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REINCARNATION WESTERN-STYLE: THE RESURGENCE OF AGE-OLD SUPERSTITION IN A SCIENTIFIC ERA

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IN BOTH THE WEST AND THE EAST THE NOTION OF REINCARNATION HAS EXERCISED its fascination over the minds of men since ancient times. According to ancient Hindu writings:

Worn-out garments
are shed by the body: Worn-out bodies
are shed by the dweller.¹

And Plato's *Phaedo* expresses a similar view:

If at its release the soul is pure and carries with it no contamination of the body ... in other words, if it has pursued philosophy ... it departs to that place which is, like itself, invisible, divine, immortal, and wise ... [and] spends the rest of time with God.... [The souls] of the wicked are compelled to wander about graveyards as a punishment, wandering until at last through craving for the corporeal which unceasingly pursues them, they are imprisoned once more in a body. And as you might expect, they are attached to the same sort of character or nature which they have developed during life.... Those who have cultivated gluttony or selfishness or drunkenness ... are likely to assume the form of donkeys and other perverse animals.²

Although belief in some versions of reincarnation is rooted in truths which the Catholic faith upholds—namely, that a human person is more than a body, and that the human soul is immortal³—such a teaching is clearly contrary to the faith, for belief in reincarnation is incompatible with belief in the resurrection of the body. As the Supplement to the *Summa Theologiae* explains:

The errors of the said heretics [i.e., those maintaining reincarnation] are able to be destroyed from this: that they prejudice the truth of the resurrection which is proclaimed in Sacred Scripture. For resurrection is not able to be spoken of unless the soul returns to the same body, because resurrection is rising again; it belongs to the same thing however, to rise and to fall. Whence the resurrection regards the body, which falls dead after death, more than it does the soul, which lives after death. And so if it were not the same body which the soul resumes, [Scripture] would not say resurrection, but rather the assumption of a new body.⁴

Given the way in which the mysteries of the faith are interconnected, it is not surprising that the denial of the resurrection of the body entails a denial of other aspects of God's plan of salvation:

Death is the end of man's earthly pilgrimage, of the time of grace and mercy which God offers him so as to work out his earthly life in keeping with the divine plan, and to decide his ultimate destiny. When "the single course of our earthly life" is complete, we shall not return to other earthly lives: "It is appointed for men to die once."⁵

There is no "reincarnation" after death.⁶

In light of the above, it is a distressing fact that belief in reincarnation has become increasingly widespread in our day, even among those who profess to be Christian.⁷ Now, as has been briefly shown above, it is possible to refute this error with arguments drawn from the faith. These arguments, however, will not be accepted by non-Christians nor even by all Christians. If there is to be any discussion, it must be carried on the basis of what can be naturally known by reason alone. The purpose of this paper is to formulate arguments of this sort.

PART ONE: THEORIES OF REINCARNATION AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST THEM

First we must state what reincarnation is. Reincarnation is not taken to mean exactly the same thing by all who espouse it. Different philosophers have different conceptions of it, as do various eastern religions, and there are also the popularized versions of it, both eastern and western. What is common to all conceptions of reincarnation is the idea that after a human individual dies, his soul enters the body of either another human being (generally an infant) or some lower life form. Put in more popular terms: Depending on whether a person is good or bad, after death he or she will come back again as the Queen of England or as a leper or maybe as a slug.



Hindu symbol for reincarnation

My discussion of reincarnation will be addressed principally to the popular version of the belief. I do not intend to examine the religious versions which are espoused by Hindus and Buddhists, among others, for this would suppose a familiarity with their traditions and writings which is only acquired after long study.⁸ I will argue on the basis of

what is known to natural reason (i.e., reason unaided by faith), since all share this common ground. It is not to my purpose, however, to investigate the various theories proposed by philosophers and theosophists,⁹ with the exception of that proposed by Plato, since his is representative of a conception of reincarnation popular with many people, both in our day and in the past.

A. ARGUMENTS DRAWN FROM NATURAL PHILOSOPHY VS. REINCARNATION

1. Platonic Reincarnation or the Soul Changes its Garments

Plato was open to the possibility of reincarnation because of his view of the relation of body and soul. He regarded the body to be a shell in which the real person, the soul, is contained; the soul pilots the body around, as a sailor does a ship, or as a driver, a vehicle. On this understanding of the relation of body and soul, conceiving the reincarnation of the soul poses no more problem than envisaging a person getting out of one vehicle and entering another, or a person taking off one garment and putting on another.

There is a certain attractiveness in the position that the body is not the real you, but is only a covering. After all, we consider it an insult if we are "loved" only for our body, and there is no doubt that the condition of the "inner person" is more important than bodily health or physical appearance. And it is certainly true that the soul is the mover of the body. However, as St. Thomas Aquinas points out, there are a number of problems with this position:

[I]t is manifest that the *soul* is that by which the body lives, for to live is the being of the living thing: the soul therefore is that by which the human body has actual existence. It belongs to a form to give actual existence. Therefore the soul is the form of the body. So if the *soul* were in the body as a sailor in a ship, it would not make the body the kind of thing it is, nor the body's parts the kind of thing they are. The contrary, however, is obvious from the fact that once the *soul* leaves the body, the particular parts do not retain their original name except by equivocation. For the dead eye is called an eye by equivocation, as are stone eyes and eyes in pictures; and same with the rest of the parts. And furthermore, if the *soul* were in the body as a sailor in a ship, it

would follow that the union of body and soul was accidental. Death, therefore, which brings about the separation of body and soul, would not be the corruption of any substance-but this is obviously false.¹⁰

In other words, a thing that moves another does not as such cause the other to exist as a certain kind of thing. The sailor does not cause the ship to be a ship. The life principle or soul does, however, cause the body to be a living body. Therefore it cannot be simply related to the body as its mover. Alternately put, the body would not itself be alive, but would be simply a puppet or costume, if the soul were merely the body's mover.

