

# RELIGIONS AND NONVIOLENCE

## Spirituality for fuel



Working Group on  
**Christian Nonviolence**  
Christianity and Justice Research Center



Centre d'estudis  
**Cristianisme i Justícia**

*"Move Nonviolence"* is an educational commitment to initiate a process of personal transformation before the conflicts we face in our times, creating nonviolent strategies that free up situations that are at an impasse. This tool consists of a series of videos accompanied by the corresponding educational units so that the teaching guides have the material and direction for their work. The dynamics of this document are classified into sections and their topics in accordance with their appearance in the video. In some sections we suggest suitable options for each end-user profile. This proposal is intended for groups who can be accompanied by someone with a capacity for in-depth reflection on each subject.

Acquire all the material

**[www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net)**

Each unit plan incorporates a series of associated material accessible from the project website: [www.movenonviolence.net](http://www.movenonviolence.net). The material of this specific unit is found in: <https://movenonviolence.net/U11>.



## Communion and diversity

To speak of spirituality and religion is to speak of experiences of communion both with what transcends us and with others, within the diversity of forms and beliefs. These emerge from the deepest existential questions: why do we exist, instead of the opposite? Is Someone or some reality the cause of this? What does the peculiarity of being able to think about ourselves actually mean? Where do violence, love or freedom come from? What is there after death? What meaning is there in such a complex cosmos? What can we do in these years that are our lifetime?

### ■ CHILDREN

Explain the introduction interactively adapting it to each age. Now show: [01 Wheel of Religious Symbols](#), and exhibit the elements of each spiritual experience, completing this process with chapters 2-8. Look for and explain the meaning of each symbol to keep them in mind. Then hide the wheel and divide the (previously cut out) symbols and names into groups, so that they learn how to

associate them. Each child needs to choose a tradition, look for information about it and sketch a religious object that belongs to it. In the end, exhibit them all in a mural.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

Raise each question in the introduction and leave them time so that they can try to give a response. From the questions draw up the many groups that tried to formulate a response: with the help of [01 Wheel of Religious Symbols](#), show them the eight names of religious traditions that are in this unit, and get them to brainstorm ideas based on what they know. Next, watch this video describing the five major world religions: [02 The Five Major World Religions](#). How many friends do we have from each religion? Have we ever talked with them about their beliefs? Let us share our experiences about that. Religions have come to meet in interreligious dialogue, promoting peace and development for human beings. Do you know any such examples? Share them with us.

# 1

## Spirituality

**Inwardness** Capacity to connect with your own inner space.

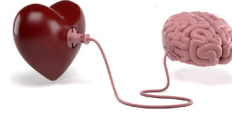
**Spirituality** Capacity to encounter the strength that moves and animates life. It can open up our relationship to the Transcendent, even as it opens the person up to their communion with another.

**Religion** Experience of that which transcends us and which is organised into time (cycles, celebrations, rituals...) and space (places of worship, sacred spaces), which share texts and canons, and which have a strong social dimension.

A sense of spirituality can contribute elements that strengthen nonviolence: authenticity from inwardness; resilience in the fight; fidelity in relation to the Transcendent; capacity to suffer for another because of communion with everyone; a rejection of violence, which is anti-communion with another and with the Transcendent; hope and trust in the Transcendent to progress, etc..

### ■ CHILDREN

We ask the children: what can we measure, touch or see? Is there anything we can't? A decision, love, fear, an idea..., these are also real and important. Just as we take care of our outer selves, so we need to attend to our inner selves. (A) We then move them towards a corner called **Inwardness**. Throughout history, many people have cultivated what we cannot see. We get them all to sit in the lotus position and briefly explain meditation to them. This way we go on to propose a taste of different experiences of inwardness: Qigong, prayer, the contemplation of an image, reflections on certain questions... (B) We get them to go to



a corner called **Spirituality**, and we explain to them: spirit comes from respiration or breathing, which is movement that we do all of the time. If we work on our inwardness every day, and we discover that there is something (the Transcendent) that gives us air and life, we end up speaking of spirituality. We ask them to close their eyes. They enter a cave and we shout "eeeeooooo". If there is no response, we play with the idea until they realise that they need to listen to the echo. The cave is our inner being, where feelings resound and we need time to listen to them and to decide what we want. We ask them to write down in words how they feel. (C) We take them to another place called **Religion**, and show them the symbols from the previous chapter. Each person or community decides either to believe or not in Someone bigger than ourselves. If this is the case, they live different experiences of spirituality in common with what are known as religions. Do we have friends from different religions? Let us share different experiences.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

