

EVIDENCE FOR LIFE AFTER DEATH

by Boyce Batey

Over the past century, psychic researchers have developed volumes of evidence that provide a rational basis for believing that some component of man - consciousness, the spirit, the soul - survives the death of the physical body. This evidence transcends religious and doctrinal differences, gives life more meaning and provides greater incentive for living life more fully. William Gladstone, a Prime Minister of England, recognized that there is no field of research more important than psychical research since it deals with the immortality of the human soul.

Evidence for survival falls into thirteen major categories, each standing on its own merits; if viable alternative explanations are found for any one of these categories of evidence, such evidence does not explain away the other twelve categories of evidence. In assessing the evidence for survival with an attitude of benevolent skepticism, it is helpful to consider the entire range of phenomena suggestive of an afterlife, viewing the evidence as a whole, analyzing how the various types of evidence dovetail and weighing the cumulative evidence. The major categories of survival evidence are as follows:

MEDIUMSHIP, including such forms of automatism as automatic writing and typing, the pendulum and the ouija board, with especially good evidence provided by “drop-in” communicators, cross correspondences and the demonstration of specific skills such as xenoglossia (speaking in a foreign language unknown to the medium but known to the discarnate purporting to communicate through the medium).

SPONTANEOUS COMMUNICATION during meditation, dreaming and other altered states of consciousness.

POSSESSION, especially the rare, classical cases such as that of Lurancy Vennum / Mary Roff in Watseka, Illinois in 1978.

OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCES, including evidential cases of bilocation and the collective perception of the apparition of a living person; the detection of an ectosomatic aspect of a subject's being at a discrete point distant from the physical body by photomultiplier tubes, thermistors and thermocouples; and the study of perception involved while the subject is out-of-the-body.

EXPERIMENTS AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH, including photographs of a cloud-like

substance leaving the body and detection of an immediate loss in weight.

NEAR-DEATH AND CLINICAL DEATH EXPERIENCES, known also as the Lazarus syndrome, anabiosis, the thanatominetic experience and the pseudo-death experience that are described and have been studied by Dr. Raymond Moody, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Dr. Kenneth Ring, Dr. Michael B. Sabom and others. Commonalities of these experiences include the experience of being out-of-the-body, conversing with deceased loved ones, experiencing a golden-white light and a being of love, and returning without fear of death and finding a greater purpose to life.

DEATH BED EXPERIENCES in which the dying have mood elevation, see heavenly scenes and speak to and see deceased relatives, friends and religious figures soon before they die. "At the Hour of Death" by K. Osis and E. Haraldsson (Avon Books, New York, 1977) reports on the scientific research of such cases and their evidentiality for post mortem existence.

APPARITIONS OF THE DEAD, especially when collectively perceived and fully materialized spontaneously or in carefully controlled experimental sessions with physical mediums.

PLACE HAUNTINGS, especially where multiple persons feel, hear, see and experience the same or similar phenomena.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY, some planned but many unplanned photographs of deceased persons which appear on photographs made following their death.

PARANORMAL VOICE RECORDINGS, the Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) in which purportedly the voices of the "dead" are recorded on magnetic tape. The best-known book on this subject is "BREAKTHROUGH, An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead" by the late Konstantin Raudivc (New York; Lancer Books, Inc. 1971).

REINCARNATION MEMORIES, intuitively by adults; spontaneously by children; clairvoyantly by psychics such as Edgar Cayce, Dr. Vincent Rague, and Noel Street; regressive recall under hypnosis; through announcing dreams to pregnant women; and with the occasional corroborating evidence of birthmarks corresponding to the mortal wounds on the body of the one in the previous incarnation. The best scientific investigation of past life recollections has been done by Dr. Ian Stevenson. His book, "20 Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation," discusses some of the over 1,600 cases he has investigated.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCES in which one knows experientially that the polarity between life and death is nonexistent.

Seen as a Gestalt, these categories of evidence provide a compelling case for the survival hypothesis. But not for everyone. For those who are unwilling or unable to approach the survival issue as a matter of faith and who remain unpersuaded by the cumulative evidence of survival research, what would provide conclusive evidence - perhaps bordering on proof - that some component of human personality / consciousness / spirit survives bodily death? Of what would

the elusive “perfect case” consist?

Consider a case with the following evidence: A collectively perceived, fully materialized, three-dimensional apparition of one for whom there is irrefutable evidence of the death of the physical body, appearing to different trained observers independently at different points in time and distant from each other in place. This “apparition” would function objectively - lifting objects, speaking, eating and drinking, moving and interacting with people and objects - while displaying the personality, knowledge and skills of the decedent. The “apparition” would relate to each person in just the way he had related to them while living in the physical body. The spiritual body of this person would materialize and dematerialize in a lighted area and display a wide range of functions while the entire sequence is recorded by videotape and color motion picture and sound equipment using both regular and infrared light. Doctors and psychiatrists would examine the “apparition” clinically while various monitoring devices would be used to record the activity of his brain, heart, lungs and other vital organs (if any). Blood, urine, saliva, perspiration and hair samples (if any) and some skin scrapings (if any) would be taken for future analysis. The “apparition” would be finger-printed, voice-printed, weighed and measured. Kirlian electrophotographs would be taken, hearing, seeing and other tests given and a battery of psychological tests administered. Handwriting samples would be taken for analysis by a graphoanalyst and the “apparition” would be tested for the full range of his paranormal cognitive and energetic capabilities. Complete details would be obtained on the modus operandi of his interface with this space-time reality and his motivation in coming back determined. If there were such a case, it would be fairly conclusive and convincing, wouldn't it?