A further problem with maintaining that the soul stands to the body simply as driver to vehicle, is that when a driver leaves a vehicle, destruction of the vehicle does not ensue, whereas when the soul leaves the body, the body corrupts.¹¹

Yet another fact which Plato's theory of the relation of body and soul overlooks is that since a human being is an animal that thinks, one cannot have a complete human person without a body. To understand why a human person without a body is an incomplete person requires making two distinctions which are not that easy to see. First of all, one must recognize that thinking is not imagining. This is seen by thinking about something, say a cat, and at the same time imagining a cat, and then comparing what one is doing in each case. One's image of a cat is necessarily of a specific (relative¹²) size and shade, say, small and black. One's concept of cat, however, is not that it is small and black, because then the concept would not apply to cats without that specific size and color. If one thought that a cat was a small black thing one would not really be thinking, because one really has not yet got an idea of what a cat is. Stated generally: our images, even when vague, are always of individual things with specific dimensions, whereas our concepts are abstracted from specific individual things with their specific characteristics, and being abstract apply to every individual of a given type.

Once one recognizes that thinking and imagining are not the same, the second distinction that needs to be made in order to see that a complete human person cannot exist without a body is that thinking depends upon imagining. I cannot think about cats without imagining a cat (or at least the word 'cat'). This is known from ex-

perience: If we are tired, our imagination does not function well, and we cannot think; if we cannot reproduce in our mind's eye what we have just read or heard, we cannot think about it. Another experience which also reveals the dependency of thinking upon imagining, is that when we are trying to understand something we form for ourselves images to serve as examples in which we regard, so to speak, what we want to understand. When we are unable to come up with examples, we are unable to understand. Consider, for example, an abstract statement such as "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver." Notice how the statement remains unintelligible until one can come with some kind of example illustrating it (such as, hearing the same piece of bad news has a different impact on one when one is in a good mood than when one is in a bad mood). Thinking, then, is not imagining, but it depends on imagining.¹³ Now since imagining is an operation taking place in a bodily part (namely, the brain), when the soul is separated from the body it has not simply left behind something extraneous to human nature. Since a rational soul without a body cannot (naturally) exercise its rationality, a soul without a body is not a complete person. Plato's theory of reincarnation is therefore based upon a position which is false.



Nevertheless, Plato is correct in observing that the body does in certain ways hinder the soul from exercising its ability to think-sickness and strong emotion are just two of the things pertaining to the body which have a negative impact upon thought.¹⁴ Indeed that the body impedes the soul to the extent that it does is a natural source of puzzlement. Since natural processes generally result in an arrangement of parts of organisms which is the best possible under the particular circumstances, our native reason must regard this as a somewhat mysterious situation (and indeed the explanation for it must be traced to original sin). However accurate Plato's observation that obstacles to thought arise from the body, he nonetheless failed to see that corporeal indispositions such as sickness or false imagination, do not impede thought the way having no body at all would.

In the face of the direct evidence of their internal experience that the body is part of them, it is somewhat

puzzling that people can deny this. Indeed, as Aristotle points out in the beginning of his treatise *On the Soul*, at first sight “there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body, e.g., anger, courage, appetite, and sensation generally.”¹⁵ In other words, our experience of apparently everything we do, be it to feel emotion, or perceive colors, sounds, etc., indicates unity between body and soul, rather than separateness. Certainly, the soul is mover of the body, but to think that it is only the mover of the body overlooks evidence for a closer connection between the two, first and foremost of which is the corruption of the body which follows upon the soul’s departure. Other evidence of the unity of body and soul in a person includes the existence of mental problems resulting in physical problems (psychosomatic illnesses), physical problems resulting in mental problems (depression due to organic deficiencies), and mental attitude affecting life span (cancer patients with a zest for life often live longer than predicted; married men live longer; placebos are often efficacious). And it strikes us as odd to interpret “give me a hug” to mean “give the ‘shell’ that I presently occupy a hug.” Even the common experience of the war between the flesh and the spirit is experienced as taking place between different parts of oneself-however much some people pretend that the body is the sole culprit in some intemperate action rather than admitting that the guilty party is themselves, and even their soul more than their body. One can see why people who have adopted the position that matter in general is evil, or the position that the flesh is evil (Manicheans, Jansenists, followers of some versions of Hinduism, *inter alia*) are inclined to deny that the body is part of themselves.¹⁶ It is not their experience of themselves which leads them to do so, but rather their desire to dissociate themselves from what they regard as evil and burdensome.

We should note that while our body is an essential part of us, and we would not be the person who we are without it, it is still somewhat mysterious what exactly makes our body ours. After all, the material making up the body is continually replaced throughout life; and material that once was someone else’s body may become part of one’s own (the graveyard worm is eaten by the fish which is eaten by a human). *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes that the modalities of the resurrection are unknown to us.¹⁷

2. Reincarnation as Cosmic Recycling

Reincarnation as Plato would have it is not, the-

refore, a tenable position. However, that this particular explanation of reincarnation does not work does not prove that reincarnation does not in fact occur. Indeed, one could argue that one of the very facts which Plato overlooked-namely, that a human soul without a body is not a complete person-requires one to postulate a return of the soul after death to a body:

... because if the resurrection of the body is denied, it is not easy, indeed it is rather difficult to maintain the immortality of the soul. For it is the case that the soul is naturally united to the body; [to be] separated from it, however, [is] contrary to its nature and per accidents. Whence the soul divested of the body, so long as it is without the body, is imperfect. However, it is impossible that that which is natural and per se, be finite and as nothing; and that which is contrary to nature and per accidents, be infinite, [which would be the case] if the soul would last forever without the body. And therefore the Platonists positing the immortality [of the soul], posited reincarnation, granted this be heretical: And therefore if the dead do not rise again, we will have confidence only in this life.¹⁸

Crucial to this argument are the ideas that frustrated states are never permanent in nature, and that the soul being unable to reason without the body would be in a frustrated state. There are, however, two arguments against this argument for ‘cosmic recycling’ of souls. Ironically, one of these arguments shows that the reincarnation hypothesis actually entails the same absurdity which the advocates of this hypothesis meant to avoid; namely, that a process which continually resulted in frustrated states would be a permanent feature of nature.

