

The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 34, Number 2

April • May • June 2014

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Hare Krishna

Freemasons

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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RAS TEAM NOTES

We continue to reach out with gratis editions to churches and schools/colleges. A few weeks ago we mailed 47 copies to Russian pastors and churches (the issue mailed concerned Russian orthodoxy in the Twin Cities' area). Later we sent 117 copies to Christian college libraries. God willing, we will be donating soon ca. 50 copies to other churches and pastors in the Midwest.

All of this is intended to equip more people, pastors and lay people, with sound literature against cults, false teachings, and unbiblical practices. We praise the Lord for extra gifts that subscribers give that make all of this possible.

In November, RAS President Steve Lagoon, will be holding public meetings in the Twin Cities' area that address cults and other aberrant, unbiblical movements. More information on these meetings will be forthcoming in our next issue.

We welcome Rick Dack back to the RAS Board after a two-years' absence.

Have a great summer!

RAS Team

DEAR READER

In these days of shallowness, confusion, and compromise we Christians should declare our faith in no uncertain tones. How often do we “give our testimony” these days? And, when we do testify, do our words and actions carry weight and impact? I would like to challenge you, as I challenge myself, to consider a series of statements from an anonymous author who brings us quickly to realize what a Christian testimony ought to involve:

“I’m part of the fellowship of the unashamed. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made.

I’m a disciple of His and I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed. My presence makes sense. My future is secure.

I’m done and finished with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity.

I no longer have to be right, or first, or tops, or recognized, or praised, or rewarded.

I live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by Holy Spirit power.

My face is set. My gait is fast. My goal is heaven.

My road may be narrow, my way rough, my companions few, but my guide is reliable and my mission is clear.

I will not be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice or hesitate in the presence of the adversary.

I will not negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut-up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Christ.

I must not give up until I drop, preach until all know, and work until He comes.

And when He does come for His own, He'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear."

May God bless our testimonies for Christ,

Laurence J. Sutherland

WITH THIS ISSUE

We have often jested about the “sacred cows” of India, how they block traffic, create unhealthy street conditions, and are treated with unusual deference. However, we must realize that these “sacred cows” represent a whole world view that can be captured in the word reincarnation. Reincarnation is essentially part of an Eastern religion where humans, upon death, assume different forms of life, depending upon the conduct and religious devotion in this life to supposed Indian deities and cosmic forces. RAS president, Steve Lagoon has thoroughly researched this often misunderstood Eastern world view and contrasts it with the historical, biblical world view. The article has a substantial bibliography that is helpful for study of world religions.

In a second article, Lagoon submits a cogent way of dealing with doubt that can beset at times even the most conscientious Christian. It would be a mistake to ignore or temporize doubt because it can cripple our personal devotion and witness to God’s Word. Lagoon’s emphasis on being candid and honest, and counter doubt by investigating factual and sound biblical literature, makes this short article especially valuable for young Christians.

Our third article, by Shawn Stevens, RAS friend, attacks the pernicious practice of gambling. Gambling, with its vast tentacles, has become a billion-dollar mammoth industry that is devastating to millions. Stevens methodically treats both the biblical stance toward gambling but also its harmful affect especially on people of lower income. This brief article should provoke heart-searching reflection and reaction for all concerned.

I enjoyed putting together the quiz on “Trees”. I love trees, In fact, I planted 52 trees in our half-acre property. Please let us know if you have a score of 80% or more.

Laurence J. Sutherland

REINCARNATION

by Steve Lagoon

Many of our readers have perhaps heard the song, “The Highwayman” by four legendary country-music singers Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson.

The song captures very well the theme of reincarnation. Each singer describes a life they lived and how they died, and yet they will live “again, and again, and again.”

Adherents of Reincarnation

Reincarnation has been popularized in our culture by many famous people such as Henry Ford, General George S. Patton, the artist Salvador Dali, New Age icon Shirley MacLaine, Peter Sellers, Sylvester Stallone, George Harrison, and Loretta Lynn.

Since most studies show that about 20% of Americans believe in some form of reincarnation,¹ it is important that Christians understand reincarnation and how it contrasts with the Christian gospel. When we realize how many sects and cults advocate reincarnation, we can be sure that we will encounter an adherent at some time or other.

As to world religions, Hindus, Buddhists, and the Jain Sect are adherents, as well as religions derived from Hinduism that include Hare Krishnas, Sikhs, and Eckankar. Under the general heading of New Age religions we can put Edgar Cayce and the Association for Research and Enlightenment, the Unity School of Christianity, and the Church Universal and Triumphant. Drury states that “Reincarnation beliefs were also common among the Iroquois, Dakota, Huron, Kiowa, and Hopi Indians in the United States.”²

Why Is Belief in Reincarnation Popular?

John Snyder speculates that reincarnation is popular for at least two reasons. First, “Reincarnation appeals to human pride by teaching that one’s final destiny is determined by one’s own works and efforts”.³ Snyder also notes: “another reason for its warm reception

1 For instance, Geisler and Amano state: “According to a 1982 poll, 23 percent of Americans, that is, almost one in every four believes in reincarnation.” Norman L. Geisler & J Yutaka Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation*, Wheaton IL (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986) 7.

2 Nevill Drury, *Reincarnation: Exploring the Concept of Reincarnation in Religion, Philosophy, and Traditional Cultures*, New York (Barnes and Noble Books, 2002) 21.

3 John Snyder, *Reincarnation VS. Resurrection*, Chicago IL (Moody Press, 1984) 14.

is that it is very convenient to believe in reincarnation. It is easier to face than the prospect of giving account to an infinite, personal God who has the power to cast people into eternal separation.”⁴

Different Terms for Reincarnation

Reincarnation is also known by other names such as metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul, rebirth, or at times it is even called being born-again. Dhavamony clarifies the meaning of the terms: “The terms reincarnation, transmigration and metempsychosis are used in an almost identical sense. Those who believe in spiritism and theosophy, however, limit the migrations of the soul to human bodies only, while metempsychosis is extended to animal bodies and even to plants.”⁵

Nevill Drury states: “There is another Hindu perspective on reincarnation, according to which souls pass through mineral, vegetable, and animal forms before becoming human.”⁶

But it is popularly known as reincarnation. This is a doctrine long established in Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and their offshoots. But in the last century, the belief in reincarnation has made major inroads in western countries as well.