Let us make different versions of the barometer of values (chapter 10 of unit 7) with allegedly ambiguous phrases so as to question our prejudices and differentiate between inwardness, spirituality and religion even better. For example: "Inwardness calls for faith" - "A religion without spirituality does not help working on nonviolence" - ....We try to end up defining and reaching consensus on all three notions according to the introduction.

## 2

## Religious traditions

Let us venture one step further: some spiritual experiences have developed within religious traditions initiated by a founder in some place around the world, and unfolded according to their own rites and principles. As with other social groups, religious followers fell into the temptation of grave violence, especially in periods of history when they knew power. Violence warps the deepest experience of each religion. Yet many other believers live the same religious traditions within nonviolence and peace. One criteria of truthfulness for a religion is how it moves us to nonviolence.

We do not try to prove, however, that the way religions materialise has always been pacific (this would be far from the truth!). What we do try to demonstrate is that the essence of all religions speaks to us of peace and nonviolence because it is based on the experience of communion with the Transcendent and with others.

### ■ CHILDREN

We separate into three rows and sit down. (A) In each row, we play the broken telephone game with a long sentence about peace that is difficult to memorise. What happens with the last ones in the row? (B) We make up another sentence and at this point we secretly give a red card to some of them, asking them to muddle up the sentence when it is their turn. What happens? (C) We change the sentence again, and now we only give its written version to the first one in each row, secretly handing out blue cards to others who will pretend not to know how to read. Does the message of the last in the



row have most in common with the original written version, even though not everyone could read it? We now ask them if religions have always been pacific (explaining examples of wars). We interpret the game: in each group we find violent people (red cards), or people who trust others without studying to understand their message (blue cards), and what is important is for us to return to the deep origin of each religious tradition (row) to see what it wanted to communicate, which is usually a message of peace.

### ■ YOUTH AND ADULTS

You make a mural with two major sections: "What saves us is obeying the norms," and "What saves us are relationships of communion." You fill each section with names of historical believers in each religion who you think understood their religion that way. Now fill in a biographical card of the figures in the second section. What part do the rites, norms and symbols play in this case? Now draw conclusions over how this influences violence or nonviolence: if what is absolute is a relationship of communion, human dignity will always be protected. If, instead, the absolute is a norm or a symbol, sooner or later violence will emerge against someone else.



## Jainism (Beginning Unknown)



**Context** Questionable origin: the founder Mahavira (VI-V BC) was the Tirthankara num. 24 of a list where twenty-three others preceded him. The aim is to become a Tirthankara. Strict vegetarianism so as not to harm living beings. The Jainist temple is the derasar.

**Texts** Drastivad, which consists of fourteen Purva texts. At a later stage, each of the two Jainist branches (Digambara and Svetambara) adds further holy texts, which are told apart from them.

**References** Mahavira. The other 23 Tirthankaras.

**Beliefs and Values** The soul exists, but no divinity exists. Ahimsa (nonviolence, represented by the hand). Satya (truth). Asteya (do not steal). Brahmacharya (sexual abstinence). Aparigraha (non possession).

Ahimsa (nonviolence) is the foundation principle of life and spirituality. Every living being – human, animal or vegetable – has to be respected, and we need to feel compassion for each, as each possesses spirit. Every life is closely-knit in mutual support and interdependence. The aim is to free the soul-spirit of its karma to reach nirvana when a person's body dies. In the end, it will reach moksha or liberation, the final salvation or emancipation. If this is not the case, this person will go on being reincarnated in whatever living being awaits it.