Consider first the form of reincarnation that claims that not only can a human being be reincarnated as another human being, but also as a plant or animal. What we observe about natural processes is that they result in each organism having the right tools for the activities it has to perform: the beaver has the teeth it needs in order to cut down trees; the woodpecker has the beak and the brain-cushioning needed to successfully peck holes in trees to find insects to eat. Nature does not give giraffes prehensile tails for swinging from tree to tree-they are too heavy to be able to use them. Only in rare cases does nature seem to give a creature more than what it can use, and such cases are limited to parts of minor importance, and even they in many cases can be explained in terms of

purpose; e.g., the vestigial feet found on certain species of snake served the purpose of locomotion in the snake's ancestor, and our appendix was once useful for digesting a diet much richer in vegetable fiber. Furthermore, such organs tend to be eliminated over time (fins of modern day whales are smaller than those of prehistoric whales, apparently because the larger fins did not help the whale swim any better). As a general rule then, there is a proportion between the parts the organism has and the activities it has to perform.

What then about a human reincarnated as a plant¹⁹ or animal? Would it have the ability to think and to invent new forms of technology, but not be able to make use of these abilities? Or would it have lost these abilities? If the latter, then how could we speak about reincarnation, since what can only do what a plant can do or an animal can do is no longer a human being at all. In the case of a human soul reincarnated in a plant or lower animal, there would not even be memory or imagination. Even if the human soul were reincarnated in a higher animal such as a chimpanzee or dolphin, there would not be the memory and imagination requisite for thought. For if they had it, they would also by nature be endowed with the capacity for thought, since nature does not provide organisms with parts of superfluous capability. Providing apes and dolphins with memories of which they could not take full advantage would be like giving a Stradivarius to an untalented violin student. But again what we observe is that what comes about by nature is reasonable.²⁰ Furthermore, even if one conceded that these animals had adequate memories, there is the problem of the lack of coordination of their experiences with the ideas which had been previously acquired by the human souls, resulting in the uselessness of those ideas (this problem is elaborated on in the next paragraph). The cosmic recycling theory, then, results in the same sort of absurdity that it claimed to avoid.

The hypothesis that the reincarnated adult soul enters a human infant fares no better, for here too nature would be acting in vain just as in the case of a lower organism. For although an adult soul does not differ from an infant soul in kind, it does differ from it in as much as the adult soul has acquired certain accidental perfections, namely, ideas. If the intellect of the child is as a blank

slate, that of the adult is as a slate on which something has been written. To put an adult soul in an infant body would be to frustrate it, for the adult soul would be incapable of thinking about the ideas which it possessed, lacking as it would the corresponding experiences and images which are required as an object of thought-for again, thinking depends on imagining,²¹ which insures a point of contact with reality. An idea cannot be understood when it becomes detached from reality. If nature-especially on a permanent basis-never does anything of importance which is in vain or pointless, then it could not be according to nature for adult human souls to be reincarnated in bodies which would not allow them to actually think about the ideas that they had acquired. In order for the soul not to be frustrated, it would have to be reunited with its own body with its own memories.²²



“In order for the soul not to be frustrated, it would have to be reunited with its own body with its own memories”



Finally, while the ‘change-of-garment’ and the ‘cosmic recycling’ versions of reincarnation differ on the point of whether or not the body is necessary in order to have a complete person, they are nonetheless very similar in that they regard bodies and souls as interchangeable: Both hold that you could still be you with a body other than your own. Both fail to recognize that the

particular body one has is an instrument uniquely fitted to one's particular soul, and without it one could not be one's complete self.²³

B. ARGUMENTS VS. REINCARNATION BASED UPON AN EXAMINATION OF POSSIBLE SUPERNATURAL MOTIVES BEHIND IT

While reincarnation could not be a natural phenomenon for the reasons given above, it is not immediately evident that reincarnation could not be a supernatural phenomenon.²⁴ Let us examine some of the most common reasons given by those who maintain that reincarnation is due to supernatural causes.²⁵

1) Reincarnation as punishment or reward

A common explanation for why human beings are reincarnated is that it is in order to punish or reward them for their performance in their previous life.²⁶ However, it is pointless to punish or reward people if they are unaware of the deeds of their previous lives. The majority of people are unaware that they are reincarnated, and

this through no fault of their own. To punish them, therefore, would be either stupid or cruel. Certainly, stupidity is not a characteristic usually attributed to the supernatural being; nor is cruelty: the supernatural power is generally held to be incapable of committing any evil. Those who hold these consequences of the doctrine of reincarnation-as-punishment to be false,²⁷ must hold that the doctrine itself is false if they are to be consistent.

2) Reincarnation as a form of mercy

A variation of the punishment-reward explanation for reincarnation is that reincarnation takes place in order that people might have a chance to improve upon their performance in their previous life: the Supreme Power out of mercy does not want to condemn us for the wrong-doings of our first life (or lives).

There are a number of problems in maintaining that this is the motivation behind reincarnation: (1) If we do not remember our previous life, we cannot appreciate our present life as a merciful second chance. (2) If the Supreme Being in his mercy does not want to condemn us for the wrong-doings of our first life, why would he condemn us for them in later lives? Doing so would be arbitrary and would seem to be contrary to mercy. It would be like cosmic musical chairs: just a matter of luck when the music stopped whether you were on one of your good lives or one of your bad ones (except for the rare individual who achieves perfection in every life from the first one to the last one). (3) A second chance is reasonably given in two situations: first, when the original test proves to be poorly formulated.

However, this possible reason for retesting is readily dismissed, as most will not countenance that the cosmic tester is capable of making mistakes. The second reason for retesting is when some factor outside the test taker's control (inexperience, illness, etc.) hinders him or her from performing in a manner representative of his or her abilities. While certain individuals are handicapped by ignorance and emotional problems (arising from poor upbringing, among other things), and consequently are destined to live morally diminished lives,²⁸ they are still capable of making choices according to their lights. By taking into account impediments to responsibility for which people cannot be held culpable, their moral goodness or badness can be reasonably assessed on the basis of the actions performed throughout a single lifetime. Retesting, then, is unnecessary.

