

Zarah & Pharez

Part Thirteen

Questions & Answers

(continued from Part 12)

*** *Does sonship allow the teachings of reincarnation into its message?***

As we shared before, we'd like to pick up where we left off. If we should repeat certain points that have already been mentioned in the previous article, it's only that we might tie it all together (we'll try not to be too redundant). Now, with that being said, we'll finish our response.

An important factor that determines whether or not we would allow for reincarnation has to do with our anthropological point of view. It stands to reason that the way in which we view man's original design has a great bearing on the way in which we view his destiny.

As we shared before, the Eastern view is purely monistic regarding anthropology. It states that, in the beginning, what is now perceived as being the individual spirit (atman) originally found its existence in the Universal Spirit (Brahman). At such a time, it existed in a single indistinguishable form, much like a drop of water exists in the ocean. Where does the drop begin and the ocean end? None can say. Thus, it had no individuality of its own, and no personal identity. However, *somehow* (no one seems to be able to explain the mechanics of it) it began to think of itself as being separated from Brahman, as being something "other than" the Divine (what I'd like to know is, if, in the beginning, there was but One Divine Consciousness, from whence came the capacity to think apart from *IT*?). As a result of this "mistaken identity," the spirit became "trapped" within an illusionary body of flesh (a body of its own making), and from that time forward, a circular struggle ensued between dualistic opposites: the Creator vs. the created, the spiritual vs. the material, the spirit vs. the body, right vs. wrong, good vs. evil, that which is real vs. that which is but an illusion, etc.. Naturally, of course, when one body reached the end of its days, it would return to the mayadic elements from whence it came. But because the spirit would still have "leftover" Karmic debt for which to pay, it would be forced to reenter another prison house of flesh, in order to serve out its "full term." Round and round the spirit goes, like a hamster on a treadmill. Where it stops, nobody knows. But the hope of the practitioner of Eastern philosophy is that the spirit might ultimately find

release from the body, from the nauseous Wheel of Samsara, and that it might become reunited with (or reabsorbed into) God.

By contrast, the Judeo-Christian worldview is that when God originally created man, He did so by deliberately and purposefully breathing spirit into an earth-formed body (Gen. 2:7). He then called this union a *nephesh* (literally speaking in the Hebrew language, a breathing creature. KJV and others translate it as "a living soul," in a very broad and general sense, though the word soul might not be the best choice. The Greek word thought to be its equivalent, *psuche*, is usually more specific in the way in which it's used, and speaks of a particular part of man's being, rather than the whole. But I digress). Based on the biblical account, then, the incarnation of the spirit occurred, **not** as a form of punishment, and **not** as the result of a mistake which the spirit had committed, but by divine design of the Creator. It was God's plan from the beginning, and it was a very good one indeed.

Both reincarnation and resurrection represent salvific processes through which the spirit is believed to pass, in order that it might be restored to its original state. However, the question that must be asked is, from what is it saved, and unto what state is it restored? When compared alongside one another, it becomes clear that they represent two completely incongruous thought-systems regarding salvation. For example,

Resurrection speaks of a progressive work of salvation (He has saved us, He does save us, and He will yet save us--- ref. II Cor. 1:10), a work which comes to bear upon the whole man. Since death had its impact on every aspect of man's being, and death by sin, then we could say that resurrection is the reversal process (and then some) of that life-depriving effect. It commences with the spirit, it continues with the soul (comprised of the intellect, emotions, will and desire), and it will ultimately conclude with the body. Thus, resurrection could be described as salvation to the uttermost, a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:5). According to Ephesians 2:5-6, it quickens us after once we were dead, it saves us from our sins, it raises us up together, and it makes us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Not only that, but we have the assurance that it will ultimately quicken our mortal bodies. All this occurs by the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, the Spirit that now works in us (Rom. 8:11). To quote from the words of Paul, the process is one wherein we are progressively changed "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (II Cor. 3:18).