"I ask forgiveness of all living beings, may they all forgive me. May I come to befriend all beings, and be enemy of none." (Pratikramana-sutra, 49)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

If you like a flower, you pick it. If you love a flower, you water it and take care of it. Try this activity in the middle of nature. If you cannot, bring to the session a small animal that you can contemplate for a while in silence. With the yellow play-dough shape the centre of a giant daisy. Split into pairs and place the petals, about eighteen inches in length and cut out of cardboard, which you will join to the play-dough with a little stick fastened to each petal. Around the edge of each petal everyone is to sketch a living species of gradual complexity: the first petals with plants, the last with elephants, whales and humans. Give them a long time to contemplate nature, and then ask them how they feel. Ask them now to fill the petals with specific actions that help to ensure that each creature they sketched in their petal can live in the peace and harmony experienced. Now you are all to explain each petal to the group, so that each person who has contributed can feel peace in him or herself and in nature. To round off, adapt an explanation of Jainism to each age-group. [03 Introduction to Jainism](#)



## Hinduism (3000 BC)



**Context** It began in India. It has been spreading all over for 5000 years. They worship different gods which they consider to be manifestations of the supreme being Brahman. They do not have a creed or official rituals. Their place of worship is the Hindu temple.

**Texts** Shruti (what was listened to). Smriti (what was remembered). Other texts: Vedas, Upanishads.

**References** No founder or leaders exist, nor any priestly cast or institutional structure. Some figures known around the world are Gandhi, Tagore, Gargi, Mirabai, Vandana or Chopra.

**Beliefs and Values** The soul exists and is reincarnated. *Purushartha* or the four vital goals: Dharma (religious duty), Artha (material prosperity), Kama (pleasure which satisfies and motivates), Moksha (release from the reincarnation cycle).

Hinduism takes ahimsa as one of its principles, as is the case in Jainism. The most important representative of nonviolence was Mohandas K. Gandhi, who applied nonviolence to his way of life and integrated it into his political action, which was used to gain independence for India.

In Hinduism we can find holy texts which call for meditation and the practice of ahimsa, as does the following:

"I regard them to be perfect yogis who see the true equality of all living beings and respond to the joys and sorrows of others as if they were their own."  
(Bhagavad Gita 6,32)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Download from Internet some instrumental base rhythm of a given style. In small groups, they are asked to create a song taking that rhythm as a starting point, which they can listen to from some device, and with lyrics that they can make up which express the principles in which they believe and what they most long for (for smaller children simply how they would like to be happy). To round up, each group plays its song. They come to realise that with the same rhythm we can go on to create works of art that are very different. Hinduism stems from this: we all have a soul and we can seek it through Divinity (the same rhythm) in many different ways. If the Being unites us from within, we will treat every person better, we will experience harmony. Present them in terms of what they believe and in the diversity of styles and characters belonging to this religion.



## Judaism (2000 BC)



**Context** YHWH is the name of the God of Israel who creates a covenant with the Jewish people for their salvation. He offers the revelation of this Law to observe in the books of Moses' Torah, and speaks through prophets. His place of worship is the synagogue.

**Texts** Tanakh (Torah—the Law—, Nev'im —prophets—, and Ketuvim —writing—), Mishnah (compilation of the Oral Law), Talmud (Tanakh commentaries), Halakha (rules and customs).

**References** Some ancient and modern references are: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and his sister Myriam, Ruth, David, Solomon, Anne Frank, Sarah Katsenelenbogen.

**Beliefs and Values** God is one, personal and creator of the universe. The three fundamental pillars are loyalty to YHWH (by Whom we live), the Law (how to live) and His people (life in the community).

The essence of Judaism is to remain in a state of purity before God, both in terms of worship and society. But Jewish spirituality does not stop here, and encourages us to develop an active reparation of the world through the justice (tzedakah) that moves us to nonviolence, even before the enemy. Here is an example in each of the three parts of the Tanakh:

If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its

load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him. (Exodus 23, 4-5)

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. (Ezekiel 33,11)

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. (Proverbs 25,21)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Let them first draw on a piece of paper what comes to mind when they hear the words God and Judaism. Comment on these in a group, and guide them by separating any prejudice from the real aspects of this religion. Split up into three groups where each group prepares decoration for a miming session based on three key scenes in Judaism: (1) All we have comes from the God YHWH. (2) We were slaves in Egypt and the God YHWH freed us. (3) From God we receive the mission of bringing salvation to everyone through goodness.

You can copy and reproduce the gestures of goodness in a human chain to visualise this through mime. Finally comment on each scene represented. According to Judaism, God (YHWH) does not choose the people of Israel because they are better than others, but says rather: "I will also make you a light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isaiah 49,6). Read the last scene in the light of this quotation from Isaiah: we can learn that we too have the responsibility to "save" others from evil through goodness.





