

The Manifestation of God is the light-bringer of the world. Like the arrival of spring, His coming releases a fresh outpouring of spirit into creation and has a universal effect. When humanity has entered its “winter,” this new “sun” appears above the horizon and “shines upon the worlds of spirits, of thoughts and of hearts...” Then, “the spiritual spring and new life appear, the power of the wonderful springtime becomes visible, and marvelous benefits are apparent.”

With the coming of each Manifestation, new forces are released that, over time, increasingly permeate human affairs, providing the main impulse for the further development of consciousness and society.

This process—in which the Manifestations of God have successively provided the guidance necessary for humanity’s social and spiritual evolution—is known as “progressive revelation.” If God were to be likened to the unapproachable sun, the source of all light and life in our own solar system, then the Manifestations of God might be compared to mirrors that perfectly reflect the sun’s light in a form that human beings are capable of comprehending. “*These sanctified Mirrors...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.*”

Since the purpose of all these divine “mirrors” is one and the same, no distinction should be made between Them. Bahá’u’lláh writes, “*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.*”



If all the great religions can be considered to be one in essence, founded upon the same reality, how then can we understand the differences—particularly regarding social practices—between the teachings of the various Manifestations of God?



Each Manifestation may be seen as a skilled physician. He has a complete grasp of the nature of the body of humanity and is able to prescribe the appropriate cure for the ills of the world—one that best meets the requirements of the time in which He appears. Referring to His own Revelation in this age, Bahá’u’lláh wrote, “*The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy.*”

(From: <http://www.bahai.org/beliefs/god-his-creation/revelation/manifestations-god>)

Bahá’u’lláh wrote:

*All praise to the unity of God, and all honor to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, Who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation, and Who, rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and the perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory. Nothing short of His all-encompassing grace, His all-pervading mercy, could have possibly achieved it. How could it, otherwise, have been possible for sheer nothingness to have acquired by itself the worthiness and capacity to emerge from its state of non-existence into the realm of being?*

*Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man*

*the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.*

*These energies with which the Day Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.*

*And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. He hath, moreover, conferred upon Him a double station. The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself. To this testifyeth the tradition: “Manifold and mysterious is My relationship with God. I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am*





# Bahá'í Faith

## The Manifestations of God

Throughout the ages, humanity's spiritual, intellectual and moral capacities have been cultivated by the Founders of the great religions, among them Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and—in more recent times—the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

These Figures are not simply ordinary people with a greater knowledge than others. Rather they are *Manifestations of God*, Who have exerted an incomparable influence on the evolution of human society. While each of Them has a distinct individuality and a definite mission, the Manifestations of God all share in a single, divinely-ordained purpose—to “*educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...*”

*withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.*

—Bahá'u'lláh

*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, no. 27

### *Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh*

The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human kind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind—these stand out as the essential elements [which Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed].

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 281)

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*that I am, and He is that He is.” And in like manner, the words: “Arise, O Muḥammad, for lo, the Lover and the Beloved are joined together and made one in Thee.” He similarly saith: “There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them, except that They are Thy Servants.” The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: “I am but a man like you.” “Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?” These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unfailling guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts.*

*From the foregoing passages and allusions it hath been made indubitably clear that in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all. Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.*

*Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be*