

The Concise Encyclop?dia Of Islam

BARZAKH — BASMALAH

principal state from which he will return at the end of time. The Koran does not further explain the nature of the crucifixion, nor the difference between its outward appearance — the death of a man — and its inner truth, which is that Jesus was not killed. The Koran does say that the crucifixion of Jesus is what the people saw, and does not go into the reasons why God let the event take place and let the people see what they saw.

The Koranic passage in question is part of a series of accusations against the Jews, namely, of breaking the covenant, of disbelieving in God's revelations, slaying of the Prophets, and claiming, as it puts it: "We slew the Messiah Jesus son of Mary". It is the claim that they slew Jesus which the Koran refutes; it then cites sanctions for this and other transgressions.

As regards the "Gospel of Barnabas" itself, there is no question that it is a medieval forgery. A complete Italian manuscript exists which appears to be a translation from a Spanish original (which exists in part), written to curry favor with Muslims of the time. It contains anachronisms which can date only from the Middle Ages and not before, and shows a garbled comprehension of Islamic doctrines, calling the Prophet "the Messiah", which Islam does not claim for him. Besides its farcical notion of sacred history, stylistically it is a mediocre parody of the Gospels, as the writings of Bahá'í Aḥláh are of the Koran. See BIBLE; JESUS.

Barzakh (Ar. = "barrier", an "obstruction" between two things or places; specifically, an "isthmus"). A point of transition where entities similar yet different come together. The word has many applications in metaphysics. The Koran in 25:55 states:

And it is He who let forth the two seas, this one sweet,
grateful to taste, and this
salt, bitter to the tongue,
and He set between them a barrier, and a ban
forbidden.

and in 55:20:

He let forth the two seas that meet together,
between them a barrier they do not overpass.

78

Thus the isthmus, or *barzakh* between the salt and sweet seas (metaphors for this world and the next) beyond which one cannot cross without permission, is a barrier. There is another barrier (also *barzakh*) at death which prevents return, or reincarnation, to this world (23:100):

Till, when death comes to one of them, he says,

"My Lord, return me;
I fearook." Nay, it is but a word
he speaks; and there, behind them,
is a barrier until the day that they
shall be raised up.

A Saint who spans the chasm of human and Divine knowledge may also be called a *barzakh*. Indeed man in general, in view of his conjunction of body and soul, matter and intellect, and above all individual and Divine consciousness, is also a *barzakh*. Because the *barzakh* touches the two worlds it is not only a separation, but also a bridge; thus it is very similar to the concept of man as *pontifex*.

Basmachis, ("Bandits"). The revolt of the Basmachis or Bandits was what the Bolsheviks called the Islamic resistance to Communism in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s. One Tatar who did become a Bolshevik and was extolled by the Revolution was Mir Sultanaliev. In 1921 the Tatar nationalist and Communist Sultanaliev called for the creation of an international organization of colonial and semi-colonial nations and for its dictatorship over the advanced industrial states.

Basmalah. The formula *Bismil-Láhli-r-Rahmání-r-Rahím*: "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate". The *basmalah* is spoken by Muslims many times each day as a consecration before undertaking any lawful action. It is never omitted before a meal, where it is the equivalent of "saying grace". The meal is ended with the uttering of the *barakallah*. When beginning ritual action the *basmalah* is preceded by the *ta'awuzah*. When performing ritual slaughter the words *ar-Rahmání r-Rahím* are replaced by *Alláhu akbar*.

The *basmalah* has a clear predecessor in the Pahlavi Zoroastrian formula of the 4th century: *pa nam i yazdan i xverozmand i rayozmand* ("in the name of the blessing and bountiful

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