Answering E-mail

Some examples of Probe's e-mail correspondence, covering questions about on which day Jesus died, the Nephilim, and is Jesus God's final messenger. It concludes with some flames from non-fans of our articles.

Three Days in the Tomb

One aspect of our ministry at Probe is answering questions sent via e-mail. In this article I'm going to address a few questions people have asked.

The first question I'll address has to do with the day of Jesus' death. Someone wrote and asked, "Was Jesus crucified on Thursday or Friday? How do we account for the three days [in the tomb]?"

It will be quite impossible to deal adequately with this question in such limited space. But let's see what we can do.{1}

The Friday view of the crucifixion has been held the longest in the church. John 19:31 says that Jesus' body was taken down from the cross on "the day of preparation" to avoid having it there on the Sabbath. If this refers to the weekly Sabbath, then the day of preparation—and hence, that of Jesus' death—was on Friday. Luke 23:54-56 says the women witnessed his burial on the day of preparation, and then went home and rested on the Sabbath. On the first day of the week, Sunday, they found the tomb empty (Luke 24:1ff).

Jesus' reference to Jonah poses the greatest problem for this understanding. In Matthew 12:40 we read, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Because of this verse, some have held a second view of the crucifixion, that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. He

then arose on Saturday afternoon, and first appeared to his disciples on Sunday.{2} This allows a full three days and nights in the tomb. But Sunday has from the beginning been regarded as the day Jesus rose from the dead, and this would be the fourth day from Wednesday rather than the third. In addition, it's been established that the Jews counted any part of a day as a whole day, so a full seventy-two hours in the tomb isn't required (cf. Gen. 42:17,18; I Kings 20:29, II Chron. 10:5,12; Esther 4:16, 5:1). "After three days" and "on the third day" are equivalent as Matthew 27:63-64 shows clearly.{3}

A third view is that Jesus died on Thursday and rose on Sunday, which allows for three nights and part of three days in the tomb. Thus, the Last Supper was on Wednesday evening, and Jesus – the Passover Lamb—was crucified on Thursday. Friday was the first day of Unleavened Bread, a day of no work, and so is thought to be "the Sabbath of the Passover."{4} So Jesus was buried on Thursday to avoid profaning this "Sabbath."

In response, New Testament scholar Harold Hoehner notes that there is no precedent for thinking of Friday as a special Sabbath. "The day of preparation for the Passover" in John 19:31 needn't refer to the day before Passover; it could refer to Passover itself.{5} John 19:31,42, which speaks of the day of preparation and the Sabbath, seems naturally to refer to Friday and Saturday.{6} In this writer's view, then, the Friday view still seems to be the correct one.

The Nephilim

Who were the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6? That is a question raised fairly often. The Nephilim are mentioned in Genesis 6 and again in Numbers 13. The passage in Genesis 6 is especially intriguing because of its account of the "sons of God" going in to the "daughters of men." Someone wrote to ask whether the Nephilim "were simply human or the off-spring of

angels (demons) mating with human women."

Let's begin with the passage itself. Genesis 6: 1-4 reads:

> When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

In considering the identity of the Nephilim, one must also answer two other questions: the identity of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men," and the significance of the passage relative to that which precedes it and that which follows (its context). "In most cases," says John Sailhamer, "the interpretations [of this passage] have arisen out of the viewpoint that these verses introduce the story of the Flood."{7} Some commentators, however, think otherwise.