Reincarnation also suggests a progressive work of salvation, but it is thought to be a work which is accomplished over an extended number of lifetimes by the individual himself, rather than by an external savior. It provides as many opportunities as are necessary for the spirit to work out its own salvation, in any one of a number of ways that are believed to be available. Therefore, salvation, as explained by transmigrationalists, might best be described as being more of an escape route. That from which it offers escape is not sin and death, but rather, from the illusion that such things exist. And it suggests that this salvation ultimately concludes with disembodiment, when the spirit is finally severed from the body, and is restored to a state wherein it ceases to exist as a separate entity.

Given the familiarity he had with the competing religious beliefs of his time, it's very likely that Paul had this difference in mind when he wrote in II Corinthians 5:1-5, *For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee*" (NKJV).

Again, as we said, the goal of reincarnation is that the spirit might be unclothed or disembodied, and released from the confines of this earthly house. But the hope of sonship is in resurrection---*not* that we should be found naked, but that we might be *further* clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up by life! For the believer in Christ, that which is within shall overtake that which is without, and we shall be changed! Praise God!

Summarily, then, the Christian attitude toward the body is one of respect. The reason why we say this is threefold. First of all, it's because the body is considered to be a part of that which was made in God's image. The second reason is because it's viewed as being God's temple, the earthly house of this tabernacle, a place that is considered to be holy and sacred to the Lord (I Cor. 6:19). And finally, it's because we are urged to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). We are commanded to give our bodies entirely over to the service of the Lord, because our bodies are the divinely-designed means by which God expresses Himself in this world. This was His plan in the beginning, and, by virtue of the resurrection, this will be His plan in the ages to come. Even though it can exist apart from it, God created the human spirit for the express purpose of inhabiting the human body. However, the Eastern attitude varies greatly from this. Because the body is generally viewed as being a prison house for the spirit, it's usually looked upon either with disdain, or as being simply a place where one may work off Karmic debt, and better himself for the next life. (Honestly, now, have you ever known anyone to love a debtor's prison?)

(We don't want to become sidetracked here, but the question might be asked, if this is so, then why does it seem as if New Agers are more concerned about physical health, i.e. diet and exercise, than are many Christians? Well, for one thing, while the Christian position has always been one of respect for the body, it has, sad to say, not always been its practice. I speak this to our shame. For another thing, despite the Eastern belief that the body is but a part of the illusory world, those who embrace it also believe that, in order for there to be a consistent flow of divine Energy (Chi, Ki or Prana) in the universe, we must bring our minds and bodies into a state of alignment with it. An unhealthy body is believed to block the flow of Energy from passing through the chakra points; and this results in a disturbance of the vital continuity of Spirit (at least, that's what we're told). Finally, we must remember that all Eastern philosophy ultimately rests on pantheistic monism [that is, that God is everything, and everything is God.] Included in "everything," of course, would be the body. Therefore, those who embrace New Age philosophy will

generally take one of three extremes. Either they will 1) look upon the body as a prison house [and thus whip themselves through ascetical practices and sense-depriving disciplines, in order to earn Karmic "brownie points" for the future]; 2) they will look upon it as a transient dwelling, but one which must be kept up in a condition of wellness or wholeness, in order to maintain universal equilibrium; or else 3) they will worship the body as God. Needless to say, none of these extremes shows the proper attitude that God intends for us to have concerning our bodies.)

There are those who would argue that the Biblical position toward the body actually reveals more of an Eastern influence than perhaps most Christians are willing to admit. For instance, they insist that the book of Job is a perfect example of the Eastern mindset, and assert that Job generally viewed his own incarnational experience as that of a spirit woefully held captive by a body. According to them, this proves that Job was greatly affected by the Hindu way of thinking. They also assert that the apostle Paul looked upon the body as a vile, detestable thing that was unworthy of honor. His own words are seen as proof that he, too, sat in the shade of the Banyan Tree. Since some feel there is merit to these arguments, we'll take a look at the verses upon which these claims are based, namely, Job 10:11 and Philippians 3:21. We'll begin with Job's lament before God:

"Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about: yet Thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech Thee, that Thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt Thou bring me into dust again? Hast Thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews." (Job 10:8-11)

If we are to understand these words of Job, we must needs consider them in light of the circumstances in which they were spoken. As you know, Job was, by this time, in an pitifully infirm state. He was physically afflicted with sore boils from head to toe, and was emotionally suffering from the loss of his children. Naturally, therefore, he would feel as if he were clothed in a corruptible state of being, and miserably bound within mortal woof. This, in a nutshell, explains his comments. *You see, it was not merely his existence in a human body that made him feel imprisoned; rather, it was his existence in an infirm body that made him feel this way.* Anyone who has ever suffered personally from a debilitating illness, or who has witnessed firsthand the sufferings of another, can relate to the cry of his heart. He felt trapped in a body that was racked with sickness, and he desperately wanted things to change! (It's important that we read this within its context. For while some would contend that the "me" referred to in verse 11 is the voice of the spirit speaking apart from the body [the "real" Job, they say], they usually fail to couple this with fact that the "me" in the preceding verses is clearly associated with the bodily part of Job's being, i.e. "clay" and "dust." The truth is, Job didn't just look at himself as being a spirit living in a body. He considered himself to be "fashioned together round about" of spirit, soul and body, and was fully conscious of every dimension of his being.)

To demonstrate that his feelings of imprisonment had to do with his physical and emotional condition, and not merely with his existence within an earthly body, compare these words with his previous statement:

*○And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me. My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest. **By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.**" (Job 30:16-18)*

It should be plain by this that Job saw the ravages of disease as having effectuated a change in his fleshly garment." And it was his changed, disease-riddled garment of flesh, bones and sinews, that bound him about as an ill-fitting collar. Judging from his own words, it must have felt like a strait-jacket to him!

In order to remove all doubt regarding whether or not Job entertained the common aspirations of Calcutta, we'll add this. In spite of his confining circumstances, Job never lost hope. And the hope that he had was not concurrent with those of Hinduism. He absolutely did not share their beliefs, no, not in the slightest way. (The way some tell it, you'd almost picture Job sitting in the lotus position in the ash heap, in hopes of achieving enlightenment!) However, lest anyone think that Job expected his deliverance to come through disembodiment, that is, by being released from physical incarnation, just listen to this emphatic and explicit declaration of his faith:

○O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in a rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:23-27) To be sure, this old patriarch was not denying the direness of his condition. Nor was he trying to convince himself that it was all just a lying vanity. He knew full well that, except the Lord should intervene on his behalf, death would run its course, and dissolution would overtake his body. And yet, he was just as surely persuaded that, even if this was to happen, that would not spell his end. Another change was destined to occur, which would loosen him from the power of the grave, allow him to stand once again upon the earth, and enable him to behold his Redeemer with his own eyes, and in his own flesh. Undoubtedly, this was the change which he had in mind when he asked (and answered in the same breath) the age-old question, *○If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."* (Job 14:14) After reading this, can anyone honestly deny that Job believed in, and hoped for the bodily resurrection of his members?

Now, let's look at the verse which some allege speaks dishonorably of the body, Phil. 3:20-21:

○For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His

glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

It must be noted that there are two times where the word vile appears in the KJV of the New Testament. In each of those instances, it was translated from a different word. The first time it appears is in Rom. 1:26, where Paul said that God gave certain men over unto vile affections. The actual Greek word Paul used is *atamia* (# 819 in Strong's), and means *infamy, i.e. comparative indignity, disgrace*. This word is also translated in other places in the KJV as dishonor, reproach, and shame. In each case where it's found, the context surrounding it supports its usage. It carries a very definite meaning. However, the word that Paul employed in Phil. 3:21 is altogether different. It's the Greek word *tapeinosis* (#5014), and it means *to depress or to humiliate (in condition or heart); --- abase, bring low, humble (self)*. The fact is, while the KJV's translation could have been better, there is no better word in the Greek language that Paul could have chosen to describe the condition of man's body after the fall. Whereas once it had been the object of the most magnificent display of glory, and the perfect picture of God's crowning achievement in the created realm (though it was destined for even greater manifestations of glory), it had now fallen into subjection to vanity, and to the weak and beggarly elements of the world. It became sense-ruled, rather than Spirit-led, and was inclined toward the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Nevertheless, while it is a far cry from the original state in which God created it, there is still nothing dishonorable, disgraceful or intrinsically evil about it. As the Psalmist David said, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We find nothing in the writings of Paul, or any other New Testament writer, for that matter, that would suggest that we ought to think of ourselves otherwise.

