

# THE BAHÁ'Í RELIGION<sup>1</sup>

## BRIEF HISTORY:

In 1844 a young Persian Muslim, Mirza Ali Muhammed, renamed himself the “*Bab*,” which means “*gate*.” He began to promote new social and religious teachings which by Muslim standards were very radical. Not surprisingly, he was persecuted and finally killed by his own people in 1850. His followers were also persecuted and thousands were killed.

Before his death, “*the Bab*” predicted that there would come one after him to take over and lead the group. He also sent his writings to one of his eager followers named Mirza Husayn Ali. Eventually Husayn Ali announced that he was the one prophesied, and in 1863 he changed his name to *Bahá'u'llah*, which means “*glory of God*” and he became the new prophet of the movement. The followers called themselves *Bahá'is*. Persecution continued and Bahá'u'llah eventually spent forty years in various prisons, dying in 1892 in modern day Haifa, Israel. Before his death, he appointed his son Abdu'l Baha as his successor. Although he was not a prophet, his interpretations of Bahá'u'llah's teachings are considered authoritative. Before Abdu'l Baha's death in 1921 he was knighted by the British government, which, unfortunately, gave him greater credibility in other people's eyes. Abdu'l Baha's grandson then led the movement until 1957. In 1957 the Bahá'is established a new leadership structure with a governing board that is elected every five years, called “*The Universal House of Justice*.”

Bahá'is claim to have 3-4 million followers world-wide, though these statistics are very hard to verify. Bahá'is use no ritual, no sacraments and no clergy. Services are conducted weekly. Their meetings vary from public lectures, study classes and discussion groups, to worship and conventions. Readings are given from the sacred scriptures of the various world religions.

“The basic beliefs of Bahá'í are contained in **10 principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'llah for this age**:

1. “*All mankind is one.*”
2. “*There should be independent investigation of truth.*”
3. “*The foundation of all religions is one.*”
4. “*There is an essential harmony of science and dreligion.*”
5. “*Men and women are equal.*”
6. “*All prejudice must be eliminated.*”
7. “*There should be universal compulsory education.*”
8. “*There should be a spiritual solution to the world's economic problems.*”
9. “*A universal language should be developed.*”
10. “*Universal peace should be upheld by a world government.*”<sup>2</sup>

## BASIC ERRORS OF BAHÁ'Í TEACHING:

**1. ALL RELIGIONS ARE ONE** (“*one light in many lamps*”). In the Ten Principles, Bahá'u'llah states, “*The foundation of all religions is one.*” Bahá'is also declare, “*Fundamentally they (religions) are one in spirit...It is one light, appearing in many lamps...A Bahá'í believes in Christ, Muhammed, Buddha, Moses, Zoroaster—all are messengers of God.*”<sup>3</sup>

When Bahá'is make such statements as those above, one wonders about their cognitive abilities. It is obvious that they are only fooling themselves. Hinduism has absolutely nothing in common with Judaism. Buddhism totally contradicts Islam. Islam, in turn, denies the foundation of Christianity i.e. that God has a Son, Jesus Christ! (See summary of world religions at the end of these notes)

Bahá'is believe that there have been nine great prophets throughout history who have revealed God. They call them “*Manifestations*.” Yet there is a disagreement about who those nine are. Various authorized leaders of Bahá'í have listed 14 different people. The currently accepted nine are: Moses, Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, Muhammed, Bab and Bahá'u'llah.

Jesus Christ, however, never claimed to be only a prophet. He claimed to be God! Either He was and is God, or He was a lunatic or a liar. Those are the only choices available. Buddha, Muhammed, Krishna and the others may have been influential, but they are all still in the grave. Only Jesus Christ rose from the dead and proved that He is God. He claimed to be “*THE way, THE Truth, and THE Life*” (Jn. 14:6). The apostle Peter said that there is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12). If what Christ said about Himself is true, then there is no use for or need of any of the other religions.

**2. BAHÁ'Í TEACHING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST.** Bahá'is deny nearly all the basic Bible doctrines concerning Jesus Christ, including: His incarnation, resurrection, second coming, and that He is the only Saviour for all eternity. According to the Bible, those who deny these essential teachings are deceivers and anti-christs (e.g. II John 7-11; I John 2:19-26, esp. v. 23).

- **Denial of Christ's Incarnation** – Bahá'í writings state: “*Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His essence and reveal it unto men.*”<sup>4</sup> “*Was Christ within God, or God within Christ? No, in the name of God.*”<sup>5</sup> Such statements totally contradict the Bible (e.g. Col. 2:9; John 14:9; Mt. 1:23; Jn. 1:1, 3, 14; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; etc).

