

The Baha'i Faith and the Divine Principle

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Baha'u'llah

The Baha'i faith originated in Persia (Iran) in the year 1844. It was in this year that Mohammad Ali took the title the Bab, meaning "the door" or "the gate." He said that he was the One foretold by two early nineteenth century Moslem leaders, Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim. The Bah taught that he was a Manifestation of God, and that his station was the same as that of the founders of other religions. Beyond this, however, he said that he was to prepare mankind for the coming of "Him whom God will make manifest," who was the Promised One of all religions (the return of Christ to the Christians, the Amitabha Buddha to the Buddhists, etc.), and who would establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The Bab quickly attracted many followers, called Babis, over 20,000 of whom were killed by the Persian government. In 1850 the Bah himself was killed. Thirteen years later Baha'u'llah ("the Glory of God"), the foremost disciple of the Bah, publicly proclaimed that he was "Him whom God will make manifest," and that he had received this revelation ten years earlier in 1853. Baha'u'llah spread his teachings until his death in 1892, even though he was imprisoned, tortured and exiled repeatedly by the Persian and Turkish governments for doing so. After Baha'u'llah died his son 'Abdu'l-Baha ("the Servant of the Glory") spread the faith to the Western world, even visiting America in 1912. Shoghi Effendi was the Guardian of the faith from the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's death in 1921 until his own death in 1957. The faith is now administered by the "Universal House of Justice" in Haifa, Israel, and there are Baha'is in every country of the free world.

When 'Abdu'l-Baha was in London and Paris he proclaimed what are now known as the "twelve Baha'i principles." The very first of these principles is called the independent investigation of truth. Baha'is would do well to note that 'Abdu'l-Baha did not exclude them when he said, "We must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the Way to Truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any one religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal." This paper critically examines the Baha'i faith and its teachings, in a sincere attempt to find the truth. May those who read it do so with the same spirit.

The Baha'i teachings

The Baha'i faith is similar to the Divine Principle in its goal of setting up the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and in many specific beliefs. However, its teachings differ significantly from those of the Divine Principle in three major areas; the nature of God's relationship with man, the nature of religion, and the nature of evil.

Baha'u'llah's teachings on the nature of God's relationship with man are very explicit. Since man is the creation and God is the creator, man can never know God, just as a painting can never know the artist. In

the *Book of Certitude* he stated, "No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness." Here and in many other places, Baha'u'llah implies that it is impossible for God to create children who can know Him directly in the same way that children know their human parents directly. But how could it be impossible for God to do something that would give Him great joy?

Baha'u'llah says that God has bridged the gap between man and Himself by sending "manifestations of God," such as Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Christ, and Mohammad, to mankind. They know God much more directly than most people do, and bring people to Him by their teachings. But why can't everyone become a manifestation of God? There is no logical reason why God would want to let only a small, select group of men know Him directly. If God desires to make Himself known unto men why must He use an intermediary? These inconsistencies show that the Baha'i understanding of God's relationship with man is incomplete.

The Baha'i teachings on the nature of religion say that God created man with the capacity for infinite good, but that man did not know about goodness and about his spiritual nature. Therefore, each manifestation of God had the mission of spiritually educating mankind. Each one of them taught mankind a bit more about how to live a good life; and revealed a bit more of God's Truth. This gradual spiritual education is called "progressive revelation."

However, why would a God of infinite goodness create the original parents from whom all humanity is descended without letting them know about their spiritual nature, and without giving them any way to learn about it until mankind as a whole evolved spiritually, thousands of years later? Individual plants and animals grow to maturity and perfection within their lifetimes. The fact that the original parents, and all mankind since them, have not grown to full spiritual maturity within their lifetimes, shows that something must have happened after the creation of the original parents, that caused them to lose the knowledge of their spiritual nature. Otherwise, God's love for individual human beings would be limited, and He would not be a God of infinite goodness.

In addition, the doctrine of progressive revelation states that God has sent all His manifestations to the East. 'Abdu'l-Baha says that "In the past, as in the present, the Spiritual Sun of Truth has always shone from the horizon of the East... all the great spiritual teachers arose in the Eastern world." Since Baha'is do not consider Confucius and Lao-Tze to be manifestations of God, many Baha'is say that all religions come from an area in the Middle East roughly 3,000 miles in diameter. But why has God sent so many manifestations to this small area, and to the descendants of Abraham in particular? The Baha'i teachings do not give any reasons for this.