There are reports of cases in the literature which meet some, but not all, of these conditions. Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross' report of Mary Swartz, her patient who “came back” 10 1/2 months after death and physical burial, is a case in point. Kubler-Ross, a psychiatrist and thanatologist, performed reality-testing upon herself when the spiritual body of Mary Swartz materialized in the corridor of the Chicago hospital early in 1969, confirming that she was in contact with reality. The apparition had come back to encourage Kubler-Ross to continue her work with the dying at a time when she had become despondent about this work and was considering ending it. The apparition spoke to Kubler-Ross, physically opened the door to her office and closed the door to her office while entering and leaving, held a pencil and wrote a note on a piece of paper when Kubler-Ross requested the written note as evidence; and interacted with Kubler-Ross just as she had while living. Her return was instrumental in persuading Kubler-Ross to continue her work with the dying.

The most outstanding and unique case, however, is that of a carpenter who said there is no death, told some of his friends that he would come back after the death of his physical body, and did so, on at least eleven different occasions, appearing fully materialized. As did Mary Swartz, Jesus of Nazareth came back for a purpose - to commission and instruct his followers on the mission they were to accomplish and by the fact of his return from death, show that there is no death. His return is important since Christianity stands or falls on His resurrection from the dead. To what extent do the eleven recorded post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus in the forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension meet the criteria for the “perfect case” of survival evidence as postulated above?

Let's consider two areas of evidence: (1) the recorded sightings of the Resurrection body of Jesus and (2) the burial shroud in which his crucified and dead body was wrapped.

The sightings and reference to the burial shroud are recorded in the New Testament - in the four Gospels and in Paul's first letter to the Christians at Corinth. The Shroud of Turin - referred to as the "Fifth Gospel" because the image of the crucified man appearing on it corroborates all details of the Gospels concerning the crucifixion and physical injury to the body of Jesus - beatings given by soldiers, marks of the crown of thorns, puncture wounds of the feet, wrists, and left side - provides additional evidence which has been investigated by scientists (In October, 1979, an international group of sindonologists examined the shroud in Turin, Italy, using sophisticated non-destructive testing techniques.

The Gospels record that the physically dead body of Jesus was wrapped in a burial shroud and placed in a sealed tomb. After the Resurrection, the physical body was missing although the burial shroud was left in place. Simon Peter's reaction at seeing the linen cloth suggests that Jesus left the grave clothes without disturbing them. Scientific investigation to date supports the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, the image on which is a photographic negative. Dating techniques place its age at the time of Jesus. It is suggested, then, that the image on the shroud is a self-photograph of Jesus made by techniques not yet understood by modern science. It is a photograph of the front and the back of the crucified figure and computer enhancement techniques indicate the image on the linen shroud is three dimensional!

The Resurrection body of Jesus was fully materialized and solid, was perceived collectively; appeared independently to different persons who knew Him before His crucifixion and death; appeared at different points in time and at places distant from each other; ate honeycomb, broiled fish, and bread; interacted with people and objects while displaying the personality, knowledge and skills He had before His death; related to people He had known as He had before death; was probably touched by some of them; materialized and dematerialized while in the presence of multiple witnesses; breathed on those close to Him; evidently spoke, saw and heard as He had while living; evidenced paranormal cognitive and energetical capabilities; and made clear His reason for coming back.

Referring to the resurrected Jesus, John, in his First Letter 1:1, says: "...which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands..." This suggests that some - if not all - of the disciples accepted Jesus' invitation and physically touched His Resurrection body. It may also suggest the reason Thomas, who was not present, asked for this type of evidence before he would believe that Jesus had come back from the dead.

When the resurrected Jesus appeared "to more than five hundred brethren at one time" (I Corinthians 15-6) and to Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel of Cana, James, John and two disciples fishing in the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee, He was collectively perceived as He was twice in the Upper Room, in Emmaus, and in other places. Clairvoyantly, He knew where the fishing disciples could throw their net to catch fish. These appearances of His Resurrection body were not expected, made His ministry memorable and meaningful, and were for the purpose of commissioning His disciples to carry forward the work He had begun.

The resurrection appearances of Jesus and the testimony of the Shroud of Turin are real, historical phenomena that offer more evidence - both qualitatively and quantitatively - for survival than any other case on record. Could it be that the Resurrection of Jesus is the elusive “perfect case”?

Mr. Batey is a psychical researcher with a particular interest in survival research. He is currently the executive secretary of the Academy of Religion and Psychical Research. For 20 years he chaired the Central Connecticut chapter of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship and presented many interesting programs in the Hartford area. Mr. Batey is a teacher, lecturer and hypnotherapist. He can be reached at bateyb@infionline.net.

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