

# The Baha'i Faith—Part Eight

By Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. John Weldon

## THEOLOGY—Part 4

### *Jesus Christ*

“The Christology of the Church and the teachings of Baha'u'llah about Christ's mission are on essential questions irreconcilable.”<sup>1</sup>—Huschmand Sabet, *The Heavens Are Cleft Asunder*

In our study of some 40 Baha'i books and periodicals, we discovered a significant number of denials of the Gospel teachings and the person and work of Jesus Christ. Yet Udo Schaefer claims, “One thing, however, must be stressed. The attitude of the Baha'i towards Christianity is clear: he acknowledges its divine origin and believes in the Word of God as testified by the Gospels.”<sup>2</sup> It is odd, then, that the Baha'i believer entirely leaves out the Gospels in his “independent investigation of truth.” For if the Gospels are uncorrupted, and this is historic fact, then Jesus taught that He and His words were *eternally* authoritative and that He alone, the Person of Jesus, was the only way to God (Matthew 24:35; John 14:6). “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26).

It is a sign of the times—and quite disquieting, if not surprising—to see how people can sincerely claim to be true followers of Christ and yet accept such comprehensive denials of the person and work of Christ as found in Baha'i. Baha'i theology denies the Incarnation, the virgin birth, the unique deity, the saving death, the miracles, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this comprehensive denial of Jesus Christ, we are told that “a person cannot be a Baha'i unless he believes in Jesus Christ”! Obviously, then, Baha'is believe in “another Jesus” (2 Corinthians 11:4 NAS), and not the biblical Jesus.

The Baha'i view of Christ is radically different from the biblical view. Jesus is called “the Spirit of God” and is equated with the Holy Spirit; that is, the Spirit of the Baha'i God, who allegedly inspired the biblical prophets.<sup>4</sup> Baha'u'llah is a far superior revelation of God than that found in Jesus. Baha'u'llah declared: “O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. . . . Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self.”<sup>5</sup>

Baha'u'llah was “a fuller and more glorious Revelation” of God than Jesus Christ despite Scripture telling us that Jesus Christ is the radiance of His [God's] glory [cf. Colossians 1:15, 2:2-3] and the exact representation [Gk. *charakter*] of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3). Anyone who reads the Gospels will see at once that a fuller revelation of God than in Jesus is not possible.

In keeping with their exalted view of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah himself, and modern Baha'is apply biblical texts that refer to the second coming of Christ to the coming

of Baha'u'llah (for example, Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1-2; 40:1-5). In *Thief in the Night*, William Sears spends almost 300 pages attempting to prove that Old Testament prophecies refer to Baha'u'llah and not to Christ. Sears attempts to make Baha'u'llah more or less *literally* fulfill biblical prophecy but then he declares in midstream that Christians misunderstand the Bible today because they take it literally and not symbolically!<sup>6</sup>

For example, Isaiah 53 is applied to the Persian Baha'u'llah<sup>7</sup> despite the fact that the prophecy refers to the Hebrew Messiah (and also to the Jewish nation's rejection of the Messiah). How can Isaiah 40-55 possibly predict Baha'u'llah when so much of it (for example, chapter 53) was already fulfilled at the time of Christ, 1900 years before Baha'u'llah even existed? And why does Sears leave out Isaiah 53:6 and 12, which refer to the Messiah dying for our sins? Did Baha'u'llah claim to do this, or are those verses omitted because Jesus did?<sup>8</sup>

Because Baha'is seek to deal with biblical data concerning the Messiah, they should abide by the biblical data in its entirety. What does the Bible say about the Messiah? The Messiah was Jewish, and of course will be Jewish when He returns in His second Advent (see Isaiah 11:1-2 NAS, out of "the stem of Jesse," King David's father). Baha'u'llah was not Jewish, a descendent of King David, but Iranian. Very specific and dramatic signs are to accompany the Messiah's return (see, for example, Matthew 24), *none* of which were present for Baha'u'llah's arrival. The Messiah would not have human birth at His return (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10), but Baha'u'llah did. The Messiah would return directly from heaven to Jerusalem (Acts 1; Zechariah 14), but Baha'u'llah did not. The Messiah would set up an immediate worldwide Kingdom (Zechariah 14), which Baha'u'llah apparently forgot.

It may not be appreciated by Christians enamored with Baha'i just how thoroughly Baha'u'llah erases Jesus Christ. The Jesus Christ of the Gospels is simply no longer relevant. Thus "when Baha'u'llah instituted the great Feast of Ridvan" on April 21, 1863, as a declaration of his own "power and sovereignty," he called it "the Day of God." Townshend comments, "Now it was that Jesus Christ [Baha'u'llah] ascended His throne in the power of God the Father. Now it was that He took upon Himself the scepter of the fullness of God's might and thus set Himself as Supreme Overlord of all that is in heaven and on earth."<sup>9</sup>

Baha'u'llah had no misgivings at all with usurping Christ's glory for himself. He tells us, "I am the One Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled.... Jesus, the spirit of God... hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you."<sup>10</sup> According to Dr. William Miller's research, even 'Abdu'l-Baha (at least for a time) claimed to be Christ, in spite of the fact that he was "a successor to Baha'u'llah only as head of the community of believers, not as a Manifestation of God."<sup>11</sup> However, he eventually repudiated the claims, as they apparently caused him some embarrassment: "I am Abdul' Baha and no more"; "I am not Christ, I am not Eternal God."<sup>12</sup>

(to be continued)

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Hushmand Sabat, *The Heavens Are Cleft Asunder* (Oxford, England: George Ronald Publishing, 1975), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Udo Schaefer, *The Light Shined in Darkness* (Oxford, England: George Ronald, 1975), pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> See John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999), p. 22 for examples.

<sup>4</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust,

1976), p. 57; 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Baha'i World Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> William Sears, *Thief in the Night* (Oxford, England: George Ronald, 1975), pp. 203-208.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-159.

<sup>8</sup> Sears also confuses the Holy Spirit with Christ (p. 172), and Christ with Satan (p. 174). He engages in selective use of date (pp. 150, 118), and he denies clear biblical teachings (on p. 122 he claims the Messiah would come from Assyria). The book has many such errors.

<sup>9</sup> George Townshend, *Christ and Baha'u'llah* (Oxford, England: George Ronald, 1977), p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> *World Order*, Winter, 1966, p. 27

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Fall, 1978, p. 17; William McLwee Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1974), pp. 224-227.

<sup>12</sup> Miller, *The Baha'i Faith*, p. 225.