Some Aspects of Isrā'īliyyāt and the Emergence of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Interpretation of the Bible

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This thesis deals with Islamic Isrā'īliyyāt ("Israelitica") literary traditions, the Bible and the relationship to them of two closely related post-Islamic movements, the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions. It concerns the Islamic assimilation and treatment of pre-Islamic, biblical and related materials and their level of post-Islamic Bābī-Bahā'ī assimilation and exposition. More specifically, this thesis focuses upon select aspects of the biblical and Islamo-biblical ("Islamified", "Islamicate") traditions reflected within the Arabic and Persian writings of two Iranian born 19th century messianic claimants, Sayyid `Alī Muḥammad Shirāzī, the Bāb (1819-1850) and Mīrzā Ḥusayn `Alī Nūrī (1817-1892), entitled Bahā'-Allāh, the founders of the Bābī and Bahā' ī religions respectively.

The presence of Islamo-biblical citations and the absence of canonical biblical citations within the writings of the Bāb will be argued as will the emergence of the Bahā'ī interpretation of the canonical Bible though its founder figure Bahā'-Allāh who first cited an Arabic Christian Bible version whilst resident in Ottoman Iraq (Baghdad) towards the end of what has been called the middle-Bābī period (1861-2 CE). This laid the foundations for the Bahā'ī interpretation of the Bible which was greatly enriched and extended by oriental Bahā'ī apologists , Bahā'-Allāh's eldest son `Abd al-Bahā' Abbās (d.1921) and his great-grandson Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957) who shaped the modern global Bahā'ī phenomenon. Over a century or so the neo-Shī'ī millennialist faction that was Bābism (the religion of the Bāb) evolved into the global Bahā'ī religion of the Book.

Throughout this thesis aspects of Isrā'īliyyāt will be analysed historically and the Islamic, especially Shī'ī-Shaykhī background to and the Bābī-Bahā'ī messianic renewal of the Isrā'īliyyāt rooted tradition of the ism Allāh al-a`ẓam (Mightiest Name of God) will be noted and commented upon.