

FALSE HOPE OF REINCARNATION

REINCARNATION

Most believers in a life after death believe in reincarnation. That has always been so. The doctrine says that after we die we come back in new bodies. It is believed that we all lived before. Reincarnation is usually taken to refer to returning in a human body. Transmigration is the doctrine that you can come back as an animal.

Reincarnation and the doctrine of karma, that the suffering and good you send out of you returns to you later perhaps in a new incarnation, do not have to go together. You can be randomly reincarnated without karma. But anybody that wants to believe in reincarnation likes to hope that karma exists for they want to work for a good incarnation the next time round. Reincarnation with karma is a frightening doctrine. It is ten times worse without it for you could come back as an AIDS baby and most people in the world are in a bad way.

Karma is a vile doctrine but perhaps it is untrue and we have chosen to be here?

Some think that when we are in the midst of unhappy lives now, we must not have chosen to be human and that since we survive death we must be subject to some law of reincarnation that forces us to be on earth instead of in some heavenly happiness.

But perhaps the mind which may exist without the body develops in the womb and then lives on after the death of the body without reincarnation.

It could be that we don't know anything at all but sense that there is a body available when we are in between incarnations. We then may struggle for the body and the winner gets incarnated in the body or the early bird catches the worm. Perhaps there is a terrible war going on all the time in the spirit world with ghosts fighting it out to get into a body.

Maybe we want bodies and choose them ourselves. Perhaps it is worse being outside the body than in it which makes us willing to come back to earth in a new body after death. Perhaps being disembodied is a painful and lonely experience. Perhaps we are driven by this pain to take the bodies. If so then there is no karma for it could hold us back to get us to pay off our debts of suffering. It is ludicrous to imagine that the mind is separate from the body and suffers without it. If a body had no senses or nerves the mind wouldn't be able to suffer. If you are separate from your body then your body is not you but an accessory.

Death is really nothing if we live on. Reincarnation cannot explain death. It would be easier and wiser to let a person live on in the one body and wipe their memories or some of them at various long intervals.

Reincarnation is no consolation for the one who fears annihilation at death for when you won't remember your past lives when your next one starts so you might as well have had none at all.

YOGA

Yoga is prayer in action. It holds that exercise can be a tool to help you realise that you are actually the creator of the universe. Yoga is a tool for handling the need to escape repeated incarnations. Some wonder if running down the value of the body or losing sight of it gets people to control their bodies and lives better. If that happens then it is in spite of the belief not because of it. The belief is still bad and declared bad by how you have to be a step ahead of it. If you are a yoga practitioner and see yourself not as a body but as having one that may lead you to caring for it like a piece of property.

CHRISTIANITY AND REINCARNATION

The Bible says in the book of Hebrews that a man only dies once. Jesus said John the Baptist had come in the spirit of Elijah. This is thought by some to refer to reincarnation. But the Bible says Elijah never died so that is out. Spirit means breath so that takes the mystery out of the text. It means John came with the ethos and in the ethos of the ministry of Elijah. Elijah was a man and had a spirit. The fact that Jesus came so close to reincarnation language and rejected that meaning shows he is against the doctrine. The doctrine is totally absent from the Bible and Christian tradition.

The Handbook of Christian Apologetics argues against reincarnation thus:

It is denied by the Bible and by the Churches.

So what? You Churches think you know it all. You think you are something special. The Bible banned belief in reincarnation yes but said nothing to justify its claim to know it was wrong. It just says it without saying how it knows.

It would mean that the incarnation of Jesus was just an apparition.

This is not true as Jesus was supposed to be God or the Son of God. The options for him were different from ours. For example, he rose again. The book contradicts this assertion with the next point it makes that it also pretends undermines belief in reincarnation.

It would mean we incarnate as well as Christ and take away from the uniqueness of his incarnation.

Nonsense - for he was supposed to be the revelation of God. And he said we are not God. Jesus if he was God or the Son of God would be unique regardless of whether or not we engaged in incarnation or reincarnation.

