

# Reincarnation

A121 Sunday Address 4th July 1943 St Mary Abbots Place, London Sunday Service

*The date of this address is conjectural (see below), while the text is as issued in the magazine Angelus after it was given, apart from correction of errors*

*Text: from Angelus, September 1943.*

*Context:* once again the main reason for the conjectural date is appearance in the following issue of Angelus. However, although there is no fore-mention of the topic in the addresses of May and June, this address forms the third in an obvious trio on related topics: May on the nature of God and Christ, June on life after death, and now reincarnation. In the second paragraph of this address, there is a reference back to the Life after Death address, just as a reference in May looked forward to it. As noted with the May address, internal references make this a clear series from May to October, where the date is certain.

*General Notes:* in this address as in other places White Eagle uses terms which might seem to derive from psychology, such as 'subconscious' and 'superconscious'. It is fairly obvious in context that his use of the word is not the psychological one.

## White Eagle's Address:

Our subject this evening is, we fear, somewhat controversial; but controversy is good. We cannot do without differing opinion. We learn through exchange of thought; nevertheless, we are well aware that the theme of reincarnation is thorny, since many reject it because they do not like the idea of coming back to earth. They therefore see no purpose in reincarnation and will have none of it. Another strong argument against the truth of reincarnation is that we cannot remember our past lives. Therefore, we are too apt to dismiss reincarnation by saying it is not true. But once a wider vision opens and a deeper memory of the past awakens in the soul, thereafter the soul knows; and no amount of argument will then ever convince such a soul that reincarnation is untrue.

We have already dealt with the subject of Life after Death, a question in which most people are interested – not all people, however. Some say they have an open mind, but no deep convictions, for they see little purpose in survival after death.

The subject of reincarnation follows as a logical sequence of the continuing life of the soul apart from the physical body. Reincarnation reveals to men the eternal nature of life. When a man is once convinced of the continuity of life, when he can see that through reincarnation there can be revealed a wide and grand purpose in all life's experiences, it gives him hope not only for the future, but hope for the present. It gives to him a reason for many of life's happenings. Life's purpose begins to reveal itself. He sees that the soul travels a journey which commenced when it was *breathed forth* from the heart of God; and, descending through the spheres of spiritual life, came to earth to gain experience, to gain consciousness. Consciousness of what? Consciousness of itself first, and of its own vast and deep potentialities; and in gaining this knowledge of itself, the microcosm, it began to gain knowledge of God, the macrocosm.

## **Life becomes Logical**

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With such knowledge opening, the whole plan of life becomes logical and the soul stands revealed as something that is eternal. The human spirit descends from its Creator down the cycle of life and knows incarnation not once, but many, many times. Through this process of succeeding incarnations, it gains *quality of consciousness* – eventually such a rich quality that it becomes *God-conscious*. No great number of people now in incarnation have attained to such God-consciousness, but great numbers of souls who have passed through incarnation on earth once reached this stage, a fact evident to the student of past and present religions and to the student of the philosophers, the poets and the scriptures of all ages. When such spiritual consciousness is attained by any soul, that soul realises, recognises, the truth that it is itself eternal. As that soul goes about the world it becomes awakened; memories of ages past and its own past lives stir within and a familiar chord may be struck when that soul meets certain people. It is remembering, vaguely at first, a past life; the soul that it has contacted vibrates to the same chord. It also knows. Thus souls can meet and recognise each other.

## Arguments against

We are well aware that people try to argue against this teaching of Ancient Wisdom. Well, it does not matter: neither argument nor opinion can alter truth. Sooner or later he who argues against this truth will be for it, he will suddenly know that he has lived on this earth before.

One of the paths by which to regain this memory of the past is meditation. This means the sustained contemplation, not of the daily self but of the greater self of God, by which the little self is raised above the limitations of the here and now and the soul catches a vision of the past from which it came, of the heights to which it will someday climb. Once the soul attains this superconscious state, memories flood in upon it.

This varying quality of consciousness is an interesting fact, proving the varying stages of spiritual understanding to which man can reach. By studying humanity you will find that there are many people unable to understand even elementary spiritual truth. They may be intellectual and clever, but still incapable of seeing, hearing or comprehending anything spiritual in spite of their ability and so-called common sense. In other words, they lack the quality of consciousness, or the ripeness of consciousness, which can alone give them comprehension.

