

## Is “Returning Resurrection” Acceptable to Christianity?

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The Divine Principle teaches that even after you pass away and happen to go to a low level of the spirit world because you unfortunately have not lived an ethical enough life on the earth, you can still “return” spiritually to an earthly person, most likely your bereaved spouse or descendent, for your needed spiritual growth, which the Divine Principle calls “resurrection.” You can spiritually benefit this resurrection, by receiving merit from the good deeds of your earthly counterpart to whom you return. Hence your “returning resurrection.”

“Resurrection” here is a Divine Principle notion which refers to your gradual spiritual growth from the state of fallenness, whether you are on the earth or in the spirit world. (It may be similar to the Christian notion of “sanctification,” prominent especially in the Methodist tradition.) If you are still on the earth, you spiritually benefit resurrection through your own good deeds in accordance with God’s will. But if you are already in the spirit world, you benefit it by receiving merit from the good deeds of your earthly counterpart. So, this notion of resurrection as spiritual growth is very different in its meaning from the Christian idea of “physical resurrection,” “bodily resurrection,” or “resurrection of the body,” which means that after you pass away, you come back to physical life by regaining your physical body. These two should not be confused here, although our discussion later will find out that they are related to each other in a significant way.

What is noteworthy in the Divine Principle idea of “returning resurrection” is that even if you pass away as a person of failure on the earth and go to a very low level of the spirit world, say hell, you will be given **a second chance** to grow spiritually there, by returning to your earthly counterpart for your resurrection, so that you may be able to move to a higher level in the spirit world, even getting out of hell to reach heaven eventually, no matter how enormously difficult it may be. It is to be noted also that while you in the spirit world receive merit from your earthly counterpart’s good deeds, you, in turn, contribute something to that earthly person, by cooperatively helping or at least expecting the earthly person to do good deeds in accordance with God’s will.

The way how you in the spirit world receive merit from your earthly counterpart needs to be explained more.

According to the Divine Principle, during your physical life you have your “spirit self” and “physical self,” which together have the relationship of the dual characteristics of **sungsang** (internal character) and **hyungsang** (external form). If you pass away by shedding your physical self, you will remain only as your spirit self in the spirit world. But in the spirit world you are not purely spiritual, since your spirit self contains both your “spirit mind” and “spirit body,” which together have the relationship of the dual characteristics of **sungsang** and **hyungsang**.

So, when you in the spirit world face your earthly counterpart who has the dual characteristics of **sungsang** (spirit self) and **hyungsang** (physical self), you do so with your own dual characteristics of **sungsang** (spirit mind) and **hyungsang** (spirit body). There is something in common between you and your earthly counterpart: the dual characteristics of **sungsang** and **hyungsang**. This is what makes it possible for both of you to relate to each other and affect each other. By analogy, it is like two tuning forks (you and your earthly counterpart), each with two prongs (the dual characteristics), resonate with each other.

Therefore, when good deeds are done through the give-and-take action of your earthly counterpart’s spirit self and physical self centering on God, these good deeds affect you in such a way as to be received and absorbed to you. This is how you receive merit from your earthly counterpart. What is striking here is the existence of your “spirit body” in your spirit self, so that you in the spirit world may have the dual characteristics of **sungsang** and **hyungsang** to be able to relate to your earthly counterpart who also has the same dual characteristics.

Returning resurrection is not reincarnation, as it indicates that you who have passed away and your earthly counterpart to whom you return are two different individual persons and not one and the same person.

But is this returning resurrection in the Divine Principle acceptable to Christianity? The answer is in the negative because Christianity believes that the wicked, upon their physical death, will go to hell for eternal damnation (while the righteous will go to heaven for eternal blessing) without being able to return to their earthly counterparts, i.e. without being given a second chance to grow spiritually through them for eventual salvation. They must stay in hell for eternity. Even after their physical resurrection, whether it takes place immediately upon their physical death or in the last days, they will not be given a second chance. The curse will be even more intensified with their bodily resurrection.

Because of this, critics of Christianity usually say that the God of Christianity is a very merciless and cruel God towards people in hell. The famous atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell states: “I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin [everlastingly], is a doctrine of cruelty” (*Why I Am Not a Christian*, 1957, p. 18). In an attempt to justify the love of God, therefore, some Christians have adopted reincarnation, which teaches that

the soul can continuously grow through repeated life on the earth. For example, Geddes MacGregor has done so in his *Reincarnation in Christianity: A New Vision of the Role of Rebirth in Christian Thought* (1990). But, strictly speaking, Christianity has no room for reincarnation.

