

# **Reincarnation and Christianity**

(prepared by R. F. Beck as guidance for NPA members interested in religious discussion)

In my recent paper published in the General Science Journal (<http://gsjournal.net/Science-Journals/Essays/View/4057>) I included the following as an informative appendix to indicate how human error can creep into religion (blue text):

## **Evidence of historical misconception**

The possibility of human error causing misconception that has resulted in prejudice against the possibility of reincarnation is suggested by the following quotes, which seem to indicate that Jesus said that John the Baptist was Eli'jah:

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Eli'jah who is to come." (Matthew 11:13-14) RSV

"And the disciples asked him, 'Then why do the scribes say that first Eli'jah must come?' He replied, 'Eli'jah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Eli'jah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:10-13) RSV

Note reference in the Old Testament to this:

"Behold, I will send you Eli'jah the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." (Malachi 4:5) RSV

So the reason for prejudice about reincarnation in western, Christian culture seems to stem from the Council of Nicea ignoring Christ's own words and St. Matthew's understanding of what He said.

Roger Anderton provided the following from the website below it (green text):

The teaching of reincarnation is against the Old Testament; therefore, Jesus was not teaching that John the Baptist was Elijah reincarnated. So, what did Jesus mean when He said that John the Baptist was Elijah? We see in [Malachi 4:5](#) this prophecy, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." Jesus is referring to the prophecy concerning Elijah. We see that the coming of Elijah was in the spirit of Elijah, which is so stated in [Luke 1:13-17](#).

[snip] So, we see that John the Baptist was in the spirit of Elijah, but not actually Elijah reincarnated.

(from <http://carm.org/bible-difficulties/matthew-mark/was-john-baptist-really-elijah>)

I explained how science now makes sense of the apparent contradiction as follows (again green text):

Read the science and you may see that information about not just DNA, but ideas and emotions, can be encoded at the smallest level. This IS the 'spirit', but the work of Stevenson leaves little doubt that some or possibly all of this information is transferred from one who has died to a new born human.

It is a matter of interpretation what 'actually reincarnated' should mean. People who remember past lives as children generally lose that memory as they grow older. So it seems that the new life has some of the 'essence' of the person who died (their 'spirit'), but also the ability to develop a new individuality. In my case, although many points of congruence can be identified between myself and Epicurus, I feel that I have 'moved on' to be able to think differently. He was happy to overcome the fear of death by ruling out any kind of awareness after death, whereas I find greater comfort in knowing that death is not the end for all eternity.

Thus reincarnation appears to be different to cloning. Information from the DNA and personality of the dead person seems to be mixed with those inherited from parents. So what you have quoted below is a case of religious ideas having a vague but poorly understood link to reality. But NOW we have the advantage of amazing discoveries in SCIENCE.....

An argument that Anderton fails to mention in his favour is what the site he refers to tells us that John the Baptist said of himself:

"And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." (John 1vs 19-21).

Perhaps Anderton thought it wise not to mention this, because if he is claiming that John the Baptist spoke with authority, he would have to equally believe John's words about Jesus, "And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

But although Luke 1v15 tells us that John may have known this from birth, being filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb, we know from Stevenson's research, and I can bear witness to the fact, that inherited childhood knowledge can be drowned out either permanently or until something may later trigger the memory, as in my case. If someone had said to me at any time from my late teens until about two years ago that I was Epicurus, I would have responded that this was absolute nonsense.

So is John the Baptist, who may have forgotten as I did, to be given more credibility than Jesus?

But there is also a simple matter of historical accuracy that makes a nonsense of choosing to believe either the Council of Nicea's ruling or modern interpretations as provided by Anderton. If we were interested in the most reliable account of anything historical, such as what Queen Elizabeth the first really thought about men, would we prefer the ponderings of someone claiming to be an authority hundreds or thousands of years later (eventually), or would we prefer to trust what either she is recorded as saying or what her contemporaries are recorded as saying or concluding about this?

Regrettably, when people choose something to believe as unshakable truth, they reject the most reliable source, and even scientific evidence, because being wrong is unacceptable. This applies to both believers and atheists, the latter thus believing 'religiously'. Atheism is actually more unscientific than the choice to believe something that may not be true. The former fails the important test of scientific thinking, which is keeping an open mind for greater or clearer truth. The latter includes acceptance that clarity will come later.

So it is far more logical to take note of what Christ is recorded as saying, accepting that whatever he meant will ultimately become clearer. In this respect we must note that Matthew did not record Christ saying that John the Baptist was 'inspired' or 'filled' with the spirit of Eli'jah; the text says, "...he **is** Eli'jah."

