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STUDIES IN IMMORTALITY

PART II

New Revelations of the Unseen World

THERE are human sciences and divine sciences. There is human knowledge acquired through a chain of many minds laboriously building up sets of facts, and there is divine knowledge given to humanity at intervals by a great mind which sees with the Inner Sight.

Seventy years on earth, and then countless millions of years in the unseen Kingdom—such is the relation of mortal life to life eternal. One hundred years, even, on earth, is to the life beyond the Gateway as a tick of the clock to an eternal day. For all humanity, therefore, the absorbing question must be: What is the nature of the life in that endless eternity!

Who are the authorities on this subject of life beyond death? The materialists who deny all that cannot be seen and touched? The traditionalists who accept nothing new? The philosophers who adhere to human reason alone as impregnable in all its deductions—deductions which change from century to century, even during the lifetime of the philosopher himself?

The materialistic scientist, the scientific philosopher follows certain immutable laws and works along them for his logical sequences. The searcher for divine truth, equally scientific, asks what is that law of the divine universe by which we may recognize our great, trustworthy authority?

"Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus, "for *they* shall see God." And those who can see God can see His immortal Kingdom. But where is the heart which is absolutely pure?

There are many degrees of existence. As the plant cannot understand the animal, as the animal is powerless to comprehend the glory of the human intellect, so man is unable to comprehend spiritual verities until he is spiritually reborn. "Except one be born from above," said Jesus to Nicodemus, "he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Nicodemus had an earthly mind and only understood earthly things. Heavenly things are alone understood by heavenly minds." "As to the worlds whereunto Christ referred—unto whom be great glory—(the many mansions)," writes Abdul Baha, "they are spiritual, divine, heavenly, single, unlocated; neither the imperfect mind can comprehend them nor the sinning soul can know them. But verily the vision of the people of the Kingdom of El-Baha perceives them and the intellects of the people of the Supreme Concourse apprehend them."

In a word, the masters of divine science are those who have divine character.

Knowing themselves, they know their God, because He abides within them. The most pure, perfect and divine of men are the great world prophets. It is through contact with their teachings and their spirits, as Abdul Baha has so wonderfully explained in the article on education in this present issue, that human beings are spiritually reborn. In fact, the degrees of existence are: first, the mineral; second, the plant; third, the animal; fourth, the rational soul; fifth, the spiritually reborn, and sixth the Divine Prophets. These Divine Prophets are so pure and perfect that we call them the primal mirrors, the Manifestations of God. When they tell us of the many mansions of the Father's house they speak of what they have seen and heard. Their utterances are revelations of eternal verities. "I have yet many thing to say unto you," said Jesus, "but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all the Truth."

Our age of doubt is divinely blessed in having in its midst such masters, who reveal the fuller truth about immortal life. Baha'Ullah and Abdul Baha have given the most complete descriptions of life in the unseen worlds of God recorded in spiritual literature.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

By Abdul Baha

Question: What will become of the soul of man after death?

Abdul Baha: The body goes under the earth. Thence it came and thither it goes. Everything that you see returns to its own place. As the human body came from dust, to dust it returns. But the human spirit comes from God and to Him it returns.—*Star of the West,* Vol. 7, No. 9, p. 77.

It is apparent that the soul has its individuality, even as the body has its own. But if the body undergoes a change, the spirit need not be touched. When you break a glass on which the sun shines, the glass is broken, but the sun still shines. If a cage containing a bird is destroyed, the bird is unharmed. If a lamp is broken, the flame can still burn. The same thing applies to the spirit of man.—*Paris Talks.*

The spirits of the sons of the Kingdom, after the disintegration of this body ascend to the world of eternal existence; but should you ask the place, know thou that that world of existence is the world of unity, but the grades are different. For instance, the mineral existenc has a grade, but the mine al being has no knowledge of the vegetable kingdom. It (the mineral existence) has no information of a higher realm, nay, rather, according to appearances it may deny the higher grade. Likewise, vegetable life has no knowledge of the animal kingdom. It is entirely heedless and unconscious of that kingdom, because the grade of the animal is higher than that of the vegetable. The vegetable, owing to its limited environment, is veiled from knowledge of the animal kingdom and may deny it, although the animal, the vegetable and the mineral live in the world of existence. Likewise the animal cannot comprehend man's faculties of intelligence which generalize concerning the universal and discover the mysteries of being, so that while living in the East he organizes and founds institutions in the West, and he reveals hidden things. Though he abides in Europe he discovers America; though he dwells upon the earth he unravels the realities of the solar system. The animal is entirely unconscious of, nay, rather, is a denier of this intelligent force which penetrates into the unknown and comprehends the general as well as the particular ideas of this illimitable universe.