Besides those stemming from anthropology, there are other differences that are worthy of note. And there are multiple reasons why the New Testament teachings on resurrection make it unique and exclusive to the Christian faith. As Doug Groothuis once said, the significance of the bodily resurrection of Jesus is not exhausted by the idea of a resuscitated corpse. No, it goes much further than that. There had been other individuals who had been raised from the dead (but who later returned to their graves). But Christ alone is recognized as being the Firstborn of those who slept, the First Begotten of the dead. He is distinguished from every other religious leader in the history of the world by the facts of His bodily resurrection and His ascension...facts, we might add, that were attested to by a great number of witnesses. Surely, had He not been raised in their sight, and taken up out of their midst, those who professed to have observed these things would not have been willing to stake their lives on them.

So, what is the significance of Jesus's resurrection? And what makes it so special? Well, among other things, it serves two primary purposes. The first of those purposes, of course, is to establish the fact that God accepted the sacrifice of His Son as a Sin-Offering for the entire race of man. We need not question whether Jesus was received in our stead...the fact that He was raised from the dead provides us with all the assurance that we could ever need! We don't mean to sound like a broken record on this, but it's worth repeating again and again: *our justification is directly linked to His resurrection.*

As the apostle Paul said, if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then we would still be dead in trespasses and sins! Had He merely been reincarnated after His crucifixion, this would have done nothing to have justified us. But the resurrection declares that the work that was done at Calvary was accepted on our behalf, thereby making it possible for us to advance in God. No wonder Peter rejoiced in the Lord, saying, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”* (I Pet. 1:3, NKJV). His resurrection has birthed within us a living hope, and one that is predicated on the abundance of God’s mercy. *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He Who did not spare His Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* (Rom. 8:31, NKJV).

The second reason why His resurrection is significant is that it provides us with an example of the resurrection of our own bodies. This is a great mystery, to be sure. But whether we sleep the sleep of death, or whether we are alive and remain at His appearing, will absolutely make no difference at all. *“We shall all be changed,”* Paul said, *“in a moment* (Gr. *atomos*, the etymological root of our English word ATOM. It applies, not only to the smallest imaginable division of time, but also to the smallest imaginable particle of matter), *in the twinkling of an eye* (Gr. *rhipe*, literally, the sudden jerking of the eye, or the swift refocusing of one’s attention), *at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (I Cor. 15:51-52). Of a truth, our change will be swift, our change will be thorough, and our change will be certain! Hallelujah!

Some have claimed that the fact that Jesus appeared in various forms following His death on the cross supports the theory of reincarnation. However, the empty tomb makes an entirely different statement. The fact that His body could not be found indicates that the different forms in which He appeared were but manifestations of that one and selfsame body, resurrected out from among the dead. You see, it was not that He had *exchanged* His body for another, whenever He passed from this world to the next. No. It was that His body had been *changed* to such a degree that He could actually alter its appearance at will, whenever it served His purpose to do so. That same body could materialize and dematerialize, could pass through walls as if they were constructed of mere tissue paper, and was totally independent of earthly sustenance. These are just a few of the fantastic powers and capabilities of the glorified existence, conditions to which we may all look forward. What a marvelous future God has in store for His sons!

This highlights one of the most outstanding points of difference. Resurrection, for the Christian adherent, has to do with change. Reincarnation has to do with exchange. Resurrection ultimately speaks of the *transfiguration* of the body. Reincarnation speaks of the *transition* from one body to another. And the change brought about through resurrection speaks to us of *permanence*, while the exchange which is believed to come through reincarnation is only *temporary*. Herein are key distinctions. Note it well: Paul never said that Christ would exchange these vile bodies of ours, that they may eventually

be made like unto His glorious body. No. He said that He would change them. We should not rush past this, but should ponder it carefully, for it is a matter of extreme importance.

