

THE ORTHODOX REFUTATION OF THE CONCEPT OF REINCARNATION¹

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Reincarnation

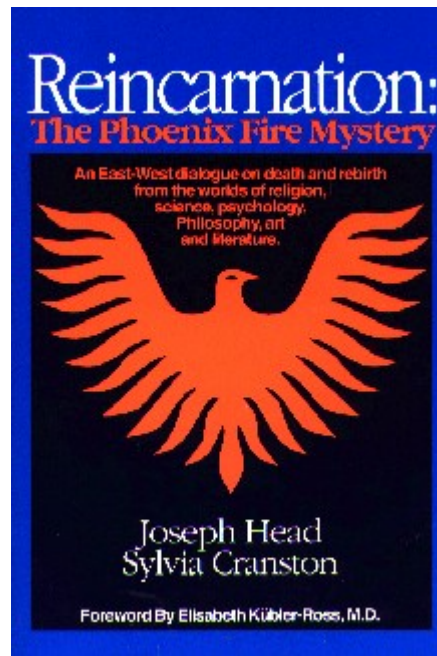
One of the beliefs *sine qua non* of the new age movement is the belief in reincarnation. But it is not classical *Upanishads* faith with the resolving of the negative "karma" and achieving of perfection, but the Western version of reincarnation taken from theosophy and anthroposophy, widely accepted by the new agers, and advocating for the upward spiral perfection through reincarnation.



From the Egyptian mythology was taken the Phoenix myth as the image of immortality, making a forced analogy to the teaching of reincarnation. The periodic revival of the bird from the ashes does not imply confirmation of this theory. Some of those who rallied this opinion were the authors Joseph Head and S.L. Cranston. They described different versions of reincarnation in time and space in the book *Reincarnation: The Phoenix Fire Mystery*².

¹ From the cap. IV of the book [Pr. Dan Bădulescu *Împărăția răului: New Age*, Ed. Christiana, București 2001](#)

² Julian Press/Crown Publishers Inc., New York, 1977.



The history of these ideas begins with Pythagoras, who lived in the sixth century BC and continued with the doctrine of transmigration and metempsychosis of Plato (d. 347 BC). From those ones the ideas spread and were holding in the ranks of some Stoics.

It is known the fact that even in the East does not rule an unanimity concerning this teaching. Thus, the Buddhism denies the existence of a 'soul', and even an 'I' who comes back. In the Hindu concept the inner self (*atman*) is not born, nor dies, but dresses in different clothes and identifies himself with these clothes. In the West there is the version upon which the man always remains man, unable to be embodied in an animal, for example.



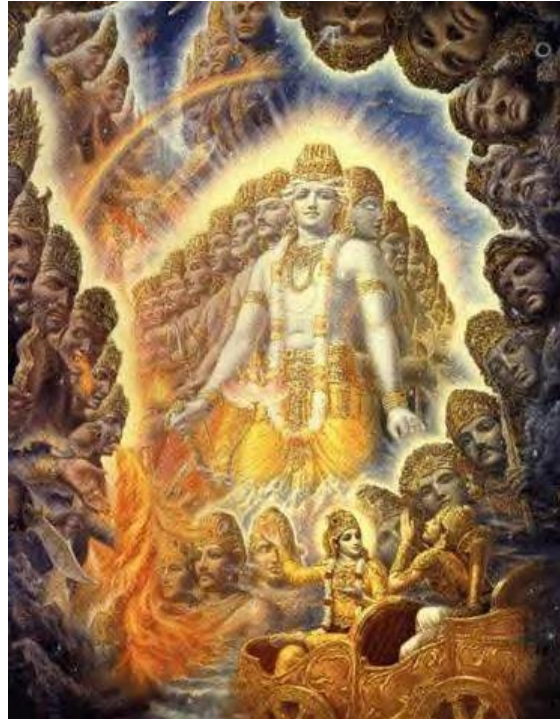
The same theme has been treated by the Greek author Vasilis Vitsaxis in his book *Plato and the Upanishads*³. Thus, in Chapter 6, entitled *Reincarnation-Samsara* is mentioned from the work of Plato's myth of Er from *the Republic*, as a hypothesis, the remembering of the past lives (also present in the dialogues *Menon* and *Phaidon*). From the *Phaidon* dialogue was extracted the following quote:

³ Ed. Arnold Heineman, New Delhi, 1977.

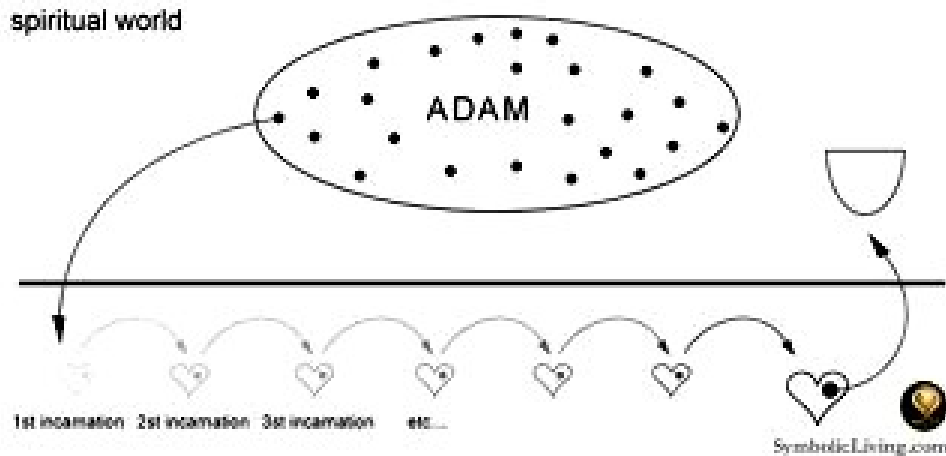
"There's an old tradition that they (the souls) exists there, arrived here *and also that they come here in this world, and are born from the dead.*" Further on, the author aims to make a parallel between Plato's dialogues on this issue and the Indian *Upanishads: Brhandaranyaka, Katha-Upanishad, Maitri*, in which is found the theme of *samsara*.

In the dialogue *Republic (State)*, according to the myth of *Er*, the preexistent souls draw lots on the bodies in which they will descend. This unwilled situation of random can be controlled by Knowledge (gnosis). Hence, there are two consequences: 1) the freedom of the soul to choose his „flesh“; 2) The eternity of the Cycle of transmigration (metempsychosis).

In Upanishads Hinduism the man can escape from this inexorable and implacable moral law of karma by unchaining (*Moksha*).



Passing in the European middle ages, the belief in reincarnation was taken over by dissident groups, such as the Hebrew Kabbalists. They took over the theories of reincarnation from hermetism, an esoteric version of Gnosticism.



In these shortfalls to a nonconformist magic, the mystical Hebrews have addressed the issue of successive reincarnation. The sacred texts do not mention the idea of metempsychosis (or metempsychosis). The canonical religions based on biblical revelation reject the idea of reincarnation. According to them, the human souls live their earthly life only once.

"Under the influence of some currents of ideas coming from the East (as well as Neo-Platonism), some rabbis, less orthodox, from the period of geonim have developed a sacred anthropology in which *the souls can be reincarnated many times*. "Gilgul anaeshef" will be picked up later on by the medieval Kabbalah."⁴ It is found in the Book of Brilliance (*Sefer ha-Bahir*), published in France Provençal. It thus argues Theodicy. The principle of reincarnation, *Gilgul*, is present in the form of purification cycles also in the book *Zohar II 99b*.

Unlike Plato, the *Upanishads*, or *Kabbalah*, in *The Holy Scripture* there is nothing to support the belief of reincarnation. However, the followers of theosophy origin have raised certain passages from the Bible, such as that of John 9:1-3⁵, as evidence of spreading the doctrine of reincarnation among the Jews of Jesus' time. This attitude expresses an immense pride, the source of the claim of theosophists, occultists, free thinkers etc., that then they could really restore the Church's teachings, distorted by the clergy. The roots of this absurd concept can be traced in the anti-churchal contesting movements from the medieval Western. Returning to the scriptural passage, verse 3 states explicitly that blindness was not due to any karmic causality, so the verses in question do not constitute any biblical confirmation of the hypothesis of reincarnation. Nor in this case would not be explicit about reincarnation, but possibly pre-existence of souls. The disciples were not acquainted with the Hindu and Buddhist concepts, but should have known, under the influence of the Hellenistic era, just about Gnosticism, Platonism, pre-existence. Even at Plato himself we find the idea of metempsychosis, but not the Hindu law of karma.

Another faith of Old Testament Jews, this time one official and widespread, was the belief in the resurrection. Thus, it was believed that the prophets, especially, could rise again and live among the contemporaries. The other Gospel passage cited by occultists refers to Jesus' question about who people

⁴ Constantin Bălăceanu Stolnici, *Introducere în studiul kabbalei iudaice și creștine*, Omnia, 1996, p. 63.

⁵ "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

thought it was Him, and the disciples reply, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." (Matthew 16:13-14). But here again, the esoteric exegesis is awfully wrong because people believed, as Herod Agrippa did too, "And said unto his servants: This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth in him." (Matthew 14:2), which means very clearly once again *the resurrection*, not reincarnation. The basis of this belief was also biblical based on Malachi 4:5, who predicted that the great day of Judgement, that Jews identified with a day of the coming of the Messiah, Elijah will show (about they *knew* that has not died, but was raised to heaven by the chariot and horses of fire):



"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." The belief that the Lord could be Jeremiah based on 2 Maccabees 2:1-8 and 15:13-16, after which Jeremiah showed himself to Judah Maccabee.

The adepts have claimed that the early Church experienced the teaching of reincarnation. And here it is also a disinformation, because there were at the most certain neo-Platonic influences found in

some Christian thinkers about the pre-existence of souls. The new agers rely on their support upon Origen (ca. 185 - ca. 254), Justin Martyr in 2nd century and Synezius of Cyrene 5th century. On the latter we learn from Father Coman *Patrology*: "Synezius considered the soul as 'a spark of intelligence' hidden in the depths of matter, as a seed of God (Hymn 3, vv. 560-562). There are not described other features of the soul than that it comes from God and through him the intelligence (nous) was placed in the body."⁶ We know that before his conversion to Christianity, Synezius believed, as a neo-Platonic, in the pre-existence of the soul but again, it's not about reincarnation. "Origen believed in the preexistence of souls, but not in transmigration nor in the incorporation of rational souls in animal bodies"⁷. Although Plato was invoked as a source of spreading the faith of reincarnation in the West, in reality it can be counted rather as Hindu origin, introduced into Europe via the English and German since the eighteenth century.

It is also argued that in the second century reincarnation was a belief widely spread among the Christian Gnostics. Among the most important representatives of Gnosticism are Basilides (around 125), Marcion (around 150) and Valentin (d. 160). Gnostics were closely related in that period with the manicheians, with more than 70 sects, and simonites. After a while the Gnostics came into conflict with the Church and were eventually subject to anathema, and many of their writings, including some apocryphal gospels (eg. *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Mary*) were burned as heretics. The Neognostics claim today that they represent the true inheritors of Christ's teachings, i.e. the Gnostics, an Esoteric Christianity that is opposed to official, exoteric orthodox and dogmatic Christianity of the former Catholic Church.



The condemnation of Origen's theology occurred at the Fifth Ecumenical Council is seen among the new age circles as a anathematization of the doctrine of reincarnation. We will see later how, in turn, more councils were called in support of the allegation regarding *the arbitrary prohibition of from that historical moment* of the belief of reincarnation by the official Church. Thus, surprisingly, were evoked also the union councils from 1274 and 1439. Beyond the theosophical fantasy, it tis documentary known that the Lyon Council II, regarded by Roman Catholic ecumenical XIV convoked by Pope Gregory X has dealt with "the union" concluded on 6 July with the Greeks.

Ferrara-Florence Council of 1439-1445, considered to be "the seventeenth ecumenical" convoked by Pope Eugenius IV, focused again on uniting with the Greeks. At these councils was debated and settled theological fact that the soul is going directly either to heaven, or in purgatory or

⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Coman, *Patrologie*, vol. 3, Ed. I.B.M, București 1988, p. 282

⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/432455/Origen/5403/Theological-System>

hell. In the Middle Ages, it was alleged that the Inquisition, established in 1184 by Pope Lucius III in the council of Verona under the name of the Holy Office and brought to Spain in the thirteenth century, had to combat a movement that is spreading very quickly, and namely the cathars (καθαροι, "the pure") who believed in reincarnation. Here we encounter a new overbid because of the documents shows that the cathars were rather dualistic, Gnostic, Manichean. In addition, they were anticlerical, antinomists, encratists and vegetarian iconoclasts, Puritans, anticosmists. Their views have given rise to cultural current *amor courtois*⁸. They could believe at the most in the pre-existence of souls, but, as in Origen's case, nowhere is explicitly mentioned reincarnation.



