

Some Answered Questions, The Appearance of the Spirit in the Body

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fifth Edition, page 231

The Appearance of the Spirit in the Body

Question: What is the wisdom of the appearance of the spirit in the body?

Answer: The wisdom of the appearance of the spirit in the body is this: The human spirit is a divine trust which must traverse every degree, for traversing and passing through the degrees of existence is the means of its acquiring perfections. So, for example, when a man travels in an orderly and methodical manner through many different countries and regions, this will most certainly be the means of acquiring perfections, for he will see at first hand various sites, scenes, and regions; learn about the affairs and circumstances of other nations; become familiar with the geography of other lands; acquaint himself with their arts and wonders; become informed of the customs, conduct, and character of their inhabitants; witness the civilization and the advancements of the time; and be apprised of the manner of government, the capacity, and the receptivity of each country. In the same way, when the human spirit traverses the degrees of existence and attains each degree and station—even that of the body—it will assuredly acquire perfections.

Moreover, it is necessary that the signs of the perfections of the spirit appear in this world, that the realm of creation may bring forth endless fruits, and that this body of the contingent world may receive life and manifest the divine bounties. So, for example, the rays of the sun must shine upon the earth and its heat must nurture all earthly beings; if the rays and heat of the sun were not to reach the earth, it would remain idle and desolate and its development would be arrested. Likewise, were the perfections of the spirit not to appear in this world, it would become dark and wholly animalistic. It is through the appearance of the spirit in the material body that this world is illumined. Just as the spirit of man is the cause of the life of his body, so is the whole world even as a body and man as its spirit. If man did not exist, if the perfections



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of the spirit were not manifested and the light of the mind were not shining in this world, it would be like a body without a spirit.

By another token, this world is even as a tree and man as the fruit; without the fruit the tree would be of no use.

Beyond this, the members, constituent parts, and composition that are found within man attract and act as a magnet for the spirit: The spirit is bound to appear in it. Thus, when a mirror is polished, it is bound to attract the rays of the sun, to be illumined, and to reflect splendid images. That is, when these physical elements are gathered and combined together, according to the natural order and with the utmost perfection, they become a magnet for the spirit, and the spirit will manifest itself therein with all its perfections.

From this perspective one does not ask, "Why is it necessary for the rays of the sun to fall upon the mirror?"; for the relationships that bind together the realities of all things, whether spiritual or material, require that when the mirror is polished and turned towards the sun it should manifest the rays thereof. In like manner, when the elements are composed and combined according to the noblest order, arrangement, and manner, the human spirit will appear and manifest itself therein. Such is the decree of the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.