

# Some Answered Questions, The Procession of the Human Spirit from God

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fifth Edition, page 237

## The Procession of the Human Spirit from God

Question: In what manner does the human spirit proceed from God, since in the Torah it is said that God breathed the spirit into the body of man?

Answer: Know that procession is of two kinds: procession and appearance through emanation, and procession and appearance through manifestation. Emanational procession is like the procession of the handiwork from its author. For example, the writing proceeds from the writer. Now, just as the writing emanates from the writer and the discourse from the speaker, so does the human spirit emanate from God. But it does not manifest Him; that is, no part has been separated from the divine Reality to enter into the body of man. No, the human spirit has emanated, just as speech emanates from the speaker, and become manifested in the body of man.

As for manifestational procession, it is the manifestation of the reality of a thing in other forms, like the procession of this tree or this flower from their seeds, for it is the seed itself that has become manifested in the form of the branches, leaves, and flowers. This is called manifestational procession.

The spirits of men proceed from God by emanation, in the same way as the discourse proceeds from the speaker and the writing from the writer; that is, the speaker himself does not become the speech, any more than the writer becomes the writing: The connection is rather one of emanational procession. For the speaker remains in an absolute state of ability and power, as the discourse emanates from him, even as the action emanates from its author. The true Speaker, the divine Essence, ever remains in the same condition and experiences no change or alteration, no transformation or



TRANSLATION

vicissitude. It has neither beginning nor end. The procession of human spirits from God is therefore an emanational procession. When it is said in the Torah that God breathed His spirit into man, this spirit is even as speech that has emanated from the true Speaker and taken effect in the reality of man.

Now, if we were to understand manifestational procession as “appearance” rather than “division into parts”, we have already stated that this is the manner of the procession and appearance of the Holy Spirit and the Word, which are from God. As it is said in the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” It follows then that the Holy Spirit and the Word are the appearance of God and consist in the divine perfections that shone forth in the reality of Christ. And these perfections were with God, even as the sun which manifests the fullness of its glory in a mirror. For by “the Word” is not meant the body of Christ but the divine perfections that were manifested in Him. Thus Christ was like a spotless mirror which was turned towards the Sun of Truth, and the perfections of that Sun—that is, its light and heat—were plainly manifest in that mirror. If we look into the mirror, we see the sun and we say it is the sun. Therefore, the Word and the Holy Spirit, which consist in the perfections of God, are the divine appearance. This is the meaning of the verse in the Gospel which says: “the Word was with God, and the Word was God”, for the divine perfections cannot be distinguished from the divine Essence. The perfections of Christ are called the Word since all created things are like individual letters, and individual letters do not convey a complete meaning, while the perfections of Christ are even as an entire word, for from a word a complete meaning can be inferred. As the reality of Christ was the manifestation of the divine perfections, it was even as a word. Why? Because it comprised a complete meaning, and that is why it has been called the Word.

And know that the procession of the Word and the Holy Spirit from God, which is a manifestational procession and appearance, should not be taken to mean that the reality of the Divinity has been divided or multiplied, or has descended from its heights of purity and sanctity. God forbid! If a clear and spotless mirror were placed before the sun, the light and heat, the form and image of the sun would appear therein with such a manifestational appearance that if a beholder were to say, “This is the sun”, he would be speaking the truth. But the mirror is the mirror and the sun is the sun. The sun is but one sun, and remains one even if it appears in numerous mirrors. There is no place here for inherence, egress, commingling, or descent; for egress, regress, inherence, descent, and commingling are among the characteristics and requirements of bodies, not of spirits—how much less of the holy and sanctified Reality of the Divinity. Glorified is God above all that ill beseems His holiness and sanctity, and exalted is He in the heights of His sublimity!

The Sun of Truth, as we have said, has ever remained in the same condition and undergoes neither change nor alteration, neither transformation nor vicissitude. It has neither beginning nor end. But the sanctified Reality of the Word of God is even as a

clear, spotless, and shining mirror wherein the heat and light, the form and image of the Sun of Truth—that is to say, all its perfections—are reflected. That is why Christ says in the Gospel, “The Father is in the Son”, meaning that the Sun of Truth shines resplendent in this mirror. Glorified be He Who has cast His splendour upon this Reality that is sanctified above all created things!