Defining Reincarnation

And how do we specifically define reincarnation? *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions* defines reincarnation as “The process by which, in certain belief systems, the soul of a dead person enters another body in order to continue its existence.”⁷ In *Living Religions*, Mary Pat Fisher provides a traditional definition of reincarnation within Hinduism:

One is the idea of reincarnation. In answer to the universal question, ‘What happens after we die?’ the *rishis* taught that the soul leaves the body and enters a new one. One takes birth again and again in countless bodies—perhaps as an animal or some other life form—but the self remains the same. Birth as a human being is a precious and rare opportunity for the soul to advance toward its ultimate goal of liberation from rebirth and merging with the Absolute Reality.⁸

4 Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 14.

5 Mariasusai Dhavamony, *Christianity and Reincarnation in Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, Arthur and Joyce Berger—Editors, London (The Aquarian Press, 1991) 153.

6 Drury, *Reincarnation*, 14.

7 C. R. Taber, *Reincarnation, The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*, Keith Crim, Editor, New York (Harper and Row, 1981) 608.

8 Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, Boston MA (Pearson Custom Publishing, 2003) 86.

Marcus Bach further defines reincarnation for the Hindu:

Reincarnation is the third great truth for the Hindu. It means ‘recurring life.’ It means that the soul of man—the atman or life essence—is ever on a round of births and rebirths. If a man dies, shall he live again? The Hindu answers, ‘Yes, definitely. He will live again on this earth to work out his destiny and reap the reward of his previous acts.’ Reincarnation answers many questions for the Hindu. It explains the variety of personalities we find in the world, the striking gap between rich and poor . . . It explains all these seeming inequalities. It provides a solution to the perplexing puzzle of why one person dies young; another, old”⁹

To show the importance of defining terms, consider the possibility of an unwary Christian asking a Hindu if he believes in being born-again. The Hindu might well reply: “Oh yes, I have been born again and again and again!”

Hinduism, Reincarnation, and Karma

However, it is impossible to talk about the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation without the closely related doctrine of karma. Bach defines karma: “In Hinduism this term refers to the entire ethical consequences of a person’s acts. These results are considered as fixing one’s lot in his future existence.”¹⁰

Louis Renou quotes from the Hindu text the Manu-Smṛiti: “In consequence of many sinful acts committed with his body, a man becomes in the next birth something inanimate, in consequence of sins committed by speech, a bird, or a beast, and in consequence of mental sins he is re-born in a low caste.”¹¹

Karen Farrington elaborates:

The Karmic Wheel. Hindus believe in reincarnation. That means the soul is reborn into another body after death to endure a further life. This is not a matter to rejoice over for the aim is to leave the wheel of rebirth—samsara as it is known in Sanskrit—to be reunited with Brahman, the Absolute. The law of cause and effect governing reincarnation is called karma . . . In essence every physical action, word and thought is accounted for, not in this life but in the next . . . It is a chain that cannot be

⁹ Marcus Bach, *Major Religions of the World: Their Origins, basic beliefs, and development*, New York (Abingdon Press, 1959) 25.

¹⁰ Bach, *Major Religions*, 19.

¹¹ John Snyder, *Reincarnation VS. Resurrection*, Chicago IL (Moody Press, 1984) 14.

broken, but will hopefully come to a natural end if one follows the three 'Pure Precepts': cease evil, do good for others and keep a pure mind.¹²

Farrington further defined the consequences of Karma:

The threat of reincarnation as an Untouchable was present in the Chandogya Upanishad and it was an effective one. 'Those who are of good conduct here—the prospect is that they will come to a pleasant birth, either the birth of a priest, or the birth of a warrior, or the birth of a merchant. But those who are of evil conduct here—the prospect is that they will come to an evil birth, either the birth of a dog, or the birth of a swine, or the birth of an outcast.'¹³

Buddhist View of Reincarnation

Farrington also describes the more complicated version of reincarnation held to by Buddhists:

One of his most challenging theories was that nothing remains the same. In death not only does the body degenerate, but the soul also fragments. The elements of sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness starburst to mix and match with others and thus form new personalities. Hence the Buddhist phrase of *anatta*, meaning 'no-self'. . . So reincarnation in Buddhist terms is not a return of the same soul in a different bodily guise, but a rebirth of a new combination representing the same life force. However, this rebirth is not a happy or desirable thing, associated as it is with bad *karma* – the negative thoughts, words, and actions delivered in the previous life. To transcend the wheel of rebirth one has to conquer desires, delusions or hatred on earth and so attain Nirvana.¹⁴

Myrtle Langley further elaborates the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation:

It is not a 'permanent self' which connects a man's new life to the life of his former existence. Rather it is the 'deeds' of karma (the inexorable law of cause and effect) which link one existence to another. The goal of human existence is *nirvana*, the state of bliss arrived at when desires cease and *karma* is no more.¹⁵

12 Karen Farrington, *Religion*, London (Reed Consumer Books Limited, 1998) 68-69.

13 Farrington, *Religion*, 70.

14 Farrington, *Religion*, 98.

15 Myrtle Langley, *Religions: A Book of Beliefs*, Ontario, Canada (Paideia Press, 1981) 23.

Drury adds: “Buddhists do not embrace the Hindu teaching of the atman, and generally refer to ‘rebirth’ rather than reincarnation.”¹⁶ Suffice it to say, it is difficult to understand how the Buddhist’s doctrine of reincarnation can be maintained or defended simply because it seems to be incoherent. If there is no personal continuity, how can Karma maintain a fair moral accountability?

We have looked at the specific definition of reincarnation amongst Hindus and Buddhists. However, most westerners hold to a more basic understanding of reincarnation which holds that the soul will live in a succession of bodies until it pays off its negative karmic debt and learns to live in harmony with eternal moral laws. In this article, we will especially contrast this view of reincarnation with the Christian belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reincarnation and Justice

It is argued that reincarnation offers an explanation for the apparent problem of theodicy. That is, it offers an explanation for the seeming injustice and suffering in the world. Thus, Geddes MacGregor, a supporter of reincarnation, suggests: “Reincarnation solve [s] many of the classic philosophical and theological problems (such as the problem of evil).”¹⁷

Likewise, John Snyder states: “Most of life’s mysteries and inequities can be accounted for: the suffering of children, mental illness, poverty, disasters, of nature—all are the result of evil committed in past lives.”¹⁸ Elizabeth Claire Prophet in her substantive book promoting reincarnation put it like this: “Over the years she [Elizabeth Claire Prophet’s mother] was to point out to me children who were born maimed or blind, others who were gifted, some who were born into wealthy homes and some into poverty. She believed their past actions had led to their present inequalities. She said that there could be no such thing as divine or human justice if we had but one life.”¹⁹

I am not sure that this interpretation is very comforting to those suffering, especially children. They are told that their suffering is undoubtedly their own fault, and yet have no memory of their past sin, and hence no way to learn from it so as to avoid similar suffering in the future.

