

THE MYTH OR REALITY OF REINCARNATION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF ISLAM

Yekini Ismaila Okanmibale

Postgraduate Researcher
Department of Religions,
Lagos State University,
Ojo, Lagos State
ibale_okan@yahoo.com

Abstract

For long, the controversies over reincarnation have failed to be put to rest. This is because the phenomenon is one that relates to many fields of study and thus can only be examined using a multi-disciplinary approach. From Islamic point of view, in spite of the numerous things that have been said or written about reincarnation, the failure to nip the concept in the bud lies in incognito of the relationship between mankind and Jinn. It has been established through this paper that what many have often termed as reincarnation of a deceased person can well be viewed in the light of the influence of Jinn on man for the former has the power to transform to or wear the face of a man, deceased or living. Besides, careful study of the paper reveals that reincarnation is common among the individuals that relate more with the world of spirits.

Prelude

The creation of man¹ is purposeful and his existence on earth is divinely gauged. For this reason, death is superimposed on him as a checker and reminder of both his temporal existence on earth and the purpose for which he is created. Albeit, there is consensus opinion that man is created good and implored to maintain good decorum. However, there are divergent opinions amongst differing schools of thought, religious groups and the likes on whether the single existence of man on earth could suffice making him attain the highest spiritual dispositions *sine qua non* for his return to his “original home” (Paradise). In other words, could spending only one lifetime and die thereafter enough for man to attain the spiritual height needed for his final re-admission into paradise? The above question is the crux *vis-à-vis* reincarnation. Yet

some attributed reincarnation to delay in the interment of the corpse of the deceased person.

In modern time, reincarnation is a controversial phenomenon. Although this writer could not cite with precision the exact date belief in it sprang up; it is, however, appropriate to say that belief in it became prevalent since the period when the Gnostic, Carpocrates developed his Theory of Transmigration of Soul². Thenceforth, virtually all cultures and traditional societies *cum* some religions of the world have developed one theory or another in support of reincarnation. In fact several works have been written and various tales have been narrated complemented by movies on television to enunciate the phenomenon. One of such movies is the AIT programme titled *El Cuerpo* (Second Chance). Recently, some reincarnation related tales were narrated in the weekly (every Monday) 92.9 Bond FM programme entitled “*Awon Akoni Igba Iwase* (Powerful Personalities of Antiquity)”. A good example is the tale of *Iya Aye* narrated on Monday 22nd of July, 2012. It should nevertheless be noted that all the theories in support of reincarnation are fraught with contradictions.³

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to note that reincarnation centers around and depends largely on other relevant issues such as the origin, essence and significance of soul in man, the concept of morality; punishment and reward, essence of man on earth, death and life after death to mention a few. These, in fact, are the cores of reincarnation. There is no gain saying that the above related issues transcend the knowledge of science and scientific approach for they are fundamentally spiritually related. Scientific approach is not always feasible and has severe limitations in investigating spiritual topics, says Stephen Lampe⁴. It is because of the essential limitations of the rational mind, scientific theories can never provide a complete and definite description of reality. Fritjof Capra says “Scientists do not deal with the truth; they deal with limited approximations of reality.”⁵

Similarly, there is limit to which secular philosophy can take man. Except a well-guided reasoning, Philosophers are prone to shortcomings. Imam Ghazali demonstrated this in his encounter not only with the works of some Western Philosophers but also Muslim Philosophers who erred somehow due to their contact with Hellenism. He submitted thus:

Philosophy cannot guarantee the truth because it does not produce certainty; it is not a product of the consequence of illumination of a divine inspiration. Truth, consequently, can only be attained

by Allah's (God) designation, not only by human effort alone.⁶

Without much ado therefore, Religion is most reliable a source from which reincarnation can best be examined. But yet Religion is divine, primal or orient. Except divine religion, which has revealed scripture as source of guidance and information, primal and orient religions are products of the customs and traditional beliefs of the people of a society and personal reasoning and experience of an individual person respectively. For instance in African metaphysics, belief in and acceptance of reincarnation hinges, by and large, on belief in divinity and ancestral world among others.⁷ Whereas the influence of Hinduism on Buddhism perhaps as a result of the latter being an offshoot of the former is unarguable.⁸ Worst still, Christianity and Hinduism are both influenced tremendously by Greek Philosophy *cum* Gnosticism.⁹

It is indisputable that some Muslims strongly embrace and believe in reincarnation. Such Muslims are not only influenced by (African) Indigenous Religion *via* faith in spirits, divinity and ancestral worship *et cetera* but also supports their claim with Qur'an 56:61. They seem not to have denounced totally their belief in certain indigenous religious creeds, doctrines and practices for true Islamic monotheism. Similarly, the expectation of *Mahdi* as one of the signs of the Last Hour in Muslim *Ummah* (Muslim community), there is no doubt, has led some Muslims to acclaim that some *Mujahidun* (Jihadists) including the deceased amongst them as the expected *Mahdi*. Ghulam Ahmad (died 1908), and Alhaj Muhammad Jumu'ah Adeshina Imam (died 1959) among others are few examples.¹⁰ That the deceased *Mujahidun* shall return as *Mahdi* is tantamount to re-incarnation.

All the aforesaid notwithstanding, it is worth mention that though Islam rose from a society where plurality of religion was in practice, its creeds, tenets, and doctrines remain incorruptible. This is because its source, *al-Qur'an* is incorruptible. It is in the light of the Qur'an and *Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad the topic in question shall be examined. And to do this, an overview of reincarnation, the origin; essence and significance of soul, death and life after death, and the relationship between man and *Jinn* shall be delved into.