## Taoism (604 BC)



**Context** Two great parts within the Chinese classical period (771-221 BC): 1) Spring and Autumn Period (771 - 476 BC) 2) Warring States Period (476 - 221 BC)

The Taoist temple is called daoguan.

**Texts** Tao Te Ching. Also in each part: 1) The Book of Zhuangzi. 2) Liezi: Classic of the perfect emptiness.

**References** Lao Tse. Also in each part: 1) Zhuangzi. 2) Lie Yukou.

**Beliefs and Values** Tao. Also in each part: 1) Wu wei (inaction or effortless action, free-flowing spontaneity). 2) Yin Yang.

Taoism tries to connect and let yourself be carried along by an essence or energy that lies behind all things, which is difficult to define and which is known as Tao. The basis for this connection is the principle of Wu Wei, by means of which, without forcing situations and by letting ourselves be carried along, we can follow the path of movement which is the flux of Tao. This connection in walking or "letting ourselves be walked" follows the balance of two opposing, complementary and interdependent tendencies: Yin and Yang.

Tao Te Ching calls upon us to use nonviolence through flexibility and the strategic adaptation of water, which insists until it doubles adversity:

The highest good is like water,  
Water gives life to ten thousands things and  
does not do battle.

It flows in places men reject and so is like  
the Tao.

In dwelling, be close to the land.

In meditation, go deep in the heart.

In dealing with others, be gentle and kind.

In speech, be true.

In ruling, be just.

In business, be competent.

In action, watch the timing.

No fight: no blame.

*(Lao Tse, Tao Te Ching, Poem 8)*

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Why is it simpler to achieve things in a good way rather than in a bad way? Now we show them a small glass bottle: if we throw it on the ground, it breaks. But if we throw it into a pail of water, it does not break. Why? The water shields the blow (we can demonstrate this). Explain the notion of Wu wei, adapting it to each level. We encourage them to be a cushion of kindness, like the water that shields the blows in conflicts. Now read poem 8 of Tao Te Ching. In groups, they have 10 minutes to reply to the question: in our everyday lives, how can we put into practice what this text explains in every sentence? With youth and adults, take 5 extra minutes to meditate the text in silence, and then respond to the same question as a group, for a further 10 minutes. Do the same replies crop up, or are they different? How do you feel inside, after meditating? What have you learnt, from the text and the meditation?

# 7

## Buddhism (6th century BC)



**Context** Philosophical-spiritual teachings, not theist. The aim is to eliminate feelings of dissatisfaction from the mind. Through meditation, each person is transformed and develops wisdom, conscience and goodness. The sanctuaries are called *candi*, *chaitya*, and the places are known as *jingu-ji*.

**Texts** Canonical: Sutras (Buddha's teachings). Non Canonical: Tripitaka (Pali canon), Mahayana Sutras, The Tibetan Book of the Dead.

**References** A few references are Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha), Khandro Rinpoche, Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, Tenzin Palmo.

**Beliefs and Values** 3 characteristics of existence: impermanence, insubstantiality and dissatisfaction.

4 noble truths: Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, Magga.

The Noble Eightfold Path.

Buddhism believes in Karma and Nirvana.

in life, so that this can be reflected in our behaviour both with ourselves and others: a nonviolent response coming from a place of compassion. We discover this compassion for all living creatures in the form of peace within Buddhist spirituality:

We live with authentic happiness, without hate, in the midst of those who know hatred, in the middle of those who hate, we live without hate.

Victory breeds enmity. The defeated live in unhappiness. Relinquishing victory as much as defeat, peace-seekers live happily.

There is no fire like passion, no offence like hatred, there is no suffering like the components (of mind and body), no happiness outside peace.