¹⁶ Drury, *Reincarnation*, 15.

¹⁷ Geddes MacGregor, *Is Reincarnation Compatible with Christian Faith? In Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, Arthur and Joyce Berger—Editors, London (The Aquarian Press, 1991) 90.

¹⁸ Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 20.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *Reincarnation: The Missing Link In Christianity*, Corwin Springs MT (Summit University Press, 1997) 21-22.

The Problem of Past-life Memory

So the major problem of appealing to reincarnation as the solution to questions about injustice is that most people simply do not have memory of their alleged past lives. Dhavamony states: “The first difficulty is absence of memory of our previous lives . . . We do not recall even the one we lived just before our present birth, the events of which would have contributed to the way we find ourselves today.”²⁰

In fairness, Dhavamony states the reincarnationist answer to the problem of memory: “Reincarnationists assert that none of us remembers the time passed in our mother’s womb or even in the cradle . . . every morning we forget most of our dreams.”²¹ However, these examples do not explain why we can’t remember the events, not even the most traumatic or memorable (i.e. spouses, children, travels etc.) of our past life that occurred as adults and while quite awake.

Dhavamony sums up the moral case:

The hypothesis of reincarnation does not solve the moral problem . . . If the purpose of succession of earthly existence is to correct the culpable and to permit them to expiate their past faults, it is necessary that they recognize themselves as culpable. To do so they must retain the memory of the fault committed. It is necessary that they know the causal link uniting these faults with their present miseries. Without the memory of past existences, it is impossible to speak of punishment, or amendment, of progress.²²

For example, if someone touches a hot stove, they learn quickly and are very unlikely to do it again. But if they simply don’t have a recollection of it, they just might make the same mistake. How much more difficult would it be learn from our punishment today for an alleged offense in a previous life. It is well established from the behavioral approaches of psychology (i.e. Skinner et al) that both the reward or punishment must be in close relation to the behavior for the subject to associate them and learn. If a mouse gets a reward each time he runs a maze, he will be motivated to complete other mazes in the future. But if you give the mouse a reward three days after running the maze, how will it learn?

²⁰ Dhavamony, *Christianity*, 160.

²¹ Dhavamony, *Christianity*, 160.

²² Dhavamony, *Christianity*, 160-161.

Likewise, it would make no sense to punish a child for an infraction committed several years earlier. Imagine the reaction of a ten year old boy who is told that he is being grounded for breaking his brother's toy when he was four.

How much more illogical is it to suggest that we can learn by being punished for something we are supposed to have done in a previous life, indeed one that we have no memory of!

Past-life Recall?

To get around these difficult questions regarding the lack of memory of alleged past lives, reincarnationists appeal to cases of spontaneous recall or to alleged past life memories recalled during past life therapy (PLT) while under hypnosis. Ankerberg & Weldon explain:

Past-life therapy (PLT), or so-called 'reincarnation' therapy, is more widely practiced than most people might think. Clinical psychologists and hypnotherapist Jonathan Venn writes: 'Past-life hypnosis has become a common practice in the United States and Western Europe.' Hundreds—possibly several thousand—therapists use this method. The field has professional societies and journals, such as the *Association for Past-life Research and Therapy*, and the *Journal of Regression Therapy* . . . 'Past-life' therapy employs hypnosis to place the individual into a trance state for a specific purpose . . . to send the individual 'back' into his supposed former lives in order to resolve hidden emotional or spiritual conflicts that are allegedly affecting his physical, emotional, or spiritual health today.²³

After defining past life recall, Ankerberg & Weldon also provide this troubling assessment of such therapy:

Yet the results of such therapy typically support occult New Age philosophy and goals . . . The basic conclusion of our own research . . . is that its experiences and phenomena result from several factors: 1) suggestions of the therapist; 2) inventions or delusions of the patient; 3) spiritualistic manipulation of the mind."²⁴

D. Scott Rogo, a researcher, writer, and educator in parapsychology made this assessment of evidence of past lives as a result of hypnosis: "It is difficult to determine whether they [alleged past-life memories]

²³ John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, Eugene OR (Harvest House Publishers, 1996) 336.

²⁴ Ankerberg, *Encyclopedia of New Age*, 336.

resulted from the state of consciousness produced by hypnosis, or from the explicit suggestions used during the regression.²⁵

In other words, a researcher in the field suggests that it is not clear whether the recall is real or is simply the result of delusion or the suggestions of the hypnotherapist. Nevill Drury agrees:

One of the most fascinating aspects of reincarnation research is the use of hypnosis to explore past lives. Some of this research has been very inconclusive, and seems to have uncovered fantasies from the subconscious mind rather than authentic memories of personalities who really did exist and historical events that really did take place.

How to Know What Is Required by Karma

Another problem is the problem of knowing just what we are supposed to do. Christians have the Bible as God's revelation and guide for living. But how does one know how to erase negative karma or build positive karma in non-Christian and cultic systems? Snyder says, "Another question arises: How does one discover the requirements of karma? . . . In the Western version there appears to be no way of knowing what karma really enjoins us to do."²⁷

The Problem of Sin

A further problem is advanced by Snyder, "Reincarnationists see the future of the human race as a gradual—but certain—ascend. Such a view is maintained not on the basis of evidence."²⁸ In other words, the theory ignores the reality of sin all around us, and which biblical theologians call original sin. There is simply no evidence that men get better in one lifetime or in multiple lives. We end our lives the same as we began them, as sinners needing redemption.

Larry Norman opined: "Sometimes I think that we advanced, but then I look at where we are."²⁹ Are there any less wars now than there has ever been? Is there any less slavery, drugs, and kidnapping?

