

# Reincarnation

THE CYCLE OF NECESSITY





# REINCARNATION

The Cycle of Necessity

By

Manly P. Hall



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*This book is dedicated to  
Carolyn A. Lloyd  
with the sincere regards  
of the author*



## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this present writing is to encourage the study of the doctrine of reincarnation as the most reasonable solution to the mystery of life. There is already considerable literature on the subject, and other books will be written in the future. But until now the circulation of these works has been limited, so that the general public is as yet uninformed on this most important of all philosophical teachings.

To me the laws of reincarnation and karma are the only solutions to the eternal problem of human unfitness. In the words of a celebrated orientalist: "It is only the knowledge of the constant rebirths of one and the same individuality throughout the life cycle... that can explain to us the mysterious problem of Good and Evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and *apparent* injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him, and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, while their nearest neighbor with all his intellect and noble virtues—far more deserving in every way—perishing of want and for lack of sympathy; when one sees



all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the undeserved suffering, one's ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him—that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men, as well as their supposed creator." \*

Reincarnation is nothing more nor less than the law of evolution applied to the unfolding consciousness of the individual. All growth and development bear witness to the improvement of that invisible divine force which is the cause of all physical growth and development. Everything in the universe is growing up through the experiences of existence. Why should man be left unaware of his participation in this eternal growth? Why should he be bound round with dogmas of fear and doubt; man-made conceits in the midst of a God-made world?

As may be expected of any widely diffused belief, reincarnation has been variously stated according to the spirituality and rational powers of its interpreters. It is obvious that the Eskimo concept should be less philosophical and detailed than that of a great East Indian scholar. In substance both agree, but each interprets this law according to his own world of experience.

It is a law of the Eskimo, who lives a precarious existence that the old and the feeble must be left behind. It is customary, therefore, for one of advancing years to look about him for an appropriate family into which to be reborn. Selecting a newly married couple, he goes to them and asks if they will permit him to be their first child. If he is a good and honorable person they probably will give their consent. The

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\* H. P. Blavatsky.

aging man will then depart from the camp, and going some distance will commit suicide believing that his soul will come into the new family he has selected.

To our modern and practical mind the Druids of ancient Britain and Gaul gave even greater testimony of their belief. In the British Museum are receipts and other Druidic legal remains proving that it was not uncommon for these men to borrow money on their promise to repay in a future existence.

Dr. Le Plongeon found evidence of a belief in reincarnation among the Maya and Quiche Indians of Central America. The belief is imputed also to the Incas and other peoples of the Andes in South America.

New research makes it possible for me to include in this edition a survey of the belief in reincarnation among the American Indians. This is the first time that the Amerindian concepts have been included in any book dealing with rebirth. We hope that at some future date it will be possible to examine the cults of Central Africa, among which, also, there are vestiges of the doctrine.

In our treatment of the subject we have departed somewhat from the precedent laid down by previous writers. In the first place we have not included literary and poetical references to reincarnation. This is because we have no assurance that a poetical or fictional reference actually represents the sober opinion of the author. Nor have we included a vast amount of "borderline" material which is doubtful in its implication. Thirdly, we have omitted those reminiscences of people who traveling to different localities suddenly feel that they have been there before. And lastly, we have restricted our quotations to authorities whose opin-



ions hold weight as arising from scholarship and achievement in various fields of thought. There is an abundance of quotable material which may be equally authentic, but coming from unknown sources carries little weight against the almost impervious materialism of our times.

By no means have we exhausted the potential sources of information. To publish all the statements of scholars and thinkers on this subject would take thousands of pages. Therefore we have collected only such as are indicative of the general trend.

It is obvious that no one can be compelled to accept a belief because that belief is enlightened. Man accepts only when he himself is enlightened. The doctrine of reincarnation carries with it an almost metaphysical power of conviction. When a normal, healthy mind is given an adequate understanding of the meaning of this law there is an instantaneous psychic sympathy. It is as though the mind suddenly remembers something it has known over vast periods of time. In the words of Plato, "learning is remembering." The inward part of man, recognizing truth, may not deny or ignore it, but in the terms of Plotinus, "flows joyously toward reality and embraces it."

I have discussed reincarnation with many persons, and frequently have observed an unexplainable flash of acceptance. To these the discovery of this law is the end of seeking and the beginning of becoming.

MANLY PALMER HALL

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

Words are the vehicles of ideas, and unless they are understood properly misunderstanding is inevitable. The English language is immature for the reason that Western civilization itself has not yet achieved maturity. The language has a rich commercial and industrial vocabulary, but is woefully lacking in exact philosophical terms. Possibly the most perfect of philosophical languages is Sanskrit.

It is the Sanskrit word *samsara* that has been translated as *reincarnation*. Literally the word reincarnation means to incarnate again, to be re-embodied, or more accurately, to be re-enfleshed; to return after death to the physical world in another physical body. To the Oriental the word *samsara* implies this and more. It is a word symbol for a complete idea; the progressive re-embodiments of the ego, self, or sattva, depending on the philosophic system. The law of reincarnation as revealed by Buddha teaches that all living things, animate and inanimate, must pass through innumerable re-embodiments until all imperfections have been removed by experience.

The word *rebirth* as used in Western schools of metaphysics is identical in technical meaning with reincarnation, but lacks a little of the color and inferences of the latter term. The law of rebirth is the law of reincarnation, and for practical purposes the two terms may be regarded as synonymous.

The Greek word *metempsychosis* is defined as "the passing of the soul at death into another body, whether of a brute or a person." For our purposes we wish somewhat to refine this definition. Platonists explicitly state that, in reincarnating, the spiritual entity of an exceedingly depraved person might overshadow an animal, but never actually enters into an animal body. In the "Platonic Philosophers' Creed" Thomas Taylor, the most distinguished of modern Platonists, says: "I also believe that the human soul on its departure from the present life, will, if not properly purified, pass into other terrene bodies; and that if it passes into a human body, it becomes the soul of that body; but if into the body of a brute, it does not become the soul of the brute, but is externally connected with the brutal soul in the same manner as presiding daemons are connected in their beneficent operation with mankind; for the rational part never becomes the soul of the irrational nature."

In this present writing we shall follow the opinion of the most learned of the Greeks and regard metempsychosis as synonymous with reincarnation; as a progressive and not a retrogressive process, reserving the term *transmigration* to define the less evolved opinions of inferior peoples.

The term *transmigration* also means successive embodiments. We shall use it in the restricted sense of rebirth in lower or animal bodies, which belief is held by the less informed in many Asiatic countries. For example, it is a prevalent belief among many Hindus in Benares that a person dying on the opposite side of the river from where the temples and ghats stand shall be reborn in the form of a donkey. In view of this it is rather remarkable that the Rajah's palace should stand on the wrong side of the river!

*Palingenesis* is occasionally used as a synonym for reincarnation. More exactly, however, the word signifies revivification, regeneration, resurrection, or renewal. In alchemy palingenesis is the restoration of bodies from their ashes. The experiments are performed in sealed retorts. Both Paracelsus and the Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher performed this experiment. The term therefore should only imply the resurrection or renewal of an old form or body so that it may be re-embodied by the entity.

*Pre-existence* is the belief in the existence of the spirit prior to its descent into birth. This doctrine has been defended by a wide variety of eminent persons and is responsible for a number of misstatements in books dealing with the subject of reincarnation. Although pre-existence may involve a belief in reincarnation, this is not by any means an infallible rule. A simple example is the Biblical statement, "Before Abraham was, I am." This statement, while it may indicate the belief in pre-existence, does not necessarily imply reincarnation.

Certain sects believe that we may live again, or have lived before, but not on the physical earth. It has even been suggested that souls pass from planet to planet. Such beliefs should not be confused with the doctrine of reincarnation.

*Immortality* simply means the deathlessness of the spirit. Immortality is agreed upon by the greater part of the human race, but as the term does not imply any necessity for physical rebirth, the belief in immortality is not synonymous with the belief in reincarnation.

The divine part of man is commonly called the *spirit*; the permanent being; that which is the cause of body and operates through body, but is capable of an existence independent of body. In some systems this spiritual permanence



is called the "self" as distinguished from its body and appetites which are termed the "not-self." In Buddhist philosophy the self is termed the *sattva*, and it is the *sattva* which is periodically re-embodied in the cycle of necessity.

In more advanced philosophies the self, *sattva*, or spirit, is regarded as impersonal. It emanates personalities into the phenomenal world, but never for an instant should be confused with these personalities. The personality is seldom reborn. Thus Plato or Napoleon will never live again, but the spirit that emanated Plato or Napoleon will emanate new personalities and will continue to evolve through these emanations.

The term *ego* is occasionally used to distinguish the *sattva* of a human being from the *sattva* of inferior or superior creations. *Ego* means I or selfness, and supposedly is applied only to creatures capable of the conscious knowledge of I. The *sattva* or entity of the subhuman kingdom is properly termed a *monad*, which to the reincarnationist means the collective entity of a species or type, an unindividualized self.

*Personality* is the term applied to the complex of mind, emotion, sense, and form. Personalities are those objective parts of man's composite nature which are discernible or sensible to others, and come to be regarded as realities by the uninformed. To most people reincarnation signifies the re-embodiment of their personalities. This is the key to the confusion in *Isis Unveiled* wherein Mme. Blavatsky insists that personalities are not reborn except under unusual conditions. Personality is the most impermanent part of man, and is subject to modification and change during life, and utter dissolution at death.

In the Buddhistic philosophy a *bodhisattva* or enlightened self is one in whom the imperfections of the material existence have ceased or died out. Through realization and meditation the *bodhisattva* has reached the point of liberation. He may choose to go forward and enter nirvana, which is the end of personalized existence, or he may choose to remain for a time as a teacher and guide for others less perfect than himself. The *bodhisattva* therefore must make what is termed "The Great Choice"; the choice of existence or nonexistence.

A *Buddha* is a perfected soul or *sattva* in which all karma is finished; that is, the three fires of personal existence—thought, emotion, and action have burned out. A *bodhisattva* may remain for some time as a teacher, and then, having completed his responsibility, may choose to become a Buddha. Buddhahood is the last life on this earth; therefore a Buddha does not die. He passes into nirvana. His causal nature is disseminated through time and space, and he ceases forever to exist as a being.

*The cycle of necessity* is the wheel of birth and death. It is the cycle of consecutive re-embodiment covering that time from the beginning of individualized existence to the final absorption in nirvana, or the completion of material existence. Buddha is frequently represented in the posture of turning a wheel with eight spokes. This is the wheel of existences to which men cling because of their ignorance, and from which they are released only through illumination.

*Memory of past lives*: In both the Eastern and Western schools the memory of past lives is awakened only after initiation into the Mysteries. This memory is preserved in the permanent self and may be contacted when the lower personality is lifted up by discipline into communion or par-

ticipation with the self. For the uninitiated there is no advantage in remembering past personalities.

*Karma* means compensation, and is the application of the law of cause and effect to the moral lives of personalized creatures. The law of karma motivates rebirth. Reincarnation is made necessary by the accumulation of good and evil actions brought forward from previous existences. Rebirth must continue as long as karma remains. Christ is made to say: "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." This is a statement of the law of compensation. But a theological system teaching the forgiveness of sin can never adhere very closely to the law of compensation. Buddha's statement of the same law permits no intercession or escape: "Effect follows cause as the wheel of the cart follows the foot of the oxen." Rebirth takes the place of faith and atonement, giving to each incarnating entity fresh lives in which to master and transmute personal imperfections.

As karma is compensation, so *dharma* is conduct, the actions from which karmic consequences are derived. A man's dharma is the life which he has earned in the past plus his own philosophical conduct toward his own imperfections. Thus dharma bestows the element of progress so that there is not only punishment, but growth during each incarnation. The ultimate dharma is to voluntarily embrace the Law, become an arhat, and seek nirvana.

## REINCARNATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

It is impossible to state with certainty at what time the doctrine of reincarnation first came to be believed in India. The *Vedas*, the most ancient of the Hindu sacred books, contain no definite statement of rebirth. The Vedic concept of the after-death state corresponds closely with that of the early Greeks. The soul departs from the body and wanders as a ghost in the underworld. Homer, describing the soul of Achilles, gives no promise of a future life, but leaves the hero's shade wandering aimlessly in the fields of the dead.

According to S. E. Gopala Charlu in his article "The Indian Doctrine of Reincarnation," there are inferences of a continuity of lives in the *Rig Veda*. He gives the thirty-second *rik* of the first section as follows: "He who produced him does not know him. From him who sees him, he is concealed. He is hidden within the womb of his mother. Taking many births he has entered upon misery." \* It appears, however, that the first part of the last sentence, "taking many births," reads in the original *bahuprajah* † and that the interpretation is alternative and therefore inconclusive. We

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\* *The Theosophist*, May, 1892, p. 480.

† Literal meaning: having many progeny.



particularly mention this because of the frequent reference to this important verse.

Metempsychosis is stated expressly, however, in the *Atharva Veda*, the *Institutes* of Manu, the *Vishnu Purana*, and in the *Upanishads*. An example typifies the mood of these scriptures and commentaries: "In man there are arteries, thin as a hair split a 1,000 times, filled with fluid, blue, red, green, yellow, etc. The tenuous involucrum \* (the base or ethereal frame of the astral body) is lodged in them and the ideal residue of the experiences of the former embodiments adhere to the said tenuous involucrum and accompany it in its passage from body to body." †

To the East Indian mind the *Institutes* of Manu is a work of special sanctity as a revelation of law and conduct. In the twelfth section of this work appears the statement: "The various transmigrations of men through the highest, middle, and lowest stages, are produced by their actions." In this case we may safely say that the English translator should have used the word reincarnation instead of transmigration. Here is an example of Western misinterpretation of Eastern scriptures, but we can expect no better when we realize what has occurred to our own sacred books.

The *Upanishads* were compiled in the century immediately preceding the birth of Buddha. Their inspiration is the *Veda*, and they comprise a vast literature dealing with the most recondite phases of metaphysics. They abound in references to the doctrine of rebirth. For example, in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is the statement: "According to his deeds the embodied one successively assumes forms in various con-

\* Involucrum—a wrapper, an envelope or sheath.

† *Lucifer*, Vol. IV. p. 89.

ditions." In the *Mundaka Upanishad* reincarnation is expressed in the words: "Having had enjoyment on the top of the heaven won by good works, they re-enter this world." The *Katha Upanishad* is particularly poetic: "The human race is like the grain that ripens, it falls and is born again."

The *Puranas* are poetical works belonging to the class of sacred books, and like the *Upanishads* are held in the highest esteem. References to rebirth appear also in the puranic literature. The *Bhagavat Purana* contains the following reference: "Action brings rebirth, yet action can destroy itself when devoted toward the Supreme Being."

Several learned pundits have written to defend themselves against Western misconceptions of their belief in transmigration. They insist that the informed Hindu does not believe that he will be reborn in any creature less than human. This, however, cannot prevent local superstitions which abound in every country from distorted religious teachings. The Hindu believes in a progressive cycle of births. In his conception karma or compensation plays a most important part. He views life as a period of compensation and retribution. Christian missionaries have cried out against this "so horrible" doctrine. But to the Oriental mind the Occidental belief in damnation is infinitely more horrible.

The most famous of all Hindu scriptures is that part of the *Mahabharata* called the *Bhagavad-Gita*—The Lord's Song. The "Gita" is the Brahman's book of Psalms, his constant inspiration, his rule of conduct. From a literary standpoint the book equals any of the sacred books of the world, and surpasses many in dignity and beauty. The "Gita" truly summarizes the Hindu's concept of rebirth. The section dealing with the subject is as follows:

"As a man, casting off worn-out garments, taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new.

"For sure is the death of him that is born, and sure the birth of him that is dead; therefore over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve."

There can be no reasonable doubt that reincarnation was a major tenet of Brahmanism centuries before the rise of Buddhist culture. Tradition has it that the teaching originally belonged to the caste of the warriors, among whom it was guarded as an esoteric secret. It was only after many centuries that it came into the possession of the other Brahmanical sects. It may be interesting in passing to remember that Buddha himself belonged to the caste of the warriors. Therefore, the teaching must have been strongly emphasized in his early training.

The end for which the Brahmans strove was emancipation from the cycle of return. In the course of time these original beliefs became theologized. Brahmanism degenerated from a natural aristocracy to a more or less despotic caste system. The Brahman was no longer a Brahman because of the superiority of his actions, but rather by the accident of his birth. Wherever there has been a people to exploit, sacerdotalism has never been far away. A form of vicarious atonement crept into the primitive statement, destroying its fundamental integrity. Life became a succession of offerings and purification. The Eastern mind sought for its short cut to the Brahman-world. Even today some Indian sects, including the Tantriks, are fully convinced that in one life they can conquer the ages in themselves and pass triumphantly to Brahmaloaka.

Arthur Avalon in *The Serpent Power* acknowledges the Tantrik acceptance of rebirth. "There is no such thing as the resurrection of the same body. It returns to dust, and the *Jiva* when it reincarnates does so in a new body which is nevertheless, like the last, suited to give effect to its Karma."

It was against the intolerances of the Brahman castes that Gautama Buddha raised his voice. He made public one of the most priceless secrets of the Brahmans, the law of reincarnation. For the hundreds of millions who have followed this law he destroyed forever the intrinsic superiority of one man over another. He stated that the only form of spiritual democracy that can exist in space is the privilege of each individual to perfect himself.

Reincarnation finds its place in the teachings of the Vedantic school. Swami Abhedananda writes: "Vedanta teaches that it is neither the will of God nor the fault of the parents that has formed the characters of those children, but each child is responsible for its own tendencies, capacities, powers and character.... The doctrine of reincarnation alone can explain most satisfactorily and rationally many instances of uncommon powers and genius displayed in childhood." \*

The attitude of the Yoga sect is summarized by Haridas Bhattacharyya: "As beings have been coming and going during the whole period of their eternal life, they must have assumed many shapes in course of transmigration and a deposit of impressions of those different lives is left in the *chitta* as *vasanas*." †

It is common to both the Yoga and Vedantic schools to regard their teachings as a means of releasing the soul from

\* *Vedanta Philosophy*. Three Lectures, p. 22.

† *Cultural Heritage of India*. Vol. 1:335.



the "net of the Law." They regard spiritual achievement as a means of release from the law of rebirth.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the Theosophical Society, with its international headquarters at Adyar near Madras, created a profound stir in the Oriental mind. The group restated the belief in reincarnation, disseminating it throughout Asia, Europe, and America. With more than two hundred branches in India alone, the society drew to itself some of the ablest priests, monks, and pundits, with the result that extensive research was made into the old scriptures for evidences and traces of the teaching of reincarnation.

In and around Bombay live the Parsis, the last remnants of the Zoroastrians, followers of the fire cult of Persia. The most ancient sacred book of the Parsis is the *Zend-Avesta* written by the last Zoroaster some time before 600 B. C. While the *Zend-Avesta* contains no direct statement as evidence of belief in rebirth, much of the religious literature of the Parsis, including works considered of great authority, refers to this subject. The *Desatir*, a collection of sacred writings of ancient Persian prophets, contains the following verse: "And every one who wisheth to return to the lower world, and is a doer of good, shall, according to his knowledge, and conversation, and actions, receive something, either as a King or Prime Minister, or high office, or wealth."

## BUDDHA - "THE LIGHT OF ASIA"

The rise of Buddhism in the sixth century B. C. resulted in a wide dissemination of the doctrines of reincarnation and karma, the principal tenets of the faith. Gautama Siddhartha, Prince of Kapilavastu, the most illustrious of the Sakya family, stands out as one of the greatest men in the history of the world. Leaving wealth and honors behind him, the young Prince Siddhartha renounced the world for the ascetic life. Years later, after wanderings and privations, he received the illumination at Buddha-Gaya. Achieving Buddhahood, he devoted his life to teaching the two great laws, reincarnation and karma. Having preached and taught upon the earth for more than eighty years, and having lived to see his doctrines disseminated throughout Asia, the great sage finally entered nirvana, leaving behind a faith that was to endure as a foundation of inspiration for ages then unborn.

Buddha left no writings of his own, but soon after his transition his followers and disciples gathered in council and recorded from memory the words that he had spoken. Later, under the Emperor Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism, there were great synods of monks. As a result of these convocations encouraged by royal patronage, Buddhism became a religion. Edicts were drawn up, laws were established for the clergy, and the simple agnosticism of Gautama was slowly transformed into an elaborate polytheism. In Tibet Bud-

dhism achieved its greatest complexity, accumulating a pantheon of more than eighty thousand gods and demons.

Buddha cannot be held responsible, however, for the vicissitudes of his faith. He stated great and simple truths. It remained for those who loved him but could never understand his true teachings to theologize the original tenets. Fortunately, however, the teachings of the master regarding reincarnation and karma have survived, and while adorned with the trumpery of numerous enthusiasts, the essential truths remain.

To Buddha, reincarnation was the solution to the apparent inequalities of life. Without the law of rebirth existence was purposeless, meaningless, and absurd. Karma, likewise, explained the purpose of rebirth. We are born to live out the good and evil of previous lives. Reincarnation makes possible the absolute fulfillment of the law of cause and effect. There is no escaping the result of action. Man must be ready to accept the responsibility for what he does and must so conduct himself at all times that retribution is outwitted by his own virtue.

There is immense dignity in the simple statement of cause and effect. There is strength and assurance in Buddha's interpretation of this law. He derived his philosophy from the older writings of Hindu sages. But it remained for him to drive home the truths.

At the Anavatapta Tank Buddha gathered with his disciples where one of them asked him to explain his own karma as carried forward from other lives. It amazed the disciples that their master, perfect in wisdom, should still suffer from imperfections of the flesh. While walking that day a cactus thorn had entered his foot, and from a nearby village he had

returned with his alms bowl empty. Likewise, some strangers had spoken unkindly of him. To the disciples it seemed impossible that one so perfect, so complete in wisdom, should still suffer as do ordinary mortals. The Venerable One answered them smilingly: "Listen, I will explain to you the wonderful and indissoluble sequences of *Karma*. They follow you when you advance; even when you pause, they pause; the bonds of *Karma*, like true servants, ever attend on all creatures. They dive into the forest, roam over the regions, climb the lofty mountain, attack and find their way into Indra's abode, and even enter the nether world which is inaccessible to man. *Karma* is like the stream of time. Never can its course be stopped in its constant pursuit of man. Long is the vine of *Karma*; new, and yet always covered with old fruit; a wonderful companion of all creatures, and yet immovable, however you may pull it, grasp it, part it, uproot it, twist it, rub it, or skilfully break it into atoms, it is never destroyed. That the beautiful moon bears the dark spot of blame on her disc; that the cruel black snake carries the gem which catches the 'netted beam,' is all due to the action of *Karma*, which in manifold form shows the variegated experiences of all creatures." \*

From this statement and the context it is obvious that Buddha did not interpret his high attainment as a means of evading or nullifying the mistakes of previous lives. In fact, original Buddhism offers no escape mechanism of any kind, nor does it compromise for any reason the perfect working of the law. It is inevitable that there should be differences of opinion on this subject. Even today many persons claim-

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\* 50th Pallava of Kshemendra's *Kalpalata*.



ing to be devout Buddhists have fallen into the delusions of a vicarious atonement.

It has always been my opinion that if reincarnation and karma are universal laws, as I believe them to be, they cannot have exceptions, nor can they be compromised by human beings seeking to escape from the responsibilities of personal integrity. As well order the sun to stand still, or the tides to cease their ebb and flow, as to supplicate these laws. If there be any justice in the universe, if there be anything in space worthy of the faith of man, it is immutable law far from the bribery of offerings and sacrifices, and equally far from the mummery of prayer.

To my knowledge, most people who believe in reincarnation and karma accept the possibility of these laws being placated by some bribe. Some hope to breathe themselves into an immediate nirvana. Others confuse law with the forgiveness of sin. Still others seek by the constant repetition of sacred words and names to escape their just deserts. But if the law of rebirth be in any way a law, if karma be a fact in the universe, then its immutability and its eternal constancy is the refuge of the wise man. The philosopher desires to escape nothing; he is not searching for short cuts. He is prepared to pay his bills and is satisfied to live under the conditions he has earned. This does not mean that he will not strive after better things, but he expects no better state for himself until he has grown wiser through his own works.

Buddhism divided into two general schools of thought within which flourished innumerable sects. These schools are called the Hinayana or small cart, and the Mahayana, the large cart. According to the Pundit Hara Prasad Sastri, the principal goal of the Hinayana school is the extinction or

absorption of self. The virtues are practiced not for the common good of mankind, but for the liberation of the practitioner. Therefore the sect is regarded as essentially selfish, concerned only with its own good.

The Mahayana system softens the austere philosophic atheism of primitive Buddhism. It clothes simple truths in elaborate symbolism. The simplest way of stating the matter may be that the Hinayana remained a philosophy and the Mahayana became a religion. Both schools agree on the subjects of reincarnation and karma, but it is said that the Mahayana system broadened the road to nirvana. The Mahayana system moved northward into Tibet, China, and the border states of India. The Hinayana retired to Ceylon where its scholars seek nirvana's bliss and reject the world.

From the great Buddhist university at Nalanda and other centers of Buddhist learning, missionary priests inspired by the significance of the great laws of rebirth and compensation journeyed forth to carry the Buddhist doctrines to the furthest corners of Asia. Such was Padma Sambhava, the wizard of Tibet. Driving before him oxen laden with books, this intrepid man crossed the great Himalayan passes to carry the Law to the cannibal tribes of Tibet. Another missionary going to a cruel and savage land was asked what he would do if the natives should desire to kill him. He replied: "It is no matter. They may destroy me, but they cannot destroy the Law." So he went forth and converted the people.

One by one the nations of Asia accepted the doctrines of reincarnation and karma. Burma, Indo-China, and Cambodia received the Law. It was carried southward to the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Bali. Korea embraced the teachings of

the Enlightened One. And in the sixth century of the Christian Era the Law reached Japan, where it is now disseminated through more than twenty principal sects. In China Buddhism mingled with the teachings of Lao Tze and Confucius. To China belongs the honor of having first printed the words attributed to Gautama Buddha. As early as the Tang Dynasty the *Prajna Paramita Sutra* was printed from wood blocks, perpetuating Buddha's doctrine of rebirth in the earliest examples of printing known today.

Through the conspiracy of Brahmanism and the rise of Islam, Buddhism slowly declined in India. The arhats of the good Law retired to Burma and Ceylon, and the Mogul emperors sat on the peacock throne. This political change, however, should not be regarded as indicating a decline in the belief in reincarnation. In fact, numerous mystical sects arose to perpetuate the doctrine. Buddhism itself became part of the cultural heritage of Asia, and as such its force has survived and will continue as long as men suffer, sorrow and die.

The time will yet come when the West will realize that the "Light of Asia" was in reality the "Light of the World." East and West bound together with the common bond of sorrow and uncertainty need the same answer to their problems. There is no answer but the Law.

## PREVIOUS LIVES OF BUDDHA

According to the doctrines of Buddhism, one who has achieved to the highest state of Buddhahood is able to remember his previous existences. Discoursing with his disciples the Enlightened One explained the doctrine of rebirth by telling about his own former incarnations. Five hundred and fifty embodiments of the Buddha are related in the literature of his order.

More than a hundred thousand years ago there dwelt in India a learned and righteous Brahman named Sumedha. This wise and holy man meditating on the mystery of rebirth dedicated his future lives to the quest of that wisdom which should lead to liberation from the cycle of necessity. Sumedha reasoned thus: "Why should I not now cast off all remaining evil in myself and enter into nirvana? But let me not do so all for myself alone; rather let me also some day achieve omniscience and convey a multitude of beings in the ship of doctrine over the ocean of rebirth safely to the farther shore."

In order that he might accomplish the liberation of all creatures from bondage to the law of rebirth, he who was to become the Buddha willed to be reborn in each of the orders of life. Not only did he take on the human form, but he incarnated as a deva, as an animal, even as a tree. It is said therefore: "There exists not a particle of earth where the Buddha has not sacrificed his life for the sake of creatures."



In central Java, in a valley surrounded by active volcanoes, stands the Boro Budur, one of Buddhism's most impressive shrines. The great structure is roughly pyramidal, each side more than five hundred feet in length, with the central tower rising more than one hundred and fifty feet. The galleries of this huge structure are ornamented with the most elaborate carvings. Here, hewn in deep relief, are scenes depicting the previous lives of the Buddha.

In one remote existence he is depicted as a turtle bearing on his back shipwrecked sailors to shore. While many of the scenes are obviously mythological, representing only the piety of ancient Javanese sculptors, the force of the inference remains. The Great One is represented only as serving or teaching his fellow creatures.

In the *Jataka* is described the time when the coming Buddha was incarnated as a royal elephant. In this incarnation he sawed off his own great tusks to please a jealous woman. Later she reincarnated, became a disciple of the Buddha, and attained sainthood.

The last incarnation prior to the attainment of Buddhahood was as King Vessantara, whose virtues are recounted at great length in the *Jataka*. After reigning for many years and achieving a great reputation for piety and generosity, the king died and the Buddha-elect retired into the *Tushita* heaven to await his final rebirth.

When Buddha was in advancing years and his strength was failing, his disciples wondered why so great and learned a man should not be given strength to carry on his work. He was so necessary; there was none to take his place. The birds perched on his shoulders; the beasts of the jungle gath-

ered to hear his words. Why was one so virtuous, so full of wisdom, noble and gentle in every action, permitted to fade from among them?

The master gathered them about him and explained that there was no escape from the laws of life and death except the ultimate nirvana. The virtuous man and the evil man both must come down at last to the grave. Wisdom does not bestow immortality upon the body. Rather it elevates the consciousness, giving patience and understanding. He further explained that this was his last life. He had fulfilled the purpose of his existence; he had kept the vow. All the streams of his ancient karma, the residue of past existences, had met and mingled in his present body. He must bear them to the end.