(Dhammapada 15,1.5.6)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Cut out cards with people in eight different situations of suffering: (1) incurable illness, (2) war victim, (3) victim of poverty, (4) a person afraid of not being accepted, (5) someone frustrated for not managing to be what they wished to be, (6) someone harassed at school or work, (7) a tsunami victim, (8) a person with anxiety and psychological problems. Sketch on the ground, the courtyard for example, a big wheel with eight spokes, symbol of Buddhism. We summarise a little explanation of Buddhism, and the meaning of this wheel. Buddhism says that life is suffering, but that we can free ourselves from it through illumination. To reach this state,

In Buddhism, nonviolence is the first step to liberate the mind and body from hate, fear and self-promotion. "Everyone is afraid of the stick, everyone fears death. Putting ourselves in another's place, we should not beat or kill others." (Dhammapada 129). The starting point is inner meditation to see or reach knowledge of oneself and of situations

we need to follow the noble eight-fold path. Split up into eight groups, and place each group at the end of a spoke, where there will be a poster. Each poster will figure the name of one of the eight paths and an activity to perform in the space of one minute from the moment each participant is touched:

- **Right understanding.** Knowing that in this world everything changes, explain how to understand the suffering you feel to become more peaceful.
- **Right thought.** How, in the situation you find yourself in, will you achieve this, in order to receive more knowledge of life and acquire wisdom?
- **Right speech.** One minute representation of how we can use conciliatory and thoughtful words even in the situation we are suffering in.
- **Right moral action.** Name three good and nonviolent things you could do for others if you found you suffered from this.
- **Right livelihood.** It is important to earn your living according to your own principles. With play-dough or clay, shape in one minute an object which represents how you could earn your living in such a situation.
- **Right effort.** Human clock: form a circle and every second, for one minute, someone stands up and another sits down accordingly.
- **Right mindfulness.** We have to maintain constant mindfulness. Someone will try to read a book for a minute whilst the others try to distract him/her.
- **Right concentration/meditation.** Everyone sits down in the lotus position and has to stay completely still, eyes closed, for one minute, meditating.

The game will go on turning the “wheel of life,” so that at each turn a different group moves to a different spoke to perform the actions described on the poster. When you have completed a round of turns, each group will move to the following spoke, and so on. After completing the eight paths, the game is over and the game-leader takes out a very large card with KARMA written on it, where he or she will have noted down how each group behaved and which actions they opted for. According to the Karma they acquired on the way, each group will find out if they reached Nirvana or Enlightenment outside the samsara wheel, or indeed if they still have to return to be reincarnated in another being, be they: (A) inferior or animal, (B) the human world again, (C) superior, kindly, non-human beings, (D) immaterial and infinite beings. Finally, speak in a group about how you felt, and about whether or not you knew about Buddhism before or what you have learnt. Interpret the different elements according to this Buddhist key to reading, adapted to each age: “Life is suffering. Suffering comes from desire. Happiness comes from the path of transcending ego and its desires, and from compassion for all living beings.”



## Christianity (4 BC)



**Context** The centre is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah (4 BC to 30 AD). God enters human history by becoming man (through Jesus) and preaching the Kingdom: a rebirth in our heart, love, social justice and forgiveness. He was sentenced to death, crucified and rose again. The places of worship are churches.

**Texts** The Bible (Old and New Testament). Relevant texts from the New Testament are the four gospels and Saint Paul's letters.

**References** Jesus of Nazareth. Mary, mother of Jesus (Mother of God). Mary Magdalene. The apostles. The four evangelists. Saint Peter (representative of the Church). Saint Paul (missionary to non-Jews). Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity. The Desert Fathers. Other saints.

**Beliefs and Values** Love God in all things and love others like oneself. Forgiveness and love even our enemies. Resurrection: full life in God after dying. God the Trinity: Father (creator), Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Ghost (the spirit of Jesus after Pentecost).

The Gospel of Matthew reveals in chapter 5 how the way to imitate God is to become nonviolent. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5,1-12) are the titles of the path to follow, and at the end of the chapter we are shown how to respond to villains and enemies:

You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I

say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. [...] You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous [...]. (Matthew 5,38-48)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS<sup>1</sup>

Explain to each age group the main keys to Christianity and read the texts of this chapter. The examples provide ideas for acting with creativity, dignity and complaint in favour of the enemy to disarm him or her. Invent a fictive news story related to forgiveness: some real person known for their enmity towards or oppression of an individual or group experiences such positive action from his or her victims which disarms and brings about a change in them. Record the news story in a professional way: recreate a scenario where the action and the interview, the journalist's explanation are all recorded. Finally, consider whether or not it would be appropriate to send this recording to the real person to appeal to them.