Eckankar and Negative Karma

I must mention here the rather insidious way that Eckankar deals with the problem of human sin and our inability to overcome its effects. Eckankar is a false savior that claims that it is a path for

25 D. Scott Rogo, *State of Consciousness Factors in Reincarnation Cases in Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, Arthur and Joyce Berger—Editors, London (The Aquarian Press, 1991) 22.

27 Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 21.

28 Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 23.

29 Larry Norman, from his song, *If God is My Father*.

removing negative karma. Perhaps their most preposterous claim relates to the so-called “cave of purification.’ Their current leader, known as the Mahanta or living eckmaster is “Sri Harold Klemp.”

Klemp teaches that while in the dream state, and under his guidance, one can travel to a “place in the inner worlds where people go to burn off negative karma. It’s called the cave of purification . . . This is an actual location on a number of planes. Its purpose is to provide a place for a rapid burn-off of karma . . . The Mahanta may bring an initiate there in the dream state. In this cave a brilliant white light burns away useless karmic burdens.”³⁰

Of course, Klemp claims to be this Mahanta and so is an Anti-christ deceiving his followers into believing that he can do for them what only Jesus Christ can really do.

Negative Consequences of Reincarnational Belief

David Lorimer raises another issue of criticism concerning reincarnation and karma: “It engenders fatalism and lack of compassion that springs from the supposition that people karmically have deserved their fates”³¹ Lorimer thinks this is an unfair criticism of reincarnation belief since some Christians also teach that God uses misfortunes and/or suffering to teach souls, perhaps as punishment for sin.

Indeed, it is true that God can do thusly, but this has never been taken to suggest that acts of love and charity are inappropriate for Christians. In the Christian West there are multitudes of hospitals and other various charitable organizations in stark contrast to India before Western influence. This is because Christians do not have knowledge of whom God may be punishing or by what means. Indeed, the Scriptures are abundantly clear that not all suffering is a result of God’s punishment (Job, John 9). Therefore, our proper response as Christians is to show compassion to all.

This can be compared to the situation in which a person is complaining of chest pains. Medical responders are trained to take the situation seriously, as though the person is having a heart attack (or something serious). They do this because they do not know which patients are actually having a heart attack and those who are not. They know that the doctors at the hospital will sort out everything later and make sure that the patient receives the appropriate care.

30 Harold Klemp, *A Modern Prophet Answers Your Key Questions About Life*, Minneapolis MN (Eckankar, 1998) 178-179.

31 David Lorimer, *Reincarnation and Theodicy in Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, Arthur and Joyce Berger—Editors, London (The Aquarian Press, 1991) 69.

In the same way, Christians should always show compassionate care knowing that God will ensure that each person is judged properly. Nor do I doubt that God's judgment will be thwarted by our compassion. God will achieve His purposes by whatever means He deems necessary.

In order to soften the blow of this criticism, Lorimer amazingly suggests that those who suffer have perhaps approved of this course before coming to earth: "These personalities seem to have chosen or accepted that particular experience either because of the wish to take a steeper and harder path of development or the need to repay karmic debt."³²

Lorimer's theory may soften the blow concerning the lack of compassion amongst reincarnation adherents, but it is simply wild speculation without any ground of evidence to support it. Indeed, it is circular reasoning in that it assumes reincarnation, and then assumes to know that some volunteer to suffer, especially as children. As an explanation, Lorimer's argument has the feel of desperation.

Robert Morey further highlights some of the unfortunate results of belief in reincarnation: "It is a psychologically devastating concept . . . that teaches that suffering is one's own fault."³³ Someone suffering some tragedy sadly believes that they are guilty, though they have no understanding as to why, and are therefore suffering justly. This would surely be hard to take emotionally.

Indeed Elizabeth Claire Prophet says, "Before we leave the story of the man born blind, let us look at a controversial question it raises about reincarnation: Are people who are born with handicaps responsible for their own misfortunes? The answer is yes, in many cases, yes."³⁴

Where the belief in reincarnation is most prevalent, it has led to the horrible caste system in India in accordance with Morey's statement that belief in reincarnation "produces pride among the rich and healthy, and shame within the poor and sick."³⁵

Déjà Vu and Past-life Memory

The New York Yankee great Yogi Berra famously said, "It's déjà vu all over again." Most people report having had a déjà vu experience in

³² Lorimer, *Reincarnation*, 72.

³³ Robert A. Morey, *Reincarnation and Christianity: Has the Traditional Viewpoint of the Church Been Right?*, Minneapolis MN (Bethany House Publishers, 1980) 42.

³⁴ Prophet, *Reincarnation*, 102.

³⁵ Morey, *Reincarnation*, 42.

which a current situation seems so much like a past experience that one feels as though they have momentarily gone back in time.

Robert Morey commented:

These feelings may arise as one's subconscious mind attempts to relate the present experience to things in the past . . . Secondly, one may once have seen a picture or photograph of that person or place. Although he cannot consciously remember seeing this, his subconscious mind accurately relates the encounter to the picture or photograph, Hence, he 'feels' he has encountered that person or was in that place before.³⁶

Reincarnationists believe that memories or knowledge of past lives proves that one has lived before. These memories may occur spontaneously, or through some sort of hypnosis, guided imagery i.e. spirit guides, or in dreams.

The Case of Peter Hurkos

Snyder shows weaknesses with these assumptions in the case of Peter Hurkos.³⁷ Hurkos was a resident of Holland who apparently had incredible knowledge of the past. However, his detailed knowledge was of people and events that occurred *after he was born, and hence could not possibly be the result of reincarnation*. Likewise, Hurkos "was capable of 'remembering' intimate details of the lives of two or more persons who lived simultaneously. No one could possibly argue that that he obtained his information during a previous life."³⁸

The Case of Bridey Murphy

Perhaps the most well-known example given in support of reincarnation is that of Bridey Murphy. Renee Haynes, a psychical researcher, sums up the case:

Morey Bernstein's *The Search for Bridey Murphy* examined the case for reincarnation of a woman, said to have been born in Ireland in 1798 . . . and died childless in 1864. It was claimed that she returned some 50 years later as an American lady born in 1923, who married a man called Hugh Tighe, and who had volunteered to undergo hypnotic regression by Mr. Bernstein into a possible previous life. She produced in trance various 'memories of that previous life' in Cork, recounted with 'a soft

³⁶ Morey, *Reincarnation*, 21.

