



REINCARNATION

A STUDY OF FORGOTTEN TRUTH

E.D. WALKER

REINCARNATION

A STUDY OF FORGOTTEN TRUTH

Discovery Publisher

For the English edition:
2015, Discovery Publisher

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Author : E. D. Walker

DISCOVERY PUBLISHER



616 Corporate Way, Suite 2-4933
Valley Cottage, New York, 10989
www.discoverypublisher.com
books@discoverypublisher.com
facebook.com/DiscoveryPublisher
twitter.com/DiscoveryPB

New York • Tokyo • Paris • Hong Kong

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	3
Introduction	5
Chapter I: What Is Reincarnation ?	10
Chapter II: Western Evidences of Reincarnation	14
I. Immortality demands it	16
II. Analogy is strongly in favor of reincarnation	18
III. Science confirms it	20
IV. Nature of the soul requires it	23
V. It most completely answers the theological questions of “original sin ” and “future punishment ”	25
VI. Reincarnation explains many curious experiences	28
VII. That it alone solves the problem of injustice and misery which broods over our world	36
Chapter III: Objections to Reincarnation	38
Chapter IV: Western Prose Writers on Reincarnation	47
Chapter V: The Poetry of Reincarnation in Western Literature	93
Part I. American Poetry	96
Part II. British Poetry	112
Part III. Continental Poetry	135
Part IV. Platonic Poets	143
Chapter VI: Reincarnation Among the Ancients	157
Chapter VII: Reincarnation in the Bible	172

Chapter VIII: Reincarnation in Early Christendom	178
Chapter IX: Reincarnation in the East Today	189
Chapter X: Eastern Poets upon Reincarnation	195
Chapter XI: Esoteric Oriental Reincarnation	205
Chapter XII: Transmigration Through Animals	212
Chapter XIII: What then of Death, Heaven, and Hell ?	223
Chapter XIV: Karma, the Companion Truth of Reincarnation	230
Conclusion	238

REINCARNATION

A STUDY OF FORGOTTEN TRUTH

Preface

“The idea of a transmigration of souls has hitherto remained a dream of the fancy, nor has any one yet succeeded in giving it a higher moral significance for the order of the universe” writes Hermann Lotze, the German philosopher, in his magnificent “Microcosm,” expressing the common feeling of Christendom. If this little book achieves its purpose it will show the strength and value of that dreamy idea.

The present perplexity of all Christendom upon the deepest problems of life, the sense of blind fate oppressing mankind, the despairing restlessness of many leading poets, the absence of sublime ideals in art, the prevalence of materialism and agnosticism (if not in philosophy, in the most vital form of practical life), all feed a flood-tide of dissatisfaction which Christianity tries in vain to resist, and indicate that the West deeply needs some new truth. Not only the wavering masses of men, but many of those uncompromising devotees of truth who dare surrender themselves, like St. Christopher, to the mightiest, are yearning after a larger revelation. A portion is contained, we believe, in the doctrine variously termed as Reincarnation, Metempsychosis, Transmigration. By this we do not mean the theories concerning rebirth of men in brute bodies, which are attributed to oriental religions and philosophies because popularly accepted by their followers. These are crude caricatures of the true conception. They represent the reality as absurdly as ordinary life in Europe and America illustrates the teaching of Jesus. But we mean the inner kernel of that husk, which in protean forms has irrepressibly welled up in every great phase of thought, which is an open secret lying-all around us and not simply a foreign importation, and which Christendom cannot afford to lose.

For those who are content with the usual creeds this little work will have no attraction. They may be pleased to regard it as a heathen invasion of Christendom. But for truth-seekers it may prove useful, though

it claims only to be an earnest investigation of what seems an indemonstrable proposition. Its doctrine was first met as the declaration of the profoundest students of the mysteries enveloping humanity—coming with authority but no proof of weight to most western thinkers. Its violent antagonism to current ideas compelled the writer to dispose of it by independent methods. If true, there must be some confirmation of it such as will impress any candid mind. If false, nothing can force it to live. This led to a careful study of the subject, which was summarized in a brief essay read and published to a small circle of Theosophists. A continuation of that study has resulted in this volume. Some readers will regard it as a waste of energy, except as a diverting curiosity, the truth or falsehood of reincarnation being to them of little consequence. But a sincere motive underlies it. For reincarnation illuminates the darkest passages in the murky road of life, dispels many haunting enigmas and illusions, and reveals cardinal principles which, if apprehended, will steady the shambling gait of mankind. Virtue, kindliness, and spirituality may thus be seen in their unveiled splendor as the only proper modes of action and thought. The noblest life is discerned to be the only sensible kind, and not abandoned to the accidental expression of impulse or sentiment. The cause of all the evils of modern society, the parent of the revolutions of Europe, the source of the labor disturbances aggravating America, is the arch-enemy of the race—materialism. Reincarnation combats that foe by a most subtle and deadly warfare.