The bottom line is this. If the theories of Reincarnation and of Karma are true, then Jesus was the most deceived religious leader that ever lived. The reason why this would be so is because He clearly believed that He came into this world to be the sacrificial Lamb of God, Who would take away the sin of the world. He lived His life with this belief in the forefront of His mind, and was fully persuaded that His destiny was a foregone conclusion in the mind of God. It was because of this belief that He willfully submitted Himself to the horrors of scourging and crucifixion, and, for it, He gave Himself up for us all. He was firmly convinced that, by laying down His life and by being lifted up upon the cross, the way would be made for all men to be reconciled unto God.

Furthermore, if reincarnation is true, then Jesus's resurrection would have been absolutely meaningless. What purpose would have been served in raising Jesus's body from the grave, if it was simply going to be vacated anyway?

Finally, if Jesus was reincarnated following His death on the cross, or even after His resurrection, what would that say about His life? It would naturally infer that He had not lived the sinless life that He was said to have lived, and therefore, would not have been qualified to be the precious Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. The entire concept of atoning sacrifice would come into question. Otherwise, He would have been released from the wheel of rebirths. This fact alone rules out the possibility of such a thing.

However, if the doctrine of Resurrection is true, then Reincarnation must be false. It's as simple as that.

Now, after having compared reincarnation with the biblical teaching of resurrection, we'll look at it from a couple of different angles. On a strictly logical basis, the road to the rational confirmation of reincarnation is full of potholes. Take, for instance, the facts regarding the world population growth. Polling data coming from modern censuses create insurmountable problems for the professors of reincarnation. If, as reincarnationists say, there was a fixed number of spirits which separated themselves from Brahman in the beginning, and that number has not changed or increased (they categorically deny the ongoing creation of spirits); and if certain spirits have *left* the cycle over the course of human history as a result of having achieved a state of Oneness, then, logically speaking, there should be a decrease in the number of spirits inhabiting bodies today. That would only stand to reason. But the simple truth is that the number of births still exceed the number of deaths that occur each year, and the population of the world continues to climb. That's a hard fact to ignore, now, isn't it!

In spite of this statistical stumbling block, reincarnationists refuse to give up. They still claim that science is on their side, and that their theory has been indisputably verified through empirical means. So what is this so-called empirical evidence they claim to possess? Well, there are four primary ways by which reincarnation is said to be

scientifically confirmed: 1) intuitive recall; 2) spontaneous recall; 3) psychic recall; and 4) past life recall through hypnosis, or through other artificial stimuli..

We won't spend a great deal of time addressing these things, since there are some fine critiques that are currently in print, which have focused entirely on them. We can recommend those critiques to anyone who would be interested in doing a more in-depth study on the subjects. But for the benefit of our readers, we'll provide a brief analysis, followed with a few comments of our own.

Intuitive recall, or what is commonly referred to as a "deja vu" experience is said to be one proof that individuals have lived in previous times. What exactly is intuitive recall? It's that overwhelming and oftentimes unexplainable sensation that one gets when, after meeting someone for the first time, he feels as if he has known the person before. The same feeling may also be experienced when encountering places or things for the first time. Reincarnationists tell us that the only sound explanation for this is that we *have* known them before, but just not in this life.

How would we explain this phenomena? Well, we could begin at the most obvious starting point, by considering the natural workings of the human mind. It almost goes without saying that the mind of man is an amazing and complex thing. It receives an enormous amount of information through the five senses, and it retains most, if not all of that information on its memory banks. At the same time, it sorts through and categorizes the intelligence according to its relative value. Some of the data that it receives is stored on a conscious level of the mind, some on the subconscious level, and still other on a level which some have labeled as the unconscious. However, when fresh encounters are made, the new information that comes in is compared with the older information stored *on all levels of the memory banks*, and certain psychological associations are established. It is these associations that naturally result in a feeling of familiarity. Of course, whenever comparisons are made with details recorded in the subconscious or unconscious mind, we may not necessarily remember when that information first came to us, or what the circumstances surrounding its acquisition were. The reason for this may have to do with the significance (or lack thereof) the mind initially assigns to it. But we may still experience a sense of familiarity with the new information, by virtue of its relationship with this subconscious data. This is true, whether we are talking about encounters with people, places or things. Also noteworthy is the fact that it might not necessarily be the people, places or things themselves that we remember, but particular details with which we were formerly acquainted (such as prominent cosmetic features or outstanding character traits that someone else had, distinctive architectural designs that impressed us elsewhere, etc.).

