



of His own, and with material needs, but on another plane they are all part of the same one divine spirit.

"Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He (God) hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of God Himself."

#### THE VOICE OF GOD

"God hath, moreover, conferred on 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...The second station is the human station..."

This is why a Manifestation sometimes speaks as God, and sometimes as a human being. For example, at one time Christ said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10 v.30), and at another time He said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10 v.18).

Each Messenger, speaking as the Voice of God, builds on the Messages of those who have gone before. For instance, in ancient times, kindness and friendship was shown within the family, then within the tribe. Christ used an example to show the people of the times that someone from another tribe was to be considered as a neighbour. Now Bahá'u'lláh has made it quite clear that every person in the world is our neighbour, for "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

#### SOCIAL TEACHINGS

"The second part of the Religion of God, which refers to the material world, and which comprises fasting, prayer, forms of worship, marriage and divorce, the abolition of slavery... this part of the law of God, which refers to material things, is modified and altered in each prophetic cycle in accordance with the necessities of the times."

"Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present day afflictions can never be the same as that which subsequent ages may require."

This can be illustrated by comparing the laws of Moses, which were revealed to a wandering people in a harsh environment, with those of Christ, given in a later age and a more settled time. For example, Moses taught "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", as a practical and more advanced approach to justice than was the custom of the time. However, when the rule of law was established, Jesus was able to go beyond this teaching when He urged people to, "turn the other cheek".

"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 as though humanity has been going through a school. In each class, the teacher only teaches what the children are capable of understanding. In the case of the Manifestations of God each One emphasises those things most necessary for that time. The "light" they give out depends not on any limitation on their knowledge, but on the readiness of that age.

#### NO BEGINNING OR END

There is one part of religion which is not renewed - this consists of those man-made beliefs and traditions which can be recognised as such and cast aside when the new Manifestation of God appears.

The process of God revealing Himself to His creatures is a process without end. Each Prophet or Messenger is a lamp shining with the light of God. We must be careful not to become too attached to the lamp, but rather to love the light that shines from it, so that we can allow the reflection of this light to shine through us.

"Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause."

"If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold Them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring on the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith."

The process of religion is the very process of God giving mankind a framework within which individuals, and even society itself, can develop spirituality. Bahá'ís believe that humanity, as a whole, has been going through a growing-up process over the centuries. It is just now coming out of adolescence into maturity.

Different attributes, such as love, detachment, submission to the will of God, have characterised each religion over the ages. The basis of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation, which fulfils the needs of this age, is unity - unity of all people and peoples, free of all hindrance, and working together in harmony for the good of all.

#### PERFECT MIRRORS

The Manifestations of God are like perfect mirrors reflecting the light of God. If we look at the sun reflected in a mirror, we can truthfully say that we have seen the sun. But the sun has not come down out of the sky into the mirror. So it is with the Manifestations: they are perfect mirrors in which we can see 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... From Him proceed their knowledge and power..."

If we clear the dust of the material world from the mirrors of our own hearts, we will surely be able to reflect the love of God and, by following the laws revealed for this age, gradually bring about the Kingdom of God on earth:

"All nations will become one; all religions will be unified; all individual men will become of one family and of one kindred."

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