Addressing the disciples, Buddha reminded them that he had not always been a virtuous man. Behind him were innumerable existences lived selfishly and without enlightenment. He had committed unnumbered errors. Therefore, even as he approached nirvana, he must fulfill the law; he must make right the wrongs with suffering and humility. Liberation comes only at the end of the sequence of existences.

So he discoursed to them as recorded in Kshemendra's *Kalpalata*, telling them much of his previous lives and the karma which had descended from them. Once in the distant past he had been Sarvata, greedy for more profits, and because he had desired an inheritance had slain his step-brother. Turning to the disciples he commented: "It is even I, who having borne the burden of that sin in previous births, even now carry on my person its last relic."

In another life the Buddha had been a merchant named Arthadata who owned a ship full of rich merchandise. An-

other merchant who had lost his wealth was so jealous of Arthadatta that he attempted to scuttle his ship. So Arthadatta slew him.

In another life he had been Chapalaka, a boy of bad manners. A holy man had come to the village and the boy had rudely knocked the begging bowl from the old man's hand and had ridiculed him. That is the reason, explained the Buddha, that he had that day returned from the village with an empty alms bowl.

Then in another life there had lived Bharadvaja, whose brother was an arhat. So good and wise was this arhat that all the people loved and honored him. Bharadvaja became so jealous of his brother's good name that he caused a scandal to be circulated against him so that the holy man's reputation was damaged. This too remained to be expiated, the Buddha explained; and because he had been Bharadvaja, certain persons ignorant of the Law spoke ill of him.

In another life he had been Mrinala, a man of bad morals who had been publicly executed. In still another he was a Brahman who had incited the people against the arhats. In still another existence he had been Uttara, a man who carried scandals. Again, he had been born as Tiktamukha, a doctor who, because his patient would not pay his bill, had permitted the man's child to die.

Thus he discoursed about many existences and concluded: "Though I am now an immaculate Sambuddha, yet I am being visited by troubles. My body is subject to pains owing to the evil deeds of my former births." The *Kalpalata* continues, and the section concludes with the words: "The mendicants, hearing this discourse of the venerable sage, perceived that the consequences of *Karma* can never be avoided."

There is nothing in the text of this work to imply that the description of past lives therein contained is to be regarded as allegorical. Buddha describes his previous personalities and the various accidents that befell them. For the most part, Buddhist sects acknowledge these accounts as literal, the authority for the doctrine being the canons collected and revised at the great council in 250 B. C.

It should be pointed out that various Buddhist sects of the present time differ considerably on the matter of interpretation. Each sect, founded upon the opinions of some revered saint, differs in emphasis, but with the exception of the Zen they agree in principle.

The Zen sect was founded by the arhat Bodhidharma who traveled to China from the great Indian university at Nalanda. It migrated to Japan where it flourishes today with many temples and is highly favored by the military class.

This sect emphatically denies reincarnation. It even goes so far as the denial of the historical Buddha. To them the true Buddha is the realization of enlightenment, but they deny the existence of historical tradition. According to the Zen belief Buddha's description of his former lives is purely allegorical and should be interpreted metaphysically. As Buddha, the principle of universal enlightenment exists everywhere and in everything; it is embodied in all form. Any man's history, therefore, may be the story of Buddha, and all creatures which have existed previously may be regarded as existences of the Buddha.

It seems important at this time to contrast the Eastern and Western concepts of existence, with special reference to the matter of rebirth. Buddhism does not believe in the superman. There is no place in its philosophy for the eternal



progress of the individual. The goal of human effort is not immortality, but absorption.

The West, from Plato to the present time, teaches the immortality of the individual. It looks forward to the day when spiritual evolution will result in the production of a divine man and even ultimately the accomplishment of godhood. The individual, though growing greater, still remains himself. He becomes godlike, evolving through the various superior forms.

In the East eternity evolves through man. The individual ceases as soon as ignorance dies in him. His very personal existence is built on an ignorance complex. There is no immortal self. The very word "I" is an illusion.

While both schools had their common origin in the great tradition of Aryan wisdom, they have branched apart, resulting in the establishment of two great civilizations, the Eastern and the Western. The Western school accepts reincarnation as a means of unfolding the individual, while the Eastern accepts reincarnation as a means of eliminating the individual.

A confusion has arisen, however, due to the modern mingling of the East and West. This confusion has led to compromise which, while perfectly understandable, is nevertheless unfortunate. This compromise in the West had its beginning in the first centuries of the Christian Era when law and faith struggled for dominance in the human mind. A simple, modern statement of the subject would be: What is to be the status of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin in a world ruled by immutable law? Is it true that the new dispensation has destroyed the old law? Can a universal law ever be changed or modified by human desire, human faith,

or human hope? The will to believe frequently leads man to the acceptance of irreconcilable doctrines.

Nor is the East without blame in this respect. The simple, philosophic agnosticism of Buddha was too severe for average acceptance. Men wanted to hope. They wanted magic words that would cleanse them of their own misdeeds. The Law of Buddha was for the arhats; for those who had entered the path, renounced the world, and dedicated themselves to the achievement of nirvana. To the rest the doctrine must have seemed cruel or a little heartless. Man was left entirely to his own devices, his destiny in his own hands, to make or break himself, with no god to receive his prayers, no devas to make his tasks easier—only law, only cause and effect, only the command for right action. There remained no color, no temples with richly appointed altars, no festivals and celebrations, no holy water to wash away the sins—only the living of innumerable lives to be what he makes of them, only bills to pay, and courage to struggle on under the load of Karma.

It is small wonder then that Buddha's simple gospel underwent almost immediate change. How his agnosticism gave birth to countless gods is history. Men seeking the easier way turned from the law to the priest. The old Buddhism is almost entirely gone; the mind of man could not endure the simple truth.

The West presents a somewhat different picture. After the decline of the pagan mysteries there were centuries without philosophy; with nothing but blind faith in the substance of things unseen. The law of reincarnation came to the West, therefore, as a philosophy; as a justification of things already believed. Those who accepted it built it enthusiastic-

ally into the fabric of their creeds and doctrines, with the result that in the West rebirth no longer leads to nirvana but to the superman. We all believe what we desire to believe, and those who desire to be immortal attempt to believe immortality into a fact.

Reincarnation and karma as taught in Asia and in certain mystical Christian sects is approximately the same. It is the end to be achieved that differs.

If the Eastern dream is a little more mature, more gentle with realization than the Western, perhaps it is because the East is old. Asia has lived through so many beliefs. It is tired with the very dream of existence. To one who has lived long, long life means little; to a world that has experienced much, suffered much, mellowed with ages of existence, our Western love of life may seem a little adolescent. The East was a great civilization while we still lived in caves. It was decadent before Europe was civilized. It has lived out life; it has seen the greater folly and can be tolerant of a new world that yet has much to learn. The Eastern saint no longer lives in this world; he dreams of space and peace; he knows that sometime we shall dream the same way when our culture is old and tired and weary with the fact of being. The Buddhist arhat in his saffron-colored robe wants none of the things we dream after. He desires neither wealth, nor power, nor honor. He desires only nirvana which to him is indeed the end of waiting.

## THE REBORN LAMAS OF TIBET

Tibet is ruled by a reincarnating theocracy. The principal lamas are revered as reincarnations of early saints, converted princes and kings, and terrestrial bodhisattvas who return life after life to govern their orders and participate in the affairs of state. The highest of these reborn abbots, the Dalai Lama, is the reincarnating bodhisattva Avalokita. He is the political head of the entire country, ruling his empire of monks and laymen from the great palace of the Potala at Lhasa.

Of almost equal importance and even greater sanctity is the Tashi Lama, the spiritual head of the state. He is the embodiment of the Supreme Buddha Amitabha, and hence dwells far from the involvements of politics in the old monastery at Tashi-lhunpo.

The sovereignty of Tibet is now guarded by the British crown. The Tibetans have no desire for foreigners in their land. They are afraid that their vast natural resources will be exploited. Within the last few years, however, a more liberal attitude has developed. The great palace at Lhasa has been equipped with electric lights, a radio station is in the process of being built, and the late Dalai Lama was the proud possessor of an automobile.

The only reincarnate lama outside of Tibet is the Lord Abbot of Peiping. Most persons desiring to enter Tibet make



the necessary arrangements through him. His temple contains the world-celebrated statue of the Lord Maitreya or the Buddha-to-come. The figure is more than seventy feet in height and is supposed to have been carved from a single tree.

Though Tibet is now the headquarters of the high church of Buddhism with the Dalai Lama as its Pope, it was one of the last great countries to be converted to Buddhist doctrines. Prior to the ninth century the Tibetans were cannibals, and their religion was a form of Shamanism called Bon. Human sacrifice was not uncommon, and the people lived in constant fear of the demons and spirits that harassed their daily lives.

When Buddhism reached this strange northern land its first tasks were arduous and dangerous. The demons had to be brought under the power of Buddhist law. The people, entirely unlearned, must be educated. The wandering militant tribes had to be subdued and settled in various areas. To the honor of Buddhism let it be said that within one century books were being printed on the great Tibetan plateau. The native kings and princes had been converted, monasteries were being built, and the black hat priests of the Bon sects had been driven into the mountains. Cannibalism had ceased; human sacrifice was no more. Education had taken the place of ignorance, and thousands of young men had taken the yellow robe and had become scholars and teachers.

It was the laws of reincarnation and karma that made this change. These two truths tamed a savage people and laid the foundation of the Tibetan civilization. Old beliefs are not easily forgotten however. Elements of the old Bon faith mingling with the current of Indian Buddhist thought produced Tibetan Buddhism.

The cult of the reborn Buddhas did not arise until several centuries after the Buddhist conversion of Tibet. It was no part of the Indian cult. Grave changes had taken place in India. The Brahmans rallying from their defeat were stamping out Buddhism in its homeland. Many Indian priests fled to other countries. Some visited Tibet and settled there. The Tantric cult later migrated northward and played its part in modifying Tibetan Buddhism. The result is Lamaism which can only be defined as a mingling of several beliefs in which Buddhist philosophy is the dominant note.

The reincarnating hierarchy came into existence about the thirteenth century. From that time on its power has increased. The various Dalai Lamas and regents have so successfully promulgated the doctrine that an absolute religious dictatorship has resulted.

According to the Lamaist doctrines a reincarnating Buddha is re-embodied immediately. A delegation, therefore, is appointed to search for the new embodiment. A child must be found who was born at the exact time of the Lama's decease. Frequently great difficulties are met in the discovery and selection of this child. The members of the delegation watch for a sign or symbol to prove the re-embodiment. On one occasion, while searching for a successor to the Dalai Lama, the committee was privileged to behold a child but six months old arise in its crib and recite the *Diamond Sutra*. If no miracle occurs, various articles, including one that belonged to the previous embodiment, are held before the child. If it touches first the property of the deceased priest, this is regarded as an omen of re-embodiment. All other means failing, recourse is had to the drawing of lots. There is a certain democracy in the practice, because

the child selected as the embodiment may be found in a very humble peasant environment.

The death of the late Dalai Lama was attended by unexpected complications. The re-embodiment could not be found. The entire hierarchy realized the gravity of the situation. It would mean the end of the system. Committees and delegations went as far as the northern provinces of India in search of a successor. But the re-embodiment was at last found, and amidst the great rejoicing of the people, the child was brought to Lhasa.

Among the reincarnating lamas are several abbesses revered throughout the land for their piety and erudition. The Abbess of Samding is the most celebrated. Her Tibetan name means "The Most Precious Power of Speech, the Female Energy all Good." In a heavily-barred chamber which none may enter lie the mummified remains of all the previous incarnations of this venerable woman. Here one day her present body, embalmed, will be placed. It is the duty of this abbess, a duty which she may not evade, that once during each life she must enter into this gruesome tomb and pay honor to the moldering remains of her previous personalities.

Lamaism is an example of the compromise in Buddhist teaching. While reincarnation is the great law, demonism still flourishes. Charms are made for every purpose. Invocations and formulas abound, and every incident of life is bound round with ceremony and sacrifice. There are prayers to be pasted over doors or placed under beds; there are rituals for the harvest, and mantrams to protect the herds. There are so many priests in Tibet, one out of every four persons being devoted to sacred orders, that they have become the

indispensable element in every transaction. Theological exigencies have overwhelmed the gentle doctrines of the Buddha.

A priest is an absolute necessity to protect the laity from the members of the various classes of evil spirits which literally outnumber the living; to read the future so that misfortunes might be averted; and to plan for a successful re-embodiment. The unborn must be guaranteed a happy existence, the dying must be guided across the mystery of death, and the dead must be assured of a pleasant interval in Sukhavati. The result is a constant round of religious life. Everything centers about a successful rebirth. But in the rush of ceremony the law of karma has small place. There are mantrams, the mere recitation of which will wipe out the karma of a hundred lives. There are prayer wheels, the endless turning of which fills the very heavens with rejoicing. There are prayer flags which spread the good law by their fluttering. There are water wheels turning great drums of prayer that will assure a thousand fortunate existences.

The *Bardo*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, is an invaluable instrument of rebirth in Tibet. When a reincarnate abbot is dying, a priest sits beside him reading the formulas of re-embodiment. It appears that while the transition of death is occurring, the mind of the dying man might be temporarily clouded; he might forget the technique of re-embodiment. Also, after death the *sattva* hovers for a short time about the body, and in this state it especially requires instruction. So the priest whispers in the ear of the dying man the necessary instructions to assure an immediate rebirth in an appropriate environment. It is believed that the *sattva*, hearing this instruction, immediately regains its poise and proceeds in an enlightened manner, thus escaping the illusion of transition.



According to Schlagintweit in his *Buddhism in Tibet*: "Confession of sin influences for a happy metempsychosis. The mention of the name of Buddha in the form of a petition insures the forgiveness of all sins committed in previous existences." This approximately sums up the situation and speaks not only for Tibet, but to a great degree for China and Japan. How the forgiveness of sin got into Buddhism can be explained only by the psychology of the human mind. Man suspects that if he is not forgiven much he has small chance for salvation.

In his article, *Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism*, Mead quotes the following: "The superior Lamas and incarnate bodhisattvas generally keep diaries recording the events of everyday life. They recount their doings every week, month, year, and cycle of their lives to find out if their existence has not been one of steady spiritual progress . . . . They argue that if one fails to enumerate his doings of yesterday or the past month, when all his faculties are in order, how would it be possible for him to keep intact the *Purva Janmanu-smriti* (recollection of the events of one's former existences) when the faculties are deranged by death."

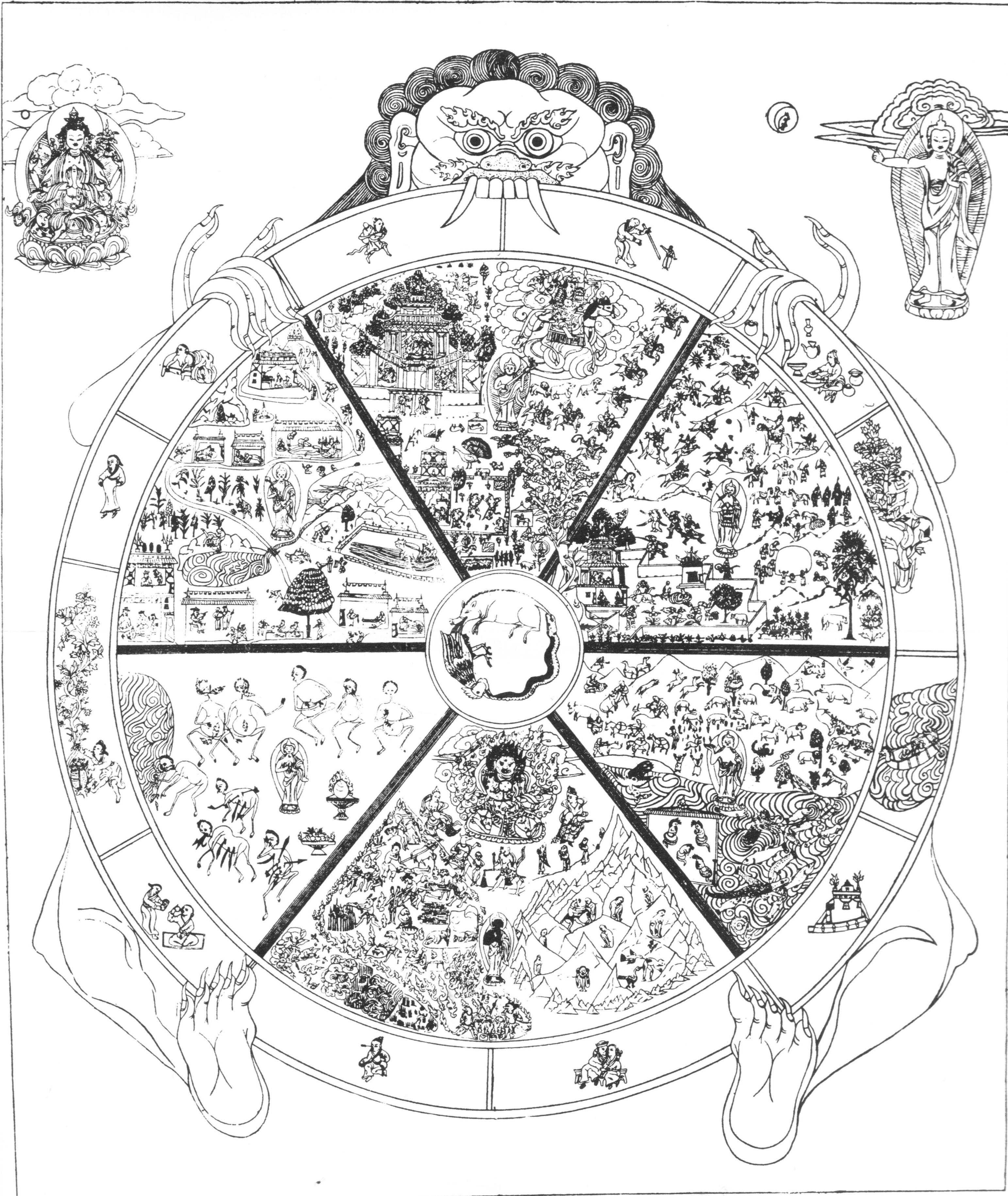
In the Tashi'ding monastery at Sikkim is a fresco of the Bhava Chakra, or the Wheel of the Law. It is represented as divided into six compartments depicting the six states of being. The three divisions of the upper half of the wheel are called *lokas*, the highest is the abode of the gods, the second the abode of the demigods, and the third the abode of men. The lower half of the wheel also has three parts, the lowest of which, *naraka*, represents hell; the other two divisions represent the state of ghosts and the state of animals.

After death the sattva migrates from the physical life into one of these six compartments according to actions and merits. If the sattva has been virtuous it may go to the abode of the gods where it will remain in rejoicing until its good karma is worn out. If it has been exceedingly evil the sattva may go to *naraka*, an infernal condition where it will remain for a time according to its demerits. If the karma is of the best and most truly philosophic type the sattva will enter *nara-loka*, the abode of human beings; that is, it will be immediately reborn into the physical life.

The sattva can achieve nirvana only while in the human form. Its karma must earn a human existence before emancipation is possible. Nirvana is not represented in any part of the wheel, the state of Buddhahood being shown by two figures outside of the wheel. He who has the key to nirvana has no place in the cycle of transmigratory existence. It will also be noticed that in each one of the six parts of the wheel is a small figure of the Buddha. It is believed that the Enlightened One assumed the illusional nature of the six worlds, and simultaneously entering into each of them preached the Law, thus assuring the creatures of all the spheres ultimate salvation. In the Buddhist philosophy nothing can actually be lost. All living things must ultimately achieve nirvana.

To the northern Buddhist the entire wheel with its six parts is illusional. The condition of being either a god, a ghost, a beast, or a demigod is merely part of the illusion of existence. The only reality is Buddhahood. The axis of the wheel of illusion is composed of three creatures representing stupidity, anger, and lust. These are the illusional emotions which bind the sattva to existence, and until these three "fires" die out there can be no emancipation.





THE WHEEL OF LIFE,  
Picturing the Buddhist Theory of the Universe.



In a Buddhist text translated from the Korean there is the following quotation: "The multitude of living beings transmigrate about the fiery house, and unless they free themselves from covetous desire, there are few who will reach the Heavenly Mansion." The fiery house is the sphere of desire. The heavenly mansion is nirvana.

Around the edge of the Bhava Chakra are twelve compartments called the nidanas. These are the twelve states of existence from birth to birth, and are arranged like the hours of a clock. This cycle from birth to birth has no end except nirvana. Most Buddhists, however, realize that the circle is really a cycle. Every rebirth is an improvement, and brings nearer the day of liberation.

The Tibetans are a strange people, and in a strange way they have interpreted the laws of the Enlightened One. But in their own way, like all other people, they are seeking happiness, peace, and liberation. They are a good people and among them are some very wise and enlightened lamas whose fundamental learning greatly exceeds that of the Western scholar. For the many, there are prayers and mantrams, but for the few who see beyond, there is the middle path, the road of Buddha that winding through the mysteries of rebirth finally comes to the Great Peace.

## METEMPSYCHOSIS AND GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The most celebrated of the early Hellenic thinkers was Pythagoras of Samos, a contemporary of Buddha, Confucius, Lao Tze, and the last Zoroaster. Pythagoras traveled to India and was initiated into the rites of the Brahmans in the cave temples at Ellora and Elephanta. He was given a new name by the Brahman priests, and is the first non-Brahman in the history of the world to be accepted into their esoteric rites. He was called *Yavancharya*, the Ionian master, and after he had established his school at Crotona a number of Hindus came to study with him.

Pythagoras brought from Asia the doctrine of metempsychosis or rebirth, and taught it esoterically to his disciples. Laertius says of Pythagoras: "He first asserted, that the soul passing through the cycle of necessity lived at several times in different living creatures."

Heraclitus states that Pythagoras remembered several of his previous lives and described them to a few of his most intimate followers. He had been the herald Aethalides, esteemed the son of Mercury, and in this body had written two theses, one deriding the instability of mortal existence. He was then born as Euphorbus the Trojan, and died before the gates of Troy, slain by Menelaus. In another life he had been born Hermotimus. He had then lived as Pyrrhus, a



fisherman of Delus. It was after this life that he had been born as Pythagoras. He recognized at Argos the shield which he had used against Patroclus during the siege of Troy. He also distinguished, attached to a trophy of war in the temple of Juno, the spear of Atrides that formerly had killed him. Clearchus adds that Pythagoras in one of his previous existences had been a beautiful courtesan named Alce.

Pythagoras described to certain of his disciples the experiences of their own former lives, but only to such as had purified their souls by the practice of his disciplines. He caused Millias of Crotona to remember that he had been Midas, son of Gordias, whereupon Millias went to Epire to perform the funeral rites for his own previous body.

It is obvious from numerous records that Pythagoras definitely believed in metempsychosis and taught it to his disciples. Furthermore, he believed that it was possible for the highly evolved person to remember his previous existences. He taught that the soul was incarnated in a material form that it might gain new experience and purge itself from the errors of previous lives. In the Pythagorean philosophy the human soul achieves liberation from the cycle of rebirth when it has attained the godlike nature.

Pythagoras has been accused of teaching transmigration, but this is probably due to the defects in the few surviving texts that may be regarded as expressing the viewpoints of Pythagoras. None of his actual writings have survived. He most likely taught that those whose lives had been filled with evil deeds and destructive emotions were unworthy to reincarnate immediately in human form. Such souls, therefore, obsessed the astral bodies of animals and attempted to function through these ill-gotten vehicles. Later Plato clarified this point.

There is also a belief that the animal bodies referred to by Pythagoras were the constellations of the zodiac through which the souls of men descended into birth. A man born under the rulership of the sign of Leo was said to have taken on the body of a lion; one under Taurus the form of a bull. This may explain a verse composed by Empedocles, which superficially might indicate a belief in transmigration:

A boy I was, then did a maid become;  
A plant, bird, fish, and in the deep sea swum.

As a disciple of Pythagoras, Empedocles was bound by an oath which prevented him from revealing the esoteric teachings of his master, and we may not be sure at this distant time the exact meaning which he intended.

Plato was influenced by the teachings of Pythagoras, and a great part of the Platonic writings actually interpret the old Pythagorean tenets. Among other teachings of the Samian sage, Plato accepted the doctrine of metempsychosis. His profound universal genius recognized in the teachings of rebirth the most reasonable solution to the mystery of existence. Accepting, like Pythagoras, the immortality of the human soul, Plato declared that the soul was imprisoned in the body as an oyster within its shell. He regarded the material universe as a sphere of retribution, the real hades, and taught that the periodic reincarnation of men into the material world was essential to the ultimate perfection of their divine nature.

In the *Phaedo* Plato writes: "Because every pleasure and pain, as if armed with a nail, fastens and rivets the soul to the body, causes it to become corporeal, and fills it with an opin-

ion, that whatever the body asserts is true. For in consequence of the soul forming the same opinions with the body, and being delighted with the same objects, it appears to me that it is compelled to possess similar manners, and to be similarly nourished, and to become so affected, that it can never pass into Hades in a pure condition; but always departs full of corporeal nature; and thus swiftly falls again into another body, and becoming as it were sown, is engendered; and lastly, that from these it becomes destitute of a divine, pure, and uniform association."

At the end of his *Republic* Plato describes how every soul fixes or chooses his own personality and fate at rebirth. Again in the *Phaedo*: "Let us consider whether the souls of men who have died are in the nether worlds or not. An old saying, truly, which I remember, says that when they go from here they are there, and return again here, and are again born from among the dead."

Plato believed in spiritual evolution, and from the explicit nature of his statements obviously derives his authority from the sacred tradition of his time. He was an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and could have held no belief contrary to these teachings.

Speaking of Orpheus, Plato states that after the bard had been torn to pieces by the Ciconian women he refused to be reborn again through the body of a woman, and therefore incarnated as a swan. Orpheus, the word itself meaning dark, was a man from the East who had brought wisdom to the Greeks, and established the Mysteries not later than 1400 B. C. In the Egyptian writings it is stated that Osiris, esoterically a body of knowledge as well as a god, was driven to Egypt from India in the form of a spotted bull. The

Egyptians thus acknowledged the Eastern origin of their religion. Pythagoras, an initiate of twenty-eight mystery schools including the Greek, Egyptian, Chaldean, and Hindu, affirmed that they taught precisely the same doctrine in all matters. Each of the schools, however, laid special emphasis upon one part of the doctrine. For example, the Egyptians excelled in geometry, the Chaldeans in astronomy, and the Gymnosophists in self-abnegation.

According to the rules of the Mysteries a doctrine held by the Brahmans could not be denied by the Greeks, though in any particular school special emphasis might be lacking. Thus Pythagoras may have gone forth and learned metempsychosis from the Brahmans, a doctrine not greatly developed by the Greeks, but the Brahmans as an esoteric school could not be denied by the Greeks in any of their major teachings. If the Brahmans taught metempsychosis the Greek schools had to acknowledge it. The Mystery Schools were bound together by the most sacred ties, and under no condition could dispute each other's doctrines.

Plato had desired to go to India, but wars raging throughout the Near East made his trip impossible. Therefore he was forced to accept the findings of Pythagoras concerning the Eastern Mysteries. Three hundred years later, however, Apollonius, another Pythagorean, crossed Asia to the high Himalaya country and there received the same doctrine that had been given to Pythagoras.

The foundations of religious differences are matters of emphasis. The points of common accord are gradually lost. The points of difference become more and more real. The result is modern religion, a corruption of the Mysteries in which the concord of faith has been lost.



In the *Phaedo* Plato puts the words concerning metempsychosis into the mouth of Socrates, which would imply that this great skeptic believed in rebirth.

After the death of Plato the Academy was split up, one part remaining in the Lyceum and the other retiring to a cinder track under the leadership of Aristotle. Because of their constant walking of this track the Aristotelian group was named the Peripatetic. Aristotle preserved the doctrine of rebirth among the other philosophic traditions that he had derived from Plato.

Reincarnation was taught in the Platonic Academy for more than nine centuries. The last successor for Plato, Damascius, was teaching this doctrine in 529 A. D. when the Christian Emperor Justinian closed the Academy.

After the decline of Greek culture the doctrine of metempsychosis intrigued the Roman mind. Julian, the most philosophic of the Roman emperors and the only one of them to claim any scholarship, believed himself to be the reincarnation of Alexander the Great.

Apollonius of Tyana who lived in the first century A. D. was a self-appointed Pythagorean. He subjected himself to the old disciplines, included the five years of silence in his austerities, wore his hair in the manner of the Pythagoreans, and dressed as they had dressed. Apollonius was the friend and confidant of several of the Roman emperors, a most celebrated thaumaturgist, and an ardent follower of the doctrine of metempsychosis.

When Apollonius was about forty years of age he made his celebrated journey to the fabled mahatmas of India. Accompanied by Damis, his faithful disciple, he crossed the Ganges River and penetrated the land of the sages. He was

entertained as one long expected and was invited to describe his previous lives. He declined because of the humbleness of his previous position, but being pressed admitted that he had been a sea captain who had saved his ship and cargo from pirates.

The early centuries of the Christian Era witnessed the rise of Neo-Platonism in Alexandria. This city was a great pagan stronghold; a city of culture, of libraries, and philosophers. The most distinguished of the Neo-Platonists were Ammonius Saccas, Proclus, Plotinus, Iamblichus, and Porphyry. All these noble and sublimely illuminated men, among the greatest who ever lived upon the earth, accepted the doctrine of reincarnation as a fundamental law of Platonism. They acknowledged their admiration for the teaching of metempsychosis, and advanced this law as the perfect solution to the mystery of life.