And this is made even clearer when Matthew later tells us, "Then the disciples understood that He was speaking to them of John the Baptist."

Thus if Jesus were just a man, this would be the most trustworthy account of what this man believed. But if Matthews account is more trustworthy than those hundreds or thousands of years later who like Anderton think they know better, we have to take account of all Matthew said, especially where supported by the other gospel writers, and whatever other contemporary sources can be found, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, and conclude that Jesus Christ is more likely to have greater authority than any man, whether in modern times or as his contemporaries.

The science provided in my recent paper can help to bring this further clarity by demonstrating that both the physical body in terms of DNA and characteristics of personality, such as ideas and emotions, can be encoded and passed on. But we have to ask, "Passed on to what?" If there is matter in the form of ovum, sperm, foetus or child that receives this information, then we might conclude that the resultant person is BOTH the reincarnated person from the past AND the newly created person.

Thus John the Baptist WAS Eli'jah, but he was also the product of Elizabeth's and (possibly) Zechari'ah's genes. The 'spirit' or 'soul' of Eli'jah took on new cellular form in combination with the cells of what was to become John the Baptist.

John may not have known or remembered from childhood that he was Eli'jah, but as Luke tells us that, "...he will go...in the spirit and power of Eli'jah", and we know from 2Kings1v8 and Matthew3v4 that he chose to dress exactly as Eli'jah did, clearly something about Eli'jah was coming across in John.

This may or may not be correct or complete, but as it is what science now suggests, it is both a matter of good science and the humility appropriate to not just Christianity but the other major religions to expect greater understanding to come through scientific or spiritual endeavours to find the truth, rather than from the huge arrogance of assuming that one's faith or viewpoint cannot be wrong.

Atheism is unscientific, and frankly rather stupid in missing that the more knowledge we gain, the more we realise that there is vastly more than the 'knowledgeable' could have imagined.

As this is intended to help those in the NPA who may be Christian believers or searching for the possible truth in Christianity, the following extract from my autobiography is relevant:

"I also note that in her book *Unnatural Enemies*, Dr. Kirsten Birkett makes the point in her preface that many scientists in previous centuries were Christian believers. At the time (1997), Kirsten Birkett, BSc(hons), PhD(Science & Technologies Studies), was the Director of the Matthias Centre for the Study of Modern Beliefs, and her studies had included the history of science.

Although I might not agree with everything in *Unnatural Enemies*, I strongly support the comment and analysis pointing to the need for considerable discernment when reading the Bible; and I thoroughly agree that in both science and religion there has been considerable arrogance; and, of course with what she says about God revealing truth when he is ready. And I am very pleased to say that on page 23 she makes the point that I have used many words to state in various ways with the simple statement that:

"Until you know everything in the universe, you cannot know for sure that some scientific theory is true."

Can we vary this just a little and say that:

"Until you know everything in the universe, you cannot know for sure that God does not exist."

Perhaps it is symptomatic of arrogance among physicists that many seem to claim to be close to a theory of everything. But then I have to admit to the same arrogance when I said that, "I thought that God had now explained to me just about everything in the Universe". This was, however, an overstatement to emphasise the incredible extent of what I believed God had revealed to me, and I was soon to suggest that it could be another hundred years before we are able to propose what my tiny particles are comprised of.

The fact is, we have only just started to actually explore the Universe and we are still frequently surprised by what we find on this planet. Who knows what there remains to be learned. One thing that I have learned from all my studies is that the more you know the more you realise you do not know. I suspect that this may prove to be true for millennia to come. If we survive that long that is!

What appears very likely to me is that when we are ready for a certain level of knowledge, or perhaps in dire need of it, if we are unlikely to work it out on our own, we get a little help. I suspect, quite strongly, that now is the time when a more complete understanding of gravitation may be essential to prevent cataclysmic disaster in some form. Such disaster may come gradually but inextricably because there is not the political will to prevent our misuse of the planet's resources, perhaps even presenting a threat to civilisation as we know it; or it may come more suddenly, with much less warning as we are struck by an asteroid or comet. Or is Armageddon inevitable, because mankind has not, and will not learn to curb its war-like and selfish tendencies? If those who follow religions choose to ignore the most fundamental teachings of the founders, as they have done in the past, then we could well be headed in that direction."

Perhaps I should add to that now, and suggest that if atheists in the mould of Anderton, who appear to have no moral compass, and think that conflict is normal, continue to gain influence, then it is no wonder that Christ warned of 'awful horrors' that Revelation enlarged upon, that are partly the result of this and partly to deal with it.

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