The sincere thanks of the writer are due to a number of kind friends, whose assistance has largely facilitated the collection of materials for this book, and also to the authors who have kindly permitted the use of extracts from their writings, (in Chapters IV and V.)

E. D. WALKER

Introduction

Once, the whole civilized world embraced reincarnation, and found therein a complete answer to that riddle of man's descent and destiny which the inexorable sphinx Life propounds to every traveler along her way. But the western branch of the race, in working out the material conquest of the world, has acquired the compensating discontent of a material philosophy. It has lost the old faith and drifted into a shadowy region, where the eagerness for "practical" things rejects whatever cannot be physically proven. Even God and immortality are for the most part conjectures, believed only after demonstration, and not vitally then. The realization of this condition is provoking throughout Christendom a counter-current of spirituality. The growing freedom of thought and the eastward look of many leading minds seem to herald a renaissance more radical, although more subtle and gradual, than the reformations of Columbus, Luther, and Guthenberg. As surely as the occupation and development of the western Eldorado revived Europe into unprecedented vigor, the exploration of Palestine, and beyond into India, for treasures more precious than gold and dominion, shall revitalize the West with an unparalleled growth of spiritual power.

Strangely enough, too, just as the "New World" proved to be geologically the oldest continent, so the "new truths" recently discovered are found to be the most ancient. They are as universal as the ocean, always waiting to be used. The latest philosophies and heterodoxies are only fresh phrasings of early ideas. The most advanced conceptions of art, education, and government are essentially identical with those of Greece and Rome. The newest industries are approaching the lost arts of Egypt. The modern sciences (as electricity and chemistry) are merely ingenious applications of what the schoolmasters of the primitive races knew better in some respects than Edison and Cooke. Geology has just dawned upon us to reveal the sublime synopsis of earth's history hid-

den for over three thousand years in the first chapter of the Bible. The last great thought of this era — Evolution — is as old as the hills in the East. Professor Crookes's wonderful experiments connected with the instability of certain elements, psychic force, and the fourth dimension of matter (so far in advance of present scientific culture that many physicists deride them) are stumblings upon the outskirts of a domain long familiar to oriental students. After many centuries of tedious jangling with creeds and sects, we are slowly learning that primitive Christianity will make earth a paradise. The permanent edifice of the world's complete education seems to patiently await the time when men shall tire of fashioning useless building stuff from their crumbling theories and revert to the basal granite of which the everlasting foundations are laid, caring only to shape the superstructure by the Architect's plan.

Although commonly rejected throughout Europe and America, reincarnation is unreservedly accepted by the majority of mankind at the present day, as in all the past centuries. From the dawn of history it has prevailed among the largest part of humanity with an unshaken intensity of conviction. Over all the mightiest eastern nations it has held permanent sway. The ancient civilization of Egypt, whose grandeur cannot be overestimated, was built upon this as a fundamental truth, and taught it as a precious secret to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil, and Ovid, who scattered it through Greece and Italy. It is the keynote of Plato's philosophy, being stated or implied very frequently in his dialogues. "Soul is older than body," he says. "Souls are continually born over again from Hades into this life." In his view all knowledge is reminiscence. To search and learn is simply to revive the images of what the soul saw in its preexistent state in the world of realities. It was also widely spread in the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus and Proclus. The swarming millions of India have made this thought the foundation of their enormous achievements in government, architecture, philosophy, and poetry. It was a cardinal element in the religion of the Persian Magi. Alexander the Great gazed in amazement on the self-immolation by fire to which it inspired the Gymnosophists. Caesar found its tenets propagated among the Gauls. The circle of metempsy-

