

Some Answered Questions, The Pre-existence of Christ

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Translated. Original Persian



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The Pre-existence of Christ

Question: What is the meaning of the verse in the Gospel of John: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

Answer: Pre-existence is of two kinds. One is essential pre-existence, which is not preceded by a cause but which exists in itself. For example, the sun shines in itself and does not depend on the radiance of the other stars for its light. This is called essential light. But the light of the moon is derived from the sun, for the moon is in need of the sun for its radiance. Thus, with respect to light, the sun is the cause and the moon the effect. The former is ancient, antecedent, and prior, while the latter is preceded by something else.

The second kind of pre-existence is temporal pre-existence, which has no beginning. The transcendent Word of God is sanctified beyond time. The past, the present, and the future are all equal in relation to God. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow do not exist in the sun.

There is likewise precedence with regard to honour and distinction; that is, the most distinctive precedes the distinctive. Thus the reality of Christ, Who is the Word of God, undoubtedly precedes all created things in essence, in attributes, and in distinction. Before appearing in human form, the Word of God was in a state of utmost sanctity and glory, abiding in perfect beauty and splendour in the height of its majesty. When, through the wisdom of the Most High, that Word shed its light from the pinnacle of glory upon the corporeal world, it was assaulted through the flesh. Thus it fell into the hands of the Jews, became the captive of the ignorant and the unjust, and was at last crucified. That is why He called upon God, saying: Release Me from the bondage of the corporeal realm and deliver Me from this cage, that I may ascend to the heights of greatness and majesty, regain the former sanctity and glory which I enjoyed before inhabiting the world of the flesh, rejoice in the everlasting dominion, and wing My flight to My true abode, the placeless realm of the unseen Kingdom.

As you have observed, after His ascension the greatness and glory of Christ was established both in the realm of the hearts and across the reaches of the earth, even unto the very dust itself. So long as He dwelt in the corporeal world, He was despised and reviled by the weakest nation on the earth, the Jews, who saw it fit that a crown of thorns be placed upon His blessed brow. But after His ascension the gem-studded crowns of all the kings became humble and submissive before that crown of thorns.



TRANSLATION

Behold the glory that the Word of God attained even in this world!