It is supposed to imply that God made a mistake by putting us in bodies

Not necessarily, when he does it once he could do it again. The book is using a straw-man approach. It wants to pretend that reincarnation goes with the idea that being in a body is a terrible thing for the body is a prison in the soul. When God makes a body for a baby in the womb and the baby is lost before three months you don't see any mistake there. Some consistency would be nice! If God makes mistakes we are not allowed to see it. We must demean ourselves by failing to look.

Reincarnation is supposed to say that souls are imprisoned in bodies which contradicts what we know about mind and body being interconnected.

But if we have souls now and they are not in prison this argument isn't necessarily right. We fight for life - we don't act like imprisoned souls.

Reincarnation is supposed to blame evil on the body.

Often it does not. It may blame it on our acts. And even if it did blame the body who can prove that it is not the body's fault? The reincarnation doctrine can be reformulated to avoid blaming the body. You might suggest that we could be reincarnated because the body is the best thing we can have with all its flaws.

Reincarnation is rejected by the book because it says we come back to learn which makes no sense when the memory is wiped at conception.

But that presupposes that we need the lessons of the past life in this life which is not necessarily true. The wiping could be necessary for we will know too much. Perhaps when we need no more incarnating we will remember all and it will all fit into a whole picture that will show the reasons why the memories were wiped. No two situations are the same so maybe that could be the answer to the problem of people coming back to seemingly learn the same things over again. It could be that we have vocations in each life. That would mean we are here to develop certain virtues for this life that won't be looked for in the next.

Our memories are wiped all the time during life and we tend to remember inaccurately. If that isn't a problem in this life, why should memory loss stand as a refutation of reincarnation?

The book dismisses the evidence for reincarnation, memories of past lives, as being caused by telepathy or demons.

The existence of telepathy is only a guess not a scientific fact. The talk about demons is just a game to scare people away from reincarnation.

The witness of thousands people we can talk to and interview and get to know when they testify to a return from the dead is ignored. The Handbook believers favour the testimony of a handful of men we know little about like the apostles. That irrationality and unfairness is what I would call trafficking with demons.

The next problem posed by the writers of that awful book is why reincarnation is necessary.

They reject it for no answer has been thought of. Then think of one however complicated. You can't prove something wrong just by finding no reason for it.

REINCARNATION AND PHILOSOPHY

For this study we will deploy the OCR Philosophy of Religion for AS and A2, Matthew Taylor, Editor Jon Mayled, Routledge, Oxon, New York, 2007.

What is the link between soul and body or mind and body?

There are two basic answers.

One is that the soul and body or mind and body are separate. The soul or mind controls the body but is separate from it and so can survive the death of the body. This view is called dualism. The soul can go on to take another body. Reincarnation is possible. With dualism there can be only one me at the one time.

Two is that the mind or soul cannot be separated from the body. Body and soul are the one thing. This view is called monism. Some monists believe that when you die you cease to exist but your mind comes back in another body. The new body isn't a problem at all for they say my body now is not the same body I had years ago for it rebuilds itself.

We conclude from this that no idea of body and soul necessarily excludes reincarnation.

Monism is credible because sensors developed by NASA can detect and identify words you say silently to yourself without speaking audibly. A scanner was used in 2005 which could picture what people were merely thinking (page 273). These experiments strongly show that thoughts happen in the brain - they have a physical not supernatural cause. If we survive death by resurrection or reincarnation and monist theory is true, it follows then that I could be copied for with resurrection and reincarnation what is happening is the creation of what is more or less a replica of me. Believers in this theory say that a replica is not the same as a copy. But this isn't believable. If a replica of me is made, then how do I prove that this replica is not a copy? How do I know a copy is not a replica? You can make several copies or replicas of a person so which one is the person? All of them?

Against this it is said that there can only be one me for part of being human or person is being an individual. The reply to that is that if there were two copies made at the same time then which one is me and which one is the copy? Why aren't both me? Why aren't both copies? Both have had the same experience that makes me me so it suggests that BOTH are me.

Another reply is that if I die and there are two me's created after my death one will still be as much of a person as the other. To say there being more than one me is a problem is nonsense. Its confusing for people yes but you never say that the argument is proven wrong by being confusing and doing away with the way we think of people as individuals.