Reincarnation: An Overview

Reincarnation is the rebirth or transmigration of soul (after death) in another body. It is the belief in the autonomy of the human soul, which passes out from a dead person into another body different from the original body. Belief in reincarnation is as old as man for it is found in almost all cultures. Although it means different things to different people both in theory and practice, to believe in it is simply the acceptance of the knowledge that a human spirit or soul, in one continuous existence, is given the opportunity to come to the earth more than once.¹¹

Similarly, whereas majority of exponents of reincarnation affirm that the reincarnate occurs in human body, others who are in minority opine that it may occur also in other living creatures such as insects, animals, fishes, plants *et cetera*.¹² As a matter of fact the Pythagoreans denounce eating flesh (animal or fish) on the premise that some animals or fishes might have been victims of reincarnation. Such a notion was exhibited by some Muslims during the time of Prophet Muhammad as will be seen later.

Generally speaking, the rationale for reincarnation varies from one traditional society to another as well as from traditional metaphysical viewpoint to religious metaphysics. For instance, most African metaphysics hold that reincarnation gives room for vengeance (in the case of death caused by evil doers), continual preservation and protection of the family (by deceased ancestors) among others.¹³ Like in African metaphysics, the rationale for reincarnation is no different in modern Europe. About one-third of Europeans who believe in 'scientific' reincarnation affirm that it guarantees a new positive occasion for achievement since one life is too short; that it gives room for one to correct the mistakes of the previous existence and thus serves as an antidote to the crisis of life.¹⁴

The religious view, by Christian exponents, is that reincarnation helps in attainment of adequate spiritual dispositions necessary for man to return to his original home (paradise). It is opined that one lifetime is insufficient to reach the peak of the spiritual height and thus, the need for the soul to reincarnate. In addition, they say it helps in explaining some ambiguous verses in the Bible.¹⁵

However, it is pertinent to ask when exactly does the soul cease to reincarnate? On this, opinions differ by and large. In African metaphysics for instance the soul must reincarnate sixteen times opine some Yoruba, whereas it is fourteen times according to the culture of the *Esan*.¹⁶ In fact the latter holds that man ceases to reincarnate once he has exhausted his

life circle of reincarnation and existence on earth which is 114 years life span X 14 number of reincarnation processes which equal to 2016 years.¹⁷ In Hinduism and Christianity, there is no specific time reincarnation ceases. Cessation depends on the nature and circumstances of each soul and hence the variation.¹⁸

Perhaps, it is noteworthy that the cessation of reincarnation presupposes that in order to attain perfect spiritual dispositions (as in Indigenous Religious metaphysics) which is the key to paradise, man must live on earth for the above stated period of years, though at different interval and form. This is more explicit from the submission of Plato in his *Phaedrus* thus “ten thousand years must elapse before the soul of each one can return to the place from whence she came. Only the soul of the philosopher (e.g. righteous person as deemed then) can get back to its original state in less time (three thousand years).¹⁹ Interestingly, Plato’s remark presupposes that it takes righteous soul lesser years to cease from reincarnation and vice versa.

More importantly, various cues have been advanced by exponents of reincarnation as proof for it. These are deformity at birth or birth mark and manifestation of some skills or qualities deemed possessed by the ancestral parents such as memory transfer, family resemblance and behavioural pattern.²⁰ Consulting with the *Ifa* priest (divination) is another means *via* which a child is discerned a reincarnate or not.²¹ Other cues include physical rebirth, and the second coming of both Jesus Christ and Elijah. It is fascinating that these proofs have logically been refuted by opposing Christians using also some biblical references²² and modern Medical Science and Psychology.

Soul²³: Origin and Essence

Man is a bi-component²⁴ creature. His origin is sand or clay (for Adam) and water (*i.e.* semen; for Adam’s progenies). In the process of creation, Allah breathed His Spirit into Adam (Q15: 29, 32: 7-9, 38: 72 *et cetera*) and instructed angel Jibril to blow spirit into the foetus as evident in the *Hadith* thus:

The parts that make man are collected for forty days as a drop of seed, the parts become a clot of thick blood for forty more days...then the angel is sent by Allah to blow soul into him and commanded him with four words...²⁵

Prior to the breath of the divine soul the developing fetus possesses a vegetative life. After all, the spermatozoa that fertilizes the ovum is a living and active cell. Essentially, the divine spirit or soul gives man spiritual life and essence. Thus, whereas the clay or “water” constitutes the material component of man, the divine spirit makes his spiritual component. However, there are divergent and conflicting opinions amongst scholars *viz-a-viz* the two phenomena: soul (*Nafs*) and spirit (*Ruh*). The Qur’anic usage of the duo also depicts that they are to an extent different.

Although majority of scholars have conceptualized *Ruh* as soul and even interpreted it in the various verses of the glorious Qur’an where it appears as angel Jibril, Prophet ‘Isa, an angel of immense size, revelation, Qur’an and human soul among others,²⁶ this writer contends some of the interpretations. A careful study of the verses of the Qur’an on *Nafs* and *Ruh* reveals that Allah uses in respect of each three connotations. *Nafs* is used to connote physical body (a human being), a spirit, and a man’s psyche (mind). To paraphrase, Allah speaks in relation to each thus:

- a. human being : has angels watching over him, has an appointed time to live and die, possesses senses and intellect, responsible for his actions and deeds (Q 50: 21, 86: 4, 82: 10-12, 4: 1, 38: 6, 7: 189 *et cetera*)
- b. spirit : emanates from the body during sleep and separates from it at death but would rejoin it later after interment. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah asserts that it also departs upon interrogation and returns upon resurrection²⁷ (Q 81: 7, 39: 42, 6: 93 *et cetera*) . In the same vein the Prophet said: “Do you not see that when a person dies his gaze is fixed intently; that occurs when his eyesight follows his *Nafs /Ruh* (soul) as it comes out.”²⁸

Invariably, it could be inferred that *Nafs* as a spirit is in concrete form particularly if it is conceptualized as “self”. Consequently, there is tendency that it possesses virtually some of the characteristics of the body in which it dwells. The only exception is that it shall not die. Perhaps, *Nafs*, used as referring to man and spirit presupposes one entity (human being) in that man possess spirit which gives him spiritual life on one hand and that the spirit leaves while the body decomposes on the other hand. Hence, it is unarguable that spirit which also represents the real man possesses some characteristics. Allah qualifies *Nafs* in three ways: *Nafs Amarah* (Q12:53), *Nafs Lawamah* (Q75:2) and *Nafs Mutma’inah* (Q89:27). Akintola²⁹ refers to these qualifications as the stages or states

of the development (just as in human growth and development) of the human *Ruh*. He posits that *Amarah* is the earliest stage of development when the soul is susceptible to evil, *Lawamah* is the stage when man's growth and understanding has enabled him to distinguish between good and evil such that his *Ruh* reprimands him when he takes a wrong step. *Mutma'innah* is the stage when the soul is restful and contented. Succinctly, *Nafs* as man and spirit have been used here synonymously.

