

Some Answered Questions, The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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The Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles

Question: It is recorded in the Gospels that the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. What was the manner and meaning of this descent?

Answer: The descent of the Holy Spirit is not like the entrance of air into the human body. It is a metaphor and an analogy rather than a literal image or account. That which is intended is like the descent of the sun into a mirror, that is, when its splendour is reflected therein.

After the death of Christ the Apostles were troubled and diverged in their thoughts and opinions; later they became steadfast and united. At Pentecost they gathered together, detached themselves from the world, forsook their own desires, renounced all earthly comfort and happiness, sacrificed body and soul to their Beloved, left their homes, took leave of all their cares and belongings, and even forgot their own existence. Then was divine assistance vouchsafed and the power of the Holy Spirit manifested. The spirituality of Christ triumphed and the love of God took hold. On that day they received divine confirmations, and each departed in a different direction to teach the Cause of God and unloosed his tongue to set forth the proofs and testimonies.

Thus the descent of the Holy Spirit means that the Apostles were attracted by the messianic Spirit, attained constancy and steadfastness, found a new life through the spirit of God's love, and saw Christ to be their ever-living helper and protector. They were mere drops and became the ocean; they were feeble gnats and became soaring eagles; they were all weakness and became endowed with strength. They were like mirrors that are turned towards the sun: It is certain that the rays and the effulgence of the sun will be reflected therein.



TRANSLATION