First, who are these "sons" and "daughters"? One view holds that the "sons" were kings and the "daughters" were lower class women who made up the harems of such kings.{8} The "sons" were guilty of polygamy in taking more than one wife from among the "daughters of men." This was at least part of the reason God brought judgment. This view has real possibilities, for it provides a bridge between the genealogies of Cain and Seth in chapters 4 and 5, and it serves as an explanation of the judgment to follow. A weakness of this view is that "while both within the OT and in other Near Eastern texts individual kings were called God's son, there is no evidence that groups of kings were so styled."{9}

Another view is that these "sons of God" were angels or demons who united with human women, and so corrupted the race that

God had to bring judgment. It seems highly unlikely that this is the correct interpretation. First, Jesus said that angels don't marry, and in Genesis 6:2 the word for "married" means just that, and not fornication. If good angels don't marry, why would God grant sexual powers to demons? Second, if demons were taking advantage of human women, why was mankind judged? The Interpreter's Bible Commentary offers this view, but relegates the story to myth. If we aren't prepared to think of Genesis as being mythological, we need to look for another option.

A third view is that the "sons of God" were descendents of godly Seth, while the "daughters of men" were descendents of ungodly Cain. Although "sons of God" is used in the Old Testament to refer to angels (see Job 1:6, 2:1 in the NASB), godly men are also called "sons" as in Psalm 73:15 and Hosea 1:10.

This view provides a bridge between chapters 4-5 and chapter 6. Chapter 4 lists some offspring of Cain, chapter 5 those of Seth, and chapter 6 brings them together. According to this view, says commentator Victor Hamilton, "The sin is a forbidden union, a yoking of what God intended to keep apart, the intermarriage of believer with unbeliever."{10}

Jesus said in Matt. 24:38, "For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark." Seth's godly descendents had shifted their focus from God to the things of the flesh and were simply carrying on with their lives, but not in accordance with God's will. That the primary focus of God's wrath is against the union, rather than the offspring of it, is the fact that God's displeasure is announced after mentioning the marriage unions but before mentioning the offspring.

So, then, who were the Nephilim? The Holman Bible Dictionary says the word "probably derived from the root 'to fall' and

meaning either ‘the fallen ones’ or else ‘ones who fall [violently] upon others.'”{11} Hamilton translates it “those who were made to fall, those who were cast down.” If this is correct, then the Nephilim are certainly not to be identified with the “heroes of old, men of renown” in verse 4.{12} Old Testament commentators Keil and Delitzsch believe Martin Luther had it correct when he said these men were tyrants. “They were called Nephilim,” they say, “because they fell upon the people and oppressed them.”{13}

Were they the offspring of the “sons of God” and “daughters of men”? Apparently not, for the verse says they “were on the earth in those days—and also afterward”; in other words, they were contemporaries of the “sons” and “daughters.”

It’s hard to be dogmatic about the interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4. But my vote goes with this last view.

Is Jesus the Final Messenger from God?

The next question has to do with Jesus as the final “messenger” from God. A letter e-mailed to us reads in part: I assume you believe the Old Testament to be part of the inspired word of God, and therefore believe Moses, and Abraham before him, were part of this “progress of revelation.” Were there others, perhaps Krishna, Zoroaster, or Buddha, who spread God’s instructions to others at different places and times?

The writer continues:

> Is it possible that God has sent other messengers since Jesus, to accommodate His instructions, perhaps Muhammad (as Muslims believe) or Baha’ullah (as Baha’is believe)? If you do not believe these two men were messengers from God, do you believe we are due for another messenger, so God can accommodate his instructions to the moral and spiritual standards of the people of our time? In general, how can we

determine which messengers are part of God's progressive revelation and which are not?

According to Scripture, Jesus was the full revelation of God to us (Heb. 1:1-2). Not only did he teach us about God, but also His work of securing our redemption was the culmination of God's plan. He was the focus of God's message. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament point to Him. As two sorrowful disciples of Jesus made their way home after His death, He appeared to them, and "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). The New Testament clearly is focused on Jesus as well. If Jesus was the focus of God's message, anyone who legitimately spoke for God after Jesus was simply clarifying and expanding on His message.