After the cathars comes the turn of Giordano Bruno, who was burned at the stake by the Inquisition in 1600, to be credited with membership of the doctrine of reincarnation. Beyond this mythology, it is known of Giordano Bruno that he was a defrocked Neapolitan monk. Iconoclast in his youth, he was rightly considered a crypto-Protestant. He supported inter alia Copernicus's views regarding the heliocentrism, and infinity of the universe. He openly claimed to be a Neoplatonic pantheistic magician⁹. Here's who he is admired by: "...His name enflamed the spirit and voice of countless Freemasons, free-thinkers, revolutionaries, materialists or anarchists of the nineteenth century... the most anti-democratic thinker, became a symbol of democracy!"¹⁰ He turned magic into 'scientific' manipulation of the masses and the human individual, where it is normal to be fully admired by his followers, psychologists, etc. He exercised great influence on the Rosicrucians, that esoteric ideological movement in the 17th century. Today the descendants of his spirit are active in the intelligence trusts as psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists. In the West, and after 1989 in our country too, their main field of action is mass media and the braintrusts.

Belief in reincarnation today

In the modern age, in the secular and paganized Western Europe have already penetrated 200 years ago the Eastern concepts of reincarnation. They were spread first among the intellectual elite, such as where the famous W. Goethe, who believed for example that his girlfriend Charlotte von Stein was once his wife.

⁸ I. P. Culianu, *Eros și magie în Renaștere*, Nemira, 1994, pp. 40-41

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 94-95.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 119-120.

The pessimistic German philosopher Schopenhauer was greatly influenced by Hindi philosophy and religion, and admired much the *Upanishads*. The Russian writer L. Tolstoy also, it is known that he had a great time Freemasonic sympathies, thought that we existed before this life and that we will return. In France, the authors Gustave Flaubert and George Sand also flirted, even if not explicitly, with thoughts on reincarnation.

The chief representative of the American transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson, believed that people come back, "in new guises". The Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck has called for a return to reincarnation. This belief looks like more beautiful, more just, cleaner, more moral, more fruitful, more accurate and more comforting than Theosophy. Here are explained all the intellectual and physical inequalities, all social injustices, all the damned injustice of fate. The German composer Richard Wagner would have been also draged to the Buddhist teachings, a feature typical of the era's cultural environment, quite similar in this regard with New Age appeared a century later.

In the early twentieth century, the Jewish Austrian composer Gustav Mahler addressed to his biographer Richard Specht statements that were open reference to reincarnation. In a somewhat surprising way, we encounter these concepts also in some interviews given by American businessman Henry Ford. These ideas have penetrated in the prosaic and realistic world of politics too. A prominent representative in this respect was, according to his friend Lord Riddell, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George.

In support of the hypothesis of reincarnation have been made so-called psychological evidence consisting of past life memory. Thus, they described cases of children age two, who talked about the events lived in another life. On these cases were concerned many researchers, of which we mention the psychiatry and parapsychology professor at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA, Ian Stevenson (b. 1918). He attribute all these odd cases the explanation of confirming reincarnation.

Among the researchers of this phenomenon occurred, of course skeptical positions too. These have included the psychologist S. Freud and the British biologist Julian Huxley. The latter has put the phenomena in question on behalf of chance events and heredity, being such on a materialistic evolutionary position. The American parapsychologist [William Roll](#) introduced as a working hypothesis psychometry, in which, "image memories", which are attached to objects can be grasped by a psychic.

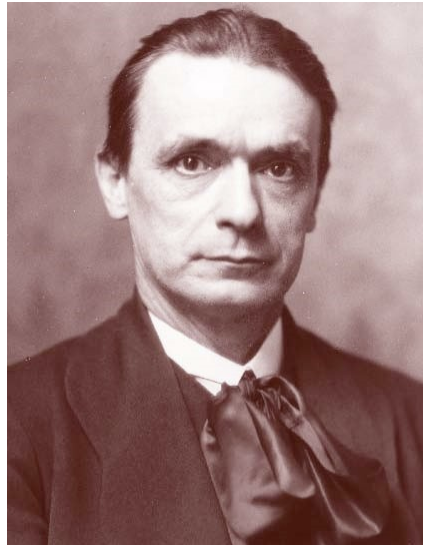
The literature devoted to the subject are currently hundreds of titles, many of which are easily accessible on the Romanian book market in this period. One of these books is the work of A.T. Mann¹¹. The author in question speaks for the ecological and spiritual paradigms of today: karma and reincarnation, arguing the absurdity that until 200 years ago this was an universal faith. According to a Gallup poll cited by Mann, in 1969 in the West, 18-25% of Catholics and Protestants accepted reincarnation¹². In 1981, 38 million Americans believed in reincarnation.