³⁷ Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 30-31.

³⁸ Snyder, *Reincarnation*, 31.

Irish accent’ . . . Some of her statements were checked for historical accuracy, and proved correct, but many others could not be traced.³⁹

Bridey Murphy’s memories of Ireland were despite the fact that “Neither she nor her husband had ever been to Ireland. The evidence for reincarnation seemed unassailable.”⁴⁰

Renee Haynes concluded her review of the Bridey Murphy case thus:

It was later discovered, however, by American investigators that as a child, ‘Mrs. Simmons’ had lived across the road from an elderly Irish immigrant whose name was Bridie Murphy Corkell. This woman had loved to talk nostalgically about old times and happenings in her native land. Possibly, her reminiscences had sunk into the child’s receptive memory and had been accepted there as her own experience.⁴¹

Robert Morey concludes:

Researchers discovered that she had spent her earliest years in the care of her Gaelic speaking Irish grandmother, who loved to read to her stories about old Ireland . . . How many other celebrated cases of reincarnation recall under hypnosis are, in reality, the unearthing of long-forgotten experiences and stories which were buried in the subconscious mind?⁴²

After having studied numerous alleged cases of past-life recall, it seems clear that proper investigation will show that the person alleging past-life recall has at some time in their lives (most often as a child) taken in the information, whether it had been a movie they watched, a book, perhaps a novel or biography they have read, or personal stories told them, and when the information resurfaces in their mind, they have forgotten the true source and mistakenly believed it was a past-life recall.

Satanic Deception as Cause of Recall

Walter Martin raises the troubling explanation that some past-life recall may actually be the result of demonic deception:

We must not forget that there is a malevolent personal being who has lived down through the ages and is designated ‘the god

39 Renee Haynes, *Why I Do Not Accept the Theory of Reincarnation in Reincarnation and Theodicy in Reincarnation: Fact or Fable*, Arthur and Joyce Berger—Editors, London (The Aquarian Press, 1991) 134.

40 Haynes, *Why I Do Not Accept*, 134.

41 Haynes, *Why I Do Not Accept*, 134. 42 Morey, *Reincarnation*, 23.

42 Morey, *Reincarnation*, 23.

of this age' and 'the ruler of this world' (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 14:30). This personal being could easily provide 'evidence' from historical records (or even from living persons) that would seem to confirm reincarnation. But note that when such 'evidence' is presented it is often associated with either non-Christian religious backgrounds or the world of the occult. By asserting the false doctrine of reincarnation, Satan as the master counterfeiter attacks the value of Christ's sacrifice at Calvary, and teaches that man can do for himself through 'cycles of reincarnation' what Christ could not do for him.⁴³

Josh McDowell and Don Stewart sounded a similar alarm:

There is a spiritual battle going on, and if people can be convinced that there is no judgment after this life but merely a progression into the next, then they will feel no need to receive Jesus Christ as savior . . . People experience what they believe is a regression into a past experience when in actuality their experience is in the realm of the occult. It is easy for demonic forces, which have been around from the beginning of the earth, to reveal to someone some past act or experience.⁴⁴

This troubling statement must be taken seriously, for as Jesus said, Satan is a liar who wants to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). He uses deception to fool people into believing in reincarnation and from there into other false doctrines.

Alleged Biblical Evidence for Reincarnation

Despite the fact that Eastern ideas like reincarnation do not fit very well with the biblical worldview, reincarnationist are determined to find "proof" for their views in the pages of the Bible. The Eastern cyclical view of time fits well with reincarnation theories, but not with the biblical linear view of time in which the world and all its inhabitants are moving toward God's final judgment at Christ's second coming.

No doubt this desire to find evidence for reincarnation in the Bible is driven by the knowledge of the important place of authority the Scriptures still hold in the western world. But we shall see that the supposed evidence that reincarnationist claim to find in the Bible is of the most flimsy and contrived kind.

43 Walter A. Martin, *The New Cults*, (research by Cal Beisner) Ventura CA (Regal Books, 1980) 375-376.

44 Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino CA (Here's Life Publishers, Inc, 1983) 172.

Jeremiah 1:4-5

We begin in the Old Testament with the prophet Jeremiah. Elizabeth Claire Prophet offers this supposed proof of reincarnation from the Old Testament in Jeremiah 1:4-5:

The Old Testament offers a less esoteric reference to reincarnation. God tells the prophet Jeremiah that he knew him before he was conceived. ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as a prophet to the nations.’ This passage implies that Jeremiah’s soul existed before his birth in the sixth century B.C.⁴⁵

However, there is no reason to take this in any but a prophetic sense in which God knows of Jeremiah through the use of His foreknowledge. Romans 11:2 says that “God did not reject his people [Israel] whom he foreknew.” Now not even Elizabeth Claire Prophet suggests that nations have preexistence, and therefore, this means that God’s foreknowledge means just that. Not that people, or nations exist prior to their time on earth, but rather through foreknowledge, God looks ahead and “calls the things that are not as though they are”(Romans 4:17).

Elijah and John the Baptist

Perhaps the strongest case that can be made that the Bible teaches reincarnation is in the claim that John the Baptist was the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah. For that reason, it is the claim most often raised by adherents of reincarnation, and therefore requires a substantive response.

For instance, Elizabeth Clare Prophet stated: “What the Gospel authors are trying to show here is that John was indeed Elijah reincarnated . . . After these three confirmations, it would seem difficult to deny that Jesus taught reincarnation—at least in the case of Elijah.”⁴⁶

Mrs. Prophet based her claim on the following biblical evidence. The prophet Malachi predicted that God would “Send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes” (Malachi 4:5). Prophet argued that the fact that some thought that John the Baptist was Elijah (Matthew 16:14; Mark 6:15; Luke 9:8) proved that they believed in reincarnation.

⁴⁵ Prophet, *Reincarnation*, 55.

⁴⁶ Prophet, *Reincarnation*, 99.

Further, she argued that Jesus could not have been any clearer when He said regarding John the Baptist, “And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come” (Matthew 11:14).

It is true that Jesus looked back at the ministry of John the Baptist and said, “But I tell you, Elijah has come and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him” (Mark 9:13). Also reporting about the transfiguration, Matthew said, “But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him . . . Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist”(Matthew 17:12-13).