Many others require no argument, they do not need to be convinced of spiritual truth; it is already there in them; they are born with it. Some people are apt to believe that it is easier for some people to be good than for themselves. We would say that the opportunities are about equal. The quality of consciousness which the soul brings back into incarnation depends entirely on the life which preceded it. When this quality is developed it will naturally and normally be spiritual in its nature, with knowledge of the life after death. Such souls do not regard such a procedure as a succession of incarnations as objectionable or in any way retrogressive, but see it revealed as a path of eternal progress; they will see that as the soul returns to each successive life it bears with it a richer quality of consciousness – which, by the way, can only be attained through the everyday experience, suffering and hard work of physical life.

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## **Life Purposeful**

Do you begin to see the reason, the wonderful reason for such a belief as reincarnation? Do you not see the purpose which hides behind every disappointment, that nerves every attainment in everyday life? By all these the soul is forging ahead, gaining experience and developing this soul-consciousness. Recognising, therefore, my friends, how long it takes us all to learn any simple lesson, let us think very earnestly about the number of incarnations necessary to the soul before it can attain true greatness. How slowly, how obstinately and reluctantly do we learn, and this particularly in the early incarnations of the soul. How dull we are at glimpsing spiritual truth!

## **Forgetfulness**

The reason why memories of our past lives are rare is because the memories are stored in the superconscious mind; and not in the everyday earthly mind. In this connection shall we remind ourselves how difficult we find it to remember incidents of our babyhood and childhood, and even to recall details of that which happened only a few months ago; and how easily we forget much of what we read and what we hear! Confronted with this faulty power of recollection how can we then deny the truth of reincarnation because we cannot remember any past lives of ours? ... After all, what would be the use of such memories? many people would think them entirely unnecessary. 'Let us get on with the present', they say, 'and forge ahead into the future; do not look back – it is unhealthy'. My friends, we should not probe the past through self-desire, through self-pride. Thus would we answer the critics who depreciate reincarnation by saying, 'Oh yes, I know all about it. A strange thing is that every other person who believes in reincarnation claims to have once been either a king or a queen, or other notable historical character'. We would refute this criticism here and now. Such memories or such statements originate because of pride in the individual. We cannot all have been great, true; but we do know that it is sometimes necessary for souls who once held a position of power to reincarnate subsequently into very humble positions. We know also that people who lived in obscure conditions wisely, truly and honourably prepare themselves for a subsequent incarnation which affords them greater dignity, power and opportunity to serve mankind.

The whole purpose of reincarnation is for the development and training of the soul. The soul must learn how to use power wisely and humbly; the soul must learn how to accept with simplicity and humility the limitations which it has earned before it can find the truth concerning itself. My friends, go into the inner chamber, the inner sanctuary, into the silence, thinking not about self at all, but contemplating the beauty of God. There be raised in spirit – perhaps not immediately, but after a succession of periods of meditation and contemplation, the soul will rise and absorb a spiritual quality which brings to it vision. Then it will know truth.

## **Karma**

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We find it impossible to separate our theme, reincarnation, from that of the law of Cause and Effect, a law which is being demonstrated with every moment of life that passes, for all its action and reaction, cause and effect. Sow a seed and reap the harvest. Sow a habit and reap a character. What is all this but the workings of what the Easterners call the law of Karma (or Cause and Effect), so necessary for us to comprehend?

Some people think that karma merely affects the eastern races, but they are wrong. In the East the ancient and wise ones knew that reincarnation and karma went hand in hand. They knew that every thought and act of man in time would bring its due result. They knew it was impossible for a soul to escape the result of its own actions, in spite of the many who think that death cuts all things short.

## **Suffering has its Purpose**

Some souls who pass to the spirit world apparently escape retribution for their sins and shortcomings. They appear to live in comfort and happiness, much as many people dwell comfortably and complacently down here on earth. Their past actions and how they affect the whole community apparently bothers them not at all; but consider – whatever a man soweth in laziness, in complacency, in indifference to the sufferings of others, he will experience himself. Perhaps not in this incarnation, perhaps not in the spirit world during his soul's period of rest, or in the intermediary state between one life and another; but as sure as night follows day, men nations and races meet that which they have meted out to others either by active evil or cruelty through neglect, which latter might be called inactive cruelty. A vast total of suffering results from man's inaction, because of men and women not being sufficiently interested in the welfare of others.