In another e-mail, the same writer said: "I am struck by the great similarities of the world's religions. It seems to me that certain central themes run through them all . . . for example, Love for God and your fellow man." In response, I quoted Steve Turner's tongue-in-cheek declaration of religious pluralists: "We believe that all religions are basically the same . . . They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation."{14}

Those are some major differences, aren't they? So all religions believe in God. Which God? There are polytheists, Trinitarian theists, oneness theists, pantheists, panentheists, . . . Which view of God is true? What about salvation? Are we to become one with the cosmos, or find forgiveness through faith in Jesus alone? Are we to discover our own essential divinity, or recognize that we are finite, contingent beings who were made to serve the one true God who is "Wholly Other"? According to Jesus, there is only one God and only one way to Him.

It's clear, then, that no other "messenger" such as Krishna or

Buddha, who doesn't preach Jesus and salvation through him alone, could be from God.

Flames

Along with e-mails asking questions and occasionally giving us pats on the back, there are those that take issue with something we've said.

One general kind of criticism is that we don't know what we're talking about. Here's an excerpt from an e-mail to Dr. Ray Bohlin:

> I was highly disturbed by the content of this page. Your delusions and misinterpretation of facts is highly disconcerting. . . . This page is ripe with Christian propaganda and follows a thoroughly unscholarly approach in developing its argument. I only hope that millions of innocent people are not blinded by your lies, and that scientific research will continue to restore the truth that has been so corrupted by the archaic concept that is Christianity.

Wow! That's rather harsh. But notice that there are no specific issues mentioned. Here is Ray's response in part:

> I . . . noticed that your message was loaded with accusations but no substance or specifics. If you really think we are so full of errors and lies, a few examples might allow us the opportunity to correct them.

The critic wrote back to say he would substantiate his accusations but never did.

Others of us have been accused of not knowing what we're talking about. One writer thought Pat Zukeran's assessment of Buddhism reflected a lack of direct experience with Buddhists. Pat replied,

> I come from an island that is 80% Buddhist. My entire family clan has held to Buddhist teachings for hundreds of years. My parents and cousins remain in the Buddhist faith. I grew up under the teachings of the Buddhist temples near my house. I have been a member of the Young Buddhist Association. Therefore, I have many Buddhist friends including my own family members.

That should be enough experience, shouldn't it?

Occasionally we receive e-mails that almost fry our monitors—"flaming," I think it's called. Don Closson received this one:

> I read your article about Bishop Spong, and while I don't always agree with him, I'm not an idiot like you who doesn't understand one word of the bishop's writings. You should try living in the 21st century sometime. What an idiot.

This isn't going to look good on Don's resume.

If things aren't looking good for Don, though, what about poor Ray? One writer said, "Hey I read your commentary on apes, 'hominids', and humans and thought it [stinks]." Well, he didn't say "stinks," but I think it would be improper to use his actual word. "Surely you can find something better to do than knock God's evolutionary plan back into the dark ages," he continues. "LOL. Crack me up. . . what a buffoon! You crack me up!"

But wait! It gets worse. Here's an e-mail that begins, "You are a sad man." Another says plainly, "You're sick." One says, "I think that you are a moron." Whoa! What kind of crew do we have here at Probe, anyway?

One final e-mail ought to be noted. Someone was upset about one of our articles on evolution and creation, and concluded his message with this:

> All your pseudo-religion promotes is hate and intolerance, preaching your holyier [sic] than thou attitude. So with great contempt I say, if your god is real, may you burn in hell, you evil Christian dinosaur.
> Let's see. We preach "hate and intolerance," and the writer consigns us to a long stay in hell?

At Probe we take input seriously . . . when it's presented in a reasonable manner. Maybe a variation of the Golden Rule should be a guide: "Speak unto others as you would have them speak unto you." Do you have a complaint? State it clearly, give specific examples, and keep the tone as amiable as possible. And one of our sick, holier than thou, unscholarly, idiotic buffoons will answer . . . once we figure out what we're talking about.

