

SOME ARGUMENTS FOR THE AFTERLIFE FROM THE Handbook OF CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Chapter 10 of this book discusses the evidence for life after death.

1 Since God is creative and just and loving we must live on after death

This assumes that God has no purpose that we are unaware of for letting us pass out of existence. It contradicts the view that God's mind is not ours for he knows all things.

2 Feeling the presence of the dead proves they are still alive

This is not a good thing to encourage. It can lead to denial being prolonged when the person needs help to move on. The person needs to feel the person is gone but somehow still linked to you. Perhaps the link is the memories or little things that belonged to them and were special.

3 Near-death experiences (NDE) are put down as evidence - though rather cautiously because nobody can be proved to have had an experience after dying and because they contradict Christian theology. No NDE without brain activity has ever been verified. If that happened the person would count as a resurrected person!

The fact that the authors would use an essentially non-Christian miracle, which usually involves meeting a being of light who does not care about your sins, smacks of sheer desperation and is an alarming lapse of logic. That miracle, if miracle is, refutes the core doctrine of Christianity which is that repentance or forgiveness is necessary and is what religion should be all about. Even the resurrection of Jesus cannot be true if repentance is immaterial for it is about expressing and incarnating the principle of mercy.

Evidence from history that Jesus rose is superseded by evidence that there is a being of light who does not judge and who is certainly not Jesus! Testimony from people you can talk to always supersedes even similar testimony from those who are no longer with us. Unlike the resurrection accounts, the being is glorious. Christianity's core doctrine that the resurrection of Jesus does not mean a return to life but an exaltation to eternal life and glory is granted no evidence at all even in the Bible. Jesus could have risen for all we know and died later and his revival from death is not the only one that is claimed in history.

The Handbook's treatment of near death experiences violates the assertion of the Handbook and the Christian Church and the Bible that miracles are signs of the truth and tell us truths about God, religious truths. Here miracles that contradict the Church are downplayed though recognised as satisfying the conditions for deserving to be believed.

Near death experiences do not really support spirituality or religion. They support the idea that the brain has the power to create experiences and credible visions and to deceive. As believable as they are, the experiences are not real. If the brain can do all that when somebody is very ill what is it up to the rest of the time? They could well be the strongest evidence that religion is about some subliminal need and not really about God or Jesus though that may not be apparent.

4 The resurrection of Jesus is supposed to prove life after death.

The dubious thing about the resurrection is that Jesus allegedly raised people from the dead before he raised himself and these testimonies are not focused on historical authentication like you would expect. When the Jews were saying the resurrection must have been a hoax, the natural thing for the Christians to have done would have been to verify the other resurrections as much as Jesus' own. But far from having done that, we have the story of the raising of the widow's son in Luke alone and Lazarus in John alone and they are treated soberly and briefly. More importantly no effort is made to authenticate the stories – another hint of a late origin for the gospels and that they were making a lot of the stuff up. The gospels of Matthew and Mark and Luke are similar to a great degree. John is very different. How the three gospels, Matthew and Mark and Luke can claim a right to encourage us to believe in the resurrection when they show collaboration is just like the three witnesses of a crime being allowed to confer together before being brought into court. No - its worse for there was no court for Matthew and Mark and Luke.

The book says that nature would not go to the trouble of evolving us to let us go out of existence at death

Nature goes to a lot of trouble to make babies and most babies die before birth even unknown to the mother. Many

scientists would reject the idea that nature has a purpose. If nature purposely went to a lot of trouble to make us it would want to give us bodily immortality for it makes bodies. If we survive death as spirits then that is beyond the scope and grasp of nature and so separate from it. If nature results in spirits that have no bodies it is not doing a very great job after going to all the trouble to make the bodies!

The book argues that mystical experience proves life after death for the mystics despite all the serious disagreements in interpreting their experience all agree that the consciousness lives on after death. I would add that most mystics have had no interest in caring for others which adds outstandingly pathetic weight to their testimony of an afterlife!

The Handbook is not worth talking about never mind purchasing. It avoids problems it cannot deal with. Evidence for the afterlife is desirable but not as desirable as proof. After all, to say somebody is going to live on after death is not a trivial matter. What if they are told they will live on and they do not? What if you think they are alive still and they are not? The argument that it is comforting and thus justified insults the fact that it is not about comfort but truth. If you believe in love, you want people to have a relationship with you as an existent being. No truly good person wants to go out of existence with relations and loved ones thinking the relationship is going on still.

It is not right to be willing to accept that evil has a purpose even if you don't know what it is and when no answer seems to work just so that you can believe in God and maybe enjoy an eternal afterlife. And what if you want to believe in the afterlife for the sake of others? Why do you believe others suffer for the greater good even if they are unwilling and will never reap the benefits when you would turn down life after death if it demanded that you suffer forever for others because it was the only way to help them?

