

Committee on Religious Reform (CORR)

Introduction

Dr. Salah Salman says of Druze documentation, “Most of the scholars who have published on the Druze were not Druze themselves, and therefore, they had no complete and easy access to the original sources, a standard requirement for objective and scholarly writing. Consequently, misinformation, misconception and misinterpretation have been particularly abundant in Druze scholarship.”

The American Druze Society (ADS) has been particularly serious about producing material on the Druze Faith, and the topics have ranged from scholarly to simply informative. Throughout the years, there have been a number of authors who have written on topics about the Druze; some of the authors were more informed than others. The ADS has never had a serious religious editor, at least one to whom the material was submitted and edited before publication; therefore, some of the articles are not conducive to good scholarly work. The closest, in the Druze Diaspora, the Druze have come to producing material considered scholarly, is a project undertaken by a sub-committee of the American Druze Foundation (ADF). All the articles written and published in the ADS magazines between the years 1968 and 2001 were collated and edited by this sub-committee. The sub-committee is named the Committee on Religious Reform (CORR). The articles selected happen to be by authors recognized as scholars by the American Druze Society, and their articles had previously been published in the American Druze Society’s publications. The authors, on the one hand, are challenging, and that can be attributed to their excellent skills of listening and their openness to others’ opinions. On the other hand, they are keen to ask critical questions and by the clear desire to achieve change in its real meaning, both on the religious and the visionary levels, they have produced challenging and controversial work. **This, however, does not eliminate the perception, occasionally, supported by evidence that they do not commit to one opinion.** A number of the authors are quite prolific producing ideas or works frequently and in large quantities. Mr. Samah HeLal and Dr. Abdallah E. Najjar rank high in that category; they have been producing work since 1968, and to this day, they continue to present current articles in the ADS “Our Heritage.” Dr. Anis Obeid has contributed numerous works, as well, and his latest contribution to the project is his *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid*. The other authors who have published books are: Dr. Abdallah Najjar, the statesman and Mr. Fred Massey. Dr. Abdallah E. Najjar is the namesake of Dr. Abdallah Najjar who was the Lebanese ambassador to the United States. Mr. Fred Massey edited **Bouron**, Capitaine N., *Les Druzes*, translated into English and annotated and edited by Mr. Fred Massey. The English publication is *Druze History* from the Arabic version of the French text by Adel Taqui-Ed-Din, Detroit, Michigan in 1950. Unfortunately, none of Mr. Massey’s work is among the collated works in the CORR project; Mr. Massey passed away quite a few years ago. Dr. Nejla M. Abu-Izzeddin, published *The Druzes A New*

Study of Their History, Faith and Society, by Leiden - E, J, Brill in 1984. Neither is Dr. Abu-Izzeddin's work among the collated works in the CORR project. Dr. Abu-Izzeddin passed away this year (2008). She is the only author considered controversial that did not permanently reside in the United States. She spent all her years living in Lebanon after studying in England. Another author's work that is not in the CORR project is Dr. Abdullāh Al-Najjar, who in 1965 published *Madhhab ad-Durūz wa t-Tawhīd The Druze Sect and Unism* in Arabic, and it was published in Egypt by Dār al-Maārif. Dr. Abdullāh Al-Najjar also published *The Druze, Millennium Scrolls Revealed*, and that was also translated into English and annotated and edited by Mr. Fred Massey by the American Druze Society, and Committee on Religious Affairs in 1973. Dr. Abdullāh Al-Najjar was a statesman, and he kept his permanent residence in Beit Meri, Lebanon. He, too, passed away many years ago. The authors with publications are :

1. Obeid Anis, *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid*, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006

2. Abu-Izzeddin, Nejla M., *The Druzes A New Study of Their History, Faith and Society*, Leiden - E,J, Brill, 1984.

3. Bouron, Capitaine N., *Les Druzes*, Translated into English, Annotated and Edited by F. Massey, *Druze History*, From the Arabic version of the French text by Adel Taqui-Ed-Din, Detroit, Michigan, 1950

4. Al-Najjar, Abdullāh (1965). *Madhhab ad-Durūz wa t-Tawhīd (The Druze Sect and Unism)* (in Arabic). Egypt: Dār al-Maārif.
Al-Najjar, Abdullāh (1973). *The Druze, Millennium Scrolls Revealed*, Translated into English, Annotated and Edited by F. Massey, American Druze Society, and Committee on Religious Affairs.

5. Helal, Samah, *Progressive Revelation in Monotheism, Is the Qur'an the Third Testament?* A commentary on Islamic Theology by Samah HeLal, **Work in Progress**

The authors in the CORR project are: Dr. Abdallah E. Najjar, Mr. Samah Helal, Dr. Anis Obeid, Mr. Faozi Barouki and Dr. Salah Salman. These authors are considered the Druze intelligencia in the American Druze Society, and the fact that their writings are considered controversial has been recognized. In some cases, these writings have created a furor among the Druze; however, the Druze have read and discussed these works, all the time, keeping in mind the steadfastness and preservation of the Druze faith for one thousand years. By Julie Makarem

Comment by Julie Mullin Makarem

Committee for Religious reform (CORR)

In 2001, members of the American Druze Foundation and the American Druze Society embarked on a project which focused on respect for religious rights and basic personal freedoms in the Druze religion. The unanimous adoption of the resolution to form a committee, Committee for Religious reform (CORR), was preceded by considerable debate; and the final proclamation of an individual's personal, social and cultural rights was, if accepted, understandably hailed as an exceptional historical achievement which would have everlasting repercussions for all Druze. However, the Druze Faith message is much more fundamental and its aims have a far deeper meaning, dealing essentially with a person's inner self. The values the Druze faith propagates are absolute and timeless, and the principles therein are not relative to any particular circumstance. Throughout the Hikmah, the Druze holy books, however, the need to constantly reflect on the meaning, significance, relevance and practical application of its timeless message is repeatedly stressed, i.e., *the basic tenets of the sect*.

Article Excerpt (see; Reincarnation for the Druze)

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Résumé / Abstract

DOCTRINAL UNDERPINNINGS AND NECESSARY CONDITIONS

Secrecy and Esotericism

Although secrecy and the esoteric characterize Druze religious knowledge, (3) several sources describe the basic tenets of the sect (Andary 1994; CORA 1984, 1996; Makarem 1974; deSacy 1838; Shavit 1993). The pursuit of formal religious knowledge is not open to just anyone, Druze included. If a Druze chooses to pursue religious study, it is only possible as an adult and through establishing a mentoring relationship with religious leaders. Thus, Druze children are not taught the more arcane aspects of Druze religion, yet they are aware of their sect identity, in part through the informal mechanism of reincarnation stories.

The Druze are a closed sect, and for ten centuries have not accepted converts. According to Druze doctrine, all human souls were created in one moment, and their number is fixed for all...

The collated articles are listed in the Table of Contents.:

