

**Spiritual Science**



**Deep Dive Article**

# Reincarnation in the Bible

The Long Forgotten Doctrine

Source: the Bible

Does it make any ultimate difference in the religious life whether or not one believes in reincarnation? I believe there are much greater priorities in a spiritual life than whether one does or does not accept a particular theological tenet. Those who are still irresolute on the question of reincarnation, or indeed those who are emphatically resolute in one direction or another, possess no special advantage before God. The only possible advantage that the reincarnationist may claim over those who are unresolved or opposed is that he has a reasonable and consistent theory to account for the prenatal and postmortem life of the soul as well as an explanation for the apparent absurdities in the dispensation of divine justice. The following are excerpts from two great books on the subject. The first is Reincarnation for the Christian by Quincy Howe Jr. The other is Reincarnation: The Missing Link in Christianity by Elizabeth Clair Prophet. SRC: <http://reluctant-messenger.com/origen.html>

## The controversy

During the period from A.D. 250 to 553 controversy raged, at least intermittently, around the name of Origen, and from this controversy emerged the major objections that orthodox Christianity raises against reincarnation. Origen of Alexandria, one of Christianity's greatest systematic theologians, was a believer in reincarnation.

Origen was a person devoted to scriptural authority, a scourge to the enemies of the church, and a martyr for the faith. He was the spiritual teacher of a large and grateful posterity and yet his teachings were declared heresy in 553. The debates and controversies that flared up around his teachings are in fact the record of reincarnation in the church.

The case against Origen grew by fits and starts from about A.D. 300 (fifty years after his death) until 553. There were writers of great eminence among his critics as well as some rather obscure ecclesiasts. They included Methodius of Olympus, Eppiphanius of Salamis, Theophilus, Bishop of Jerusalem, Jerome, and the Emperor Justinian. The first of these, Methodius of Olympus, was a bishop in Greece and died a martyr's death in the year 311. He and Peter of Alexandria, whose works are almost entirely lost, represent the first wave of anti-Origenism. They were concerned chiefly with the preexistence of souls and Origen's notions about

the resurrection of the dead. Another more powerful current against Origenism arose about a century later. The principals were Ephiphanius of Salamis, Theophilus of Alexandria, and Jerome.

From about 395 to 403 Origen became the subject of heated debate throughout Christendom. These three ecclesiasts applied much energy and thought in search of questionable doctrine in Origen. Again the controversy flared up around 535, and in the wake of this the Emperor Justinian composed a tract against Origen in 543, proposing nine anathemas against "On First Principles", Origen's chief theological work. Origen was finally officially condemned in the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, when fifteen anathemas were charged against him.

The critics of Origen attacked him on individual points, and thus did not create a systematic theology to oppose him. Nonetheless, one can glean from their writings five major points that Christianity has raised against reincarnation:

- (1) It seems to minimize Christian salvation.
- (2) It is in conflict with the resurrection of the body.
- (3) It creates an unnatural separation between body and soul.
- (4) It is built on a much too speculative use of Christian scriptures.
- (5) There is no recollection of previous lives.

Any discussion of these points will be greatly clarified by a preliminary look at Origen's system. Although it is of course impossible to do justice in a few pages to a thinker as subtle and profound as Origen, some of the distinctive aspects of his thought can be summarized.

## **The doctrine itself**

Looking at the sequence of creation from its inception to its conclusion, one could summarize Origen's theological system as follows: Originally all beings existed as pure mind on an ideational or thought level. Humans, angels, and heavenly bodies lacked incarnate existence and had their being only as ideas. This is a very natural view for anyone like Origen who was trained in both Christian and Platonic thought. Since there is no account in the scriptures of what preceded creation, it seemed perfectly natural to Origen to appeal to Plato for his answers.

God, for the Platonist, is pure intelligence and all things were reconciled with God before creation - an assumption which scripture does not appear to contradict. Then as the process of the fall began, individual beings became weary of their union with God and chose to defect or grow cold in their divine ardor. As the mind became cool toward God, it made the first step down in its fall and became soul. The soul, now already once removed from its original state, continued with its defection to the point of taking on a body. This, as we know from Platonism, is indeed a degradation, for the highest type of manifestation is on the mental level and the lowest is on the physical.

Such an account of man's fall does not mean that Origen rejected Genesis. It only means that he was willing to allow for allegorical interpretation; thus Eden is not necessarily spatially located, but is a cosmic and metaphysical event wherein pure disincarnate idea became fettered to physical matter. What was essential for Christianity, as Origen perceived, is that the fall be voluntary and result in a degree of estrangement from God.

Where there is a fall, there must follow the drama of reconciliation. Love is one of God's qualities, as Origen himself acknowledged, and from this it follows that God will take an interest in the redemption of his creatures. For Origen, this means that after the drama of incarnation the soul assumes once again its identity as mind and recovers its ardor for God.

It was to hasten this evolution that in the fullness of time God sent the Christ. The Christ of Origen was the Incarnate Word (he was also the only being that did not grow cold toward God), and he came both as a mediator and as an incarnate image of God's goodness. By allowing the wisdom and light of God to shine in one's life through the inspiration of Christ, the individual soul could swiftly regain its ardor for God, leave behind the burden of the body, and regain complete reconciliation with God. In fact, said Origen, much to the outrage of his critics, the extent and power of God's love is so great that eventually all things will be restored to him, even Satan and his legions.

Since the soul's tenancy of any given body is but one of many episodes in its journey from God and back again, the doctrine of reincarnation is implicit. As for the resurrection of the body, Origen created a tempest of controversy by insisting that the physical body wastes away and returns to dust, while the resurrection takes on a spiritual or transformed body. This is of course handy for the reincarnationist, for it means that the

resurrected body either can be the summation and climax of all the physical bodies that came before or indeed may bear no resemblance at all to the many physical bodies.

There will come a time when the great defection from God that initiated physical creation will come to an end. All things, both heavenly bodies and human souls, will be so pure and ardent in their love for God that physical existence will no longer be necessary. The entire cohesion of creation will come apart, for matter will be superfluous. Then, to cite one of Origen's favorite passages, all things will be made subject to God and God will be "all in all." ( 1 Cor 15:28 ) This restoration of all things proposed by Origen gave offense in later centuries. It seemed quite sensible to Origen that anything that defects from God must eventually be brought back to him. As he triumphantly affirmed at the end of his "On First Principles", men are the "blood brothers" of God himself and cannot stay away forever.

## **Scriptural support for reincarnation**

There are many Bible verses which are suggestive of reincarnation. One episode in particular from the healing miracles of Christ seems to point to reincarnation:

"And as he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who has sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but the works of God were to be made manifest in him.'" (John 9:1)

The disciples ask the Lord if the man himself could have committed the sin that led to his blindness. Given the fact that the man has been blind from birth, we are confronted with a provocative question. When could he have made such transgressions as to make him blind at birth? The only conceivable answer is in some prenatal state. The question as posed by the disciples explicitly presupposes prenatal existence. It will also be noted that Christ says nothing to dispel or correct the presupposition. Here is incontrovertible support for a doctrine of human preexistence.

Also very suggestive of reincarnation is the episode where Jesus identifies John the Baptist as Elijah.

"For all the prophets and the law have prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who was to come." (Matthew 11:13-14)

"And the disciples asked him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' But he answered them and said, 'Elijah indeed is to come and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also shall the Son of Man suffer at their hand.' Then the disciples understood that he had spoken of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:10-13)

Here again is a clear statement of preexistence. Despite the edict of the Emperor Justinian and the counter reaction to Origen, there is firm and explicit testimony for preexistence in both the Old and the New Testament. Indeed, the ban against Origen notwithstanding, contemporary Christian scholarship acknowledges preexistence as one of the elements of Judeo-Christian theology.

As for the John the Baptist-Elijah episode, there can be little question as to its purpose. By identifying the Baptist as Elijah, Jesus is identifying himself as the Messiah. Throughout the gospel narrative there are explicit references to the signs that will precede the Messiah.

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi 4:5)

This is one of the many messianic promises of the Old Testament. One of the signs that the true Messiah has come, according to this passage from Malachi, is that he be preceded by a forerunner, by Elijah.

Although the Bible also contains other reincarnational passages, these Elijah-John passages constitute clear proof of reincarnation:

1. The Old Testament prophesied that Elijah himself (not someone "like" him or someone "similar" to him, but Elijah himself) would return before the advent of the Messiah.
2. Jesus declared that John the Baptist was Elijah who had returned, stating bluntly "Elijah has come".

Now, based on these passages alone, either (A) or (B) must be true:

- A. John the Baptist was Elijah himself, meaning that Elijah had reincarnated. If this is true, then reincarnation must belong in Christian theology, and the West's entire doctrinal interpretation of "Life After

Death" in general, and the "Last Day Resurrection" in particular, must be radically revised, or...