PART TWO: OTHER REASONS WHY PEOPLE BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION

There are two main reasons why people in the West believe in reincarnation: first, because they think that there is evidence which supports such a belief; second, because they want to believe it. As far as evidence for the belief is concerned, some of the apparent evidence takes the form of the various erroneous notions of the human person and of the flesh which we have spoken of above. There is also a second sort of evidence which leads some to posit reincarnation, namely, supposed cases of people who are reincarnated.

People are, of course, correct in thinking that if one person has an argument that supposedly proves that no x is y, and another person comes up with a case of an x that is y, then one is justified in rejecting the proof, or at least rejecting its universal scope (for the conclusion of some arguments is that something is true for the most part). However, what people commonly overlook is that unless they themselves have experienced something, they do not know it to be a fact. Rather they are either simply believing that the cases are genuine on the word of those who claim it, or they are inferring that the cases are genuine from signs, the cases again not being a direct object of observation. Thus, people are mistaken about thinking that cases known second hand settle the question of reincarnation. They fail to realize that some claims can be accepted as merely probable, and that only after being documented.²⁹

In addition to confusing knowing with believing or opining, people are often ignorant of the sort of criteria to apply in order to determine whether there is any plausibility to the supposedly reincarnated person's claim. Knowledge of these criteria pertain to science, rather than to philosophy. However, since it is useful to know how science can uncover mistaken interpretations of facts regarding supposed cases of reincarnation, I will briefly step outside of philosophy in order to examine some of the relevant findings of scientific research. Further, since some of the supposed cases of reincarnation cannot be easily dismissed either on scientific grounds, or on philosophical grounds, I will introduce certain considerations which belong to the faith (i.e., the possibility that occult, spiritual causes may be involved in these experiences).

A. BELIEF IN REINCARNATION BASED ON SUPPOSED CASES OF REINCARNATED INDIVIDUALS

1. Supposed Cases which are Explicable by Natural Causes

What some people take to be evidence for a person's being reincarnated sometimes has a natural explanation.³⁰ When some people see a likeness between a newborn and some relative who lived long before the child, they take this as a sign that the child is a reincarnation of that person; to them the evidence is especially convincing when the ancestor had some features non-typical in the family. Such resemblance, of course, finds its explanation in genetics.³¹

In addition, people do not realize how early some children start to remember things. A child may retain a story heard when he or she was very young, and recount it later in life as if it were a memory from a previous life. The child may do so either because he believes that he actually remembers the event or because he wants to please others or perhaps a combination of both. For it is possible for an individual who hears from his very infancy that he is the reincarnation of so-and-so who did such-and-such to eventually come to believe it (just like bright children sometimes come to believe that they are stupid when told so often enough). I know firsthand of an individual who came to believe that he had seen certain things because he had seen them so often in family movies; he was convinced that he remembered these things, even though others pointed out to him that he was not even born when the events took place. Another similar case is that of psychologist Jean Piaget who remembered an incident in which his nurse saved him from someone who tried to abduct him. On her deathbed, the nurse confessed that she had made up the story about rescuing the child (and had even scratched herself to give the story verisimilitude) so that the family would have reason to keep her on.³² Although the child Piaget had witnessed what had actually happened, the repetition of the nurse's story resulted in his memory (or imagination) filling in things which had not happened. Such filling in is especially likely to happen when there exists a motive for doing so, such as getting attention from others. Indeed, children will sometimes pretend that they remember things that they do not remember simply to please their elders.³³ Thus one can see that a child would be motivated to claim that he is reincarnated and that he did such-and-such when doing so wins approval and esteem

in the society in which he lives.³⁴

Recent research into repressed memory provides further evidence that people sometimes are convinced that they remember things which actually never happened, when there exists some kind of motivation for doing so. A repressed memory is a memory of an event which has been completely forgotten without any conscious effort to do so. A person may be abused as a child, and have no memory of the event as an adult.³⁵ Such memories may sometimes be brought to the surface through psychotherapy, which often involves the use of hypnosis.³⁶



While there are undoubtedly genuine cases of repressed memory, ignorant or unscrupulous psychotherapists through suggestion sometimes evoke from a patient, not a genuinely repressed memory, but an account of things which never really happened.³⁷ 'False memory syndrome' results not only in false memories of childhood abuse, but also of abduction by aliens and memories of past lives.³⁸ According to Nicholas P. Spanos:

[T]he available data strongly indicate that past-life reports obtained from hypnotically regressed subjects are the fantasy constructions of imaginative subjects who are willing to be come absorbed in the make-believe implied by the regression suggestions.... As do subjects who are asked to regress to childhood, past-life reporters construct their fantasies by interweaving information given in the suggestions with information gleaned from their own life experiences and from what they have read and heard that was relevant to their performances. Moreover, just as age-regressed subjects incorporate misinformation into their enactments of being children, so past-life reporters incorporated historical misinformation into their past life enactments.³⁹

Another strike against reincarnation is the supposedly reincarnated person's inability to speak even a few words of the language spoken in his previous life. It is an observed fact that the last thing people forget when they are going senile is their mother tongue. They may forget their spouse, where they live, etc., but they will

still remember their mother tongue. Thus, when someone claims to be a reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian, they should be able to say a few words in ancient Egyptian, which generally they cannot. There are some people who are able to speak some phrases in a foreign language which they claim they had not learned in this life. However, linguists who have examined such cases conclude that “the subjects did not know the basic vocabulary of their putative earlier native languages; in addition, and perhaps even more significantly, this study showed that their utterances in the ‘previous lives’ languages’ were so unsystematic as to be impossible components of any natural human language.”⁴⁰

2. Supposed Cases which are Explicable by Supernatural Causes

The ability of supposedly reincarnated people to recount events that happened in the past may in some cases be due to occult causes. There is no doubt that Satan and the other demons desire man’s perdition.

