

A copy of a letter written by E. C. G.--- April 1st, 1916, and read before the Washington, D. C., Baha'i Assembly, April 16, 1916.

ALLAH'O'ABHA!

My dear B.---

May the Abha greetings find you in good health and spirits. Your kind letter of March 4th was duly received and your questions therein carefully considered. Since the information in these answers are of such general interest I thought it best to make this an "open letter" and so informed you last week. In this manner others beside ourselves will no doubt be benefitted.

Yes, there is a growing misconception among the Friends that the term "Reincarnation" and "Return" mean the same thing, when in fact they do not. Abdul Baha utilized the word "Return" for the first time in 1899, when we were discussing the theory of reincarnation in Aoca, in order that "The return of qualities and perfections" might be distinguished from the erroneous theory of reincarnation, in its intent and purpose in explaining certain progressive paths in the existence of the soul or spirit of man.

In the first place when a prophet comes amongst us, especially during our time, we prove our sincere adherence and acceptance by accepting his teachings without question; forsake vain philosophies and turn to revealed Words as our guidance. We cannot take one teaching and dilute the other with it and get any where definite in clear comprehension. Then how much more ought we to accept the Words of the manifestation - that Clear Mirror of Divine guidance - when it is our good fortune to live in his day, yes, almost minute. Thus Baha'u'llah has upset many of the old and established beliefs of centuries, as accepted by philosophers, scientists and theologians. In fact it was he who wrote of evolution in nature before either Darwin or Huxley elaborated on this to the Western World.

The prophets and more so the Manifestations, have access to the Book of the Ages, the Library of the Spheres, have knowledge of sealed mysteries and convey these to man as far as he can comprehend. To these fountains of knowledge the philosophers are barred, simply because they are not revelators but mere mediators.

The theory of "reincarnation" means, briefly put, that the soul, identity, or ego of man, alternates during his destiny, in and out of a carnal body and thus acquires perfection through experiences and is thus capable of ignoring the intercession, guidance or even redemption as taught by the very prophets whom they call "Masters." By this means this theory attempts to account for the justice of God to His creatures, ignoring the words of Christ, "I will draw ye unto me."

Can this be the only process by which man's soul can attain to perfection - by reincarnation? And does God's justice to His creatures depend upon this immutable law and precision of Karma? These people say emphatically, "Yes!"

Before reincarnation was formulated, transmigration of soul was the established belief, and which was later extinguished by the reincarnation theory. Those nations were just as certain that than migration was the only possible means of ascent of man through temporary descent, as the reincarnationists believe today that such a process is the only possible manner of the soul's ascent through descent; yet none of the prophets either taught either of these tenets. Both are the deductions made by pantheistic thinkers, who would substitute natural processes for such transcendental methods as divine revelators espoused.

No one can find in the sayings of Buddha, without strained interpretations, that He taught reincarnation. The prophets and manifestations ought to know, as revelators, by what processes, whatever be the law of compensation, the soul attains to its perfections, because for the very purpose of setting straight again the path which philosophers made crooked with their ~~philos~~ sophistry, did these Holy Ones come among us to suffer a martyr's death. Baha'u'llah has written in unmistakable terms that reincarnation is not a truth, but a superstition and false belief. He knows, and that is sufficient for the time being until we can recover from our mental momentum and be in a sufficient state of faith to adjust our mentality to this new center of comprehension.

Furthermore, Abdul Baha, whose station is "The Center of His Covenant," whose title "The Interpreter of the Holy Words," etc., likewise has written and in His discourses has said clearly without interpretation or deduction, that the theory of reincarnation is not true, and that Baha'u'llah likewise so stated. I am a firm adherent of the Center of the Covenant, consequently, as his vision ranges into realms wherein I am blind, I accept, without further question, this rejection.

Excerpts from a tablet to Abdul Bahá, by Baha'u'llah. Translated by Ali Kuli Khan, about 1903.