Likewise the people of the world lack knowledge of the world of the Kingdom, nay, rather, they deny it. Do we not hear from their lips words such as these: "Where is the Kingdom? Where is the Lord of the Kingdom?" But these souls are like unto the mineral and vegetable who know nothing of the animal and human kingdoms. They neither see nor search. However, the mineral, the vege-

table and the animal all live in this world of existence.

The divine trials are in this world, not in the world of the Kingdom.

The human reality in the other world has no physical likeness nay, rather it has the likeness of the Kingdom, which consists of the harmonious elements of the realm of the spiritual kingdom.

The center of the Sun of Truth and of the supreme world is the Divine Kingdom. Those souls who are purified and sanctified, after the disintegration of this elemental tabernacle hasten to the Divine Realm and that realm is in this universe, but the people of this world have no knowledge of it, just as the mineral and vegetable kingdoms have no knowledge of the animal and human kingdoms — *From a Tablet to Mr. and Mrs. Ostburg, Boston, Mass.*

Question: Do the dead pass entirely away from the earth, losing all consciousness of and interest in the people and affairs of the world?

Abdul Baha: No, the dead retain both interest in and remembrance of those they love.—*From Mrs. Aline Devine's notes, taken at Akka, October, 1906.*

Question: What is the connection of the spirit with the body?

Abdul Baha: It has the same connection as the sun has with the mirror. Death is the name for the dissolution of this connection.—*From Mirza Mahmoud's Diary, July, 1912.*

Abdul Baha: Concerning the question of death, know that the spirit is abstracted and sanctified from all things; for entrance and departure, ascent and descent, union and separation are the properties of material beings and not of the spirit. Consequently, the human spirit does not enter into the physical body, nay, rather, it has some "attachment" (to it). This "attachment" is like that of the mirror and the sun. The sun neither enters into nor does it go out of the surface of the mirror, nor does it absolutely identify itself with it, but it (the sun) has some attachment to the mirror and reflects itself therein. However, when this attachment is broken the mirror is deprived of illumination, beauty and effulgence.—*From Tablet to Madame D'Astre of Paris, dated May 21, 1908.*

Question: What is meant by the Mirror for Divine Reflection?

Abdul Baha: "Mirror" is the whole body, the brain in particular. Body has many elements in its composition and these are continually changed during one's lifetime. At dissolution each element is received back to its original source. The physical body of man is like that of the animal, the only difference being on the level of consciousness. It follows therefore that only consciousness or mind is left after death. Electricity is known by its attributes and effects. The power of consciousness is also thus recognized. After death the condition is one which cannot be clearly explained in words. It is one of comprehension, understanding which involves all other things—feeling, etc.

In beings there are degrees; all are not in the same station. Observe the various characters to be seen and compared, say, among ten children who have received identically the same treatment, training and food. Three degrees will be found, which might be classed as, rapid development, less rapid, and almost stagnant.

Question: Is there any predominant quality which man should develop in order to obtain especial excellence or power after death?

Abdul Baha: No, man should develop all his qualities for each quality has its own use and function.

Question: Is individuality retained by the various individual consciousnesses?

Abdul Baha: Complete individuality belongs only to the station of the Prophet. Those who follow him are under the "shadow" of his station. After death man does not develop through conscious effort, but through the power of Divine Bounty or unfoldment. All good works, loving memories, prayers and help from lesser beings assist the soul to push for-

ward after death.—*Questions asked at Ramleh, May, 1911.*

Abdul Baha: You will retain your individuality and will not be swallowed up in one vast spirit. Concerning the condition of the human soul after its ascension from the material world: the essence of the human soul is clarified from material substances and purified from the embodiment of physical things. It is exclusively luminous; it has no body; it is a dazzling pencil of light; it is a celestial orb of brightness.