Scripture witnesses to the disastrous influence of the one Jesus calls ‘a murderer from the beginning,’ who would even try to divert Jesus from the mission received from his Father.... In [the] consequences [of the works of the devil] the gravest of these works was the mendacious seduction that led man to disobey God.... Although Satan may act in the world out of hatred for God and his kingdom in Christ Jesus, and although his action may cause grave injuries-of a spiritual nature

... to each man and to society, the action is permitted by divine providence.... It is a great mystery that providence would permit diabolical activity, but “we know that in everything God works for good with those who love him.”⁴¹

One of the ways in which demons lead people astray is through divination. Demons do not know the future, but they are far more capable than we are of detecting signs which indicate future happenings. Just as an experienced doctor knows that such and such an illness normally runs a certain course, so too demons can know that, given the presence of certain things, certain other things are likely to ensue. By leading people to turn to them for help in coping with the future, they lead people away from counting on God’s providence.⁴²

Demons not only have an ability to predict future events with some degree of accuracy, they also have

knowledge of past events. Just as they are able to communicate their knowledge of the future to a human seer, so too they are able to communicate their knowledge of the past to a human whom they desire to convince that reincarnation is a reality (or whom they desire to use as a means of convincing others that reincarnation is a reality). A human informed by demons could, for example, recount stories of life in a hitherto undiscovered past civilization which might later on actually be discovered because it actually had existed. Such a feat would plainly constitute persuasive evidence that reincarnation does take place. In this way the demons could attain their goal of weakening or extinguishing people’s belief in individual judgment after death and in the resurrection of the body. Thus, although perhaps all of the supposed cases of reincarnation are either intentional hoaxes or admit of natural explanations, it would not be surprising if some of them involve the work of the devil.

3. Deja Vu

The sentiment of having seen before a place or person whom one has not seen before is often interpreted as supporting the notion that one has lived prior lives in which one did in fact know the place or person. However, many deja vu experiences may be accounted for by natural causes.

We consciously remember things that are important to us; things which are not important (or are of little importance) to us are sometimes stored in unconscious memory.⁴³ When we see for a second time a thing whose memory is stored in unconscious memory, we do not consciously remember seeing it before, but the fact that we have seen it before may result in a deja vu feeling. (Once my sister and I felt deja vu simultaneously while on a city bus in San Francisco. We realized later that we had actually been by the place before while on a different bus; on that earlier bus our attention, however, was focused on what we were going to do when we got to our destination.)

When it comes to remembering people, who has not had both the experience of thinking that one has met someone before without being able to place him and the experience of not recognizing at all someone whom one has met before? Now if an experience fell between these two cases, it is not improbable that it would result in deja vu.

Other times, the feeling of deja vu may be simply

the result of a chance resemblance between what one is presently seeing and people or places one has seen before.

Other cases of *deja vu* may result from physiological causes. When one is seeing a thing for the first time the appearance of the thing is being recorded in one's memory. The next time one sees that thing, a correlation is made between the recording and the object as presently perceived, resulting in one's remembering the object. If during the first time one was seeing an object something interfered with the recording process causing it to skip (stop and restart), it would seem to one that one had previously seen the thing, since the continuation of the recording would be compared to the initial recording of the object as it would be to any past recording. There is some evidence that this happens in the case of certain diseases, but it may be the case that it happens spontaneously as well.⁴⁴

Finally, it is possible that a *deja vu* experience may not be due to natural causes, but rather due to demons, who are capable of acting upon the human imagination.⁴⁵

B. BELIEF IN REINCARNATION DUE TO DISORDERED DESIRE

Another reason that many people accept reincarnation is that such a belief is soothing: It allows them to believe that their bad actions ultimately have no serious consequences. They will have another life to do better, and most likely they will not even recognize that life as their own (which averts the fear that it might be a painful one), so why not enjoy this one? They do not want to accept the four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. In place of death, which is naturally a one-time occurrence, they put 'cosmic recycling.' A single judgment after death (according to which one is allotted an eternal punishment or eternal reward) is substituted by a series of judgments of

successive lives (according to which one is promoted or demoted for one's future life)-a series, however, which either never reaches any definite end, or which terminates in all individuals, both good and bad alike, attaining the same end. Thus, hell simply drops out of the picture, and heaven loses its meaning as a place where the individual person is rewarded for his efforts⁴⁶ to do good.⁴⁷ The belief of reincarnation is tailor made for the person who does not want to give up his aspirations to immortality, yet who wants to avoid a God who rewards people for doing good works, which are sometimes difficult and painful to perform, and who punishes people for doing evil works, which are often pleasurable.⁴⁸

When people reject the one true God, their hearts remain ever restless, and in that void where God ought to be superstition rushes in.⁴⁹ This paper has endeavored to show that from the standpoint of natural reason, reincarnation is mere superstition. In sum: A person not only cannot be a complete self without a body, he cannot be his complete self without his own body. To unite his soul with the body of a plant or lower animal would impede it from thinking about the ideas it had acquired in its previous life. To unite it with the body of a human infant would cause similar frustration, since the ideas the soul contained could not be understood except in reference

to that person's memories which cannot be actualized without the necessary images stored in his brain. The alternative positions that concede that reincarnation is not a natural process, but hold it rather to result from divine intervention, lead to absurdities such as that the divine being is cruel (punishing people for deeds they are unaware of having performed) or stupid (having poorly formulated the 'cosmic test').

Furthermore, the cases of supposedly reincarnated people generally do not stand up to scientific examination, but are explicable in terms of natural causes such as genetics, repressed memory, and lying. The few cases which resist explanation by natural causes may well



Buddhist depiction of karma and reincarnation

be the work of occult powers. In spite of the evidence to the contrary, many people will persist in their belief in reincarnation because the only other alternative open to one who thinks that the soul is imperishable is belief in the resurrection of the body, and that belongs to a faith which is demanding.

If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realize that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin....

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again.... When he died, he died once for all to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. That is why you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies....⁵⁰



NOTES

1Bhagavad-Gita as quoted in Houston Smith's *The Religions of Man*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 75. Hereafter cited as *Religions of Man*.

2Plato, *Phaedo*, 81a, 81d, e, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, eds. Hamilton and Cairns, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961). Cf. *Phaedrus* 495ff.