The present writer, however, believes that while Christianity cannot accept reincarnation, it can accept the Divine Principle idea of returning resurrection, if it understands its traditional notion of physical resurrection in a proper way which is still non-heretical. That way Christianity can let the deceased return to their earthly counterparts and even give a second chance to the wicked in hell, thereby being able to address the criticism of those who complain that the God of Christianity is merciless towards people in hell.

What, then, should be Christianity's proper understanding of physical resurrection, so it may be able to accept returning resurrection? It should be by equating the "resurrected body" in the Christian tradition with the "spirit body" of a deceased person in the Divine Principle, so that the duality of the spiritual part (the soul) and the physical part (resurrected body) of the deceased person in Christianity may be equated with the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (spirit mind) and *hyungsang* (spirit body) of the deceased person in the Divine Principle.

This equation entails the following two more points regarding physical resurrection. First, physical resurrection should not mean the reanimation of the physical corpse, the resuscitation of the same body that the deceased person used to have on the earth, but rather the gaining of a "spiritual body," which is "celestial" and "imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:40-44). This means that the deceased person does not literally come back to the earth with exactly the same body as before but continues to live with a "spiritual body" in the spirit world even after physical resurrection. Actually, this is what most theologians agree upon. Amazingly, what St. Paul calls a "spiritual body" coincides namewise with what the Divine Principle terms a "spirit body."

Second, physical resurrection should take place immediately upon physical death and not in the last days.

Regarding the time of physical resurrection, there are two different understandings in Christianity:

1) immediately upon physical death (2 Cor. 5:1-3); and 2) in the last days (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). And the second understanding is far more popular than the first. But, if physical resurrection would take place in the last days, something unacceptable would emerge. It is that the deceased person would have to go through the so-called "intermediate stage" between the time of physical death and the last days, during which the deceased person would have no resurrected body, thus not having the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang* by which to be able to relate to some earthly person. Thus the deceased person would not be given a second chance for spiritual growth.

By having the above two points which are still biblical and therefore non-heretical, Christianity can now say that for further spiritual growth in the spirit world the deceased person with the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (the soul) and *hyungsang* (resurrected body) can really relate to the earthly counterpart who also has the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (soul) and *hyungsang* (earthly body).

John Hick correctly maintains that there still will be "a divine purpose of person-making" after physical death, and that this person-making takes place because of physical resurrection. But, according to him, it takes place when the deceased person with a resurrected body (a spiritual body) relates to fellow inhabitants with resurrected bodies in the spirit world ("Life after Death," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, pp. 332-33). According to the Divine Principle, however, the deceased person can spiritually grow, by receiving benefit only from the earthly counterpart.

If the Divine Principle idea of returning resurrection is acceptable to Christianity in the way mentioned above, the Catholic notion of "purgatory" can be better understood in this light. According to Catholic theology, if you commit only venial sins on the earth, you will not go to hell but to purgatory for purification to be eventually allowed to go to heaven. For your purification in purgatory, your earthly counterpart can pray and buy indulgences. From the viewpoint of the Divine Principle, your earthly counterpart's good deeds of praying and buying indulgences constitute merit you can receive through the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang* both of you have in common.

The Catholic notion of the limbo of the fathers (*limbus patrum*), too, can be understood the same way. The Catholic Church teaches that the limbo of the fathers is the place in the spirit world in which the Old Testament saints such as Abraham, Jacob, and Moses stayed till Christ's coming and redemption which opened heaven to them. The Divine Principle can explain it, by saying that when Christ came, the Old Testament fathers were able to receive benefit from the good deeds of earthly Christians through the mechanism of the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*.

Finally, there is a point of caution we have to bear in mind. When the Divine Principle teaches that even the wicked in hell will be given a second chance, it does not mean that their liberation from hell is an easy process. It is because communication between the spirit world and the physical world is extremely difficult for now. Especially a wicked person bound in hell would not have much ability to relate to the physical world. So, while on the earth, we are encouraged to refrain from thinking that we can commit sin now because we will be liberated from hell anyway.