A third problem with the doctrine of progressive revelation regards Mohammad. Mohammad came 600 years after Christ, and should therefore have brought a higher level of God's Truth. It is true that the teachings Mohammad brought were responsible for the birth of Arab civilization, and that contact with the Moslems during the Crusades helped end the "dark age" of the Christian world. However, Mohammad's teachings not only do not go beyond those of Christ, but they actually retrogress to those of Moses. In the Koran (which few Baha'is have read) Mohammad portrays God as an infinitely powerful Being who will destroy people who will not do His will. This view is diametrically opposed to the love of God for man which is shown so clearly by Christ in parables such as "the Prodigal Son." The love of God for man is not even hinted at in the Koran. This shows that Mohammad did not bring a higher level of truth than Christ did.

Concerning evil, Baha'u'llah taught that it is simply the absence of good, and not a negative force opposing good. He said that the things in the world that are called evil actually result from the ignorance of mankind, and that when religion teaches goodness to people they gradually become less "evil," like a light spreading in the darkness.

However, evil is more than the absence of good. There are many indications of this, even in the Baha'i teachings. One example is the Baha'i teaching on covenant breakers. Covenant breakers are Baha'is who turned against the true Baha'i leaders at one time or another, and tried to form their own sect. Baha'is are to avoid all contact with covenant breakers. Why? If evil were only the absence of good, there would be no reason to avoid evil people. Good people cannot be harmed by associating with people who are not good, as long as they are not actually evil. The real reason covenant breakers are to be avoided is that they represent a negative power which tries to destroy goodness, and they are often strong enough to triumph over the Baha'is. (If the Baha'i standard of goodness was stronger, this separation would not be necessary.)

Evil is shown to be a negative force in other places in the Baha'i teachings, also. In his *Tablet to the City of Constantinople* Baha'u'llah said, "We behold in thee the foolish ruling over the wise, and darkness vaunting itself against the light." Clearly the "darkness" must be more than an absence of light, since it was triumphing over the light. In *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, "the Evil One" is mentioned in seven different places. Baha'is explain this away, but the context of these quotations clearly shows that

an evil power exists. But the Baha'i teachings do not show how to overcome this evil power.

The Baha'i teachings and the Divine Principle

The Divine Principle untangles the inconsistencies and fills in the gaps in the Baha'i teachings. It offers the only logical explanation of why people are separated from God, even though they were created by a God of limitless goodness, power, and love for man. The first people on earth were to grow to perfection by fulfilling their own portion of responsibilities within their lifetimes. If they had reached perfection they would have been able to have direct give and take with God's heart, entering the direct dominion of His love. Their descendants would also have been able to do this, and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth would have been established right away. The Divine Principle explains the inner meaning of the fall of Adam and Eve, which happened when they were still immature, in the growth stage, and which resulted in the separation of mankind from God and in the creation of evil.

The major trouble with the Baha'i teachings is that they omit the fall entirely. They say that everything has been going according to God's plan, and that no fundamentally different relationship with God is possible than the relationship with Him that some people have now. The Baha'i teachings, without knowing it, deal exclusively with fallen man. The Baha'i teachings give no indication that God wants to relate to us much more directly than He has been able to relate to mankind in the past, when everyone has had a fallen nature.

The Divine Principle teaches that God is working to restore man's original unfallen nature. To do this God has worked with men to lay foundations of faith and foundations of substance upon which the Messiah can come to restore all people.

The foundation of substance to receive the Messiah has often involved relationships that God has set up between two individuals or two groups, one (usually the younger) relatively good and the other (usually the older) relatively evil. God gives His love to the individual or group that is in the position of relative goodness. If the individual or group that is in the position of relative evil is humble and unites with the relatively good side, they can grow together, both receiving God's love. The first such relationship was between Cain and Abel. However Cain, symbolizing relative evil, killed Abel instead of uniting with him.

Later, God created another "Cain-Abel relationship" between Abraham's sons Ishmael and Isaac, in the positions of relative evil and good, respectively. This relationship was never resolved. Therefore, God set up another Cain -- Abel relationship, between Esau and Jacob. When Esau humbly united with Jacob (Genesis 33:4), this relationship was resolved successfully. Because of this God could bless both of them, and give Jacob the new name "Israel"

This is one of the reasons why so many "manifestations" have been descended from Abraham. There were many other conditions that Abraham and his children fulfilled, which collectively established a foundation upon which God could send many prophets, and finally the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to their descendants. When Christ came he could have restored all mankind to God if the people had accepted him and spiritually grafted themselves to him. However, the people failed to accept him, and therefore Christ was able to restore mankind only on the spiritual level. If the people had accepted Christ they could have been restored both spiritually and physically, and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth would have begun. Christ would not have been crucified. Because Christ was rejected and crucified, God's restoration providence has been prolonged until now. Christ must come again at this time, in a similar manner to his first coming, and complete what was left unaccomplished during his first advent.