Some of the cognitive associations that occur within our minds can be so strong that they feel strange to us. They may even be entirely outside of the normal range of sensations which we've experienced within our lifetime. But just because we may not be able to precisely identify the time or place or other peripheral details when certain information first came to us doesn't mean that we have to assume that it came during a previous lifetime.

One theory submitted in the *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* is that déjà vu experiences are due to a kind of momentary neural "short circuit" so that the impression of the scene arrives at the memory store before it registers in the sensorium" (pg. 183). The theorist adds that there is at least some evidence in support of this, since these experiences are known to coincide with symptoms associated with particular types of brain damage. While it does make sense, we can't confirm or deny this theory, since there have been no clinical studies (that we know of) which actually verify it. But we can say this. While great advances have been made during the past several years, we have only just begun to explore the vast parameters of the mental frontier. There's so much we don't yet know regarding the "hows and whys" of the human mind. But what little we do know still provides for us a better and more "scientific" explanation for the so-called intuitive recall experiences than the one provided by reincarnationists.

The next proof reincarnationists offer is referred to as *spontaneous recall*. Spontaneous recall is said to occur when individuals spontaneously and without outside provocation recollect details of lives which are completely foreign to them. Throughout history, certain individuals have claimed to have had this type of experience (for example, Krishna, Buddha, Emanuel Swedenborg, Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant, to name a few of the more famous ones). Other individuals have been alleged to have had them. But the most persuasive testimonies in modern times have come from the mouths of babes.

One of the leading protagonists of spontaneous recall is Carlson Professor of Psychiatry and founder of the Division of Parapsychology, Ian Stevenson. Dr. Stevenson lent a great deal of credibility to the subject through his documentation involving a very special group of children. According to the accounts given in his book, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, the children began to recount their stories between the ages of two and four, and began to taper off with them at about five or six. By the time they reached the age of eight, they ceased to mention anything at all about having lived a former life, and, in most cases, seem to have forgotten the memories altogether.

Of the various stories told by the children, some recall having been raised by a different set of parents; others recall having lived in a different home. Some recall lives as both adolescents and adults, while others recall the type of death that they experienced. And, remarkably enough, some of them were even able to provide details which could be checked out and corroborated by the investigators.

Professor Stevenson's presentation is quite compelling, to say the least. He advances his findings in a very professional manner, and by all appearances, with a reasonable amount of skepticism. After reading his material, it would be difficult for anyone to question either his sincerity or his intellectual integrity. However, there is reason to question the testimonies themselves. As it turns out, nearly all of the children who were interviewed came from religious cultures and/or homes which highly favor reincarnation. This, coupled with the fact that significant amounts of time lapsed between when the children first began to speak of these supposed past lives and when the stories were actually brought to the attention of the investigators (an average of three to five years), creates a

certain degree of apprehension regarding their accuracy. Honestly, with such a large and unsupervised window of opportunity, who can say what information actually came from the children's memories, and what might have come as a result of being coached by individuals with a doctrinal agenda?

Dr. Stevenson obviously recognizes this possibility himself, for he says that "the statements attributed to the subject are memories of some kind, and the question is whether they are memories of what he has heard or learned *normally*, or what he has experienced *paranormally*, or of what he has experienced in a previous life" (*Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, pg. 13).

But what about those stories which were corroborated by fact, and which continue to confound all logical and psychological explanations? What shall be done with them? Well, the jury is still out, and the deliberations are ongoing. But Russell Chandler makes a good point when he says, "Such evidence at most implies nothing more than a knowledge of the past; it does not prove that the person who remembers it was present in the past." (*Understanding the New Age*, pg. 246). And, with that, we have another viable possibility that might explain this phenomena: spiritual intelligences. Even Dr. Stevenson acknowledges that the children may have simply been influenced by, and received their information from spiritual forces, such as the spirits of the deceased, or demons.