<sup>1</sup> Notes prepared by Rev. Mike Edwards. Originally written 1988, Pt. Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Revised October, 2007, Baptist Bible College of the Caribbean, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, West Indies.

<sup>2</sup> Norris Anders, “*Bahá'í—What does the Bahá'í Faith Teach?*” (OMF Publishers: Manila, Philippines, 1976), pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

- **Denial of Christ's Resurrection** – “*The resurrections of Divine Manifestations are NOT of the body...his (Christ's) resurrection from the interior of the earth is also SYMBOLIC.*”<sup>6</sup> Anyone who has seriously, critically examined the evidence for Christ's resurrection knows that it cannot be denied on intellectual, historical grounds.<sup>7</sup>
- **Denial of Christ's Second Coming** – “though Baha'is claim that they believe this doctrine, they actually do not. What they believe is that Baha'u'llah, as God's manifestation for this dispensation, is Christ returned.”<sup>8</sup> But the Bible promises that when Christ returns, this world will be transformed (e.g. Isa. 11). Baha'is must be faced with the question, **Why aren't the things described in Isaiah 11 happening?** They have fallen into the same error as the Jehovah's Witnesses in believing that Christ's return is a “*secret*” coming. The Bible is crystal clear that “*every eye will see Him*” when He returns (Rev. 1:7; Mt. 24:24-27; Lk. 17:23-24; 21:27).
- **Denial of Christ as the only Saviour for all Eternity** – Bahai's declare that Christ is the only way to heaven, BUT only during His dispensation, i.e. until Muhammed came. Abdu'l Baha said, “*The revelation of Jesus was for his own dispensation...it is no longer the point of guidance to the world. Baha'is must be severed from all and everything that is past...Now all is changed...Abdu'l Baha is now supplying all the world.*”<sup>9</sup> Because of their teaching about the nine “*manifestations,*” they deny that Christ is the only way, and they deny that Christ is God. But both of these truths are taught throughout the New Testament.

**3. BAHAI DENIAL OF THE TRINITY.** The following is a quote from an interview with a Baha'i instructor: “Do you in Baha'ism believe in the Holy Trinity?” Answer: “*If by the trinity you mean the Christian concept that the three person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all one God, the answer is No.*”<sup>10</sup> To deny the doctrine of the Trinity is to deny one of the most basic teachings of Christianity. Without citing all the relevant biblical passages, it should simply be pointed out that all three (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are called God (Rom. 1:7; Heb. 1:8; & Acts 5:3-4).

**4. BAHAI TEACHING ABOUT GOD.** Baha'is have no coherent concept of God. Their teaching about the nine manifestations means that their doctrine of God will come from all of them. But the problem is that the nine manifestations totally contradict one another! As one has pointed out, “*God cannot be impersonal, personal, transcendent, polytheistic, pantheistic, monotheistic, able to beget, not able to beget, relevant and irrelevant, ALL AT THE SAME TIME.*”<sup>11</sup> When Baha'is are challenged about this they make statements such as the following: “*the manifestations disagree on the non-essential aspects of their doctrine*”<sup>12</sup> or, “*While it is true that there are discrepancies between the teachings of the great prophets, all held to basic moral and spiritual values.*”<sup>13</sup> Such statements betray a mindset that borders on unreality.

**5. BAHAI AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.** From an interview, once again: “*Does the Bahai faith recognize the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit...as revealed in the New Testament?*” Answer: “*We understand this (the Comforter) to be the coming of Baha'u'llah...*”<sup>14</sup> There are two problems with this: a) Jesus' promise was to the disciples living at that time, but Baha'u'llah wasn't born for another eighteen hundred years, & b) Baha'is believe that Baha'u'llah is Christ returned. How then can he also be the Holy Spirit?

**6. BAHAI AND THE BIBLE.** Baha'is believe that “*the writings of Baha'u'llah...are to be considered the final authority in matters of religion so far as the Baha'i faith is concerned.*”<sup>15</sup> But such a view totally contradicts both Christ's teaching about the Bible, as well as the Bible's teaching about itself (e.g. Mt. 24:35; 5:18; I Pet. 1:25; Jude 3 [NASV]; etc).

**7. BAHAI VIEW OF SIN.** They believe that sin is ignorance. Abdu'l Baha wrote, “*None are bad or evil.*”<sup>16</sup> “*Evil is imperfection...Through education we must free ourselves of these imperfections.*”<sup>17</sup> The Bible's teaching is very different. Education will not make a man righteous (Rom. 3:10-12, 23; 14:23b; I Jn. 3:4; 1:8, 10; Jas. 4:17; Eph. 2:1; etc).