chosis was an essential principle of the Druid faith, and as such was impressed upon our forefathers the Celts, the Gauls, and the Britons. It is claimed that the people held this doctrine so vitally that they wept around the new-born infant and smiled upon death; for the beginning and end of an earthly life were to them the imprisonment and release of a soul, which must undergo repeated probations to remove its degrading impurities for final ascent into a succession of higher spheres. The Bardic triads of the Welsh are replete with this thought, and a Welsh antiquary insists that an ancient emigration from Wales to India conveyed it to the Brahmans. Among the Arab philosophers it was a favorite idea, and it still may be noticed in many Mohammedan writers. In the old civilizations of Peru and Mexico it prevailed universally. The priestly rites of the Egyptian Isis, the Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, the Bacchic processions of Rome, the Druid ceremonies of Britain, and the Cabalic rituals of the Hebrews, all expressed this great truth with peculiar force for their initiated witnesses. The Jews generally adopted it after the Babylonian captivity through the Pharisees, Philo of Alexandria, and the doctors. John the Baptist was to them a second Elijah. Jesus was commonly thought to be a reappearance of John the Baptist or of one of the old prophets. The Talmud and the Cabala are full of the same teaching. Some of the late Rabbins assert many entertaining things concerning the repeated births of the most noted persons of their nation. Christianity is not an exception to all the other great religions in promulgating the same philosophy. Reincarnation played an important part in the thought of Origen and several other leaders among the early Church Fathers. It was a main portion of the creed of the Gnostics and Manichseans. In the Middle Ages many scholastics and heretical sects advocated it. It has cropped out spontaneously in many western theologians. The elder English divines do not hesitate to inculcate preexistence in their sermons. In the seventeenth century Dr. Henry More and other Cambridge Platonists gave it wide acceptance. The Roman Catholic Purgatory seems to be a make-shift improvised to take its place. Sir Harry Vane is said by Burnet to have maintained this doctrine.

Many philosophers of metaphysical depth, like Scotus, Kant, Schelling, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, and the younger Fichte, have upheld reincarnation. Geniuses of noble symmetry, like Giordano Bruno, Herder, Lessing, and Goethe, have fathered it. Scientists like Flammarion, Figuiet, and Brewster have earnestly advocated it. Theological leaders like Julius Muller, Dorner, Ernesti, Rüchert, and Edward Beecher have maintained it. In exalted intuitional natures like Boehme and Swedenborg its hold is apparent. Most of the mystics bathe in it. Of course the long line of Platonists from Socrates down to Emerson have no doubt of it. Nearly all the poets profess it.

Even amid the predominance of materialistic influences in Christendom it has a considerable following. Traces of it are found among the aborigines of North and South America, and in many barbaric tribes. At this time it reigns without any sign of decrepitude over the Burman, Chinese, Japanese, Tartar, Tibetan, and East Indian nations, including at least 750,000,000 of mankind and nearly two thirds of the race. Throughout the East it is the great central thought. It is no mere superstition of the ignorant masses. It is the chief principle of Hindu metaphysics, the basis of all their inspired books. Such a hoary philosophy, held by the venerable authority of ages, ruling from the beginning of time the bulk of the world's thought, cherished in some form by the disciples of every great religion, is certainly worthy of the profoundest respect and study. There must be some vital reality inspiring so stupendous an existence.

But the western fondness for democracy does not hold in the domain of thought. The fact that the majority of the race has agreed upon reincarnation is no argument for it to an occidental thinker. The conceit of modern progress has no more respect for ancient ideas than for the forgotten civilization of old, even though in many essentials they anticipated or outstripped all that we boast of. Therefore we propose to treat this subject largely from a western standpoint.



We cannot yet have learned all that we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it. Is all that remains lost?

—GEORGE MACDONALD.

You cannot say of the soul, it shall be, or is about to be, or is to be hereafter. It is a thing without birth.—BHAGAVAD GITA.

As the inheritance of an illustrious name and pedigree quickens the sense of duty in every noble nature, a belief in preexistence may enhance the glory of the present life and intensify the reverence with which the deathless principle is regarded.

—WILLIAM KNIGHT.

If we except the belief of a future remuneration beyond this life for suffering virtue and retribution for successful crimes, 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.—ISAAC D'ISRAELI.

The experiences gained in one life may not be remembered in their details in the next, but the impressions which they produce will remain. Again and again man passes through the wheel of transformation, changing his lower energies into higher ones, until matter attracts him no longer, and he becomes—what he is destined to be—a god.—HARTMANN.

*As billows on the undulating main That swelling fall,
and falling swell again, So on the tide of time incessant roll
The dying body and the deathless soul.*

Chapter I

What Is Reincarnation?

Reincarnation is an extremely simple doctrine rooted in the assurance of the soul's indestructibility. It explains at once the descent and the destiny of the soul by so natural and forcible a method that it has not only dominated the ingenuous minds of all the primitive races, but has become the most widely spread and most permanently influential of all philosophies.