We've all seen the so-called "proof" provided by Psychic recall. It's regularly advertised on the talk-show circuit, and on the covers of grocery store tabloids. Psychic recall is said to occur when a medium "assists" an individual by seeing the past for him. However, since no one can actually say whether or not the intermediary is merely "assigning" a character to his client, and drawing details from his own knowledge of history, we'll move along.

Finally, some feel that the strongest evidence for reincarnation that has been tested in a clinical environment is hypnotic recall.

There are other researchers in the field, of course, but perhaps the most oft-cited and highly respected authority on the subject of hypnotic regression is Helen Wambach, author of the books *Life Before Life* and *Reliving Past Lives*. According to her books, Wambach conducted a series of hypnotic sessions (which she referred to as "birth trips") with large numbers of people. After the volunteers were sufficiently hypnotized, she asked them to think about certain questions for which they would be queried later. She opened her line of questioning with the statement, "I want you to go back to the time just before you were born into your current lifetime." She then proceeded to inquire about such things as, whether or not they had chosen to be born, whether they had chosen their sex, whether they'd known their parents in a former life, and whether they were conscious of others who would play a role in their coming life. Following the course, each of them were required to write down what came to their minds during the session.

It seems that most, if not all of those who participated in this survey were predisposed to a belief in reincarnation. We also find it interesting that a vast number of them were old hands of the Consciousness Movement. They had been involved in various mental therapy workshops, such as Werner Erhard's est training or Silva Mind Control. Mrs. Wambach openly admits that while some of the participants had a hard time "seeing" into their previous existence, the best answers came from these "veterans" (to use her term). Doesn't this raise suspicions about the outcome of the survey?

(Since we've mentioned it here, we should at least make a passing comment about it. Western reincarnationists commonly inject this notion that, while in our preexistent state, as well as in our intermediate states, we are all given choices regarding our earthly conditions. However, this prompts a valid question: if Karma determines one's future incarnation, then what choice does the individual spirit have? Someone should have thought about this long and hard before they started circulating this idea.)

Whether we're talking about intuitive recall, spontaneous recall, psychic recall or hypnotic recall makes no difference whatsoever. The testimony of past life recall is simply unverifiable. Besides, in order for any one of these experiences to qualify as true empirical evidence, it would have to put every other possible explanation to rest. Since all of them have failed to do that, they cannot legitimately receive the scientific seal of approval.

Another area where the doctrine of reincarnation absolutely falls apart is on the basis of morality. Why would we say this? Well, if the main objective of reincarnation is the perfection of the spirit (and its eventual reunion with Ultimate Being), then we should be able to see major moral improvements with every passing generation. However, this is not the case. If the Law of Karma is sufficient in the purifying of spirits, and if the same spirits have been round and round on the wheel of Samsara for thousands of years now, why hasn't there been a notable change in society? Reasonably speaking, shouldn't we be able to expect a rise in the moral and ethical standards of humanity?

We suspect there will be some who would argue that moral improvements would merely be in the eye of the beholder, since (to them) morally dualistic opposites of good and evil are not absolute or even real. According to them, dualistic distinctions such as right and wrong, good and evil are simply constructs of the mind that do not truly exist in the realm of Oneness or Ultimate Reality. However, despite their denial of moral absolutes, wouldn't their belief in the Law of Karma force them to accept that such distinctions exist? The so-called Law of Karma is said to indiscriminately operate on such distinctions. It punishes or rewards a spirit, based on the good or evil deeds attributed to it. (After all, what would constitute "bad Karma," if we are not able to know what bad is? It was just this type of reasoning that led Charles Manson to once say, "If God is One, then what is bad?" Coming from his sick, twisted mindset, such a question would be perfectly legitimate.) Therefore, those who argue for moral relativity, while at the same time defending the principle upon which reincarnation rests (the Law of Karma), entangle themselves in a philosophical dilemma from whence they cannot be extracted.

