



WHAT REINCARNATES?

What reincarnates is a mystery to many minds because they find a difficulty in understanding such a permanency as must stand behind repeated incarnations. They know that the body is born and dies and is dissolved, but their minds are so identified with the body in its relations and surroundings that they are unable to dissociate themselves from it. They think of themselves as persons, as bodies of a physical nature, and hence can not see where in them may reside that power of incarnating from life to life.

Theosophy presents a larger view in showing that man is *not* his body, because the body is continually changing; that man is not his mind, because he is constantly changing his mind; that there is in man a permanency which is the identity throughout all kinds of embodiments. There has been no change in our identity from childhood up to the present day. The body has changed; the surroundings have changed; but the identity remains the same and will not change from now on through all changes of body or mind or circumstance. That in us which is itself unchanging is the only real. Nothing is real that changes. It is only the real that perceives change. Change can not see change. Only that which is constant perceives change; only the permanent can perceive impermanence. However dimly we may perceive it, there is that in us which is eternal and changeless.

This unchanging, constant, and immortal something in us is not absent from any particle or any being whatever. There is only one Life in the world to which we, as well as all other beings, pertain. We all proceeded from the same one Source – not many – and we are proceeding on the same path to the same great goal. The ancients said that the Divine Self is in all beings, but in all it does not shine forth. The real is within, and may be realized by any human being in himself. Everyone needs that realization that he may shine forth and express the God within, which all beings but partially express.

If then the Source is the same – the One Spirit – in all

beings, why so many forms, so many personalities, so many individualizations? All, again Theosophy shows, are developments. In that great Ocean of Life, which is at the same time Consciousness and Spirit, we move and live and have our being. That ocean is separable into its constituent drops and the separation is effected through the great course of evolution. Even in the kingdoms below us, which are from the same Source, the tendency to separate into drops of individualized consciousness goes on in ever-increasing degree. In the animal kingdom, those species that are nearest to us make an approach to self-consciousness; but we as human beings have arrived at that stage where each *is* a constituent drop of the great ocean of Consciousness. As with an ocean of water, each drop of it contains all the elements of the great body, so each constituent drop of humanity — a human being — contains within its range every element of the great universe.

The same power exists in all of us, yet where we stand on the ladder of being we see many below us and others greater than we above us. Humanity now is building the bridge of thought, the bridge of ideas that connects the lower with the higher. The whole purpose of incarnation, or our descent into matter, was not only to gain further knowledge of matter, but to impel the lower kingdoms to come up to where we are. We stand as gods to the lower kingdoms. It is our impulsion that brings them weal or woe. It is our misconception of the aim of life that makes Nature so hard; that causes all the distress and disasters which afflict us in cyclones, tornadoes, diseases, pestilences of every kind. All are our own doing; and why? Because there is a sublimation of mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms in our bodies, which are lives in themselves. Every cell in our bodies has its birth, youth, manhood, decay and death, and its reincarnation. We are impelling each one of those lives according to whatever thought, will, or feeling we may have, whether for help or injury to others. These lives go out from us for good or evil, back into their kingdoms with good or evil. So by our lack of understanding of our own true natures, without a comprehension of universal brotherhood, we are imperfectly performing our duties on this plane and imperfectly helping the evolution of the lower kingdoms. We shall realize our responsibility to them only as we see that every being is on his way upward; that all above man have been men at one time; that all

below man will some time reach man's estate, when we have gone on further; that all forms, all beings, all individualizations are but aspects of the One Spirit.

Granted, then, that this one unchanging Spirit is in all – the cause of all evolutionary development, the cause of all incarnations – where, we may ask, do we carry the power to see and know from life to life? How is continuity of knowledge, gained by observation and experience, preserved? How is the individual maintained as such?

We should remember that we were self-conscious beings when this planet began; some even were self-conscious beings when this solar system began; for there is a difference in degree of development among human beings. If the planet or solar system began in a state of primordial substance, or nebulous matter, as Science calls it, then we must have had bodies of that state of substance. In that finest substance are all the possibilities of every grade of matter, and hence it is that within the true body of primordial matter all the changes of coarser and coarser substance have been brought about; and within that body is all experience. Our birth is within that body. Everything that occurs to us is within that body – a body of a nature which does not change throughout the whole *Manvantara*. Each one has such a body of finest substance, of the inner nature, which is the real container for the individual. In it he lives and moves and has his being, and yet even the great glory and fineness of that body is not the man; it is merely the highest vesture of the Soul. The Real Man we are is the Man that was, that is, and that ever shall be, for whom the hour will never strike – Man, the thinker; Man, the perceiver – always thinking, continually acting.