If all that were not enough, the angel Gabriel spoke of John the Baptist saying: “He will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17) fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6. To be fair, this biblical evidence does seem to be compelling evidence for belief in reincarnation.

We respond first by noting that those who thought that John was Elijah did not believe that John was a reincarnation of Elijah, but that Elijah had actually been resurrected from the dead. They were, however, wrong in their conjecture.

More to the point, when John the Baptist was asked if he was Elijah, he categorically denied such: “They asked him, ‘then who are you? Are you Elijah? He said, ‘I am not.’” (John 1:21).

If words mean anything, this should settle it. But advocates for reincarnation do not give up so easy. Elizabeth Clare Prophet argued cleverly if not desperately:

And the gospels repeatedly tell us that people wondered whether or not John was Elijah . . . The first instance is when John is preaching in the wilderness and priests and Levites come to question him. Here he actually denies that he is Elijah . . . Perhaps John was being evasive for a very good reason, denying he was Elijah to avoid repercussions from the spiritual authorities—who later beheaded him—but then giving a veiled confirmation to reassure his followers.⁴⁷

However, it was Herod Antipas and not the “spiritual authorities” who had John beheaded. Further, given that John the Baptist was so bold as to preach the truth to Herod though it would cost him his life, Mrs. Prophet’s allegation that John denied his true identity to the authorities “to avoid repercussions” is an insult to the courage and

⁴⁷ Prophet, *Reincarnation*, 97.

integrity of John. I think we do well in interpreting the passage by accepting John's plain and inspired statement over Elizabeth's wild conspiracy theories.

Mark Albrecht added:

We are looking at a classic example of biblical typology; that is, John the Baptist was a 'type' of Elijah. He fulfilled the role of Elijah, as prophesied by Malachi. John the Baptist had the same endowment of power and spiritual characteristics as Elijah . . . In reincarnation doctrine death must precede rebirth and Elijah never died. According to 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah was taken up 'by a whirlwind into heaven.'⁴⁸

As we have noted, it is argued that when Luke 1:17 says that John the Baptist "will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah," it is clearly affirming that John is the reincarnation of Elijah. However, in 2 Kings 2:15, when Elijah had been caught away on the heavenly chariot, the company of the prophets said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha." Now it is simply impossible that this was an indication of reincarnation since both of the men were close contemporaries.

Martha Knobloch asserted:

After he watched Elijah's departure, Elisha succeeded him as prophet. His request was granted, for the sons of the prophets who were watching said, 'The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha (2 Kings 2:15).' This clearly meant his power, his mission; not his soul. Elisha became the same kind of man as Elijah.⁴⁹

Geisler and Amano agree: "Obviously this does not mean that Elisha was a reincarnation of Elijah since they were both alive at the same time. It means that he continued the prophetic ministry with the same spirit and power of Elijah."⁵⁰

Therefore, it is simply unbiblical and illogical to suppose that Luke 1:17 and these related passages support the claim that John the Baptist was a reincarnation of the prophet Elijah.

⁴⁸ Mark C. Albrecht, *Reincarnation: A Christian Critique of a New Age Doctrine*, Downers Grove, IL (InterVarsity Press, 1982) 38.

⁴⁹ Martha Knobloch, *Reincarnation: The Gospel Truth*, Shippensburg PA (Destiny Image Publishers, 1988) 86.

⁵⁰ Norman L. Geisler & J Yutaka Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation*, Wheaton IL (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986)140.

Hebrews 9:27

Perhaps the clearest biblical verse debunking reincarnation is in the Book of Hebrews: “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Man does not live multiple lives, but once only followed by God’s judgment.

Elizabeth Claire Prophet attempts to evade the clear meaning of the passage:

What does the author mean by saying ‘since men only die once’? The easiest explanation is that he is referring to the fact that our mortal bodies die only once. The human body is a one-shot deal. No one has tried to argue otherwise except Christians who believe in a bodily resurrection . . . the passage does not say, ‘It is appointed unto man *once to live*.’⁵¹

While I again give her credit for creativity in evasion, yet her response simply ignores the clear statement of Scripture. Not willing to give up so easy, Mrs. Prophet reaches for another explanation by appealing to a Franciscan of another time:

In London in 1864, Franciscan Mercurius van Helmont published a book . . . If ‘once to die’ were meant to be taken literally, as it is ‘generally understood,’ asks the author, then what about people that have been raised from the dead—like Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter? Didn’t they die again in the natural course of life, therefore dying twice? He then asks, ‘Must not these words then have another, a deeper and less obvious sense.’⁵²

Though van Helmont’s point is well-taken, and we could even add other exceptions such as the fact that neither Enoch or Elijah ever died, the general biblical principle remains as authoritative: aside from a handful of exceptions among the billions that have or ever will walk the face of the earth, it is appointed that each will live once, die, and face God’s judgment.

John 9:1-3

Another verse that reincarnationists believe shows Jesus’ belief in reincarnation is the account of the man born blind in Gospel of John:

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he

51 Prophet, Reincarnation, 105.

52 Prophet, Reincarnation, 106.

was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him’ (John 9:1-3).

Supporters of reincarnation claim that by asking if the man’s blind condition was caused by the man’s own sins, they must believe that the man was judged for sins in a previous life since he was born blind.

Geisler and Amano quote the reincarnationist Quincy Howe, Jr. comments on John 9:1-3: “Here is incontrovertible support for a doctrine of human preexistence . . . There is probably no more persuasive passage in the New Testament than this one to support the case that Jesus and his followers accepted or at least were aware of reincarnation.”⁵³

In responding to Howe, Geisler and Amano argued: “The Jewish theologians of that time gave two reasons for birth defects: prenatal (before birth, but *not before* conception) and parental sin . . . These references illustrate that Jewish tradition held to the belief in prenatal sin, *not* reincarnation.”⁵⁴

The disciples question suggested that they believed that either the man was suffering for his parents’ sins or for sins committed before birth. The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of original sin; the belief that the sin nature is passed down to all of the descendants of Adam. This means that even before their birth babies have the sin nature. Did not David say, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).

There is no reason to suppose the disciples were making reference to a belief in reincarnation. Nor does Jesus response indicate any such understanding: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:3).

