

“To Die For”

Snapshots of an eternal Saga, a look at deepest devotion and mystery, a glance at a driving force in human history, a glimpse into love, a road to our destiny:

That special relationship between the All-Knowing, All-Wise Father in Heaven and His “Son”; the Word, the “Spirit of Truth”, the “light of the World” and redeeming educator of all.

(A relationship described in Holy Scriptures of many Faiths.)

One of the proofs...and mysteries; one of the hallmarks of their Station of Divine Greatness, is the willingness; nay eagerness, of the true Messenger of Light, to be as a sacrifice; to lay down their very life so that **“the whole world may attain unto true liberty... that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness.”** Reread the words again and then meditate on the full texts below with an open mind. Do not they convey much the same meaning as Jesus laying down his life for our sins? Jesus was granted his wish to shed his blood on the cross for us. Baha’u’llah endured a life of imprisonment. Certainly Baha’u’llah would have, in an instant, freely given his life for us dying as Jesus was allowed, but rather, in submitting himself to the Will of the Father, he remained on Earth to fulfill and complete his God appointed Mission.

Indeed, reading the passages below; including verses quoted from Hindu, Islamic and Christian sources; may well give insight into one of the mysteries beyond true human understanding i.e. The relationship between God the Father and His Appointed Messenger; in realms beyond temporal time and space - His Son.

Baha’i

“The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment. Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies. By My life! They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self. Would that ye know it!

The shame I was made to bear hath uncovered the glory with which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruelties I have endured, the Day Star of Justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendor upon men...”

“O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. Deal with Me as ye wish, for I have vowed to lay down My life in the path of God. I will fear no one, though the powers of earth and heaven be leagued against Me. Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self. Do unto Me as ye like, for the deepest longing of Mine heart is to attain the presence of My Best-Beloved in His Kingdom of Glory. Such is the Divine decree, if ye know it. Followers of Muhammad! If it be your wish to riddle with your shafts the breast of Him Who hath caused His Book the Bayan to be sent down unto you, lay hands on Me and persecute Me, for I am His Well-Beloved, the revelation of His own Self, though My name be not His name. I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty. He, verily, is the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. I, verily, anticipate from you the treatment ye have accorded unto Him that came before Me. To this all things, verily, witness, if ye be of those who hearken. O people of the Bayan! If ye have resolved to shed the blood of Him Whose coming the Báb hath proclaimed, Whose advent Muhammad hath prophesied, and Whose Revelation Jesus Christ Himself hath announced, behold Me standing, ready and defenseless, before you. Deal with Me after your own desires.”

“Know verily that whenever this Youth turneth His eyes towards His own self, he findeth it the most insignificant of all creation. When He contemplates, however, the bright effulgences He hath been empowered to manifest, lo, that self is transfigured before Him into a sovereign Potency permeating the essence of all things visible and invisible. Glory be to Him Who, through the power of truth, hath sent down the Manifestation of His own Self and entrusted Him with His message unto all mankind.”

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 99)

HINDU

The following hymns to Agni seem very much like Christian songs praising Jesus. Sure, names, symbols and cultural setting will, of course, be different. But, the core message is the same. Agni is praised in song as one to be greatly honored (sometimes deified) for bringing new emancipating wisdom from God. The plural “gods” refers to what is past and overcome by the new message Agni brings to the world.

Wikipedia describes Agni is “the messenger, the herald, master of all wealth, oblation-bearer, much beloved, who brings the willing Gods from the heavens and makes them sit on the grass with him near the sacrificial altar. Agni along with Indra, the lord of the heavens and Surya, the lord of the skies, constitute the first trinity of Hinduism. Their places were later assigned to Siva, Brahma and Vishnu respectively. In the Puranas, Agni is subordinated to other gods. We see in them a clear decline in his popularity and significance. The Agni Purana, for example, is not about the significance of Agni but of

Vishnu as the lord of the universe. Agni is a mere recipient of divine knowledge like other vedic deities.

Many earlier vedic hymns praise him copiously often describing him as the supreme god and creator.”

HYMN II. Agni.

With sacrifice exalt Agni [The Celestial Priest or Messenger of Heaven Anointed by God] who knows all life; worship him 'with oblation and the song of praise,

Well kindled, nobly fed; heaven's Lord, Celestial Priest, who labours at the pole where deeds of might are done.

At night and morning, Agni, have they called to thee, like milch-kine in their stalls lowing to meet their young.

As messenger of heaven thou lightest all night long the families of men. Thou Lord of precious boons.

Him have the Gods established at the region's base, doer of wondrous deeds, Herald of heaven and earth;

Like a most famous car, Agni the purely bright, like Mitra. to be glorified among the folk.

Him have they set in his own dwelling, in the vault, like the Moon waxing, fulgent, in the realm of air.

Bird of the firmament, observant with his eyes, guard of the place as 'twere, looking to Gods and men.

May he as Priest encompass all the sacrifice. men throng to him with offerings and with hymns of praise.

Raging with jaws of gold among the growing plants, like heaven with all the stars, he quickens earth and sky.