Like other authors of the same size in the area of contemporary Western, Mann tries at all costs to emphasize the idea that certain passages in Scripture support the idea of reincarnation. This time it is invoked John 3:5-6, the Savior's dialogue with Nicodemus. Another monumental blunder, because no further than 3:4: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time in his mother's womb and *be born*?" is annulled by that question any presumption of reincarnation.

What is real this time is that, unlike the Church, where the idea of reincarnation was never accepted, the theosophy movement and her kinship follower, anthroposophy, have spread extensively these views.

¹¹ *The Elements of Reincarnation*, Melbourne-1995

¹² Gallup & Proctor, *Adventures in Immortality*, p. 487



Rudolf Steiner presented reincarnation and karma in an evolutionary trend, a perspective embraced afterwards by the new agers. As about the occult observation of the *Akasha Chronicle*, we believe we can make a taking only if we have a genealogy according to the following supposed chain of karmic reincarnation: St. Elias - St. John the Baptist - Raphael - Novalis - R. Steiner.

But not only Steiner, but other famous occultists claimed observation in this 'universal data bank'. One of them was "the sleeping prophet" Edgar Cayce (1877-1945). Needless to mention that the results obtained by him are not in accordance with Steiner's statements, something actually very common for different astrologers. The psychological equivalent for the *Akasha Chronicle* is called 'The collective unconscious', a concept that was introduced by C.G. Jung. Under the guidance of Rudolf Steiner, a group of Protestant pastors, led by Friedrich Rittelmeier and Emil Bock, established in 1922 an alternative anthroposophical cult called *Die Christen Gemeinschaft*. One of the representatives of this cult, theologian Rudolf Frieling, sought to demonstrate the compatibility of Christianity with reincarnation¹³. Being familiar with the history of theology and the Universal Church, Frieling refers expressly to Origen's condemnation of the Fifth Ecumenical Council 553, citing exactly the original Latin: "*Si quis fabulos animarum praeexistentiam quis et ex illis quae monstrous consequitur restitution (apokatastasin) asseruent, anathema sit.*"¹⁴ The doubts and uncertainties are fading on what that council condemned.

Concerning the way soul begins, in the West there were two theories. The first, published in Catholicism, is *creationism*, which Protestants have opposed *Traducianism*. The Orthodoxy rejects both views, because of their onesideness and their unreliability.

In support of biblical confirmation of the concept of *karma* is cited one passage from the Epistle to the Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But to extract from this a karmic hint one have necessarily to read this verse in a theosophical key, the Orthodoxy never understood it as being about the consequences for future lives.

Frieling tried to find grounds in the Old Testament too, citing the example of Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." If this verse does not pose any problem to a Christian, even a nonteologian one, the following passage from Malachi 4:5 may extend an apparent stroke: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." We look forward to refute this assumption.

¹³ *Kristendom och Reinkarnation*, Frieling Rudolf, Stockholm 1985

¹⁴ "[If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema.](#)"

Ideas of teosophic-psychic nature have not missed any in our country¹⁵ too. An important representative of the prewar period was Scarlat Demetrescu. In his book *On the mysteries of life and universe*, on page 168 we find the habitual chapter about reincarnation, the author being an adept of a spiritualist evolutionism.