The relationship between Ishmael and Isaac still needs to be resolved. If the children of Israel (the Jews) had accepted Christ as the Messiah, they and the children of Esau, as the children of Isaac, would have united, centered on their faith in the Messiah, with the children of Ishmael (the Arabs). Then the combined children of Abraham would have united in the same way with the rest of the world, forming the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

However, the Jews rejected Christ, and the physical restoration of mankind was prolonged. Therefore, God has given the Arabs a course of history similar to the one that the Jews have gone through, so that the Cain-Abel relationship between them can be resolved by the Lord of the Second Advent. There is a remarkable parallel between the history of the Jewish people from the time they went into Egypt until shortly after the coming of Christ, and the history of the Arab people during the past 2000 years.

Both first spent several hundred years on a low physical and spiritual level. Then each received the Law of God, through Moses and Mohammad respectively. The parallels between the Law of Moses and the Law of Mohammad are very clear. Both have the same understanding of God as a powerful Being to be feared. Both teach that those who commit a crime must receive a punishment equal to the crime, i.e. "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth..." (Ex. 21:24) and "retaliation is decreed for you in bloodshed; a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave..." (Koran 2: 173). Both forbid eating blood or pig's meat (Deut. 12:16, Lev. 11:7; Koran 2: 168). Both require animal sacrifices (Ex. 29, etc.; Koran 22:34-38, etc.). Both

have a holy place of central importance: the Jewish Temple that was at Jerusalem, and the Moslem Ka'bih at Mecca. Members of both faiths practice circumcision.

Both tribes then set up a nation under God's guidance, using military force to conquer the surrounding people. Each nation had a succession of spiritual leaders. There were 16 Jewish Judges and 12 Moslem Imams. Each nation prospered and went through a golden age, and then began to decline. Each nation was prepared to receive a Messiah. The Messiah figure came to both nations, as Christ and the Bab, respectively. The Bab did not have the same providential significance as Christ did, but the parallels between their two lives are amazing. Bill Sears lists 27 parallels between the two in his book, *Thief in the Night*. These parallels culminated with the rejection and death of the Messiah figure, in both cases.

The teachings of each Messiah figure were then established extensively over the earth, by Paul and Baha'u'llah, respectively. The parallels between these two men are also remarkable. Neither of them was one of the original disciples chosen by the Messiah figure (Christ's 12 apostles or the Bab's 18 Letters of the Living). Both received their calling in a vision a few years after the death of the Messiah figure. Both of them wrote many epistles, expanding and elaborating the teachings of the founder of the faith, and calling the believers to higher moral standards. Both defended themselves in their writings as the legitimate leader of the faith (many of Baha'u'llah's writings are similar in tone to Paul's II Cor. 11). Both of them were repeatedly exiled and imprisoned, and each died in a land far to the west of the original country of the faith. In each case their teachings became the central doctrine of the faith.

Baha'u'llah and the Lord of the Second Advent

The Divine Principle thus teaches that Baha'u'llah was not the one foretold by the Bab: Him whom God will make manifest, the Lord of the Second Advent. Baha'u'llah failed his mission by claiming to be Him whom God will make manifest, although this does not mean that Baha'u'llah went against God's will deliberately, for his own personal gain. God called Baha'u'llah in 1853 to lead the followers of the Bab, and He gave Baha'u'llah great spiritual knowledge and insight. Baha'u'llah interpreted the fact that God had given him this revelation and these blessings to mean that he was the promised Messiah, and not just the leader of the Bab's followers. This interpretation, though sincere, was incorrect and against God's will. There is abundant evidence that this is true.

The Bab shows us that Baha'u'llah was not Him whom God will make manifest. The Bab wrote in the Persian Bayan: "The Germ that holds within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of all those who follow me." Baha'is interpret "those who follow me" to exclude Baha'u'llah, but at the time this was written Baha'u'llah was definitely one of the Bab's disciples. The Bab alluded many times to the fact that Baha'u'llah was to be the leader of his followers after he himself had died, but he never indicated that Baha'u'llah was to be Him whom God will make manifest.

Furthermore, the year the Bab began his ministry, 1844, is the year indicated in all the prophecies from past religious books that Baha'is feel refer to the Baha'i faith. The year Baha'u'llah began his ministry, 1863, is not mentioned in the vast majority of these prophecies. Clearly, then, the Bab's position was more important than Baha'u'llah's position.

Saint Paul gives us strong evidence that Baha'u'llah was not the Lord of the Second Advent, the One whom the Bab called "Him whom God will make manifest." Paul writes: "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ... let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God" (II Thess. 2: 1-4). No man or creed that fits this description came before Baha'u'llah, so Baha'u'llah cannot be the second coming of Christ.