Such as thou art, brilliantly kindled for our weal, a liberal giver, send us riches in thy shine, For our advantage, Agni, God, bring Heaven and Earth hither that they may taste oblation brought by man.

Agni, give us great wealth, give riches thousandfold. unclose to us, like doors, strength that shall bring renown.

Make Heaven and Earth propitious through the power of prayer, and like the sky's bright sheen let mornings beam on us.

Enkindled night by night at every morning's dawn, may he shine forth with red flame like the realm of light,-

Agni adored in beauteous rites with lauds of men, fair guest of living man and King of all our folk.”

(Vedas, Rig Veda - Book 2) 1-8 Hindu

HYMN XIV. Agni.

“ENKINDLING the Immortal, wake Agni with song of praise: may he bear our oblations to the Gods.

At high solemnities mortal men glorify him the Immortal, best

At sacrifice among mankind.

That he may bear their gifts to heaven, all glorify him Agni, God,

**With ladle that distilleth oil.
Agni shone bright when born, with light killing the Dasyus and the dark:
He found the Kine, the Floods, the Sun.
Serve Agni, God adorable, the Sage whose back is balmed with oil:
Let him approach, and hear my call.
They have exalted Agni, God of all mankind, with oil and hymns
Of praise, devout and eloquent.”**

The Rig Veda: Book 5 1-6 Hindu

ISLAM

Here are verses from the Quran. In verse “162” on Sura 6 Muhammad makes it clear his “life and death is all for Allah [God].

Other verses address the oneness of God, living a good life, Guidance of God to Muhammad, Submission to the Will of God,

159. As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.

160. He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit: he that doeth evil shall only be recompensed according to his evil. No wrong shall be done unto (any of) them.

161. Say: "Verily, my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, a religion of right, the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith, and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah."

162. Say: "Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds:

163. No partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to His Will.

164. Say: "Shall I seek for (my) Cherisher other than Allah, when He is the Cherisher of all things (that exist)?" Every soul draws the meed of its acts on none but itself: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is toward Allah: He will tell you the truth of the things wherein ye disputed.

The Quran: Sura 6: 159-164

The next story gives insight regarding the devotion and willingness of Muhammad to sacrifice his life to the Almighty. As in many Bible stories, it is the inner lesson or spiritual enlightenment that is important. In this case Muhammad is represented as a Courtier to a king.

STORY VII.

The Courtier who quarreled with his Friend for saving his Life.

“A king was enraged against one of his courtiers, and drew his sword to slay him. The bystanders were all afraid to interfere, with the exception of one who boldly threw himself at the king's feet and begged him to spare the offender. The king at once stayed his hand, and laid down his sword, saying, "As you have interceded for him, I would gladly pardon him, even if he had acted as a very demon. I cannot refuse your entreaties, because they are the same as my own. In reality, it is not you who make these entreaties for him, but I who make them through your mouth. I am the real actor in this matter and you are only my agent. Remember the text, 'You shot not when you shot;' I you are, as it were, the foam, and I the mighty ocean beneath it. The mercy you show to this offender is really shown by me, the king." The offender was accordingly released and went his way; but, strange to say, he showed no gratitude to his protector, but, on the contrary, omitted to greet him when he met him, and in other ways refused to recognize the favor he had received from him. This behavior excited remark, and people questioned him as to the cause of his ingratitude to his benefactor. He replied, "I had offered up my life to the king when this man intervened. It was a moment when, according to the tradition, 'I was with God in such a manner that neither prophet nor angel found entrance along with me,' and this man intruded between us. I desired no mercy save the king's blows; I sought no shelter save the king. If the king had cut off my head he would have given me eternal life in return for it. My duty is to sacrifice my life; it is the king's prerogative to give life. The night which is made dark as pitch by the king scorns the brightness of the brightest festal day. He who beholds the king is exalted above all thoughts of mercy and vengeance. Of a man raised to this exalted state no description is possible in this world, for he is hidden in God, and words like 'mercy' and 'vengeance' only express men's partial and weak views of the matter. It is true 'God taught Adam the names of all things,' 3 but that means the real qualities of things, and not such names as ordinary men use, clad in the dress of human speech. The words and expressions we use have merely a relative truth, and do not unfold absolute truth.”

(Mathnavi of Rumi (E.H. Whinfield tr), The Masnavi Vol 4)

CHRISTIAN:

Jesus makes it clear the words he speaks are not his own. He gives God full credit, as did Muhammad, when, in John 12:49, * Jesus explains,” For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak”.

Below, in context, is the previous quoted verse. Jesus states his relationship with God and with Esaias (Isaiah).

“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

*** For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.**

And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

(King James Bible, John) 12:41-50

Jesus not only claims His Station as a Messenger of God, He also stresses the importance of fulfilling the ancient Jewish Law by submitting himself as the Supreme Sacrifice; offering to die an excruciating death in atonement for the sins of the world. Thus his mission was short; a mere three years. Yet, those same three years had a profound influence upon two thousand years of human history. More Biblical references will be added soon exploring this phenomena of Jesus and how he fits into the Greater Covenant.

David