it consolidated their break with the pagan Meccans and their creation of an independent community of believers. Later generations viewed the Muslims who fought in this battle with special reverence. See also expeditions and battles.

John Nawas

Bibliography

Bahā'īs

The adherents of Bahā'ism (ahl al-Bahā), widely recognized as the “Bahā'ī Faith,” an independent world religion with Islamic origins. The Bahā'ī movement, a universalization of Bābism, was founded by Mīrzā Husayn ʻAlī Nūrī (1817-92), known as Bahā'ullāh (Splendor of God; standardized Bahā'ī spelling, Bahā'ullāh), in Baghdad in the year 1863. In 1866, it emerged as a distinct faith-community in Adrianople (Edirne). Bahā'īsm underwent transformations in ethos and organization throughout three missionary phases: the Islamic context (1844-92), the international missions (1892-1963) and global diffusion (1963-present). The Islamic context was co-extensive with the combined ministries of Bahā'ullāh and his precursor, Sayyid ʻAlī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1819-50), known as the Bāb (Gate), the prophet-martyr of the Bahā'ī movement.

The year 1260/1844 marked the Shi'i millennium, a thousand lunar years since the occultation of the twelfth imām (see ʻImām; shī'īsm and the Qur'ān). On 22 May 1844 the Bāb effected a decisive, eschatological break from Islam by means of an exegetical work entitled The immortal renovator of the divine names (Qayyūm al-asmā', often referred to as The commentary on the Joseph sūra), an audacious and revolutionary commentary on the twelfth sūra of the Qur'ān (see Joseph). In this work he “proclaimed himself the focus of an Islamic apocalypse” (T. Lawson, Structure, 8). One of his most distinctive exegetical techniques is his “exploded commentary.” In works on q 108 and q 109, the exegesis proceeds “not only verse by verse, or even word by word, but also letter by letter” (T. Lawson, Dangers, 179). The Bāb’s commentaries on the Qur'ān are remarkable in that, by force of his prophetic authority, “interpretation became revelation” (T. Lawson, Interpretation, 253). In 1848, he revealed a new law code (bayān-i fārsī), paradoxically super-Islamic in piety, yet supra-Islamic in principle.

After the Bāb’s execution (1850) by the Persian authorities, Bahā'ullāh revitalized the Bābī community by employing symbolic interpretation as strategy to abolish the Bābī antinomianism. In the Arabic Tablet of “all food” (Lawḥ-i kull al-ța'ām, 1854 — note that the titles of Bahā'ī works written in Arabic are conventionally given in Persianized form), Bahā'ullāh related the abolishment of the Jewish dietary restrictions in q 3393 to the mystical and cosmological realms. While the Baghdad period (1853-63) was eschatologically charged with his own messianic secrecy (qayyūm-i būtūn), Bahā'ullāh, in his pre-eminent doctrinal work, the Book of certitude (Kitāb-i Mustaţfā-i ışqān, Jan. 1861), advanced an extended Qur'ānic and biblical argument to authenticate the Bāb’s prophetic credentials. Bahā'ullāh’s repertoire of exegetical techniques includes most of the
twelve “procedural devices” attested in the classical commentaries (Wansbrough, q8 part ii) as well as others. Bahá’u’lláh’s style of discourse is itself exegetical, with frequent pairings, linked by the Persian metaphorical genitive (idafa-yi magázi), of qur’anic symbols and referents. Hermetically, Certitude resonates with five Islamic orientations to symbolism: 1. the semanticism of rhetoric, especially the science of tropes (ilm al-bayán); 2. the dialectic of theology (kalá)m; 3. reason (aql) and analogy (qiyyá) as a reflex of philosophy (falsafa) and jurisprudence (fiqh); 4. the use of allusion (ishára) and gnosis (márifa qal-biyya) in Súfí/Isrraqí mysticism (see SADVAN and the QUR‘ÁN); 5. recourse to apocalyptic presentism, adducing prophetic proof-texts to instantiate a realized eschatology, a common characteristic of millenarian sectarianism. In his Commentary on the sûra “By the sun” (Tafsír sûrat wa-l-shams), while critical of rhetoric (ilm al-balágha) and the cognate qur’anic sciences, Bahá’u’lláh echoes al-Ghazáli (d. 505/1111) and al-Taftázání (d. 791/1389) in stressing the need to harmonize literal and figurative interpretations (C. Buck, Symbol, 91-2, 104). In his Tablet on esoteric interpretation (Laws-i ta‘iyl), citing Q 33:5, he states that eschatological verses are properly susceptible to esoteric interpretation (ta‘iyl) whereas qur’anic laws are to be understood by their obvious sense (tafsír, see EXEGESIS OF THE QUR‘ÁN: CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL).