1. The groups of Christian adults can work on booklet 169 from Cristianisme i Justícia [Dismantling the Hells. Practising the nonviolence of Jesus Today](#), with the questions that are found at the end.



## Islam (570 AD)



**Context** At the beginning of VII AD in Mecca, a place of different religions and deities. A way of living one's faith arises, which unites different Arab tribes in the same identity. Later it grows and includes non-Arab peoples. The Umma or community integrates the prophet Mohammed and all of his followers. The places of worship are the mosques.

**Texts** The Koran.

**References** Muhammad, the prophet of Allah. Other references: Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Malala Yousafzai.

**Beliefs and Values** "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger" (Shahada). Prayer (Salat) five times a day. Alms (Zakat). Fasting (Sawm) during the month of Ramadan. Pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca.

At present, a part of Islam has a reputation of being violent, but this is a wrong interpretation: every religion contains truth, but when we find violence is when it is has gone astray. Jihad (the endeavour against evil and struggle on behalf of Allah) is in its innermost dimension (the greater Jihad) a struggle for spiritual progress, and in its external dimension (the lesser Jihad) it is normally understood as legitimate defence, which does not exclude armed defence as a last resort, but which at every moment proposes a peace offering as a higher choice. For example:

If they (the non-believers) incline to peace, then incline to it also and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. (8,61)

And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord, and establish prayer (Salah), and spend from what We have provided for them secretly and publicly and prevent evil with good – those will have the consequence of a heavenly home. (13,22)

### ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Explain the central points of Islam adapted to the age of each group. Now split up into three groups. The first will make a mural about peace and religions. Explain to them that Muslims choose not to draw either God or Muhammad, and that we respect this choice so as to get along better with them. The second group will also write a poem about peace and religions. The third group will draw up a letter on behalf of everyone and addressed to a Muslim authority in your region (an imam or a head of a community). In the letter you will explain that you have been finding out more about Islam and the peace that it can offer the world, and that with the mural, the poem and the letter you would like to work together with them for peace in the world. The person who guides them in their group work will oversee all content. You can even form a delegation to deliver it all in person to the Muslim community of your choice.



**Context** In 1844, the Iranian Sayyed Alí Muhammad (the Bab) announced he was the door to prepare the life of “He whom God shall make manifest.” In 1863, one of his disciples, Bahà'u'llàh, declared himself “He whom God shall make manifest”. The temple of worship is called Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

**Texts** Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Most Holy Book). The Hidden Words. Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude). The Seven Valleys. The Four Valleys.

**References** The Bab. Bahà'u'llàh. Abdu'l-Bahà. Shoghi Effendi The Bab. Bahà'u'llàh. Abdu'l-Bahà. Shoghi Effendi.

**Beliefs and Values** The unity of humanity. Independent and individual search for truth. Unity of religions. The removal of extreme poverty and wealth. World peace, based on a legislation and universal institutions which defend social justice and diversity.

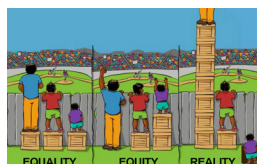
According to the Bahà'í religion, throughout history God spoke through different special people whom they call manifestations of God —Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad...— whose mission was to educate and invigorate society, free human beings from the darkness of the world and reach a major level of unity between peoples. The last was Bahà'u'llàh, who declared that he was the Manifestation of God for his time. His teachings have to guide society's evolutionary process for the next thousand years, because divine revelation is progressive and continuous. Humanity is in essence one, and for this we need respect

and peace. Historically, in times of oppression or persecution of their believers, they implemented pacific and nonviolent strategies.

So intense must be the spirit of love and loving kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. (Abdu'l-Bahà. Will and Testament)

## ■ CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS

Discuss this sketch. If we concentrate only on what each one has, which situation is the fairest? And if we concentrate on what each person needs? Why is it that we actually find it so exaggerated? The bahà'í faith is committed to changing injustice through kindness, so as to arrive at a situation of equity. Organise a debate: one part will defend the position of working towards a better world by giving everyone the same (equality). Which concrete actions would you undertake to change things according to each model, if you had unlimited power in the world? To round off, explain the bahà'í faith, adapting it to each age group.



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