

The Manifestations of God and the Renewal of Religion



- What do the Bahá'í Writings say about the Founders of the religions of the world? Is there any relationship between them?
- What do the religions of the world have in common?
- Why are there so many different religions in the world?

Opening Prayers



O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness.

Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Prayer for Humanity

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.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Some Founders of World Religions

Abraham – Judaism ~5000 BC

Krishna – Hinduism ~3200 BC

Moses – Judaism ~1330 BC

Buddha – Buddhism ~500 BC

Jesus Christ – Christianity ~30 AD

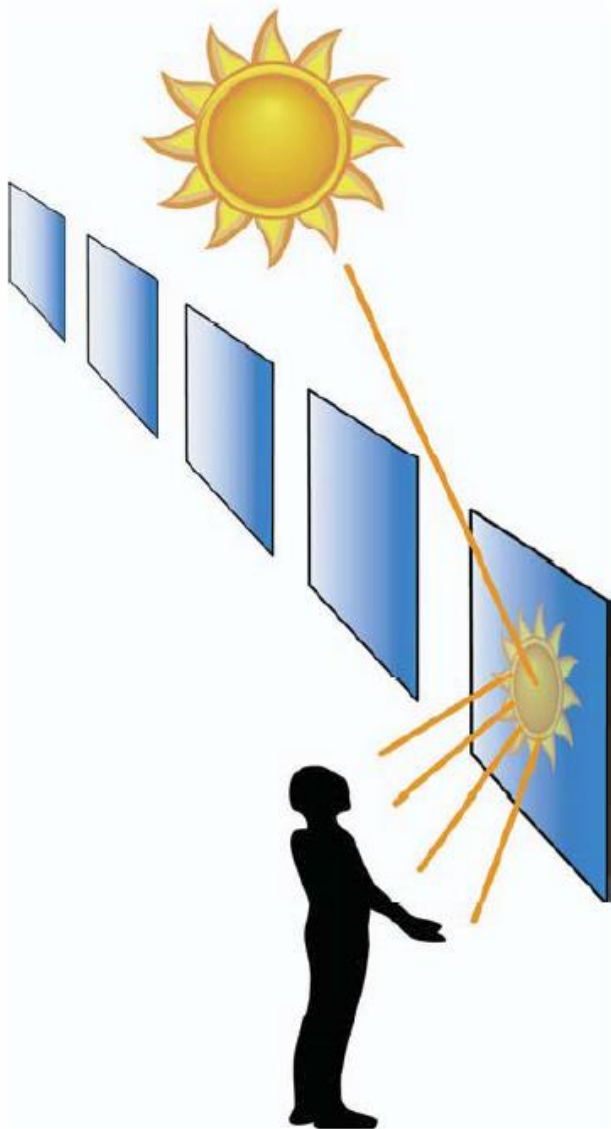
Muhammad – Islam ~570 AD

The Báb – Babism ~1844 AD

Bahá'u'lláh – The Bahá'í Faith ~1863 AD

*Manifestations of God**

Mirrors of God



Describing the relationship between the Manifestations of God and Their Creator, Bahá'u'lláh used the analogy of the **mirror**:

God is as the Sun, and the Manifestations are as **Mirrors** that reflect that divine light -- **but they are in no way to be considered as identical to that Sun.**

* *“Manifestation of God”* is one term often used by Baha’u’llah to refer to the **Founders of the world’s religions**. But He also uses other names and terms in His Writings, such as “Prophets,” “Gems of Holiness,” “Sanctified Mirrors,”...

Manifestations of God

manifest the names and attributes of God

These sanctified **Mirrors**, these Day Springs of ancient glory, are, one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade.... These Tabernacles of Holiness, these Primal **Mirrors** which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. **By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest.**

These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. ~ **Bahá'u'lláh**

God or Man?

An example from the New Testament (Christianity):

John 10:30 “I and my Father are one.”

John 1:18 “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Bahá'u'lláh explains:

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: **“I am God,”** He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. ... And were any of them to voice the utterance, **“I am the Messenger of God,”** He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth....

By virtue of this station they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God.

Manifestations of God have a Twofold Station (1)

One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attributes, thou hast not erred from the truth. ... They are all invested with the robe of prophethood, and are honored with the mantle of glory...



It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. **Such is the unity of those Essences of Being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor! Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: “I am the return of all the Prophets,” He, verily, speaketh the truth.** In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established.... ~**Bahá’u’lláh**

Manifestations of God have a Twofold Station (2)

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. **Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation....**



It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Well Springs of Divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of Divine wisdom, all their utterances are, in reality, but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they, therefore, feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same.

~Bahá'u'lláh

The Divine Religions Embody Two Kinds of Ordinances

First, there are those which constitute essential or spiritual teachings of the **Word of God**. These are faith in God, the acquirement of the virtues... This is the fundamental aspect of the religion of God... This is the essential foundation of all the divine religions, the reality itself, common to all...



Second, there are laws and ordinances which are temporary and non-essential. These concern human transactions and relations. They are accidental and subject to change according to the exigencies* of time and place.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

* The need, demand, or requirement

Essential Spiritual Teachings: “The Golden Rule”

“This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.”

Hinduism ~ 3200 BC

“What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.”

Judaism ~ 1330 BC

“Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.”

Buddhism ~ 500 BC

“Do unto others what you would have them do unto you; this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Christianity ~ 30 AD

“No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.”

Islam 570 AD

“Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou chooseth for thyself.”

Bahá'í Faith 1863 AD

The Renewal of Religion

The independent Prophets are each the Author of a divine religion and the Founder of a new Dispensation. At Their advent the world is clothed in a new attire, a new religion is established, and a new Book revealed. These Prophets acquire the outpouring grace of the divine Reality without an intermediary... These Daysprings of the morn of Divine Unity are the fountainheads of divine grace and the **mirrors** of the Essence of Reality...



In the beginning, this tree was full of vitality and laden with blossoms and fruit, but gradually it grew old, spent, and barren, until it entirely withered and decayed. That is why the True Gardener will again plant a tender sapling of the same stock, that it may grow and develop day by day, extend its sheltering shade in this heavenly garden, and yield its prized fruit. So it is with the divine religions: With the passage of time, their original precepts are altered, their underlying truth entirely vanishes, their spirit departs, doctrinal innovations spring up, and they become a body without a soul. That is why they are renewed.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Closing Thoughts

God leaves not His children comfortless, but, when the darkness of winter overshadows them, then again He sends His Messengers, the Prophets, with a renewal of the blessed spring. The Sun of Truth appears again on the horizon of the world shining into the eyes of those who sleep, awaking them to behold the glory of a new dawn. Then again will the tree of humanity blossom and bring forth the fruit of righteousness for the healing of the nations.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