B. John the Baptist was not Elijah himself, meaning that Elijah himself had not returned. If this is so, then either:

A. The Old Testament prophecy about Elijah returning before the Messiah failed to come to pass (meaning that Biblical prophecy is fallible), OR

B. Jesus was not the Messiah.

Basically, it comes down to this simple question: What do you want to believe? One of the following A, B, or C, must logically be true:

- A. Reincarnation is true, or
- B. Jesus was not the Messiah, or
- C. The prophecies of the Bible are unreliable.

As surely as two and two make four, one of the above must be true. At any rate, the passage in which Jesus says in no uncertain terms that John was Elijah is "overt" and direct:

"But I tell you, Elijah has come." (Mark 9:13)

The following verse is used to refute the John the Baptist/Elijah reincarnation connection. The Bible tells us that John the Baptist possessed,

"... the spirit and power of Elijah." (Luke 1:17)

Those who refute this reincarnation connection say that John the Baptist merely came in the spirit and power of Elijah. However, this is a perfect description of reincarnation: the spirit and power. This is reincarnation - the reincarnation of the spirit. The Bible itself states that John the Baptist possessed the spirit that had previously lived in, and as, the man Elijah - not his physical being and memory, but his spirit.

John carried Elijah's living spirit, but not his physical memory. And since John did not possess Elijah's physical memory, he did not possess the memories of being the man Elijah. Thus, John the Baptist denied being Elijah when asked:



They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (John 1:21-27)

But Jesus knew better, and said so in the plainest words possible:

"This is the one ... there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.... And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 11:11-15).

It comes down to this: Jesus said John was Elijah, and John said he wasn't. Which of the two is to be believed - Jesus or John?

There is a prophecy in the Book of Revelation concerning the days before the second coming of Christ. Two prophets are predicted to appear at this time working the same miracles and performing the same ministries as those of Elijah and Moses.

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want." (Revelation 11:3-6)

While the verses in Revelation do not specifically identify the two prophets to come as Elijah and Moses, it strongly suggests that it is them. If Elijah and Moses are to "rise" again before the second coming of Christ, then it is clear the only possible way for them to do so is through reincarnation. After the death of John the Baptist, whom Jesus identified as Elijah, Elijah appears again along with Moses at the Mount of Transfiguration:

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:1-13)

The scriptures strongly suggest a connection between Elijah and Moses with the ministries of Jesus. Since Jesus already identified Elijah as appearing during his first ministry, it is not hard to conclude that Elijah will appear again at Jesus' second coming. Even the Old Testament suggests this will be the case:

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi 4:5)

This is one of the many messianic promises of the Old Testament. It was fulfilled during Jesus' first coming and there is reason to believe it will happen again during Jesus' second coming.

Due to the condemnation of reincarnation by church authorities some 500 years after Jesus left the scene, this doctrine has become an alien, even enemy concept to the Judeo-Christian West. However, it is reasonably certain that reincarnation was not an alien concept to the people Jesus preached to, nor, to Jesus himself. As a natural geographic crossroads, the land of Israel enjoyed a strong and steady flow of both foreign travelers and foreign ideas; the doctrine of rebirth is not only likely to have been a familiar concept in 1st century Israel, but actually seems to have been

widely considered a distinct possibility. Even though the idea later became a heresy to the people of the Christian Empire, during the life of Jesus, at least, reincarnation was an open question in the minds of many.

From time to time in Jewish history, there had been an insistent belief that their prophets were reborn. The Samaritans believed that Adam had reincarnated as Seth, then Noah, Abraham, and even Moses. Christ's countrymen seem to have thought of the doctrine of reincarnation as an intriguing, if unproven theory; the Israelites were aware, of course, that their sacred scriptures didn't specifically endorse this theory, but, since they didn't condemn it either, the general population apparently felt it best to keep an open mind about the whole idea. To the chagrin of traditional Christian doctrine, it was apparently actually rather common for Christ's contemporaries to innocently wonder aloud if Jesus himself was the reincarnation of some earlier prophet:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:14)

His disciples replied:

"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Considering such widespread conjecture about the doctrine of reincarnation in 1st century Israel, the people of his own time undoubtedly assumed Jesus had been openly promoting this doctrine when he claimed that the man now known as John the Baptist was the same man who centuries earlier had been the famous prophet Elijah.

Confronted by these rumors that His countrymen believed in reincarnation, did Jesus take this opportunity to deny and refute this doctrine? No. Instead, He made statements that seem to support reincarnation.

Jesus was sometimes taken to be a reincarnation of one of the prophets. An example of this is when Jesus asked:

"Whom do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)

The consensus of opinion seems to have been that He was a reincarnation of either John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the Old Testament prophets. It is hard to see how Jesus could have been a reincarnation of the prophet by whom He was baptized, but that has not deterred these believers in reincarnation around Jesus.

Another Bible verse has Paul discussing the process of "resurrection" (i.e. reincarnation):

"But someone may ask, 'How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?' How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:35-44).

Another verse suggestive of reincarnation can be found when Jesus declares the following to the believers in the Church of Philadelphia:

"Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it." (Revelation 3:12)

Jesus is stating that people were once inhabitants of the temple of God. This is strongly suggestive of preexistence and reincarnation. As soon as the person overcomes (the world) the person becomes a permanent inhabitant of this temple and never again has to leave it. The flip-side to this is that those who do not overcome must leave this temple of God only to return when they overcome the world.

Another verse in the Book of Revelation suggests reincarnation:

"She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne." (Revelation 12:5)

This verse describes the birth of a child who is taken to heaven after birth. The interesting aspect is that this child is to rule all the nations with an iron scepter. Because the child was taken to heaven after birth, reincarnation is the only way the child can return to the world in order to grow up and "rule all nations". Although Revelations is mostly symbolic and is often quite abstract, this verse implies the ability to incarnate more than once.

There is another reference to reincarnation in the gospels; an indirect reference, yet an unmistakable one. In all three of the synoptic gospels, Jesus promised that anyone leaving their homes, wives, mothers, fathers, children, or farms to follow him would personally receive hundreds more such homes, families, and so on in the future. Jesus said:

"No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or wife or children or land for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age - homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields ... and in the age to come, eternal life." (Mark 10:29-30)

Outside of the doctrine of reincarnation it's difficult to imagine how such a promise could be fulfilled. In one lifetime, one can only have a single set of real parents, and no one seriously proposes that each of the 70 original disciples, who actually did leave their homes and families, ever received as compensation a hundred wives, a hundred fields, and so on. Either this statement of Jesus' occurred when he was waxing so poetic as to allow a falsehood to pass his lips, or he was making a promise that only many reincarnations could fulfill.

The following passage in the Book of Hebrews, especially the italicized sentence, is a clear statement of the concept of reincarnation.

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Indeed the reincarnationist can even find scriptural support for personal disincarnate preexistence. Origen took the following Bible verse as proof of preexistence:

"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in his sight and love." (Ephesians 1:4)

Jerome, who is just as uncomfortable as Justinian about preexistence, interprets the passage to mean that we preexisted, not in distinct disincarnate form, but simply in the mind of God (Against Rufinus 1.22), and from this throng of thoughts God chose the elect before the creation of the world. The distinction is indeed a fine one, for Jerome is asking us to distinguish between that which exists as a soul and that which exists as a thought. What is illuminating for the reincarnationist is that this passage from Ephesians offers very explicit scriptural testimony for individual preexistence.

Malachi 1:2-3 and Romans 9:11-13 both state that God loved Jacob, but hate Esau even before they were born. These verses are highly suggestive of the pre-existence of Esau, a necessary tenet associated with reincarnation.

The same concept of pre-existence can also be found in the following Bible verse:

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58)

Other words uttered by Christ are suggestive of reincarnation. In the gospels, Jesus reveals information about His return and who will witness it. Several times, He has mentioned that some people alive during His day will be around when He returns. One example is when Jesus gave His Olivet Discourse about His second coming. His disciples ask about His return and inquire as to the signs that would proceed His return. After Jesus reveals the signs of His coming, He states,

"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." (Matthew 24:34).

It can be argued that Jesus is pointing to a time in the future when those around Him inquiring about this will reincarnate and experience His second coming. Another example is when Jesus states,

"Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matthew 16:24-28).

The question now is this: what is it to "taste death until He comes"? The concept of a person having to "taste death until the Lord comes" is a good description of reincarnation and of what the Bible refers to as the "First Death". The First Death is spiritual death, separation from God. When we are born, we are born into spiritual death and it requires some action on our part to break out of it and enter into spiritual life. These verses all are suggestive of reincarnation.