Those souls who are not vivified and attracted by the Holy Spirit are accounted among the dead, because their souls are deprived of the Breath of the Holy Spirit; and these, after physical death, are in a certain condition, having feeling and discernment in their environment; but in comparison with the pure souls who have been vivified by the Holy Spirit they are as dead, and deprived of life.—*From an early Tablet, to Mr. E. C. Helbry, Tacoma, Washington.*

Thou hast asked concerning the spirits of men. They are not at all annihilated. They are immortal. But the spirits of heavenly souls will find eternal life, that is, they will attain to the highest and most great stations of perfection. But the spirits of the heedless souls although they are immortal yet they are in a world of imperfection, concealment and ignorance. This is a concise answer. Contemplate, and meditate upon it in order that thou mayest comprehend the reality of the mysteries in detail. For instance, no matter how much the mineral has existence and life yet, in comparison with man, it is entirely non-existent and deprived of life. When man is transformed, translated, from life to death, his comparative station will be that of the mineral existence. In such wise, the mineral life typifies the death of man. This is a brief answer.

We cannot realize in this world the bounty of God nor can we appreciate His love. But in the next world we can do so.

THE GLORY OF IMMORTAL LIFE

From the Words of Baha'Ullah

But concerning that which you have asked about the spirit and its everlastingness after its ascension: know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until it enters the presence of God in a form which throughout all centuries and times and throughout all circumstances and events of the world will remain unchanged but will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His power and His might, and from it will appear the traces of God, His qualities, providences and favors.

The pen cannot move at the mentioning of this station as it is in its supremeness and exaltation. The Hand of Divine Bounty will cause the spirit to enter into a station which cannot be comprehended by expression nor be explained by all the creatures of existence. Blessing be upon the spirit who departed from the body purified from the doubts and superstitions of the nations. Verily it moves in the atmosphere of God's pleasure and enters into the Supreme Paradise. All the angels of the Supreme Paradise attend and surround it; and it will have fellowship with all the prophets of God and His saints and will speak with them and tell them what happened to it in the Cause of God, the Lord of the universe. If anyone could realize what hath been assigned in the Kingdom of God, the Lord of the throne and the dust, he would immediately yearn with a great longing for that immovable, exalted, holy and most glorious station.

O Abdul Wahab, now listen in the Persian language!

As you asked about the immortality of the spirit, this Wronged One beareth witness to its eternality; and as to your question about its form—it cannot be described, and is not needful to be expressed; but only some things need to be known and messengers come only to guide the creatures to the straight path of God and in order that people may be trained. Then at the time of their ascen-

sion, with perfect holiness and separation and having been cut from the things of this world, they will repair to the Supreme Station. By the Self of God, the rays of those spirits are the cause of the development of the people and the station of the nations! These are the leaves of existence and the greatest cause of the appearance of divinity and the works of the universe. By them the clouds will shower and the plants of earth spring up. Not one thing of all existing things is without cause, reason and beginning. The greatest cause is that the spirits were and are forever above us unequal. And the difference between this (earthly) kingdom and the other is as the difference between the embryonic world and this world. After its ascension the spirit wi enter into the presenc of God in form suited for eternit and for the Kingdom.

ETERNAL REUNION

From Tablets of Abdul Baha

O thou spiritual friend! This world is a prison for heavenly souls and this earthly world is but a cage, and not a nest, unto divine birds. A prisoner who is awake and conscious will certainly seek for freedom, and a mindful bird will certainly wish for deliverance from the cage. —*p. 109.*

Do not grieve on account of the death of thy son, neither sigh nor lament. That nightingale soared up to the divine rose garden; that drop returned to the most great ocean of truth; that foreigner hastened to his native abode and that one who was ill found salvation and life eternal.—*p. 99.*