Life is one. Spirit is one. Consciousness is one. These three are one – a trinity – and we are that trinity. All the changes of substance and form are brought about by Spirit and Consciousness and expressed in various forms of life. We are that One Spirit, each standing in a vast assemblage of beings in this great universe, seeing and knowing what he can through the instruments he has. We are the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; or, in theosophical parlance, we are *Atma*, *Buddhi*, and *Manas*. *Atma* is the One Spirit, not belonging to any one, but to all. *Buddhi* is the sublimated experience of all the past. *Manas* is the thinking power, the thinker, the man, the immortal man. There is no man without

the Spirit, and no man without that experience of the past; but the mind is the realm of creation, of ideas; and the Spirit itself, with all its power, acts according to the ideas that are in the mind.

The *Voice of the Silence* says, "Mind is like a mirror. It gathers dust while it reflects." It needs soul-wisdom to brush away the dust. This mind of ours, or that which we call the mind, is merely the reflector, which presents as we train it, different pictures. The Spirit acts in accord with the ideas seen, for good or for evil. Is there evil in the world? It is the power of Spirit that caused it. Is there good in the world? It is the power of Spirit that caused it. For there is only one power. The misdirection of that power brings evil; its right direction brings good.

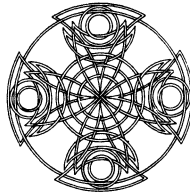
We must give up the *idea* that we are poor, weak, miserable creatures who can never do anything for ourselves; for as long as we hold that idea, so long will we never do anything. We must get the other idea — that we are Spirit, that we are immortal — and when we come to realize what that means, the power of it will flow directly in and through us, unrestricted in any direction, save by the instruments which we ourselves caused to be imperfect. So let us get away from the idea that we are this poor, miserable, defective physical body over which we have so little control. We can not stop a heart beat; we can not stop the breath without destroying the body; we can not stop the constant dissociation of matter that goes on in it, nor prevent its final dissolution. Some people talk of "demonstrating" against death, but we might as well try to demonstrate against the trees shedding their leaves when the winter blasts come. Death will always be, and there is a great advantage in it. If we could not change our bodies, how would there be any chance for advancement? Are we so well pleased with the bodies now ours that we would desire no change? Certainly not. There is only one thing in this life that can be retained permanently, and that is the spiritual nature, and the great divine compassion which we may translate by the word "love."

We are the reincarnating Egos who will continue to incarnate until the great task which we undertook is completed. That task is the raising up of the whole of humanity to the highest possible stage of perfection on an earth of this kind. We incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of wickedness, and the establishment of righteousness. That is what

we are here for, whether we know it or not, and we must come to a recognition of the immortality of our own natures before we shall ever relieve ourselves from the distresses that afflict humanity everywhere. We have to bring ourselves in touch and tune with the whole great purpose of Nature which is the evolution of Soul, and for which alone all the universe exists.

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ROBERT CROSBIE



The untouched soul,
 Greater than all the worlds (because the worlds
 By it subsist); smaller than subtleties
 Of things minutest; last of ultimates;
 Sits in the hollow heart of all that lives!
 Whoso hath laid aside desire and fear,
 His senses mastered, and his spirit still,
 Sees in the quiet light of verity
 Eternal, safe, majestic — HIS SOUL!

KATHA UPANISHAD



Let us call every new life on earth of the same *Ego* a *night* on the stage of a theatre. One night the actor, or "Ego," appears as "Macbeth," the next as "Shylock," the third as "Romeo," the fourth as "Hamlet" or "King Lear," and so on, until he has run through the whole cycle of incarnations. The *Ego* begins his life-pilgrimage as a sprite, an "Ariel," or a "Puck"; he plays the part of a *super*, is a soldier, a servant, one of the chorus; rises then to "speaking parts," plays leading *roles*, interspersed with insignificant parts, till he finally retires from the stage as "Prospero," the *magician*.

H. P. BLAVATSKY