"But concerning that which you asked about the spirit and its everlastingness after its ascension; know that it will ascend at the time of its departure until it enters the presence of God, in a form, which throughout all centuries and times, and throughout all circumstances and events of the world, will remain unchanged, but will be everlasting as the perpetuity of the Kingdom of God. and from it will appear the traces of God. His qualities providences and favors. Verily, it moves in the atmosphere of God's desires (Will) and enters into the Supreme Paradise..... and it will have fellowship with all the prophets of God and His saints and speak with them... If you ponder carefully over the teachings of the prophets, you will bear witness that there are other worlds beside this. Now if these Prophets all believed that the "worlds" of God are only this earth, then they would not put themselves in the hands of the enemies and endure such hardships and difficulties as beyond comparison."

Just here, my dear B----, Baha'u'llah says that for all eternity the spirit or soul of man remains after ascension unchanged, but goodly qualities will emanate from it. Were reincarnation true, Baha'u'llah would have written it right in this tablet in answer to the persons question. Then, too, He says there are other worlds beside this earth sphere wherein the soul of man dwells as a conscious and unfolding spirit.

This is another rejection of Karma, which allows only its working out in this world of the flesh, or in other words, the law of Karma involves a form of refined materialism as contrary to absolute materialism. Reincarnation collapses without Karma.

In another tablet revealed in Akka, to Persians, translated by Ali Kuli Khan, Baha'u'llah, in a revelation says for the essence of God:

"I was in My ancient Essence and My Everlasting Being; I foreknew My love in Thee (Baha) therefore I created thee (Baha) and laid upon thee My Image and manifested to thee My Bounty."

Excerpts from a tablet by Baha'u'llah, translated by Ali Kuli Khan, 1903.

"What you asked concerning ordinary mankind, (other than the prophets and saints), after death,.... 'If a person has insanity or other form of

illness, will his feelings and perceptions cease; and as death destroys the material composition and elements, then how can it be that after death the form of identity and feeling will be maintained, conceived or apprehended, since the material aggregation has disintegrated?'

"Know ye, that the spirit is permanent and perpetual in its action, and the feebleness of the sick person is due to preventing (accidental) causes, yet, in fact, the feebleness will never approach the spirit '(of man)'. For example when you look at the lighted lamp, if you put something before it, then the light will be prevented; yet in its sphere it is radiating clearly; but by the means of an object of prevention, its light was kept from shining forth."

"In the same manner a person, while in a diseased condition, the manifestation of the power and might of his spirit will be prevented and concealed on account of the object of prevention; but after his spirit leaves the body, it will appear with such power, might and superiority, that all ordinary comparison is impossible..... Some fruits ripen after they are plucked from the tree.Now numerous examples have been mentioned, that thou mayest understand what is desired. The Command is in the grasp of the hand of God. He bestows, He withholdeth He causes blindness at the open eyes; He does as He wills, and commands as He wishes."

If reincarnation and the law of Karma were true, then Baha'u'llah would have so stated right here and not emphatically repudiated those theories by stating that the physical or accidental malformations which interfere with the normal manifestation of the human within (or without) such a frame, do not interfere with the spirit's expression after death, hence no reincarnation is necessary in order to establish its equitable relation with the rest of human existences through the law of Karma. Now read in "The Book of Iqan," concerning the "resurrection," "Return", and "revival", pages 102 to 124, and ponder well over these concentrated wisdoms.

In another Tablet of Baha'u'llah, He says:

"Know verily, the soul which each individual possesses, will exist after all the elements are mingled into their nothingness. As the spermatozoa, after it has progressed to a certain appointed station, then God develops from it that potentiality which is hidden in it. That quality of the soul which is needed by it will be resurrected or endowed by the Word of God, and when it is later withdrawn from the body by death, God sends it in a better body or form and causes it to enter a Supreme Paradise."