It can be deduced from the scriptures the fact that Christ Himself had many incarnations in the flesh. It is well known that the apostle Paul wrote of Adam as:

"... a pattern of the one who was to come (i.e. Jesus)" (Romans 5:14)

Paul drew between Adam and Christ a parallel that was also a contrast:

"The first Adam became a living being; the last Adam (i.e. Jesus) became a life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45).

Christ is thus seen as the last Adam, the "one man" who by his obedience undoes the results of the disobedience of the first (Romans 5:12-21). Jesus Christ recapitulated the stages of Adam's fall, but in reverse order and quality.

The belief in many incarnation of Jesus is not a new belief. The early Judeo-Christian group known as the Ebionites taught that the Spirit had come as Adam and later reincarnated as Jesus. Other Jewish Christian groups such as the Elkasaites and Nazarites also believed this. The Clementine Homilies, an early Christian document, also taught many incarnations of Jesus.

Another possible incarnation of Christ is the Old Testament figure known as Melchizedek, the High Priest and King of Salem, who:

"...without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever." (Hebrews 7:3).

It is clear from the scripture that Melchizedek was no ordinary man, assuming He even was a man - for what kind of man has no father or mother, is without genealogy, and without beginning of days or end of life? Whoever this Melchizedek was, the scriptures declare Jesus to be a:

".. priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 7:17).

It may be argued that Melchizedek was one of the incarnations of Jesus. Certainly it has to be acknowledged that Melchizedek was no ordinary man.

There are Bible verses that are highly suggestive of the "mechanics" of reincarnation. Before His arrest, Jesus stated:

"All who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

Common sense tells us that not all people who live "by the sword" will die by the sword. This statement can only be true if meant in the context of a future life. If in this life you "live by the sword", you will most certainly die, if not in the same life but a future life, "by the sword". In fact, this concept is the ancient doctrine of "karma" as it is known in the East where reincarnation is the foundation of reality. Here are some other Biblical references to this concept:

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A person reaps what he sows." (Galatians 6:7)

"Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." (Exodus 21:24-25)

"In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (Matthew 18: 34-35)

"If any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain." (Revelation 13:10)

"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny." (Matthew 5:25-26)



The above passages can be seen to at least be suggestive of reincarnation.

In James 3:6, some translations (such as the American Standard Version) mention "the wheel of nature" which seems to resemble the cycle of endless reincarnation stated by the Eastern religions. However, in this context the reference is made to the control of speech in order not to sin. The ASV translation states:

"And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." (James 3:6)

The tongue out of control is compared with a fire that affects all aspects of existence, thought and deed, in a vicious cycle. This means that sinful speech is at the origin of many other sins, which are consequently generated, and conduct man to hell.

Nowhere in the Old Testament is reincarnation denied. Job asks:

"If a person dies will he live again?" (Job 14:14)

But he receives no answer.

Another Old Testament verse states:

"Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again...What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:4-9)

The Hebrew kabbalists interpreted this quote to mean that a generation dies and subsequently returns by the process of reincarnation.

In the New Testament, one verse in particular is often used to refute reincarnation. It is Hebrews 9:27.

"... man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...." (Hebrews 9:27)

This is often assumed, reasonably enough, to declare that each human being lives once as a mortal on earth, dies once, and then faces judgment. But this verse, on its surface, not only applies to reincarnation, but to the modern concept of resurrection. In fact, if anything, this verse can be most applied to refuting modern Christianity's definition of resurrection. Reincarnation states that the spirit leaves the body at death, faces judgment, then can enter a new and different body at a later time. In this way, Hebrews 9:27 does not refute reincarnation because it is not the same body that dies again. It implies one man/one death, which agrees with reincarnation, but totally disagrees with modern Christianity's definition of resurrection which holds that after a body dies and faces judgment, his physical body will rise from the grave at a later day to face possible death again and judgment. So Hebrews 9:27 does not refute reincarnation after all, but does refute resurrection as modern Christianity defines it.

From all that has been said here, one can safely draw the conclusion that reincarnation was not only known by those in Christ's day, but that Christ Himself and the Bible teaches it and reincarnation should be a doctrine acceptable by every follower of Christ.

### **More scriptural support for reincarnation**

Ancient writings were discovered in 1945 which revealed more information about the concept of reincarnation from a sect of Christians called "Gnostics". This sect was ultimately destroyed by the Roman orthodox church, their followers burned at the stake and their writings wiped out. The writings included some long lost gospels, some of which were written early than the known gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The Gnostic Christians claimed to possess the correct definition of "resurrection" - based on Jesus' secret teachings, handed down to them by the apostles.

The existence of a secret tradition can be found in the New Testament:

"He [Jesus] told them, ' The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" (Mark 4:11-12)

"No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began." (1 Corinthians 2:7)

"So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God." (1 Corinthians 4:1)

A fragment of the Secret Gospel of Mark, one of the Gnostic texts discovered, describes Jesus performing secret initiation rites. Before the discovery of Gnostic writings, our only knowledge of it came from a letter written by Church Father Clement of Alexandria (150 AD - 211 AD), which quotes this secret gospel and refers to it as "a more spiritual gospel for the use of those who were being perfected." He said, "It even yet is most carefully guarded [by the church at Alexandria], being read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries." Clement insists elsewhere that Jesus revealed a secret teaching to those who were "capable of receiving it and being molded by it." Clement indicates that he possessed the secret tradition, which was handed down through the apostles. Such Gnostics were spiritual critics of the orthodox Church of what they saw as not so much a popularization as a vulgarization of Christianity. The orthodox church stressed faith, while the Gnostic church stressed knowledge (gnosis). This secret knowledge emphasized spiritual resurrection rather than physical resurrection. Indeed, the Gnostic Christians believed reincarnation to be the true interpretation of "resurrection" for those who have not attained a spiritual resurrection through this secret knowledge.

The New Testament talks about this gnosis (knowledge):

"Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding." (Colossians 1:9)

The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus states that the Pharisees, the founders of rabbinic Judaism for whom Paul once belonged, believed in reincarnation. He writes that the Pharisees believed that the souls of bad men are punished after death but that the souls of good men are "removed into other bodies" and they will "have power to revive and live again." The Sadducees, the other prominent Jewish sect in Palestine, did not emphasize life after death and according to the Bible "say there is no resurrection" (Matthew 22:23). From what we have just discussed, it is clear that what Matthew really states is that the Sadducees "say there is no reincarnation".

The following are some the secret teachings of Jesus from the Gnostic gospels that affirm reincarnation, revealing the secret knowledge:

"Watch and pray that you may not be born in the flesh, but that you may leave the bitter bondage of this life." (Book of Thomas the Contender)

"When you see your likeness, you are happy. But when you see your images that came into being before and that neither die nor become visible, how much you will bear!" (Gospel of Thomas)

In the Book of Thomas the Contender, Jesus tells the disciple Thomas that after death those who were once believers but have remained attached to things of "transitory beauty" will be consumed "in their concern about life" and will be "brought back to the visible realm".

In the Secret Book of John, reincarnation is placed at the heart of its discussion of the salvation of souls. The book was written by 185 AD at the latest. Here is the Secret Book of John's perspective on reincarnation:

All people have drunk the water of forgetfulness and exist in a state of ignorance. Some are able to overcome ignorance through the Spirit of life that descends upon them. These souls "will be saved and will become perfect," that is, escape the round of rebirth. John asks Jesus what will happen to those who do not attain salvation. They are hurled down "into forgetfulness" and thrown into "prison", the Gnostic code word for new body. The only way for these souls to escape, says Jesus, is to emerge from forgetfulness and acquire knowledge. A soul in this situation can do so by finding a teacher or savior who has the strength to lead her home. "This soul needs to follow another soul in whom the Spirit of life dwells, because she is saved through the Spirit. Then she will never be thrust into flesh again." (Secret Book of John)

Another Gnostic text, Pistis Sophia, outlines an elaborate system of reward and punishment that includes reincarnation. The text explains differences in fate as the effects of past-life actions. A "man who curses" is given a body that will be continually "troubled in heart". A "man who slanders" receives a body that will be "oppressed". A thief receives a "lame, crooked and blind body". A "proud" and "scornful" man receives "a lame and ugly body" that "everyone continually despises." Thus earth, as well as hell, becomes the place of punishment.

According to Pistis Sophia, some souls do experience hell as a shadowy place of torture where they go after death. But after passing through this hell, the souls return for further experiences on earth. Only a few extremely wicked souls are not allowed to reincarnate. These are cast into "outer darkness" until the time when they are destined to be "destroyed and dissolved".

Several Gnostic texts combine the ideas of reincarnation and union with God. The Apocalypse of Paul, a second-century text, describes the Merkabah-style ascent of the apostle Paul as well as the reincarnation of a soul who was not ready for such an ascent. It shows how both reincarnation and ascents fit into Gnostic theology. [Click here to read more.](#)

As Paul passes through the fourth heaven, he sees a soul being punished for murder. This soul is being whipped by angels who have brought him "out of the land of the dead" (earth). The soul calls three witnesses, who charge him with murder. The soul then looks down "in sorrow" and is "cast down" into a body that has been prepared for it. The text goes on to describe Paul's further journey through the heavens, a practice run for divine union.

Pistis Sophia combines the ideas of reincarnation and divine union in a passage that begins with the question: What happens to "a man who has committed no sin, but done good persistently, but has not found the mysteries?" The Pistis Sophia tells us that the soul of the good man who has not found the mysteries will receive "a cup filled with thoughts and wisdom." This will allow the soul to remember its divine origin and so to pursue the "mysteries of the Light" until it finds them and is able to "inherit the Light forever." To "inherit the Light forever" is a Gnostic code for union with God.

For the Gnostic Christians, resurrection was also a spiritual event - simply the awakening of the soul. They believed that people who experience the resurrection can experience eternal life, or union with God, while on earth and then after death, escape rebirth. People who don't experience the resurrection and union with God on earth will reincarnate. Jesus states the following the Gnostic Gospels:

"People who say they will first die and then arise are mistaken. If they do not first receive resurrection while they are alive, once they have died they will receive nothing." (Gospel of Philip)

Paul writes in several places that resurrection involves a spirit body. Such a definition corresponds with spiritual resurrection and reincarnation:

"It [the dead body] is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:44)

"I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." (1 Corinthians 15:50)

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ." (Colossians 2:13)

The Gnostics claimed their terminology was sprinkled through the Epistles. For example, the author of Ephesians uses the words "awake", "sleep" and "dead" in a Gnostic sense:

"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:13-14)

Some of the Greek words in the New Testament translated as "resurrection" also mean to "rise" or "awake". Therefore, argued the Gnostics, when Paul says people can be part of the resurrection, he is really saying that their souls can be awakened to the Spirit of God.

We know that in some passages Paul writes about the resurrection as a present rather than a future event:

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:3-11)

Colossians also seems to describe the resurrection as a present-day event:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1)

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:9-10)

In the above passage, taking off the old self and putting on the new is a code for the resurrection, which, again, is described as a present-life event.

The Gnostic manuscripts present a clear, simple and strong vision of the resurrection. First, the Gospel of Thomas disabuses people of the notion that the resurrection is a future event:

"His followers said to him, 'When will the rest for the dead take place, and when will the new world come?' He said to them, 'What you look for has come, but you do not know it.'" (Gospel of Thomas)

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is saying that the resurrection and the kingdom are already here. We simply do not realize it - or, in the Gnostic sense, we simply have not integrated with them.

Jesus explained the concept of resurrection before raising Lazarus from the dead:

"Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:23-26)

In these verses, Jesus tells Martha her brother Lazarus will "rise again". Martha mistakenly thinks Jesus means Lazarus will come out of his grave at Judgment Day. Jesus corrects her by stating that those who believe in Him will live, even before they die. Jesus is referring here to spiritual regeneration. Jesus also states that those who die believing in Him, will never die. This clearly implies reincarnation. The flip-side to this is that those who die not believing in Him, will have to die again (i.e. reincarnate). It is interesting to note that by raising Lazarus from death, Jesus is forcing Lazarus to live out the rest of his life only to die physically again. By raising Lazarus from death, Jesus seems to be demonstrating that one does not wait until Judgment Day to rise.

Jesus flatly tells Nicodemus:

"I tell you a truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

Nicodemus misunderstands what Jesus means by "born again":

"How can a person be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" (John 3:4)

In response, Jesus states:

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:5-6)

In context of these verses, Jesus is talking about the process of resurrection, that is, being born of water and being born of the Spirit. Jesus describes physical resurrection (to be born of water) and spiritual resurrection (to be born of the Spirit). They are two similar yet different processes. From these verses, the case can be made that Jesus taught the concept of resurrection as being physical rebirth as well as spiritual rebirth.



In the Apocryphal book Wisdom of Solomon, recognized by the Catholic Church, is the following verse:

"... I was given a sound body to live in because I was already good."  
(Wisdom of Solomon 8:19-20)

This verse raises the following question: How is it possible to get a body after you have already been good if reincarnation is a fact?

Flavius Josephus records that the Essenes of the Dead Sea Scrolls lived "the same kind of life" as the followers of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras who taught reincarnation. According to Josephus, the Essenes believed that the soul is both immortal and preexistent which is necessary for belief in reincarnation.

One scroll entitled "The Last Jubilee" mentions reincarnation. This scroll is about the "last days" during which time it says, a "Melchizedek redivivus" (reincarnate) will appear and destroy Belial (Satan) and lead the children of God to eternal forgiveness. Parts of this scroll has been unreadable and will be denoted by this '. . .' symbol. Here is it's message:

"Men will turn away in rebellion, and there will be a re-establishment of the reign of righteousness, perversity being confounded by the judgements of God. This is what scripture implies in the words, "Who says to Zion, your God has not claimed his Kingdom!" The term Zion there denoting the total congregation of the "sons of righteousness" that is, those who maintain the covenant and turn away from the popular trend, and your God signifying the King of Righteousness, alias Melchizedek Redivivus, who will destroy Belial. Our text speaks also of sounding a loud trumpet blast throughout the land on the tenth day of the seventh month. As applied to the last days, this refers to the fanfare which will then be sounded before the Messianic King." (The Last Jubilee)

Melchizedek was the High Priest described in the Bible. It is interesting to note that some early Christians believed Melchizedek to be an early incarnation of Jesus. If this is true and the above passage of the Dead Sea Scrolls can be believed, then the passage is very likely referring to Jesus Himself and His second coming.

The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the Jewish mystical tradition of union with God went back to the first, if not the third, century before Christ. Jewish mysticism has its roots in Greek mysticism which espoused

reincarnation. Some of the hymns found with the Dead Sea Scrolls are similar to the Hekhalot hymns sung by the Jewish mystics. One text gives us unmistakable evidence of Jewish mysticism. It is called "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice". Also, fragments of 1 Enoch, which is considered the oldest evidence of Jewish mysticism, were also found with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Since Jewish mysticism existed in the third century before Christ, as Enoch indicates, then it would certainly have been present in first-century Judaism. As stated earlier, this twin idea of divine union and reincarnation can be found in early Christianity and one can easily conclude that it was the key to the heart of Jesus' message.

Reincarnation has been a tenet for thousands of years for certain Jews and Christians. The Zohar is a work of great weight and authority among the Jews. In II, 199 b, it says that "all souls are subject to revolutions." This is metempsychosis or a'leen b'gilgoola; but it declares that "men do not know the way they have been judged in all time." That is, in their "revolutions" they lose a complete memory of the acts that have led to judgment. The Kether Malkuth says, "If she, the soul, be pure, then she shall obtain favor. . . but if she hath been defiled, then she shall wander for a time in pain and despair. . . until the days of her purification." If the soul be pure and if she comes at once from God at birth, how could she be defiled? And where is she to wander if not on this or some other world until the days of her purification? The Rabbis always explained it as meaning she wandered down from Paradise through many revolutions or births until purity was regained.

Under the name of "Din Gilgol Neshomes" the doctrine of reincarnation is constantly spoken of in the Talmud. The term means "the judgment of the revolutions of the souls." And Rabbi Manassa, son of Israel, one of the most revered, says in his book Nishmath Hayem: "The belief or the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is a firm and infallible dogma accepted by the whole assemblage of our church with one accord, so that there is none to be found who would dare to deny it. . . . Indeed, there is a great number of sages in Israel who hold firm to this doctrine so that they made it a dogma, a fundamental point of our religion. We are therefore in duty bound to obey and to accept this dogma with acclamation . . . as the truth of it has been incontestably demonstrated by the Zohar, and all books of the Kabalists."

## The mystery of God in humanity

Early in the fourth century, while Bishop Alexander of Alexandria was expounding on the Trinity to his flock, a theological tsunami was born.

A Libyan priest named Arius stood up and posed the following simple question: "If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence." In other words, if the Father is the parent of the Son, then didn't the Son have a beginning?

Apparently, no one had put it this way before. For many bishops, Arius spoke heresy when he said that the Son had a beginning. A debate erupted, led by Arius on the one side and by Alexander and his deacon Athanasius on the other. Athanasius became the Church's lead fighter in a struggle that lasted his entire life.

In 320, Alexander held a council of Alexandria to condemn the errors of Arius. But this did not stop the controversy. The Church had nearly split over the issue when the controversy reached the ears of the Roman emperor Constantine. He decided to resolve it himself in a move that permanently changed the course of Christianity.