The Christian Gospel

Probably the biggest difference between most forms of reincarnation / Karma and Christian theology is that in the former, the karmic debt must simply be paid for by appropriate suffering and punishment.

Elizabeth Claire Prophet openly admits that “Almost every belief system that teaches reincarnation also includes the idea that man has the potential to become God. This divine potential is described as

⁵³ Norman L. Geisler & J Yutaka Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation*, Wheaton IL (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986)145.

⁵⁴ Geisler, *The Reincarnation Sensation*, 145.

a seed or spark within us that need to be nurtured or fanned so that it can develop into full godhood. Reincarnation gives us the chance to pursue that development.”⁵⁵

In other words, for the reincarnationist, salvation is by self-achievement. When you have suffered sufficiently for your negative karma, and have finally purified yourself, you can escape the world of rebirths.

This salvation by self-effort is in clear contrast to the Christian gospel in which salvation is the finished work of Jesus Christ. Further, it is heretical in that it repeats the satanic promise of Eden that we man can become God. Christianity shows us how to become reconciled to God through the cross, not how to become a God ourselves.

Christ did not die merely as a martyr. It was His very purpose for coming to earth. It was His plan from the beginning and he set His heart on Jerusalem knowing that He was going to die on the cross. Cult expert Walter Martin stated: “The reincarnationist is right in saying that man cannot atone for all of his sins in one lifetime. The Bible says that man could not atone for his own sins if he had thousands of lifetimes (Romans 3:10-12).”⁵⁶

Jesus came to die a sacrificial death by which He would be the substitute for the sinner, bearing the punishment that they deserved (1 John 2:2). He was the perfect, spotless Lamb of God who would take upon Himself the sins of the world (John 1:29).

The Christian teaching is that of an exchange; Christ Jesus took upon himself our sins and guilt and we, by faith in Him, receive His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is indeed the gospel or good news, because it means that Christian believers do not have to receive the punishment of eternal damnation. God has justly judged us righteous and set us free. That God sent His only Son, Jesus to die in our place was the greatest act of grace in the history of the universe. But in order to receive this salvation and be born again, we must personally turn to Jesus Christ, trusting in Him for eternal life.

⁵⁵ Prophet, Reincarnation, 39.

⁵⁶ Martin, *The New Cults*, 373-374.

DOUBT AND FAITH

by Steve Lagoon

In this article, I am going to briefly examine the issue of doubt as it relates to Christian faith. Both as a pastor and in my role at Religion Analysis Service, I come across people exploring Christianity, or who are already Christians, but on occasion struggle with doubt. That is, for the most part, they are drawn to Christ and the claims of Christianity, but at times they wonder if they may perhaps be mistaken.

“What if there is no God?” “What if evolution is true and mankind is just a cosmic accident without meaning?” “What if Jesus wasn’t really God, but was just a man?” “What if Jesus didn’t really rise from the dead?”

Often those coming with such questions or doubts are very troubled by them and are perhaps fearful that God will be displeased with them. Indeed, sometimes, church leaders have actually admonished such persons to just accept what they are taught and to trust the church. They are told that such questions show a lack of faith or should just be accepted as mysteries.

It is just this kind of thinking that caused Mark Twain to quip, “Faith is believing what you know ain’t so.” But I want to make clear in this article that we do not have to check our brains at the door to be Christians. In fact, many of the greatest intellects of human history have felt quite comfortable in the faith of Jesus Christ. Christianity doesn’t consist in blind faith, but in reasoned faith.

Yes, Christians understand that reason, along with the Scriptures, are a gift of God, doubts are normal and questions are welcome, because they drive us to the throne of God. I say that because it is often the very process of doubt that can drive us to reexamine the reasons we came to believe in the first place. In my experience, such renewed study and reflection leaves me re-invigorated in my faith, as I find again the evidence for the Christian faith so compelling and a strong foundation for my life.

For instance, critics have often attacked the Christian belief in the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As a younger Christian, when confronted with such skepticism, I studied material on both side of the question, and always found that the apologetic evidence in favor of Christ’s literal resurrection overwhelming.

The result of the process was that my faith in Christ was only strengthened further. I am always willing to hear what others believe and to hear their criticisms of my faith. This is because I have felt that it would be better to be shown where I am wrong than to go on blindly and blissfully believing what isn't true! Again, truth has no fear of being examined; it is only darkness that flees from the light (John 3:19-21).

In this light, I have sometimes asked atheists if they have doubts. I would say to them: "Haven't you ever had a moment where you stopped and thought to yourself, 'What if they are right; what if there is a God?'" It would be perfectly normal if they did, but they tend to deny it. How true are the Scriptures: "The fool says in his heart there is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

While the atheist is blinded,, the honest seeker after God can admit doubts and ask questions. God is big enough to handle them. I am convinced that God would rather have honest doubters than pretend believers. Anyway, there is no sense in pretending since God knows our hearts. Give your doubts, questions, and fears to the Lord and ask to help you. He will!

I am reminded of the words of the man who when confronted by Jesus cried aloud; "I believe, help me overcome my un-belief" (Mark 9:24). We should also keep in mind that while the evidence for Christianity is overwhelming and strong, yet there is still an element of faith necessary.

Gary Parker has well said, "In my own pilgrimage, if I have to choose between a faith that has stared doubt in the eye and made it blink, or a naïve faith that has never known the firing line of doubt, I will choose the former" (Gary Parker, *The Gift of Doubts*, Harper Collins, 1990).

The great Greek philosopher Socrates was known for his "Socratic method" in which he regularly challenged people to examine the basis for their beliefs. His great motto was "*the unexamined life is not worth living!*"

His point is well-taken. It is better to build our lives around ideas that we have seriously investigated than to merely believe what we have been taught or told. In this way, and through this crucible, they become OUR beliefs.

If there is some question that troubles or perplexes you, take the time and seek out an answer. Great men and women of God have probably asked the same or similar question. Take advantage of the many great resources available. Also, feel free to contact us at Religion Analysis Service. We would be honored to assist you.

THE REALITIES OF GAMBLING

by Shawn Stevens

We can all imagine a desert traveler, thirsty for water, climbing over the sand dunes, who, all of a sudden, sees an oasis just over the next sand dune. He rushes to the spot only to find another dry sand dune. What did he see before? **It was a mirage, a “fata morgana”.** He was seeing what he wanted to see, but it was an illusion. This is an excellent parallel to the man or woman who aspires to become rich through gambling. They have their eyes fixed upon a great mirage.

