

# The Light of Unity



A NEWSLETTER ABOUT THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

Vol. 1 Issue 3

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth." — Bahá'u'lláh

## The Golden Rule: Found In All The World's Religions

The Golden Rule, the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, is a principle repeated in all the great religions.

In the Bahá'í Writings, it is taught that the true believer "should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself." Thus, the Golden Rule sums up the moral attitude of the major religions of the world, regardless of the time and place of their revelation.

The Golden Rule is also an evidence of the basic unity of the religions, a concept that is being increasingly recognized. How often are the differences dividing various faiths emphasized, yet their common feature is one that can provide the key for bringing them together.

**Does God Love All of His Children?**

### Different Religions, Only One God

Many who believe in God are puzzled, or even turned off to religion, by the attitude of exclusivity practiced by the followers of some faiths. If there is only one God, then how can the followers of only a certain faith be "saved" or go to heaven while everyone else is condemned?

If God has, in fact, created humanity, would not God love all of His children? Would God not provide for all?

The Bahá'í teachings provide answers to these very important questions. Bahá'u'lláh addresses these issues through his explanations on the relationship between the religions.

(see **Different Religions, Only One God**, Page 2)

As the Golden Rule is more deeply understood and practiced among friends and strangers it will serve to create the environment in which peace among different faiths can become possible.

### THE GOLDEN RULE

**Abraham** - ~ 2000 B.C.

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee." — *Old Testament, Genesis 13:8*

**Moses** - ~ 1250 B.C.

"What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man." — *Talmud: Shabbat 31a*

**Zoroaster** - 1000 B.C.

"That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto others whatsoever is not good itself." — *Dadistan-I-Dinik 94:5*

**Krishna** - ~ 800 B.C.

"Let no man do to another what would be repugnant to himself." — *Mahabharata 5:5-7*

**Buddha** - 563 B.C.

"Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." — *Udanavarga 5:18*

**Jesus Christ** - ~ 30 A.D.

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." — *New Testament, Luke 6:31*

**Muhammad** - 621 A.D.

"No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." — *Sunnah, Hadith*

**The Báb** - 1850 A.D.

"Become a source of comfort to one another." — *Selection from the Writings of the Bab, p. 129*

**Bahá'u'lláh** - 1863 A.D.

"Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself." — *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 71*

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## Making a Difference For Religious Unity

Nancy Songer, a Bahá'í from South Carolina, has been promoting her Faith's principle of the unity of religions through her participation for nearly a decade in a statewide interfaith council.

The council, Partners in Dialogue, was initiated by a religious studies professor in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions. Its members include Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Unitarians, and Bahá'ís. The first conference was such a success with nearly 600 people in attendance that the council decided to continue the program in the form of a dialogue.



Scenes from the just released new video, *We Are One*, featuring Dan Seals (top), and a variety of Bahá'ís around the Nation in a display of unity in Faith. Contact your local Bahá'ís to see this new release, or download the video from [www.us.bahai.org](http://www.us.bahai.org)

The group meets once a month for a potluck dinner and the participants discuss topics such as science and religion, life after death, or the role of women in religion. Nancy says that not only do the group members learn more about each other's religions, they also gain something much deeper: true friendships. "The dialogue is a way to dispel religious misunderstandings. We get to know each other as human beings. Doing that over a period of time builds trust," she said.

The dialogues are not always easy, as tensions and suspicions are oftentimes historically present among members of different religions. The group makes it a point to help its members overcome some of these feelings, so even if there is religious strife amongst members, the relationships between individuals are not strained.

Nancy recalled an incident between members of two religions in conflict. In one of their first encounters, there was much tension and animosity between the two. Two years later, the situation had completely reversed and they treated each other with the utmost respect and kindness.

Nancy says, "The council had created an atmosphere in which they could finally hear each other." Through her involvement and services to this interfaith council, Nancy is putting into practice her Bahá'í belief in the unity of religion and is making a difference.

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### Different Religions, Only One God, (con't from Page 1)

Bahá'u'lláh taught that there is only one God, who loves and provides for all people. God's mercy rains upon all. The way that God has extended love and knowledge to humanity is through the succession of the great religions of the world. These religions, according to the Bahá'í perspective, are not antagonistic, but are in reality parts of one faith. "This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future." (*The Kitáb-I-Aqdas, The Most Holy Book, Page 85*)

The religions are like the different chapters of the same book — they have a common aim and build on one another. Therefore, the Prophets of the major religions of the world are one in purpose: "... through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world." (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 54*)

An examination of the history and causes of religious conflict shows that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings would be of great practical value in creating a climate of peace in the world. Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated." (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 13*)

For a century and a half, Bahá'ís have been working to spread these ideas and help eliminate religious intolerance and strife. They are motivated by these inspiring words of Bahá'u'lláh:

"... haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction." (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 13-14*)

## Bahá'í Teachings Explain 'Differences' Between Religions

Those who have studied the great religions are often struck by their similarities. However, more difficult to understand are the differences between these faiths.

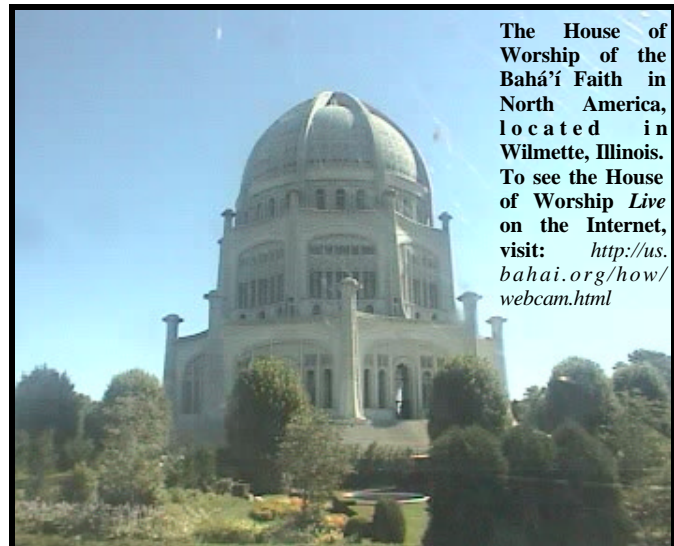
There appears to be many features of these religions that contradict one another, which suggests that if the great religions of the world were truly sent by God, why do these significant differences exist?