The orthodox accused the Arians of attempting to lower the Son by saying he had a beginning. But, in fact, the Arians gave him an exalted position, honoring him as "first among creatures." Arius described the Son as one who became "perfect God, only begotten and unchangeable," but also argued that he had an origin.

The Arian controversy was really about the nature of humanity and how we are saved. It involved two pictures of Jesus Christ: Either he was a God who had always been God or he was a human who became God's Son.

If he was a human who became God's Son, then that implied that other humans could also become Sons of God. This idea was unacceptable to the orthodox, hence their insistence that Jesus had always been God and was entirely different from all created beings. As we shall see, the Church's theological position was, in part, dictated by its political needs. The Arian position had the potential to erode the authority of the Church since it implied that the soul did not need the Church to achieve salvation.

The outcome of the Arian controversy was crucial to the Church's position on both reincarnation and the soul's opportunity to become one with God. Earlier, the Church decided that the human soul is not now and never has been a part of God. Instead it belongs to the material world and is separated from God by a great chasm.

Rejecting the idea that the soul is immortal and spiritual, which was a part of Christian thought at the time of Clement and Origen, the Fathers developed the concept of "creatio ex nihilo", creation out of nothing. If the soul were not a part of God, the orthodox theologians reasoned, it could not have been created out of His essence.

The doctrine persists to this day. By denying man's divine origin and potential, the doctrine of creation out of nothing rules out both preexistence and reincarnation. Once the Church adopted the doctrine, it was only a matter of time before it rejected both Origenism and Arianism. In fact, the Arian controversy was only one salvo in the battle to eradicate the mystical tradition Origen represented.

Origen and his predecessor, Clement of Alexandria, lived in a Platonist world. For them it was a given that there is an invisible spiritual world which is permanent and a visible material world that is changeable. The soul belongs to the spiritual world, while the body belongs to the material world.

In the Platonists' view, the world and everything in it is not created but emanates from God, the One. Souls come from the Divine Mind, and even when they are encased in bodily form, they retain their link to the Source.

Clement tells us that humanity is "of celestial birth, being a plant of heavenly origin." Origen taught that man, having been made after the "image and likeness of God," has "a kind of blood-relationship with God."

While Clement and Origen were teaching in Alexandria, another group of Fathers was developing a countertheology. They rejected the Greek concept of the soul in favor of a new and unheard of idea: The soul is not a part of the spiritual world at all; but, like the body, it is part of the mutable material world.

They based their theology on the changeability of the soul. How could the soul be divine and immortal, they asked, if it is capable of changing, falling and sinning? Because it is capable of change, they reasoned, it cannot be

like God, who is unchangeable.

Origen took up the problem of the soul's changeability but came up with a different solution. He suggested that the soul was created immortal and that even though it fell (for which he suggests various reasons), it still has the power to restore itself to its original state.

For him the soul is poised between spirit and matter and can choose union with either: "The will of this soul is something intermediate between the flesh and the spirit, undoubtedly serving and obeying one of the two, whichever it has chosen to obey." If the soul chooses to join with spirit, Origen wrote, "the spirit will become one with it."

This new theology, which linked the soul with the body, led to the ruling out of preexistence. If the soul is material and not spiritual, then it cannot have existed before the body. As Gregory of Nyssa wrote: "Neither does the soul exist before the body, nor the body apart from the soul, but ... there is only a single origin for both of them."

When is the soul created then? The Fathers came up with an improbable answer: at the same time as the body - at conception. "God is daily making souls," wrote Church Father Jerome. If souls and bodies are created at the same time, both preexistence and reincarnation are out of the question since they imply that souls exist before bodies and can be attached to different bodies in succession.

The Church still teaches the soul is created at the same time as the body and therefore the soul and the body are a unit.

This kind of thinking led straight to the Arian controversy. Now that the Church had denied that the soul preexists the body and that it belongs to the spiritual world, it also denied that souls, bodies and the created world emanated from God.

## **The Arian controversy**

When Arius asked whether the Son had a beginning, he was, in effect, pointing out a fundamental flaw in that doctrine. The doctrine did not clarify the nature of Christ. So he was asking: If there is an abyss between Creator and creation, where does Christ belong? Was he created out of nothing like the rest of the creatures? Or was he part of God? If so, then how and why did he take on human form?

The Church tells us that the Arian controversy was a struggle against blasphemers who said Christ was not God. But the crucial issue in the debate was: How is humanity saved - through emulating Jesus or through worshipping him?

The Arians claimed that Jesus became God's Son and thereby demonstrated a universal principle that all created beings can follow. But the orthodox Church said that he had always been God's Son, was of the same essence as God (and therefore was God) and could not be imitated by mere creatures, who lack God's essence. Salvation could come only by accessing God's grace via the Church.

The Arians believed that human beings could also be adopted as Sons of God by imitating Christ. For the Arians, the incarnation of Christ was designed to show us that we can follow Jesus and become, as Paul said, "joint heirs with Christ."

The orthodox Church, by creating a gulf between Jesus and the rest of us, denied that we could become Sons in the same way he did. The reason why the Church had such a hard time seeing Jesus' humanity was that they could not understand how anyone could be human and divine at the same time. Either Jesus was human (and therefore changeable) or he was divine (and therefore unchangeable).

The orthodox vision of Jesus as God is based in part on a misunderstanding of the Gospel of John. John tells us: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Later John tells us the "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The orthodox concluded from these passages that Jesus Christ is God, the Word, made flesh.

What they didn't understand was that when John called Jesus "the Word," he was referring to the Greek tradition of the Logos. When John tells us that the Word created everything, he uses the Greek term for Word - "Logos". In Greek thought, Logos describes the part of God that acts in the world. Philo called the Logos "God's Likeness, by whom the whole cosmos was fashioned." Origen called it the soul that holds the universe together.

Philo believed that great human beings like Moses could personify the Logos. Thus, when John writes that Jesus is the Logos, he does not mean that the man Jesus has always been God the Logos. What John is telling us is that Jesus the man became the Logos, the Christ.

Some early theologians believed that everyone has that opportunity. Clement tells us that each human has the "image of the Word [Logos]" within him and that it is for this reason that Genesis says that humanity is made "in the image and likeness of God."

The Logos, then, is the spark of divinity, the seed of Christ, that is within our hearts. Apparently the orthodox either rejected or ignored this concept.

We should understand that Jesus became the Logos just as he became the Christ. But that didn't mean he was the only one who could ever do it. Jesus explained this mystery when he broke the bread at the Last Supper. He took a single loaf, symbolizing the one Logos, the one Christ, and broke it and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you."

He was teaching the disciples that there is one absolute God and one Universal Christ, or Logos, but that the body of that Universal Christ can be broken and each piece will still retain all the qualities of the whole. He was telling them that the seed of Christ was within them, that he had come to quicken it and that the Christ was not diminished no matter how many times his body was broken. The smallest fragment of God, Logos, or Christ, contains the entire nature of Christ's divinity - which, to this day, he would make our own.

The orthodox misunderstood Jesus' teaching because they were unable to accept the reality that each human being has both a human and a divine nature and the potential to become wholly divine. They didn't understand the human and the divine in Jesus and therefore they could not understand the human and the divine within themselves. Having seen the weakness of human nature, they thought they had to deny the divine nature that occasionally flashes forth even in the lowliest of human beings.

The Church did not understand (or could not admit) that Jesus came to demonstrate the process by which the human nature is transformed into the divine. But Origen had found it easy to explain.

He believed that the human and divine natures can be woven together day by day. He tells us that in Jesus "the divine and human nature began to interpenetrate in such a way that the human nature, by its communion with the divine, would itself become divine." Origen tells us that the option for the transformation of humanity into divinity is available not just for Jesus but for "all who take up in faith the life which Jesus taught."

Origen did not hesitate to describe the relationship of human beings to the Son. He believed that we contain the same essence as the Father and the Son: "We, therefore, having been made according to the image, have the Son, the original, as the truth of the noble qualities that are within us. And what we are to the Son, such is the Son to the Father, who is the truth." Since we have the noble qualities of the Son within us, we can undergo the process of divinization.

To the Arians, the divinization process was essential to salvation; to the orthodox, it was heresy. In 324, the Roman emperor Constantine, who had embraced Christianity twelve years earlier, entered the Arian controversy. He wrote a letter to Arius and Bishop Alexander urging them to reconcile their differences, and he sent Bishop Hosius of Cordova to Alexandria to deliver it. But his letter could not calm the storm that raged over the nature of God - and man. Constantine realized that he would have to do more if he wanted to resolve the impasse.

## The Council of Nicea

In June 325 the council opened and continued for two months, with Constantine attending. The bishops modified an existing creed to fit their purposes. The creed, with some changes made at a later fourth century council, is still given today in many churches. The Nicene Creed, as it came to be called, takes elaborate care by repeating several redundancies to identify the Son with the Father rather than with the creation:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. By whom all things were made ... Who ... was incarnate and was made human ..."