According to Porphyry souls are given new bodies in keeping with their merits and demerits. Proclus believed himself to be the reincarnation of Micromachus, the Pythagorean. Iamblichus explains that men suffer here, not realizing that they are paying for previous mistakes in former lives. Plotinus would never reveal his natal day because he was ashamed of the evil deeds he had done which caused him to be reborn, and felt that no one should celebrate his infirmity.

The Platonic recension in the seventeenth century defended with great learning the Platonic doctrine of rebirth. The Cambridge Platonists, especially Henry More, were conspicuous champions of the subject. Cudworth and Hume accepted the doctrine of rebirth, as did Fourier and Leroux. André Pezzani, in a book called *The Plurality of the Soul's*

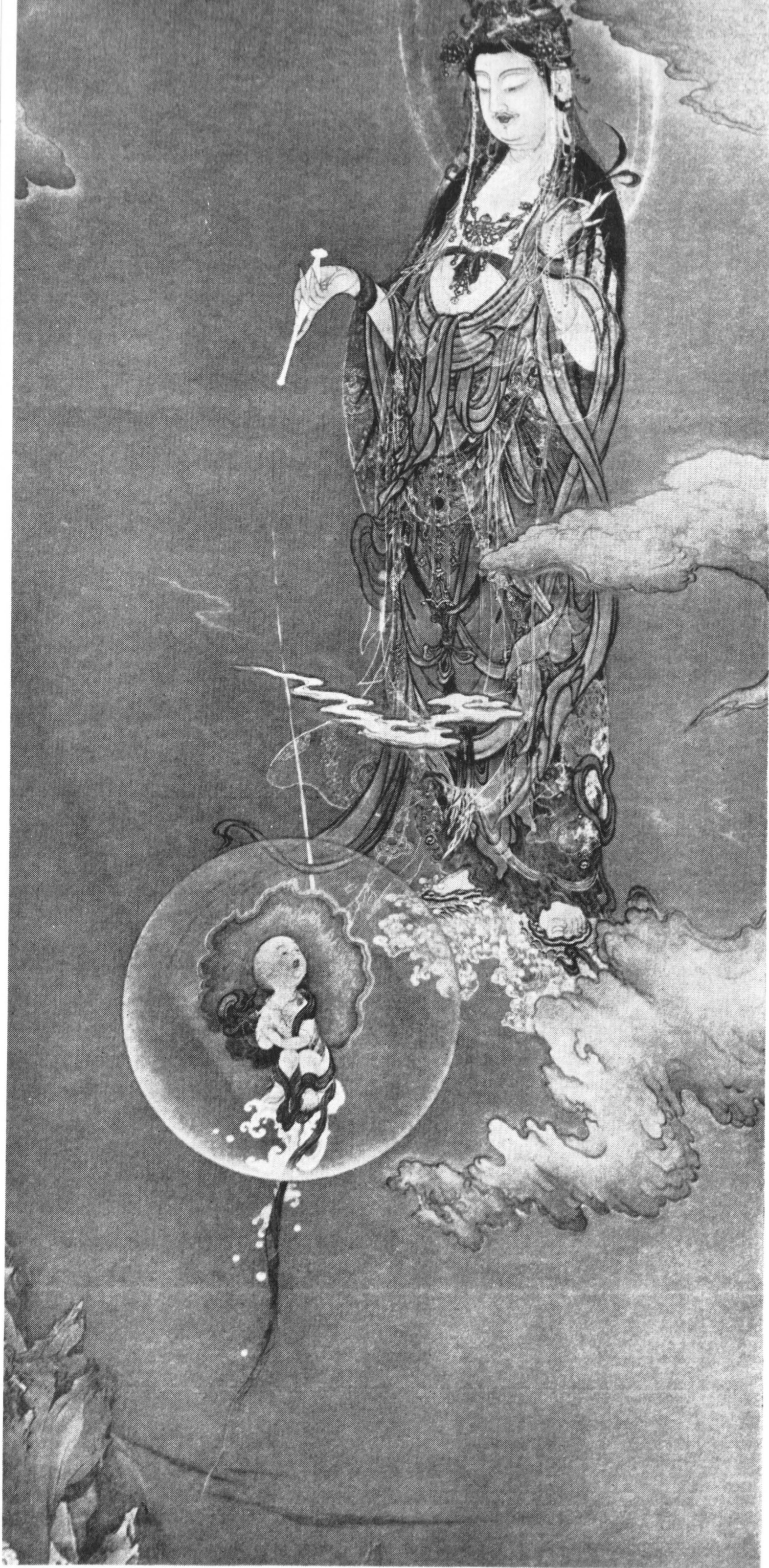
*Lives*, attempted to combine reincarnation with the Roman Catholic idea of expiation.

Thomas Taylor, who wrote during the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first three decades of the nineteenth, may well be termed the last of the Platonists. He dedicated his life to the restoration of Platonic philosophy, and gave the world the most enlightened of all translations from the writings of the Greek and Roman Platonists.

In his *Collectanea* Taylor writes in his introduction to the "Chaldean Oracles": "They are of opinion, that the soul often descends into the world, through many causes; either through the defluxion of its wings, or through the paternal will."

The Greeks were the most civilizing force in the Western world. The doctrine of metempsychosis passed from the Greeks to the early Christian Church where it was widely accepted during the formative years preceding the Nicene Council. After an exhaustive study of Plato's works Voltaire was induced to say that Plato was the true founder of the Christian Church. If Greece excelled other countries in philosophical excellence it was because of her people's sublime beliefs concerning the origin and destiny of the gods, the universe, and man. Metempsychosis as a doctrine was an integral part of Greek learning, and the most powerful inspiration for the perfection of human nature to be found in their teachings.





THE  
MYSTERY  
OF  
BIRTH

From  
the  
Imperial  
Collection

## THE LAW OF REBIRTH IN CHINA AND JAPAN

Buddhism reached China about the first century of the Christian Era. Here it met and mingled with the principal indigenous creeds, Taoism and Confucianism. The hopeless tangle that has resulted makes positive statements concerning Chinese religious beliefs exceedingly difficult. We know, however, that the Buddhist arhats and lohans (singing priests) brought with them the doctrines of reincarnation and karma which found immediate acceptance, and since have become an integral part of Chinese religious thought.

Under the patronage of benevolent emperors, monasteries and nunneries were built, libraries and schools were established, and Buddhism flourished like the green bay tree. The migration of Buddhism to China resulted in one of the most important discoveries ever made by man—the invention of the art of printing. According to Thomas Francis Carter \* the dynamic force that created the demand for printing was the advance of Buddhism. The exact date of the invention of printing is unknown. The oldest printed book known in the world today is a copy of Buddha's *Diamond Sutra* printed by Wang Chieh in 868 A. D. This was discovered in the

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\* *The Invention of Printing in China.*



Cave of the Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang by Sir Aurel Stein in 1907. The original is in the British Museum.

The Diamond Sutra is the ninth section of the *Maha-Prajna-Paramita Sutra* and was highly regarded by the founders of Ch'an sects of Chinese Buddhism. It is in the form of a dialogue between Subhuti and the Buddha. There are numerous references to reincarnation. In one, the Buddha converses with his disciple thus: "Besides, Subhuti, I recall that during my five hundred previous lives, I had used life after life to practice patience and to look upon my life humbly as though it was some saintly being called upon to suffer humility. Even then my mind was free from any such arbitrary conceptions of phenomena as my own self, other selves, living beings, and a universal self." \*

Chiang Chi-chi (522-597) was a devout student of the Dhyana school of early Chinese Buddhism and the founder of the Tien-tai sect. In lectures given by him are numerous references to reincarnation. In his work on censorship over desires he announces that such annoyances and suffering as are caused by inordinate emotions "will continue to trouble, after the death of the body, in a following rebirth." He then quotes the *Dhyana Sutra*: "The continual sufferings of birth and death are due to thy sensual desires and lusts."

The earliest Buddhist books to be used in China were written in the Sanskrit language but with Chinese characters. Therefore it naturally follows that the Chinese doctrines concerning rebirth and karma are essentially Indian, and deviate in no important particular from the precepts set forth in the Indian Buddhist *Sutras*.

\* *The Diamond Sutra* by Bhikshu Wai-Tao and Dwight Goddard.

Willoughby-Meade in his *Chinese Ghouls and Goblins* shows how the doctrine of reincarnation has become part of the mythology and folklore of the Chinese people. There are celebrated fables involving rebirth under strange and curious conditions. Considered together, these prove that the doctrine of rebirth has a definite place in the subconscious minds of the Chinese people. China is dominated by tradition, and that which becomes part of the tradition influences to some degree the life of every Chinese.

A famous Chinese intellectual philosophizing on the mystery of life penned the following verse:

After I depart, I cast no look behind  
 Still wed to life, I still am free from care.  
 Since life and death in cycles come and go,  
 Of little moment are the days to spare.  
 Thus strong in faith I wait, and long to be  
 One with the pulsings of eternity.

—Po Chu-I. 800 A. D.

From China, Buddhism migrated to Korea. The King of Korea requested of the Emperor of China a complete edition of the Buddhist *Sutras*. The request was granted and the doctrines of Buddha found favor among the Koreans. They accepted the faith and embraced the doctrines of reincarnation and karma. It appears that the Koreans invented movable type. This greatly increased the efficiency of printing, and materially contributed to the spread of Buddhism.

When Buddhism reached Japan it found there an especially fertile field. It mingled to some degree with Shintoism, the native faith of Japan. Today Japan supports three



great religions: Buddhism, Shintoism, and Christianity. As early as the thirteenth century the Buddhist sacred books, including the *Diamond Sutra*, were printed in Japan. Again enjoying the favor of princes, Buddhism spread throughout the islands and divided into numerous branches. These sects or schools of Buddhist thought derive their indirect inspiration from India, but pay special reverence to local saints. Thus the Shingon reveres Kobo Daishi, and the Nichiren derives its name from the Japanese Buddhist saint who was its founder.

The wide diffusion and intermingling of Buddhist thought in Japan makes a brief summary of their various doctrines impossible. It is safe to say, however, that with the exception of the Zen, all the Buddhist sects in the Japanese Islands accept reincarnation and karma in some form. It is most frequently compromised by the belief in the efficacy of charms, prayers, and mantrams. The Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement finds its parallel in several Japanese Buddhist sects. Whether this is due to the influence of early Dutch missionaries must remain conjectural.

Many Japanese Buddhists as individuals have severed their relations with their native sects and give allegiance only to the Indian school and the original teachings of Buddha. Japan borrowed much of its philosophy from China, including painting, sculpturing, music, the drama, and flower arrangement which has come to be a fine art. To the Japanese Buddhist, law is made manifest through natural and simple things. Their innate love of beauty has affected their philosophy, but their intuitive grasp of the deeper Buddhist doctrines cannot be denied. Their folklore likewise abounds in references to metempsychosis and transmigration.

## REINCARNATION IN ISLAM

Prior to the advent of the Prophet Mohammed, the people of Arabia practiced the rites of idolatry and Sabaism. They worshipped strange gods, the stars, the constellations, the decans and degrees of the zodiac. When Mohammed entered the Kaaba at Mecca, he destroyed the three hundred and sixty gods whose images stood within the confines of the holy place. The gods belonged to the astrolatry which had survived in Arabia from the time of the Chaldean Magi.

In the introduction to his translation of the *Koran*, George Sale refers to the pre-Islamic belief in reincarnation: "Some believe in metempsychosis, and that of the blood near the dead person's brain was formed a bird named Tamah which once in a hundred years visited the sepulchre." It is evident from this statement that the beliefs of this earlier people were most irregular.

The *Koran* is the final authority of Islam. The enthusiastic Moslem declares that not one line; not one character; not even a single punctuation mark of the *Koran* has ever been changed. They advance this book as the only scriptural writing in the world that has not suffered the corruption of revision or translation.

The *Koran* contains one sura that is interpreted by numerous Moslem sects as authority for the belief in metempsychosis. "God generates beings, and hence they return to

him." This statement appears to be specific and incapable of other interpretation, but it is only fair to say that reincarnation is a disputed point in Islamic orthodoxy.

Soon after the death of Mohammed mystical religious cults began to spring up in Arabia. These cults accepted the absolute authority of the *Koran*, but desired to search further and more deeply into the mystery of God. Some of these esoteric groups were monastic, others lived in communities. Various sects were distinguished only by words and signs by which the members might know each other.

Mohammed never realized that his religion would extend beyond the boundaries of Arabia. He had given it to his own people. But the rise of the Caliphate resulted in a wide diffusion of Islamic culture.

By the ninth century of the Christian Era the principal writings of Plato, Aristotle, and the Neo-Platonists had been translated into the Arabic language and were accorded a high degree of veneration and respect. Thus the doctrine of metempsychosis reached Islam from Greece and Egypt.

According to George Foot Moore "Reincarnation is fundamental to the doctrine of Immam as held by the Shi'a Moslems, it was developed in a characteristic form by the Isma'is, and is a cardinal doctrine of Babism. The Druses believe that the souls of the righteous (Druses) pass at death into progressively more perfect embodiment till they reach a stage at which they are re-absorbed in the godhead; while the wicked are born in lower condition."

There is also evidence that some Islamic sects hold to the doctrine of transmigration. John P. Brown writes: "The *Bektashees* believe that God is in all things, and that the soul, after its separation from the human frame, may enter into

the body of an animal, for which reason they are unwilling to kill any living creature, lest it contain the soul or spirit of a late human being." \*

There is also a belief in Islam that certain prophets and sages return periodically to the material life. The author of *The Dervishes* writes: "It is this belief in the reappearance of holy personages which gave rise to the religion of the Druses, whose founder, *Bi Emir Allah*, after having already existed in this life in another form, returned as the Caliph and Reformer of Egypt, and, having mysteriously disappeared, will reappear at a future period."

The order of the Mevlevites, more commonly known as the "whirling dervishes," was founded by *Mevlana Jelalu'-d-Din Mohammed el Balkh er-Rumi*. This celebrated mystic had already developed extraordinary spiritual powers by his sixth year. In his *Mesnavi I Ma'Navi*, Book IV, Jelalu'-d-Din writes:

A stone I died and rose again a plant,  
A plant I died and rose an animal;  
I died an animal and was born a man.  
Why should I fear.

This is undeniably a statement of progressive re-embodiment, and coming as it does from the most famous and revered of Islamic prophets, must be accepted as a statement of orthodox belief.

To quote again from John P. Brown's unique work: "In a small treatise by a learned Sheik of the Mevlevee Order,

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\* *The Dervishes*.



lately deceased, there is a clear and distinct explanation of the 'spiritual existence' as believed by them. He explains and draws his proofs from the Koran, that all mankind were created in heaven, or in one of its celestial spheres, long before God created the present one, and perhaps any of the planets; that in this world they continue to exist in various conditions before assuming that of humanity; and that moreover they will continue hereafter to exist in other forms before they finally return to their original ones in the sphere of blessedness... He declares that the spirit of man has no knowledge in this life of its condition or existence in any previous one, nor can it foresee its future career, though it may often have vague impressions of past occurrences which it cannot define strongly resembling those happening around it."

The present trend in religion is away from metaphysical speculation and toward a general scepticism. The more esoteric doctrines are disappearing in favor of a smug materialistic agnosticism. This is true of Islam as of other world movements. The modern intellectual Moslem ignores the inference of rebirth in the sacred writings. The result is that like most Christians he is dominated by an unbelief which detracts greatly from the dignity of living.

## REINCARNATION AMONG THE AMERICAN INDIANS

In matters of philosophy and faith the American Indian is by nature an individualist. His convictions are influenced profoundly by his interpretation of the experiences of daily life, and by the visions and other mystical extensions of consciousness resulting from vigil, fasting, prayer, and meditation. Members of the same tribe may differ widely in their beliefs. Religious tolerance is general, and nonconformity brings no reproach if a man practices his beliefs with sincerity. Therefore, when an ethnologist asks some old sachem or an outstanding tribal citizen for a summary of the religion of his people, the learned elder, as likely as not, will elucidate his personal opinions on the subject. Thus many differing accounts may be secured from a single group. Due to this complication, all broad statements covering Indian theology are subject to a variety of exceptions.

In his *North American Mythology* Dr. Hartley B. Alexander makes a cautious generalization of the Indian attitude toward the doctrine of successive lives: "Belief in the possibility of rebirth is general," he writes, "although some tribes believe that only young children may be reincarnated, and certain of the Californians who practice cremation bury the bodies of children that they may the more easily be reborn." Referring to Arctic tribes, the same author notes: "Birth and

death, in Eskimo conception, are less a beginning and an end than episodes in life... Souls may be born and reborn both as man and as beast, and some have been known to run the whole gamut of the animal kingdom before returning to human shape. Ordinary human souls are reborn as men."

Some Indian nations have reincarnation or transmigration as an essential tenet of tribal doctrine, while others have only vestiges of the concept. Certain Greenland tribes, for example, believe that the soul of a dead relative will enter the body of a newborn babe, guarding and instructing the child until it reaches maturity, when its own soul takes control. Several tribes hold that scalping prevents rebirth, as the spiritual nature is connected with certain locks of hair.

The Indians of Eastern United States are convinced that the after-death world of the red man is exclusively for the use of their own race—the white man has a different heaven. Because of their admiration for George Washington, these Indians say that he has a special house just outside the door of the Indian Spirit Land. Medicine priests who have left their bodies and journeyed along the path of souls report that the Great White Father is having a splendid time in his fine home.

The Cherokee recognized no essential difference between the spirits of human beings and those of animals. All the kingdoms of nature shared a common immortality. Although the animal belonged to a lower order of intelligence than man, and its body might properly be used for food, the spiritual principle which animated the brute form was indestructible. It was necessary to kill animals that men might live, but these four-footed younger brothers had their

place in the afterlife. The hunter did not actually kill the animal, he only deprived it of a body for a short time. The Indian never hunted for sport, and when he killed the body of a deer or other wild creature, he offered prayers to its spirit, and honored its memory with sacred rites and ceremonies. In his *Myths of the Cherokee* James Mooney explains the philosophy of these Indians as it relates to this interesting subject. The hunter is pardoned "through a peculiar doctrine of reincarnation, according to which, as explained by the shamans, there is assigned to every animal a definite life term which cannot be curtailed by violent means. If it is killed before the expiration of the allotted time the death is only temporary and the body is immediately resurrected in its proper shape from the blood drops, and the animal continues its existence until the end of the predestined period, when the body is finally dissolved and the liberated spirit goes to join its kindred shades in the Darkening Land." See the *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*.

The numerous tribes of the Sioux Nation inclined toward a belief in rebirth. Of this group James Owen Dorsey writes: "Some of these metempsychosists go so far as to aver that they have distinct recollections of a former state of existence and of the passage into this." In another place he adds: "They believe in the transmigration of souls. Some of the medicine men profess to tell of what occurred to them in bodies previously inhabited, for at least six generations back." See *A Study of Siouan Cults*.

Most authors do not distinguish clearly between reincarnation and transmigration, thus further clouding an already obscure field of research. Enough can be gathered, however, to prevent serious misunderstanding. A clearly defined



trend is noticeable, which would indicate that the belief in rebirth is more prevalent among certain classes of Indians than among particular tribes. It is most likely to be found among the shamans, priests, prophets, medicine men and seers. These mystics have examined into the spiritual mysteries of life, and like the Yogis of India claim to possess faculties and powers by which they can explore into the secret workings of nature. They accompany souls into the shadow-life, wander about on the borderland which divides the living from the dead, and can see the life principles entering and leaving the physical body.

Occasionally those not consecrated to the holy life may enjoy visions or mystical experiences. As among the ancient Greeks, there are numerous accounts of warriors who seemingly have died, and after a time returned to life. The words of such men have great authority, and the reports which they bring back of their adventures while out of the body become part of the tribal tradition. It is not unusual for these resurrected ones to turn from their ordinary pursuits and take on the duties of priests and spiritual advisers. Most Indian religious cults, like that of the Ghost Shirts, begin with prophets who have returned from the dead.

In *The Soul of the Indian*, Charles Alexander Eastman (Ohiyesa) a member of the Sioux Nation, who wrote extensively on Indian culture, refers to reincarnation thus: "Many of the Indians believed that one may be born more than once, and there were some who claimed to have full knowledge of a former incarnation." Such recollections of previous existences nearly always resulted from mystic practices or other unusual circumstances. One famous medicine man gained his powers after being struck by lightning.

Some years ago Dr. Paul Radin carried on extensive researches among the members of the Winnebago Tribe of Wisconsin. He found that "By the belief in reincarnation the Winnebago entirely bridge the gulf between life and death... To live again is the greatest desire of the Winnebago, and practically every secret society holds this out as the lure to the outsider. If you join the Medicine Lodge you will become reincarnated, they say, and the other ritualistic organizations make the same claim. But not only by joining an organization is it possible to be reincarnated; if you live an upright life, if you die on the battlefield, reincarnation also awaits you."

Dr. Radin was fortunate enough to secure directly from a Winnebago shaman an account of three of this wise man's previous lives. The shaman who is identified by the initials T. C. said that he had been killed, while still a lad, by a hostile war party. He did not know that he was dead until he found his own body among the slain. He was then taken to the Spirit Land where he lived with an old couple until the desire to be reborn came over him. The Chief of the Spirit Village told him that he could go back to earth and obtain revenge on the tribe that had killed his relatives and himself. He was taken into what seemed to be a room, where he could hear little children playing outside. He wanted to join them, so he went through a door. There was a rush of cold air, and he began to cry, and he knew that he was being born from a woman's body.

In that life T. C. grew up to be a great warrior, and he slew many men and revenged himself upon his enemies. He died of old age, and left his body without pain. He even watched the people as they buried his remains. He had much pleasure in the afterlife, and even talked face to

face with Earthmaker. There were spirits about, and he was like them.

After a time T. C. again returned to the physical world and it was in this latest incarnation that he told his story to Dr. Radin, remarking, "I am going through the same that I knew before."

The Peyote cult has many followers among the Winnebago. They eat the peyote or make a liquid from it which they drink. The mescal, or peyote, is a small cactus, used medicinally as a stimulant and antispasmodic. With the Indians the effect is to produce visions and a temporary clairvoyance, and the plant is also believed to have great curative powers. The Peyote cult denies the doctrine of reincarnation, and this has caused ill feeling between the old tribal shamans and the new cult. Those Winnebago who will have nothing to do with the Peyote people claim that the use of this plant destroys the spirit, and the addicts will not be reborn again but will die utterly.

It is fortunate, indeed, that Dr. Radin has been able to continue his researches into the mystical philosophy of the Winnebago. In 1945 he published the sacred ritual drama of these Indians under the title, *The Road of Life and Death*. Making use of the old belief in reincarnation, the medicine priests interpreted life as a mystical road to the heaven worlds and back again *ad infinitum*. In his new book Dr. Radin tells us that the initials T. C. stand for the venerable seer Thunder-Cloud. Not only did this wise man remember his past lives; he recalled also his previous initiation into the secret rites of the Spirit-Road.

In the ritual, Earthmaker, the Great Spirit, promised that if the ceremonies of the rites were properly performed the

initiate would have more than one life. Earthmaker said, "I will always keep the door through which he may return to earth open to him. When he becomes reincarnated he can live wherever he wishes. He can return to the earth as a human being or he can join one of the various bands of spirits, or, again, if he wants to, he can become one of the beings who live under the earth."

Dr. Radin sums up the psychological aspect of the doctrine of rebirth as held by the Winnebago thus: "With the belief in reincarnation, the priest-thinker could do much more. Here a kind of continuum already existed. The priest-thinker had merely to develop the concept of a continuing consciousness. Thus the first attribute of divinity, permanence, was on its way to accomplishment. This permanence was further enhanced and fixed by having an individual born again into the same family and reliving, in every detail, his previous existence."

The Winnebago were led to the belief in the plurality of lives by the pressure of adversity and affliction. They were in much the same position as the white man of today. The only escape from war, crime, sorrow, and misery was through the strengthening of the internal spiritual self. Man must have a philosophy of living that explains the obvious tragedy of the world and at the same time proves that the human being can live well and attain security by a high standard of personal conduct. All mature civilizations are confronted with this problem of universal ethics.

In his delightful book, *What the White Race May Learn From the Indian*, George Wharton James summarizes the Amerindic philosophy of death. "The Indian," he writes, "believes in immortality without any admixture of complex



theological ideas. His is a simple faith which he accepts as he accepts life. He believes that when he dies his spirit goes to its new life just as at birth he came into this life... When death approaches he faces it with calmness, equanimity and serenity... Those who are left behind may wail for their loss, but the one who departs asks for and receives no sympathy."

In matters of spiritual conviction the Indian was by nature a silent man. He held his mystical beliefs close to himself and the members of his tribe. He had no instinct to convert others; to him each man must find his own Spirit-Path, and having found his way must live it gloriously and courageously to the end. After contact with the Europeans, the Indian became even more reticent on the subject of religion. The white man was always trying to force his beliefs upon the Amerinds, condemning all faiths but his own, but applying to himself very little religion of any kind. Because of these critical attitudes the European closed in his own face the sanctuaries of the American Indian esoteric tradition. As a result, very few Anglo-Saxons have any conception of the more profound aspects of the red man's mystical theology, occult philosophies, and disciplines.

As the Amerindic nations had no written languages it is not possible to restore this ancient learning from the crude pictographs which are the only literary remains of the old times. The lore of the tribes survives only in the memory of the old men and the medicine priests. If these shamans are silenced by the white man's criticism and contempt the wisdom of the tribes dies with them, and is lost beyond all hope of recovery. This has already happened in a number of cases and, sad to relate, even those ethnologists and anthropologists who have devoted the best years of their

lives to research among the surviving tribes are seldom interested in Amerindian metaphysics. Vestiges of a belief in reincarnation are to be found throughout the North American tribes, but only the initiates of the various mystical societies have a complete understanding of the doctrine. Under these conditions a complete statement is impossible at this time.

Dr. S. Baring-Gould explains the principle of rebirth as it was held by early peoples. Although his statement is general it applies accurately to the speculations of the Indians of North America. "The human soul," he observes, "with its consciousness of infinity, seemed to be something already perfected in a pre-existing state, something which had gone through a succession of phases of existence, and which would undergo a further succession. In the dream of metempsychosis we may trace the yearnings and gropings of the soul after the source whence it derived its consciousness, counting its dreams and hallucinations as gleams of memory, reflecting acts which had taken place in a former state of being. After death, the translation of the soul was supposed to continue." See *The Origin and Development of Religious Belief*.

So complete was the destruction of the religions, philosophies, and historical records of the Indians of Central America by the Spanish, that the mystical tradition among these nations appears to be hopelessly lost to modern scholars. There are hints, however, such as the casual observation of Bernard Picart in his *Religious Ceremonials*. In summing up the metaphysics of the Incas of Peru this learned Frenchman writes: "They believed that all who were born in a material world would live again in a material world."

Although no scriptural writings of the Mayas or Aztecs have been decoded, and it is impossible therefore to quote an authoritative text, it is almost certain that they believed in rebirth. No nation of the ancient world reached a degree of culture equal to that of the peoples of Mexico and Central America without discovering the law of reincarnation. This is the more probable when we realize that esoteric societies reached a degree of refinement in Central America closely approaching the Mysteries of Greece and Egypt. Metempsychosis is an essential teaching of the initiation rites of all the enlightened nations of antiquity. It is now held by leading anthropologists that the mound builders of the Mississippi Valley area of the United States were emigrants from the regions inhabited by the Aztecs, Toltecs and Mayas. As these emigrants were aware of reincarnation, it would support the opinion that rebirth was taught in the land of their origin.

While Diego de Landa was Bishop of Yucatan he wrote at considerable length about the customs and religion of the natives. Landa pointed out that the Mayas were the only people of the "Indies" who practiced the rite of baptism. According to the Bishop, this ceremony was expressed by a word which means "be born again or another time." As the Mayas had no concept of original sin, and to them baptism was protective rather than purificatory, it is quite possible that rebirth is implied by the word selected to describe the ritual.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, contrasting the religious beliefs of the Vesperic, or North American tribes with those of the Anahuac nations, writes as follows of the Aztec religion. "They upheld the theory of the transmigration of souls, and believed that... these souls entered into, and animated the

clouds, noble beasts, and birds of beautiful plumage and sweet song—possessing the privilege, while in this state, of ascending to heaven, or of descending to the earth." Many of the Greeks agreed with this conviction, affirming that the decarnate spirit could choose to be reborn in either human or animal form. Wherever transmigration was taught, metempsychosis usually was implied in a modified or limited form.

The Jivaros, a tribe of Indians inhabiting Eastern Ecuador, still have a belief similar to that of the Aztecs. "The Jivaros," writes M. W. Stirling, "believe that after death they are reborn in various forms of animal life. A warlike curaka [elder] becomes a jaguar when he dies and goes to live in the forest near enemy tribes in order that he may continue his vengeance toward them... It is believed that children under the age of puberty change into small birds... When Anguasha was asked if he expected to become a jaguar he said no, that he hoped to be a chicken hawk, because he was very fond of eating chickens and birds." See *Historical and Ethnographical Material on the Jivaro Indians*; Smithsonian Bulletin 117.

In his description of the Indian mental type in general, and applying to both hemispheres, Schoolcraft, the first great authority on the Amerinds, makes the broad statement; "They also believe in the general doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls... The notions of the northern tribes on this subject are shown incidentally in the oral tales which I first began to collect among the Algonquins and Decotas in 1822, and which are embodied in *Algic Researches*. The soul of man is seen, in these curious legends, to be thought immortal and undying, the vital spark passing from one object to another... It has been shown that



their oral traditions contain abundant evidence of the idea of metempsychosis, or transmigration of the soul through a wandering series of existences, human and brutal."

