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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

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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 Ḥusayn 'Alī 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'ism 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 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī (1819-50), known as the Bāb (Gate), the prophet-martyr of the Bābī movement.

The year 1260/1844 marked the Shī'ī millennium, a thousand lunar years since the

occultation of the twelfth imām (see IMĀM; SHĪ'ISM 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 103, 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-ta'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 3:93 to the mystical and cosmological realms. While the Baghdad period (1853-63) was eschatologically charged with his own messianic secrecy (*ayyām-i buṭūn*), Bahā'ullāh, in his pre-eminent doctrinal work, the *Book of certitude* (*Kitāb-i Mustafāḥ-i iqān*, 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, *QS*, part ii) as well as others. Bahā'ullāh's style of discourse is itself exegetical, with frequent pairings, linked by the Persian metaphorical genitive (*idāfa-yi majāzī*), of qur'ānic symbols and referents. Hermeneutically, *Certitude* resonates with five Islamic orientations to symbolism: 1. the semanticism of rhetoric, especially the science of tropes (*ilm al-bayān*); 2. the dialectic of theology (*kalām*); 3. reason (*'aql*) and analogy (*qiyās*) as a reflex of philosophy (*falsafa*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*); 4. the use of allusion (*ishāra*) and gnosis (*ma'rifa qalbiyya*) in Šūfī/Ishrāqī mysticism (see ŠŪFISM AND THE QUR'ĀN); 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 sūra “By the sun”* (*Tafsīr sūrat wa-l-shams*), while critical of rhetoric (*ilm al-balāgha*) and the cognate qur'ānic sciences, Bahā'ullāh echoes al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and al-Taftazānī (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* (*Lawḥ-i ta'wīl*), citing Q 3:5, he states that eschatological verses are properly susceptible to esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) whereas qur'ānic laws are to be understood by their obvious sense (*tafsīr*, see EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'ĀN: CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL).

Islamic prophethood 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, Bahā'ullāh 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 (*liqā' Allāh*) on the last day (see

ESCHATOLOGY). Arguing that direct beatific vision of God is impossible, Bahā'ullāh 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'ānic commentary — served as an advance prophetic warrant for Bahā'ullāh, who on 22 April 1863 declared himself “He whom God shall manifest” (*man yuzhiruhu llāh*), the messianic theophany foretold by 'Alī Muḥammad. In public epistles to Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX and other world leaders during the Adrianople and 'Akkā (Haifa) periods (1864-92), Bahā'ullāh proclaimed himself the advent of the millenarian “Promised One” of all religions — a “multiple-messiahship” (C. Buck, *Unique*, 158), i.e. the Zoroastrian Shāh Bahrām Varjāvand, the Jewish Everlasting Father (*Isa* 9:6)/Lord of Hosts, the Christian Spirit of Truth, the Shīrī al-Ḥusayn *redivivus* and the Sunnī return of Christ (see APOCALYPSE).

As “the world-reformer,” Bahā'ullāh 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, Bahā'ī principles represent modernist universalizations of Islamic canons, transcending the traditional believer/in-fidel dichotomy (see BELIEF AND UNBELIEF). In precocious religious preparation for a global society, Bahā'ullāh'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-Bahā' (Servant of the Bahā', d. 1921) as interpreter, exemplar and successor and by establishing elected councils, Bahā'ullāh instituted his Covenant, sym-

bolized as “the Crimson Ark” (C. Buck, *Paradise*, ch. 5). This is the organizing principle of the Bahāʿī community and the means to safeguard its integrity against major schism. Succeeding ‘Abdu l-Bahā’ in 1921 as “Guardian” of the Bahāʿī faith, Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) globalized and evolved the Bahāʿī 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 Bahāʿī governing body, on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel.

While granting the Bible’s divine inspiration, Bahāʿīs regard the Qurʾān as the sole world scripture which, apart from the Bahāʿī canon, qualifies as pure revelation. Sacred, but not central, the Qurʾān nonetheless profoundly enriches the Bahāʿī scripture as a revelation within a revelation and is essential to its study. Qurʾānic 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 Qurʾān (see RHYMED PROSE), inform and suffuse the other Bahāʿī scriptures. ‘Alī Muḥammad’s earliest works exhibit a conscious effort to extend and amplify a Qurʾānic voice, a crucial warrant of revelation. Bahāʿullāh’s commentaries include *Commentary on the mysterious letters (Tafsīr-i ḥurūfāt-i muqaṭṭaʿa)*; see LETTERS AND MYSTERIOUS LETTERS), which incorporates a discourse on the Light Verse (Q 24:35); *Commentary on “He is” (Tafsīr-i Hū[wa])* and *Essences of the mysteries (Jawāhir al-asrār)*.

Christopher George Buck

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