Only two bishops, along with Arius, refused to sign the creed. Constantine banished them from the empire, while the other bishops went on to celebrate their unity in a great feast at the imperial palace.

The creed is much more than an affirmation of Jesus' divinity. It is also an affirmation of our separation from God and Christ. It takes great pains to describe Jesus as God in order to deny that he is part of God's creation. He is "begotten, not made," therefore totally separate from us, the created beings. As scholar George Leonard Prestige writes, the Nicene Creed's description of Jesus tells us "that the Son of God bears no resemblance to the ... creatures."

The description of Jesus as the only Son of God is carried forward in the Apostles' Creed, which is used in many Protestant churches today. It reads: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty... I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord." But even that language - calling Jesus God's only Son - denies that we can ever attain the sonship that Jesus did.

Christians may be interested to know that many scholars analyzing the Bible now believe that Jesus never claimed to be the only Son of God. This was a later development based on a misinterpretation of the gospel of John.

There is further evidence to suggest that Jesus believed all people could achieve the goal of becoming Sons of God. But the churches, by retaining these creeds, remain in bondage to Constantine and his three hundred bishops.

Some of the bishops who attended the council were uncomfortable with the council's definition of the Son and thought they might have gone too far. But the emperor, in a letter sent to the bishops who were not in attendance at Nicea, required that they accept "this truly Divine injunction."

Constantine said that since the council's decision had been "determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops," the Church officials must regard it as "indicative of the Divine will."

The Roman god Constantine had spoken. Clearly, he had concluded that the orthodox position was more conducive to a strong and unified Church than the Arian position and that it therefore must be upheld.

Constantine also took the opportunity to inaugurate the first systematic government persecution of dissident Christians. He issued an edict against "heretics," calling them "haters and enemies of truth and life, in league with destruction."

Even though he had begun his reign with an edict of religious toleration, he now forbade the heretics (mostly Arians) to assemble in any public or private place, including private homes, and ordered that they be deprived of "every gathering point for [their] superstitious meetings," including "all the houses of prayer." These were to be given to the orthodox Church.

These heretical teachers were forced to flee, and many of their students were coerced back into the orthodox fold. The emperor also ordered a search for their books, which were to be confiscated and destroyed. Hiding the works of Arius carried a severe penalty - the death sentence.

Nicea, nevertheless, marked the beginning of the end of the concepts of both preexistence, reincarnation, and salvation through union with God in Christian doctrine. It took another two hundred years for the ideas to be expunged.

But Constantine had given the Church the tools with which to do it when he molded Christianity in his own image and made Jesus the only Son of God. From now on, the Church would become representative of a capricious and autocratic God - a God who was not unlike Constantine and other Roman emperors.

Tertullian, a staunch anti-Origenian and a father of the Church, had this to say about those who believed in reincarnation and not the resurrection of the dead: "What a panorama of spectacle on that day [the Resurrection]! What sight should I turn to first to laugh and applaud? ... Wise philosophers, blushing before their students as they burn together, the followers to whom they taught that the world is no concern of God's, whom they assured that either they had no souls at all or that what souls they had would never return to their former bodies? .... These are things of greater delight, I believe, than a circus, both kinds of theater, and any stadium." Tertullian was a great influence in having so-called "heretics" put to death.

## The Fifth General Council

After Constantine and Nicea, Origen's writings had continued to be popular among those seeking clarification about the nature of Christ, the destiny of the soul and the manner of the resurrection. Some of the more educated monks had taken Origen's ideas and were using them in mystical practices with the aim of becoming one with God.

Toward the end of the fourth century, orthodox theologians again began to attack Origen. Their chief areas of difficulty with Origen's thought were his teachings on the nature of God and Christ, the resurrection and the preexistence of the soul.

Their criticisms, which were often based on ignorance and an inadequate understanding, found an audience in high places and led to the Church's rejection of Origenism and reincarnation. The Church's need to appeal to the uneducated masses prevailed over Origen's coolheaded logic.

The bishop of Cyprus, Epiphanius, claimed that Origen denied the resurrection of the flesh. However, as scholar Jon Dechow has demonstrated, Epiphanius neither understood nor dealt with Origen's ideas. Nevertheless, he was able to convince the Church that Origen's ideas were incompatible with the merging literalist theology. On the basis of Epiphanius' writings, Origenism would be finally condemned a century and a half later.

Jerome believed that resurrection bodies would be flesh and blood, complete with genitals - which, however, would not be used in the hereafter. But Origenists believed the resurrection bodies would be spiritual.

The Origenist controversy spread to monasteries in the Egyptian desert, especially at Nitria, home to about five thousand monks. There were two kinds of monks in Egypt - the simple and uneducated, who composed the majority, and the Origenists, an educated minority.

The controversy solidified around the question of whether God had a body that could be seen and touched. The simple monks believed that he did. But the Origenists thought that God was invisible and transcendent. The simple monks could not fathom Origen's mystical speculations on the nature of God.

In 399, Bishop Theophilus wrote a letter defending the Origenist position. At this, the simple monks flocked to Alexandria, rioting in the streets and even threatening to kill Theophilus.

The bishop quickly reversed himself, telling the monks that he could now see that God did indeed have a body: "In seeing you, I behold the face of God." Theophilus' sudden switch was the catalyst for a series of events that led to the condemnation of Origen and the burning of the Nitrian monastery.

Under Theodosius, Christians, who had been persecuted for so many years, now became the persecutors. God made in man's image proved to be an intolerant one. The orthodox Christians practiced sanctions and violence against all heretics (including Gnostics and Origenists), pagans and Jews. In this climate, it became dangerous to profess the ideas of innate divinity and the pursuit of union with God.

It may have been during the reign of Theodosius that the Gnostic Nag Hammadi manuscripts were buried - perhaps by Origenist monks. For while the Origenist monks were not openly Gnostic, they would have been sympathetic to the Gnostic viewpoint and may have hidden the books after they became too hot to handle.

The Origenist monks of the desert did not accept Bishop Theophilus' condemnations. They continued to practice their beliefs in Palestine into the sixth century until a series of events drove Origenism underground for good.

Justinian (ruled 527 - 565) was the most able emperor since Constantine - and the most active in meddling with Christian theology. Justinian issued edicts that he expected the Church to rubber-stamp, appointed bishops and even imprisoned the pope.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire at the end of the fifth century, Constantinople remained the capital of the Eastern, or Byzantine, Empire. The story of how Origenism ultimately came to be rejected involves the kind of labyrinthine power plays that the imperial court became famous for.

Around 543, Justinian seems to have taken the side of the anti-Origenists since he issued an edict condemning ten principles of Origenism, including preexistence. It declared "anathema to Origen ... and to whomsoever there

is who thinks thus." In other words, Origen and anyone who believes in these propositions would be eternally damned. A local council at Constantinople ratified the edict, which all bishops were required to sign.

In 553, Justinian convoked the Fifth General Council of the Church to discuss the controversy over the so-called "Three Chapters". These were writings of three theologians whose views bordered on the heretical. Justinian wanted the writings to be condemned and he expected the council to oblige him.

He had been trying to coerce the pope into agreeing with him since 545. He had essentially arrested the pope in Rome and brought him to Constantinople, where he held him for four years. When the pope escaped and later refused to attend the council, Justinian went ahead and convened it without him.

This council produced fourteen new anathemas against the authors of the Three Chapters and other Christian theologians. The eleventh anathema included Origen's name in a list of heretics.

The first anathema reads: "If anyone asserts the fabulous preexistence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema." ("Restoration" means the return of the soul to union with God. Origenists believed that this took place through a path of reincarnation.) It would seem that the death blow had been struck against Origenism and reincarnation in Christianity.

After the council, the Origenist monks were expelled from their Palestinian monastery, some bishops were deposed and once again Origen's writings were destroyed. The anti-Origenist monks had won. The emperor had come down firmly on their side.

In theory, it would seem that the missing papal approval of the anathemas leaves a doctrinal loophole for the belief in reincarnation among all Christians today. But since the Church accepted the anathemas in practice, the result of the council was to end belief in reincarnation in orthodox Christianity.

In any case, the argument is moot. Sooner or later the Church probably would have forbade the beliefs. When the Church codified its denial of the divine origin of the soul (at Nicea in 325), it started a chain reaction that led directly to the curse on Origen.

Church councils notwithstanding, mystics in the Church continued to practice divinization. They followed Origen's ideas, still seeking union with God.

But the Christian mystics were continually dogged by charges of heresy. At the same time as the Church was rejecting reincarnation, it was accepting original sin, a doctrine that made it even more difficult for mystics to practice.

