

sense comes through of what persons, demographically and sociologically, are most likely to be drawn to the movement.

To be sure, vivid scenes and bite-sized words zooming in and out, surprising and unforgettable but without much logical or narrative connection unless on some deep psychic level, seem to be increasingly the way we are given the world, whether in television news, documentaries, or even cinema. And so this is perhaps the way we actually see it—the way our senses and minds are being trained to register reality—as something like William James' "big, buzzing confusion," but now high-tech and Technicolor. Personally, I remain a little too old school to be entirely comfortable with this kaleidoscopic vision. I believe the Pagans of modern Greece could have been presented chapter by chapter, as it were, regarding their history, beliefs, worship, and sociology, without any loss of the colorful scenes offered by this DVD. The scenes could have been rearranged in appropriate sequence and with a stronger narrative voice—of which there is virtually none. I would like to urge that the impressionistic collage style has gone far enough, and I call for a new structuralism, one might term it, in documentary filmmaking.

On the other hand, this mixed-up but fascinating taste of the new Olympus is perhaps the way an inquisitive tourist or a serious inquirer would first experience a new religion. It could stimulate students to want to investigate further, either in Greece or among comparable movements at home. As it is, this film may be seen as an excellent example of its type, and can be recommended for classroom use or viewing by all interested in alternative religious movements.

Robert Ellwood, University of Southern California

Transparency: Choice, Oppression, Faith, Sex, Modesty, Prejudice, Infidelity. Directed by Osama Al-Zain. 30 min. A Focus Film Production. Zahra Pictures, 2002. \$19.95 DVD.

Transparency is one of an avalanche of films that have appeared since 11 September 2001 in a genre that might be called "Islam for the uninitiated." Of this genre, perhaps the most popular—certainly the most interesting—are the films that deal with some aspect of the *hijab*, the Islamic covering for women. *Hijabs*, we now know, come in many forms, from the heavy *burkas* worn in Afghanistan that leave only a mesh screen at eye level, to the head scarves more frequently found in Turkey and North Africa. They have become the focus of controversy in Europe, where France recently passed legislation (which much resembles legislation in force in Turkey) that forbids women or young girls from wearing the *hijab* in schools. And the *hijab* features prominently in American popular images of women in the Islamic world as the victims of patriarchy and oppression.

The film's format has become by 2006 rather stereotypical, but in 2002 it was fresh and vibrant. The brief 30-minute film introduces the audience to a several Muslim women, including an African American convert, and women from Iran, Turkey and Lebanon, as well as two Muslim men—an Iranian and a man from one of the Gulf States. These Muslims appear in interview segments, offering opinions that range from a strongly Westoxicated feminist (to borrow a term from the late Iranian commentator Jalal al-e Ahmad) to Turkish Member of Parliament Merve Kavcacki, whose struggle to be allowed to wear *hijab* in the university and in the halls of parliament have drawn international coverage.

The film is valuable in that it illustrates the wide range of views of *hijab* on the part of Muslim women as told in their own voices. *Hijab* emerges from this dialog as more liberating than oppressive. *Transparency* will interest students on an intellectual level, and the 30-minute running time is ideal for classroom use. However, while interesting, students will find the dearth of action of moving pictures beyond talking heads less than engaging. Some stock footage of the demonstrations by female university students in support of *hijab* in Turkey is a welcome diversion.

The DVD includes as special features the Qu'ranic text upon which the tradition of *hijab* is based, and some basic facts about *hijab* and the controversy it has aroused in many countries, which are also in text format. Finally, a brief text discussion guide is included that features some basic questions that might be of use in a high school classroom. This discussion guide refers viewers to the Zahra films website, <http://www.zahrapictures.com/films_trans.html>, for a transcript of the film and a complete discussion guide, however, at this writing in February 2006 the site is still under construction and neither of these are available.

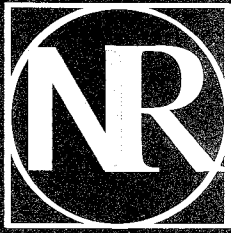
I recommend this DVD for purchase by libraries or academic departments, although there are more recent films about *hijab* that students will find more compelling.

Jeffrey Kaplan, University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

The Promise of All Ages: The Life of Bahá'u'lláh. 165 min. Dexiny Productions, 2003. \$29.95 2 DVD set.

This DVD set accomplishes what it sets out to do: describe the life of Bahá'u'lláh, the nineteenth-century Persian prophet who is the founding figure of the Bahá'í Faith, and is regarded by Bahá'ís as the latest and most important in a series of prophets who have spoken to humanity over many ages and in many religions. The film achieves this end through voice-over narration accompanied by maps, stills of important sites, both contemporary and from nineteenth-century photographs, and "talking heads" supplementing and interpreting the story.

NOVA



Stephen A. Kent

Martha Sonntag Bradley

Lori G. Beaman

Rick Phillips

Helen Crovetto

Norris W. Palmer

Rebecca Moore

RELIGIO

*The Journal of American
and European Religions*

REGISTRATION

SUBSCRIPTIONS

ADVERTISING

*A Journal of European, American, and African Religions,
Theology, Culture, and African Rights Education*

*East Asia: Philosophy, Literature,
and Religious Landmarks in the Culture of Japanese Buddhism*

*Religion: The Sacred, the Holy, and the Divine in the
World of the Future*

*Revisiting the Fundamental Principles
of Islam*

*Embedded Knowledge and Diversity: The Hidden
Curriculum in Multicultural Education*

*Gifts of the Spirit
Revisiting the Holy Spirit in an American
Context*

*Evolutionary
Theology: A New Paradigm*

REVIEWS