A Tibetan Lama, a Catholic Bishop, and an epicurean all walk into a bar. Over the course of the night they begin a conversation amongst each other regarding death and what each believes should be done to prepare for it. Each is very avid on the correctness of their views and that the other two’s beliefs are invalid.

The epicurean states, “Prepare for death? What would I need to prepare for? I live in the here and now, and enjoy every day of my life. I enjoy the beauty of the world. I indulge in all the wonderful pleasures this world has to offer. There is so much to enjoy in the now. Why would I worry about after this? I’m not even sure there is anything after this life and if there is I’m not going to let it stop me from getting the most out of my life now. I think it’s foolish to limit yourself because of some religious code of conduct. Enjoy the world, learn from your experience. That’s all there is to worry about.”

The Tibetan Lama expresses his views as such, “Well as a Buddhist I strongly believe in the importance of preparing for death, and what follows after it. There is something after this life. I believe that you will be reincarnated again here upon the earth. And depending upon how you live in this present life will determine your station and peace of life in your next life here. Every good and bad deed is counted and tracked. I believe in what is found in one of our sacred texts called the Bardo Thodol. It is commonly called the Tibetan Book of the Dead. This is read over a person as they are dying or not long after their death. We believe it is a guide to souls while they are going through the process between death and rebirth called bardo.”

The Catholic Bishop thoughtfully listens to the other gentlemen and then states, “I believe that it is important how you live your life here, as it will determine your station for the rest of eternity hereafter. As Catholics we believe in the Devil or Satan. He is the very personification of evil and desires to lead as many souls down into Hell as he can. Hell is where he dwells along with his followers called Demons and where all evil and unworthy people will dwell forever after this life. Those who follow our teachings and are baptized will live in Heaven and praise God forever there in that beautiful place of peace. It is important to follow God so that you can go to Heaven and not be dragged down by the devil and his companions.”

The epicurean gives his reply to the others as such, “Well, that’s nice and all and you are welcome to your beliefs but I think it is wrong to be held back by religious teachings that restrict you. I don’t think I believe in reincarnation but if it’s real then fine. But I’m not worried about it now. And I don’t believe in a devil, I think people just make themselves evil and it’s not the work of some grand evil being from the unseen world. I just don’t think its right to restrict people like that. Everyone should be able to enjoy whatever they want during this life and I think not doing that is holding yourself back.”

The Tibetan Lama responds, “Well, I will have to disagree with both of you. Obviously we cannot go through this life just enjoying every pleasure known to man and expect to be happy and achieve peace not only in this life but in your lives to come. There must be balance and restraint. I also do not believe in a supernatural being of evil, such as the devil. People choose their path on their own and that will determine their standing in their lives after this one. I do not believe in a “hell” or an eternal resting place for the evil people of the world. I do not believe in a one supreme God and do not think that one is necessary.”

The Catholic Bishop states, “Obviously I must disagree. If you live your life just seeking after the pleasures of this earth and are never baptized and accept God, you will live in Hell for all of eternity after this life. You will suffer for your sins and damnations before God. God is a real being of supreme power and creation. His way is the only way. Our Tibetan friend I do agree with you that it is of importance how you live your life, but I do not believe in reincarnation. This life is it. You don’t get multiple chances in life. If you make it this time then you will live with God in heaven forever. If not you will burn in hell with the devil forever. It must seem harsh I know but this is how it must be.