- c. psyche (mind) : Allah alone knows what a person harbours in his or her mind, need be purified to enable man be morally sound, remembrance of Allah in the mind or heart is better and more effective on man (Q 39: 15, 50: 16, 2: 235 and 284, 5: 116, 7: 205 *et cetera*). Psyche or mind, though not in concrete form, is an indispensable aspect of every animate creature.

In contrast, *Ruh* is explicitly used to refer to angel Jibril (Q78: 38, 16: 102, 43:52, 5:110) and Prophet 'Isa (Q4 :171) . The "Spirit" from Allah is the implicit connotation given the term as evident in Q38:72, 15:29, 21:91 *et cetera*. It is, to which Allah refers to as among His *Amr* (command) and about which man possesses but just little knowledge (Q 17:85). It is, also, that is referred to in some quarters as human *Ruh* or soul. The third connotation given of *Ruh* is a phenomenon and inspiration with which Allah strengthen or aids the pious and righteous servant (of His) as a result of his faith and piety (Q5 : 22, 16 : 2, 40:15, 58:22 *et cetera*). Although *Ruh* in its third connotation may be interpreted to include the Qur'an due to its significance and effect in the life of a true Muslim, a comprehensive interpretation is offered by Ibn Qayyim. He states thus:

...there is also the soul (*Ruuh*) which he casts upon those whom he pleases, though it is not the *Ruuh* which is within the body. As for the strength of the human body, it is also called a *Ruuh*. As a result, there is the seeing *Ruuh*, the hearing *Ruuh*, and the smelling *Ruuh*. Each *Ruuh* is a power placed within the body which dies along with it... the *ruuh* represents knowing Allah, loving Him, and pursuing Him. If the *Ruuh* loses these essentials, it becomes like a body without a soul...³⁰

To buttress Ibn Qayyim's assertion is the popular Prophetic *Hadith* Qudsi that the more a servant goes close to Allah the more he found Him his supporter until He becomes the sight with which he sees, He becomes his hand with which he takes or holds and so on.³¹ Similarly, Prophet Muhammad recommended to Fatimah in lieu of maids some *Adhkar*³² with which he said Allah shall strengthen her. In fact that Allah aids His beloved servants with *Ruh*, internally and externally, is evident in the life of the renowned late Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilori.³³

From the foregoing, it is obvious that *Nafs* and *Ruh* are two different phenomena. The only affinity between them is the interpretation of both as spirit or soul, precisely the soul breathed into Adam or the developing fetus by and / or from Allah. Perhaps, this is the reason why they are understood to be synonymous and used interchangeably. As a matter of fact, it is on record that Prophet Muhammad did use them at different points when he was giving the reason why the eyes of the dead are opened at death. Yet, based on usage of the words in some *Ahadith*, Ibn Qayyim interpreted *Nafs* as blood and envy and *Ruh* as Qur'an and wind among others³⁴. He affirms that the Qur'anic use of *Nafs* generally applies to essence (i.e self). Thus, the *Nafs* has been named *Ruh* because it is a source of life, and the *Ruh* has been named *Nafs* either because it is precious, or either because it frequently exists and enters the body³⁵.

It would be reiterated that the soul breathed into man is his human soul or spirit. It is breathed after 120 days of conception when abortion is Islamically prohibited except if the health or life of the mother is endangered. Hitherto, the movement and perceptions of the fetus, according to al-Hajar Asqalani, are not voluntary. But after the breath of the soul, the movements and perceptions become voluntary and added to the vegetative type of life.³⁶ More specifically, Mohammed Ali Albar asserts that the first voluntary movements appear clearly at the 12th week though it may have started by the 8th week. The pregnant mother starts feeling the kicking of her unborn child by the 16th week; some mothers a little earlier and some a little later...³⁷

Moreover, it is in reference to the soul breathed into man Allah asserts in Q17:85 that man possesses but little knowledge. And in actual fact Prophet Muhammad did not comment aught about the verse. Although man is favoured, inter alia, with the knowledge of its origin, its essence, hints about its departure in the body its destination and its position on the day of resurrection, its exact nature is known to Allah, its Originator, alone. Therefore, Akintola is right that the exact nature of human *Ruh* is among the sacred realm of *al-Ghayb* (The Concealment)

and that the *Ghaybiyyah* nature appears to have been a Divine deliberate calculation³⁸. Without much ado therefore it is apparent that in respect of animate creature, *Nafs* simply represents the self or body with its vegetative spirit while *Ruh* represents the divine breath in him.

Death in Islam

It is pertinent at this juncture to say that it is the extraction of the soul from the body that results in death. Put simply, death is the separation of soul from the body in the life of this world without re-union until the body is interred. It is the irreversible cessation of life in this world. As soon as the soul is out, man is dead. Death is a universal, an inevitable phenomenon the exact time of which is not only unpredictable but also is beyond human control. It is a debt every person must pay; old or young, black or white, godly or ungodly. Imam al-Ghazali and Muhammad Iqbal perceive death as a transformation from one state to another.³⁹ Allah says death is certain and that every person and living soul must experience it (Q3:185, 21:35). Similarly the Prophet said all diseases have cure except death.