Reincarnation teaches that the soul enters this life, not as a fresh creation, but after a long course of previous existences on this earth and elsewhere, in which it acquired its present inhering peculiarities, and that it is on the way to future transformations which the soul is now shaping. It claims that infancy brings to earth, not a blank scroll for the beginning of an earthly record, nor a mere cohesion of atomic forces into a brief personality soon to dissolve again into the elements, but that it is inscribed with ancestral histories, some like the present scene, most of them unlike it and stretching back into the remotest past. These inscriptions are generally undecipherable, save as revealed in their moulding influence upon the new career; but like the invisible photographic images made by the sun of all it sees, when they are properly developed in the laboratory of consciousness they will be distinctly displayed. The current phase of life will also be stored away in the secret vaults of memory, for its unconscious effect upon the ensuing lives. All the qualities we now possess, in body, mind and soul, result from our use of ancient opportunities. We are indeed "the heirs of all the ages," and are alone responsible for our inheritances. For these conditions accrue from distant causes engendered by our older selves, and the future flows by the divine law of cause and effect from the gathered momentum of our past impetuses. There is no favoritism in the universe, but all have the same everlasting facilities for growth. Those who are now

elevated in worldly station may be sunk in humble surroundings in the future. Only the inner traits of the soul are permanent companions. The wealthy sluggard may be the beggar of the next life; and the industrious worker of the present is sowing the seeds of future greatness. Suffering bravely endured now will produce a treasure of patience and fortitude in another life; hardships will give rise to strength; self-denial must develop the will; tastes cultivated in this existence will somehow bear fruit in coming ones; and acquired energies will assert themselves whenever they can by the *lex parsimonice* upon which the principles of physics are based. *Vice versa*, the unconscious habits, the uncontrollable impulses, the peculiar tendencies, the favorite pursuits, and the soul-stirring friendships of the present descend from far-reaching previous activities. Science explains the idiosyncrasies of plants and animals by the environment of previous generations and calls instinct hereditary habit. In the same way there is an evolution of individuality, by which the child opens its new era with characteristics derived from anterior lives, and adds the experience of a new personality to the sum total of his treasured traits. In its passage through earthly personalities the spiritual self, the essential *Ego*, accumulates a fund of individual character which remains as the permanent thread stringing together the separate lives. The soul is therefore an eternal water globule, which sprang in the beginningless past from mother ocean, and is destined after an unreckonable course of meanderings in cloud and rain, snow and steam, spring and river, mud and vapor, to at last return with the garnered experience of all lonely existences into the central Heart of all. Or rather, it is the crystal stream running from a heavenly fountain through one continuous current that often halts in favorite corners, sunny pools, and shady nooks, muddy ponds and clearest lakes, each delay shifting the direction and altering the complexion of the next tide as it issues out by the path of least resistance.

That we have forgotten the causes producing the present sequence of pleasures and pains, talents and defects, successes and failures, is no disproof of them, and does not disturb the justice of the scheme. For temporary oblivion is the anodyne by which the kindly physician

is bringing us through the darker wards of sorrow into perfect health.

We do not undertake to trace the details of our earlier stoppages further than is indicated in the uncontrovertible principle, that as long as the soul is governed by material desires it must find its homes in physical realms, and when its inclination is purely spiritual it certainly will inhabit the domain of spirit. The restless wandering of all souls must at last conclude in the peace of God, but that will not be possible until they have gone through all the rounds of experience and learned that only in that Goal is satisfaction. That men ever dwell in bodies of beasts, we deny as irrational, as such a retrogression would contradict the fundamental maxims of nature. That philosophy is a corruption of Reincarnation, in which the masses have coarsely masked the truth.

Granting the permanence of the human spirit amid every change, the doctrine of rebirth is the only one yielding a metaphysical explanation of the phenomena of life. It is already accepted in the physical plane as evolution, and holds a firm ethical value in applying the law of justice to human experience. In confirmation of it there stands the strongest weight of evidence, argumentary, empirical, and historic. It untangles the knotty problem of life simply and grandly. It meets the severest requirements of enlightened reason, and is in deepest harmony with the spirit of Christianity.



The house of life hath many chambers. — ROSSETTI.

The soul is not born; it does not die; it was not produced from any one; nor was any produced from it. — EMERSON.

*For men to tell how human life began
Is hard: for who himself beginning knew.
— MILTON.*

There is surely a piece of divinity in us—something that was before the elements and owes no homage unto the sun. Whatever hath no beginning may be confident of no end. —SIB THOMAS BROWNE.

For of the soul the body form doth take, For soul is form and doth the body make. —SPENSER.

Secreted and hidden in the heart of the world and the heart of man is the light which can illumine all life, the future and the past. —THROUGH THE GATES OF GOLD.

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. —HUME.

Nature is nothing less than the ladder of resurrection which, step by step, leads upward—or rather is carried from the abyss of eternal death up to the apex of life. —SCHLEGEL.

*Look nature through; 'tis revolution all,
All change; no death. Day follows night, and night
The dying day; stars rise and set, and set and rise.
Earth takes the example. All to reflourish fades
As in a wheel: all sinks to reascend;
Emblems of man, who passes, not expires.*

—YOUNG.

