

following Manifestation/ Prophet of God. And fourth, the resurrections of unbelievers to belief. The pre-existent Manifestation comes down from the Kingdom of God Manifested into This World and emanates the Kingdom of God Revealed - the world of spirit that each of us are invited to enter here and now!

THE RESURRECTIONS OF THE MANIFESTATIONS OF GOD

With regard to the Resurrection of the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh wrote,

"...by `Resurrection' is meant the rise of the Manifestation to proclaim His Cause ..." (Kitab-i-Iqan, p.170). And `Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's Son, explained:

The resurrections of the Divine Manifestations are not of the body. All their states, their conditions, their acts, the things they have established, their teachings, their their expressions, their parables, and their instructions have a spiritual and divine signification, and have no connection with material things. (Some Answered Questions, old ed., p.119)

When the Manifestation of God begins His Ministry, symbolized, with Moses, by the appearance of a Burning Bush, with Zoroaster, by the Sacred Fire, with Buddha, by the bo tree, with Jesus, by the dove, with Muhammad, by the angel Gabriel, with the Bab (Bahá'u'lláh's Forerunner), by a vision of the Imam Husayn (one of the central figures in Shi'ih Islam), and with Bahá'u'lláh, by a vision of the Maid of Heaven, He is, figuratively, "resurrected." That is to say, He arises to begin His earthly Mission.

THE RESURRECTIONS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD

The second usage of the term "resurrection" in the Bahá'í teachings pertains to the resurrection of the Cause of God. `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote:

As to the influence of holy Beings and the continuation of Their grace to mankind after They have put away Their human form, this is, to Bahá'ís, an indisputable fact. Indeed, the flooding grace, the streaming splendours of the Holy Manifestations appear after Their ascension from this world. The exaltation of the word, the revelation of the power of God, the conversion of God-fearing souls, the bestowal of everlasting life - it was following the Messiah's martyrdom [crucifixion of Christ] that all these were increased and intensified. In the same way, ever since the ascension of the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh], the bestowals have been more abundant, the spreading light is brighter, the tokens of the Lord's might are more powerful, the influence of the Word is much stronger, and it will not be long before the motion, the heat, the brilliance, the blessings of the Sun of His reality will encompass all the earth.

...This is but the early dawn. Consider how, with the CAUSE [emphasis added]

of Christ, three hundred years had to go by before its great influence was made manifest. Today, not sixty years from its birth [note: as of the time this was written], the light of this Faith has been shed around this planet. - Selections From the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p.65

And He once again stated:

...we say that the meaning of Christ's resurrection is as follows: the disciples were troubled and agitated after the martyrdom of Christ. The Reality of Christ, which signifies His teachings, his bounties, his perfections, and his spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three days after his martyrdom, and was not resplendent and manifest. No, rather it was lost; for the believers were few in number and were troubled and agitated. The CAUSE [emphasis added] of Christ was like a lifeless body; and, when after three days the disciples became assured and steadfast, and began to serve the CAUSE [emphasis added] of Christ of Christ, and resolved to spread the divine teachings, putting his counsels into practice, and ARISING [emphasis added] to serve him,... his religion found life, his teachings and admonitions became evident and visible. In other words, the CAUSE [emphasis added] of Christ was like a lifeless body, until the life and bounty of the Holy Spirit surrounded it. - From a chapter of Some Answered Questions, old edition, pp.119-121

Finally, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, wrote through his secretary:

We do not believe that there was a bodily resurrection after the crucifixion of Christ, but that there was a time after His ascension when His disciples perceived spiritually his true greatness and realized He was eternal in being. This is what has been reported symbolically in the New Testament and been misunderstood. His eating with disciples after resurrection is the same thing. - High Endeavors: Messages to Alaska, pp.69-70

This symbolic meaning of resurrection is affirmed by the Apostle Paul:

Buried with him [Jesus] in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. - Col. 2:12

And again:

...as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. - Rom. 6:4

The Cause of Christ, the resurrected body of Christ, was then incorporated into the early Christian eklesia (in-gathering or church). Paul wrote:

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. - I Cor. 12:27

The body of believers, in each Prophetic Dispensation, are the temple, the body of the Manifestation, who, collectively, become the earthly representation of

the Manifestation of God

THE RESURRECTION OF THE PREVIOUS RELIGION

During the Ministry of the Manifestation of God, the previous religion is perfected. Again, the Bab wrote:

For example, from the inception of the mission of Jesus - may peace be upon Him - till the day of His ascension was the resurrection of Moses. For during that period the Revelation of God shown forth through the appearance word punished by His word everyone who did not believe; inasmuch as God's testimony for that Day was that which He solemnly affirmed in the Gospel. - Selections From the Writings of the Bab, passage on pp.106-8

According to the late Hand of the Cause of God Hasan M. Balyuzi:

The Bab states that the first one to believe in a Manifestation of God is the essence of the achievement of the preceding dispensation; and so, `Abdu'l-Bahá...was the most eminent representative of the virtues called forth by the Bab. - `Abdu'l-Bahá, p.13

THE RESURRECTION OF UNBELIEVERS

Shoghi Effendi wrote:

Concerning the meaning of `Resurrection': although the term is used by Bahá'u'lláh in His Writings,... its meaning is figurative. The tomb is also allegorical, i.e., the tomb of unbelief. - Dawn of a New Day: Messages to India, p.79

The Bab explained, briefly, the symbolic meaning of the resurrections of unbelievers to faith and steadfastness:

True resurrection from the sepulchres means to be quickened in conformity with His Will, through the power of His utterance. - Selections From the Writings of the Bab, p.158

And again, Shoghi Effendi wrote the following, through his secretary, to the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Racine, Wisconsin:

...the spiritual resurrection of man... is...his acceptance of Divine Manifestations. - Lights of Guidance, 1988 revised edition, no.1592, p.481

When we accept the Manifestation of God, are "born again," i.e., we are raised from "the tomb of unbelief" to a life of faith and service.

The rapture, or translation, of the church, terms which are never actually used in the New Testament, are also references to the resurrections of unbelievers. I offer the following quote from the first epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessolonians. Commentary is included in brackets:

...we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who

are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope [There IS hope beyond the grave for those who sleep, i.e., who are dead.]. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again [resurrection of the Cause of Christ], even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus [Christians, when they leave this world, will be allowed to draw close to the Presence, the Will, of God.]. For this we have to say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain [in this world] until the coming of the Lord Himself [the return of Christ] shall not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. For the Lord [return of Christ] will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet [call] of God; and the dead in Christ [those Christians who have passed into the Kingdom of God Beyond - the next world] shall rise first [have the blessing of being the first to arise, from the Kingdom of God Beyond, and bow down to the returned Christ]. Then we who are alive and remain [still in this world] shall be caught up together with them [the great believers who have attained a high station in the Kingdom of God Beyond] in the clouds [while still in the physical body] to meet the Lord [the return of Christ] in the air [the Kingdom of God, including the Kingdom of God Beyond and the Kingdom of God Revealed], and thus we shall ever be with the Lord [in the everlasting Kingdom of God]. - I Thes. 4:13-17, New American Standard Version

CONCLUSION

The enlightened meaning of resurrection, as given in the Bahá'í teachings, is not only satisfying to the soul, but it makes a great deal more sense than a materialistic explanation focusing on form rather than spirit. Through the resurrections of the Manifestations, the Cause of God is exalted and unbelievers are raised to eternal life in the higher degrees of purity of the Kingdom of God.

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