Contrary to some beliefs in African Religion, for instance, that only the aged should die and so attributed the death of a young person to some supernatural forces (such as witchcraft, demons, magic, sorcery or powerful curse)⁴⁰, Islam reveals that only Allah has the power to kill or take a person's soul, although He uses other creatures as *Sabab* (cause) for death (Q6:60, 56 : 60). Besides, Allah has predetermined the life span of every living soul of which, when it is time, there shall neither be delay nor hasten (Q3: 145). Corroborating the above fact, the Prophet said: "... Then Allah sends the angel to blow soul into him and then he is commanded with four words *viz*: his sustenance, his share of life (i.e. sex, life span *et cetera*), deeds, and whether he would be a happy one or unhappy."⁴¹ In another *Hadith*, he is reported to have said: "The life span of those in my *Ummah* (Muslim community) is 60-70 years. Only a very few of them will exceed this span."⁴²

More importantly, it is worth mentioning that it is not only a man's life span that is predetermined but also the place and time of death as well as the nature of his death, as evident in Q31: 34. It is fascinating to say, here, that Prophet Muhammad died at 63 of illness in his wife's ('Aisha) room while laying his head on the bosom of the latter. Abubakri Siddiq (the first caliph in Islam) died of fever at 61, and 'Umar ibn khattab died at 61 as a result of the stabbing with dagger by one Abu

Lu'lu. 'Uthman died at the age of 82 *via* assassination⁴³. The philosophy that only Allah causes death, remarks Akintola, has a positive effect on society and the relationship among each member as it eschews bitterness borne out of suspicion that the death of a dear one or any misfortune which befalls one is caused by a next door neighbour. This philosophy should be seen as helpful in building a healthy and virile society.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, it should be noted that death occurs on earth but once. Allah says in a clear, unambiguous term that every living soul on earth shall die but only once (Q 44 : 56, 37 : 52-60). Essentially, this is in order for mankind to act righteously for there is no any other opportunity of returning to this world after death. Allah says: "Blessed is He (Allah) in whose hand is dominion and He has power over all things. He who created death and life, that He may try who among you is best in deed (Q67: 1-2, 61: 35, 3: 185)."

Similarly, showing that death is once and worth being prepared for *via* engaging in righteous and virtuous deeds, the Prophet is reported to have advised his companions as follows: "live in this world as if you are a stranger or wayfarer"⁴⁵. And 'Umar used to say in elucidation of the above *Hadith* that: "If it becomes the evening, do not expect the morning. And if it becomes the morning, do not expect the evening; take from your health to your illness; and from your life to your death."⁴⁶ Therefore, it is those who understand and fear that death is certain at any time and will expose them thereafter that are pious and righteous. The Prophet was once asked; who is the most sagacious and the most prudent among the people? He replied: "Those, who are most aware of death and prepare themselves for it. They are the wisest of people and will have honor in this world and a generous reward in the hereafter."⁴⁷

In a nutshell, the major *raison deter* for death is to implore man to be good and virtuous, warn him to desist from vices, and prepare adequately for the life next. The philosophy of death in Islam is not to create terror or fear in man as some have misconstrued but to instill the spirit of preparedness. In Islam, the remains of the dead person is interred immediately it is certified by a medical doctor and the necessary Islamic rites carried out on it. As a matter of fact, the common practice cited by Akintola is that the corpse should be buried within 48 hours⁴⁸. Delay in interment must Islamically be with cogent reasons. However, the position that the deceased person is seen especially around its residence is attributed in some quarters to delay in burying the corpse.

Life After Death

It has been established above that at death the soul separates from the body. But what happens to the soul after this separation? Where does it go? It is indisputable that the body decomposes (except a bone called ‘*ajb adh-dhanab*’⁴⁹ in the soil for that is its origin. This is the natural and general rule for mankind *viz-a-viz* death and resurrection. The only exception, however, is the body of the Prophets of Allah (and possibly the body of some pious servants of Allah). The Prophet said: “Allah has forbidden the earth from consuming the body of His Prophets.”⁵⁰

As earlier said, irrespective of the nature and place of death, Allah has the power to re-assemble all the parts for bodily resurrection. But for the soul some scholars have given different responses *viz-a-viz* its destination. Akintola⁵¹ cited Imam Malik who was of the opinion that it is set free “to go wherever it pleases” and ‘Umar bin ‘Abdullah who said the soul of *Mu’minin* (Faithfuls / believers) would hover above their graves. Meanwhile, he quickly observed the danger of misinterpretation inherent in the opinions above for whereas the former can be misconstrued as suggesting that the soul may tenant a new body in *orbis alius* (another region) as in Celt belief. The latter can equally be misinterpreted as suggesting to be reborn into the family as in African religion. Contrarily, the Prophet said the soul is in *Barzakh* (*i.e.* the intervening state between death and the Last Day). In this “state”, a soul joins other kindred souls who in their nature and deeds are similar to it and stays with them. More so, the soul receives temporarily, reward or punishment in *Barzakh* before the major and permanent reward or punishment.⁵²

Precisely, the appropriate place of a soul after departure on earth (death) is basically determined by the deeds of the soul when on earth. Thus, for the righteous their abode is in categories, the highest being occupied by the Prophets. This is evident in the report of Prophet Muhammad after his *Isra’ wal Mi’raj*⁵³. Buttressing the verses of the Qur’an wherein Allah calls the attention of Muslim to the fate of martyrs after death (Q3: 169-171, 2: 152), the Prophet said some souls (*i.e.* souls of some martyrs) are in the form of green birds who roam around freely in the paradise. The souls of some martyrs are prevented from entering paradise on account of their debts or some other similar thing. Succinctly, the righteous souls found their abode high above and around the paradise.⁵⁴

In contrast, the souls that cannot rise to heaven remain confined to earth. These, indeed, are base and earthly souls. A soul that is oblivious to its Lord, blind to His love, negligent of His remembrance and remiss in seeking His pleasure is a despicable earthly soul. Such is the soul that would dwell in blooded sea in which they would be swimming and fed with stone. The others would continue to face grave punishments until the Day of Reckoning.⁵⁵

At this juncture, some points need further elucidation. Readers must not misconstrue the fact that souls are in the form of bird for reincarnation in bird or other creatures. This is because:

- Those birds have nothing to do on earth. They dwell in paradise and so should not in anyway be compared with the birds or animals on earth.
- Birds in paradise are medium *via* which the righteous souls receive means of sustenance as promised by Allah pending when the soul would finally be admitted in paradise and become permanent inmates.
- Although wicked souls remain in the earth, they are not in any animal, plant or mankind. Such souls are right in the grave receiving torture from the assigned angels, Munkar and Nakir.
- Contrary to the Pythagoreans opinion, animals, birds, fishes are distinct beings on their own. Allah created them for our consumption and numerous other uses (Q16: 18, 40: 79-80, 43:12 *et cetera*).
- Still, in response to the skeptic notion that perhaps animals such as monkey, pig, lizard and so forth are reincarnate of those nations destroyed by Allah (*e.g.* the Israelites), the Prophet replied thus:

“Allah does not provide the destroyed nation (*via* transformation) with sustenance after destruction. Those animals have been in existence ever before destruction of the nations”.⁵⁶

Two salient points are delineable from the prophetic response. Firstly, there is no succor following the wrath of Allah. That is, the transformation might have taken the shape of a still object (*i.e.* lifeless image). And so secondly, lifeless object or image could not have eaten for that will be too irrational and unrealistic. Therefore, monkeys, pigs, lizards and other animals predated man on earth.⁵⁷ This is further confirmed by chronicle of creation in Islam and Christianity. Man was created last. Furthermore, some Muslims of the Mystic Brotherhood are

of the opinion that Prophet Muhammad descends or appears phantom to receive the blessings whenever the *Jawharatul Kamal*⁵⁸ is recited. Consequently, a white sheet of cloth is usually spread to receive him in their midst while engaging in their usual spiritual liturgies.⁵⁹ Similarly, giving reasons why *Mawlid Nabiyy* is worth celebrated, some Muslims are of the opinion that Prophet Muhammad lives on earth like every other mankind in the third month of Islamic calendar, Rabiul- Awwal.⁶⁰ Wittingly or unwittingly, the above opinions should not be mistaken for suggestive reincarnation. Besides, the practice and belief is utter innovation for it is in sharp contradiction of the *Ahadith* describing how the Prophet receives the blessings of *as-Salat* sent to him. Abu Hurayrah related that the Holy Prophet said: “Do not make my grave a place of festivity and merry making. But invoke blessings upon me (by reciting *as-Salat*) for your blessings (as-*Salat*) will reach me, wherever you may be.”⁶¹ In another version he said: “Whenever anyone sends *Salam* to me, Allah will restore my soul to me, till I respond to his invocation.”⁶²

Is there any indication from the *Ahadith* above that Muhammad would appear phantom and join the congregation or the Muslim seeking the blessing for him? No. It is his soul that would be restored to his body which never decays (as pointed out earlier). Therefore, to think that prophet Muhammad would appear as thought, no doubt, tantamount to equating him with Allah who is Omnipresent. For the question may be asked that should the piece of white cloth be spread at the same time among the different branches of a particular *Tariqah* (Spiritual Order), on which one would Prophet Muhammad appear?

The Influence of *Jinn* on Mankind

The foregoing, though revealing and convincing as it may, the discourse will be incomplete without the perusal of the influence of *Jinn* on mankind as unearthed by Prophet Muhammad. “The Curse of the Pharaohs”⁶³ is an indelible story corroborating the influence of *Jinn* on man. *Jinn* are creatures of Allah. They are created from fire (Q15: 27). They predated man on earth (Q15 : 27) . Like mankind, they have senses, procreate, are given volition, possess ability and strength and are to worship none except Allah (Q51 : 56).

Although the generic name for them is *Jinn*, they are, however, categorized into various groups due to their disposition and role. The common groups are *Qarin*, ‘*Amar*, *Arwah*, *Shayatin*, and ‘*Afrat*⁶⁴. Of these groups, *Qarin* , *Shayatin* and *Arwah* are our concern here. This is

because of their direct influence on mankind. *Qarin* is the *Jinn* companion of every man. The Prophet said: “Every one of you has been assigned a companion from the *Jinn*, myself not excluded except that Allah has helped me against him and he has submitted. Now he only tells me to do good.”⁶⁵

Apparently, it is obvious from the *Hadith* above that *Qarin* has the power to influence man positively or negatively. Of course, aside another *Hadith* that says there is *Shaytan* or *Jinn* (which must be understood metaphorically) flowing in the bloodstream of the children of Adam⁶⁶, Allah states in an unambiguous term that it is *Jinn* and mankind that whisper evil-thought into the mind of a man (Q 114 : 6).

Furthermore, *Jinn* are bestowed with superfluous ability and strength. Besides, they preceded mankind in the matters related to space⁶⁷. Among such abilities is the ability to take on other shapes. That is, they can transform or enter (*i.e* possession as in satanic possession) into mankind, plants or animals. *Qarin* could adopt this, thereby creating the impression that every person is in ‘two’ as commonly heard or reincarnated in a person erroneously believed to have died untimely. It has been reported in numerous *Ahadith* that *Shaytan* transformed to a man. In Qur’an 8: 48 , Allah says:

And when Satan made their sinful acts seem alluring to them and said: ‘no one among men can overcome you this day while I am near to you’. But when the two forces came in sight of each other, he turned on his heels and said: Lo, I am clear of you. Lo, I see what you see not ...

The verse above is in reference to the deceitful promise by *Shaytan* who transformed to a man called Suraqa ibn Malik and promised to assist the Polytheists during the battle of *Badr*. He fled the battlefield on sighting the angels who were assisting the Muslims.