Be not grieved at the death of thy dear daughter. That divine bird flew away to the rose garden of the Merciful and that plant of humanity hastened to the garden of the Kingdom of El Abha. That drop returned to the Most Great Sea and that ray betook herself to the Most Great Orb. Be happy and thankful, because thou wilt see her face shining in the Divine Kingdom and wilt find her as a lamp amid an assembly in the spiritual heaven.—*p. 179.*

Be not sorrowful on account of the departure of thy good son. He hath indeed departed from this narrow and gloomy world, which is darkened by unlimited sorrow, unto the Kingdom which is spacious, illumined, joyous and beautiful. God delivered him from this dark well and promoted him to the Supreme Height. He gave him wings whereby he soared to the heaven of happiness. Verily this is the great mercy, from Him who is Precious and Forgiving.—*p. 51.*

Mrs. ..... hastened from this mortal world to the divine world and soared from this temporal realm to the expanse of the Kingdom. She abandoned the earthly cage and flew toward the bower of the upper world; so that, like unto a nightingale of significances she may in that divine rose garden engage in praising, glorifying and sanctifying the True One with the most marvelous melody. Consequently, do ye not sigh in grief because of her decease and be not dejected on account of her ascension.

To the people of adoration death is an ark of deliverance and to pure souls flight from this world of dust is the means of attaining to the kingdom of spheres. By "spheres" is not meant this infinite space, nay, rather, is meant the divine world and the invisible realm.—*p. 443.*

O my dear daughter! Indeed the separation from thy dear husband is very hard and difficult for thee. But he obtained the privilege of beholding the beauty of the Almighty. We, and you will also soar to that world, and you will find his shining face visible in the heavenly realm and in the world of the Kingdom, and you will find eternal union with him.

Be thou assured that he has not been lost; he is in existence, that is, in the pure world. And know thou for certain that thou hast not lost him, for thou shalt find him in the end.

Have therefore patience and endurance and be thou firm and at rest, and seek

God's mercy and benevolence in his behalf. I, too, will pray and beg for him everlasting glory. Be patient, so that thou mayest find great reward and see thy respected husband in the Divine Kingdom in the end, and find peace of soul and rest of heart.—*From a Tablet of Abdul Baha to a friend in Cleveland, Ohio.*

O thou beloved maidservant of God! Although the loss of a son is indeed heart-breaking and beyond the limit of human endurance, yet the heedful and observing person is assured that the son has not been lost but, instead, has stepped from this world into another, and he will find him in the Divine realms. That meeting shall be eternal; whereas in this world separation is inevitable and this in its turn entails its consuming fire.

Praise be unto God, thou hast faith, art turning thy face toward the everlasting Kingdom and believing in the existence of the heavenly worlds. Therefore be thou not disconsolate; do not languish; do not sigh; and refrain from wailing and bemoaning for agitation and mourning deeply affect his soul in the divine realm. That beloved child addresses thee from the hidden world, thus: O thou kind mother! Thank Divine Providence that I have been freed from the narrow and gloomy cage and, like unto the birds of the meadow, have soared to the divine world, a world spacious, illumined and ever gay and jubilant. Therefore lament not, O mother, and be not grieved. I am not of the lost ones and have not been exterminated and destroyed. I have shaken off the mortal form and have raised the banner in this spiritual world. Following this separation is everlasting association. Thou shalt find me in the heaven of the Lord, immersed in an ocean of light.—*Tablet translated by Shoghi Effendi, January 18, 1918.*

O thou whose soul is tranquilized by the grace of God and by the Greatest Gift! Verily I inform thee of that by which thy breast will be dilated with joy, thy heart will rejoice and thy soul will be delighted in every time and moment. And it is this, that verily thy honored wife, who journeyed unto God and hastened unto the Blessed Spot, her heart ignited with the fire of the love of God and her sight and gaze extended toward the Kingdom of El Abha, was firm in the Testament, and was overtaken by death in the land of Beirut, is now attracted to "The Living One who shall never die."

Verily, she surrendered her life while she was in a condition wherein she was encompassed with the glad tidings of thy Lord from all directions and her nostrils were perfumed with the fragrances of holiness from the Supreme Concourse. Her soul soared up to the summit of sanctity, under the shelter of the mercy of thy Lord, the Mighty, where the concourse of the chosen ones are assembled around it in the Lofty Paradise, and the angels of mercy are blessing it and are speaking its praise while their faces are smiling because of her ascension to heaven.