Notes

1. I have drawn extensively from chapter four of Harold Hoehner's *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 65-74, for this discussion.
2. W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London, 1948), 569-577; cited in Hoehner, Chronological Aspects, 66-67.
3. Also, there are more occasions in the Gospels where Jesus is said to rise on the third day than after the third day (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; I Cor. 15:4).
4. Hoehner, 68.
5. New Testament scholar Leon Morris notes that there is no evidence that the phrase indicates the day before the Passover; all clear references to the "day of preparation" refer to Friday. See Hoehner, 70.
6. Hoehner, 71.
7. John Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 75.
8. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 263.
9. Hamilton, 264.

10. Ibid.
11. *Holman Bible Dictionary*, "Nephilim."
12. Hamilton, 270.
13. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsche, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1: The Pentateuch. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 137.
14. Steve Turner, *Nice and Nasty* (Marshall and Scott, 1980).

©2001 Probe Ministries

See also the entire *Probe Answers Our E-Mail* section of our website

---

The Religion of Baha'i – What Does a Baha'i Believe

Lou Whitworth looks at the principles and claim of the Baha'i faith from a biblical perspective. Then, he compares the beliefs of Baha'i with the teaching of Christianity so we can understand the significant differences between the two. He shows that Baha'i really offers nothing to our lives while Christianity offers an eternal relationship with our Creator God.

The Origin of Baha'i

The roots of the Baha'i faith go back to a nineteenth-century religion called "Babism." Babism, which broke off from the

Shiite form of Islam, was founded in 1844 in Persia (now known as Iran). The founder, a young businessman who assumed the title “Bab” (which means “the Gate” or door to spiritual truth), began to proclaim a new religious system that took a marked departure from his Islamic roots. For example, he stated that the religious prophets were divine “manifestations” of God himself. He then proclaimed himself a prophet or manifestation of God greater than Muhammad, and claimed that he was sent by God “to replace Muhammad’s religion and laws with his own.”(1) He also saw himself as a “forerunner” to an even greater manifestation destined to emerge later. This person would be “the World Teacher who would appear to unite mankind and usher in a new era of peace.”(2)

The Bab’s message fell on responsive ears, and soon he developed a strong following. In fact, the growth of this movement, called the Babis, so alarmed orthodox Muslim leaders that the Bab was arrested. The bulk of his ministry occurred during this six-year prison sentence. The years between 1848 and 1850 were marked by bloody clashes between the Babis and the Persian government. In 1850 the government, in an attempt to eradicate the movement, executed the Bab by firing squad and launched a widespread persecution of his followers. The persecution reached its height in 1852 when the government massacred approximately 20,000 Babis. In spite of this horrible persecution, Babism continued to spread.

Before his death, the Bab had chosen a young disciple to be his successor. The young man, Subh-I-Ezel, was not cut out for leadership and many of his responsibilities were performed by his older half-brother, Mirza Husayn Ali.(3) In 1863, the older half- brother, also a disciple of the Bab, declared himself the World Teacher. In other words, he claimed to be the fulfillment of the Bab’s prediction of a coming World Teacher who would unite the world and bring peace. He then assumed the name “Baha’u’llah” which means “the glory of God.”

Most of the Babis accepted Baha'u'llah as the World Teacher (and became "Baha'is"). Some, however, remained loyal to the younger brother. Violent skirmishes occurred between the two factions, and the two leaders accused each other of attempted poisoning.(4) The government sent Subh-I-Ezel, the younger brother, to prison in Cyprus, and the older to prison at Akka (now in Israel).(5) The younger man's following withered away, but Baha'u'llah's following grew in numbers and intensity. This is largely because his disciples, the Baha'is, recorded everything he said over one hundred books and tablets in all, and thus were able to keep spreading the word.(6)

Baha'u'llah spent many years in prison and/or exile, but because of all the recorded teachings his movement continued to grow. He lived to the ripe old age of 75 and died in 1892. His oldest son Abdu'l- Baha was given sole authority to interpret his teachings. He was considered to be infallible in his interpretation of Baha'u'llah's works, and he proved quite successful in spreading the faith outside of the Muslim world.(7)