Islamic prophetology is anchored in the received interpretation of Q 33:40, which is widely believed to establish Muḥammad as the final prophet (see PROPHETS AND PROPHETHOOD). In what is perhaps his most significant exegetical maneuver, Bahá’u’lláh relativizes that claim in order to supersede it, refocusing the reader’s attention a mere four verses later (Q 33:44) on the eschatological attainment to the presence of God (liqá‘ Alláh) on the last day (see ESCHATOLOGY). Arguing that direct beatific vision of God is impossible, Bahá’u’lláh reasons that Q 33:44 anticipates a future theophany who, as deus revelatus and divine vicegerent, is symbolically God by proxy.

By force of explicative logic, Certitude — arguably the world’s most-widely-read non-Muslim qur’anic commentary — served as an advance prophetic warrant for Bahá’u’lláh, who on 22 April 1863 declared himself “He whom God shall manifest” (man yużirahu īlāh), the messianic theophany foretold by ‘Alí Muḥammad. In public epistles to Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX and other world leaders during the Adrianople and ‘Akká (Haifa) periods (1864-92), Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed himself the advent of the millenarian “Promised One” of all religions — a “multiple-messianhip” (C. Buck, Unique, 158), i.e. the Zoroastrian Sháh Bahrám Varjávand, the Jewish Everlasting Father (Isa 9:6)/Lord of Hosts, the Christian Spirit of Truth, the Shí‘í al-Ḥusayn redí-vius and the Sunní return of Christ (see APOCALYPSE).

As “the world-reformer,” Bahá’u’lláh advocated world peace, parliamentary democracy, disarmament, an international language, the harmony of science and religion, interfaith concord as well as gender and racial equality. From a historicist perspective, Bahá’í principles represent modernist universalizations of Islamic canons, transcending the traditional believer/infidel dichotomy (see BELIEF AND UNBELIEF). In precocious religious preparation for a global society, Bahá’u’lláh’s signal contribution was to sacralize certain secular modernist reforms within an irreducibly original paradigm of world unity in which peace is made sacred. By designating his son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ (Servant of the Bahá’, d. 1921) as interpreter, exemplar and successor and by establishing elected councils, Bahá’u’lláh instituted his Covenant, sym-
bolized as “the Crimson Ark” (C. Buck, *Paradise*, ch. 5). This is the organizing principle of the Bahá’í community and the means to safeguard its integrity against major schism. Succeeding ‘Abdu-l-Bahá’ in 1921 as “Guardian” of the Bahá’í faith, Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) globalized and evolved the Bahá’í administration as a system of local and national Spiritual Assemblies. This led in 1963 to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the international Bahá’í governing body, on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.

While granting the Bible’s divine inspiration, Bahá’ís regard the Qur’án as the sole world scripture which, apart from the Bahá’í canon, qualifies as pure revelation. Sacred, but not central, the Qur’án nonetheless profoundly enriches the Bahá’í scripture as a revelation within a revelation and is essential to its study. Qur’ánic vocabulary, ideology and motifs, as well as a plethora of citations and allusions and even the use of rhymed prose similar to that in the Qur’án (see rhymed prose), inform and suffuse the other Bahá’í scriptures.

‘Alí Muḥammad’s earliest works exhibit a conscious effort to extend and amplify a Qur’anic voice, a crucial warrant of revelation. Bahá’u’lláh’s commentaries include *Commentary on the mysterious letters* (Taťšir-i ḥurūfšt-i muqatša‘a; see *letters and mysterious letters*), which incorporates a discourse on the Light Verse (Q 24:35): *Commentary on “He is”* (Taťšir-i Hu[wa]) and *Essences of the mysteries* (Jawáhir al-‘asrār).

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