The blending of mind and matter in the bodily structure of the sentient and rational orders, we may be assured, is a method of procedure which, if it be not absolutely indispensable to the final purposes of the creation, subserves the most important ends and carries with it consequences such as will make it the general, if not the universal law of all finite natures, in all worlds. —ISAAC TAYLOR.

Chapter II

Western Evidences of Reincarnation

The old Saxon chronicler, Bede, records that at a banquet given by King Edwin of Northumbria to his nobles, a discussion arose as to how they should receive the Christian missionary Paulinus, who had just arrived from the continent. Some urged the sufficiency of their own Druid and Norse religions and advised the death of the invading heretic. Others were in favor of hearing his message. At length the king asked the opinion of his oldest counsellor. The sage arose and said: "O king and lords. You all did remark the swallow which entered this festal hall to escape the chilling winds without, fluttering near the fire for a few moments and then vanishing through the opposite window. Such is the life of man. Whence it came and whither it goes none can tell. Therefore if this new religion brings light upon so great a mystery, it must be diviner than ours and should be welcomed." The old man's advice was adopted.

We are in the position of those old ancestors of ours. The religion of the churches, called Christianity, is to many earnest souls a dry husk. The germinant kernel of truth as it came from the founder of Christianity, when it is discovered under all its barren wrappings, is indeed sufficient to feed us with the bread of life. It answers all the practical needs of most people even with the husks. But it leaves some vital questions unanswered which impel us to desire something more than Jesus taught—not for mere curiosity, but as food for larger growth. The divine law which promises to fill every vacuum, and to gratify at last every aspiration, has not left us without means of grasping a portion of these grander truths.

The commonest idea of the soul throughout Christendom seems to be that it is created specially for birth on this world, and after its lifetime here it goes to a permanent spiritual realm of infinite continuance. This is a very comfortable belief derived from the appearances of things,

and those holding it may very properly say, “My view agrees with the phenomena, and if you think differently the burden of proof rests upon you.” We accept this responsibility. But a careful observer knows that the true explanation of facts is as a rule very different from the appearance. Ptolemy thought he could account for all the heavenly motions on his geocentric theory, and his teachings were at once received by his contemporaries. But the deeper studies of Copernicus and Galileo had to wait a century before they were accepted, although they introduced an astronomy of immeasurably nobler scale. Is it not a relic of the old confidence in appearances to consider the physical orbits of human souls as limited to our little view of them?

The theologian seeks to explain life, with its inequalities, its miseries and injustices, by a future condition rewarding and punishing men for the deeds of earth. He concedes that benevolence and justice cannot be proven in God by what is seen of His earthly administration. The final law of creation is said to be Love, but the sin and suffering bequeathed to most of the race through no apparent fault of theirs annuls that dictum in the world’s real thought, and compels men to regard life as a ceaseless struggle for existence in which the strongest wins and the weakest fails, and the devil takes the hindermost. But even if the future life will straighten out this by a just judgment, fairness demands that all shall have an even chance here — which only reincarnation assures.

The materialist takes a more plausible ground. On the basis of the soul beginning with the present existence, he regards all the developments of life as results of blind natural forces. He says that the variety of atomic qualities accounts for all the divergencies of life, physical, mental, and moral. But he can give no reason why the same particles of matter should accomplish such stupendous varieties. Moreover Science, the materialist’s gospel, instead of disposing of psychic facts, is studying and classifying them as a new branch of supersensuous knowledge.*These investigations will ultimately initiate Science into the surety of non-physical things. Already a strong advance in that direction has been made by

* See the publications of the Society of Psychical Research of London and Boston and New York.

Isaac Taylor's "Physical Theory of a Future Life" and Stewart & Tait's "Unseen Universe." The conception of an Infinite Personality overwhelms all the narrow groove-thinking of every mechanical school, and rises supremely in the strongest scientific philosophy of all time—that of Herbert Spencer. Strangest of all, Evolution, the cornerstone of Spencerian philosophy, is merely a paraphrase of reincarnation.

There are seven arguments for Reincarnation which seem conclusive.

1. That the idea of *immortality* demands it.
2. That *analogy* makes it the most probable.
3. That *science* confirms it.
4. That the *nature of the soul* requires it.
5. That it most completely *answers* the *theological questions* of "original sin" and "future punishment."
6. That it *explains* many *mysterious experiences*.
7. That it alone *solves* the problem of *injustice* and *misery* which broods over our world.

