

*The elect soul is punished
through martyrdom*



Higher Manas is punished through martyrdom, while its lower counterpart is purified by proper chastisement.

From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTARY ON THE PISTIS SOPHIA) XIII pp. 78-81.

[PS 248] “. . . And they have been cleansing them (*sc.*, those of the Mixture) not of themselves, but of compulsion, according to the Regulation of One and the Same Ineffable. Neither have they at all undergone Sufferings, nor Changes in the Regions, nor have they flayed themselves at all, nor poured themselves into different Bodies (1), nor have they been in any Affliction.”

(1) *Metagizein* (*Μεταγγιζεν*): to pour from one vessel into another. *Metangismos* was the technical term for metempsychosis or reincarnation among the Pythagoreans. C.W. King, however, translates this passage: “nor transformed themselves into various *figures*”; but *sōmata* are animal bodies and nothing else, and *metagizein* and *metangismos* are technical terms, used only in connection with the idea of reincarnation, and frequently employed in *Pistis-Sophia* by Schwartze to denote rebirth. It is, therefore, difficult to understand how the author of *The Gnostics and their Remains* missed the correct translation.

Augustine¹ copying from Philaster, gives the name of *Metangismonitae* to a certain sect of the Heretics who, he avers, asserted that the Son was in the Father, as one vessel (*ageion*) in another. There is, however, no evidence to support this statement.

The many striking and instructive passages referring to reincarnation from the writings and teachings of the Gnostic Heresiarchs have yet to be collected.

As an example, we take one from Clemens Alexandrinus,² who quoted from Basilides in order to refute him as he imagined. Basilides, he says averred that the soul was punished in this life for sins that it had previously committed in another. The *elect soul* was honourably punished through martyrdom, but the *other* was purified by its proper chastisement. The key of Theosophy at once unlocks the mystery by its teachings as to the Higher and Lower Manas, the divine Individuality and the perishable Personality. For the Higher Ego is indeed the Sacrificial Victim, that suffers an honourable “martyrdom”; and “the other” is the Lower Manas that must be punished by its “proper chastisement.”

¹ [Aurelius, St., 354-429 B.C.]

² *Stromata*, ib. iv, ch. xii

The late E.D. Walker, in the eighth chapter of his book on *Reincarnation*,¹ has given a brief sketch to show that it was the prevailing creed in the first centuries of Christianity, and those who are interested in the subject should certainly read this chapter, if they have not done so already. An authoritative volume, however, has yet to be written on the subject, supported by the citation of the innumerable passages that are to be found in the writings of the Gnostics, Neo-Platonists and early Church Fathers.²

The doctrines of the *Pistis-Sophia* are in many essentials identical with Egyptian teachings, especially with regard to the mysteries of life and death and of reincarnation. What the learned of the Egyptians taught on these heads we do not as yet know, for such teaching formed part of the instruction of the Mysteries. And even exoterically we are dependent to a large extent on what Greek and Roman writers have to tell us of the Egyptians rather than on the Egyptians themselves. Moreover, such writers, if they were initiated, had their tongues tied by the oath of secrecy; and if uninitiated, could only re-echo the popular beliefs at best, and in general wove in their own glosses and misconceptions even of this distorted shadow of the truth. Consequently no subject remains in greater obscurity for our scholars.

Wilkinson³ throws no light on the subject, although he is useful for the finding of a few references. Let us turn to the first of them, Herodotus.⁴

The Egyptians are the first who said that the *psyche* of man is immortal, and that when the body (*sōma*) is destroyed, it always enters into some *other* living one (*zōon*), and after having completed the cycle of all earthy, watery, and airy (bodies), it enters again into the body of a man, and this cycle takes it 3,000 years to accomplish.

Again, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, translated by Thomas Taylor,⁵ we read:

But no soul will return to its pristine condition till the expiration of 10,000 years, since it will not recover the use of its *wings* until that period, except it be the soul of *one who has philosophised sincerely*, or, together with philosophy, has loved beautiful forms. These, indeed, in the *third period* of 1,000 years, if they have *thrice* chosen this mode of life in succession . . . shall in the 3,000th year *fly away* to their pristine abode; but other souls being arrived at the end of their first life shall be judged. And of those who are judged, some, proceeding to a subterraneous place of judgment [*Kāmaloka*], shall there sustain the punishments they have deserved; but others, in consequence of a favourable judgment, being elevated into a certain celestial place [*Devachan*], shall pass their time in a manner becoming the life they have lived in a human shape. And in the 1,000th year, both the kinds of those who have been judged, returning to

¹ [*Reincarnation; A study of Forgotten Truth*. New York: University Books, 1965 reprint.] Full text of the 1st ed. of 1888 in our Secret Doctrine's Third Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.

² [Today's students may consult S.L. Cranston and J. Head's *Reincarnation, The Phoenix Fire Mystery*. New York: Crown, 1977.]

³ *Ancient Egyptians*, Vol. V, p. 440, 3rd ed.

⁴ *Euterpe*, ch. 123

⁵ p. 325

the lot and election of a second life, shall each of them receive a life agreeable to his desire. Here also the human soul shall pass into the life of a beast; and from that of a beast again into that of a man. For the soul that has never perceived the truth cannot pass into the human form.

These two passages throw considerable light on one another, and, with the help of Theosophical teachings, become understandable, in spite of the innumerable blinds which they contain. The figures refer to certain cycles, based on the root numbers, 3, 7, 10, and have to do with Rounds, Races, individual births, monadic evolution, *etc.*, *etc.*

But the soul is of two kinds, the Manasic and Kāmic, and herein is the greatest blind. The former goes to “a certain celestial place,” and the latter to “a subterranean place.” It is the *latter only* that goes through the “cycle” which Herodotus speaks of.

Wilkinson, therefore, is only useful for the two references, the first of which has been retranslated and the second retained *verbatim*, as it is Taylor's translation. He, however, adds one further item of interest, *viz*:

The doctrine of transmigration was also admitted by the Pharisees; their belief according to Josephus,¹ being “that all souls were incorruptible; but that those of good men were only removed into other bodies, and that those of the bad were subject to eternal punishment.”



“Transmigration, Reincarnation, Gilgulim,” in our Confusing Words Series.

¹ Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum* ii, 8, 14