## Conclusion

With the condemnation of Origen, so much that is implied in reincarnation was officially stigmatized as heresy that the possibility of a direct confrontation with this belief was effectively removed from the church. In dismissing Origen from its midst, the church only indirectly addressed itself to the issue of reincarnation. The encounter with Origenism did, however, draw decisive lines in the matter of preexistence, the resurrection of the dead, and the relationship between body and soul. What an examination of Origen and the church does achieve, however, is to show where the reincarnationist will come into collision with the posture of orthodoxy. The extent to which he may wish to retreat from such a collision is of course a matter of personal conscience.

With the Council of 553 one can just about close the book on this entire controversy within the church. There are merely two footnotes to be added to the story, emerging from church councils in 1274 and 1439. In the Council of Lyons, in 1274, it was stated that after death the soul goes promptly either to heaven or to hell. On the Day of Judgment, all will stand before the tribunal of Christ with their bodies to render account of what they have done. The Council of Florence of 1439 uses almost the same wording to describe the swift passage of the soul either to heaven or to hell. Implicit in both of these councils is the assumption that the soul does not again venture into physical bodies.

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Below is more information from <http://www.iisis.net/index.php?page=semkiw-reincarnation-past-lives-christianity>

## Jesus & Reincarnation

Jesus, reincarnation & Christian doctrine, Justinian In the New Testament, Jews are depicted as expecting the reincarnation of their great prophets. Indeed, these prophets were already thought to have reincarnated in times past. For example, the Jewish sect called the Samaritans believed Adam reincarnated as Noah, then as Abraham, then Moses. (1)

Reincarnation of the old prophets was also on the minds of Jews at the time of Jesus. In fact, followers of Jesus thought that he was a reincarnated prophet. Let us reflect on the following passage from the Gospel of Matthew:

"When Jesus came into coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked disciples, saying, 'Whom do men say I, the Son of man, am?' And they said, 'Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.'" (Matthew 16:13–4)

Herod, who was in command of Jerusalem under the Romans, also speculated who Jesus may have previously been. Herod also thought Jesus might have been one of the old prophets.

When Jesus announced that he was the Jewish Messiah, his followers became confused, as the scriptures stated the prophet Elias (or Elijah in Greek) would return and precede the coming of the Messiah. The disciples put this apparent discrepancy to Jesus. The disciples pointed out:

"Why then say the scribes that Elias must come first. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not. . . . Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:9–13)

In another section of the New Testament, Jesus unequivocally states that John the Baptist is the reincarnation of the prophet Elias: "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. . . . And if ye will receive it, this is Elias. . . . He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:11–15)

Reincarnation is alluded to in a section of the New Testament in which the disciples ask Jesus why a man was born blind. The disciples asked,

"Which did sin, this man or his parents?" (John 9:34)

This passage implies that the blind man had a previous incarnation where he had the opportunity to commit a sin that would result in the karmic consequence of blindness. Without the premise of reincarnation, how could the blind man commit a sin responsible for his handicap, as the man was blind from birth? Jesus didn't dispute the reasoning of the disciples, though he stated that the blindness was due to other factors.

## **Reincarnation and the Early Christian Church Fathers**

In addition to these citations from the New Testament, evidence shows that reincarnation was part of the Church's early doctrine and was promoted by Church Fathers, writers who established Christian doctrine prior to the eighth century and whose works were used to disseminate Christian ideas to populations of the Roman Empire. To be considered a Church Father one had to meet the following criteria. One had to lead a holy life; one's writings had to be free of doctrinal error; one's interpretation of Christian doctrine was deemed to be exemplary; and one's writings had to have approval of the Church.

A number of Christian Church Fathers believed in and wrote about reincarnation:

St. Justin Martyr (100–165 A.D.) expressly stated that the soul inhabits more than one human body. (2)

Origen (185–254 A.D.), who was considered by St. Jerome as "the greatest teacher of the Church after the Apostles," defended the idea that the soul exists before the body, fundamental to the concept of reincarnation. (3)

Another Church Father, St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (257–332 A.D.), wrote: "It is absolutely necessary that the soul should be healed and purified, and if this does not take place during its life on earth it must be accomplished in future lives. . . . The soul . . . is immaterial and invisible in nature, it at one time puts off one body . . . and exchanges it for a second." (4)

St. Gregory also wrote: "Every soul comes into this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life." (5)



St. Augustine (354–430 A.D.), one of the greatest theologians of the Christian church, speculated that philosopher Plotinus was the reincarnation of Plato. St. Augustine wrote: "The message of Plato . . . now shines forth mainly in Plotinus, a Platonist so like his master that one would think . . . that Plato is born again in Plotinus." (6)

Other Church Fathers who demonstrated a belief in reincarnation included Synesius (the Bishop of Ptolemais), St. Ambrose, Pope Gregory I, Jerome, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and Clement of Alexandria. (7)

## **How Reincarnation was Removed from Christian Doctrine**

If the belief in the pre-existence of souls and reincarnation was prominent in the early Christian Church, why is it not present in contemporary doctrine?

The reason is that a Roman Emperor named Justinian made arrangements for reincarnation to be removed from official Church doctrine in 553 A.D.

In the early centuries of the Christian Church, disputes over doctrine were settled by bishops of the Church, through meetings called Ecumenical Councils. These Councils were major gatherings, which occurred infrequently, sometimes once in a hundred years. To understand the story of reincarnation and the Christian Church, we must go back in time to the year 330 A.D.

In that year, Constantine the Great moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Constantinople, a city which today is called Istanbul. As a result, two centers of the Christian Church developed; the Western Church in Rome and the Eastern Church in Constantinople. The emperors of Constantinople controlled the Eastern Church and dictated policy as they pleased.

As an example, the Constantinople Emperor Leo III prohibited images and portraits from being kept in churches, so icons, paintings of saints, which today are so admired for their beauty, had to be removed from places of worship. On the other hand, the Western Church headquartered in Rome refused to give up icons. Similarly, the Constantinople Emperor Justinian determined Church policy regarding reincarnation.

In the sixth century, the Church was divided over the issue of reincarnation. Western bishops in Rome believed in pre-existence of the soul while Eastern bishops were opposed to it. Emperor Justinian, who controlled the Eastern Church, was against the doctrine of reincarnation. As an example of his interference in Church matters, Justinian excommunicated the Church Father Origen, who openly supported the idea of reincarnation.

To further his agenda, Justinian convened the Fifth Ecumenical Council in 553 A.D., with only six bishops of the Western Church in attendance. On the other hand, 159 bishops of the Eastern Church, which Justinian controlled, were present. An image of Justinian is provided to the right.

It was at this meeting that pre-existence of the soul was voted out of Church doctrine. Emperor Justinian manipulated Church doctrine by stacking the voting deck in his favor.

Pope Vigilius protested this turn of events and demanded equal representation between Eastern and Western bishops. Though the Pope was present in Constantinople at the time of the Fifth Ecumenical Council, he boycotted the Council in protest. Justinian not only ignored Pope Vigilius, but persecuted him.

The Catholic Encyclopedia states that the conflict between the Emperor Justinian and the Pope was so extreme that the Pope suffered many indignities at the hands of the emperor and was almost killed.

Can you conceive today that a politician or head of state could dictate church policy to the Pope or that the Pope would boycott the biggest meeting at the Vatican in a hundred years? Yet this is what happened.

As a result, the Catholic Encyclopedia states, the Council called by Justinian was not a true Ecumenical Council, so the removal of pre-existence of the soul as a Church doctrine should not be considered an actual decree of the Ecumenical Council. (8, 9)

## **The Split of the Roman Catholic & Greek Orthodox Christianity**

### **Branches of the Christian Church Excommunicate One Another**

The rift between the Eastern and Western Church increased in 1054 when the two branches of the Christian Church excommunicated each other. When Christian Crusaders from the Western Church were on their way to capture Jerusalem from the Muslims, they made a point to raze the Christian city of Constantinople. In other words, the Western Christian Church waged war against the Eastern Christian Church.

Following that episode, a permanent split occurred and the Western Church became the Roman Catholic Church, while the Eastern Orthodox Church went its own way. Even today, members of the Eastern Christian Church do not consider the Pope in Rome as their leader. So we see that the political fragmentation within the Eastern and Western branches of the Christian Church is as real today as it was in the time of Emperor Justinian and Pope Vigilius.

### **The Christian Inquisition, Salem Witch Trials & Psychic Abilities**

In addition to Christian leaders fighting among themselves, there are disturbing examples of Christians fighting with those opposed to their doctrines.

The Inquisition was established by a series of Papal decrees between 1227 and 1235 to confront dissident religious movements. In this effort, Pope Innocent IV authorized the use of torture in 1252. Later, the persecution of presumed witches in Europe between 1450 and 1700 arose as orthodox Christianity went through its anxieties resulting from Martin Luther's Reformation and the emerging scientific paradigm.