■ Immortality demands it

Only the positivists and some allied schools of thought, comprising a very small proportion of Christendom, doubt the immortality of the soul. But a conscious existence after death has no better proof than a prenatal existence. It is an old declaration that what begins in time must end in time. We have no right to say that the soul is eternal on one side of its earthly period without being so on the other. Far more rational is the view of certain scientists who, believing that the soul originates with this life, also declare that it ends with this life. That is the logical outcome of their premise. If the soul sprang into existence specially for this life, why should it continue afterward? It is precisely as probable from all the grounds of reason that death is the conclusion of the soul as that birth is the beginning of it. As Cudworth points out, it was this argument which had special weight with the Greek philosophers, whose reasonings upon immortality have led all later generations. They

asserted the eternity of the soul in order to vindicate its immortality. For, they held, as nothing which has being can have originated from nothingness, or can vanish into nothingness, and as they were certain of their existence, it was impossible that they could have had a temporal beginning. The present life must be only one stage of a vast number, stretching backward and forward.

Our instinctive belief in immortality implies a subconscious acceptance of this view. We are certain of a persevering life outlasting all the changes of time and death. But birth, as well as death, is one of the temporal shifts belonging to the transitory sphere which is foreign to our spirits. It is only because our backs are toward the earlier change and our faces to the later that we refuse to reason about one on the principles used about the other. If we lived in the reversed world of Fechner's "Dr. Mises," in which old things grow new and men begin life by a reversed dying and end by a reversed birth, we would probably devise arguments for preexistence as zealously as we do now for future existence, and that would lead to reincarnation. For all the indications of immortality point as unfailingly to an eternity preceding this existence: the love of prolonged life; the analogy of nature; the prevailing belief of the most spiritual minds; the permanence of the ego principle; the inconceivability of annihilation or of creation from nothing; the promise of an extension of the present career; the injustice of any other thought.

The ordinary Christian idea of special creation at birth involves the correlative of annihilation at death. What the origin of the soul may have been does not affect this subject, further than that it long antedates the present life. Whether it be a spark from God himself, or a divine emanation, or a cluster of independent energies, its eternal destiny compels the inference that it is uncreated and indestructible. Moreover, it is unthinkable that from an infinite history it enters this world for its first and only physical experience and then shoots off to an endless spiritual existence. The deduction is rather that it assumed many forms before it appeared as we now see it, and is bound to pass through many coming lives before it will be rounded into the full orb of perfection and reach its ultimate goal.

■. Analogy is strongly in favor of reincarnation

Were Bishop Butler to work out the problem of the career of the human soul in the light of modern science, we doubt not that his masterpiece would advocate this “pagan” thought. For many centuries the literature of nations has discerned a standard simile of the soul’s deathlessness in the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly. But it is known now that once all the caterpillars and butterflies were alike, and that by repeated incarnations they have reached the bewildering differences. When they started off from the procession of life on their own road from one or a few similar species, the progeny scattered into various circumstances, and the struggles and devices which they went through for their own purposes, being repeated for thousands of years in millions of lives, has developed the surprising heterogeneity of feather-winged insects. And as each undergoes his rapid changes in rehearsal of his long pedigree, we may trace the succession of his earlier lives.

The violent energy of the present condition argues a previous stage leading up to it. It is contended with great force of analogy that death is but another and higher birth. This life is a groping embryo plane implying a more exalted one. Mysterious intimations reach us from a diviner sphere,—

“Like hints and echoes of the world
To spirits folded in the womb.”

But subtle indications rearward argue that birth is the death of an earlier existence. Even the embryo life necessitates a preparatory one preceding it. So complete a structure must have a foundation. So swift a momentum must have traveled far. As Emerson observes: “We wake and find ourselves on a stair. There are other stairs below us which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight.”

The grand order of creation is everywhere proclaiming as the universal word, “change.” Nothing is destroyed, but all is passing from one exis-

tence to another. Not an atom but is dancing in lively march from its present condition to a different form, running a ceaseless cycle through mineral, vegetable, and animal existence, though never losing its individuality, however diverse its apparent alterations. Not a creature but is constantly progressing to something else. The tadpole becomes a fish, the fish a frog, and some of the frogs have turned to birds. It was the keen perception of this principle in nature which gave their vital force to the Greek mythologies and other ancient stories embodying the idea of transmutation of personality through many guises. It was this which animated the metamorphoses of Ovid, whose philosophy is contained in these lines from his poem on Pythagoras:—

“Death, so called, is but old matter dressed
In some new form. And in a varied vest
From tenement to tenement, though tossed,
The soul is still the same, the figure only lost:
And as the softened wax new seals receives,
This face assumes, and that impression leaves,
Now called by one, now by another name,
The form is only changed, the wax is still the same.
Then, to be born is to begin to be
Some other thing we were not formerly.
That forms are changed, I grant; that nothing can
Continue in the figure it began.”*