Four is the sacred number of the American Indians. According to the esoteric teachings of the Dakota tribe, a medicine priest may be born four times as a man. Between lives he dwells with the gods and receives instruction in magic and healing. He may choose where he wishes to be reborn, and retains a memory of his adventures in the spirit worlds between lives. After four incarnations he returns to space. See Gideon Pond, in Schoolcraft's *Indian Tribes of the United States*.

A consideration of information available indicates that the American Indians, as a group, were approaching a philosophical concept of reincarnation. They were paralleling closely the Greek and Hindu unfoldment of religious conviction. In each case the realization of the immortality of the human spirit led first to the belief in the survival of consciousness as a ghost or disembodied being. Later, as the mental outlook broadened, the ghost returned and inhabited some form, animate or inanimate. This helped the primitive man to explain the intelligence which he sensed about him in nature, and prepared the way for the final conviction that the human spirit could fulfill its destiny only in a body as good, or better than the one previously occupied.

## REINCARNATION AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Old Testament, as it has descended to us in various translations of the Bible into the English language, is for the most part the production of dubious scholarship. The King James version is especially rich in errors, including numerous changes to improve the literary style. The use of biblical quotations to sustain various interpretations, therefore, is open to severe criticism.

According to E. D. Walker: "Although most Christians are unaware of it, reincarnation is strongly present in the Bible, chiefly in the form of pre-existence." While this opinion is held by many students of reincarnation, it is only fair to say that the doctrine of pre-existence as taught in Jewish and Christian sacred writings does not imply reincarnation, nor is it "the premise necessarily leading to reincarnation." It does not follow that pre-existence implies a continuity of physical incarnations. The most usual interpretation of pre-existence is that the soul, though individualized in a remote time, has dwelt in a divine body with God in a heavenly state or world. This belief has been held by many nations of the ancient world and has survived to this time in the opinion of numerous religious sects.

A typical instance of confusing pre-existence with reincarnation is found in Jeremiah 1:5. "The word of the Lord

came unto me saying, Before I formed thee . . . I knew thee; and before thou camest forth . . . I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet." (Vulgate.) There is nothing in this verse to indicate that Jeremiah had ever lived upon the earth before. There is a decided statement of predestination, but nothing of rebirth.

There is a peculiar belief sustained by the prophetic books that by a special dispensation certain of the prophets and patriarchs might return to the world in times of great tribulation and spiritual change. Malachai IV:5 reads: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This statement may seem at first to suggest reincarnation. The prophet and patriarchs having returned to God, became, as it were, elders before the almighty throne, and might be sent forth by the Divine Will to minister unto Its creatures. This is not a cycle of cause and effect, however, but a dispensation unto the elect. The prophet returns not to gain new experience and pay off the debts of a previous existence, but merely to bear witness; to carry a special message from the Creator.

Another aspect of the matter is presented in the apocryphal book of Wisdom VIII: 19-20: "And I was a witty child, and had received a good soul. And whereas I was more good, I came to a body undefiled." Many ancient peoples believed that man descended into his present state from a previous existence for which the present life was either punishment or reward. These previous lives, however, were not lived upon this visible, corporeal earth, but in some mystical place like the abode of the angels. As the evil angel was cast from the presence of the Lord for sin committed in the heavenly world, in like manner men may be punished

for a time for the vices of another state. As long as birth into this world is at the discretion of God and not the result of immutable law, the true doctrine of reincarnation is not intended.

There is a possible hint of reincarnation in Proverbs VIII: 22-31. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was . . . when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

Unfortunately, again the statements are inconclusive. Solomon declares himself to have existed with God before the beginnings of the world; also that he was an eternal being in whom there was neither beginning nor end. If we accept the eternity of the soul as proof of reincarnation we are assuming much.

The fact that reincarnation is not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament according to our present versions is no proof that the doctrines of reincarnation and karma were not accepted. The most ancient existing fragments of the Old Testament are in Greek, not earlier than the second century B. C. It is impossible to dogmatize upon a work the original of which is virtually lost. It is quite possible that the doctrine of reincarnation has been edited out of the Bible so that only fragmentary, imperfect, and distorted remnants



of the belief have survived in such verses as we have quoted. A simple illustration of the confusion resulting from translation alone will indicate the general difficulty. Psalms XC:1 in the Authorized Version reads: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." The same verse translated from the French Bible reads: "Lord, thou hast been for us a refuge from age to age."

In the Douay translation of the Vulgate the verse is changed to Psalms LXXXIX: 1, and reads: "Lord, thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation."

Superficially it might appear that the differences are immaterial, but such actually is not the case. "All generations" is not synonymous with "from age to age," nor "from generation to generation." Each of these terms has a separate and distinct significance, and the French translation implies the possibility of rebirth which is absent from both of the other translations. When we realize that each verse of the Bible is capable of several different translations, the magnitude of the dilemma becomes apparent.

Regardless of the testimony of the Old Testament and the *Talmud*, which at best is uncertain, there is ample evidence that the doctrine of reincarnation occupied a prominent place in the religious tradition of the Jews. In some cases the belief in transmigration occurs.

This belief may have originated with Pythagoras, who founded a secret sect in Lebanon in the sixth century B. C. Rabbi Elias declares that the doctrine of metempsychosis was believed in and approved by the heads of his religion. Rabbi Manassa ben Israel in his *Nishmath Hayem* writes with authority: "The belief or the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is a firm and infallible dogma accepted

by the whole assemblage of our church with one accord, so that there is none to be found who would dare to deny it... Indeed, there is a great number of sages in Israel who hold firm to this doctrine so that they made it a dogma, a fundamental point of our religion."

The *Talmud* states that the soul of Abel passed into the body of Seth, and from that into the body of Moses. In the mystic commentaries it is explained that Cain died and reincarnated as the Egyptian who was killed by Moses, thus paying the karma of his previous evil action. Job was the reincarnation of Thara, the father of Abraham; and Samson possessed the soul of Japhet.

There was considerable amplification of this curious research. Adam's soul was reborn in the body of David and will come again as the promised Messiah. The soul of an adulterer might be reborn as a camel, and this would have occurred to David had he not repented of his evil ways. Rabbi Manassa further taught that God never allows the souls of men to be destroyed, and if they sin he sends them back into the world to be purified by metempsychosis.

The *Zohar*, the most mystical and metaphysical of Jewish books, by some attributed to Simeon ben Yohai, taught definitely that men must be reborn until they have achieved a degree of perfection which will make possible their reabsorption into God. According to Myer the Promised Land of Jewish mysticism is the nirvana of Buddhism, the ultimate return to the divine nature.

Josephus, the historian of the Jews, in the *Jewish Wars*, II:8, mentions reincarnation: "They say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies." Josephus, while defending the fortress of

Jotapata, took refuge in a cave with some forty soldiers who desired to commit suicide that they might not fall into the hands of the Romans. Josephus admonished them: "Do ye not remember that all pure spirits who are in conformity with the divine dispensation, live on in the loveliest of heavenly places, and in course of time they are again sent down to inhabit sinless bodies." By the words of Josephus the soldiers were strengthened and resisted the impulse toward self-destruction.

Josephus also writes that the belief in metempsychosis was familiar to the Pharisees, a statement sustained by the opinions of Tertullian and St. Justin. The teaching was revived by the post-Christian cabalists, and flourished during the middle ages, especially among Jewish scholars.

The mystical sects of Syria, the Therapeutae, the Essenes the Nazarenes, the Gebers, and the Johnanites, accepted various forms of the doctrine of rebirth. Philo Judaeus, a great student of Plato, evolved a complete system of pre-existence and reincarnation; and Porphyry, the Jewish Neo-Platonist believed in and wrote on the subject.

By examining the various commentaries, we discover that the true doctrine of rebirth as the outworking of the law of cause and effect is completely stated; therefore, we may properly include the Jewish people among the races and nations who have believed in metempsychosis. There is a clear statement that rebirth is the way toward perfection, the means of accomplishing the end of liberation, and also that it is a proper medium for the administration of divine retribution.

## REINCARNATION AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament also suffered greatly from mis-translation and interpolation. Nor would it be proper to ignore the deletions which have peculiarly mutilated the epistles. The true authors of the New Testament are unknown, and the present collection of writings is but a small part of the manuscripts in circulation prior to the Nicene Council.

There are vestiges of the doctrine of metempsychosis in the New Testament, but as in the case of the older writings, most of the quotations advanced concern only pre-existence. The Christian belief that Christ was consubstantial with the Father is inadmissible as evidence of metempsychosis.

John VIII:58 is typical: "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."

In the first place, it was affirmed by the early church that Christ was no man but the very person of the Father. This being true, it was impossible for Christ to suffer, die, or be resurrected as a man, and the laws which govern these theological mysteries are not applicable to ordinary mortals. When Christ as God says, "Before Abraham was, I am," he is merely stating the eternity of the Godhead which must necessarily precede any of the beings created by It. When Christ further tells the disciples that they were with him



before the beginning of the world, all that can be safely inferred is that God, possessing all wisdom, chose his own messengers and fashioned them by his will, and kept them with him until the time of the Incarnation.

The Gnostics distinguished between Christ and Jesus, a distinction which, if accepted, changes the entire complexion of the subject. If Jesus was a man who was christened or overshadowed by God, then the doctrine of rebirth can apply to that man, as he would be subject to the laws of life. With this interpretation, all Christendom can accept reincarnation and can strive through a succession of lives to achieve Christhood, that is, to be anointed of the spirit and to walk with God.

John the Baptist preceded Jesus, heralding the coming of the new dispensation. According to the gospels, Jesus was baptized by John at the beginning of the three years' ministry. Soon after the baptism, John the Baptist was executed, so the story goes, by Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee. According to Matt. XIV: 1-2, Herod learning of the increasing fame of Jesus: "Said unto his servants, this is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead." According to Mark VI: 15-16 there were others who said that Jesus was Elias reborn, or one of the prophets, but Herod insisted that it was John, whom he had beheaded, who had risen from the dead. In Matt. XVI:14, the disciples ask Jesus who he is and he replies by asking them who they think he is: "And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

All of this is most confusing. In the first place, Herod was not Tetrarch of Galilee at the time he is supposed to have beheaded John. History assures us that Herod, sur-

named the Great, died in the year 4 B. C. The next embarrassment arises from the fact that John the Baptist and Jesus were contemporaries, Jesus being thirty years of age when he received the baptism. How then could John have been reborn as Jesus, when Jesus was past thirty when John died?

It is not likely that John could have risen physically from the grave after his decapitation. If such a circumstance occurred, it scarcely could have escaped mention. There is only one possible answer; namely, that John might have overshadowed or obsessed the body of Jesus. It is unlikely in the extreme that the Jews held this opinion. As these verses can in no way support the doctrine of reincarnation, they require no further consideration.

It was the belief of the Jews that Elias the prophet was to come. The opinions of Jesus on this matter are given in Matt. XVII: 11-13: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptist."

As we already have mentioned, the return of a prophet upon a divine mission is not to be interpreted as reincarnation, but as divine intercession. This verse, therefore, is not admissible as evidence, but, with many others, points toward some teaching of return. There is a tradition that Jesus was the reincarnation of King Solomon, but this belongs to the sphere of cabalistic speculation.

Among the miracles of Jesus is one which has been advanced as evidence of rebirth. The account is given in John

IX:1-2: "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" It appears from this question that the disciples believed it possible for a man to have sinned before his birth. If so, where and how? It is quite possible that a previous physical existence is implied. The significance of the statement is greatly reduced by the failure of Jesus to confirm the belief of his disciples. But, here again, the words are ambiguous. Jesus replies: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

If we accept the law of retribution as the work of the Lord, then we can understand that the living man had not sinned nor had his parents sinned, but rather that the debt was karmic; that is, had been brought forward from the deeds of the previous personality now dead. This is only an interpretation, however, and is not necessarily intended in the text.

There is, however, one statement from the book of Revelation which appears to be the only positive statement of reincarnation in the two testaments. Rev. III:12 reads: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." The meaning is inevitable. Those who fail must go out again; that is, must return to the corporeal state. Those who achieve (become godlike) return to the Father's house where they become pillars, uprights, and supporters; the living columns in the everlasting house. These are the adepts; the initiates of great mysteries; those whose lives and works have justified them.

This is the precise teaching of Buddhism. There can be no doubt that the Jewish mystical sects had contacted Asia.

The Buddhist belief that the *sattva* or self returns to earth age after age until it achieves liberation is so pointedly stated that we can well understand why Martin Luther believed the Apocalypse to be uninspired. He felt the work to be pagan, and pagan it is. Its inclusion in the New Testament is a proof of the survival of the great philosophical institutions of paganism in the very Book of the Christian Church that had dedicated itself to the destruction of paganism with fire and sword.

Jesus is believed to have been educated by the Essenes. The ruins of a monastery of this order still stand at Engedi near the Dead Sea. They also had a retreat on the shore of Lake Maoris in Egypt. The entire sect believed in reincarnation and studied the arcane traditions of the Egyptians. Josephus mentions the integrity of the Essenes with the highest praise, stating that they never engaged in any trade of buying or selling but selected occupations which brought them into slight contact with the commerce of their time. They were shepherds, but they kept their flocks only for wool. They were carpenters, and also acted as tutors and instructors. They were learned and pious people in a day of ignorance and false beliefs, and were devoted wholly to the service of the invisible Father whose will and teaching were their law of life. It was these men who wore their hair long, after the order of the Nazirs, and also affected a single white garment woven circularly without a seam, and over this a scarlet cloak.

If Jesus had been brought up in this brotherhood he had been educated to believe that enlightenment was an inner experience and that the promised Messiah would come not in the sky but in the heart of the faithful.



True Christianity as taught by the first Christians prior to the theologizing process was a simple statement of spiritual belief. God, the principle of infinite wisdom, was manifested in the world through certain enlightened prophets who by sanctity of life had come to approach him and know his mysteries. These prophets preached to the Gentiles (the unbelievers) and sought to direct them into lives of sanctity and virtue. Such a teacher was Jesus, whose good name became the foundation of the faith.

It is my opinion, based upon an extensive survey of primitive Christian doctrine, that this Jesus, whoever he was and whenever he lived, taught reincarnation as had the initiated priests before him. He taught also the law of compensation and urged men to a higher life upon the authority of the most mystical and profound of Jewish mysticism. Like the Essenes, his immediate teachers, he believed that a good life led to a happy rebirth and ultimate identification with God. Like the Egyptians and Hindus, his more remote mentors, he accepted unto himself a number of followers, and of these he chose twelve to whom he communicated the mysteries. The substance of their knowledge is lost because it was an oral tradition and died with them. The church symbolizes its peculiar sanctity by means of a gold and silver key with which it would open all locks. Would it be too much to say that these keys are reincarnation and karma, the laws which unlock the mysteries of the universe? It is these two laws, and these laws alone, which can make all things new, and can assure the ultimate salvation of all souls

## EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS ON REINCARNATION

The first centuries of the Christian church were devoted largely to the problem of what constituted orthodoxy. Most of the early bishops were pagans by birth and education, and were Christianized only by later conversion. These men brought with them much of their early training and belief, interpreting the new faiths in terms of the old. More than one remained a pagan in his private life as did Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemaeus, who acknowledged that he was a Christian only in his public capacity.

When Christian bishops visited Alexandria it was customary for them to hold two services, one in their own church and the other at the shrine of Serapis. It was not until considerably later that Christians made the momentous discovery that theirs was the only true religion.

Most of the educated pagans who were drawn to the church during the first four centuries of the Christian Era believed in some form of metempsychosis and were convinced that they had lived on this earth before. It is small wonder then that the doctrine of rebirth took on Christian manners and enjoyed a general approval.

It was only after the Church had ascended to the first place among the religions of Europe that the reincarnationists were weeded out and branded as heretics. It dawned upon

the elders that the teaching of reincarnation was diametrically opposed to such Christian institutions as vicarious atonement, forgiveness of sin, heaven and hell, and baptism. If man could work out his salvation without benefit of clergy the Church would be relegated to limbo. The doctrines of Origen were hotly disputed, and gradually the concept of metempsychosis was forgotten. During more than a thousand years the facts of rebirth were ignored while many theological fictions were preached. But truth is immutable and undying—and the doctrine of rebirth has survived. Today the laity, freed from the domination of the clergy, is searching for the rationale of belief. The reasonableness of the doctrine of rebirth is becoming more widely accepted, and ultimately the recognition of the spirit's repeated embodiments will become the foundation of all intelligent spiritual effort.

There is no mightier name in the history of the early Church than that of St. Augustine. In early life he belonged to the cult of the Heresiarch Manes, where he was instructed in the doctrine of the plurality of lives. Later he was converted to Christianity, became bishop of Hippo, and after death was canonized, becoming a "prince of the Church triumphant."

In his *Confessions* 1:6, St. Augustine asks: "Did I not live in another body, or somewhere else, before entering my mother's womb?"

St. Jerome assisted in the preparation of the *Vulgate* and was a man of most sanctified and scholarly life. This worthy churchman declared that the doctrine of transmigration was taught as an esoteric mystery in the early Church, being

communicated only to a few specially selected members of the congregation. \*

According to Ruffinus, a letter existed written by St. Anastasius in which he definitely states his belief in pre-existence, and intimates an acceptance of reincarnation.

Nemesius, bishop of Emissa, states in no uncertain terms that the Greek Christians of his time accepted metempsychosis.

Arnobius, a Numidian apologist of Christianity wrote: "We die many times, and often do we rise from the dead." † The same Arnobius has left a record that Clement of Alexandria had written a most important account of metempsychosis. Clement of Alexandria declared that reincarnation was a truth transmitted by tradition and authorized by St. Paul himself.

St. Justin the Martyr explicitly states that the soul of man occupies a human body on more than one occasion. He acknowledged the difficulty that men could not remember their previous lives, but went so far as to hazard the opinion that the worst sinners might, after death, have their souls mysteriously attached to the bodies of wild animals.

St. Gregory of Nyassa also expressed himself on the matter of reincarnation: "It is absolutely necessary that the soul should be healed and purified, and if this does not take place during its life on earth, it must be accomplished in future lives." This might hint of life in some other state, but considering the opinions of his time, more likely implies metempsychosis.

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\* Hieronim - *Epistola ad Demetr.*

† *Adversus Gentes.*



In a prayer which has survived, Synesius says: "Father, grant that my soul may merge into the light, and be no more thrust back into the illusion of earth." In a thesis on dreams quoted by Thomas Taylor, Synesius adds: "It is possible by labor and time, and a transition into other lives, for the imaginative soul, to emerge from this dark abode."

In *Contra Celsum*, the great Christian father Origen writes: "Is it not more in conformity with reason that every soul for certain mysterious reasons (I speak now according to the opinion of Pythagoras and Plato and Empedocles, whom Celsus frequently names) is introduced into a body, and introduced according to its deserts and former actions?"

In the *Wheel of Life*, the Reverend A. Henderson, Vicar of St. John de Sepulchre writes of reincarnation in the early initiation into the Mysteries. This memory is preserved in church: "A further objection which exists in the minds of many is based on the supposed condemnation of the doctrine by the Church in the Fifth General Council of Constantinople. A careful consideration of the historical situation makes it abundantly clear that the question of Reincarnation was not even raised at the Council; and that the condemnation of certain extreme tenets of the Origenists was an act of Mennas, Patriarch of Constantinople in the provincial synod. In this he was instigated by the Emperor Justinian who ordered him to procure the subscription of the bishops to the anathema. This local synod was held in 543 A. D., while the General Council did not meet until ten years later. It is easy to understand, however, how this extra-councilar sentence of Mennas was, at a later period, mistaken for a decree of the General Council."

Justinian had closed the classical academies in Athens and Rome, and had sent the philosophers into exile. Goaded

on by enemies of the Origenist teachings, Justinian condemned Origen by an imperial edict which later was confirmed by Pope Vigilius. \*

Lutoslawski writes: "This condemnation refers only to a very peculiar form of the doctrine of pre-existence, implying the fall of perfect spirits who had already reached Heaven... Such a radical extension of palingenesis deserves condemnation, but leaves untouched the real old tradition, according to which reincarnation corresponded to the Christian conception of purgatory."

It appears on the basis of expert testimony that the actual doctrine of reincarnation as the proper means of ultimately accomplishing unity with God has never been anathematized or declared heretical by the Christian church. It is astonishing, therefore, that the doctrine so necessary to the understanding of life should be ignored by even the liberal denominations. The doctrine of reincarnation is the most important and significant teaching which the churches of Christendom could disseminate today.

The mysterious apocryphal book called the *Pistis Sophia*, a writing rich with the tradition of the gnosis and claiming to set forth the esoteric teachings of Jesus as communicated to Mary of Magdala, supports the belief in reincarnation with the following statement: "But if he shall have sinned once, twice, or thrice, they shall reject that soul sending it back again into the world according to the form of the sin that it may have committed."

After the Synod of Constantinople the doctrine of reincarnation departed from Europe, and its absence contributed

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\* See *Pre-existence and Reincarnation* by W. Lutoslawski.

much to the misery and desolation of the Dark Ages. Like many other philosophical traditions it was carried away to the deserts of Arabia where it flourished with the rising power of the Saracens, to return to Europe with the homecoming Crusaders. Reincarnation has always been a philosophical doctrine, and as philosophy languished in the West the doctrine of metempsychosis languished with it.

There were occasional exceptions, however. "It may interest you to know that some of the advocates of reincarnation in the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages were: St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) who founded the Franciscan Order; the learned Irish monk Johannes Scotus Erigena; St. Bonaventura (1221-1274) Cardinal and general of the Franciscan Order—the 'Seraphic Doctor'; Thomas Campanella, the Dominican monk who was sent into exile on account of his belief in the successive return of the soul to earth. M. d'Orient, an orthodox Catholic writes (*Destinees de l'Ame*): 'In this doctrine, so evidently based on reason, everything is linked and held together... for all that was needed in order to bring to pass these various results, was for God to call back into existence certain souls He knew to be naturally suited for His purpose. Consequently, the most sublime mysteries of religion, the most wonderful facts regarding the destiny of the soul find their natural explanation in a clear understanding of metempsychosis.' \*"

Among the heretical sects of Christendom which believed in the doctrine of reincarnation were the Manichaeans, Priscillianists, and the Albigenses. The Manichaeans combined Gnosticism, Persian dualism, and Christian monotheism. Reincarnation was a prominent tenet of the sect.

\* *Azoth* - Feb. 1920 - "Letters That May Help You," No. 5.

Manichaeism exercised a profound influence throughout the Near East until it was dissolved by the pressure of Christian orthodoxy.

The Priscillianists were followers of Priscillian, a Spanish bishop of the fourth century. The members of the group combined Gnostic and Manichaean philosophy with their orthodox beliefs, with the result that Priscillian was condemned for heresy by the Roman Emperor Maximus and executed in 385 A. D. Remnants of the sect remained, however, until the sixth century. The Priscillianists accepted pre-existence and speculated on the subject of metempsychosis. For these and similar beliefs they were destroyed.

The Albigenses, who flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, brought down upon themselves not only the wrath of the Church but the strong hand of the Inquisition. Among the beliefs for which they were tortured and killed was the doctrine of rebirth.

Heretical sects sprang up as long as the temporal power of the Christian Church remained undisputed. Various councils and synods dealt severely with these schisms but could not prevent the spread of unorthodox mysticism. Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation did not result in Christian liberalism. The reformers were puritanical themselves and achieved a measure of orthodoxy equal to if not greater than that of the church they condemned.

It may be interesting to note a curious tendency in the early church to regard certain Greek philosophers as Christian although they had died before the birth of Christ. Plato, Socrates, and Pythagoras enjoyed considerable dignity in the early church. A tradition was circulated that Pythagoras was a monk. Even skeptical old Socrates was embellished



with holy orders. And a rumor persists that Gautama Buddha was canonized under the name of St. Jehosaphat. These circumstances may have inspired Voltaire when he declared that Plato should be regarded as the first canonized saint in the Christian Church. There is reason also to suspect that the pagan mathematician, Hypatia, the greatest of women philosophers and the teacher of Synesius, was canonized under the name of St. Catherine of Alexandria.

The early fathers knew that the Christian faith was deeply rooted in pagan doctrine and tradition. Christendom is very similar to classic paganism, with the difference that the doctrine of original sin has been substituted in the place of reincarnation and karma.

## REBIRTH IN MODERN CHRISTENDOM

The night train to Jerusalem was an achievement in discomfort. I shared the compartment with an elderly clergyman on sabbatical leave. He was beginning to be a little disappointed. Instead of a land flowing with milk and honey he saw only a desolate rocky country through the gloom of a winter storm. In the course of a long evening our conversation drifted toward philosophy, and before we realized it we were analyzing the theory of reincarnation.

The minister personally was not antagonistic to the doctrine. He was a human being beset with those problems and uncertainties which afflict men. The old man acknowledged that the dogma of his faith did not entirely satisfy him. He sensed the need of a philosophy; some fuller realization to give reason and strength to belief.

During the conversation he admitted that had he been God he would not have created a world filled with sin, misery, and death. He would not have made some men great, others lowly; some wise, others foolish; some good, and others bad. Nor would he have destroyed men for their sins or their unbelief.

The clergyman's face lit up. Had he been God he would have created all men happy. He would have loved them all regardless of their shortcomings. He would have forgiven

them all in spite of their mistakes. A loving father might chastise his children, but he would have devised a plan that would ultimately bring all of them to salvation and peace.

But alas, he was only a man with the heart of a man and the ignorance of a man. He shook his head slowly. God knew best and the church could not be wrong. So with a smile that had much of resignation in it he concluded his remarks somewhat as follows:

"You know, personally, I would like to believe in reincarnation. It seems so reasonable, so just, so harmonious with nature. But unfortunately, I am not free to believe. My religion teaches me to believe what I am told. It is not for me to question. I must follow in humility and obedience the laws and doctrines of my faith."

Most graduates of theological seminaries have read about metempsychosis, but they have regarded the teaching as a rejected relic of old pagan theology. It never dawns on most of these young men that reincarnation is a living truth, vital to enlightened thinking. It has been my observation that the average clergyman is far more orthodox than his denomination requires. The local clergyman frequently regards as heretical the doctrines which his own superiors admit or even admire. What is the real attitude of the modern church toward reincarnation? Is it really a monstrous and misshapen heresy?

Speaking for Protestant Christianity Dean Inge, late of St. Paul's finds no conflict between this "the oldest creed" and modern Episcopalianism. It is obvious therefore that the protestant Christians can accept the doctrine of rebirth without endangering their immortal souls.

For the Catholic Church there could be no more powerful voice than that of the late Cardinal Mercier, the heroic prelate of the Belgians. While the cardinal did not commit himself as to a personal belief in reincarnation, he definitely stated that the doctrine did not in any way conflict with Catholic dogma.

"For those who are interested in the relation of the Church to the dogma of palingenesis, an Italian book, published in 1911, is of the greatest importance: Attilio BEGEY e Alessandro FAVERO, *Monsignor Arcivescovo L. Puecher Passavalli* (Milano: Fratelli Bocca, 1911). Here we find the life and letters of a pious and learned Roman Catholic archbishop who at the age of sixty-four accepted the truth of pre-existence and reincarnation from two disciples of the Polish seer TOWIANSKI, namely Stanislaw FALKOWSKI and Tancredi CANONICO. Archbishop PASSAVALLI (1820-97) admitted that reincarnation is not condemned by the Church, and that it is not at all in conflict with any Catholic dogma. His letters prove that a very learned Catholic scholar can believe in reincarnation without leaving his Church. He lived up to the age of seventy-seven, unshaken in his conviction that he had already lived many times on earth and that he was likely to return. Another Catholic priest, who also after long discussion gave up the prejudice against reincarnation which prevails among the Catholic clergy, was Edward DUNSKI, whose *Letters*, edited by Attilio BEGEY and Jozef KOMENDA, were published by Bona in Torino in 1915. Many other priests in Poland and Italy believe in reincarnation, being influenced by the great mystic Andrzej TOWIANSKI (1799-1878) whose works were printed privately



in three large volumes at Torino in 1882, and are circulated among the disciples of the master." \*

On the Sunday of August 18th, 1893, Archdeacon Colley, formerly curator of St. Mary's, Portsmouth, preached a sermon on reincarnation from the pulpit of Christ's Church, Leamington, England. It is a far cry from Calley's enlightened viewpoint back to the attitude of the inquisitional court that condemned Giordano Bruno to the flames in 1592. The principal charge against Bruno was his belief in a kind of metempsychosis. In *The Heroic Enthusiast*, a work translated into English by L. Williams, Bruno's philosophy is summed up thus: Nothing in the universe is lost, everything changes and is transformed; the soul transmigrates, and drawing round itself atom to atom, it reconstructs for itself a new body. †

A curious incident in modern Christian theology is the case of the Reverend William Alger, a Unitarian divine who published in 1860 a book entitled *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*. The Reverend Alger had no place in his heart for metempsychosis in 1860. But when he republished the work in 1878 he had greatly matured in viewpoint, and admitted that he had been converted to the doctrine of rebirth. A paragraph from his book typifies the revision of his ideas:

"In every event, it must be confessed that of all the thoughtful and refined forms of the belief in a future life, none has had so extensive and prolonged a prevalence as this. It has the vote of the majority, having for ages on ages

\* *Pre-Existence and Reincarnation* by W. Lutoslawski. London, 1928.

