

Some Answered Questions, The Three Stations of the Divine Manifestations

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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The Human and the Divine Stations of the Manifestations

We stated before that the Manifestations of God have three stations: first, the material reality, which pertains to the human body; second, the individual reality, that is, the rational soul; and third, the heavenly manifestation, which consists in the divine perfections and is the source of the life of the world, the education of the souls, the guidance of the people, and the enlightenment of all creation.

The corporeal station is human in nature and is subject to disintegration, for it is an elemental composition and that which is composed of elements must of necessity be decomposed and dispersed.

But the individual reality of the Manifestations of the All-Merciful is a sanctified reality, and it is so because it surpasses in essence and in attributes all created things. It is like the sun, which, by virtue of its inherent disposition, must inevitably produce light, and cannot be compared to any satellite. For instance, the constituent parts of the sun can in no wise be compared to those of the moon. The composition and arrangement of the former necessarily produce rays, whereas the constituent parts of the latter require the acquisition, rather than the production, of light. So the other human realities are souls, which, like the moon, acquire their light from the sun, but that sanctified Reality is luminous in and of itself.

The third station is that of divine grace, the revelation of the beauty of the Ancient of Days and the effulgence of the lights of the ever-living and omnipotent Lord. The individual realities of the holy Manifestations cannot be separated from divine grace and revelation any more than the corporeal mass of the sun can be separated from its



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light. Thus the ascension of the holy Manifestations is simply the abandonment of Their elemental bodies. For example, consider the lamp that lights this niche. Its rays may cease to fall upon the niche if the latter is destroyed, but there is no interruption in the bounty of the lamp itself. The pre-existent grace of the holy Manifestations is even as the light, Their individual realities as the glass globe, and Their human temples as the niche: If the niche is destroyed, the lamp continues to burn. The Manifestations of God are like so many different mirrors, as They each have Their own distinct individuality, but that which is reflected in these mirrors is one and the same sun. Thus, it is evident that the reality of Christ is different from that of Moses.

From the beginning, that sanctified Reality is undoubtedly aware of the secret of existence, and from childhood the signs of greatness are clearly manifested in Him. How then could He fail, in spite of such bounties and perfections, to be conscious of His own station?

We mentioned the three stations of the Manifestations of God: that of corporeal existence, of individual reality, and of perfect divine manifestation, which can be likened to the sun, its heat, and its light. Other individuals also share the corporeal station and the rational soul—the spirit and mind. Thus the passages that state, “I lay asleep when the breeze of God wafted over Me and roused Me from My slumber” are akin to Christ’s saying, “The flesh is full of sorrow but the spirit is rejoiced”, or again, “I am afflicted”, or “I am at ease”, or “I am troubled”: All these refer to the corporeal station and have no bearing on the individual reality or on the state of manifestation of the divine Reality. Consider, for example, that thousands of vicissitudes may occur to the body of man of which the spirit remains wholly unaware. It is even possible for certain members of the body to be completely impaired and for the essence of the mind to remain unaffected. A garment may sustain a myriad rents and tears and the wearer may yet remain unharmed. Thus, the words of Bahá’u’lláh, “I lay asleep when a breeze wafted over Me and roused Me from My slumber”, refer to the body.

In the world of God there is no past, present, or future: All of these are one. So when Christ said, “In the beginning was the Word,” He meant that it was, is, and shall be; for in the world of God there is no time. Time holds sway over the creatures but not over God. So in the prayer where Christ says, “Hallowed be Thy name”, the meaning is that Thy name was, is, and shall be hallowed. Again, morning, noon, and evening exist in relation to the earth, but in the sun there is neither morning, nor noon, nor evening.