The Bahá'í Teachings present a simple, but very reasonable, solution to this dilemma: "Religion has two main parts: (1) The Spiritual (2) The Practical. The spiritual part never changes. All the Manifestations of God and His Prophets have taught the same truths and given the same spiritual law. They all teach the one code of morality.... The practical part of religion deals with exterior forms and ceremonies, and with modes of punishment for certain offences. This is the material side of the law, and guides the customs and manners of the people." (*Paris Talks*, p. 142)

The spiritual law is unchanging and guides our behavior towards God and other people. Examples of spiritual laws that remain constant from religion to religion include teachings on the moral purpose of life or the sanctity of the family. Although such truths may be expressed in various ways, the intent remains the same. Another example of a spiritual law that has not changed from age to age is the importance of worshiping God through prayer.

Bahá'u'lláh says, in every religion, "the law concerning prayer hath been emphasized and universally enforced." (*The Book of Certitude*, p.38-39). However, "the form and the manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of the day." (*The Book of Certitude*, p.38-39).

The aspect of religions that often differs is the practical. The practical laws relate to the social teachings of that faith. These laws change in each cycle in response to the needs of humanity. Each Prophet brings laws that address the problems and concerns of the people at that time. For instance, according to the needs of the time, Moses revealed certain laws for capital punishment. It was impossible at the time of Moses to protect the believers



The House of Worship of the Bahá'í Faith in North America, located in Wilmette, Illinois. To see the House of Worship Live on the Internet, visit: <http://us.bahai.org/how/webcam.html>

and preserve social security without these severe measures for the children of Israel lived in the wilderness of Sinai and they could not protect their rights and establish safety. But such severe laws were not needed in the time of Christ, and were abolished.

Therefore, the social law was changed. Christ, however, did not change Moses' spiritual laws such as worshiping the one true God or loving one's neighbor. In each age, the Prophet of God reaffirms the spiritual teachings of past religions but changes the social teachings to meet the needs of the time. Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh has once again renewed the spiritual principles of past religions and has brought the social laws that are necessary for today's society.

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## Featured Devotions from the Bahá'í Scriptures

In each issue of *The Light of Unity*, select prayers and devotional passages from the Bahá'í Scriptures are presented. The focus of this issue is the Golden Rule, a scriptural evidence of the unity of religion.

"O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure."

*Gleanings From The Writings Of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 215  
(see **Featured Devotions**, Page 4)

Featured Devotions (con't from Page 3)

“O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same stock. Thou hast decreed that all shall belong to the same household. In Thy Holy Presence they are all Thy servants, and all mankind are sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle; all have gathered together at Thy Table of Bounty; all are illumined through the light of Thy Providence.

O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, dost shelter all, conferrest life upon all. Thou hast endowed each and all with talents and faculties, and all are submerged in the Ocean of Thy Mercy.

O Thou kind Lord! Unite all. Let the religions agree and make the nations one, so that they may see each other as one family and the whole earth as one home. May they all live together in perfect harmony.

O God! Raise aloft the banner of the oneness of mankind.

O God! Establish the Most Great Peace.

Cement Thou, O God, the hearts together.

O Thou kind Father, God! Gladden our hearts through the fragrance of Thy love. Brighten our eyes through the Light of Thy Guidance. Delight our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us all in the Stronghold of Thy Providence.

Thou art the Mighty and Powerful, Thou art the Forgiving and Thou art the One Who overlooketh the shortcomings of all mankind.”

*Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 100*



“... the purpose of religion is the acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, the betterment of morals, the spiritual development of mankind, the real life and divine bestowals. All the Prophets have been the promoters of these principles; none of Them has been the promoter of corruption, vice or evil. They have summoned mankind to all good. They have united people in the love of God, invited them to the religions of the unity of mankind and exhorted them to amity and agreement.

*Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 152*



“You must manifest complete love and affection toward all mankind. Do not exalt yourselves above others, but consider all as your equals, recognizing them as the servants of one God. Know that God is compassionate toward all; therefore, love all from the depths of your hearts, prefer all religionists before yourselves, be filled with love for every race, and be kind toward the people of all nationalities. Never speak disparagingly of others, but praise without distinction. Pollute not your tongues by speaking evil of another.

“Turn all your thoughts toward bringing joy to hearts. Beware! Beware! lest ye offend any heart. Assist the world of humanity as much as possible. Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one, be helpful to every indigent one, care for every sick one, be the cause of glorification to every lowly one, and shelter those who are overshadowed by fear.

In brief, let each one of you be as a lamp shining forth with the light of the virtues of the world of humanity. Be trustworthy, sincere, affectionate and replete with chastity. Be illumined, be spiritual, be divine, be glorious, be quickened of God, be a Bahá'í.”

*Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 453*



“In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquility and peace cease to shine.”

*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 125*




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**The Light of Unity is a monthly newsletter that discusses the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. It is offered free to those who would like to learn about the Bahá'í Faith. There is no obligation. Those wishing to receive a free subscription should ask their local Bahá'í community or email NTC @usbnc.org**