† See *Lucifer*, Vol. III p. 112.

been held by half the human race with an intensity of conviction almost without a parallel. Indeed, the most striking fact about the doctrine of the repeated incarnations of the soul, its form and experience in each successive embodiment being determined by its merits and demerits in the preceding ones, is the constant reappearance of that faith in all parts of the world, and its permanent hold on certain great nations."

Today reincarnation is a thoroughly established belief in the Western world. True it is frowned upon by some orthodox movements, but among thinking people there have been a great number of converts. Thomas Edison was for some years a member of the Theosophical Society; and Henry Ford, America's foremost industrialist, has publicly stated his acceptance of the belief in reincarnation based upon a wide experience in contacting and working with men in every walk of life.

I have learned that a number of liberal ministers are enrolled in mystical Christian organizations that teach reincarnation. These men have not yet reached the point where they are willing officially to teach the subject, but it influences their viewpoint and adds a quality of honesty and sincerity to their sermons.

In the last fifty years numerous organizations have grown up in Europe and America whose teachings emphasize rebirth. The Theosophical Society converted thousands to the doctrine, and other groups such as the Unity Movement, the Anthroposophical Society, and the Rosicrucian Fellowship, have done important work in popularizing the teaching of metempsychosis.

Missionary activity also has been a factor. A number of sincere men and women have gone to distant parts of

the earth to bring the blessings of Christianity to so-called backward and primitive races. Wherever they went, whether it were to the heart of darkest Africa or the desolate plains of Mongolia, these missionaries contacted the doctrine of rebirth. In some cases it was the missionary who was converted, and returning became a teacher to his own people.

An example of this is Dr. Dwight Goddard, recently deceased, who served for some years as a Christian missionary to China. Perceiving the depth and splendor of Eastern philosophy, he became a Buddhist and devoted the balance of his life to disseminating Buddhism, of which reincarnation and karma are the very essence, among the peoples of the Western world.

The doctrine of reincarnation is constantly increasing in popularity as more and more Western people are embracing the teaching. Therefore we may look forward to a world made better through the increasing integrity of enlightened individuals.

## MODERN BELIEVERS IN REINCARNATION

It is a habit of most men to agree with the great, the learned, or the powerful. According to Francis Bacon we learn not only from experiment and observation but from the testimony of those who have preceded us in time. It is important to many people to know that reincarnation was taught not only in the ancient world but also in recent times. The doctrine of rebirth has survived the constant change of empire and is part of the philosophy of our modern world. Great men have believed in it, wise men have sought to probe its mysteries, and brave men have dared to live by its laws.

George Foot Moore, American clergyman, Bible scholar, and Orientalist, in his work *Metempsychosis* writes: "A theory which has been embraced by so large a part of mankind, of many races and religions, and has commended itself to some of the most profound thinkers of all time, cannot be lightly dismissed."

Sensing the insufficiency of the orthodoxy he had left behind, the great Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza speculated on the eternity of man and the permanence of the mind in space: "It is impossible for us to remember that we had existence prior to the body, since the body can have no vestige of it, and eternity cannot be defined in terms of time or have any relation of time. But, nevertheless, we have in our



experience a perception that we are eternal. For the mind is sensible no less of what it understands than of what it remembers...

"Although, therefore, we do not remember that we existed before the body, yet we perceive that our mind is eternal, in so far as it involves the body's essence under the category of eternity, and that this its existence cannot be defined by time or interpreted by duration." \* From this quotation it appears that Spinoza was groping toward the doctrine of metempsychosis.

In his *Monadology* the great German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz likewise indicates a tendency toward the acceptance of metempsychosis. He was an initiate of European mystical societies, suspected of being a Rosicrucian, and a profound student of Pythagorean and Platonic mathematics. His personal belief in reincarnation is quite possible.

Francois Marie Voltaire, the satirical French philosopher and author, summed up the matter of reincarnation with one pithy remark: "It is not more surprising to be born twice than once; everything in Nature is resurrection."

Benjamin Franklin, who as a poor boy entered Philadelphia with a bun under each arm, was America's first philosopher, and according to the opinions of some, America's first gentleman. This almanac-maker and ambassador writes: "Thus, finding myself to exist in the world, I believe I shall, in some shape or other, always exist; and with all the inconveniences human life is liable to, I shall not object to a

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\* *Ethics*, Book V.

new edition of mine, hoping, however, that the errata of the last may be corrected."

David Hume, Scottish historian and philosopher, committed himself definitely to a belief in reincarnation: "The soul, if immortal, existed before our birth. What is incorruptible must be ungenerable. Metempsychosis is the only system of immortality that philosophy can hearken to."

The philosophers Lessing, Schlegel, Fichte, and Herder are usually included in lists of believers in reincarnation. Schlegel describes nature as a ladder of resurrection. Fichte discusses his theories in *Destiny of Man*. And Herder wrote dialogues on transmigration. In most cases, however, the quotations are ambiguous. This may have been a protective mechanism against the orthodoxy of their time, or it may have resulted from certain mental reservations.

There is considerable evidence that the great poet and mystic Wolfgang von Goethe accepted reincarnation. The words in *Faust* represent years of study and indicate the trend of Goethe's mind:

The Soul of man  
Is like water:  
From heaven it cometh,  
To heaven it mounteth,  
And thus again  
It must return to earth,  
Forever changing.

This belief is confirmed in a fragment written by Goethe in 1776 and directed to the object of his deep personal attachment, Frau von Stein: "Tell me, what has Fate in store for

us and why bound she us so close together? Ah! Thou were in time long gone my sister or my wife."

Isaac D'Israeli, father of the immortal "Dizzy" afterward Lord Beaconsfield, held opinions which unquestionably affected his son's life, and through his son the British Empire. Isaac D'Israeli wrote: "If we accept the belief of a future remuneration beyond this life for suffering virtue and retribution for successful crime, there is no system so simple and so little repugnant to our understanding, as that of metempsychosis. The pains and pleasures of this life are by this system considered as the recompense or the punishment of our actions in another state."

In his article, *Proofs of Reincarnation*, A. J. Anderson records a curious fact concerning Napoleon I: "Napoleon was an instance. Here was a man, born in the humblest possible condition of life, rising until he dominated empires and sent kings from their thrones at a single word; rising from obscurity to the very pinnacle of human power; a man who, in those strange, abnormal conditions into which he sometimes passed, would cry out to his Marshals, "I am Charlemagne. Do you know who I am? I am Charlemagne.'"

In his essay on religion Arthur Schopenhauer commits himself to a belief in reincarnation thus: "The absurdity and offensiveness of this doctrine (referring to Christendom) lie only in the Old Testament's presupposition that man is the product of an unknown will which has created him out of nothing. If, on the contrary, always admitting that moral qualities are inborn in man, we look at this fact by the light of the Brahmanical and Buddhistic belief in metempsychosis, the whole thing takes on quite a different appearance. For, according to metempsychosis, those inborn moral qualities

which we find in one man and not in another, are not a gift of grace from some unknown deity, but the fruit of man's own actions in another life in some other world."

The New England "Brahman," Ralph Waldo Emerson, has long been regarded as America's greatest philosopher. His acceptance of reincarnation is proved by his own words: "We must infer our destiny from the apparent. We are driven by instinct but have innumerable experiences which are of no visible value, and we may resolve through many lives before we shall assimilate or exhaust them."

The beloved poet Walt Whitman also acknowledged metempsychosis: "And as you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths. (No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)"

Professor Thomas H. Huxley, one of the world's greatest biologists and the moving spirit of nineteenth century science, accepted the reasonableness of reincarnation: "Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality; and it may claim such support as the great argument from analogy is capable of supplying." \*

Dr. E. B. Tylor, acknowledged as the father of modern anthropology, admits his acceptance of the teaching of rebirth with the following statement: "So it may seem that the original idea of transmigration was the straightforward and reasonable one of human souls being reborn in new human bodies."

Friedrich Nietzsche, who patterned so much of his philosophy after that of Schopenhauer, seems to have accepted

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\* See *Evolution and Ethics*.



the doctrine of reincarnation: "My doctrine is: Live so that thou mayst desire to live again—that is thy duty; for, in any case, thou wilt live again!"

In his autobiography *The Days of My Life* (chapter on religion) Sir H. Rider Haggard, world-famous novelist, writes: "Final judgment I can understand after many lives of growing towards the good or towards the ill—and, indeed, the faith I follow declares it..." Haggard raises his voice against the, to him, revolting belief that our eternal future depends upon the actions performed in any one life.

Two of the great persons of our day who believe in the doctrine of reincarnation are Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi is the greatest man who has lived on this earth in the last five hundred years. His name will be remembered as long as history is recorded. A man of peace in a world of war; a man of integrity in a world dedicated to personal advantage; this little Hindu leader is living the Law. By religion a member of the Jain sect, the Mahatma's life is firmly established on the great laws of reincarnation and karma.

## THE CYCLE OF NECESSITY

### A SUMMARY OF MODERN BELIEF

The human life wave is made up of sixty billion spirits or entities. Of this number, about two billion incarnate at one time, making up the population of the earth.

The spirit, ego, or self of the human being has been evolving through various forms and conditions for nearly a thousand million years. This vast period of time was used in the perfecting of the physical body as a medium for the expression of the entity in the physical world. The human body as we know it was first distinguishable some fifty million years ago. At that time the entity controlled the body by a rudimentary nervous system which it since has refined to its present degree of subtlety. About twenty-five million years ago the division of the sexes made sight and thought possible in the body. From that period to the present time the entity has been constantly refining the body which serves as the vehicle of its physical expression. Present humanity bears witness to hundreds of millions of years of growth which we see recapitulated in the embryo and fetus.

Millions of years of evolution lie ahead. Man is becoming human slowly but inevitably, because the subjective entity is constantly demanding better and more responsive organisms. The entire process through which the human being is passing in the mystery of growth may appropriately be

termed the *cycle of necessity*. All growth is motivated by karma; that is, action and reaction. It is karma which makes reincarnation necessary in order that compensation may justly be administered. Man is eternally suffering, and misfortune is a constant goad impelling him forward toward a more perfect state. Karma is the law, and reincarnation is the means by which that law is administered.

It is difficult for the average person to realize the full significance of an existence that is lived on planes other than that which may be described in physical terms and that extends from the beginning to the end of time. But regardless of his actions; regardless of his virtues or vices; regardless even of his efforts to destroy himself, man is an immortal, eternal being manifesting through an infinite sequence of bodies, each a little nobler than the one before. We are here today doing the things we are doing today because of this sequence of lives. The things that we are doing today will become the elements of later existences, bodies without end.

Yet there is no fatalism in this doctrine. Each state and condition that comes to it is the result of personal action. We make and unmake ourselves. There is no strange and distant god smiling upon some and frowning upon others. We are not the blind instruments of some fatal necessity. We are not marked by Adam's sin. Each of us bears witness to his own character; to the thoughts and actions of lives long past. Each of us is the architect of his own tomorrow. The future is in our own hands.

It requires a little courage to acknowledge personal responsibility; to accept a belief that teaches that there is no escape from action or the consequences of action. It takes a high measure of resolve to be willing to face the world and acknowledge that all the misfortunes which occur are

the results of our own mistakes. That is why the laws of reincarnation and karma have always belonged to the wise and strong, and by their very nature are not suitable to lesser intellects.

In the words of a modern psychologist it is inconceivable to the subconscious self that there ever was a time that it did not exist. Though each person lives for today, he cannot comprehend the condition of not existing. Man, though living and dying, takes eternal existence for granted. All of the higher purposes of the man, his dreams of accomplishment, his noblest aspirations, and his most powerful ambitions, demand eternity for their fulfillment.

As we look about us upon that strange aggregation of creatures that makes up society, we realize that no doctrine based upon the theory of a single life can solve the problems of this multitude. For the majority, there is little vision; the future stretches out into a mysterious and unknown expanse. Yet each of us in his innermost heart of hearts is aware of some great force that moves him relentlessly through the years toward the unknown.

Man is a creature of many sorrows; suffering is the common lot. Each in his own life knows the varied ills which arise in the chemistry of human relationships. Only the wise man can be happy; for the rest there are years of uncertainty. Why should a benign and all-knowing Providence afflict many and bless a few? Why should some come into this world diseased and crippled; others be born to every advantage? Why are some wise in childhood and others foolish in age? Who loosed sin and death upon the world that all the dreams we live by should come in the end to a common ruin?



The church says that it is the will of God. Science says that it is the law of nature. But philosophy maintains that all of these strange conditions are the growing pains of an immortal soul.

Reincarnation and karma are the only explanations for the mystery of life that the reason can embrace. These laws give purpose to action, meaning to existence. These same laws release man from the monotony of the daily routine by giving him perspective and the power to see beyond the horizon of his present life. When Gautama Buddha brought the doctrine of rebirth to India it released millions of human beings from the hopelessness of a caste system which gave opportunity to the highly born alone. When Pythagoras brought the same philosophy to Greece it freed slaves long bound to the traditions of the Attic state. Pythagoras freed his own slaves; and one of them succeeded him as head of his Academy.

Reincarnation comes to our modern world as liberation from the caste system of special privilege. It destroys our illusional concept of wealth and poverty. It breaks down the barriers that exist between employer and employee. It gives us a vision beyond wealth; a vision toward some Utopia to come in which men will dwell together in a camaraderie of purpose. Those who know men best realize that when humanity in general recognizes the law of reincarnation, which is the only teaching that will explain the true meaning of things as they are, men will immediately become more zealous in quickly putting the world in order.

In the words of Henry Ford: "I adopted the theory of reincarnation when I was twenty-six—Religion offered nothing to the point—at least, I was unable to discover it.

"Even work could not give me complete satisfaction. Work is futile if we cannot utilize the experience we collect in one life in the next.

"When I discovered reincarnation it was as if I had discovered a universal plan. I realized that there was a chance to work out my ideas. Time was no longer limited. I was no longer a slave to the hands of the clock. There was time enough to plan and create.

"The discovery of reincarnation put my mind at ease. I was settled. I felt that order and progress were present in the mystery of life. I no longer looked elsewhere for the solution to the riddle of life.

"If you preserve a record of this conversation, write it so that it puts men's minds at ease. I would like to communicate to others the calmness that the long view of life gives to us.

"We all retain, however faintly, memories of past lives. We frequently feel that we have witnessed a scene or lived through a moment in some previous existence. But that is not essential; it is the essence, the gist, the result of experience, that are valuable and remain with us." \*

Reincarnation and karma also light the dark mystery of ethics and morality. These laws give reason to right action, revealing that every action is intimately related to the progress of the individual. We no longer do right because of scriptural admonition, but because we have learned the meaning of right and wrong as they react upon us through the law of karma. We grow through every thought and action.

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\* Quoted from *The Esoteric Tradition*, II, 641, by G. de Purucker.

We learn not for one life, but for eternity. Each art and science that we master becomes part of the immortal self flowing through the ages.

It is no longer difficult to understand how genius flows from the fountains of the past, how each of us brings into this life the essence of all that has gone before. One child may play the violin at six; another may lead symphony orchestras at nine; a third, a little boy in Burma, may teach the most profound of Buddhist doctrines at the age of eight. Reincarnation and karma alone explain these phenomena, and explain also all the hidden powers and impulses, characteristics and traits, which come with us into birth.

Plato believed and taught that all learning was remembering, and the very word *education* originally meant to draw forth that which already was known. We all come into the world with abilities, talents, and peculiar aptitudes. We are destined to certain labors by the karma which we have brought with us out of the lives gone before.

How noble then are the doctrines of reincarnation and karma. How filled with learning is this mysterious cycle of necessity. We come into this world not to be happy, primarily, but to learn. Life after life we pass through complicated experiences until in the fullness of living we learn to grow happily. Happiness is the by-product of our harmonious adjustment to the universal plan.

Where do we exist between lives? What is the subjective state? Is the entity in heaven or in hell?

The philosopher replies that whether living or dead, man is always himself. For a time he manifests objectively, taking into himself the experiences of the outer world; and then

for another space of time he is subjective, assimilating into soul power the experiences of his physical existence.

According to the doctrine of rebirth we may add nothing new to ourselves in the intervals between lives. During this time we examine, order, and classify the experiences we have gained. We make them part of an immortal self that, enriched with experiences, proceeds into another body.

There are some who, hypnotized by physical existence, struggle to hold the possessions of their physical lives. Having achieved wealth, honor, and power, they forget that these temporal glories have small place in the universal plan. It is the purpose of the universe that all men should inevitably outgrow physical things. Man should realize that the inner life alone is real and permanent and all else belongs to the sphere of illusion. One of the duties of rebirth is to sever man's will from the objects of his physical attention. As we come of age, we leave the world behind, finding nothing in the material state to be of value except the experience of self-mastery.

The cycle of necessity is the endless cycle of rebirths; to be born, to die, and to be born again, century after century, age after age, until the very end of time mingles with eternity. The cycle of necessity is symbolized in the East by a spinning wheel to which human beings cling tenaciously, the ignorant clinging to the smaller life they know while the enlightened pass on to a larger life they have come to understand.

The cycle of necessity is the symbolical name which represents the great time and effort, the period of striving after truth through which each entity must pass. The laws of reincarnation and karma make possible the constant progress of all living things. Not only does man grow, but the sticks,



stones, and stars grow with him. All are unfolding together; all life is growing up in space and toward space. The cycle of necessity ends at some distant, incalculable time, and life having fulfilled the pilgrimage of uncertainty comes at last to the end. This end the Buddhists call nirvana, and the Christians heaven. But names mean nothing. All such terms merely represent rest after labor; peace at the end of seeking.

## REINCARNATION IN THE ANIMAL WORLD

The Neo-Platonist Porphyry, in his *Four Books on Abstinence from Animal Food*, credits the animal creation with the possession of a spirit and soul. The Buddhists who instituted the first hospitals for the care of animals taught that they were man's younger brothers who should not be misused but treated with every consideration. The teachings of the Neo-Platonists and Buddhists concerning the rights of animals are in substance as follows:

All the animate and inanimate bodies in nature are ensouled by the same divine force. This spiritual power manifests through the various kingdoms according to the intrinsic nature and the degree of evolution which each has attained. The difference between man and the animal is intellectual rather than spiritual or physical. The lower beasts lacking certain mental and sensory developments peculiar to man are incapable of reflection and expression to the same degree.

Science has discovered that certain of the higher brutes, especially the dog, the elephant, and the ape, have attained considerable mental development. The elephant's memory is prodigious; the dog's loyalty is traditional; and the ape's ingenuity enables it to solve problems which baffle twelve-year-old children. It is obvious from the study of highly

domesticated animals that these creatures have absorbed a great deal from their human associates and are capable of a measure of true intellection.

For thousands of years man has thoughtlessly and cruelly exploited the lower members of the animal kingdom. It is only within recent years that average people have seriously taken up the fight in defense of the animal's right to exist.

Philosophically, the difference between man and the animal lies in the metaphysical structure. The human being has individualized its *sattva* or ego. As a result man is responsible only to himself for his actions. He is rewarded for good and punished for evil by his own spiritual nature.

In the case of the animal the entity has not been individualized but remains as one collective source of life. Man emanates only one physical body at a time; the animal entity emanates numerous physical bodies at one time, all of which are dependent upon itself. There is a collective animal entity for each of the species of animals and their subdivisions. Thus there is a collective entity for dogs, and within this, lesser collective entities for each type or kind of dog.

When man incarnates he is a complete unit consisting of an entity and its mental, emotional, and physical bodies. The separate animal is not complete, for while its lower bodies are individual, its entity and mind are collective. The result is that in the animal evolution all animals develop and gain experience through the evolution of any one of their kind, whereas man must grow individually. When an animal dies the collective entity immediately sends out other embodiments, but there can be no such thing as the reincarnation of any specific animal.

As animals have superphysical as well as physical bodies, they may continue for a time in the invisible worlds. Therefore animals, like humans, can be earthbound, and under certain conditions can be seen clairvoyantly after they have physically died.

Unlike man, however, their organism cannot be impressed with mental or moral virtues which will affect subsequent bodies. There can be no karma in the animal kingdom. The animal is not a self-responsible creature, and because it has no individual will it is incapable of sin or error. The cruelty, gentleness, or intelligence of animals is due to their type, their instincts, and the environment in which they are placed, and not to any moral urge.

The animal has a form of psychism somewhat similar to that of primitive human races. Before an earthquake in South America horses broke from their stalls and took refuge on safe ground. There is a well-known tradition that rats will leave an ill-fated ship. Being incapable of moral determination, the animal depends entirely upon impulses impressed upon its brain by the collective entity. Being without will power, it cannot resist any of these impulses. Therefore all animals of a certain type have approximately identical habits and characteristics.

If the animal is not subject to karma it is necessary to explain in the light of philosophy the numerous misfortunes which occur to animals. The normal consciousness of a higher mammal is equivalent to that of a human being under a light anesthesia or light hypnosis. The nervous impulses of the animal organism pass not to the brain directly, but to the collective entity. Therefore it is the entity and not the animal which feels pain. The collective entity be-



longs to a much higher order than the animal, and is subject therefore to rebirth and karma. The pain which an animal apparently suffers is in reality a physical reflex such as frequently is observed under anesthesia. The individual animal is not subject to suffering as we know it, despite appearances to the contrary. This law which protects the animal, although not appearing to do so, does not prevent the human being from creating karma for himself by mistreating animals.

The law of reincarnation is not applicable to animals because of their constant emergence from the collective self, but the approximate period between waves of emanation is from five to ten years in higher mammals, and only a few days in some insects and fishes.

## REINCARNATION IN THE PLANT WORLD

The plant creation is one complete cycle lower than that of the animal, and two cycles lower than that of man. Like the animal the plant is not individualized but is the manifestation of collective entities. The plant is capable of creating form and of growth, but within its own organism is incapable of intrinsic motion, emotion, or thought. The group entity of the plant world is exceedingly complex, and the time element far more complicated than is the case of animals. The oldest living things on earth are members of the plant kingdom.

The plant kingdom has a greater tenacity for life than any of the other forms, and of all the kingdoms is the most adaptable to environment. Plant growth is most easily stimulated by artificial means. The lines between types are less formal than in the animal world, as demonstrated by the late Luther Burbank. There is no objective consciousness of environment in most parts of the plant world. There is, however, the trace of a protective instinct, as demonstrated by experiments carried on in the last decade.

Like the animal, the plant kingdom is not subject to the laws of reincarnation and karma, but only the law of evolution through the collective entity. The plant has so simple an organism that it has little superphysical existence. The

etheric double disintegrates within twenty-four hours after the death of the plant. Therefore it cannot be observed clairvoyantly, but simply fades away after the collective entity withdraws its energy.

The group consciousness of the plant kingdom is formless though possessing being. When we say formless we mean that it is azonic, or like the gods of the Greeks is capable of being everywhere at the same time, unlimited by place. The plant collective entity has a mental and emotional nature, and like that of the animal is capable of suffering, karma, and rebirth. For that reason certain forms of plants, like certain types of animals, become extinct. The dying out of a species or type indicates that its collective entity is itself passing out of incarnation. The plant evolution proceeds upward from simple grasslike structures to great spreading trees whose branches are the rudimentary patterns of arms. The trees, especially those that bear fruit, are the highest plant form. At the end of the present day of manifestation the kingdom will move forward into an animal state, but there is no crossing from kingdom to kingdom except at the end of world cycles or periods.

Plant life coming constantly in contact with higher kingdoms takes on some of the higher attributes, but these should not be accepted as evidence of true growth. Plant consciousness, such as it is, is purely instinctual like that of animals, but of a considerably lower order. A good example of the plant instinct is to be found in the case of ivy, which proceeds methodically in its process of finding a suitable surface upon which to grow. Experiments have been made in which ivy has been planted ten feet from the nearest upright. The plant has proceeded without error directly toward the nearest trellis.

As it is obvious that the plant has no brain structure its selectivity has created much discussion in the world of science. The answer is that the actual thinking is done by its collective entity which, controlling the growth of the plant, guides it toward its most convenient medium of expression. Throughout the plant world there is evidence of the guiding power of a superior intellect which cannot be attributed to the plant itself. Some call this nature; others the law of nature. But such terms merely cover the ignorance which prevails concerning group intelligences governing the inferior or less developed kingdoms of nature.

After the plant has finished its plant evolution and proceeded to its animal evolution, its collective intelligence will break up or individualize into separate entities. Then it will enter its human condition, and like man will receive its impulses from within rather than from without.

In each of the natural kingdoms there are transitorial forms; links between kingdoms. Between the mineral and the plant there are the lichens and mosses. Between the plant and the animal are certain carnivorous plants, and also plants with elementary nervous systems such as the sensitive plant. Between the animal and man are the true anthropoids. And between man and the next order above him are the great initiates and teachers; the demigods of classical antiquity.

As the plant is suspended from one central source which animates an entire order, it cannot reincarnate. But having disintegrated, its experience elements become part of the collective being. A good example of the power of the collective plant entity is a wheat field or a grass lawn. Here millions of similar structures function together experiencing



approximately similar circumstances. All wheat is suspended from one principle of wheat which renders the grain fertile even after it has lain for four thousand years in an Egyptian tomb. All grass is one grass, and as the little leaves die new ones take their place. The principle is constantly emanating forms and gaining its evolutionary progress through the building of these structures. Life and death, here as in all other natural kingdoms, is merely the bestowing or removing of the vital contact. The plant seed is impregnated with the energy of the group entity and will carry this power from one age to another. But if the group entity goes out of incarnation the types become sterile, and slowly all such forms disappear from the earth like the fantastic creations of the ancient times.

## REINCARNATION IN THE MINERAL WORLD

In the elemental system of the ancients the mineral kingdom occupies the lowest place. The mineral life wave comes into incarnation with the formation of the cosmos, and remains with but slight modification until the dissolution of the cosmos. During a life wave, therefore, each mineral entity sends out only one series of bodies.

Like the animals and plants, the mineral has no individualized entity. The mental, emotional, and growth principles remain with the entity. Only the physical body is individualized.

There are many divisions within the mineral group, the most important being the division between metals and gems. The diamond is the highest in the order of precious stones, and gold the highest of the metals. In certain parts of central Europe gold is found to have a special affinity for certain plant orders, especially the grapes, sacred in antiquity as the highest of the fruits. Grapes planted in earth containing gold build this metal into their structure, so that by burning the branches and stems the gold can be extracted.

The mineral kingdom is built up along lines of great mathematical precision. The earth itself, the collective mineral body, is composed of perfect geometrical segments. The

earth's core of azoic rock is the absolute and fundamental part of the mineral kingdom, and the true abode of the collective mineral entity. All physical life is sustained by the mineral kingdom, which is not only the substance of the planet but supplies the chemicals necessary to the continuance of organic existence.

It should be remembered that when mineral, plant, or animal life has been compounded in such structure as man, each preserves its own individuality but is co-ordinated and preserved in its proper relationship by the spiritual force emanating from the human ego. Having been incorporated in higher organisms, and then by the dissolution of these organisms reduced again to its free state, the mineral kingdom completes a minor cycle of incarnation. The element itself does not incarnate, but rather is incorporated into a superior form from which it later is released. This little cycle is the only method by which the mineral kingdom is capable of evolution.

The entity behind all mineral existence is working through bodies incapable of growth, motion, emotion, or intelligence. That is, the forms are too elementary and imperfect for these higher qualities to manifest through them. Therefore the mineral has but one form of manifestation, and that is existence. It is capable of being, but incapable of extending that being along any specialized lines. It is the entity therefore that must ceaselessly strive to refine the outer form of the minerals.

The crystals and gems represent the struggle that is going on to improve mineral types. But this improvement is so gradual that millions of years will pass before any noticeable change is effected.

It has been suggested that rocks, for example, may exist in two forms, living and dead. Disintegrated rock is not dead; more correctly, it is free. The disintegration of rock is paralleled in the human kingdom by the process of individualization which is constantly going on throughout society. This free rock is preparing for a seedlike existence, and therefore is much richer in energy than so-called living rock. The soil in which the farmer plants his crop is composed of this free earth which according to geology has been worn away from its original source by millions of years of struggle with storms, elements, and climates.

The etheric body of the collective mineral entity hovers over, enfolds, and encloses all parts of the mineral kingdom, and is the link between the collective entity and its numerous mineral forms. This etheric body is not exuded by the rocks, but is the only visible, tangible part of the mineral group consciousness.

It is well known that certain zones of the earth are especially associated with the phenomena of earthquakes. This is because here the mineral earth cell has lines of cleavage. Seismologists call these lines of cleavage faults. Earthquakes are electrical phenomena, and the discharge of electricity causes the greatest earth movement along the natural lines of cleavage.

The ancients recognized the various precious stones as being the crystallization of planetary, zodiacal, and cosmic rays in the earth. These rays, by their crystallization, create complete constellations in the earth even as these same rays, when interpreted in the human kingdom, create a constellation of tribes and nations. This is the cause of the imputed powers of gems, which have a place in every system of mystic lore.



The mineral process of incarnation began while the planet earth was still composed of a fiery mist. As this mist condensed, the mineral entities began precipitating bodies. At first these bodies were little more than tangible air, but the condensation continued with the result that minute granules appeared. These granules ultimately precipitated themselves into masses which the Tibetans term a form of clabber. The passing of thousands of millions of years increased the solidity of these masses, until substance as we know it came into existence. As soon as the mineral kingdom had been established it became the foundation for all the other kingdoms. The plant entity began to mold plant forms out of the mineral substance. Later the animal entity began molding forms out of the plant stuff. And at last the individualized human entities began to fashion bodies out of the animal material. Each of the kingdoms is a degree of ensouled or enlivened physical substance. Every form in nature in a final analysis is composed of the mineral element.