Refuting reincarnation

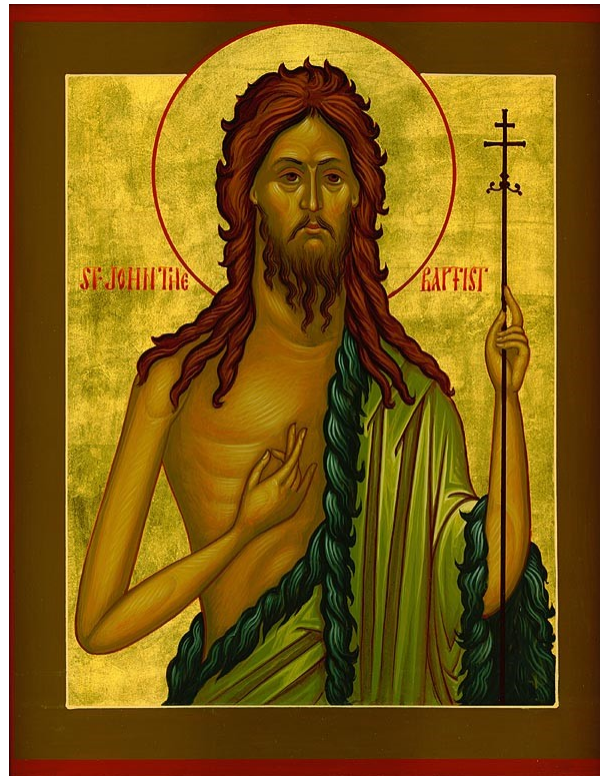
Since the last time New Age concepts make their presence felt more and more formal in our country, often encountering a spiritual attitude weakened by 40 years of atheism, we deem necessary to present a series of theological arguments against the statement that the *Holly Scripture* and the Church knew and accepted reincarnation. These arguments are of great benefit both to missionaries (priests, teachers of religion), and ordinary believers in any confrontation with this heresy.

For the beginning, the most trenchant scriptural argument against reincarnation is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews 9:27: "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement*". An idea similar to that expressed in Psalm 78:39: "For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." In the Gospel of Luke 16:22-23: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Here we see clearly the two facets of the soul after death.

In the Old Testament, Job 10:21: "Before I go whence *I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.*" And 16:22: "When a few years are come, *then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.*" But Job not only believed in one lifetime, but also in the resurrection (19:25-26): "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, And though after my skin worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

For a single life followed by the Late Resurrection advocate also the verses from the Gospel of John 5:29: "And those who have come out best, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of reproach." The key Scripturistic argument used by followers of reincarnation is that, according to the Savior, John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah reincarnated himself.

¹⁵ Romania



Let's see how to remove Scripturistical, not only with common sense logic, this false assumption. In the *Gospel of Luke*, when Zechariah's announcement by the Archangel Gabriel, "*And he (John) shall go before Him in spirit and power of Elias...*" (1:17). The New agers say also: yes, the spirit is the I of Elijah, citing the following: "*And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come*" (Matthew 11:14), and further, "*But I say unto you, that Elias has come already, and they knew him not...*" (17:12).

The orthodox answer to these objections is this:

'Whom do men say that 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 16:13-14) It is about two things:

- 1) not only about John the Baptist, but even the Savior is believed to be Elijah;
- 2) these assumptions prove Jewish faith in the possibility of resurrection and return to earth of the ancient prophets themselves, and not their reincarnation into others. A further proof for this assertion is the Matthew 14:2: "And (Herod) said to his servants, *This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.*" To this presumption Herod and others were based on Malachi 4:5, who prophesied that the day of the judgement, which Jews identified with the day of the coming Messiah, Elijah will be revealed: "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.*" About Elijah we read the 2 Kings 2:11: "as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." The moment it is confirmed in Jesus Sirach 98:12: "When Elijah was caught up in the sky, wind, Elisha was filled with his spirit." The same statement in 1 Maccabees 2:58: "Elijah, burning with zeal to the law was raised to heaven."¹⁶

¹⁶ This passage is interpreted as by the ufolatryan new agers as a scripturistical confirmation of an UFO.

In an apologetic manner, we can take a theological counter-attack on this passage, assuming the following: in the case of St. John the Baptist was the prophet Elijah reincarnated, how can be explained the moment of the Transfiguration?: "*And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus* " (Mark 9:4).



Reincarnation assumes that Elijah's self was reincarnated after *he died* first. And then, because Elijah was an adult, who spoke on the mountain with Christ? The collapse of the New Age logic is now inevitable, so most of them at this point deny that Elijah did not die but was only raised to heaven.

From here you move consistently in the *New Testament* to John 1:21: "And they asked him (John the Baptist): What then? *Art thou Elias? And he saith: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No.*" St. John Chrysostom has left us an Orthodox patristic exegesis on Mark 9:11¹⁷: "The Scriptures speak of two comings of Christ, about one that already happened and about one another that will be... forerunner of the second says that it will be Elijah, and the first was John. This one was called Elijah, not because he was Elijah, but because he did the work of that one. Therefore, as that one will be the forerunner of the Second Coming, this one was the forerunner of His first coming."

