

In my previous post I talked about how Origen's view that souls existed before being born as humans related to his view that in the end, all things — including the most wicked beings in the universe — will convert and return to God: salvation for all! Also connected to this idea was Origen's notion that after death people would be reborn to, in a sense, "give it another go." Origen is our most famous Christian proponent of the idea of reincarnation.

The idea of reincarnation had been floated for centuries before Origen. In ancient Greece the great philosopher Pythagoras was widely believed to have been the first to perpetrate, or at least to popularize, the idea. Later it was allegedly held by such figures as Parmenides and Empedocles, the latter of whom had allegedly said "Before now I was a boy, and a maid, a bush and a bird, and a dumb fish leaping out of the sea."

So too we find it in the Roman tradition, as when Virgil's Aeneas visits the underworld and sees innumerable souls gathered around the River Lethe (Forgetfulness) before being sent back to earth in a "second body." He doesn't understand why anyone would want to leave paradise for the miseries of life, but he is told that "the wretches are not completely purged of all the taints, nor are they wholly freed of all the body's plagues" and so that need to be "drilled in punishments" in order to "pay for their old offenses." Only then can they "revisit the overarching world once more" by returning to bodies, to try again (Aeneid 6. 865-96).

It is often said today that reincarnation was a widespread teaching in early Christianity as well. In fact, the evidence for it is

To see the rest of what I have to say, you'll need to belong to the blog. It's easy to join, and costs less than fifty cents a week. That gives you five substantial posts, each and every week, going back over six years. And every cent goes to charity. So why not?

You need to be logged in to see this part of the content. Please [Login](#) to access.



[The Happy News! No One Stays In Hell!
Did We Exist Before We Were Born?](#)