Evolution has remoulded the thought of Christendom, expanding our conception of physiology, astronomy and history. The more it is studied the more universal is found its application. It seems to be the secret of God's life. Now that we know the evolution of the body, it is time that we learned the evolution of the soul. The biologist shows that each of us physically before birth runs through all the phases of animal life—polyp, fish, reptile, dog, ape, and man—as a brief synopsis of how the ages have prepared our tenements. The preponderance of special animal traits

* Drvden's Translation.

in us is due, he says, to the emphasis of those particular stages of our physical growth. So in infancy does the soul move through an unconscious series of existences, recapitulating its long line of descent, until it is fastened in maturity. And why is it not true that our soul traits are the relics of former activities? Evolution proves that the physical part of man is the product of a long series of changes, in which each stage is both the effect of past influences and the cause of succeeding issues. Does not the immaterial part of man require a development equally vast? The fact of an intellectual and moral evolution proceeding hand in hand with the physical can only be explained under the economy of nature by a series of reincarnations.

■■■. Science confirms it

Furthermore, the idea that the soul is specially created for introduction into this world combats all the principles of science. All nature proceeds on the strictest economic methods. Nothing is either lost or added. There is no creation or destruction. Whatever appears to spring suddenly into existence is derived from some sufficient cause—although as unseen as the vapor currents which feed the clouds. There is a growing consensus of opinion among spiritualists and materialists alike, that the quantity both of force and of matter remains constant. The law of conservation of energy holds in the spiritual realm as in physics. The uniform stock of energy in the universe neither declines nor increases, but incessantly changes. The marvelous developments shown in the protean organisms continually entering the procession of life indicate that the new manifestations descend from some patriarchal line, uncreated and immortal, coming through the hidden regions of previous existences. Science allows no such miracle as the theological special resurrection, which is contrary to all experience. But it recognizes the universality of resurrection throughout all nature, which is a matter of common observation. The idea of the soul as a phoenix, eternally continuing through myriad embodiments, is adapted to the whole spirit of modern science.

Especially significant is the axiomatic law of cause and effect. There is

no other adequate explanation of the phenomena of life than the purely scientific one, that causes similar to those now operating before our eyes have produced the results we witness. The impelling characteristics of each personality require some earlier experiences of physical life to have generated them. All the sensuous proclivities of human nature point to long earthly experience as their only origin. And the unsatisfied physical inclinations of the soul necessitate a series of material existences to work themselves out. The irrepressible eagerness for all the range of experience seems to be a sufficient reason for a course of incarnations which shall accomplish that result.

Physiologists contend that the wondrous human organism could not have grown up out of mere matter, but implies a preexistent personal idea,* which grouped around itself the organic conditions of physical existence and constrained the material elements to follow its plan. This dynamic agent—or the soul—must have existed independent of the body before the receptacle was prepared. Bouiller and the German scientists Muller, Hartmann, and Stahl, have especially demonstrated in physiology this idea of a preexistent soul monad, whose plastic power unconsciously constructs its own corporeal organism. The Greeks coiled this idea into the word *σχίσμα*, and the younger Fichte and Lotze have developed it. The doctrine of modern physiology, as presented by the animists, is precisely the ground taken by upholders of reincarna-

* We purposely use the term Personal in preference to spiritual, for the word should be rescued from its confusion of meanings to the old classical one, in connection with the soul. As Hermann Lotze beautifully unfolds, "Personality is the key to existence," using the word in its first sense from *persona*, a mask, parallel to the Hebrew analogy which calls man the image of Jehovah. Mulford also presents the thought grandly in *The Republic of God and The Nation*, [] drawing his suggestion from the Germans Stahl and Froshammer. In this sense humanity is the shadow of Deity, the veil through which the Absolute tries to reveal Himself, casting about in the multiplicity of natural forms after an expression through physical means of His own nature. In this sublime conception God is the life of the universe, who, in Schelling's phrase, "sleeps in the stone, breathes in the plant, moves in the animal, and wakes up to consciousness in man." It is this thought which makes Novaks so reverent to a human being as a Microdeus, and elevates the dignity of the soul above all else. For as the purpose of nature is to personify the Invisible, human souls are the Persons (or masks) by which the leading parts are here acted with many changes of scenery.

tion—that as the lower animals fashion ingenious nests with incredible skill, so the unwitting soul blindly frames the fabric of its body in keeping with the laws of its own adaptation. The unconscious agency of the mind or instinct in repairing the body, healing its hurts and guiding its growth, is recognized by most scientists. Plato but expresses the same idea when he says, “The soul always weaves her garment anew.” This thought is well worded by Giordano Bruno when he says, “The soul is not in the body locally, but as its intrinsic form and extrinsic mould, as that which makes the members and shapes the whole within and without. The body, then, is in the soul, the soul in the mind (spirit). The Intellect (Spirit) is God.”