Major Beliefs in Baha'i

Progressive Revelation Baha'i theology holds to the idea of progressive revelation. In their system there are different manifestations of God during different periods of time. For example, in the Baha'i religion, Abraham was a manifestation of God, but he was followed by Krishna, who was followed by Moses, then by Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, the Bab, and finally by Baha'u'llah. Each manifestation allegedly builds on the previous ones and brings new information and insight to man. Thus God's message to man is progressively revealed and enhanced over time through different prophets. Though each manifestation is considered legitimate and appropriate for its time, in some sense the latter always overrules the former. Baha'is teach that Baha'u'llah is the manifestation to humanity for this time. In accordance with

this principle, one of the leading Baha'i teachers said that, "The fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Baha'i belief [is] the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final."(8)

Oneness and Unity The Baha'i faith teaches the oneness of God, the oneness of all religions, and the oneness of mankind. The emphasis on oneness is not window dressing; it is a core concept of the system. Unity is sought, taught, and preached today and is the goal for tomorrow. The mission of Baha'i life is to bring to fruition the unity of all mankind in a divine civilization based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Laws and Obligations Every Baha'i should observe the following laws or obligations:

1. Pray every day.
2. Observe the Baha'i Fast from sunrise to sunset each day from March 2 through 21.
3. Consider work as worship.
4. Teach the Cause of God.
5. Avoid alcoholic drinks and drugs.
6. Observe Baha'i marriage.
7. Obey the government and not participate in politics.
8. Avoid backbiting and gossip.
9. Observe Baha'i Holy Days.
10. Contribute to the Baha'i Fund.(9)

The Twelve Principles Baha'i philosophy can be summed up in this statement: "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens." Behind this maxim are the twelve principles of Baha'i thought:(10)

1. Oneness of God.
2. Oneness of Religion.
3. Oneness of Mankind.
4. Elimination of prejudice of all kinds.
5. Individual search after truth.
6. Universal auxiliary language.
7. Equality of men and women.
8. Universal education.
9. Harmony of science and religion.
10. Elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty.
11. World government.
12. Protection of cultural diversity.(11)

Extravagant Claims Baha'u'llah made some claims about himself that are breathtaking in their boldness. "He claimed to be the fulfillment not only of all Christian prophecies, but of many Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Muslim prophecies as well. In glory, stature and importance, Baha'u'llah eclipsed Jesus and all other Manifestations. He denied being Almighty God Himself, but taught that he, like all other manifestations, was the only source of divine guidance in his cycle."(12)

Dawning of Peace Baha'is believe that "Mankind is currently headed toward a socio- economic cataclysm. Out of this tragedy a golden age' will dawn, and Baha'is will be the only ones prepared to rule in this *new world order*. [Emphasis added.] War shall cease,' said Baha'u'llah,and all men shall live as brothers.'"(13)

Contrasts Between Baha'i and Christianity

God and the Trinity In response to the Christian doctrine of one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Baha'i faith answers a resounding negative. The Baha'i's emphasis on unity (oneness of mankind, oneness of religion,

etc.) is true here too. The concept of the Trinity is inconsistent and repugnant to their theology. They attribute the Christian belief in this doctrine to misinterpretation of the Bible. They view God as one person in much the same way as Judaism and Islam.

Jesus Christ To followers of Baha'i, Jesus is one of the great prophets. His manifestation of God superseded the manifestation of Buddha which had superseded the manifestations of Zoroaster, Moses, Krishna, and Abraham, respectively. But then Jesus and His message was superseded; first by Muhammad, then by The Bab, and finally by Baha'u'llah. The idea of Jesus as the unique Son of God, both God and man, is rejected in Baha'i. To them, Jesus is just one of nine manifestations, each of which came to bring more spiritual light to the world. What each one taught was true for his time until he was superseded by a greater manifestation.