It will become known later on that Abdul Baha has quoted volumes from the pen of Baha'u'llah during the past twenty years. Consequently Abdul Baha confirms the Holy Words, and by further quoting Abdul Baha, we quote both on this subject. And here I wish to refer to an interesting incident in Baha'i History, not generally known by Baha'is of recent years.

When I went to Acca on my first pilgrimage, in 1899, the theory of reincarnation had almost captured me. At that time Ib Kh., a former Baha'i teacher, was in our party. He has been won over to that theory. He had written a Baha'i (?) book in which he espoused reincarnation as Baha'i doctrine. He had taken the manuscript over with him to submit to Abdul Baha and get his sanction for publication. Abdul Baha rejected the chapter on reincarnation and also the financial scheme connected with that publication, together with the idea of such a book being published as a Baha'i text book. After discussing with Abdul Baha the theory and counter theory of reincarnation for a period of three months in the Prison

City of Akka, this Ib Kh... finally renounced the Baha'i cause and became the pronounced enemy of Abdul Baha, for no other reason than that the theory of reincarnation was rejected and he was refused permission to exploit the Friends in the manner desired.

During these discussions I was present, and remember well how vehemently and persistently Abdul Baha proclaimed reincarnation as an erroneous theory, and how he quoted from the Holy Texts of Baha'u'llah daily, such as are perhaps not yet translated. During these times Abdul Baha would make illustrations, using his hands, drawing figures in the air, as he paced up and down before us while teaching. At last we got the true idea as to the meaning of "return" then with paper and pencil we began to draw on paper the illustrations Abdul Baha had been making in the air until we got a complete diagram and one He endorsed. This illustration was later used by Mrs G... in her lectures to illustrate the "return" of qualities, powers, characteristics, functions and stations in men and women from time to time without necessarily reincarnating the soul.

Now some Friends are actually utilizing this same chart or drawing to prove that reincarnation was illustrated and taught by Abdul Baha with this diagram, when, in fact it was given us to refute it! At any event Abdul Baha, the Interpreter of the Holy Words, says that reincarnation is not true! He says that there is another reality or process by which the same results are attained in the destiny of the soul without reincarnation! Is that sufficient? And does that give us an open mind?

Now while we were discussing the pros and cons of this theory, the erstwhile wife of IbKh..... came into our party from London, and from her handwriting I here give you excerpts from a tablet translated to her and all the party present by Mirza Ali Kuli Khan who was our interpreter at the time, 1899.

"Translation of a Tablet on "Reincarnation" revealed by Abdul Baha to a Bakou (Russian) believer, Translated by Ali Kuli Khan.

"O thou servant of the Threshold of God!

"..... as to what thou hast written concerning 'Reincarnation'. Believing in reincarnation is one of the old tenets held by most Oriental nations and creeds, as well as by the Greek and Roman philosophers and wise men, the old Egyptians and the chief Assyrians. But all those sayings (theories) and superstitions are vanity in the sight of God (not true). The greatest reason produced by those who hold to reincarnation has been this; That it is necessary to the justice of God to give every one his due..... Indeed, these people have ignored the fact that had the creation been carried on in a uniform fashion (through merelaw), then how could the statement (of Baha) 'God doeth whatever He wisheth and God doeth whatever He desireth,' have been true?" (The divine Creator's intercession is thus annulled by the created.)

"Through the fact of the "REturn" is mentioned in the divine books, by this is only intended the return of the qualities, characteristics, perfections, truths, and lights of the past ages, which reappear in every age, and not the return of certain persons and souls. For example, it is said this lamp is the return of that of last night, or that the last year's flower has returned in the garden this year. In this sense the return of the individual fact, the real identity and proper being is not meant; nay, rather it is intended that the same qualities and states existing in that lamp or flower as are now seen have returned. That is the same perfections or virtues and properties which are existing in the past spring; have returned during the present spring." (Then followed 370 words along similar illustrative lines)

"Therefore, know thou that the True One possesseth invisible worlds which human mediation is unable to comprehend and the intellect of man has no power to imagine "....."