Christ gives us an even clearer proof. He told the apostles: "Take heed that no one leads you astray... you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs... and many false prophets will arise and lead many astray... Then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be... Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven... and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"(Matt. 24:4-30). It is clear that the great tribulation, which is worse than anything that has happened before it or will happen after it, had not occurred before Baha'u'llah came, 100 years ago. Indeed, Baha'u'llah referred to the great tribulation as something yet to come: "O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you... The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned" (*Gleanings from the Writings Of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 209, 216). Since the great tribulation was still in the future, the second

coming of Christ was also still in the future, and could not have been Baha'u'llah.

Finally, it must be noted that after Baha'u'llah declared himself to be Him whom God will make manifest, Baha'u'llah and his followers gradually lost their spiritual vitality and their selfless devotion to God.

During the ten years between 1853, when Baha'u'llah was called by God, and 1863, when he claimed to be Him whom God will make manifest, he wrote the vast majority of his best-known books. These include *The Hidden Words* and *The Seven Valleys*. The most important of these books, however, was the *Book of Certitude*, which Shoghi Effendi said was "foremost among the priceless treasure cast forth from the billowing ocean of Baha'u'llah's revelation." In this book Baha'u'llah explained the inner meaning of many Messianic prophecies in the Bible and in the Koran. He should have continued to write books like this, preparing the whole Moslem world to receive the Messiah, the One the Bab called Him whom God will make manifest. If Baha'u'llah had done this, his writings would have continued to increase in vitality and originality. Instead, a year after he wrote the *Book of Certitude* he claimed to be the Messiah, and as a result his later writings became more and more repetitious and monotonous, full of the almost uncountable superlatives with which Baha'u'llah described himself.

Baha'u'llah's failure affected not only his writings, but the Baha'is as well. They became less devoted and sacrificial, and got involved in a series of schisms and plots which even included several murders. Many people broke away and became covenant breakers, and even Baha'u'llah's own family was divided into rival factions. Baha'u'llah was never directly involved in these schisms, and he tried to prevent them, but it was his claim to be the Messiah that was the ultimate cause of them. These schisms were a sign from God that although Baha'u'llah was still the legitimate leader of the Bab's followers, his claim to be "Him whom God will make manifest" was false.

When Baha'u'llah died, his son 'Abdu'l-Baha was able to stop some of this erosion of Baha'i unity and vitality, by taking the position of a servant to God and to the other Baha'is, showing the humbleness that his father had lacked. However he did not undo his father's mistake by teaching that "Him whom God will make manifest" had not yet come, and by preparing the Bah a' is and other people to accept him when he came, so the unity and spirit of selfless service of the Baha'is continued to erode after his death. His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, worked in vain to stop it. A hundred years ago 20,000 followers of the Bah gave their lives for their faith. Now more and more Baha'is are unwilling to even spend a few hours to attend the meeting (the "feast") that the Baha'is hold every 19 days. There has also been a tremendous increase in the number of "inactive" or "undeepened" Baha'is.

Shoghi Effendi wrote that "Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship, the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the law of God... Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered... the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn." But Shoghi Effendi died without having any children and therefore there has been no Guardian of the Baha'i faith for over 16 years. The implications of this are very clear. Surely the Baha'i faith would not be thus "mutilated and permanently deprived" if Baha'u'llah was really the Lord of the Second Advent.

Conclusion

If Baha'u'llah had not claimed to be "Him whom God will make manifest," the Bah a' is had not claimed to be "Him whom God will make manifest," the Baha'is, representing a sizable percentage of the Moslem people, would be able to easily unite with the Messiah, the Lord of the Second Advent, when he comes. This would- make it possible for the Lord of the Second Ad- vent to easily resolve the ancient conflict between Ishmael and Isaac, through their descendants, the Arabs and Jews. The failure of Baha'u'llah has made the resolution of this conflict much more difficult, and it has also made it much more difficult for the Moslems to recognize the Lord when he comes.

It is abundantly clear that we are now living in the "last days." The signs that were not fulfilled in Baha'u'llah's time are being realized now. The "Son of Perdition" that Paul predicted, who opposes God and claims to be God, is clearly the atheistic Communist system. "He" is especially personified in Joseph Stalin," the Red master whose purges cost the lives of 30 million Russians, most of them Christians. Furthermore, the world has already gone through the "wars and rumors of wars" foretold by Christ. This continual series of small local wars ended in 1914, with the advent of a new kind of war. Since then there have been two devastating, world-wide wars, each of them worse than any previous tribulation. The world is now in the midst of an ideological war which potentially may become a devastating third world war between America and the USSR. We are in the "great tribulation" now! The Messiah, "Him whom God will make manifest," the Lord of the Second Advent, must announce himself within the next few years. It is critically important that the Baha'is, as well as everyone else, keep their spiritual eyes and ears open and investigate all spiritual teachings with the attitude of sincerely searching for truth, so that they will accept the true Messiah when he comes.