The Holy Spirit For Christians the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune Godhead, the revealer of truth, who inspired the Scriptures, and empowers believers for Christian service and evangelism. He is also involved in the work of convicting, regenerating, indwelling, baptizing, and sealing believers. Baha'is believe that Christ's promise of another Comforter refers not to the coming of the Holy Spirit, but to the coming of Baha'u'llah (John 14:16).

The Resurrection of Christ In Christianity the central fact is the Resurrection of Christ. Baha'is, however, do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ, though they do believe in a future resurrection of all human beings. They do believe that Jesus conquered death spiritually.

Atonement for Sin The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty for sin for all who will believe on (or place their trust in) Christ. Christ bore on His body the penalty of our sin. Forgiveness is a free gift to those

who believe; good works are an evidence of the inner faith. In Baha'i, on the other hand, one arrives at what we would call "salvation" by practicing the "principles laid down by Baha'u'llah and by making every effort through prayer and personal sacrifice to live in accord with the character of the divine being."(14) Even then Baha'is must hope for God's mercy without which "no one would escape the divine judgment."(15)

Heaven and Hell The Bible teaches that there will be a final judgment, that heaven will be the future reward of those who have trusted Christ, and that hell will the future home of those who have rejected Christ. Baha'i teaches that there will be a resurrection and a time of divine judgment. There is also an abode of the righteous, the paradise of God, but there is no concept of eternal flames or hell as taught in the Bible. Those who do not attain to the paradise apparently have the opportunity to progress spiritually until they are worthy of acceptance.

Baha'i's Organization and Goals

The Organizational Structure of Baha'i

Local Worship Centers In cities large enough to have at least nine adult members of the Baha'i faith, a "Spiritual Assembly" can be formed to hold official meetings and worship services. Worship services (usually held in homes) normally consist of singing and reading from the works of Baha'u'llah or Abdul Baha. In many countries the Baha'is build a National House of Worship. America has one in Wilmette, Illinois.

The Baha'i World Headquarters is located in Haifa, Israel, on the side of Mt. Carmel. A major building and landscaping program has resulted in a beautiful headquarters for the organization. It serves as a working headquarters as well as a tourist attraction and a very brilliant public relations center in which to expose the religion in a beautiful setting and win friends for the faith. One of those beautiful

buildings is the Universal House of Justice, from which the whole ministry is run by an elected nine-person committee elected to five-year terms. Notable among the other buildings are the International Archives and the International Baha'i Library. All this construction on Mt. Carmel seems less strange when you remember that Baha'is believe that this site is to be the center of a coming one-world government and that one day presidents and kings from around the world will come to this site in search of world peace. Also these structures are effective in attracting new members.

The Goals of the Baha'i Religion

World Unity Some who have studied Baha'i closely are concerned by its organizational structure and its goals of world unity. For example, how is this unity to be achieved? Also, what would happen to those who refused to conform? Some of the statements from its leaders about expecting people to give up personal and national rights are unsettling, to put it mildly. A modern religious movement with global aspirations, but very small in size is not intimidating to anyone. But, let that organization grow and set in place various institutions with power to police and enforce its vision, and the picture changes dramatically. At that point, the possibility for abuse of dissidents is dramatically increased. For this reason, Baha'i bears close watching. Some have commented that the goals of political and religious unity and of universal submission to the Baha'i leadership sound similar to the oppressive false world church system that will exist in the Last Days. (For more information, see the Book of Revelation.)

One World "When Baha'is talk about the unity of mankind, or about one world, the Kingdom of God, they do not mean a mere mood or ethos of togetherness. They mean an international political empire of which the Baha'i Faith would be the state religion."(16) In fact, Baha'is intend to institute "a Baha'i world Super-State, a commonwealth in which all the peoples of the world would be subject to a single global authority. All

nations would waive their national sovereignty and cede key rights to the Baha'i world Super-state."(17)

After the historian Arnold Toynbee examined the Baha'i faith, he came to believe that it could be the future world religion. Others have expressed similar thoughts. Though Baha'i seems small and innocuous at present, if it grows in size and influence to the point that it could succeed in its aims of unifying the world under its own terms, it could be a sinister force.