<sup>4</sup> Baha'u'llah, “*Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*” trans. Shogi Effendi (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, pp. 46-47), cited in Francis Beckwith, “*Bahai*”, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Abdu'l Baha, “*Some Answered Questions*” trans. Laura Clifford Barney (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1930), p. 97, cited in Beckwith, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pp. 119-120, cited in Beckwith, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent discussion of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ see Josh McDowell, “*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*” (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) and Josh McDowell, “*The Resurrection Factor*” (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> George Townshend, “*Promise of All Ages*” (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1948), pp. 61-63, cited in Beckwith, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup> “*Star of the West*” (official Baha'i publication, 31 Dec., 1913), cited by Walter Martin, “*The Kingdom of the Cults*” (Bethany Fellowship Publishers: Minneapolis, MN, 1974 edition), p. 255.

<sup>10</sup> Martin, Ibid, p. 254.

<sup>11</sup> Beckwith, op cit., p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Shogi Effendi, “*Call to the Nations*” (Chatham, Great Britain: W & J Mackay Ltd., 1977), p. xi, cited by Beckwith, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Martin, op cit., pp. 255-256.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ernst, “*Baha'i*” (unpublished paper: Goroka Baptist Bible College, PNG, n.d.), p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **THE MAIN GOAL & THEME OF BAHAI'S: WORLD PEACE.**

At their headquarters (the Universal House of Justice, in Haifa, Israel) they draft and distribute resolutions regarding peace and the ending of war. They have a full time staff at the United Nations. Unfortunately, they want peace without the Prince of Peace (Jesus Christ). Bahai's also believe that everyone on earth must adopt a universal language and Baha'u'llah said, "some form of world super-state must needs be evolved in whose favour all nations will have willingly ceded (give) every claim to make war." All of this, without Jesus Christ, sounds a lot like the conditions described in the book of Revelation when the anti-Christ will take over the world (cf. Rev. 13:7-8; 19:19-21; etc).

**CONCLUSION:** Baha'i has high sounding goals (e.g. the elimination of all prejudice, world peace, and universal education), but Martin highlights three major flaws:

- "Bahai' comes from the Middle East but it hides itself in western terminology and imitates Christianity wherever it can,
- Baha'i tries to avoid conflict allowing converts to remain Christians if they acknowledge Baha'u'llah, &
- Baha'i deliberately undercuts the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith."<sup>18</sup>

## **COMPARISON OF SOME BASIC TEACHINGS OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS<sup>19</sup>** **CONCEPT OF GOD/GODS:**

### **LEADER/RELIGION:**

Moses (Judaism)	God is personal. Strict, uncompromising monotheism.
Krishna (Hinduism)	Polytheistic, but ultimately pantheistic & impersonal.
Zoroaster (Zoroastrianism)	Two supreme beings. Philosophical dualism.
Buddha (Buddhism)	God is not relevant. Essentially agnostic.
Confucius (Confucianism)	Polytheistic.
Jesus Christ (Christianity)	God is personal. He has a son (2 <sup>nd</sup> person of Godhead). Strict, uncompromising monotheism.
Muhammed (Islam)	God is personal. He has no son. Strict, uncompromising monotheism.
Bab & Baha'u'llah (Bahai)	God is personal but has no son. There are only 9 great prophets. The latest is greatest.

### **VIEW REGARDING THE PATHWAY TO HEAVEN:**

Judaism	Keep laws. Faith in the Messiah who will come.
Hinduism	Salvation is all about works. Reincarnation i.e. you keep going around until you reach Nirvana.
Zoroastrianism	Salvation by works. Deeds determine one's destiny.
Buddhism	Works i.e. good karma, leading to nirvana.
Confucianism	The nature of man is good. More of a philosophy.
Christianity	Salvation by grace alone, through a Messiah who has already come. Christ as the only way.
Islam	Salvation by works. Jesus is just a prophet.
Bahai	Salvation by works. The unity of all religions. Peace is the key focus.

### **VIEW REGARDING JESUS CHRIST:**

Judaism	Christ is not the Messiah. Messiah is yet to come.
Christianity	Christ is God and the Son of God. He is Messiah. He is the only way to heaven.
Islam	Christ is not God. He is only a great prophet. He did not die &/or resurrect from the dead.
Bahai	Christ is not God. He is only a great prophet. He did not resurrect from the dead physically. Denial of His incarnation & second coming. He is not the only Saviour for all eternity.

<sup>18</sup> Martin, op cit., p. 258.

<sup>19</sup> Much of this material is from Beckwith, op cit., p. 17.