

Ancient Readings

Note: In the cases where a piece does not have a title I have identified how it can be used. Such entries are prepeneded with "Usage:"

A Funeral Service

That which came from the earth
Has returned to the earth.

That which belonged to the spirit
Has returned to the Ancient Ones.

The wheel turns.

That which belongs to fellowship and love —
That which belongs to the circle —
Remains with us.

Nothing is final.
No farewell is the last farewell.
The wheel turns
And we who remain behind
Know that one day we will once again
Share the bread and wine with our brother.

Isha Upanishad 17

Hinduism

Now my breath, and spirit goes to the Immortal,
and this body ends in ashes;
OM. O Mind! remember. Remember the deeds.
Remember the actions.

Seicho-no-Ie

Nectarean Shower of Holy Doctrines

Man's real nature is primarily spiritual life,
which weaves its threads of mind to build a cocoon of flesh, encloses its own soul in the cocoon,

And for the first time, the spirit becomes the flesh.
Understand this clearly: The cocoon is not the
silkworm;

In the same way, the physical body is not man
but merely man's cocoon.

Just as the silkworm will break out of its
cocoon and fly free,

So, too, will man break out of his body-cocoon
and ascend to the spiritual world when his
time is come.

Never think that the death of the physical
body is the death of man.

Since man is life, he will never know death.

Birago Diop, Mali Poem
African Traditional Religions

Those who are dead are never gone:
they are there in the thickening shadow.
The dead are not under the earth;
they are there in the tree that rustles,
they are in the wood that groans,
they are in the water that runs,
they are in the water that sleeps,
they are in the hut, they are in the crowd,
the dead are not dead.

Those who are dead are never gone:
they are in the breast of the woman,
they are in the child who is wailing,
and in the firebrand that flames.
The dead are not under the earth:
they are in the fire that is dying,
they are in the grasses that weep,
they are in the whimpering rocks,
they are in the forest, they are in the house,
the dead are not dead.

Bhagavad Gita 2.19-25
Hindusim

One man believes he is the slayer, another believes he is the slain. Both are ignorant; there is neither slayer nor slain. You were never born; you will never die. You have never changed; you can never change. Unborn, eternal, immutable, immemorial, you do not die when the body dies. Realizing that which is indestructible, eternal, unborn, and unchanging, how can you slay or cause another to be slain?

As a man abandons his worn-out clothes and acquires new ones, so when the body is worn out a new one is acquired by the Self, who lives within.

The Self cannot be pierced with weapons or burned with fire, water cannot wet it, nor can the wind dry it. The Self cannot be pierced or burned, made wet or dry. It is everlasting and infinite, standing on the motionless foundation of eternity. The Self is unmanifested, beyond all thought, beyond all change. Knowing this, you should not grieve.

Chunag Tzu 23
Taoism

Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end. There is existence without limitation; there is continuity without a starting point. Existence without limitation is space. Continuity without a starting point is time. There is birth, there is death, there is issuing forth, there is entering in. That through which one passes in and out without seeing its form, that is the Portal of God.

Chuang Tzu 2
Taoism

How do I know that the love of life is not a delusion? How do I know that he who is afraid of death is not like a man who left his home as a youth and forgot to return? Lady Li, was the daughter of the border warden of Ai. When she was first taken captive and brought to the state of Chin, she wept until the bosom of her robe was drenched with tears. But later, when she went to live in the royal palace, shared with the king his luxurious couch and sumptuous food, she regretted that she had wept. How do I know that the dead do not repent of their former craving for life? Those who dream of a merry drinking party may the next morning wail and weep. Those

who who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning go off gaily to hunt. While they dream they do not know that they are dreaming. In their dream, they may even try to interpret their dream. Only when they have awoken do they begin to know that they have dreamed. By and by comes the great awakening, and then we shall know that it has all be a great dream.

Once upon a time, Chuang Tzu dreamed that he was a butterfly, a butterfly fluttering about, enjoying itself. It did not know that it was Chuang Tzu. Suddenly he awoke with a start and he was Chuang Tzu again. But he did not know whether he was Chuang Tzu who had dreamed that he was a butterfly, or whether he was butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang Tzu. Between Chuang Tzu and the butterfly there must be some distinction. This is what is called the transformation of things.

Igbo Song (Nigeria)
African Traditinal Religions

We are on a market trip on earth:
Whether we fill our baskets or not,
Once the time is up, we go home.

Usage: Especially appropriate for a Neo-Pagan
by Praxilla of Sicyon (Ancient Greece)

Loveliest of what I leave behind is the sunlight,
and loveliest after that the shining stars and the moon's face,
but also cucumbers that are ripe, and pears, and apples.

Lament the Flutes for Tammuz
from The Golden Bough (Babylonian)

At his vanishing away she lifts up a lament,
'Oh my child!' at his vanishing away she lifts up a lament;
'My Damu!' at his vanishing away she lifts up a lament.
'My enchanter and priest!' at his vanishing away she lifts up a lament,
At the shining red cedar, rooted in a spacious place,
In Eanna, above and below, she lifts up a lament.

Like the lament that a house lifts up for its master, lifts she up a lament,
Like the lament that a city lifts up for its lord, lifts she up a lament.
Her lament is the lament for a herb that grows not in the bed,
Her lament is the lament for the corn that grows not in the ear.
Her chamber is a possession that brings forth not a possession,
a weary woman, a weary child, far spent.
Her lament is for a great river where no willows grow,
Her lament is for a field, where corn and herbs grow not.
Her lament is for a pool, where fishes grow not
Her lament is for a thicket of reeds, where no reeds grow.
Her lament is for woods, where tamarisks grow not.
Her lament is for a wilderness, where no cypresses grow.
Her lament is for the depth of a garden of trees, where honey and wine grow not.
Her lament is for meadows, where no plants grow.
Her lament is for a palace, where length of life grows not.