The higher kingdoms taking hold of the mineral particles vibrate them at a rate more rapid than their normal vibration. By so doing they fashion the mineral substances into bodies. As soon, however, as the energy leaves the body by the phenomenon of death, the artificial stimulus ceases and the mineral atoms return to their true estate; mineral substance. Thus all evolution on the earth is made up of mineral matter being combined in various patterns for the evolution of higher kingdoms.

## REBORN NATIONS AND RACES

The laws of reincarnation and karma may be applied not only to the life of the individual but to the destiny of the civilization of which he is a part. Nations and races, like individuals, are born, live out their destinies, and come to ultimate dissolution. Several ancient races have entirely disappeared from the earth; others are dying; still others are being born. A race is an entity; a type or kind of life which may endure for millions of years. A civilization is a mode of culture; an entity of tradition and ambition. A nation is a group or entity within a larger collective group. It is a political unity bound together within certain boundaries of time and place.

The ancients believed that all of their communities, cities, and states were ruled over by patron divinities to whom appropriate offerings were made, and whose temples occupied the most honored places. According to Homer, when the Grecian states warred against the Trojans the gods of the Greeks fought in the air against the gods of Troy. These gods were the tribal spirits revered since the beginning of recorded history.

The members of various races take on a common complexion. Each group becomes a type apart, differing not only in greater matters of language and government but in the smallest customs, gestures, and attitudes. It is therefore

usually quite easy to distinguish between a Frenchman, an Italian, an Englishman, and an American. Each has his own peculiar ways of doing things, his own tradition, his own distinguishing peculiarities. In this way groups of people become party to common policies; they are warlike or peaceful, indolent or industrious, and by their various codes of action they bring upon themselves, individually and collectively, various consequences. The proud are humiliated, the humble are exalted, the persecuted are unified, and the prosperous are divided.

In addition to present action, each race and nation brings out of the past a tradition; a heritage of good and evil for which that race or nation must make amends. The policies of a people determine absolutely the destiny of that people. Those who persecute shall be persecuted; those who destroy shall be destroyed. From the consequences of action there can be no escape.

When a member of a certain tribe or clan begins to think differently from those about him he is either cast out of the tribe or departs from it voluntarily, seeking some place where he will find others in agreement with his beliefs. Thus it is that such as outgrow their environment depart from it, either mentally or physically, and therefore are no longer subject to its karma or its laws. The story of America is an excellent example of progressive-minded people who left their own world to seek a better place in which to live and think. Individual growth liberates man from all social orders, step by step. But for the majority the rule of the herd prevails.

The policies and inclinations of a people determine the end to which that people shall ultimately come. If the nation

desires conquests it shall ultimately be conquered. If it desires wealth beyond a reasonable degree it shall ultimately be impoverished. It is a historically proved fact that those who live by the sword perish by the sword. All empires established upon injustice finally collapse from within. It is a law of nature that only the right can survive.

A Parsee scholar once was asked how it came about that India, a land of philosophy and letters, of great ideals and a noble spiritual concept, should be deprived of its independence and fall under foreign yoke. The scholar replied that in a remote time the Aryan Hindus had descended from northern India and had driven the peaceful inhabitants of the great Indian peninsula into the sea, slaughtering many and enslaving the rest. Though this happened many thousands of years ago, the laws of karma decreed that those who had enslaved should in turn be enslaved.

As of nations and races, so of communities. Each city and town has its own atmosphere; something about it that draws some and repels others. Communities have their policies, their attitudes, and a distinct individuality. According to the merits of these qualities a community either waxes or wanes.

As communities develop according to their natures, so organizations and institutions have their karma. Corrupt enterprises ultimately fail. Business that is not founded upon integrity and intelligence ultimately comes to a bad end. Many a corporation has lost its all because it tried to gain more than was its due. The tradition, the principles, the standards behind an industry determine with mathematical precision the ultimate state to which that industry shall come.



If we allow approximately a thousand years as the interval between reincarnations for those not highly evolved, we shall see that the periodic reappearance of certain types of entities in the material world accounts for many of the changes and disasters that occur. In the opening years of the Christian Era the Roman Empire carried on extensive warfare largely to gratify the militaristic ambitions of the people. A thousand years after the decline of Rome the Crusades stand out on the pages of history. At approximately the same time the great Mongol conquests changed the face of Asia and threatened the survival of Christendom. It is approximately one thousand years from Genghis Khan to the World War; the greatest military upheaval of modern times. Those who believe in reincarnation accept the theory that entities entering life at regular intervals bring their dominant qualities with them to again live out their ideals.

According to Plato and the Egyptians it was karma that destroyed the continent of Atlantis. It will be interesting to observe the consistency with which such natural cataclysms as earthquakes and pestilences follow man-made war. Everywhere there is evidence that quality of action is resulting in appropriate consequence. As individuals we err and suffer. As communities and as industries we become selfish and decline. As nations we war and are impoverished. As races we fail and depart.

But through this whole pageantry of the coming and going of world orders the individual entity, the ego or self, is growing up through experience toward reality achieved through the conquest of illusion.

## THE DIVINE INCARNATIONS

The doctrine of avatars, or celestial embodiments, is the principal theme of the puranic literature of India. According to this concept the god Vishnu occasionally incarnates for the purpose of rescuing his creations from evil or danger. There are ten principal embodiments of Vishnu during the present *kalpa* or age of the world. Nine already have transpired, and the tenth, called the *white horse avatar*, is yet to come.

In each of the divine incarnations Vishnu, taking upon himself corporeal form, performs a heroic action. Having completed his mission the god does not die in the accepted sense of the word but retires to his true estate, from which exalted position he continues his benevolent activities for the preservation of his creatures.

The Hindu mind regards the divine incarnation as assurance of security and the perpetuation of the virtues. In the *Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna, the eighth avatar of Vishnu, is made to say: "Whenever there is decline of righteousness and uprising of unrighteousness, then I project myself into creation. For the protection of the righteous and the destruction of the evil-doer, and for the proper establishment of the law of righteousness, I appear from age to age."

There are many important parallels between the Hindu Krishna and the Syrian Christ. Each was conceived immac-

ulately; each fled from his own country to escape from an evil king who destroyed the first-born of his kingdom; each was a shepherd, at least symbolically; each was deified and regarded as an intermediary between the supreme God and his earthly children.

It is widely believed throughout India that Gautama Buddha was the ninth avatar, in this way tying Brahmanism and Buddhism together. The phenomenon of the rise of Buddhism was too great to be ignored, and the sanctity of Buddha's person has been accepted by many widely divergent Eastern cults.

Traces of avatar worship are to be found in China where the Emperor is regarded as the Son of Heaven invested with the powers of his Father; in Japan where the Emperor's person is accepted as divine; in Egypt where the Pharaohs were believed to be overshadowed by various gods; in Greece where the pagan divinities took form and wandered among men; in Rome where the Emperor himself assumed divinity with the purple; among the Nordics where Odin and other members of the pantheon wandered upon the earth, assuming various disguises; and among the Mexican and Central American Indians where Quetzalcoatl was venerated as the incarnation of the spirit of the planet Venus.

Avatar worship has risen in most religions through the deification of their founders. This is obvious in Christianity where the various councils and synods finally decided that Christ was identical with the Father, and therefore in Christ God actually was incarnated and lived with men.

An avatar, however, should not be regarded as a reincarnating entity. It is not drawn back into life because of personal insufficiency, or that any law of evolution may be ful-

filled. Rather the incarnation is a gesture of divine grace; the deity, assuming human limitations and proportions, becomes the teacher, the priest, the prince, or the general in order to forward the estate of its chosen people.

Therefore we may say that in essence and principle the belief in avatars denies the laws of reincarnation and karma by establishing a factor of grace or escape. By means of the avatar the people are elevated to an estate that they have not earned. In the case of Christ, the purpose of the divine incarnation has been misunderstood and eventually resulted in the teaching of the forgiveness of sin, a belief which violates all the principles of universal integrity.

The moment that a doctrine of intercession is established universal integrity is compromised. Reincarnation and karma as teachings must be interpreted as universal, impersonal, inevitable laws, or else their significance is entirely destroyed. In philosophy not even God is permitted to interfere with the workings of his own creations. Unphilosophical people, however, fearing to face immutable law, have conjured up an elaborate structure of evasion, compromise, and conceit which in the course of ages has evolved into what we term theology, most of which is a monument to ignorance and audacity.

How then shall the believer in reincarnation and karma interpret the doctrine of avatars? Obviously, the universal life which permeates all parts of the cosmic system cannot be contracted to the size and proportion of a fragile human being. The avatar is, in reality, the legitimate product of the laws of reincarnation and karma. The seer, the sage, the prophet, and the saint are products of a normal evolution. By consecration to the truths of life certain entities have achieved a greater unfoldment than the rest. This greater



unfoldment, this fuller knowledge, results in an appropriate superiority over those less consecrated or less developed.

Plato was not a miracle, but rather a proof of the working of the Law. Buddha was not a transcendent being who descended from some celestial state to abide for a time with men; he was the product of the Law at work in human life to perfect and illuminate mankind. The avatar then is in reality an elder brother, one who has gone before, one who has learned the lesson, and having worn out the experiences of life continues to incarnate for one purpose alone; the service and instruction of others.

The final and noblest end to which men aspire is a state of rational usefulness. Having experienced all things within himself the sage is reborn as the teacher of other men. Having conquered the world he returns to life as would a spiritual conqueror. He is no more mysterious or strange than is a great violinist, a great physician, or a great artist, who through ages of talent and application rises above his contemporaries to a unique position in the world.

The belief that God incarnates in certain persons is due to the fact that more divinity or godliness is manifested in the world through certain high types of spiritual leadership. The more that man is possessed by Truth the more he manifests of God. The great world teacher, having found more of divinity than other less evolved mortals, is accepted as a divine incarnation because the truths and laws of life are more evident in him.

## SOUL MATES

The doctrine of soul mates may be defined as the belief that at some remote time a cleavage took place in the spiritual and physical nature of man. As a result of this cleavage no human being in itself is perfect, but must achieve perfection through union with the other half of itself. While the belief in psychic affinities has never gained general favor there are several small groups in Europe and America committed to the idea.

Personal affection is the most difficult of all human emotions to rationalize. For thousands of years human beings have fallen in love, but no philosopher has ever been able to give a full and complete definition of love. The Platonic schools held to a doctrine of complements. They believed that man, striving after perfection, found in woman the virtues which he himself did not possess; or if he did possess them, they existed only as potentialities.

Those unable to understand the more abstract phases of Greek philosophy misinterpreted the opinions of these great thinkers and fell into the illusion of affinities. Instead of realizing that each human being is essentially complete and perfect they separated the male and female nature into two objective personalities, dedicating each to the quest of the other.

From a philosophical standpoint such a belief is untenable and finds no place in a universe ruled over by the laws

of reincarnation and karma. The doctrine of affinities is merely a castoff and rejected notion belonging to the childhood of human thought when the minds of men were groping toward solutions to the mysteries of personal existence.

It is becoming more obvious daily that man is the most complex of all the natural creations which inhabit our earth. The entity or ego from which the personality of man is emanated is asexual; that is, neither male nor female but of a neutral quality containing both male and female natures in a state of suspension. The entity, therefore, is capable of emanating either male or female personalities at will, but is limited by the qualities of neither.

The doctrine of reincarnation teaches that there is a tendency for the personality to alternate its sex according to a set pattern within the entity itself. The entity which manifests as male in one incarnation may manifest as female in the next; or there may be several lives in one sex pattern, and then several in the opposite. Each entity in the course of evolution will incarnate in an equal number of bodies of each sex, thus achieving a manifestation of all the powers which are resident in the entity itself.

The doctrine of reincarnation and karma, by affirming the completeness of each entity, destroys the entire supposition upon which the doctrine of soul mates is based. Man is not wandering around in space looking for the rest of himself. He is evolving the various aspects of his nature from within himself. When he has unfolded all of his latent powers he will require no other complement; but in his imperfect state he finds in the relationship of marriage a symbolical completeness and an opportunity to further unfold his own latent completeness.

Some believers in soul mates have accepted a form of belief in reincarnation. They assume that the two parts have been born many times in the quest of each other, and only when they meet and mingle has the purpose of existence been fulfilled. Experience proves, however, that with most modern believers the teaching of affinities is a form of wishful thinking arising from emotional immaturity.

Unfortunately, most people have had great difficulty in determining with certainty the true identity of their severed self. The result is that the believer proceeds along the path of trial and error. One optimist whom I knew personally has been a "five-time loser." Each time he fondly believed that he had discovered the rest of himself, and each time it turned out to be the rest of somebody else. Nor is this a unique case, but a common state of affairs among those who are questing afield for that which must inevitably be found within themselves.

There has been some conspiracy by which psychism has been induced on occasion to support the belief in soul mates. Ouija board, table tipping, and slate messages have been advanced to clinch the doctrine of affinities. Psychic phenomena notwithstanding, the believers in soul mates are still walking up and down the earth vainly seeking for their illusive counterparts.

The doctrine of rebirth and compensation is not only vastly nobler than the concept of soul mates but is established upon a much sounder interpretation of the laws of life. Evolution is impelling all men toward reality. Reincarnation and karma, as the instruments by which evolution achieves its ends, protect the integrity factor so that growth is possible only through normalcy and honesty.



For hundreds of millions of years man has been evolving upward through the forms of nature, preparing himself to receive the power of mind that through thought he might solve other mysteries. At a remote time long gone by, man was physically androgynous, as are certain primitive animals even to this time, possessing both of life's polarities within himself. Later, as mind began to develop and intellection required more and more of life's vital energies, the process of evolution decreed that in each human being one of the sexual poles be submerged and its energies devoted to mental activity. From that time on the entities have formed bodies, either male or female, submerging in each the qualities of its opposite. To compensate for this submergence the institution of marriage was established, not because marriage is a spiritual mystery that is to survive the dissolution of the body but because it is an association necessary to the perpetuation of future bodies, and psychologically necessary to convey the sense of normalcy or completeness. The submerged nature is compensated for by another person, in whom the opposite polarity is physically dominant.

Therefore it is a mistake for any person to regard marriage as more than an association of two persons, each essentially complete in itself, immortal in its own right, but drawn together as physical, emotional, and mental complements, and through this association helping to bring about the unfoldment of its own submerged parts.

## MEMORY OF PAST LIVES

Whenever the subject of reincarnation is discussed there is always someone who wants to know why he cannot remember his previous incarnation—that is, of course, *if* he ever did live here before. The absence of a remembrance of former lives seems to be the principal objection to the acceptance of the doctrine of rebirth.

Reincarnation is the periodic manifestation on the physical plane of an invisible spiritual entity. To make this manifestation possible the entity sends out from itself body principles which become the rudiments of bodies, and about which the corporeal structure is built. When the body has been completed the invisible subjective entity manifests through the body, using it as a medium of action and experience. When the stress and strain of physical existence has broken down the fabric of the body the entity withdraws its principles, and the body dies.

We shall call this body person number one. At death the consciousness absorbs into itself the attitudes, opinions, ideas, convictions, and conclusions of person number one. The disintegration of the body taking place according to the proper laws of nature, person number one then ceases to exist. Nor can person number one ever be resurrected or restored to the state of existence. After an appropriate length of time the entity sends out its form principles again, builds

a new body and functions through it, resulting in the creation of person number two.

There is no direct connection of any kind between person number one and person number two. Both have been emanated from the entity which is immortal and will continue to send out similar personalities over an immense period of time. The brain of person number one has entirely disintegrated and is in no way connected with the brain of person number two. The experiences of person number one have become part of the conscious evolution of the entity which emanated person number one.

Technically, therefore, person number one has ceased; its experiences have lost their individuality and become part of the growth of the immortal entity. Person number two contains in its very fabric the experiences of person number one, but as these experiences have become impersonalized and assimilated by the entity they come forward as character, personality, temperament, and to a degree, body structure. Person number two has no way of proving that person number one ever existed, nor has person number two any remembrance of what happened to person number one. Yet person number two contains within itself the assimilated experience of person number one and is enriched thereby.

After fulfilling its life expectancy person number two is likewise allowed to die. The entity, withdrawing its life principle, adds the experience of person number two to its collective growth, and after an appropriate period of time projects person number three, which has no way of knowing that person number one and person number two ever existed. This process continues for approximately eight hundred lives in our human cycle. The various bodies or

persons cannot remember the previous forms which the entity emanated. This record remains in the entity, and according to Buddhist philosophy it is only when one of the personalities achieves conscious union with the entity through illumination that the sequence of past lives, known only to the entity and not to any other body, may be perceived.

The exceptions to natural order are twofold: First, when the personality dies prematurely through some accident the entity may project a new physical personality without building a new mental and emotional nature. Thus in the case of children who die before adolescence there is sometimes a memory of previous existence. Second, a sensitive nature may give the personality a slight or occasional flash of contact with the entity, resulting in a momentary glimpse of the conditions of some previous existence. These, like other occasional abnormalities which occur in nature, are related to karma, pointing out some extraordinary factor in the destiny.

For the mass of mankind, however, there should be no memory of previous existences except in the form of specialized abilities such as the infant prodigy or certain peculiarities which have been superficially attributed to heredity. In Oriental countries it is regarded as singularly unfortunate to have any memory of a previous life for the reason that it indicates that some part of the superphysical nature is out of adjustment and an early death frequently follows.

The philosopher approaches the subject of reincarnation not to be convinced by the memory of some previous circumstance, but because of the fundamental rationality and integrity of the teaching. The true thinker is more interested in the integrity factor of a belief than he is in an effort to demonstrate that belief through some physical phenomena.



For example, the greater part of humanity believes in the immortality of the human soul, but the majority is content to accept the belief without effort to prove it. Only a few strive to talk with the dead or invoke the shades of the past. The human mind accepts immortality as necessary to its orientation. Proof is not required.

In the same way reincarnation and karma appeal to the normal mind because of their reasonableness and the absolute justice which they represent. The average person realizes that it is impossible to learn in one life all that it is possible to know. The mind therefore finds little difficulty in accepting the belief that we live more than once. The individual, surrounded by obvious disasters, finds it difficult to reconcile the apparent injustices of life with the concept of a benevolent and all-loving God. The doctrine of karma, which explains misery without making the universe dishonest, is acceptable to minds which long have contemplated the apparent unfairness of the material state. These seekers after honesty do not require a vision of some previous existence to convert them to a philosophy which obviously is honest and just.

We stated earlier that the experience of the previous life has its part in the molding of the new personality. It then appears natural that an entity which has created several personalities for a specific achievement should leave the stamp of this achievement on subsequent bodies. An example is the American who devotes his life to the study of Egyptology, being more at home with Egyptian antiquities than with his own contemporary world. In the same category is the child orchestra leader, the nine-year old violinist, and the small boy who plays the piano superbly before his fingers are long enough to span the octave. Such cases are evidences

of memories of past lives interpreted through abilities rather than remembrances. We are living in the light of the past whether we know about it or not.

Nor is it fair to say that no one has remembered his past lives. In earlier sections of this book we have mentioned several great and noble persons who remembered clearly exploits from their previous incarnations. If a careful check were to be made the findings on this subject would convince the skeptic that there is considerable documentation possible on the subject of previous incarnations. The difficulty, however, is that there is no way of proving these incarnations except in very rare instances. But we believe many things that we have not proved nor understood. We have never proved the existence of heaven or hell, but millions of nominal Christians have the most explicit convictions on the subject. Nor do we deny electricity because we have not been able to give it an adequate definition. The world is filled with unproved acceptances which environment and tradition have sanctified. Many of these we never question. If we did they would collapse. Reincarnation is as provable as most theological beliefs, and far more easily demonstrated from a rational viewpoint than the majority of our religious convictions.

To approach a modern materialistic objection, reincarnation is accused of being the product of wishful thinking; an escape mechanism from reality. Some of the moderns rather sneeringly refer to reincarnation as the "triumph of procrastination," implying that it impoverishes the present through hope of the future. With a gesture of pity the doctrine of reincarnation is cast aside as unprovable and intolerable by a group of intellectuals who have never proved anything.

To these objections we can only say that all forms of knowledge can be abused; both belief and unbelief can be equally dangerous. But up to the present time no truly great contribution has been made to the history of knowledge by any individual who did not believe in something nobler than himself.

Reincarnation can be an escape mechanism, but so can materiality which promises oblivion at the end of error. Reincarnation can be wishful thinking, but so can the hope of heaven to the average individual. Reincarnation and Karma are philosophical doctrines. They can be applied rationally only by reasonable people. Truths of any kind in the keeping of the unenlightened are perverted and misused.

Reincarnation does not depend for its acceptance upon proof that we have lived before, but upon proof that we must live many times again if we ever hope to be human, or achieve even a small part of the good of which we dream.

## SHANTI DEVI

Authentic accounts of the memory of past lives, though rare, are occasionally to be met with. These accounts cannot be explained by imagination or wishful thinking; neither can telepathy be advanced to explain away the mystery. The facts remain; let the savant deal with them as he will.

A word about the Neo-Orientalist and pseudo metaphysicians who imagine themselves to be the re-embodiments of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. Curiously enough, Hypatia is a general favorite. For several years there was a standing feud between two distinguished ladies, each of whom insisted that she was the re-embodiment of Hypatia. It is obvious that the elaborate claims to descent from aristocratic pre-existences are a mental and emotional autocorrection devised by the unimportant to excuse the uselessness of their present lives.

After eliminating vain pretensions, certain cases remain inexplicable according to our present conceits concerning man's future estate. You can explain away foolishness, but you cannot explain away facts. Nor is it possible to deny that in some instances the belief in reincarnation has strengthened the mind to its present tasks and contributed a great measure of well-being and security.



Take for example the case of Desider Mockry-Meszaros, the distinguished Hungarian painter, whose ability intrigued the late Maxim Gorki who bought many of his pictures. Mockry-Meszaros paints various prehistoric scenes which he claims to remember from various incarnations in remote time. In his own words: "The memory of the mammoth I used to fear then has come back to me crystal-clear. I knew the face of the earth when it was barely cooled off from the volcanic age. And memories of a still earlier incarnation as a dweller in the underworld of another planet supply me with subjects for my brush and pencil." \*

Many will differ with Mr. Mockry-Meszaros by applying "common sense" to his explanation. Some will say that he was a shrewd publicizer of his own works; others that he visited some museum of natural history; a few more generous will decide that he dreamed his subject matter. But who among the doubters can say with certainty that this Hungarian gentleman has not lived before, and which of his critics can disprove his memory of ancient times.

In Paris at the beginning of the present century lived a certain Mme. Laure Raynaud. From childhood this lady distinctly remembered that she had lived before and was able to give an accurate description of a previous home and the conditions surrounding her death. When Mme. Raynaud was forty-five years of age she traveled for the first time to Italy where she was able to recognize the scenes of her previous life. She was in Genoa when she described the type of house in which she had lived. With the aid of a friend she located the house and made a statement subject to historical

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\* *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 1930.

verification. She said that in her previous life she had not been buried in the cemetery, but in a particular church some distance away. Research proved that a young lady answering Mme. Raynaud's description of her previous self had died in the house on October 21, 1809, and had been buried in the church which Mme. Raynaud had indicated. \*

It is a far cry from Italy to Burma, but the belief in the doctrine of reincarnation long ago established itself in the most distant parts of the earth. In an article on transmigration, with special references to Burma, we find the following: "In Buddhist countries, it is no very unusual thing to have children gravely claiming to have had such-and-such a name, and to have lived in such-and-such a place, in their previous lives; and occasionally these claims are in a sort of fashion substantiated.

"Such children are in Burma called *Winzas*, and it is no uncommon thing for a sort of rough test to be carried out by taking a *Winza* to the scene of his former life, when it is said that he or she can generally identify his former dwelling and friends, and can state facts known only to the dead person and one other living man. These *Winzas* are so relatively frequent in Burma that their existence is commonly taken for granted; the power of remembering the past life is generally stated to disappear as the child grows up, though we have met adult *Winzas* who still claimed to remember the past." †

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\* Lutoslawski quoting Charles Lancelin (*La Vie Posthume*; Paris, 1922) and Gabriel Delanne (*Documents Pour Servir a l'Etude de la Reincarnation*; Paris, 1924.)

† *Buddhism*, Dec., 1903. p. 307.

The outstanding account in modern times relating to the memory of past lives is the story of the young Hindu girl Shanti Devi. The facts of her story have been carefully checked by men of the highest character, including Lala Deshbandhu Gupta, managing director of the *Daily Tej*, the leading newspaper of Delhi; N. R. Sharma, leader of the National Congress Party of India and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi; and T. C. Mathur, a leading attorney of Delhi. These men, with many others, have issued a report on their findings in which they conclude that the story of Shanti Devi is not only entirely genuine but one of the most remarkable records of the remembrance of a previous life ever witnessed and documented.

In her early childhood Shanti Devi spoke but little, being a very introspective child. After her fourth year she began referring directly to the incidents of her previous life, frequently comparing details of her present state with similar details of her former incarnation. She insisted that she was a *Choban* by caste, explaining that her husband was a cloth-merchant. She described in detail her previous home, the arrangements of the rooms, and even the color of the house.

At first the parents took little notice, attributing her statements to a make-believe world of her own imagining. Later, however, they became worried because of the prevalent belief that a child who remembers its past life will die young.

Shanti Devi frequently expressed her desire to visit the town of Muttra some distance away. It was here, according to her statements, that she had lived in her former life. For some time she declined to tell the name of her former husband, due to the native custom of extreme modesty. At last

a grand uncle, Mr. Bishan Chand, a teacher in the Ramjas School, promised to take her to Muttra if she would whisper to him the name of her previous husband. She agreed and said that the name was Pt. Kedar Nath Chaubey. Later a letter was sent to this man according to an address given by Shanti Devi. To the general amazement of all concerned Chaubey answered the letter, stating emphatically that the story told by the girl was substantially true.

Soon after, Pt. Kedar Nath Chaubey, who had remarried, came to Delhi and was immediately recognized by Shanti Devi as her husband. He asked her several intimate questions. Her replies were correct, and Kedar Nath declared that it seemed to him as though his dead wife were speaking.

In the next few days Shanti Devi spent considerable time describing the town of Muttra, and the special temple which she had frequently visited, even going so far as to say that she had promised a hundred rupees to the temple and had the necessary money buried under the floor of her home at Muttra.

As the result of continued insistence on the girl's part a party of fifteen made the trip to Muttra with her. Arriving at the station she described certain changes in the structure. She was put into a carriage and the driver was directed to follow her commands. She instructed the driver how to reach the Holi Gate, and showed complete familiarity with the environment. When the carriage could proceed no further because of the narrow street, she guided the party into a narrow lane. Here she met an old Brahman whom she immediately recognized as her father-in-law. She then led the party directly to the house which she had described



from early childhood; even though it had been repainted in a different color, she had no difficulty in recognizing it.

As they entered, several specific questions were put to her concerning the arrangement of the rooms, closets, and so forth. She answered all correctly, appearing entirely at home in the house which she regarded as her proper home.

She was taken to the temple, where she became insistent that she make the offering of a hundred rupees. She insisted on showing the party of fifteen where she had hidden the money in another house; the one in which she had died. This turned out to be the home of Kedar Nath's family. She entered the small room and indicated a certain corner, asserting that the money she had buried before dying had been put in that place. A hole was dug, and about a foot below the surface was found an arrangement for keeping valuables, but it was empty. Shanti Devi became quite excited, insisting that she had left the money there. Later, Kedar Nath acknowledged that he had found the money and had removed it after his wife's death. This circumstance precludes the possibility that she had been reading Kedar Nath's mind.

She then went to the house of her previous parents, who still lived and whom she immediately identified out of a group of more than fifty persons. She then embraced them, called them by name, and performed the customary courtesies of child to parent.

Another important point was the dialectic difference between Delhi and Muttra. Shanti Devi used the idiom familiar to Muttra before she had even been to the city, and on her visit there appeared obviously to belong to that community.

At the end of the unusual journey an open-air meeting was held for the public in the compound of a local high school. Here more than ten thousand persons gathered, many of whom had seen some part of the girl's behavior. All who attended were profoundly interested and impressed, and requested that Shanti Devi be left with them. The parents of her present life, however, felt it would be better if she returned to Delhi. On the return train trip Shanti Devi insisted that she should have been left at Muttra with her friends, relatives, and husband; and after fretting over this matter for some time and insisting that she was grown up in spite of her eleven years, at last grew weary and fell asleep.

The story of Shanti Devi presents numerous problems to both the orthodox Christian and the orthodox scientist. There is no knowledge now generally disseminated through our institutions of learning that can explain or interpret this extraordinary case. The story was widely publicized during 1937, and a number of learned men attempted to find a "rational" solution. The fact remains that reincarnation is the only reasonable solution. To deny it would be to bestow upon Shanti Devi extraordinary occult powers, the existence of which science also denies.

Reincarnation, therefore, is not only sustained by the testimony of the reason, authority, and tradition, but by the actual evidence of persons who not only affirm that they have lived before but are able to prove their statements.

If one person can prove that he has lived before, then man's whole concept of life is changed. He is no longer limited by the narrow confines of a single existence. He need no longer live for the now alone. The realization of

the truth of reincarnation bestows upon the human being not only the realization of his immortality but of his kinship with the ages. He is part of all that has been, is, or ever shall be. If men were as loyal to truth as they are devoted to their own opinions, the case of Shanti Devi would reveal a new purpose in life and a new reason for the achievement of all that is great and all that is good.

