

THE RIDDLE OF REINCARNATION

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular beliefs in the world concerning death is the transmigration or reincarnation of the soul. This belief is the main competitor today to the Christian concept of heaven and hell.

Hollywood stars such as Shirley Maclaine have given reincarnation great popularity. One finds increasing references to it in TV shows and movies. The tabloids at grocery store checkouts run sensational stories "proving" it every week. What is reincarnation all about, and how should Christians respond to it?

I. Eastern Transmigration

The orthodox Hindu idea of reincarnation teaches that when you die, your soul does not go to heaven or hell. Instead, your soul goes into some other kind of body here on earth.

This body can be an insect, fish animal or human body. This is why they practice vegetarianism, and will not even kill the pests that destroy their harvests.

II. Western Reincarnation

When occultists such as Edgar Cayce realized that the concept of reincarnating into animal and insect bodies would not be attractive to westerners, they decided to alter the concept.

Using the western concepts of evolution and progress, they taught that through reincarnation the soul always progressively evolves up the scale of being. Thus you cannot regress back into an insect or animal body once you have reached the human stage. You are either born into another human body, or you fly off the wheel of karma and are absorbed back into oneness.

III. The Theory Of Karma:

In Hindu theology, there is no personal God who hands out rewards and punishments like there is in the Bible. Instead, there is the non-personal principle of karma, which decides on the basis of the good and evil you have done in previous lives if you will be reborn as rich or poor, healthy or handicapped, slave or master, etc.

IV. Good And Bad Karma

Karma teaches that you are either suffering or prospering in your present life because of the evil or good you did in a previous life.

If you are born as a poor little "crack" baby in Harlem with terrible physical and mental

sufferings, you are only getting what you deserve. You must have done some really evil things in a past life to have such "bad" karma. But if you are born into a rich white family with health and wealth all your days, then you too only getting what you deserve. You must have done some really good things in a past life to have such "good" karma.

V. The Arguments For Reincarnation

1. It solves the problem of evil. Karmic reincarnation solves the problem of evil by viewing it in terms of punishment and reward. If you are suffering in this life, it is because of the evil you did in a past life. If you prospering, it is because of the good you did in a past life. Everyone is only getting what they deserve.

Answer: Karmic reincarnation does not solve the problem of evil.

a. You ultimately arrive at a "first" life in which there was no previous life to explain the evil in it.

b. Or, you end up making evil eternal which only extends the problem, not solves it.

2. Reincarnational recall proves it.

a. Deja vu recall.

b. Spontaneous recall

c. Hypnotic recall

d. Psychic recall

Answer. These arguments are erroneous.

a. Deja vu can be "felt" with things built in your lifetime, such as a house or a city as well as with people.

b. Logically speaking, when more than one person at the same time claims to be the present reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha, Elvis, etc., either one is right and the others are liars, or they are all liars, but they can't all be right.

c. Spontaneous recall never happens under scientific conditions. Thus it is worthless as evidence.

d. Hypnotic recall is highly unreliable. Ex. Bridey Murphy

e. Psychic recall is plagued with the problem of fraud. How can you tell if they really know who you were in a past life?

f. Why are recalls usually of important people?

g. Why is it that all recall experiences teach Hindu doctrine? In all the hundreds of cases I have researched, I did not find a single instance where orthodox Christians were recalled. Where are the recalls of Calvin, Spurgeon, Edwards, etc?

3. The bible teaches it.

John the Baptist was a reincarnation of Elijah. Jesus told us that we must be "born again" into a new body at death.

Answer: Since Elijah never died, he cannot be reincarnated. The "new birth" has to do with spiritual regeneration in this life.

4. Christianity once taught it, but it was later removed by church councils.

Answer: What council? When? Where? There is no evidence of this in church history. The early church fathers all wrote against it.

The Christian answer:

- a. The atonement of Christ makes reincarnation unnecessary.
- b. The resurrection of the body makes reincarnation impossible.