(Signed) Abdul Baha Abbas Abbas."

The Above illustration as given by Abdul Baha, is one used by Baha'u'llah many times. Now in this last paragraph lies the crux of the whole matter - after ascent, for every soul with imperfections, there are worlds upon worlds in which these souls can attain to their destiny, without returning to the Mother Earth. Whereas the ancient philosophers deemed this earth the only habitable place, and all the stars in the heavens as gods, and ~~stars~~ were called by the people "Hosts of Heaven."

The Christian people are believing in but habitable states, heaven, earth and one hell. Thus as far back as 1800, when no tablets were yet published in the English language from the pas of Baha'u'llah and Abdul Baha, the latter rejected reincarnation point blank. Consequently, whatever has appeared from His pen since then and translated, can only be made supplementary to his early teachings, though the appearance and construction of such words may seem to the contrary.

I further refer you to "Some Answered Questions," pages 152, 133, where Abdul Baha explains that when John the Baptist was called the "return of Ekias," that it was meant that the order, authority, function, courage, and particular divine office of heraldship alone had returned in John the Baptist's physical and spiritual organism, and become operative again in the world, while Elias' soul rested in the kingdom with the saints.

From and address by Abdul Baha at the Protestant Eposcopal Church of the Ascension, Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street, New York City. Rev. Percy Stickney Grant, Rector. Sunday June 2, 1912, 8 P. M.

Question: What is your belief about reincarnation?"

Abdul Baha: "The subject of reincarnation has two aspects. One is that which the Hindostanese people believe and even that is subdivided into two, - reincarnation and metempsychosis. According to one belief the soul goes and then returns at certain times in reincarnations; therefore they say that a sick person is sick because of actions in a previous incarnation and that this is retribution.

"The other school of Hindoism believes that man sometimes appears as an animal, a donkey for instance and this is retribution for past acts. I am referring to the beliefs in that country, the beliefs of the schools,

"But there is a reincarnation of the prophetic quality or attribute (not the soul of the prophet). For example, Jesus Christ speaking of John the Baptist, declared he was Elias. When John the Baptist was questioned, he said, "I am not Elias." These two statements are apparently contradictory, but in reality they do not contradict. The light is one light. The light which illumined this lamp last night is illuminating it tonight. This does not mean that the identical rays of light have reappeared, but the virtues of illumination. The light which reveals itself through the glass, reveals itself again so that we can say that the light of this evening is the light of last evening relighted. This is as regards its virtues and not as regards its former identity. This is our view of reincarnation. We believe in that which Jesus Christ and all the prophets have believed. For example, his holiness The Bab states, "I am the return of all the prophets." This is significant of the oneness of the prophetic virtue (quality), the oneness of power, the oneness of bestowal, the oneness and source of radiation, the oneness of expression, the oneness of expression, the oneness of revelation (from the Supreme Essence)."

The same arguments are used in Tablets by Abdul Baha, page 115, Vol. 1.

"Now as to what thou asked concerning the spirit (identity) and its 'return' to this world....."

In this same book of Tablets, page 138,

"Know that the 'return' of Christ for a second time, do not mean what the people believe, but signifieth the one to come after Him.***.... in as much as in this sense 'Christ' is an expression of the divine reality (authority), the simple essence and heavenly entity which hath no beginning or ending and It (that essence) hath appearances, arising and manifestation and setting in each of the cycles."

This would mean that the "Christ Essence" of the quality of self sacrifice, appears as such a quality in each of the cycles, for does not every prophet need to sacrifice himself to His Lordly mission?

If reincarnation is not true, then how do we account for recurrent memory which certain people claim to possess in a definite degree?