## THE AFTER DEATH STATE

The belief in the continuity of consciousness after death is common to all great world religions. The human mind, contemplating the mystery of its own origin, rejects as untenable the concept of complete dissolution. The pre-Homeric Greeks were content to view the future state as a ghostly existence spent in subterranean caverns. The dynastic Egyptians developed the opinion that the Blessed Land of the Osirified Dead was a more or less faithful representation of physical community existence. The dwellers in Amenti continued to practice their earthly occupations, and Egyptian art depicts the abode of the departed as a pleasant sphere of temples, gardens, fountains, and palaces.

It is now believed that the widespread superstition that the shadowland or underworld was beneath the earth arose from the custom of burying the dead in crypts, caverns, under mounds, and in pyramids. There are many mythological accounts of the shadows of the dead gathering to feast in their funeral chambers beneath the earth.

It was the classical Greek civilization that gave to the modern world the concept of punishment and reward after death. The Greeks, however, always adjusted the punishment to meet the offense, and the reward to meet the virtue. It never occurred to them that any form of punishment or compensation should be eternal. It remained for the early



church fathers to make theology an element of virtue and to populate perdition with heretics.

It is a definite relief, after nineteen centuries of belief in an orthodox conception of heaven and hell, to realize that the laws of reincarnation and karma are the true keys to the mysteries of life and death.

The East Indian philosophies point to centuries of research and thought. To them physical life is but a small part of existence. These Eastern sages have divided the invisible universe into numerous spheres and planes, each appropriately titled, and all together revealing the mysterious framework of universal laws which sustain the worlds, both visible and invisible.

The reincarnationist recognizes that his personality is suspended from an immortal principle, and that while these personalities may pass through the processes of integration and disintegration, the spiritual nature remains untouched by physical life or death. The after-death state is merely the process of gradually disintegrating the personality. The personality is composed of four parts: The physical body, the etheric body, the emotional body, and the mental body. Each of these bodies is an organism created for the purpose of manifesting the thoughts, feelings, energies, and form principles of the entity. The mere disintegration of the physical body at death does not result in the immediate dissolution of the personality which, though invisible to the physical perceptions, still continues to exist on the emotional and mental levels. Not until the mental body is finally disintegrated does the personality cease to exist.

Consider the case of Mr. Smith. He has a personality made up of his opinions, his reactions, his attitudes, his dis-

position, and his appearance. When Mr. Smith dies he merely drops off his physical body; but he still is Mr. Smith manifesting the same dispositional and temperamental peculiarities. The fact that he has no physical body prevents his functioning on the material plane, but in no way affects the function of his mind or his emotions.

It requires considerable time, from one hundred and fifty to three hundred years, for Mr. Smith's emotional nature to be disintegrated. This disintegration can take place only after the emotional experiences of the personality have been transferred to the entity to become a permanent record. But still Mr. Smith remains, because his mental individuality survives the disintegration of his emotional nature.

The length of mental survival differs definitely with various individuals. The average duration at the present time is about five hundred years. During this period the individuality slowly dies out, and the mental records are transferred to the entity. It is only when the mental nature of the personality has entirely disintegrated that Mr. Smith utterly ceases to exist. When the mental nature has been dissolved only the permanent entity remains.

After the dissolution is complete the entity begins the creation of a new personality which must pass through the same cycle and ultimately be dissolved at the end of its personalized existence. The normal personality, therefore, survives from a thousand to twelve hundred years, although the physical body of that personality may only live sixty or seventy years.

The conditions of the personality in the after-death state have been variously symbolized in different religious systems. Even the Christian concept, being derived from ancient pagan

sources, should be understood symbolically rather than literally. The descriptions of heaven and hell are merely highly colored accounts of the incidents through which the personality passes in its slow process of disintegration. According to its merits or demerits the personality suffers karma, usually depicted as some form of infernal torture.

During the period of its physical life the personality absorbs into itself certain knowledge and experience. After death this knowledge is transferred to the higher parts of the personality; that is, the mind and the emotions. Here the process of the assimilation of experience takes place. The alchemists called this distillation. The substance or essence of experience, refined by karma, then becomes part of the permanent entity, and the personality has completed its purpose of existence.

Let us now follow Mr. Smith through the process of decarnation. Having reached an age when his faculties and abilities are limited by the infirmities of his physical body, he is ready for the transition from an objective to a subjective state. At death, therefore, his center of awareness is withdrawn from the physical body, which dies, removing with it the entire mechanism of external contact. From that time on Mr. Smith lives within himself rather than in any place. He is his own world, and no longer are there windows into any objective sphere. The center of awareness is placed in his emotional nature, with the result that his own nature becomes to him a world, rich or poor, noble or ignoble, according to his emotional estate during his physical existence. Usually, however, Mr. Smith is not aware that the world in which he is living is himself. This is why certain psychics,

having achieved a measure of emotional clairvoyance, bring back contradictory accounts of things they presumably have seen in the other world. By a mysterious fourth dimensional process the entity functioning on the emotional plane after death is living within his own feelings, and though he appears to see a world about him he is seeing only himself. The various destructive emotions which dominated him during his physical life now become part of this internal landscape. The law of karma sets in, and the personality goes through various conditions and places which like dream symbols are merely the objectification of his emotions, desires, and passions.

Gradually this emotional scene changes. The personality feels that it is going to some distant place. But the change or journey is entirely within the self. The higher emotions now find their place. This condition, therefore, is heaven—not a place, but merely an emotional mood through which the personality is passing. At last feeling dies out; the pictures fade away because the symbols themselves have been solved. The personality then shifts its focus to the mental nature, and the emotional body dies out almost imperceptibly.

The personality now functions in a sphere of mental pictures; that is, it lives within its own field of thought. These mental pictures, like dreams and nightmares, also assume strange and fantastic patterns. The personality is involved in these patterns, and through the imposition of karma must live out its own thinking.

All this time Mr. Smith is still Mr. Smith. Preserving his sense of identity, Mr. Smith moves as a person through the symbol patterns of his own emotional nature. And later, still Mr. Smith, he moves through the symbol patterns



of his mental nature. His sense of self-existence remains until the mental patterns die out.

After having worked out his lower mental complexes, and having built the experience into the permanent entity, Mr. Smith enters the abstract or higher mental state. Then for the first time, Mr. Smith becomes aware of the fact that he himself is beginning to fade out. This awareness generally comes in a manner corresponding to sleep. Mr. Smith, the highest link in the chain of personality, having completed his experiences within his own mental nature, slowly goes to sleep. From this sleep Mr. Smith never awakes. Mr. Smith now is through with the cycle of his life. The only record that remains of him is preserved in the permanent entity, but he never lives again.

Thus at the end of each incarnation there comes a period of impersonality when the entity itself alone remains. As soon as the entity has been completely posited, that is when the personality is entirely absorbed, it begins the preparation for its next personality. When this personality is reborn it may be named Miss Jones. Miss Jones will pass through the same cycle, except on a slightly higher level because the experiences of Mr. Smith, having become part of the entity, have enriched it, and therefore improved the next personality which the entity objectifies.

Because the personality in its after-death state functions in its own emotional and mental body, its condition follows closely its expectation. The dead Egyptian expected to see Osiris. His expectancy became a thought pattern, and he saw Osiris. In the same way the Christian will see Christ, the Buddhist will see Buddha, and the Brahman will enter the expected palace of Indra.

In the sphere of subtle substance where emotional and mental impulse instantaneously produces any patterns desired, each personality meets what it expects to meet and experiences what it expects to experience. A materialist who firmly believes that he will have no consciousness after death may continue indefinitely in an unconscious state because he has so decreed it, but karma will ultimately break through.

It is a little difficult to clarify the idea of functioning within yourself; that is, moving about in your own sphere of thought and emotion. But in the subjective planes it is quite possible. This is why the yogi in meditation is warned by his teacher to preserve his absolute fixity of purpose; otherwise he will fall into the illusions of his own desires and may not be able to extricate himself during that life. The French transcendentalists referred to the sphere of emotional patterns as the *astral light* which takes any form that is willed, yet is none of these forms. Wandering afield in its own imaginings the personality loses its one-pointedness. To prevent this the Tibetans recite to their dying priests the words of wisdom. And in the early Christian Church the sacraments were performed to insure consecration of purpose in this world and in the world to come.

The after-death state of the other kingdoms of nature may be inferred from their lack of superior vehicles. The animal is capable of only emotional experience after death. This is primitive, but consistent with the rudimentary emotional instincts of the animal. For this reason Mohammed declared that some animals could enter heaven, heaven here being used merely as a collective term for the entire after-death state.

The mystery schools warned their disciples to moderate their emotional extremes and normalize their mental incon-

stancies. This was in order that in the after-death state the personality might not be depressed by its own emotional and mental environment, the theory being that if the emotions and thoughts were normal the after-death state would be normal, and there would be no karmic misery in the sphere of illusion.

## THE LAWS GOVERNING REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is controlled primarily by the law of karma, a manifestation of the universal law of cause and effect. The personality is subject to the various laws governing thought, emotion, energy, and form. For this reason it is never possible for the personality to escape the consequences set up by actions in the various substances of which bodies are composed.

In the Gnostic school the permanent entity is called Anthropos, or *the man*. The incarnating ego which is emanated by the entity is designated Anthropos Son of Anthropos, *the man that is the son of the man*. The ego is called by the Neo-Platonists the "summit of the personality," the self which endures for the span of one life.

In Gnosticism the cycle of necessity is set forth clearly as a process of emanations. The permanent entity emanates the impermanent ego. The ego in turn emanates its bodies. Through these bodies the ego contacts phenomenal experience which it preserves in memory, which memory-record ultimately is returned to the permanent entity through the process of decarnation or death. Thus the anthropos, or Emerson's oversoul, the greater self, grows through the experiences of these lesser natures which it



emanates. The permanent entity is slowly coming of age by a process requiring hundreds of millions of years.

The entity itself never incarnates. It merely projects the forms from itself. In Tibetan art the permanent entity is frequently depicted as seated upon a lotus throne in a posture of contemplation. Below this throne the messengers of the meditating One, small figures mounted on racing horses, are galloping to the four corners of the world. Each of the horsemen represents an incarnation or a cycle of experience. In the midst of the racing horses the entity itself remains; impersonal, detached, in no way perturbed by the confusion of its personalities.

In Christian terminology the entity is appropriately referred to as the "Father in Heaven." In Eastern theology it is termed the father-mother, because it is the true parent of the personality and each man's personal god. Prayer is the effort of an enlightened personality to contact its own source; not some abstract god in space, but its own peculiar god, its own transcendental entity. The permanent self or entity is therefore the god of the wise, to be approached with reverence and with the offerings of virtue and enlightenment.

The law of karma is the law of cause and effect applied to the personalities emanating from permanent entities; it is the force constantly impelling personalities to higher courses of action. It works through the principle of inadequacy. That which is insufficient cannot survive. There is therefore a constant urge toward equilibrium and progress. According to the *Zohar*: "Unbalanced forces perish in the Void." This explains the disappearance of races, types, and kinds, and also why all that is imperfect must fade from the earth.

All perfection is relative. Ultimates are beyond the conception of personalities. The law of karma is forcing life along the path of evolution by making present inadequacy unbearable. This is the fundamental impulse by which the universe is forcing the gradual but inevitable adjustment between personality and entity. When this adjustment is complete the entity no longer emanates personalities as we know them, but emanates higher and, to us, intangible and unknowable types.

The principal laws governing reincarnation, that is, the aspects of karma identified with rebirth, are as follows:

1. The length of the life cycle of the personality varies with the degrees of attunement between the personality and the permanent entity. In the primitive savage the complete personality cycle, including physical life and after-death personal consciousness, may not exceed a hundred years. This is because there is little individualized emotion and practically no reflective thought.

A philosopher such as Plato or Pythagoras, whose mental accomplishments were prodigious and who lived on a very high level of personal conduct, may have a personality cycle of ten thousand years; or due to difficulty in finding an appropriate environment for the succeeding personality, even greater periods of time may pass.

The reasonable expectancy for the normal person is a personality continuity of from eight hundred to twelve hundred years. There are exceptions to this rule, however. The permanent entity, making use of a higher discretion than ordinary mortals are capable of, may project a new personality at will, or whenever an appropriate environment presents itself.

2. The Mendelian law of heredity as applied to human beings is a seeming rather than an actual fact. The entity projecting a personality selects an environment suitable to the spiritual achievements, mental, emotional, and physical requirements, and karmic responsibilities which are to be exemplified in the new personality. Racial differentiations, body refinement, and predisposition to certain peculiarities of temperament and health, are important factors. Therefore the son resembles the father not because he has inherited from his parents, but because his father's personality was the principal element in a chemistry which offered certain specialized opportunities to the incarnating personality.

It is now generally acknowledged that the majority of diseases cannot be inherited, but rather a deficiency may be inherited which will cause susceptibility. This deficiency is due to the fact that the incoming personality, depending upon the parents for the substance of its physical body, must assume whatever chemical deficiencies are peculiar to this substance.

The childhood environment is a powerful determining factor in the life of the personality. This environment is due to the temperaments, characteristics, qualities, and abilities of the parent. Also such factors as wealth and poverty become forces in character. As a result of the entity's selection of a location for the personality's incarnation, the entity assures itself that the personality will pass through certain experiences peculiarly necessary to the balanced development of the entity. Thus the entity grows up by benefiting from the experiences of its personalities.

3. Under certain conditions of sickness or stress the personality may become mentally unbalanced. There are also cases of mental subnormality, including the moron and

the idiot. Physical deformities also are quite possible and must be considered in relation to the personality's experience necessity.

Insanity, as a maladjustment between the mental nature and the other parts of the personality chain, has no permanent effect upon either the ego or the permanent entity. The only detrimental element is the loss of experience over a period of years. But this in turn is karmic, and is part of the necessary spiritual experience of the entity.

The moron and the idiot are usually the result of physical subnormalities which prevent the ego from functioning through the body. In other words, the body has its emotional and vital principles, but because the body fabric is not sensitive to mental impulses normalcy cannot be expected.

Accidents and deformities are frequently checks on personalities that would otherwise develop uncontrollable and undesirable traits. The accident is a direct result of karma, either of the personality itself or of the entity. As the sole purpose of the personality is to enrich the permanent entity, such peculiarities as deformity, stuttering, and other lesser abnormalities are all media for the working out of the karmic inadequacies of the entity.

4. The law of alternation of sexes in rebirth is necessary for the spiritual completeness of the entity. This law is subject to numerous modifications, but in substance holds true over a long period of time. The evidence of the working of this law is the steady breaking down of the extreme difference between the sexes. The cave man and the fluttery female are rapidly disappearing. Men are increasing their interest in music and art and other cultural things anciently regarded as distinctly feminine; while woman's sphere has



increased to include business, politics, and professions previously considered distinctly masculine. When this increased sphere of influence is achieved without the loss of fundamental impulses we see the evidence of universal law bringing all life toward equilibrium.

The only way we can learn to live is by living, and through hundreds of lives we gradually dignify the art of living. In this way the entity perfects itself in the mysteries of physical existence in which the entity has no actual contact, depending entirely upon its personalities for the development of itself.

## SUICIDE

The Alexandrian mystics, basing their opinions upon the teachings of the immortal Plato, recognized two forms of death. The first, normal death, was the result of the soul's departure from the body; that is, the personality retired from its objective physical state. The second form of death occurred when the body was violently separated from the soul by self-destruction.

Among the Greeks suicide was exonerated under certain extreme conditions, but was rejected as a means of solving or attempting to solve the normal problems of life. Olympiodorus declared suicide to be permissible to preserve the secrets of the Mysteries or to protect the soul from dishonor. He also condoned it in the advanced stages of an incurable ailment. This matter has been revived lately in the medical controversy over the subject of "mercy-killing."

A distinction has always been made between suicide and violent death due to accidental means or war. This is because accidents and war are included in the karmic fate of the personality. But suicide is never regarded as karmic. It is an action of self-will against the self. It has been observed that the complexities of modern civilization have increased the suicidal tendency. Men and women, lacking the strength, courage, or vision to live well, have hoped for oblivion beyond the grave. Suicide is very rare among peo-

ples who believe in reincarnation, and when it occurs is due to a conflict of religious belief, as in Japan where *hara-kiri* or the honorable death is the product of indigenous Shintoism rather than imported Buddhism.

The average modern who resorts to suicide is impelled either by a boredom with physical life or by the fear of the consequences of action. In both cases the security which is sought beyond the grave fails utterly, and only bad karma results. The most usual karmic result of suicide is that a future personality will die under conditions where the desire for life will be the greatest. There is no escape from insufficiency except self-improvement.

Religio-philosophical systems have agreed that suicide is a sin degrading in the eyes of the living the person who commits the act. The rather futile law against suicide which exists in many countries, fails because it has no means of catching up with the departing personality. Spiritual education, and not legislation, must correct the self-destructive tendency in those who fear life.

According to the esoteric traditions the individual who commits suicide enters into a condition of being neither alive nor dead. In the play *Outward Bound*, the two suicides are called halfways. They cannot go back, and they cannot go on. The law of karma has been outraged, and this law is as effective in the invisible worlds as it is on the visible plane.

The suicide must wait in this middle distance "twixt heaven and earth" until the expiration of the time which his life pattern had indicated as his normal life expectancy. As the incidents which normally would have occurred could not take place after suicide has been committed, the interval of

years during which the personality remains a "halfway" is wasted as far as the evolutionary process is concerned. The effect of this is to shorten the after-death state of the personality unless the suicide is committed in very advanced years. The college boy who commits suicide through boredom with the world of which he is a part has comparatively little after-death consciousness. He has developed neither his emotions nor his thoughts to a degree of maturity. He remains earth-bound until the time when his death would have normally occurred, and then his personality is rapidly dissolved as there is little possibility of transferring rational experience to the entity.

The psychic toxin of suicide, however, enters into the fabric of the entity, and it affects the normalcy of the next personality.

Of course suicide has no permanent effect upon the evolution of the spiritual entity. It is merely an incident which is contrary to natural law, and therefore causes a powerful karmic reaction over a limited time.

In the case of Socrates drinking the hemlock the physical circumstances are not very different from suicide. In fact, Socrates would have been released upon the payment of a small fine which his friends cheerfully offered to pay. Plato, being a man of some means, tried in every way to induce Socrates to continue his life. But the great skeptic declared that by paying the fine he would admit guilt, and by admitting guilt would compromise the ideals which were more important than life; he would violate not only the highest ideals of philosophy but would cast reflection upon the gods. He therefore chose death, and was executed according to the law of his time.



The Greek philosopher would not regard this as suicide because the motive was entirely impersonal, and because he did it to protect the most sacred of human institutions, the body of learning. If his reasons had been personal he probably would have found no place in the memory of the Greeks.

The same attitude is held in cases of martyrdom, as for example the execution of Christians under certain of the Roman emperors because they refused to renounce their faith. By accepting pagan religion they would have lived; by refusing it they died. Therefore the choice of life or death was in their hands. But because the choice lay in their spiritual convictions and they chose to die rather than desert Truth as they knew it, neither nature nor man has branded them suicides.

The reasons are among those philosophical exceptions described by Olympiodorus, and the karmic results are modified by motive which is the most powerful karmic force in the world.

Accidental death creates no change in the personality laws. It is regarded the same as a natural death, with the possible exception that the mental nature maintains a certain unwillingness to die because of numerous and intense physical attachments. The after-death condition of the person killed in middle life by accident or disease is entirely normal unless the emotions are inordinately intense. Under such conditions the personality may be temporarily earthbound.

The fate of the physical body after death is of no great consequence. The personality, having entirely retired in from twelve to seventy-two hours depending upon the conditions causing death, is indifferent to the fate of its discarded body.

If, however, there is a tendency to be earthbound due to unusual conditions accompanying death, it is advisable to cremate the body to destroy any possible psychic ties between the personality and the physical world. Elaborate funerals confer no virtue, and, if anything, add to the discomfiture of the personality if it is earthbound. If the entire theory of funerals could be disposed of, and the relatives and friends of the deceased would follow the Oriental custom of performing some civic act in memory of the dead, the living would be far more benefited.

The inclination to suicide is frequently the result of poor health. Energy depletion from overwork, worries over money or domestic affairs, and forebodings concerning the future, are common causes of suicide. Very often a few days rest or a little constructive planning, or consultation with a qualified physician, will completely terminate the desire for self-destruction. The impulse is stronger during climacteric periods; that is, the years of a person's life which are divisible by seven without a remainder. Of eleven suicides noted in a daily paper, all the persons were in climacteric years.

Nearly every normal person, at least once during his lifetime, feels an inclination to commit suicide. The notion quickly passes, being repulsive to the mind and contrary to the fundamental tendencies of the individual. If the condition persists, proper methods should be used to increase interest in life and environment. A good hobby frequently cures suicidal tendencies in persons of advancing years, and a good job has a similar effect upon the young. Life should be viewed as a rich opportunity for experience. A certain amount of adversity should be accepted as inevitable, and is no justifiable cause for protracted morbidity.

Suicide thwarts the plan of the entity which sends out the personality. Therefore, religiously, it was regarded as a sin against the Father; that is, against the cause of self. Fortunately the entity is far beyond the reach of man's destructive tendencies, and suicide is merely incidental to its evolution. It is, however, definitely detrimental to the consciousness of the personality, bringing much grief that could be avoided.

Life is not to be evaded, but to be lived.

## FATE VERSUS FREE WILL

There is a popular belief that the doctrine of reincarnation and karma is fatalistic, destroying the right of the individual to live his own life, and overshadowing his daily purposes with a structure of inevitable circumstances.

The first consideration therefore must be: Is there such a thing as free will? This philosophy denies, bestowing upon man only the power of choice. Free will would imply that an individual could be anything that he wanted to be. This obviously is impossible. He possesses only the right of choice between things which he is capable of doing. As all men have a different degree of capacity, so the power of choice differs with each individual.

The power of choice is a privilege of selecting that which appears to be the best from among certain possibilities. This power of selective action is in a sense, *dharma*, or the right to interpret and select certain elements from the karma that is at hand. For example, it is karma that an individual is to make a trip; but it is dharma that he may choose the means of transportation and to a certain degree the places where he will go. Having gained certain knowledge from this trip, it is his dharma to be able to use this knowledge to advance his own ends. But it is his inevitable karma to suffer, if in the advancement of his own purposes he commits any fault against natural law. Dharma is action;



karma is reaction. Action once performed, the reaction is inevitable. Each individual has certain control over action. Therefore philosophy is not fatalistic concerning the performance of action, but it is fatalistic in its prediction of the inevitable consequences that will follow action.

Each man is free to do certain things, but having done them he must abide by their consequences. There can be no exception to this rule or the whole reasonable universe collapses.

It is karma that brings us into life according to the ripe destiny of the entity. Having come into this world we are capable of performing certain actions. We can study hard or we can be lazy; we can be efficient or inefficient; happy or sad; honest or dishonest. Therein lies our free will. All through life karma is confronting us with unfinished business, but we have the right to react to these karmic conditions according to our own understanding. Having started a course of procedure karma sets in again, and each action starts a new chain of consequences.

For this reason Buddhism teaches that there can be no end to reincarnation and karma until the causes of action die out in the individual. As long as the desire to be, to do, or to possess remains, we are subject to karma. It is fate that we meet certain obstacles. But it is integrity that we face them well and use them as steppingstones to greater achievement.

No person who is ignorant can be free. Freedom belongs entirely to those who have emancipated themselves from bondage to retributive karma. To end karma we must work out the old and cease to create new. When this end has been accomplished the entity itself becomes identified with

the personality which has accomplished this relative perfection. The result is the initiate who thinks no longer merely with the mind, but rather bears witness to the Father, the collective entity.

Reincarnation is not fatalistic any more than man-made law is fatalistic. The criminal who is caught does not necessarily associate the punishment for his crime with any system of fatalism; he inwardly resigns himself to cause and effect. In the same way the indiscreet eater does not consider his dyspepsia as fatalism; he merely recognizes his indiscretion and bewails the fact that his constitution will not support his appetite.

Is it, then, fatalism to believe that an action performed demands a certain compensation? If the action is good the compensation is good; if the action is wrong the compensation is discomfiting. It is not necessary that any individual should commit all of the mistakes which usually afflict life. But having committed them he has no right under any just philosophy to feel that he is immune from consequences.

The same is true of the birth of the personality. The individual is born where he is and what he is because of the cumulative growth of his spiritual entity. Conceivably, the entity will produce nobler and more adequate personalities as rapidly as the existing personality improves and justifies it.

According to Buddha the present state of the individual is due to the previous conditions set up in past ages by long forgotten personalities. He did not regard this as fatalistic, however, but merely as honest. Certainly there is no reason why life should be left to chance, and there is no evidence that man without superior help can carve an adequate destiny for himself. It is obvious to the thinker that only someone

infinitely old and infinitely wise can plan the life of modern man if that life is to pay any dividends in usefulness and integrity.

That mysterious something which is infinitely old and infinitely wise is the permanent entity that alone is capable of judging the proper direction of the impermanent action which we call life. Without the permanent entity to direct, without universal law to circumscribe and assist, and without a universal wisdom to direct it, this would be a sorry world for a poor, mortal man who tries to maintain his free will in the midst of a universe about which he knows so little.

## THE SECRET OF GENIUS

Man may achieve distinction in one of two ways. The first is called precocity, and the second experience. Any person who achieves fame or outstanding success prior to his twenty-fifth year is properly described as precocious. The normal expectancy which is violated by precocity dictates that position or distinction should arrive between the fortieth and fiftieth year as the result of the normal unfoldment of aptitudes. The boy violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, is a clear example of a prodigy, while the unfolding abilities of Thomas Edison are an example of outstanding yet normal development.

The effort to associate genius with heredity has been conspicuously unsuccessful. The prodigy is usually separate and apart from the rest of his family. Nor is the offspring of genius endowed with the parental ability. Greatness does not appear to be communicable. It may often develop as the result of a conflict between inner ability and environmental circumstances.

To the materialist, genius is an anomaly; a mystery for which there can be no reasonable explanation. It is only classical philosophy which can advance an acceptable solution.

Genius lies fundamentally in the entity; not in the personality. Genius therefore is a physical manifestation of some part of the spiritual nature of the permanent entity;



precocity is a matter of psychical chemistry. Normal attainment in later years is the result of the gradual development of abilities or the sensitizing of the personality, as in the case of the artist and musician.

The exceptional person is usually unable to explain the reason for his own precocity. Newton's theory of gravitation was not the result of observing a falling apple, but rather of a dream, the vividness of which impelled him to action. Beethoven and Schubert have specifically stated that they heard certain of their musical compositions as though played in the air before they committed them to paper. Other outstanding achievements have been attributed to fate or accidents. Wherever there is exceptional ability there is some mysterious factor involved.

If the incarnating personality is not the direct result of heredity but is merely attracted to an appropriate environment, then the personality is not dependent upon heredity for its precocity. Genius is an individual matter and is not explainable simply on the basis of inherited traits.

The entity sends out personalities for one special reason; to release its own potentialities and objectify them through personalization. The entity, participating in the divine nature of the world, is rich in unmanifested abilities. Evolution through rebirth is the eternal process of manifesting capacity through a sequence of personalities. The genius is a richly endowed personality.

Precocity puts definite strain upon evolving organisms. Man, intended to mature slowly, is likely to upset body chemistry if the mental development is out of tune or adjustment with the physical progress. The first twenty-one years of life are years of body building, and if these biochemic

processes are interfered with by the prodigious development of some specialized talent, frequently there is trouble in later life. A great number of youthful prodigies either die in their early thirties or lose their outstanding abilities. There are exceptions, of course, but early genius beyond a reasonable degree is hazardous, thus indicating that nature prefers a slow and normal method of growth.

Physically, genius may be a matter of glands. The glandular system is especially sensitive to the impulses of the permanent entity, and glandular derangement results in a wide variety of mental and physical abnormalcies and sub-normalcies. Where precocity is a result of glandular unbalance, permitting an uncontrolled flow of energy from the entity, it is far better for the glandular system to be normalized, thus permitting balanced development.

There is a fine line of demarcation between genius and insanity. When so-called genius is not the result of obvious causes, or its impulses are carried too far, the result is mental breakdown. It is far better to be lacking in exceptional ability than it is to have one extraordinary capacity and the rest of the temperament undeveloped.

This is an era of specialization. The versatile individual seldom achieves greatness. It is safer however to be versatile than it is to have one intensive ability. This one ability can destroy the entire value sense, resulting in a useless rather than a useful life. Precocity cannot be prevented from appearing, but its presence demands greater watchfulness on the part of the parents who must incline the exceptional qualities in ways of normal expression.

If you are threatened with exceptional precocity, or there are such persons in your immediate environment, you should

do everything possible to fill out, balance, and normalize the so-called genius factor; otherwise there will be ultimate fanaticism and a general failure as the by-product of some one dominant ability. The true purpose of growth is accomplished by maintaining harmony among the abilities and capacities; the loss of this harmony results in mental disease.

## FORGIVENESS OF SIN VERSUS KARMA

The belief in the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin is entirely inconsistent with a recognition of the immutability of universal law. Either life is a series of fortuitous circumstances dominated by the principle of chance, or the law of consequence bestows upon each that which is merited by previous action. There can be no compromise; the human mind must accept law or chaos, pattern or confusion, as the rule of action.

Frequent efforts have been made to blend the doctrine of vicarious atonement with the laws of rebirth and karma. Ingenious explanations have been offered to prove that under certain conditions and for certain people law is tempered by grace. This is only wishful thinking, man's old theological upbringing overshadowing his philosophical attainments.

It is well within the memory of modern students that various fabricators promised to make man mightier than the Law. It has been erroneously taught that karma might be overcome by breathing through the right nostril, meditating on the kundalini, or supplicating an adept. Various schools of metaphysical philosophy have built up huge followings by assuring human beings without the courage of their convictions that karma can be dissipated with a mantra, and that



the whole character and temperament can be reformed by an affirmation.