3Not all of the different versions of the doctrine of reincarnation maintain that the human soul is immortal. For example, the Buddhist view (or at least a Buddhist view) denies the notion of soul conceived as oneself or as part of oneself. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1971, vol. 15, 267: "Thus, although there is no substantial soul or unchanging self which transmigrates, there is yet a continuity of individual existences through the ceaseless generation of karma [a subtle substance which is the effects of one's deeds, both good and bad].... [Stopping] the generation of karma [requires] total destruction of all desires or craving (trishna) founded upon the illusion of a permanent, immutable self." Yet other views of reincarnation, such as that enunciated in the *Upanishads of Sankara* (e.g., 1, 13, 22, and 25), are finally little different from this Buddhist view; for although the soul is held to be immortal, the existence of individual souls is denied-what one thinks to be one's soul is really identical with the "universal all." Versions of reincarnation that acknowledge the immortality of the soul, insofar as they do so, are closer to the truth than positions which state that a human being is only a body (that the mind is simply the brain, and so forth).

4St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Ed. Instituti Studiorum Medievalium Ottaviensis. (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1953), *Supplementum* q. 79, art. 1. Hereafter cited as ST. All translations of Aquinas are my own.

5Heb 9:27, 28: "Since men only die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him." (Translation of the Jerusalem Bible). As St. Thomas notes in his commentary on this passage, there are only a few people who have died twice: Lazarus and the widow's son. However, they were not reincarnated, but rather came back to life.

6*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Bloomington, OH: Apostolate for Family Consecration, 1994,) # 1013. Hereafter cited as CCC.

7The increasing acceptance of reincarnation by Christians is what motivated Mark Albrecht to write *Reincarnation: A Christian Appraisal* (Dowers Grove, IL: InverVarsity Press, 1982), 6: "The 1982 Gallop Poll claims that twenty-

three percent of the U.S. population believe in some variety of this theory. Worldwide, belief in some type of reincarnation stands at about fifty percent. Why theologians and Christian thinkers have neglected a topic as important as this I cannot say; even seventeen percent of those who ‘regularly attend church’ allegedly believe in reincarnation.” Albrecht critiques the work of his contemporary Geddes MacGregor as expressed in his book, *Reincarnation in Christianity* (Wheaton, IL: The Theosophical Publishing House: 1978).

8Edmond Robillard’s book, *Reincarnation: Illusion or Reality?* (New York: Alba House, 1992), sketches the historical development of the notion of reincarnation in Eastern thought. I recommend the book, although with reservations on certain points, such as Robillard’s claim that “there was little difference between preaching immortality and ‘know thyself,’ and, on the other hand, proposing the identity of the self and of God as the Upanishads do. ...” An article by Aline Lizotte: “La Reincarnation est-elle compatible avec la foi?” in *Famille Chretienne*, no. 767, (24/9/92) also provides an idea of some of the specific views of certain oriental religions on the subject of reincarnation.

9See Albrecht, op. cit., regarding the views of the theosophists.

10*Quaestio Disputata de Anima in Quaestiones Disputatae*. Vol. II. Ed. P. Bazzi et al. (Turin: Marietti, 1965), art. 1.

11Another problem with Plato’s view is that if it is the case that the relation of soul and body is that of sailor to ship, the soul should be able to move from body to body at will, as sailor moves from ship to ship.

12Things in imagination do not necessarily appear life-size; however, one can definitely imagine one thing as bigger or smaller than another.

13 One might dispute this statement, pointing out that one is not consciously aware of forming mental pictures of everything that one thinks about. However, granted that one is not always forming picture images, in the cases where one is not doing so one is nonetheless imagining something, namely, words (if you stop to think whether you were imagining something corresponding to what you were just thinking of, most likely you will hear or see in your imagination the words which you last heard or saw). The words, of course, must have a habitual reference to things otherwise they would not provide an adequate object for thought.

14Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 66b-67a.

15Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 403a5-7. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1968).

16The sheer difficulty of physical existence for many Asians may be what is behind their generally negative view of the body. Perhaps a denial of the body as part of oneself could also be an extreme reaction to having been ridiculed due to one’s physical appearance or to having been physically abused.

17Cf. CCC #1000; also #997, #999. Cf. also I Con, 15:35-38.

18Thomas Aquinas, *Super Epistolas S. Pauli*, ed. P. Raphaelis Cai, OP, vol. I, (Rome: Marietti, 1953), 1 Cor. #924.

19Note also that not only would nature be acting in vain by frustrating the human soul, it would also be acting in vain by giving the plant a soul having more actuality than was needed for the plant to function as a plant.

20Cf. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals*, 687a8-23: “Anaxagoras indeed asserts that it is his possession of hands that makes man the most intelligent of the animals; but surely the reasonable point of view is that it is because he is the most intelligent animal that he has got hands. Hands are an instrument; and nature, like a reasonable human being, always assigns an instrument [or organ] to the animal that can use it (as it is more in keeping to give flutes to a man who is already a flute-player than to provide a man who possesses flutes with the skill to play them)... We should expect the most intelligent to be able to employ the greatest number of tools to good purpose; now the hand would appear to be not one single tool, but many.... Thus it is to that animal which has the capability for acquiring the greatest number of arts that nature has given that instrument whose range of uses is the most extensive.”

21Imagination in this context does not refer to a mere fiction, but to a likeness of a thing which was actually perceived by the senses.

22People who have amnesia do forget who they are while remaining who they are; yet this is not a natural occurrence, but is due to an accident or misfortune of some sort.

23Another criticism of theories of reincarnation, which does not, however, disprove them, is that they provide no explanation for why most people forget their previous lives. One notable exception is Plato’s theory which accounts for the soul’s forgetting in terms of the soul’s being aggravated by the body which it enters. In the *Meno*, Plato tries to support this view by attempting to show that people do not learn, but rather simply recollect things

known to them from a previous life. Thomas Aquinas gives numerous arguments against the notion that learning is remembering, one of which is that if this were so, a person who was blind in his present life would be able to have scientific knowledge about color (since he had sense knowledge of color in a prior life where he was not blind), which of course is not the case; cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Bk. II, q. 83.

24Actually the soul can never be united to the wrong body even through supernatural means. The arguments which show this cannot be understood without considerable philosophical background. They are taken up in Marie I. George's article: "Aquinas on Reincarnation," forthcoming in *The Thomist*. For the sake of argument, we will proceed on the false assumption that a human soul can be united to the wrong body.

