

Gnostic Apocalypse and Islam: Qur'an, Exegesis, Messianism and the Literary Origins of the Babi Religion (Iranian Studies)

By Todd Lawson

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Of the several works on the rise and development of the Babi movement, especially those dealing with the life and work of its founder, Sayyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi, few deal directly with the compelling and complex web of mysticism, theology and philosophy found in his earliest compositions.

This book examines the Islamic roots of the Babi religion, (and by extension the later Baha'i faith which developed out of it), through the Qur'anic commentaries of the Bab and sheds light on its relationship to the wider religious milieu and its profound debt to esoteric Islam, especially Shi'ism. Todd Lawson places the two earliest writings of the Bab within the diverse contexts necessary to understand them, in order to explain why these writings made sense to and inspired his followers. He delves into the history of the tafsir (Qur'an commentary) genre of Islamic scholarship, situates these early writings in the Akhbari, Sufi and most importantly Shaykhi traditions of Islam. In the process, he identifies both the continuities and discontinuities between these works and earlier works of Shi'i tafsir, helping us appreciate significant elements of the Bab's thought and claims.

Filling an important gap in the existing literature on the Babi movement, this book will be of greatest interest to students and scholars of Qur'an commentary, Mysticism, Shi'ism, the modern history of Iran and messianism.

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- Sales Rank: #3965621 in Books
- Published on: 2011-12-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 6.25" w x .75" l, 1.10 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"The book is useful for readers interested in the esoteric and gnostic traditions of Shi'i Islam, in the Islamic roots of Babism and in apocalyptic literature in general from a comparative perspective." *Oliver Scharbrodt, University College Cork, Ireland*

About the Author

Todd Lawson is Associate Professor in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on mystical Qur'anic exegesis, Islamic thought, Shi'ism and Sufism, and he has written a number of books on Islamic thought and the Qur'an.

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