In most cases only the more gullible have been caught in the nets of deliberate falsehood. Occasionally however an explanation has been advanced so temptingly devised that even the better type of mind has been influenced to disregard the Law and to hold the hope that some angelic hierarchy could wash away the sins and errors of several hundred lives.

When the Oriental doctrine of reincarnation and karma was brought to the West it interested only the most honest and courageous freethinkers. For the majority it was a heretical and insidious doctrine calculated to turn men from the noble truths of Christian orthodoxy. In order to overcome the instinctual prejudices of the nominally Christian laity, an effort was made to effect a compromise. The enthusiastic Orientalist pointed out that Christ and Buddha taught approximately the same doctrines. This viewpoint appeased many, but even these insisted that some pattern be devised by which it could be demonstrated that Christ greatly excelled Buddha. Therefore a world plan was worked out wherein Buddha should be considered as the great teacher of a previous cycle, while Christ was elevated as the master of the present world order. Christians nodded smugly and agreed that this brand of Orientalism was definitely intriguing.

At last the controversy was reduced to the problem of forgiveness versus law. This was the most difficult decision. It was decided that reincarnation and karma were laws governing the fate of ordinary mortals, but that Christ, by virtue of his identity with the Father, could at discretion nullify or change universal law. Karma worked for the com-

mon herd, but for the elect there was a dispensation of forgiveness.

The result was hopeless confusion and contradiction. Laws were not laws. There were unexplainable exceptions which plagued the mind as irregular verbs plague the school-boy. Everything became an exception to everything else. Orientalism disappeared. The old teachings of Pythagoras and Buddha were misinterpreted out of existence. The consequence was a distorted Christian theology ornamented with Eastern terms and some comparatively inconsequential Eastern dogma. Exceptions destroyed the rule.

It is only fair to say that the average enthusiastic believer sensed no contradiction between vicarious atonement and reincarnation and karma. Understanding neither doctrine, he could accept both. The result has been a great number of compromise cults which teach a little of everything and not much of anything.

The first rule that the Oriental disciple learns is that the Law has no exceptions; that neither god nor man can deflect its course in any way. The Law preceded the gods; it will remain after all living things have vanished. The Law abides in space; it governs the motion of space; it forms, maintains, and dissolves the world. The Law is not regarded as something to be feared or escaped, but rather the true hope and security of the wise. As surely as the Law punishes inadequacy, so surely it rewards adequacy. The man who lives by the Law need fear no other man nor his own ultimate fate. The Law both punishes and protects. It is the ever-present cause of progress.

The saints, sages, and world teachers are not exceptions to the Law with power to change or modify its course. They

are the product of such laws as evolution, reincarnation, and karma. The integrity of his thought and action elevates the world teacher to the chief place among men, and establishes him as an instructor of the rest. He is firmly supported by universal law, and manifests it in every thought, word, and action.

The laws of nature are scarcely the subject upon which elaborate theologies can be built. The doctrine of individual integrity is fatal to organized systems of religion. Therefore, early in the history of faiths, the priestcrafts began the process of making their followers theology conscious. Right and wrong were no longer right and wrong. Prayers and offerings, especially offerings became the requisites of salvation. The result of such notions was ecclesiasticism. The priest or the preacher became the intermediary capable of bestowing divine blessing or forgiving human sin. The Law vanished and the despotism of dogma took its place.

The student of reincarnation and karma must realize once and for all there can be no exceptions of any kind, or for any reason, to the laws of evolution, reincarnation, and karma. Anyone who teaches an exception teaches a false doctrine. As the Buddhist monk says: "There is no refuge but the Law." Reincarnation and karma are the religious teachings of the New Age. They are individual in their application, but utterly universal in their scope. There is no need of a priestcraft with its concept of special privilege. Reincarnation and karma are merely mental and spiritual honesty applied to the process of living.

It is regrettable to find that a number of sincere Orientalists have been deceived by the curious mixture of Eastern and Western teachings known as "popular Orientalism."

Very few legitimate teachers of Eastern mysticism have ever come to the West. We have comparatively little knowledge of real Oriental doctrines, and never has it proved more true that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." The intelligent Oriental is shocked, horrified, and amused by the misinterpretation of his beliefs which flourish in our Western world. To him it is incredible that any people should be gullible enough to accept as bona fide such obviously ridiculous teachings.

The Asiatic is trained from childhood to believe in law. His earliest actions are a conscious dedication to the universal pattern of law and truth.

Those who accept reincarnation and karma as rules by which to live should accept them utterly and without compromise. They should live in the Law, recognizing the exactitude of the Law as the one sure and inevitable fact which man is capable of knowing. In a universe of unknown mysteries, reincarnation and karma stand out as knowable and usable.

The honest man approaches these laws with complete acceptance. He desires no escape from the consequences of his own actions. He expects no liberation apart from self-perfection. He may even acknowledge that he does not know what perfection is, but realizes that the Law will ultimately bring to him the knowledge of all that is knowable, the highest achievement of which man is capable.

It is proper and right that those who believe in reincarnation and karma should make it the absolute rule of personal conduct. They should perform only such actions as they are willing to accept as consequence. They should evade no consequences which they realize are the results of



personal karma. Nothing else is necessary. We require no heaven or hell, no gods or demons. Life is the living out of cause and effect, each cause producing an effect commensurate with itself; each effect in turn setting new causes in motion. When the theory of evolution is added to this picture we can recognize eternal growth toward Reality. Every experience becomes a part of knowledge. We can live impersonally, comforted by the truth of eternal progress.

Reincarnation and karma, if compromised in any way by the belief in mitigating circumstances, or interfered with in any way by the whims or pleasure of the gods, would immediately cease to be laws.

## DISCIPLINES OF LIBERATION

The doctrines of reincarnation and karma as taught in Buddhist countries are the bases of a complete system of impersonal salvation. The acceptance of these two laws carries certain moral responsibilities. What you believe, you must do. A philosophy of life is something to be lived, to be applied to all problems of living, and to inspire the character and moderate the extremes of temperament.

The Eastern mind is devoted to its religious philosophies to the same degree that the Western mind is devoted to the concept of wealth. The Oriental desires to become, even as the Occidental desire to possess.

Reincarnation as a belief extends the horizon of existence to include numerous embodiments under a wide diversity of circumstances. The psychology of reincarnation is very different from the one-life belief that dominates the West. In one life so little can actually be accomplished; so large a part of hopes and ideals can never be realized. The Western thinker is limited to the narrow space of "three score years and ten." In this hopelessly inadequate time he must "live, move, and have his being." In this cramped interval he must prepare for an eternal hereafter. It is no wonder, then, that material theories, the products of scientific skepticism, are accepted as a welcome escape from the hopelessness of prevailing religious beliefs.

Some skeptics criticize the Asiatic for his belief in many lives. They maintain that it results in indolence and indifference in matters of the present existence; that it is a philosophy of procrastination and evasion; a wishful thinking for better states to come. This is not a fair criticism because the believer in reincarnation insists that his future existences depend upon his present integrity. Therefore reincarnation is a stimulus to right action, but not necessarily a stimulus to acquisitiveness.

It is inevitable that the belief in reincarnation and karma should result in the development of a method by which the workings of these laws should be expedited. In the East there are numerous philosophical orders which teach the individual how to gain the most in experience and knowledge from the doctrine of compensation and the plurality of lives. Where physical life is merely a passing incident in a larger pattern made up of numerous lives, the attitude toward living is different, less intense, less personal, less possessive and more detached. There is also a higher idealism. Much more can be accomplished in several lives than in one. Therefore the goal of living is further removed from the present than in a philosophy which teaches a single existence.

The reincarnationist does not believe in haste, stress or strain. It is the quality of accomplishment and not the rapidity of it that concerns such a mind. Whereas the West is ever hurrying though it knows not where it goes, the East proceeds slowly, exploring every detail of life. It has time to linger on its way. Two Chinese scholars will sip their tea by the hour, indifferent to the haste about them. For these scholars there is time for gentle conversation, for the study of art, for the admiring of a fine painting, and for the in-

numerable small formalities of the Confucian code. In the same way the Buddhist abbot in his saffron-colored robe spends hours pruning his wistaria or throwing crumbs to the golden carp in the monastery pool. The temptation to achieve at the expense of other men is gone. The haste to use up what little of life remains has no place among those who understand the Law.

The yogi in meditation in his cave at the headwaters of the Jumna, or the Persian Sufi illuminating manuscripts by the light of a single oil lamp, fulfills the promise of his years, each in his own way enriched by the belief in a continuity of existences.

Reincarnation is a belief that corrects not only the concept of incessant striving, but the illusional achievements toward which this striving is directed are shown in their true unreality. There is no desire to be great as men know greatness; no mad questing after power or position. Instead there is the remembrance of the Buddha's words: "Who lives a prince may come again in rags." Merit lies not in commanding and controlling other men, but in a kind and gentle victory over self. The uselessness of position and possessions which cannot survive the dissolution of the flesh inclines the mind to temperate courses in a world of excesses and extremes.

The true understanding of karma solves, as we already have shown, the whole mystery of egotism. It is not the illusional self that goes on after the dissolution of the fleshly part; therefore the whims, desires, and appetites of the personality are of little consequence. They are not even important enough to be called good or evil. Conscious immortality is no desire of the Eastern mind. Therefore during life



there is no resistance to those innumerable circumstances which normally would offend the ego. When the Westerner is reminded of his insignificance he is angry and resentful. But the Easterner, knowing truly how little he is, is not offended by criticism, but acknowledging all the faults of which he is suspected realizes that only lives, many lives, can correct them all.

The fear of death is the great delusion of the Occident. As the time of physical dissolution approaches both the living and the dying unite in common panic. Then comes the funeral, with weeping relatives sobbing over beloved remains; then empty years in which the memory of the one who has gone dominates all that concerns the daily existence of those who are left behind.

This miserable picture is not possible when the doctrines of reincarnation and karma are actually believed. Death is not the end of anything except a personality that in a certain sense is never actually real, being merely a shadow cast in matter by an immortal being who lives all the lives of the personalities which it creates. The Eastern mystic views the Christian concept of immortality with the utmost dread. Nothing could be more horrible than going on forever, always remembering, always desiring, always repenting.

Reincarnation and karma also clarify such matters as physical relationships, of father and son, of mother and daughter, of brother and sister, and of husband and wife. To the Buddhist, all associational relationships are temporary and illusional. There is no such thing as blood relationship; there are merely personalities living through the dream of relationship in order that certain experiences may be gained. The permanent entities above are complete in themselves;

the personalities which they emanate merely appear to be related to each other. Relationship is but the privilege of association for the purpose of growth and the opportunity to learn new lessons and to approach a little nearer the mystery of understanding.

In substance, then, the belief in rebirth and compensation changes the entire viewpoint, enriches it, normalizes it, frees it for action, and removes forever the theological bugaboo of perdition.

The purpose of all evolution is to achieve liberation; that is, to produce a personality into which the entity flows so perfectly and completely that there ceases to be any interval between the two. To achieve this end requires the disciplining of the personality. This discipline is made possible only because previous lives have enriched the new personality with sufficient wisdom to desire this discipline. Until that time is reached the personality is incapable of achieving liberation.

Liberation as taught in the East must never be confused with the absolutism of modern metaphysics. True liberation is the withdrawal of the personality; the end of the illusion of "I-ness"; the consummation of hundreds of lives of gradual evolution toward reality. It is not the product of will power, meditation, concentration, or any of these exercises which are advocated as substitutes for personal experience and action. Man cannot think himself, will himself, or hope himself into the state of true enlightenment. Liberation results from the elevation and refinement of personalities through thousands of years of rebirth, with the result that at last a personality is emanated which is capable of making the supreme adjustment in which it absolutely negates itself to the entity from which it emanates.

This negation is not a psychological thing, nor is it a Christian humility, nor again an inhibition as in the case of the evangelized personality who is constantly recounting his sins. Liberation is a perfect and complete adjustment in which all of the parts of the personality are in perfect rapport with the entity itself. The result is adeptship and liberation from the wheel of personality rebirth.

The average student of philosophy is not going to accomplish liberation in the present life. There are more than two billion personalities on the earth today, and of those now living it is unlikely that more than three will accomplish liberation in their present incarnation. These three will have been faithful chelas of great masters for several lives.

It should be remembered that it is not necessary to attain the ultimate illumination, such as that reached by Gautama Buddha, in order to live well and happily through the years of the present personality. Everyone could live better than he does. Each could make a definite step forward, bringing with it added security and happiness, if he would live according to the Law. In the East the acceptance of reincarnation and karma is the first conscious step on the long road that leads to reality. These laws are part of the esoteric teaching of every legitimate world religion, and the acceptance of them is essential to entry upon the path.

After the student has committed himself to the doctrines of rebirth and karma he must begin to live the gentle, impersonal life that must accompany this commitment. Now comes the greatest point of danger. Having discovered a part of truth, but still partaking of considerable ignorance, the mind has a tendency to go off on tangents and to concoct innumerable erroneous beliefs relating to the subject. This has been the common calamity in the West. A phase

of this mistake is indifference to the misfortunes of others. The attitude becomes one of "they have earned it so let them suffer it." This is not healthy. No matter how wise we may become, or how stupid others may appear to be, it is the duty of the disciple to assist the uninformed in any way possible.

Another phase is an intolerance toward people of other beliefs and a sense of personal superiority. Such attitudes destroy the improvement that has been gained, and the next personality sent out by the entity will probably be deprived of the knowledge of rebirth.

For the student just coming into the belief in rebirth and karma, or slightly advanced in the doctrine, certain suggestions may be in order. In the first place, live normally and happily. Prove that knowledge has increased tolerance and understanding, and not limited them. Balance the temperament, advancing simultaneously along several lines of accomplishment if possible. Do not become improvident, but realize that when the time comes for you to be free from physical responsibilities the entity will free you. Do not attempt virtues beyond your understanding simply because others tell about them. Do not aim at immediate emancipation or you will be sorely disappointed. Apply your beliefs to the circumstances affecting your life, and make sure that they work when they differ from your personal preferences. Teach them to others, but never force them upon a person who does not desire the knowledge of these laws. Do not permit impersonality to chill or harden your life, or permit yourself to become indifferent to social or environmental problems. Live what you believe, but make sure that you actually believe what you live. If you do there will be no conflict, and in a few hundred more lives you will achieve liberation, normally and beautifully.



The Books say well, my Brothers! each man's life  
 The outcome of his former living is;  
 The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,  
 The bygone right breeds bliss.

That which ye sow ye reap. See yonder fields!  
 The sesamum was sesamum, the corn  
 Was corn. The Silence and the Darkness knew!  
 So is a man's fate born.

He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed,  
 Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;  
 And so much weed and poison-stuff, which mar  
 Him and the aching earth.

If he shall labor rightly, rooting these,  
 And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,  
 Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,  
 And rich the harvest due.

—*The Light of Asia*

## NIRVANA

The laws of rebirth and karma are not ends in themselves, but means toward the accomplishment of the supreme end, *nirvana*. All lives lead toward the summit of life, the entity itself. When the cycle of bodies has been completed, and the personalities have fulfilled their various destinies, the cycle of life ends.

Nirvana is defined by Professor Rhys-Davids as the dying out of the three fires of the personality. The smoldering desires, ambitions, and attachments ultimately die out. The northern Buddhist waits patiently for liberation from the involvements of material existence. He seeks to untangle the snarled threads of life; he seeks selflessness within himself; he aspires to the All by becoming nothing.

It is difficult for the Westerner, with his concept of the superpersonality and a fond belief in the eternity of personal consciousness, to find comfort and peace along the ways of Eastern thought. To the Occidental there is something negative in the passive strength of Buddhist teachings. But the East is old in conquest, pillage, and power. It has perceived inwardly the uselessness and impermanence of temporal superiority. The Eastern monk turns from the illusion of the world to the reality of the Law, and finds in the Law the perfect code of life.

For the average man and woman nirvana is not an imminent concern. It is a product of a development far beyond that possible for the average person. The arhats meditate upon the nirvana. But for the "householder" the problem is to live well now and not incline the mind to useless speculation about unattained ultimates.

The only reason that it is necessary to discuss nirvana in a book dealing with reincarnation and karma is because an intelligent life must be based upon a rational concept of the true meaning of life. While we believe in heaven and hell, we can never live the Law. As long as the after-death state is associated with a golden city with jeweled gates, it is impossible to think life through or to build toward personal integrity. There must be a decision within the individual to determine whether there is sufficient wisdom to renounce the concept of heaven and to cling to the concept of nirvana.

Nirvana is the suspension of all action; the inevitable result of advanced philosophical knowledge. It is truly the state of the entity undefiled and uncomplicated. It is pure nature; the suspension of activity as the result of a full knowledge of the purpose and the plan of mortal existence.

The belief in reincarnation and karma is useless unless coupled with a reasonable doctrine concerning the ultimate state of man. After physical death the personality, according to the Tibetan notion, enters the western paradise; the glorious dwelling place of the Dhyani Buddha Amitabha. Here the decarnate entity, as one of the blessed dead, wanders through the gardens of Sukhavati.

There is little difference between this concept and that of the paradisiacal sphere of the early Christian church. Theologians would have us believe that virtuous souls dwell to-

gether in a mystical land of beauty and contentment. These also are Egypt's Aaru gardens, and the pleasant lands of the later Greeks. This likewise is Valhalla where the Nordic heroes feast together; the red man's Happy Hunting Grounds, where the Indian braves build their tepees in the sky and snare phantoms with their nets.

This intermediate condition is merely the sleeping or death side of life and should never be regarded as an ultimate condition. It is but the sphere of good karma. Righteous action results in a tranquil place of happiness; the Isles of the Blessed.

Nirvana finds no accurate description in any of the religious systems of the world. It is a return to the All-Father; something beyond the shadowland, the place where the great sachems go; the place of no return. Nirvana is far from the star-spangled plains of space in the midst of which rises Indra's palace with its golden dome. In Egypt the god of the adytum stood with one finger pressed to his lips, the proper symbol of silence concerning the greater mysteries. From paradise men may return again to earth, but from the nirvana none returns.

It should not be supposed that the entity enters nirvana. The attainment of nirvana is an experience of the final personality returning to the unconditioned consciousness of the entity itself. Nor is nirvana the end of evolution; it is merely the end of evolution as we know it, but not the end of growth. The entity will send forth no more personalities, but in the next great cycle of life the entity will create another type of extension and achieve growth by other means. Nirvana, then, is the end of the personality-forming attribute of the entity.



In the Tibetan cosmogony the world (the forms of personality) is slowly dissolved at the end of a cycle of manifestation. This is a symbolic description of nirvana when all that remains of the world is the bridge of the Siddhas. The *siddhis* of the saints are the supersubstantial virtues which have been transferred to the entity by the process of rebirth, and therefore do not perish. At last, however, even the Siddhas go to sleep, floating in their mysterious ship over the great deep; the vacant sphere of personality. It is said that only Adi-Buddha remains; the permanent entity sits in profound contemplation above the deep. There are no bodies; only silence and the self. It is then written that Adi-Buddha itself, the supreme lord of its bodies, rests in introspection; its forces and potentials are subjectified; it meditates inwardly upon its own heart. By this meditation disassociation is achieved. The self becomes selfless, and waits.

At the dawn of the next cycle of evolution the eye of the self is opened, nirvana is over. With the previous nirvana time became eternity; with the reawakening, eternity becomes time. The Lord of the Experiences Adi-Buddha spins the new wheel and sends forth the next cycle of life. The old world is gone; the old personalities are gone; the old joys and the old sorrows are gone. New rules and new laws govern the new manifestation. In the new manvantara (world cycle) a new part of Adi-Buddha achieves evolution in a new part of space. Humanity is gone; it remains only as a memory in the eternal mind. The new creation we may not name, but like man it has its beginning and its end, and only the ageless entity survives all the changes. Therefore the Hindus call this entity the golden thread upon which are strung together like beads, planets and souls, worlds and beings.

Most Orientalists have not sensed the true picture of the nirvana. They think it is an evasion; a running away from existence; an escape into nothingness. Only those greatly enlightened, like the Buddha himself, realize that it is only the end of an order. The known must pass away that the unknown may be revealed.

There is no immortality for man; no continuity of personalities. There is one entity emanating new personalities from the substance of accumulated experience. Only the entity by its true nature is immortal; only the entity endures all the changes that happen in the infinite duration of space and time. The personalities as drops of experience endure with the entity as part of the entity, but not as personalities or individualities. Personalities are merely units of experience which enrich the entity as it meditates away the ages.

Reincarnation and karma are the great laws; the *diamond truths*. Through the understanding of these laws the personality overcomes its innate egotism, and lives for the sake of the entity and not for its own sake. Hundreds of personalities bestow their part and bring their offerings of accomplishment. Thus enriched, the entity finally emits one personality in which all of the virtues of past lives are embodied. This is the supreme incarnation; this is the world teacher. Having manifested this final sublime embodiment the entity returns this personality to itself and human evolution is finished.

We are each part of this plan. Each personality that populates this earth is the visible symbol of an evolving entity that remains above, building and waiting. Each of us as personalities is fulfilling the expectancy of the previous personalities of whose very natures we are composed. We in turn are building our life and our experience into body

patterns that are to follow. This is the philosophy of reincarnation and karma; the wheel of birth and death which ceases to turn only when the last enlightened personality of our body-chain achieves the illumination.

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## POSTSCRIPT TO THE FIFTH EDITION

In the twenty-eight years since the original publication of this book, humanity has passed through many critical events, which have brought about important, and even terrifying, changes. The world has suffered the tragic experiences of World War II, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ushered in the atomic age. Nuclear research has resulted in an intensive program of space exploration, and the minds of the young have turned avidly to the intriguing mysteries of interplanetary travel and the development of innumerable electronic devices. But along with this intensification of knowledge, there has been a marked increase of neurotic ailments and psychotic pressures. The rapid advance of materialistic and mechanistic attitudes has undermined the moral life of man, and has left very little in the way of securities to comfort the hearts and souls of disturbed persons, especially those who have not yet attained full psychological maturity.

The prevailing confusion and instability have affected man's personal philosophy of life and living. He has become increasingly disillusioned in the concept of progress, and he is no longer certain that the brilliant minds of his time have any real solutions to the heartaches that afflict this generation. A new morality is necessary. New ethical convictions must arise from social research programs, and science must ultimately



reveal a pattern of practical ideals that will enable men to live together with hope and confidence.

Many beliefs and opinions have fallen by the wayside under the relentless rejections of the scientific mind. Strangely enough, the belief in reincarnation has not been adversely affected, nor have recent discoveries invalidated, or even weakened, the philosophical foundations of this ancient doctrine. In fact, it is gaining greater recognition from trained minds than any other solution that has been offered for the riddle of human origin and destiny.

The theory of reincarnation provides strong ethical incentives to right conduct, supplies reasonable inducements for the arbitration of national and international difficulties, and points the way for the future integration of both the individual and society. It is an idealistic concept founded upon the exact operations of universal laws, and these laws have already become the principal objects of scientific thought. Of course, the scientist can accept or reject any interpretation of the universe, but he cannot disprove that the operation of the law of cause and effect, which is everywhere obvious in nature, is a directing force in the evolutionary unfoldment of man.

Another change that has taken place in the last twenty-eight years concerns the old concept of infallibilities that dominated the 19th century and extended through the first third of the 20th century. Convinced that learning had attained its full maturity, and that what was already known could never be successfully assailed, the sciences had locked themselves in crystallized opinions to be defended at all costs. After World War II, a strange liberation took place in human consciousness. As it suddenly became obvious that a generation that believed it had solved everything, was falling before a new

way of life, authority lost much of its influence. Many thoughtful persons became embittered and disillusioned through the realization that very few practical answers had been found for war, poverty, crime, and mental illness.

One of the indirect results of the second world war was the development of a world attitude toward the religious and philosophic needs of disillusioned men and women. Up to that time, the strongest exponents of the doctrine of reincarnation had been the Asiatic nations, and of these, the most articulate were India, Ceylon, and Japan. Since the war, we have come into an entirely new relationship with nearly one billion human beings who accept reincarnation as a perfectly natural, healthy, and useful belief. And what is probably more important to Western man, many of the Eastern countries have undergone extremely rapid political, economic, and social development. It was easy for the West to depreciate a doctrine that was assumed to be restricted to countries still backward, underprivileged, and heathenistic. The average Occidental compared himself, with his wealth, luxury, and physical security, to the poverty-stricken Asiatics and was hardly inclined to give their beliefs much consideration.

Now all this has changed. It is scarcely possible to insist that religious uniformity can be the basis of world peace; nor can we know people well, and share in their projects, without becoming aware that they may be wonderful persons, with deep and secure moral and spiritual codes. We can no longer convince ourselves that the Japanese people are still slowly emerging from feudalism. In Asia today, believers in reincarnation are active in all areas of industry and research. In Japan, for example, a Buddhist may be the president of a great transistor industry, the chairman of the board of a shipbuilding firm

that dominates the world market, the director of a leading bank, the head of a progressive political movement, or a world famous biologist or physicist carrying on research in the Tokyo Hospital. Such men can hardly be written off as old-fashioned eccentrics who may be excused for their strange beliefs. It is also interesting to realize that the honorable Mr. U Thant, secretary-general of the United Nations, is a Burmese Buddhist.

All these conditions have opened the way for a more sympathetic exchange of ideas and a considerable increase of interest, on the part of Western people, in Oriental beliefs, especially in the Buddhist philosophy. Twenty-five years ago, very few persons in the United States had ever heard of Zen, and fewer still were able to distinguish between the various major schools of Eastern philosophy. Since that time, a number of Oriental terms have been added to the English vocabulary, the concepts for which these terms stand have become increasingly familiar, and books on the East are more numerous than ever before.

Not only has the doctrine of reincarnation gained in popular interest, but the researches carried on for evidence in support of the belief have been far from negligible. While there has been no actual breakthrough by which it can be affirmed that the doctrine of rebirth has been proved for all people and for all time, its advocates are no longer ridiculed or suspected of feeble-mindedness. Efforts have been made to estimate the number of persons in the United States and Europe who now believe that man has lived before in this world and is likely to live here again. The estimates vary, but it is suspected that the number may be more than ten millions.

The standard literature of the subject remains much the same as when our book was first issued. Actually, nearly

everything that could be said was expounded more than two thousand years ago by Buddha, Pythagoras, and Plato. What this generation is providing is an increasing number of incidents that seem to strongly support the teaching of metempsychosis. As may be expected, many such cases have come to light in Asia, but a new dimension has been added to the older approach to the problem. Eastern countries are producing their own scientists, well trained in research procedure—accredited men, whose reports cannot be easily disregarded and whose rights to be heard are equal to that of any Western scientist.

Take, for example, the case of Dr. Hamendra Banerjee, who is Director of Parapsychology at the University of Rajasthan in India. The doctor has recently flown to Northumberland, England, to make a preliminary examination of a remarkable instance in which the parents of twin girls have become convinced—actually, almost against their wills—that these children are the re-embodiments of two previous daughters who were killed in a road accident. The evidence, as it now stands, precludes the possibility of much wishful thinking. The parents belong to an extremely conservative Christian religious denomination, which is basically opposed to the idea of reincarnation, but it has been difficult to deny the facts that have come to light in the course of recent years.

In this amazing case, one child has a white scar running down the forehead, and the other, a birth mark above her left hip; the deceased children had identical markings, in the same places, on their bodies. The present children recognized articles and toys that had belonged to them in their former lives. There are also certain mannerisms that are meaningful to the parents, although they might not be especially significant



to strangers. The most important data, of course, is concerned with the continuance of memory by which these children recall incidents from their former lives. The details of the case appeared in the June 11, 1966, edition of "Weekend Magazine," which is issued with a newspaper called "The Sun," published in Montreal, Canada. Dr. Banerjee insists that he is not attempting to build an argument for reincarnation. He only wishes to discover the true facts involved and allow every individual to come to his own conclusions.

Another contemporary scholar whose interests lie in this area, and who further indicates the present attitude on the subject, is Dr. Ian Stevenson, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry and Neurology at the University of Virginia. He is also following up Dr. Banerjee's investigations and studying the twin girls in England. Dr. Stevenson's recent book, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, published in New York in 1966 by The American Society for Psychical Research, reveals a new spirit of camaraderie in the related fields of psychological and psychic matters.

Somewhat earlier, but of interest to all concerned, is *Reincarnation: An East-West Anthology*, including quotations from the world religions and over four hundred Western thinkers. This was compiled and edited by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston, and was published by The Julian Press, Inc., New York, 1961. This book certainly builds up a strong support for the belief in rebirth, proving conclusively that many of the most honored names in learning have been personally convinced that they have lived on earth before.

In most fields, a book originally published nearly thirty years ago would be considered obsolete. This is not the case with any basic text dealing with reincarnation. Interest in the

subject grows whenever the human being is forced to face the realities of strenuous times. Without the doctrine of reincarnation, too much of human life appears to lead only to futility. Unless man has a purpose, the entire evolutionary process is meaningless. And unless this purpose is being advanced by the sorrows of living, our daily misfortunes are nothing more nor less than utter tragedy. It is difficult to imagine that this vast unfoldment of the universe is without a plan, and that man has been placed here merely to perish with the institutions and monuments he erects.

Sanity demands a better way of life. The preservation of our cultural and moral heritage must depend upon the conviction that space is meaningful, that time is necessary to the attainment of ends, and that in space and through time, the human being is unfolding the eternity locked within himself. How can we escape the perfectly reasonable possibility that we came from somewhere, that we are here for a purpose, and that we shall continue our search for truth until we are one with Infinite Life?

—Manly P. Hall  
March 1967

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