To my mind Swedenberg answers the entire reincarnation philosophy in his volumn "Heaven and Hell", page 155, paragraph 25678 He says:

"It is not allowed any angel or spirit to speak with man from his own memory. but only from the man's memories; for angels have memory as well as men. If a spirit should speak with a man from its own memory, the man would not know but that the spirit's thoughts were his own, when they are not. It would be like the seeming recollection of a thing which man never heard of or saw." (Thus is recurrent memory explained). "Hence the opinion held by some of the ancients that after some thousands of years they should return into their former life, and into all its acts, and that indeed they actually had so returned. They believed so, because occasionally there occurred to them, as it were, a recollection of things which yet they never saw or heard (here). This appearance was produced by an influx of the spirit's memory into the ideas of man's thoughts."

Thus wrote Emanuel Swedenberg 178 years ago, and about 125 years before this ancient error of reincarnation was resurrected and injected into modern thought.

We can readily find proof of this transmissibility of "qualities" in chemist chemistry in the study of homeopathy. For over one hundred years physicians the world over have demonstrated that any remedial drug in crude form will transmit its remedial principle to either sugar, water or alcohol, through friction, and this can be carried on to a point where in an ounce of such "potencialized" sugar, water or alcohol, not one atom of the original drug is to found, and yet its curative properties found to be more powerful by far, than when in the original drug form. In other words, sugar, water or alcohol, by mere contact assimilate a dynamic property, quality or virtue or substance and retain it for twenty or more years, after every trace of the chemical matter has been destroyed. I have demonstrated this by experiments a thousand times during the past twenty-five years. Again the corn will never form in the cob unless pollen from the corn flower falls upon the corn silk. The pollen is not absorbed, it is simply a vibration that becomes active upon the silken chords, or a "quality" so to speak. The flowers could never evolve in double petals and variety of color unless the bees carried pollen among them. The pollen is not absorbed to the seed, but only a dynamic quality is transmitted which manifests in the later flower. Then why is it not possible that the good angels of "qualities" do come unto us in a state of the fetus, child, or even man, and transmit a dynamic (spiritual) quality to our own assimilative, human spirit? And it may be possible

by this process of divine bounty such qualities return in man age after age. Even when we read the holy words of Baha'u'llah or Abdul Baha, a "quality" of spirit and character is transmitted to our being, such as none can deny.

In the "Iron" theory of Heradity under the caption of the Mendalio Theory in the Encyclopedia Britannica, we find a demonstration in vegetable and animal life wherein, after a certain number of crossings, the same qualities, characteristics, temperaments, color and spots recur in mathematical precision. That one versed in this experiment can forestall exactly when certain peas, beans, rats, mice, guinea pigs, etc., will show forth the same physical and temperamental qualities at a time when a certain number of crossings have been reached. This has been ~~repeated~~ demonstrated on the U. S. Animal Experimental Farm near Washington, D. C.

Here we find that even in the vegetable and animal worlds there recur certain qualities in conformity to definite cycles, by a simple process of intermixture of breed and polled. Reincarnation does not enter into this process. yet the same results occur it would be claimed by that philosophy.

There seems to be an inherent quality in the organisms of chemical, vegetable and animal life, which is a more "essence" or a "vibration" which sets into like activity a susceptible dynamic property contained in various forms of matter. In man this dynamic property can be designated as his soul or spirit, and this likewise may be put into a higher attune by coming in contact with an essence of greater potency. In some manner God controls such "returnings" since they re-manifest in definite cycles among men.

No! indeed. "Reincarnation" and "return" do not infer nor mean the same thing, at all. No glossing of interpretation can make them appear alike in the face of rejection by the Two Great Luminaries who say "No!" My light is only a reflected light from the Bahai Sun, and even then upon a dusty mirror, hence it is not for me to be presumptuous and account for this and for that phenomena as long as one can ask the "Interpreter of Divine Mysteries concerning spiritual problems.

Now, my dear brother in El Abha, with love, deep Baha'i love for you I close.

I. H. N.

E. C. Getsinger.