The alternative to the prophet Elijah, the prophet Jeremiah, is based on 2 Maccabees 2:1-8 and 15:13-16, according to which Jeremiah showed himself to Judah Maccabee, "*And Jeremiah rose his right hand and gave the golden sword to Judah they said these...*" (15:15)

Against the concept of karma we mention the last five articles of faith of [the Orthodox Creed](#) composed at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (May 1 to June 9 381) by the 150 Fathers:

"I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sin: I look for the Resurrection of the dead..."

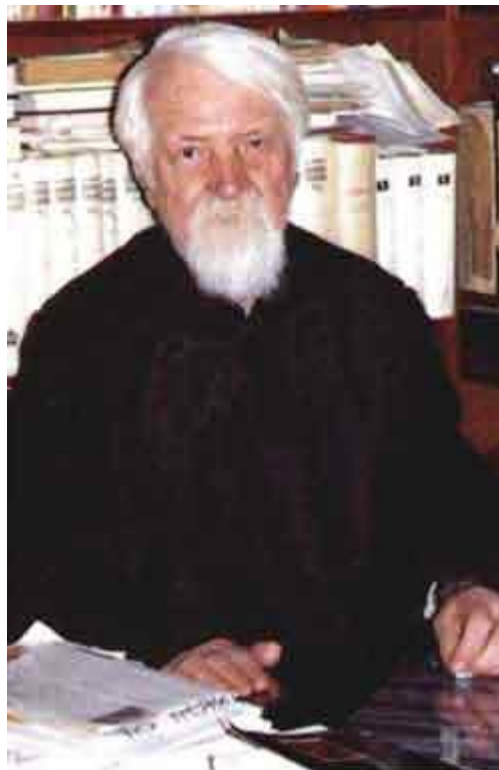
¹⁷ "And they asked him, saying, why say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

The law of karma is opposing both the action of removal of sin by the Baptism and to the resurrection of all and is therefore totally incompatible with the Gospel and Church teaching.

As a result, various church canons anathematizes the new age concepts of teosofic-anthroposophical type: "If anyone teaches that rational beings, in which the divine love is cooled, they have entered into gross bodies, such as ours and were called humans, while those who have reached the last stage of evil, took cold and dark bodies were, and there have been and are called demons and evil spirits (metempsychosis) let him be anathema." - S.Cp.4.

"If anyone teaches that as out of the order of angels and archangels were born souls, from which get demons, or that humans now can become again angels and demons, and all the heavenly order of hierarchy can be moved up or down or both downward and upward, let him be anathema." - S. Cp. 5

All the efforts of new agers to overcome the spiritual impasse of their era have proved futile, as they have consistently held outside the divine revelation preserved perfect and cleared theological into the framework of the Orthodox Church. In parallel with new age doctrines, we will set out some of the main theoretical assertions of fr. Dumitru Stăniloae¹⁸:



"The hindu philosophy with its cosmology based on the emanation, which implies a continuity of nature between Creator and creation, receives the Orthodox answer through affirming the creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). The cyclical conception of time would create a meaningless automatic repetition, repetition annulled by the presence in creation of the human spirit.

Against Platonism, Gnosticism and supporting pre-existing soul Origenism, fr Staniloae presents the orthodox position which states that the body and soul begin to exist simultaneously. The living man is ontologically an inseparable psychosomatic unit. When talking only about a spirit, we deal with an angel, devil or ghost.

¹⁸ [Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vol. 1, Ed I. B. M. al B.O.R., 1996.](#)

The human soul, even in a position after death, is none of these. The union of soul and body can be described by the model of Chalcedon, showing their union in one hypostasis (*hypostasis* or *prosopon*).

According to the St. Maximus the Confessor, we are a "bit" of God", a claim that might at first glance *only* superficially resemble the theosophical claims then we are a part *from* God. Clearly in this case is the theological confusion between nature (nature) and hypostasis (person). In other words, people are not at all "of the same nature (nature)" with God, and thereby "parts" *from* the deity, but, as St. Maximus says, bit *of* God, (i.e. who belongs to), as we say in the Holy Liturgy: "We offer to You these gifts from Your own gifts..."