

"The soul having been often born or, as the Hindus say, "Travelling the path of existence through thousands of births . . . there is nothing of which she has not gained the knowledge: No wonder that she is able to recollect . . . what formerly she knew . . . for inquiry and learning is reminiscence all."

-Emerson, "Representative Men"

Understanding the law of karma and its corollary, reincarnation, is displayed in numerous Biblical passages; e.g., "Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." -Genesis 9:6

If every murderer must himself be killed – by man; the reactive process obviously requires, in many cases, more than one lifetime.

The early Christian church accepted the doctrine of reincarnation, which was expounded by the Gnostics and by numerous church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, the celebrated Origen* (both 3rd century) and St. Jerome (5th century). The doctrine was first declared a heresy in A.D. 553 by the Second Council of Constantinople. At that time many Christians thought the doctrine of reincarnation afforded man too ample a stage of time and space to encourage him to strive for immediate salvation. But truths suppressed lead disconcertingly to a host of errors. The millions have not utilized their "one lifetime" to seek God, but to enjoy this world – so uniquely won, and so shortly to be forever lost. The truth is that mankind reincarnates on the earth until he has consciously regained his status as a son of God, i.e., until he achieves God-self-realization. Also known as Satori, Samadhi, Nirvana, Tao, heaven, the covenant, etc.

-Yogananda

Him that overcometh (achieve self realization, at-onement, Satori, Nirvana, Christ, etc.) will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. And he shall go no more out (i.e., shall reincarnate no more). . . to him that overcometh (achieves union) will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame (achieved heaven, enlightenment, etc.), and am set down with my Father in his throne (heaven, consciousness prior to thought).

-Jesus, Revelation 3:12, 21

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John . . . And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him** *in the spirit and power of Elias*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."†

Jesus twice unequivocally identified Elijah (Elias) as John: "Elias is come already, and they knew him not . . . Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist." Again, Christ says: "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

*Greek philosopher (A.D. 185? - 254?) and theologian who reinterpreted Christian doctrine through neo-platonist philosophy. His influential work was later condemned as unorthodox.

**"Before him," i.e., "before the Lord."

† Luke 1:13-17.

Matthew 17:12-13.

Matthew 11:13-14.

When John denied that he was Elias (Elijah),** he meant that in the humble garb of John he came no longer in the outward elevation of Elijah the great guru. In his former incarnation he had given the "mantle" of his glory and his spiritual wealth to his disciple Elisha. "And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee....And he took the *mantle* of Elijah that fell from him."†

The roles became reversed, because Elijah-John was no longer needed to be the ostensible guru of Elisha- Jesus, now divinely-perfected.

When Christ was transfigured on the mountain‡ it was his guru Elias, with Moses, that he saw. In his hour of extremity on the Cross, Jesus cried out: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias....Let us see whether Elias will come to save him."§§

The timeless bond of guru and disciple that existed between John and Jesus was present also for Babaji and Lahiri Mahassaya. With tender solicitude the deathless guru swam the abysmal waters that swirled between two lives of his *chela*, and guided the successive steps taken by the child and then by the man Lahiri Mahasaya. It was not until the disciple had reached his thirty-third year that Babaji deemed the time ripe for reestablishing openly the never-severed link.

-Yogananda

The Truth of Reincarnation

When a person dies, the soul leaves the body and human realm, but it may be born again or reincarnate into human life. The soul follows a natural cycle in an almost endless process of transformation and evolution. The cycles may be compared to different versions of a work of art. Each new version is undertaken with the expectation of improving the previous one.

During the first several lives in the human realm, a person may make many mistakes and accumulate much dissatisfaction. This accumulation will affect the present and future lives of the individual. It is like making a sculpture. Every application of the chisel leaves its mark in the statue. In the same way, everything one says and does is an exact projection of one's energy. When the inner being leaves the body, it carries with it the accumulation of internal and external behavior of the previous lives, which in turn form the actual energy basis of the present life. By the same principle, the behavior one projects in the present life will continually bring reformation.

Although all human beings begin with the same original nature, what each individual says and does creates wide differences. Our actions determine whether we distinguish or degrade ourselves. By cultivating self-awareness, we have the possibility of living according to our original nature rather than according to the pressures of society or one's own emotional disposition.

Through the subtle law of energy response, we know that all actions are an exact expression of one's energy. All human beings reveal their most intimate secrets through the expression of their energy, whether it is high, low, positive, negative, creative, destructive, inert, concentrated, moral or vicious. There is no way to hide this from the intuition of a developed or undistorted human being. Such a person can tell intuitively how far the inner being has evolved throughout its many lives.

** John 1:21.

† II Kings 2:9-14.

‡ Matthew 17:3.

§§ Matthew 27:46-49.