Similarly, Abu Hurayrah narrated, in a *Hadith*, his encounter with a man while the former was saddled with administration of the *Zakatul Fitr* food items. He said this man appeared on three occasions stealing some of the food items. Although Abu Hurayrah did not know his identity, he was told by the Prophet that the man was *Shaytan*.⁶⁸

More importantly, aside transforming to man, animals and plants, they can also enter into these creatures. That is satanic or demonic possession. Possession in this case is either as a result of several activities and interaction that occur between some men and *Jinn* or in order to

perpetuate some evil acts as with animals.⁶⁹ Still, children who are inept are sometimes possessed by the *Jinn* called *Arwah*.⁷⁰

Imam Ibn Qayyim, cited by Sharafadeen, says “fits of madness or epileptic seizures are of two types: fits resulting from evil earthly spirits (the *Jinn*) and fits resulting from bad humours⁷¹. In support of the above, Q2: 275 speaks of consumers of usury thus: “---they shall stand on the Day of Resurrection like a person beaten or touched by *Shaytan* (leaving to insanity)”. Ibn Kathir and Abu Ja’far Ibn Jarir subscribe to the same view.

Satanic possession can occur in man *via* sensual desires on the part of the *Jinn* (*i.e.* *Jinn* having sexual intercourse with a man or woman in the dream), angry with man for certain wrong accidentally done to them and sometimes *via* conscious association with *Jinn* in a way to achieve material desires⁷². Regarding satanic possession in animal, the Holy Prophet was reported to have said that Madinah has in it, a group of *Jinns* who became Muslims, so whoever sees any snake (in his house) should request them to leave three times. If any of them appear thereafter, he should kill it because it is a devil⁷³. In another, the Prophet said “---for the black dog is the devil among dogs and *Jinn* takes its form often---.”⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, witches, wizards and sorcerers often employ the service of birds, snakes, scorpions, dogs and cats to harm fellow human beings. These animals even get information for them from far distance and help them to carry out their evil plans.⁷⁵

Moreover, satanic (demonic) possession in man is strongly confirmed by modern medicine, which divides epileptic convulsions into symptomatic epilepsy and idiopathic epilepsy.⁷⁶ While the former requires medical attention, the latter does not. Rather, it only requires spiritual panacea. Sixtus Ozuomba describes the stages in convulsion thus

At the pre-ictal stage (just before the fits) the child may see things that are not there e.g. snakes, flashes of light (visual hallucination) or perceive odour that are not present (olfactory hallucination)⁷⁷. This is followed by the ictal stage characterized by motor activities e.g. jerky movement of the limbs and rolling of the eyes. It is not uncommon for the child to pass stool and or urine unconsciously at this stage. This is followed by the post-ictal stage during which the child appears calm and in a deep sleep.⁷⁸

There is latent demonic possession, which is subdivided into inborn possession and reincarnation⁷⁹. The inborn possession is as a result of sexual intercourse between a *Jinn* and a person (man or woman), which results in possessed baby. The baby possesses, as a result, an extraordinary power which enables him or her to perform some feats an ordinary child or baby could not have performed. In contrast, reincarnation and the nitty-gritty about it, is still as a result of the influence of *Qarin*.

Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it is obvious that there is no universally acceptable fact about reincarnation for opinions vary about it culturally and religiously. This suggests that the concept is a product of human intellectualism devoid of every possible scriptural backing.

Islamically, reincarnation is utter misnomer. Neither is there reference to it whatsoever in the Qur'an nor the *Ahadith* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Allah says, emphatically, that all living things, mankind and *Jinn* inclusive, shall die but once. The idea of "second chance" is alien to Islam and so untenable. For the fact that he shall die but only once, man is implored to act righteously on earth. As soon as he dies, his soul dwells in *Barzakh* where he receives temporary reward or punishment accordingly.

In addition, discovered from the discourse is that there is a *Jinn* companion for every man. This *Jinn* influences him positively or negatively. Besides, like *Shaytan*, the *Jinn* has the power to put on the picture of his man-companion. Perhaps, this is usually the case with reincarnation but very few people take cognizance of that. Interestingly, the influence of *Jinn* is partly confirmed in modern medical field *via* idiopathic epilepsy. There is no doubt, therefore, that belief in reincarnation is one of numerous ways *Shaytan* adopts to mislead mankind and increase his obstinacy to Allah.

Notes and References

1. Man is used in its generic sense and thus, it embraces all mankind irrespective of the sex.
2. J. I. Obilor , “Christian Attitude Toward Reincarnation” in *Studies in The Humanities: A Handbook*, Owerri , Austus Books Publishers, 2003, p.213
3. The contradictions are fundamentally as a result of the disparity in the belief among different cultures and tribes as well as religions viz-a-viz the concept of God, Creation, World and Man.
4. S. Lampe, *The Christian and Reincarnation*, Ibadan , Millennium Press ,1996, p.14
5. *Ibid.*
6. R. J. McCarthy, *Al-Ghazali’s Path To Sufism And Deliverance From Error*, Louisville, Fons Vitae, 2000 , pp.22-23
7. E. A. Godwin, “Reincarnation in an African Metaphysics” in *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy* (ed. by Jim Unah), Ibadan , Hope Publications, 1996, pp.356-365; A. Kwabena, *Topics on West African Traditional Religion*, Cape Coast, Mfantsiman Press Ltd., 1975, pp.53-68.
8. N. H. Imran, *Islam and Buddhism in The Modern World*, Karachi , World Federation of Islamic Missions,1971, pp.10-11
9. *Ibid.*, J. I. Obilor, *Christian Attitude Toward Reincarnation*...p.213
10. I. L. Akintola, *A Study of the Islamic Doctrine of Eschatology*, A Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Religions, Ilorin, University of Ilorin, 1990, pp.131-141.
11. J. I. Obilor, “The Igbo Belief in *Ilo-Uwa* is not Reincarnation” in *Studies in the Humanities: A Handbook*...pp.54-63
12. Although this is the universal position among the exponents of reincarnation, Plato however posits that righteous persons reincarnate in domestic animals whereas the evil persons reincarnate in wild animals and the likes.
13. E.A. Godwin, “*Reincarnation in an African Metaphysics*”... pp.356-365
14. J. I. Obilor, “The Igbo Belief in *Ilo-Uwa* is not Reincarnation” ...pp.54-63
15. S. Lampe, *The Christian and Reincarnation*...p.14, *Reincarnation: Its meaning and Consequences* , p.12
16. E.A. Godwin, “*Reincarnation in an African Metaphysics*”... pp.356-365.