Other problems naturally arise from the doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma, especially in regard to "fairness." If every event in a person's life is the result of past deeds, and Karma impartially renders verdicts in direct proportion to the offence, then it would stand to reason that if Karma is just, the slate should be wiped clean after the life cycle immediately following it. You would think that the spirit would start afresh after each cycle of seedtime and harvest. However, reincarnationists tell us that the harvest that comes from a single lifetime of sowing would be impossible for us to calculate. Since there is no fixed standard for compensation, and no table of measurement when it comes to issues of morality (at least, one that is knowable), it may take the suffering of a hundred lives to make up for the evils committed in a single lifetime. How fair is that? The dilemma is compounded even further by the fact that, during those hundred lifetimes, whilst a spirit is working off its bad Karma, even more evils may be piling up. Therefore, it would be impossible to determine just how long a spirit would be required to remain on the wheel of suffering, in order to pay off its debt. That doesn't leave a lot of room for hope, now, does it!

This invariably leads us to the conclusion that reincarnation is sheer fatalism. It robs mankind of hope. How can anyone possibly work off "bad Karma" if he has no idea what he has done? Unless each individual could clearly remember what he or she had done in a previous life, what profit could come from their punishment? That would not reflect justice—it would only show cruelty!

The unfairness of it all can be illustrated by way of a hypothetical example. Let's say that a certain individual, i.e. John Brown, commits a series of crimes in this life of the most horrible nature. And let's suppose that John Brown eludes discovery of these crimes till the day of his death. Then, through the course of his reincarnational experience, he completely sheds his previous ego, and discards all vestiges of his former consciousness and personal identity. That old individual is entirely erased, except for the memories of him that are recorded on the Akashic Records. Not a trace of John Brown can be found, for that mayadic ID has ceased to exist. When he emerges from the womb the next time around, he takes on an entirely different character, retaining nothing of the former self that he once was. And yet, unbeknownst to him, he carries the baggage of yesterday's Karma, the baggage of an ego that is completely foreign to him now. In what sense, then, could it be said that John Brown ever had to pay for his sins? He cannot be consciously aware of punishment or of reward. Remember, John Brown no longer exists. He that was, no longer is, and is someone else now. Would it not be the same as having someone else suffer for the crimes committed by John Brown? The way it appears to us is that John Brown actually *escaped* justice, and never had to give account for the deeds done in his body. We realize that it all sounds pretty confusing--- but that's just the point. The Eastern idea of justice leaves one's head spinning.

We could point out many other contradictions (such as the widely accepted idea that immutable Karma can be altered. Either it's immutable or it isn't. But it cannot be immutable and alterable at the same time, without changing the meaning of the word immutable.) And we could raise many more objections. But we feel that our case has been made. Still, after all of this, there may be some who would ask the question, "Is it

not at least *possible* that spirits return in other bodies following their departure from their present one? However, the question should not be framed around the *possibility* of such a return, but, rather, around the *purpose* for it. *Why* should our spirits return in other bodies? For what reason would such a thing occur? The answer given by every reincarnationist we have ever read behind or have encountered is always the same--- to give the spirit another opportunity to work out its own salvation, and to be reabsorbed into Brahman. However, as we have been wont to reiterate throughout this address, salvation is not a matter left up to the individual, but has been thoroughly dealt with by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has already worked it out for us, once and for all. He has paid the debt for every man who has, does or ever will dwell upon the earth. There is not a sin that is not covered by His blood. We need but acknowledge what He has accomplished on our behalf, and to walk in the light of that truth. What this means is that we have no need for a "second chance," or a third, or a fourth, ad nauseum. Salvation is not based on "chance." You see, even if there had been such a thing as Karmic retribution, it would have all ended at the cross! Jesus would be the end of it!

Besides, if the spirit was given a million opportunities to save itself, it would still fail miserably. The provision for salvation which was made possible by Jesus is a finished work--- period. Nothing more could be added to it; indeed, nothing more needs to be added to it! He was, and is the only One who could have ever accomplished so great a salvation. Why then should we look for another way, when the Way has already been made?

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