Some philosophers are saying the replica is not me but a copy because there is no physical continuity. If I die and my body rises again three days later the result is a new person who thinks he is me and remembers my experiences but who is not me. But my body as it is now living has been made from entirely new substances and the body I had ten years ago has literally gone down the toilet gradually. The physical link isn't important. There could still be a supernatural link. Perhaps the mind is able to link through time and space when it dies to the new body. Perhaps there is something incomprehensible happening that is the solution. After all, we cannot comprehend or explain how thoughts happen. Christians cannot deal with these problems and yet they have the nerve to talk as if the resurrection of Jesus is believable. Any evidence for the resurrection is wrong if philosophy disproves it so philosophy should be sorted out first. Even when you are looking for evidence you are doing philosophy so they pay homage to philosophy by looking for evidence and then they trample on it.

Peter Geach (page 279) contends that if you survive death as a spirit then there are problems identifying you so you need your body back. He held that the only way to make sense of life after death was to contend that people die and rise again. Resurrection was his solution.

Geach rejects reincarnation for he says that a link between the new life and the life of the person who died cannot be established. Richard Swinburne rejects reincarnation because there is no physical continuation between the brain of the person that died and the baby that is born after and supposed to be her reincarnation (page 294).

This was an incredible thing for a believer in God to argue across. Why? Because if we survive death as spirits or at least are spirits until we rise again God could take care of the identity thing. The Bible speaks of formless beings being given appearances by God and being able to speak audibly. The forms may be like visions that God uses to let other people know who you are and that you are there.

Also, how do we identify God if God has no body? Geach should say God is not a spirit at all but a material being if he wants to be consistent. Geach speaks of incomprehensible mysteries in his faith and has the nerve to say that just because he thinks there are problems with reincarnation he is entitled to reject it. There might be an incomprehensible solution for we are talking big mystery in relation to reincarnation.

Resurrection is a less probable hypothesis than reincarnation.

Page 294, says that the central idea of reincarnation is that the soul is eternal that is without beginning or end. I would correct this to say that it is the central idea of many systems based on reincarnation. But why can't a soul be made and have a beginning but no end?

The reasons for preferring belief in reincarnation to resurrection are as follows. More people in the world testify to

reincarnation than to resurrection.

Reincarnation asks us to make a good world for when we and our families will return. Resurrection doesn't care about this at all for it says you are out of the world forever when you die. Reincarnation respects the body as it is while resurrection seeks a better body that is ghostlike and magical and immortal.

Reincarnation is more comforting and realistic than a nebulous belief in a resurrection that we don't understand.

Reincarnation faces less rational problems than belief in resurrection. For example with resurrection what body is raised? The one I had when I was ten? The one I had when I died at 105? The body is not a thing but a process of rebuilding and changing. Reincarnation does not speak of super-miracles. Resurrection does for it has every person who ever lived coming out of their graves. Resurrection is based on the dubious claims of Jesus Christ who promised to rise again as a sign that he was from God and when he finally did it nobody was around to see it so some sign!

MEMORIES OF PAST LIVES

There is no scientific explanation of how memories of our past lives could stay with us. Real or not, they must come from some psychic power if they really exist. That means we never have any real reason for thinking they are really our memories. Maybe we picked up the information psychically?

The trouble is that fraud or cannot be eliminated when a person seems to remember a previous incarnation!

Finally

Reincarnation is a guess. It has no rational or philosophical or scientific basis at all. It gives no proof that murder is wrong. If murder is sending a person away into a new life that is not murder but getting rid of them. And karma which usually travels with reincarnation is not a harmless concept. New Agers in London once reasoned that the Nazi monsters who murdered Jews were being reincarnated as modern Israelis and this was about "karmically balancing former hatreds" Melanie Phillips told us that in her book *The World Turned Upside Down*. Reincarnation and karma are not bread and butter and is better for them never ever to have been believed than for them to be believed and hurt so much as one person. That can be said of any religious idea.

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