17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.* , S. Lampe, *The Christian and Reincarnation...*, pp.92-100
19. *Reincarnation: Its Meaning and Consequences*, p.13
20. E. A. Godwin, “*Reincarnation in an African Metaphysics*”... pp.356-365
21. A. Kwabena, *Topics on West African Traditional Religion...*pp.53-58
22. A thorough comparison between the work by S. Lampe on one hand and those by E. A. Godwin, and J. I. Obilor, on the other hand reveals a vivid refutation of reincarnation. More also, the position of Islam on the impossibility of second chance shows that neither is there the opportunity to correct mistakes of the past at the verge of death and after death nor for vengeance and protection of the living members of a deceased person by the latter. Besides, though Allah is the sole fashioner and determiner of not only the sex of the unborn child but also its innate dispositions; medical experts, psychologists and gynecologists have unearthed the immense impact of genes and environment on the foetus. Tersely, gene and chromosomes transfer some traits from the parents to the foetus. Such traits include colour, temperament, stature *et cetera*. However, environment contributes by and large to the deformity or otherwise of the foetus. The environmental factors thus include *inter-alia* the age of the expectant mother, drug, diseases, consumption of alcohol and cigarette smoking.
(D. Llewellyn-Jones, *Everywoman*, Lagos, Spectrum Books Ltd., 1998, pp.182-197; T. A. Bolarinwa, *Child Growth and Development* , Lagos , Olu-Akin Publishers, 1995, pp.35-38)
23. In spite of the various theories by Muslims and non-Muslims alike on soul, this writer is of the opinion that Allah alone knows the exact nature of the phenomenon. That notwithstanding, I maintain that the similitude of the soul is no less than that of the shadow in relation to body. Just as the shadow is the exact picture of the body so also is the soul. Thus, soul is the precise inner and spiritual representation or carbon copy of body. Hence, the reference to soul as “self”. Yet soul is of two kinds *viz* the body soul (vegetative soul) and the spirit soul. While the body soul dies with the body the spirit soul leaves with the spirit. It does not die. This discourse dwells on the spirit soul.
24. Many are of the opinion that man comprises of the soul, body and spirit. They view each of the trio as a distinct element. However,

this writer subscribes to the group which affirms the dualistic component of man. This group sees body and soul as one as evident in the submission of Aristotle thus “since the soul is the form of the body, one soul can only be united with one determined body”. The separation between the soul and the body during sleep *cum* events in dream suffices evidence for the above submission. It must at the same time be admitted that the picture of a person seen in dream may not necessarily be the true picture of such persons especially in the case of nightmare. In other words, it might be one wore by *Shaytan* or demons to accomplish his sinister ploy. (Behishti and Bahonar, *Philosophy of Islam*, Islamic Republican of Iran, Ansariyan Publications, 1990 pp.57-59 , S. M. Musawi Lari, *Ethics and Spiritual Growth* (tr.), Islamic Republican of Iran, Foundation of Islamic Cultural Propagation in the World, 1997, pp.51-77 , Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, *Spirits of the Deads*, New York, 1991, pp.4-21.)

25. M. B. Sambo, and H. Muhammad, *Islamic Religious Knowledge for WASC: Book 1 (Hadith)*, Lagos, IPB, 1984, pp.50-53
26. I.L. Akintola, *A Study of The Islamic Doctrine of Eschatology*,...p.67; M. A. Albar, *Human Development as Revealed in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith*, Jeddah, Saudi Publishing and Distribution House, 1999, p.135; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *The Soul*, tr. Isma'il Abdus-Salam, Beirut, Dar- Al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2010, p.298
27. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *The soul*, ...p.299
28. M. al-Kanadi, *Mysteries of The Soul Expanded*, Jeddah, The Inheritors of Abu Bilal Mustafa al-Kanadi, 1996, p.13
29. I.L. Akintola, *A Study of The Islamic Doctrine of Eschatology*,... p.69
30. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *The soul*, ...p.300
31. M.B. Sambo, and H. Muhammad, *Islamic Religious Knowledge...* pp.128-130
32. Prophet Muhammad recommended that Fatimah, his daughter, should recite *Subhanallah*, *Alhamdulillah* and *Allahu Akbar* 33 times each after the daily salat when the latter complained of the stress she undergone as a result of her domestic chores. He said the effect of the *Adhkar* is better than getting the service of maids.
33. M. J. Adewale, *Handy Harvests*, Nigeria, n. p., 2000, pp.114-116
34. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *The soul*, ...pp.297-298

35. *Ibid.* p.299
36. M. A. Albar, *Human Development as Revealed ...*pp.135-137
37. *Ibid.*
38. I. L. Akintola, *A Study of The Islamic...*p.72
39. *Ibid.*, p.28
40. A. Kwabena, *Topics on West African Traditional Religion...*pp.53-68
41. This is the concluding part of the *Hadith* adduced in reference to creation of man (see footnote 25).
42. S. Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah: Funerals and Dhikr* (tr.by M.S. Dabas and J. Zaraboso), n.p, n.d., p.26
43. G. Mustapha, *Stories of The Prophets* , Egypt, El-Nour Publisher, n.d., p.443; A. Rahim, *Islamic History*, Lagos, IPB, 1992, pp.84-106
44. I. L. Akintola, *A Study of The Islamic...*p.27
45. M. B. Sambo, and H. Muhammad, *Islamic Religious Knowledge for WASC...* pp.132-134
45. *Ibid.*
46. S. Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah: Funerals and Dhikr...*p.13
47. I. L. Akintola, *A Study of The Islamic...*p.43
48. ‘*Ajb adh-dhanab* is the name given the bone of the tail. According to Prophet Muhammad, this bone shall not decompose for it is from it every individual person shall be resurrected.
49. Y. an-Nawawi, *Riyad us-Salihin*(English and Arabic, tr. by S. M.Madni Abbasi,)
50. Karachi, International Islamic Publishers, 1986, pp663-664; E. Abdullah, *The Heart of Islam*, Lagos, Top Urban Publishing House, 1999, pp.366-369
51. I. L. Akintola, *A Study of Islamic...*pp.79-81
52. M. I. Khawaja, *The Spectacle of Death*, Offa, Hasbunallah Islamic Books Depot, 1999, pp.91-105, S. Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah: Funerals and...*p.24
53. *Isra’ wal Mi’raj* is the spiritual ascension of Prophet Muhammad to heaven in 621C.E. It was in this nocturnal journey he was shown the conditions of people in *Barzakh*. Whereas some were experiencing joy, some were being tortured.
54. S. Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah: Funerals and...*pp.13-26, M. I. Khawaja, *The Spectacle of...*pp.91-105
55. *Ibid.*