This conception gives the lie to the materialism which limits the forces of the individual to the complications of a mechanism. A corollary of this moulding power of the independent soul is Plato’s proposition that “the soul has a natural strength which will hold out and be born many times.” Since the ego is older than the body, the resident who builds its dwelling according to its tastes and materials, and since the purpose of its corporeal habitation cannot possibly be accomplished in a single brief lifetime, it is necessary that it should repeat that experience, always framing its receptacle to suit its growing character, like the epochs of a lobster’s enlargement, until it has done with physical life. The new apparitions of men upon the earth thus hail from older scenes.

Evolution may fairly be claimed as a spiritual truth applying to all the methods of life. The gradual development of the soul, by the school of experience, demands a vaster arena of action than one earthly life affords. If it takes ages of time and thousands of lives to form one kind of an animal from another, the expansion of human souls from lower to higher natures surely needs many and many a life for that growth.

Evolutionary science explains the instinctive acts of young animals as inherited tendencies—as past experiences transmitted into fresh forms. Psychic science is learning that the earliest acts of human beings are also derived from remote habits formed in anterior activities, and stored away in the unconscious memory. Herbert Spencer, the philosopher of evolution, speaks of a constant energy manifesting itself through all trans-

formations. This is the one life which runs eternally in protean shapes.

The measure of our acquisition of conceptions from the outer universe resides in the senses. There is no evidence that these have always been five. Nature, never taking a leap, must have put us through all the lower stages before she placed us at our present position. And since nature contains many substances and powers which are partially or wholly beyond these senses, some of which powers are known to other animals, we must assume that our present ascending development will introduce us to higher levels in which the soul shall have as many senses as correspond with the powers of nature.*

IV. Nature of the soul requires it

A much more weighty argument is that the nature of the soul requires reincarnation. The conscious soul cannot feel itself to have had any beginning, any more than it can conceive of annihilation. The sense of persistence overwhelms all the interruptions of forgetfulness and sleep, and all the obstacles of matter. This incessant self-assurance suggests the idea of the soul being independent of the changing body, its temporary prison. Then follows the conception that, as the soul has once appeared in human form, so it may reappear in many others. The eternity of the soul, past and present, leads directly to an innumerable succession of births and deaths, dis-embodiments and re-embodiments.

The identity of the soul surely does not consist in a remembrance of all its past. We are always forgetting ourselves and waking again to recognition. But the sense of individuality bridges all the gaps. In the same way it seems as if our present existence were a somnambulant condition into which we have drowsed from an earlier life, being sleepily oblivious of that former activity, and from which we may after a while be roused into wakefulness.

* This idea is grandly stated in Isaac Taylor's *Physical Theory of a Future Life*. In demonstrating the assurance that the future existence is in material bodies, and showing the glorious extensions to which the coming bodily powers will probably be developed, the author approaches strangely near the philosophy of reincarnation.



Thank you for reading this book
preview. We sincerely hope you
have enjoyed it. More at:

<https://www.discoverypublisher.com>



Discovery Publisher

Discovery Publisher is a multimedia publisher whose mission is to inspire and support personal transformation, spiritual growth and awakening. We strive with every title to preserve the essential wisdom of the author, spiritual teacher, thinker, healer, and visionary artist.

REINCARNATION

A STUDY OF FORGOTTEN TRUTH

Hermann Lotze, the German philosopher, in his magnificent *Microcosm*, argues that the idea of a transmigration of souls remains a dream of the fancy, nor has anyone yet succeeded in giving it a higher moral significance for the order of the universe.

The ethical leverage of the doctrine of reincarnation is immense. Its motive power is great. It reveals as magnificent a background to the present life, with its contradictions and disasters, as the prospect of immortality opens up an illimitable foreground, lengthening out the horizon of hope. It binds together the past, the present and the future in one ethical series of causes and effects.

In *Reincarnation, a Study of Forgotten Truth*, the author goes through an extensive study of the Bible, ancient poetry and writings, Western literature, the Christendom, and the religions of the East to answer one fundamental question: We cannot yet have learned all that we are meant to learn through the body; how much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it; does all that remain lost?



never been before • never seen before

ISBN 978-1-5089-9196-0



9 781508 991960

New York • Paris • Dublin • Tokyo • Hong Kong

discoverypublisher.com facebook.com/discoverypublisher