Weaknesses in the Religion of Baha'i

An Impersonal and Unknowable God In Baha'i, God is impersonal and unknowable. In Christianity, God is the believer's Father. Jesus spoke of God using a familiar, intimate term, "Abba," which means, "Daddy." The Muslim and the Baha'i know nothing of this intimacy.

No Assurance of Salvation In Baha'i, it is impossible to know whether or not you are spared from judgment and will go to the Paradise of God. Christians can know that we are forgiven and going to heaven (1 John 5:11 13). This knowledge is based not on our merit but on the mercy of God to all who will trust Christ as their sin-bearer. Apart from biblical Christianity which focuses on Christ's death, burial, and resurrection in payment for our sins, no religion, no philosophy, no program on earth has really dealt with man's sin problem. To the Baha'i, the Christian believer's claim of assurance of salvation is presumptuous. But this is a typical reaction of all non-Christian religions and cults because they all teach a program of works with no assurance of salvation.

Is the Baha'i God fickle and changeable?—Why are many "manifestations of God" necessary? According to the Bible, God never changes (He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Heb. 13:8), and human nature doesn't change or evolve. The Baha'i faith, however, holds that the manifestations were

given because of different needs in different times of human history. It also teaches that after enough time has passed mankind has learned sufficiently from one cycle and needs to grow and be stretched by a new "manifestation of God."

Was Baha'u'llah an opportunist or a manifestation of God? How is it believable that the manifestation of Baha'u'llah followed that of the Bab by less than twenty years? Could mankind have grown, progressed, and mastered his teachings so rapidly? Hardly. For one thing, few outside of Middle East had even heard of the Bab and his new religion. Furthermore, the Bab himself had predicted that the next manifestations after him would be many years (1,511 and 2,001 years) in the future.(18) Note that he mentioned two manifestations. No wonder many of the Babis were surprised and rejected Baha'u'llah's claim.

There are many facts that we could cover, but this information in this essay is sufficient to show the open-minded person that the religion of Baha'i has some real credibility problems. There are, however, many noble-minded, sweet people in this cult who deserve to hear the truth in love and gentleness so they can be free from the grip of this false religion.

In a chapter on Baha'i from his book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Walter Martin summarized in sad and melancholy fashion the emptiness of the Baha'i faith:

> *There was no virgin born Son, there was only a Persian student; there was no miraculous ministry, there was only the loneliness of exile; there was no power over demons, there were only demons of Islam; there was no redeeming Saviour, there was only a dying old man; there was no risen Saviour, there was only Abdul Baha; there was no Holy Spirit, there was only the memory of the prophet; there was no ascended High Priest, there was only the works of the flesh; and there was no coming King, there was only the promise of a new*

era.(19)

Notes

1. John Boykin, “The Baha’i Faith,” in Ronald Enroth, et al., *A Guide to Cults and New Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill.:InterVarsity, 1983), 26.

2. Edmond C. Gruss, “Baha’i,” *Cults and the Occult* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 1974, 3d ed., rev. and enl., 1994), 146-47.

3. Boykin, 26.

4. Ibid., 27.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Boykin, 28.

9. Official Baha’i booklet, “The Baha’i Faith” (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1981).

10. Larson, 147.

11. “The Baha’i Faith.”

12. Boykin, 29.

13. Larson, 147, emphasis mine.

14. Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany Fellowship, 1965), 256.

15. John Boykin, 30.

16. Ibid., 30 31.

17. Ibid., 31.

18. William Miller, citied in Gruss, 148.

19. Martin, 257.

©1997 Probe Ministries.