Through the suffering which the soul is forced to meet at some time, in some life, it eventually learns to feel for the troubles of others. Through such feeling, its imagination is awakened. Because so great a lack of imagination exists, the only way that the soul can learn to understand other is for that soul to undergo similar experiences. The child does not know that fire burns until it has itself received a burn. Then it will not forget.

This is the answer to the many who ask, Why? Why? Why? what have I done that this trouble should come to me? All we can reply is that we have either done something, refrained from or needlessly neglected some opportunity to serve or to express kindness to our fellow men. This is why the suffering came. You will ask then, what is the good of it all? protesting that because you cannot remember what happened so long ago, the suffering fails in its object. To which we answer that if your physical brain cannot remember, your deeper consciousness knows well that it has earned the experience.

## **God-given Opportunity**

But perhaps your experience may not necessarily result from either action or inaction, but because of neglect of opportunity. This is a strange saying, but suffering and disappointment often offer opportunity to the soul.

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Once the soul knows this it will accept its lesson with humility, will not question and will not demand to know why. By its quality of consciousness gained it has either repaid a debt or earned the opportunity to expand.

Do you not see what such an understanding of life's principles as this means to men and women? It means an inward peace, it means assured happiness deep within; it means complete trust and faith in God's love and God's wisdom, in the wise laws which control the universe, and which control the life of man; which commenced with the birth of the soul aeons ago and come to fruition when the soul stands forth, a perfect God-man. Brethren, we tell you that reincarnation is no weary round of birth and earth. After touching the high spheres of light and glory, an inexorable law does not force the reluctant soul back to the dull, drab conditions of physical life. No: something far more beautiful happens. The soul after death passes onward into a state of light and peace and there is able to review itself. Do you know what the soul instinctively yearns for when it sees its past in due perspective? It cries, 'Oh, my God, for another chance! I will do better next time'. Is not this logical? How few of us fail to look back over our years and say that if only we had our time over again what different lives we would lead! God in His mercy offers such another opportunity to the soul.

## **The Diver's Suit**

The soul when descending leaves in the heaven world a higher part of itself. Every mortal man and woman has that higher self, which continues to dwell in the higher spheres. The influence of that higher self comes through sometimes in the voice of conscience, or that aspiration which rises at moments to spiritual ecstasy.

The little or the mortal self comes back as a worker, much as a diver descends into the ocean depths; and like the diver comes down clothed – uncomfortably and not very beautifully sometimes, so far as outer appearances are concerned. Inside the diver's dress is probably a kind genial soul. We all come back to earth in our diver's suit. If we could once see the inside self of our brothers and sisters, what a different attitude of mind we would adopt! We do not see this, however, until we have until we have attained the quality of consciousness in ourselves which reveals not the outside cover, but the man inside. The purpose of our descent into the bed of the ocean is to gather treasure, which some people call experience. At death we take our treasure (great or small) back with us to the higher self, to that temple which we are building in the heavens. In the old Masonic phrasing, 'the soul comes forth to labour on the earth; but it returns to its true home, to its true self for refreshment; then again it returns to labour'.

This ancient teaching is a profound truth. Its acceptance should add much beauty to life, bring to you all the encouragement and an inward happiness; because you will then know that however simple, however limited your life may be, everything is worthwhile; because life provides you with opportunities to grow, to be educated, to continually develop this glorious quality of soul-consciousness which will eventually reveal truth and God. So we return to our task, which is to live fully and freely. If any memory of our past lives help us to gain this

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quality of consciousness, to climb faster and higher, that memory is worthwhile; but if not, do not probe or worry about it. Life's whole purpose is to increase the consciousness of God's love, God's beauty, God's laws.

So, my friends, peace be with you. Joy fill your hearts, for the mists will roll away and you will understand and enter into the glories of heaven.

God bless you, every one. God bless you all.

*The search matches with either words and phrases, which appear in the text, or the following 'key' words and phrases, which are similar in meaning to those in the document:*

*rebirth, resurrection, born again, path of the soul, mindfulness, calm, pain, punishment, enlightenment, illumination*