25To better understand the Western versions of reincarnation, a brief comparison with those found in Eastern thought is useful: "[In Eastern thought] the chain of rebirth is generally accounted misery from which we naturally hope to escape. Karma is the reality from which religion is expected to free us. The goal is to go beyond it to nirvana and so have done with it forever. In the West, on the contrary, our view of life is less pessimistic. For all the tragedy attending life, it is intrinsically good... For the Christian human life is to be transformed rather than terminated. The effect of that radical difference of approach to human life on our interpretation of reincarnation is inevitably profound. While the typical oriental reincarnationist is studying to free himself from the chain of rebirth that is imposed upon him by his karma and that cannot be avoided till his karma is worked out, the occidental rebirth will bring him a richer, fuller life" (Geddes MacGregor, op. cit., 28). Cf. also Albrecht, op. cit., 13: "This pessimistic view of life has its roots in antiquity. Guatama Buddha's central concern was the problem of pain and suffering. He taught that the source of the human predicament lies in the attachment of the mind and body to the physical realm or, more precisely, to existence itself. Hence the logical solution is to cease existing and, of course to stop being reborn. In fact, the Buddhist word for 'heaven'-nirvana-literally means 'blown out,' like a candle." We might also note that there is a radically different vision of life and death in Christianity and in eastern religions. The Christian desires the fullness of life, to be his most perfect self, whereas the Eastern reincarnationist desires death, for it is only by abandoning life that the cycle of rebirths ceases. Moreover, the Christian believes that the fullness of life came to man through Christ the Savior whereas the Eastern reincarnationist thinks that the escape from the cycle of rebirths, everlasting death, is achieved by oneself, and that there is no divinity apart from oneself. Cf. *A Thousand Sayings: The Upadesasahasri of Sankara*. Trans. and ed. by Sengaku Mayeda (Albany: University of New York Press, 1992), xiv: "[T]he fundamental Vedic teaching present in the Upanishads: One's innermost being, the Atman, is the ultimate reality, Brahman. The knowledge wherein this identity is realized ... recovers the original perfect of the Self, releasing one from the suffering of this samsaric [transmigratory] existence."

26The punishment-reward explanation for reincarnation leaves one with the question of why the supernatural being or cosmic forces put the immortal human soul into a body in the first place.

27According to Aline Lizotte, a negative view of God vis-a-vis creation is proposed in Hindu thought: God creates the world "on the basis of an elan vitale born by libido. Creation is then a cosmic error, an act of self-negation on the part of the creator, the entry in the world of multiplicity which is the destroyer of the One." Op. cit., p. 50. Translation mine.

28People who suffer from invincible ignorance, in following their conscience will perform actions which are objectively speaking wrong, but for which they cannot be held morally accountable. Their lack of responsibility for their actions indicates that they are living morally diminished lives, although not wicked lives.

29The other thing about cases is that even when one oneself has experience of such phenomena, one must be careful to distinguish the experience from the opinion one readily forms to explain the experience. For example, a person dreams that the next party would be a flop, and it is. Did that person foresee the future? Or were conscious or unconscious misgivings about the party's success incorporated in a dream, and this dream just happened to actually correspond with reality? Or was the person perhaps influenced by the dream to actually do things likely to bring about the event dreamt of (as happens in the case of other "self-fulfilling prophecies").

30Ian Stevenson's book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974), is often cited as providing empirical evidence for reincarnation. Leonard Angel argues that Stevenson's handling of one of the seemingly more convincing cases involves a number of methodological errors. For example, he points out how rash conclusions are drawn from mis-handled or misstated evidence: "Most important is this: the boy seemed to have in mind that in his past-life he was an important family man, wealthy enough not to have to work, with

a beautiful wife and five children, who met with a tragic accident in which his legs were broken, from which he died. This just doesn't seem to be Ibrahim Bouhamzy, a truck driver who used his family's cars, and died unmarried, and probably childless, at 25 of tuberculosis. It's only the way in which the information is misleadingly tabulated that leads people to miss the problems." Leonard Angel, "Empirical Evidence for Reincarnation," *Skeptical Inquirer*, Fall 1994, 487. Upon reading Stevenson's account for myself (241-290), I find that Angel's analysis is quite good, with the exception that the boy never said that he himself was in an accident in which his legs were broken, and as a matter of fact a relative of the person of whom he was supposedly the reincarnation had been in such an accident. What verisimilitude the case has stems chiefly from how Stevenson chose to tabulate events.

31There are many other cases of mysterious phenomena (ESP, aliens, ghosts, dreams foretelling the future, horses that can count, experiences of what happens after death, déjà vu, fortune telling) which admit of natural explanations. Some people are gullible: they believe what they want to believe, and are often not even aware that they are jumping to conclusions rather than simply recounting facts. For example, a fortune-teller might predict what position (oldest, youngest, etc.) a person has in their family. Someone ignorant of the fact that there are certain character traits generally associated with one's birth order is liable to be taken in by a 'seer' who is not capable of seeing into the past, but who is capable of applying a little psychology.

32Recounted in Martin Gardner's "The False Memory Syndrome," in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer 1993, 374.

33As a child I once witnessed an injury which my sister received, without, however, noticing the particularities of the wound. I was asked so often by my parents for details that I eventually became willing to provide them.

34It is not surprising that researchers find that many more people claim to recall previous lives in cultures where belief in reincarnation is widespread as compared to cultures where it is not widespread. Cf. Albrecht, op. cit., 64, 65.

35Regarding genuine cases of repressed memory see *Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer 1994, 421, 422.

