

Some Answered Questions, Spiritual Disclosures

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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Spiritual Disclosures

Question: Some people believe that they have spiritual disclosures, that is, that they converse with spirits. How is this?

Answer: Spiritual disclosures are of two kinds: One, which is commonly referred to among other peoples, is mere imagination, while the other is true spiritual visions such as the revelations of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, and of John.

Consider that man's contemplative powers produce two kinds of conceptions. One kind consists in sound and true conceptions, which, when combined with resolution, become outwardly realized, such as proper arrangements, wise opinions, scientific discoveries, and technological inventions. The other consists in false ideas and baseless imaginations, which yield no fruit and have no reality. They surge like the waves of the sea of delusion and fade away like idle dreams.

In like manner, spiritual disclosures are of two kinds. One is the visions of the Prophets and the spiritual disclosures of the chosen ones of God. The visions of the Prophets are not dreams but true spiritual disclosures. Thus when they say, "I saw someone in such a form, and I spoke such words, and he gave such a reply", this vision takes place in a state of wakefulness and not in the realm of sleep. It is a spiritual discovery that is expressed in the form of a vision.

The other kind of spiritual disclosures is mere illusion, but these illusions take such a tangible form in the mind that many simple-hearted people imagine them to be real. The obvious proof of this is that no concrete result or outcome ever follows from this supposed compelling or summoning of spirits. No, these are mere fables and fictions.



TRANSLATION

Know, therefore, that the human reality encompasses the realities of all things and discovers their true nature, their properties, and their mysteries. For instance, all the existing crafts, inventions, sciences, and branches of learning have been discovered by the human reality. At one time they were all hidden and concealed mysteries, but the reality of man gradually discovered them and brought them forth from the invisible world into the visible realm. It is therefore evident that the reality of man encompasses all things. Thus it is in Europe and discovers America; it is on the earth and makes discoveries in the heavens. It unravels the mysteries of all things and apprehends the realities of all beings. These true disclosures which conform to reality are similar to visions—which consist in spiritual understanding, heavenly inspiration, and the close communion of human spirits—and thus the recipient will say that he saw, or said, or heard such a thing.

It is therefore clear that the spirit has powerful perceptions that are not mediated by the organs of the five senses, such as the eyes and the ears. And, with respect to spiritual understandings and inner disclosures, there exists among spiritual souls a unity that surpasses all imagination and comparison and a communion that transcends time and place. So, for example, when it is written in the Gospel that Moses and Elijah came to Christ on Mount Tabor, it is clear that this was not a material communion but a spiritual condition that has been expressed as a physical meeting.

The other kind of summoning of, and conversation and communication with, spirits is vain imagination and pure illusion, although it may appear to be real. The mind and thought of man at times discovers certain truths, and this thought and discovery produce definite results and benefits. Such thoughts have a solid foundation. But many things come to mind that are like the waves of the sea of delusion; they bear no fruit and produce no result. In the world of sleep, too, one may have a dream which exactly comes true, while on another occasion one will have a dream which has absolutely no result.

Our meaning is that this condition which we call conversation or communication with spirits is of two kinds: One is sheer delusion, and the other, which consists in the visions mentioned in the Bible, such as those of Isaiah and John and the meeting of Christ with Moses and Elijah, is real. The latter exert a marvellous effect upon minds and thoughts and produce powerful attractions in the hearts.