56. Like Plato, some Sufis opine that reincarnation occurs especially in some of the domestic animals such as dog, lizard and the likes. They adduce Q56:61 in support of their opinion. But this verse could not be treated in isolation of verses 57-60 and 62-65. Succinctly, the verses focus on creation of man, death and resurrection. Having been created and caused to die, decomposition would be effected (as with many creatures) or not (as with the prophets) .Who among mankind knows the exact form the decomposed body takes? Yet from this state of nothingness (*i.e.* decomposition), Allah shall re-create (e.g. resurrect) everyone into a form which though we do not preconceived. Allah illustrates further this scenario by drawing man's attention to the seed sowed by a farmer. Be that as it may, the response given by Prophet Muhammad suffices that such animals are not reincarnate of any person. And if at all they are, the question may be asked that how could two souls dwell in a single body? It is as a result of such a question and similar others that Aristotle debunked reincarnation and transmigration of soul. He affirmed that since the soul is the form of the body, one soul can only be united with one determined body. (J. I. Obilor, *Christian Attitude Toward Reincarnation...* p.213; Z. M. Amira, *Boughyat Kul Muslim (Sahih Muslim): Arabic and English*, Beirut , Daru-l-Fikr, n.d., pp.200-201)
57. Still in reference to the response of the prophet, Abdul Hamid Siddiqi in his Commentary of Sahih Muslim *viz-a-viz* the transformation of the Israelites who violated their promise with Allah, posited that Prophet Muhammad was once reported to have said that the transformation of the erring Israelites did not exceed three days after which they were caused to die. Perhaps, a distinction should be made between transformation and reincarnation (or transmigration of soul). Whereas the former does not involve death, death is a condition *sinequanon* for the latter. Thus, the former involves just the same person whilst the latter involves a second party (e.g a victim for reincarnation). (A. H. Siddiqi, *Sahih Muslim* (tr.) vol.3, Lahore, Muhammad Ashraf Kashmir Basar, n.d., pp.1073-1076)
58. *Jawharatul Kamal* is a kind of *as-Salat* for the Prophet especially by the Tijaniyyah Order. This *Salat* is attributed to Shaykh Ahmad Tijani who claimed that he received it from Prophet Muhammad in his dream. It has some conditions attached to it.

59. O. Hakeem, *Jawharatul Kamal*, Lagos, Haklaps Productions, 1996, pp.31-34, T. D. A. Adekilekun, *A Handbook on The Doctrines and Rites of The Tijanniyah*, Ede , Moyanjuola Islamic Publications, 1997, pp.42-44
60. M. Eliade, *et al* (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (vol. 9), New York: Macmillan, 1987, p.293
61. Y. an-Nawawi, *Riyadus-Salihin...*pp.663-664
62. *Ibid.*
63. I. Khalil, *The Jinn and Human Sickness: Remedies in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*, Riyadh, Darussalam, 2005, pp.234-250
64. S. A. 'Umar *The World of The Jinn and Devils*(tr. by J. Zaraboso), U.S.A., al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, 1998, p.7; A. K. Sharafadeen, *Mankind in the Wilderness of Jinn*, Abeokuta, Allahu-Sati Printing Works, 1999, pp.8-9; I. Khalil, *The Jinn and Human Sickness...*pp.31-40
65. A. H. Siddiqi *Sahih Muslim*(tr.) vol.4, Beirut, Dar al-Arabia, n.d., p.1272
66. *Ibid.* (vol.3 no.1188) , *Sunan Abu Dawud*(tr.), vol.3 p.1390, no.4976
67. S. A. 'Umar, *The World of The Jinn and Devils...*pp.29-30
68. Y. an-Nawawi, *Riyad us-Salihin* (vol.2)... pp.519-521
69. S. Abdul Hakeem, *Akudaya in Islamic Perspective*, Lagos, Remarkable Concept, 2007, pp.38-41, A. K. Sharafadeen, *Mankind in the...*p.17
70. B. Philips, *Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on The Jinn(Demons)*, n.p.p., n.p., 1998, pp.31-39 , S. A. 'Umar, *The World of The Jinn...* pp.29-31.
71. A. K. Sarafadeen, *Mankind in the...*p.18
72. *Ibid.* pp.19-21
73. B. Philips, *Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay ...*pp.31-39, S. A. 'Umar, *The World of The...*pp.29-31
74. *Ibid.*
75. Many are stories often heard about this. A similar case occurred in Port-Harcourt of which a cat reportedly hit by a car instantly metamorphosed into a woman. She confessed her change from cat to human being and also that she came from one Buguma in River State (Saturday Punch, May 24, 2008, p.9). Similarly, while he was being chased, a thief metamorphosed into sheep (NTA News Line, Sunday, 25-1-09)
76. A. K. Sarafadeen, *Mankind in the...* pp.22-25

77. Since both the visual hallucination and olfactory hallucination can not be explained scientifically, it is obvious that such a child might have been possessed.
78. *Lagos F.S.P. Magazine* (vol. no.004); A Publication of the Family Support Programme in Lagos State, Jan-May, 1999, p.30
79. A. K. Sarafadeen, *Mankind in the...*pp.22-25