The Papal decree *Summis Desiderantes*, issued by Pope Innocent VIII in 1484, stimulated another wave of torture and executions. This Papal dissertation was anti-feminine and condemned witches. Thousands of innocent women were executed based on confessions obtained through torture.

The last outbreak of this persecution occurred in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. Twenty women were executed after a group of young girls became emotional or hysterical while playing at magic. In reality, some of those considered witches in the past may have been girls who had psychic gifts but who were perceived as dangerous by those who were not similarly talented. Today, many women who participate in classes designed to

stimulate intuition and psychic abilities remember past lives in which they were persecuted and burned at the stake. It can be dangerous to be an evolved being in a relatively primitive world.

## **Christian Church Doctrine and the Suppression of Reincarnation**

In sum, reincarnation has appeared in Christian church doctrine, but reincarnation as been suppressed in the contemporary Church's philosophy. One reason is that if reincarnation is acknowledged and research demonstrates that souls can change religion from one incarnation to another, a religion's claim to exclusive truth is negated.

Still, evidence of reincarnation can help fulfill one of Christianity's greatest doctrines, that we are indeed brothers and sisters, and that we should love one another as such.

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Below is more information from <https://www.facts-are-facts.com/article/reincarnation-the-churchs-biggest-lie>

### **Reincarnation: The Church's Biggest Lie**

In the year 553 A.D., 165 Church officials condemned reincarnation. Prior to that time, it had been a fundamental Christian teaching: following the trail of a conspiracy that changed the world.

Reincarnation is a fact. That it is no longer a part of today's Christian beliefs is due to one power-hungry woman who had all references to reincarnation in the early Bible removed. A seemingly small act with historical consequences: how different would the history of the last two millennia have been if mankind had known that they themselves would reap the fruit of their (mis)deeds in a future earthly life—that they would have to sleep in the beds they had made?!

The law of Karma and reincarnation: In an endless cycle, we return to earth until we have learned to control our energies.

At the beginning of the Christian era, reincarnation was one of the pillars of belief. Without it (as later happened), Christianity would lose all logic. How could a benevolent, loving God give one person a silver spoon and

leave the next to starve in their ostensibly only earthly life? Early Church elders and theologians, like Origenes, Basilides and St Gregory, taught reincarnation of the soul as a matter of course—it was written in the Bible, after all. Nowadays, most Christians suspect blasphemy if someone references reincarnation.

But let's return to the 6th century after Christ, where a diabolical conspiracy was hatched in the court of the Byzantine emperor, Justinian, which would hold mankind prisoner in a false understanding of the reality of life and death for 1,400 years. In the generations before that, reincarnation was still an uncontested fact in the Christian church. Instead, whether Jesus had been more man or more God was heavily discussed. Nestorius, Abbot of Antioch, believed that Mary should not be called "the Mother of God", since she had only given birth to the 'human' Jesus. But a Council declared Nestorius a heretic, sent him into the desert, and determined that Jesus was simultaneously human and divine. One of Nestorius' bitterest opponents was Eutyches, who, on the other hand, believed that Jesus was only divine, as his human nature was completely subsumed in the divine. Today we call this teaching monophysitism (that is, the teaching that Christ's two natures are joined into a new single human-divine nature). In 451, the Fourth Ecumenical Council (also known as the Council of Chalcedon) condemned monophysitism as heresy and persecuted its advocates. One of the most zealous persecutors was the later Emperor Justinian.

### **The Council of 451 Emphasises the Law of Reincarnation**

As already mentioned, during these religious controversies, reincarnation was never once a topic of discussion. It was held to be a fundamental dogma, which was even reinforced by the Council of 451. Who could have imagined then that Christian theology would so essentially change with the ascension of Justinian to the throne of the Eastern Roman Empire in 527 and what profound repercussions the following centuries would suffer as a result?

The real actor in the shadows was a woman: Theodora, Emperor Justinian's wife. She had made a sharp social ascent—and this daughter of a bear tamer from the Constantinople circus had used a woman's oldest weapon to make her climb. Earlier, she had been a young and beautiful prostitute whose services were happily sought by the aristocracy. Hecabolus, the young governor of Pentapolis, fell for her charms and took Theodora with him to North Africa. But she abused the governor's trust

and, at the people's cost, amassed great riches. When, in her greed, she overstepped the mark and Hecabolus was overwhelmed with complaints from the people, he threw Theodora out of his palace and confiscated all her goods. With only the clothes on her back, she fought her way through to Alexandria. At the gates to the city, she was taken in by a hermit named Eutyches. It was the same Eutyches who had originated monophysitism and was now living out his exile there. Later, Theodora would remember this fallen monk and use him to carry out her dark plans.

Back in Constantinople, she purposefully slept her way up the ladder of society, becoming one of Justinian's concubines, then his favourite concubine, and, finally, in 523, his wife. Four years later, she and her husband assumed the highest position of power in the secular world: the imperial crown.

### **Empress Theodora Seeks Her Own Apotheosis**

Theodora succeeded—well, almost. Her burning ambition pushed her ever further. There was one final step to be climbed: her own deification. Only then would she be equal with the Caesars of old. It wasn't really that long before that the Roman Emperors were automatically deified and received a place of worship in the temple halls. Christianity had brought an end to this custom. And it was precisely on this point that the biblically recognised fact of reincarnation provided a stumbling block: For how could a woman enter eternity as a goddess when everyone was supposed to be reborn? What could prevent the errant empress from being reborn as a completely normal person—even as a simple beggar? Theodora knew that as long as reincarnation was anchored fast in Christian consciousness, the people would never accept her as a goddess. And so the doctrine of reincarnation had to be completely blotted out.

Theodora selected the monophysitist monks, who were soon to be pardoned from their excommunications, as willing helpers. They were to ensure that every teaching of reincarnation completely disappeared from all church documents.

You might think that such a request wouldn't be possible—on a practical level alone. But Theodora had spread her own network of agents over the entire empire and took care that 'her' monks, little by little, took over leadership of the Church. And the entire power of the Byzantine Empire was at her service, for Justinian had already become her willing tool.

## The Emperor—Possessed?

But it was not earthly power alone that accomplished this evil. Demonic forces were working behind the scenes, powers that saw their chance and knew how to take advantage of it. Because if it is possible to take away mankind's belief in the atonement of their misdeeds and the resulting reincarnation, then not only can you subvert their sense of responsibility, but you also make them helpless and insignificant. The people will forget their true divine goal (to someday become gods and goddesses themselves), giving themselves over to the mercy of an external god and forgetting their own divinity. They wait for a salvation that will never come, because in reality, each person can only save himself. Such a humanity will easily surrender the world to evil.

The powers of darkness had found two helpers with tremendous influence in Theodora and Justinian. So it isn't really surprising that both of them were reported to be possessed. The contemporary historian Procopius offers many examples in his *Apocrypha*. He tells of a monk who travelled to Constantinople to present the case of a farmer who had suffered an injustice. He was immediately admitted, but just as he entered the throne room, he cringed and withdrew, refusing to appear before the Emperor, and rushed fearfully back to his room. Once there, he told the chamberlain that he had seen the 'Lord of Demons' sitting on the throne and his presence was so terrible that he was not able to bear it. We should bear in mind that clairvoyance was more prevalent at that time. The demon that the monk saw was by no means a product of his imagination, but a reality from the astral realm that we are not usually able to perceive today.

At another point, Procopius quotes Justinian's mother who once confessed to her confidantes that Justinian was not her husband, Sabbatius', son, nor that of any other man, but that he was sired by a demon.

Whatever you might think about these reports, Theodora and Justinian's actions were definitely diabolical. In order to accomplish their plans, Theodora first had to bring the Western Church (of the fallen Western Roman Empire) under her control. Flavius Belisarius' armies helped her in this by securing Byzantine influence in Rome and enabling Theodora's perfidy of deposing the Pope. One of the empresses' favourites assumed the position.



After she had thus dispensed with the opposition of the Western Church, Theodora concentrated once again on Constantinople and, with the help of her puppet, the Patriarch Mennas, she convened the Synod of the Eastern Church of Constantinople (543 A.D.). This Council revoked the condemnation of monophysitism as well as the affirmation of reincarnation, codified in 451 A.D. This was the first deathblow to the doctrine of reincarnation.

The Synod, however, was not binding for the almost 3,000 bishops spread across the Empire. And so a Council was called to sanction the decisions. Invitations were sent to all bishops, but they were written so that one could hope that none of the bishops of the Western Church would participate. Pope Virgilius, Theodora's accomplice, condemned the letters in the harshest terms and thereby strengthened the resolve of many bishops not to attend.





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