By the life of God, wert thou informed of her prosperity and of the bounty with which she is surrounded and of the favors of thy Lord, which were her greatest desire, thou wouldst smile with joy, thy breast would be dilated and thou wouldst thank God for that which He hath poured upon her; that He hath adorned her with the embroidery of sanctity and purity in His Kingdom, the El Abha; and that He hath crowned her with the diadem of the Greatest Gift in the Supreme Concourse.—*From an early Tablet to Mr. Percells of Chicago.*

PREPARATION FOR THE IMMORTAL DEGREES

O servants! If in these visible days and in this present world conditions contrary to your wish appear from the Realm of Decree be ye not depressed for happy and divine days shall come and spiritual worlds of holiness shall be manifest. In all those days and worlds for you a portion is ordained, a sustenance is deter-

mined and a food is established. Ye shall certainly attain to all these, should ye exchange the garment of mortality for the garment of immortality and enter the station of the paradise of Abha which is the everlasting abode of glorious, sacred souls. All things are a proof of your existence, if ye emerge from the gloomy dust of non-existence. Be not grieved at the hardships of these numbered days and be not dejected if your outward bodies are destroyed in the Path of the Beloved One; for every destruction is followed by a construction and a paradise of rest is concealed in every hardship.—*Words of Baha'Ullah.*

In the beginning of his life man was in the matrix of the world. There he obtained capacity and preparation for this world. The forces and powers necessary for this world he obtained there. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other world. He needed ears; therefore he obtained them in the world of the matrix. Thus was he prepared for this world. When he came to this world he found that all the necessary forces were ready; all his needs for material sustenance were provided.

Likewise, in this world he must also prepare himself and become ready for the life hereafter. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom he must obtain here. Just as man prepared himself for existence in this world by acquiring the necessary forces in the world of the matrix so is it necessary that all the forces needful in the Kingdom be acquired in this world.

After he is transferred from this world to the other world what is man in need of for the life of the Kingdom? In that world there is need of radiance; therefore radiance must be acquired in this world. In that world there is need of spirituality; he must acquire spirituality in this world. In that world faith and assurance, the knowledge of God and the love of God are essential; these he must acquire in this world so that after he ascends from this world to that immortal world he shall find ready for him all that is needful in that life eternal.—*From Words of Abdul Baha.*

The more difficulties one sees in the world the more perfect one becomes. The more you plough and dig the ground the more fertile it becomes. The more you cut the branches of a tree the higher and stronger it grows. The more you put the gold in the fire the purer it becomes. The more you sharpen the steel by grinding the better it cuts. Therefore, the more sorrows one sees the more perfect one becomes. That is why, in all times, the Prophets of God have had tribulations and difficulties to withstand. The more often the captain of a ship is in the tempest and difficult sailing the greater his knowledge becomes. Therefore I am happy that you have had great tribulations and difficulties. For this I am very happy—that you have had many sorrows. Strange it is that I love you and still I am happy that you have sorrows.—*From a Tablet of Abdul Baha, about 1910.*

Convey my spiritual greetings to the maidservant of God. and say unto her: "Verily for each one of the Manifestations of the previous cycles there was a certain station in existence, and a particular degree in the creation of man. But the Manifestation of the Greatest Name—may my spirit be a sacrifice for His beloved ones—was an expression of maturity and perfection in the essence of humanity and the world of existence; just as the sun is the center of light, the source of heat and the point of illumination, comprising all the perfections which were manifested to the world from the shining stars. Endeavor, so that thou mayest obtain an abundant portion and a great share from the Manifest Light.

"Verily I say unto thee, if thou arrivest at that station thou shalt behold all the holy people humble and submissive at that station. Make haste in life before death, spring before autumn, healing before sickness. Thus mayest thou be-

come a spiritual physician, healing all manner of diseases by the breaths of the Holy Spirit in this glorious century and manifest age."—**From a Tablet of Abdul Baha, 1902, to Mrs. I. D. Brittingham.*