36Nicolas P. Spanos, "Past-Life Hypnotic Regression: A Critical View," in *Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1987-88, 175: "It is important to understand that hypnotic suggestions do not directly instruct subjects to do anything. Instead, suggestions are phrased in the passive voice and imply that something is happening to the subject (e.g., "Your arm is rising," instead of "Raise your arm"). This passive phrasing communicates to subjects the idea that they are supposed to act as if the effects suggested are happening automatically. In other words, hypnotic suggestions are tacit requests to become involved in make-believe or as-if situations. A subject is tacitly instructed to behave as if he were unable to remember, as if his arm were rising, as if he were five years old, and so on. Good hypnotic subjects (a) understand the implications of these tacit requests, and (b) use their imaginative abilities and their acting skills to become absorbed in the make-believe scenarios contained in suggestions. Thus, by actively using their imaginative abilities, good hypnotic subjects can create and convey the impression that they are unable to remember, unable to lift their 'heavy' arms, and so on." 37A fairly recent law suit involving false memory was that filed by Steven Cook against Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. Cook claimed that he had been sexually abused as a teenager by Cardinal Bernardin. "It turned out that Mr. Cook had 'recovered' memories of the supposed abuse under hypnosis by an unlicensed therapist trained on week-ends at a school founded by a *New Age* guru. In February [1994] Mr. Cook, saying his memory was not reliable, dropped the lawsuit." (New York Times, 5/27/94: sec. A, p. 27, c. 1.)

37The AMA considers recovered memories of childhood sexual abuse to be of uncertain authenticity, which should be subject to external verification. The use of recovered memories is fraught with problems of potential misapplication." *Council on Scientific Affairs*, American Medical Association, June 16, 1994 cited in "Frequently Asked Questions," published by the False Memory Syndrome Foundation (Philadelphia), p. 3. For reviews of three recent books on the subject of false memory see *Scientific American*, April 1995, 135-138.

38Cf. "Frequently Asked Questions," p. 9: "In the past few years, many therapy patients have come to believe that they have been abducted by space aliens or that they were abused in past lives. While these beliefs give the person a 'reason' for unhappiness or dissatisfaction, there is no empirical evidence that such activity could have happened." Cf. also *Skeptical Inquirer*, Summer 1993, 372: ". . . another popular form of FMS [false memory syndrome], sparked by the New Age obsession with reincarnation, is the recovering of memories of past lives."

39Nicolas P. Spanos, op. cit., 179.

40Sarah G. Thomason, "Past Tongues Remembered," in *Skeptical Inquirer*, p. 374. Yet another sort of incon-

sistency in the stories of the supposedly reincarnated “concerns the dating procedures.... For example, one ... client claimed in a former life to have died in 2083 B.C. Since the subject was in a trance telling the story as if she were that person, how could she use such wording? People who lived at that time had no knowledge that they were living ‘before Christ.’” Albrecht, *op. cit.*, 56.

41CCC #394, #395.

42Cf. CCC #2115: “God can reveal the future to his prophets or to other saints. Still, a sound Christian attitude consists in putting oneself confidently into the hands of Providence for whatever concerns the future, and giving up all unhealthy curiosity about it.... #2116: “All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead or other practices falsely supposed to ‘unveil’ the future. Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone.”

43One form of unconscious memory which has been the object of considerable research of late is called ‘implicit memory.’ ‘Implicit memory’ occurs when our behavior is influenced by a previous event without any conscious act of remembering that event. Cf. for example, c. 9 “Implicit Memory Tasks” in *Human Memory: Paradigms and Paradoxes* by Robert L. Green (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992).

44Cf. *Memory in animals and humans*, Ed. Andrew Mayes (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 49, 50: “In addition to providing a basis for normal feelings of familiarity the specialized recognition system, if it is activated at an inappropriate time, may account for the false attachment of familiarity to current experience in the form of the *deja vu* phenomenon, which may occur spontaneously as well as during electrical stimulation of the brain and in association with temporal lobe epilepsy (Kalat, 1981; Walsh, 1978).” Cf. James A. Kalat, *Biological Psychology*, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981), p 30: “Brain stimulation in other locations has evoked a variety of results in humans, including hallucinations.. .and even the *deja vu* experience (the feeling that this happened before) (Baldwin, 1960; Higgins, Mahl, Delgado, & Hamlin, 1956, Delgado & Hamlin, 1960).”

45Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo* in *Quaestiones Disputatae*. Vol. II. Ed. P. Bazzi et al. (Turin: Marietti, 1965), q. 3, art. 4.

46Of course the Christian holds that the good actions one performs are not due principally to one’s own efforts, but to the grace of God which comes to us through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

47Aside from indicating that the philosopher will break out of the cycle of reincarnation, Plato often is vague as to whether, when, and why the series of reincarnations comes to an end. However, in one place he gives an account of the termination of reincarnation which sounds amazingly similar to Christian teachings regarding heaven, purgatory, and hell. This kind of account fits better than an open-ended account with Plato’s views that the universe is a rational place, and that therefore the just cannot ultimately go unrewarded, nor the wicked unpunished. Rather than positing an infinite number of lives to attain perfection, Socrates maintains that the “newly dead ... first ... submit to judgment, both those who have lived well and holily, and those who have not.... Those who on account of the greatness of their sins are judged to be incurable, as having committed many gross acts of sacrilege or many wicked and lawless murders or any such crimes-these are hurled by their appropriate destiny into Tartarus, from whence they emerge no more. Others judged to have been guilty of sins which, though great, are curable ... must be cast into Tartarus, but when...they have remained there for a year, the surge casts them out [and they have an opportunity to attain release]. ... But those who are judged to have lived a life of surpassing holiness ... live thereafter altogether without bodies, and reach habitations even more beautiful than it is possible to attain.... Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future habitations.. .is both a reasonable contention and a belief worth risking, for the risk is a noble one” *Phaedo* 113e, 114a-d.

48As St. Thomas notes, Hebrews 11:6 contains in germ all of Christian belief: “It is impossible to please God without faith ... any who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who try to find him.” “[A]ll the articles of faith are implicitly contained in certain prime ‘believables,’ namely: that God is believed to exist and to have providence for the salvation of man, in accord with what is said in Heb XI, 6: ‘It is necessary that the one coming to God believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who seek him.’ For in the divine existence are included all the things which we believe to exist in God eternally, in which our beatitude consists; in faith in providence, however, are

included all those things which in time are dispensed by God for the salvation of men.” ST II-II 1.7.

49It is sadly ironic that certain scientists, by purporting to eliminate the need for God by offering an exclusively scientific explanation for things (e.g., evolution), have in fact opened the door to the rise of superstition (indeed one might ask whether any non-scientific age has ever been as superstitious as our scientific one).

50Romans 6:5-12.

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