It is estimated that in the United States 500 billion dollars is spent in legal gambling each year. If we were to add to that the illegal gambling, it is estimated to be one trillion dollars per year. **Statistically, those who gamble the most are the poor.** They are lured in by the advertising promoting the possibility of becoming rich and escaping from their poverty. Sadly, the majority of them are only driven deeper and deeper into poverty by gambling their money away. Today, gamblers make use of the internet to gamble, as well as gambling in giant casinos. They gamble away everything from hard-earned money to their welfare checks. They gamble the money in their hand and the credit from their creditors. Participation in gambling is made easy by the industry itself.

What is gambling? Isn't it true that the general, and most broad, meaning of the word is simply to take a risk? Life is full of risks. In fact, you can't go through one day of your life without taking some sort of risk. However, this is not what I am talking about. When I speak out against gambling, I am talking about the game of gambling in which money or possessions are betted in some game of chance. It is not a moral issue whether, or not, you put knee pads on when you bicycle in town but it is a moral issue if you game-your-money-away in legal or illegal gambling.

Why is it a moral issue to gamble? Does the Bible say, “You must not gamble”? Not in those emphatic words. However, there are principles that gambling violates and vices that gambling supports. Some principles that gambling violates are:

1. Stewardship – In God's kingdom we do not own a thing, not even ourselves. Everything we are, and have, belongs to God. **God expects a return on what He allows us to manage during our lifetime.** Is gambling a responsible use of God's money?

2. A spirit of contentment – God has given us so much. **We are to be thankful for this.** However, the spirit of gambling is one of discontentment and greed. It is actually materialism which fuels the game.

3. Responsible care for One's family – Families need the security that a wage earner brings to a home. That security and provision allows spouses and children to be fed, clothed and provided for in many ways, including educationally and medical expenses. How much will your children need for their future education? What medical conditions may your spouse develop and for which he or she will need expensive medical care? These are uncertain requirements. Wages are needed for families but, sadly, many families are coming up short due to the gambling habits of wage earners.

What evils does gambling support?

1. Organized crime – It has long been known that the criminal world is deeply involved in the gambling industry. In fact, casinos are like magnets for criminals of all sorts. Consider this, that since the city of Atlanta legalized gambling in 1976, the crime rate has risen 380%. Consider this, that the state of Colorado had to double its police force when five casinos opened. Las Vegas boasts one of the highest crime rates in America. It can be observed, again and again, that when casinos are brought into a city, prostitution, drug and violent crime quickly begin to rise. This is because the criminal world is, and has always been, deeply involved in this industry. I realize that organized crime is involved in many businesses through money laundering, and otherwise. It is impossible to prevent your involvement in it 100%, but the gambling industry has been seen to foster crime to such an extent that it should be reconsidered as a legal industry.

2. Addiction – Gambling is addictive. We are told that there are 2.5 million pathological gamblers in the United States. Usually when people hear the word “addiction,” they think of drugs or alcohol. Gambling is also very addictive. It does not take long before people move from experimenting with gambling, to occasional gambling, to regular gambling, and then to compulsive gambling. Those in the first three stages mentioned often deny having a problem with gambling. Those in the last category can't stop on their own.

3. Exploitation of the poorest and weakest in society – The poor have been the largest contributors to this industry. They are simply sucked in by the advertising. They will continue to be sucked in and

exploited as long as this industry is permitted in our nation. Teens and the elderly are also sucked in by its advertising. Casinos are now even building children's theme parks to desensitize children and families to gambling.

Dear reader, if you are involved in gambling, I hope that what you have read here challenges you to re-think your involvement. The chances are that you are chasing a mirage. You are being lured into giving up hard-earned money which is needed in God's kingdom and in supporting your family. The future security of your family is being laid out on the poker table and is being fed into slot machines. Friend, God has blessed us and we have much to be content with. God has given us funds to provide for our families, for their security, for their education and for their health. Greed and materialism is the motivation for gambling and the gambling wealth that you are looking for is just a mirage. Your family is not the only one who would like to use your resources. The criminal world wants your money, also. They have white-washed something dark and sleazy and now the advertising is there to lure you and your sons and daughters. Gambling may be easy at the beginning. You may have the cash, or credit, to get involved but it is addictive and hard to stop.

Friend, please reconsider your participation in gambling.

Shawn Stevens, RAS friend, used with permission

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QUIZ: TREES

1. We identify Hiram and Solomon with these trees:
 - a. the sequoias in California
 - b. the cedars of Lebanon
 - c. the Black Forest in Germany
 - d. the willows in Babylon
2. Who said: "Poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree".
 - a. Lord Byron
 - b. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
 - c. Joyce Kilmer
 - d. Louis Agassiz
3. Which tree has no rings?
 - a. oak
 - b. pine
 - c. birch
 - d. palm
4. What wood was predominantly used in the construction of Noah's ark?
 - a. gopherwood
 - b. willow
 - c. tamarack
 - d. cedar
5. Amos was a farmer tending these trees/bushes:
 - a. fig trees
 - b. pomegranates
 - c. olive trees
 - d. sycamore trees
6. Who said: "If I knew that the world would end tomorrow, I would plant an apple tree today"?
 - a. Karl Barth
 - b. Martin Luther
 - c. Johnny Appleseed
 - d. Dwight L. Moody

7. How does Scripture term death by crucifixion or “hanging on a tree”?
- a. accursed of God and deserving His wrath
 - b. extreme but customary procedure for criminals
 - c. humanitarian - to keep society pure
 - d. the “end solution” for a Jewish criminal
8. Isaiah supposedly died by:
- a. being burned at the stake
 - b. being hung on a tree
 - c. being sawn asunder like a tree
 - d. falling from a tree
9. Who was killed as he was suspended with his hair from a tree?
- a. Mordecai
 - b. Haman
 - c. Manasseh
 - d. Absalom
10. In which Bible books does the Tree of Life appear?
- a. Genesis and Revelation
 - b. Psalms and Ecclesiastes
 - c. Genesis and John’s Gospel
 - d. Romans and 1. Peter

Answers:

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (c) 4. (d) 5. (a) 6. (d) 7. (b) 8. (a) 9. (c) 10. (a)

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