

The Afterlife Unveiled

What 'the Dead' Tell Us About Their World

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BOOKS

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Trance Teachings from the Seventh Sphere	11
Chapter 2 The Afterlife of a Young Texan	25
Chapter 3 A Notable American's First Year on the Other Side	36
Chapter 4 A Psychical Researcher on This Side Speaks to Us from the Other Side	48
Chapter 5 A Catholic Priest Describes the 'Land of the Great Harvest'	61
Chapter 6 Oh, the People We Meet Over There!	75
Chapter 7 What the Protestant Theologian Discovered upon Dying	88
Conclusion	102
Afterword	116
Key References	119
Select Bibliography	120
Index	123

Introduction

Maps are symbols, and even the best of them are inaccurate and imperfect symbols. But to anyone who really wants to reach a given destination, a map is indispensably useful as indicating the direction in which the traveler should set out and the roads which he must take.

Aldous Huxley

You are about to become acquainted with some of the most interesting literature on the planet that most educated people know nothing about. It would appear that the primary authors are people we refer to as 'dead.' Their collaborators are known as mediums or channels, and we refer to them as 'alive.' When you want to buy one of their books, you should look it up under the medium's name, though most mediums say the real authors are the spirit communicators who speak through them. The Other-Side communications that we'll be reviewing here are, in my view, the best of the genre – the richest, most revelatory, most fertile I've come across after a quarter century of researching this sometimes dubious material. Taken as a group, they provide for us a map of the afterlife, that place where we may be going in a few short years.

Here you will find seven accounts of the afterlife allegedly conveyed by spirits who are there. These spirits were formerly alive on earth occupying physical bodies, just like we are. Some 'died' centuries ago. Others were 'dead' for little more than a few days or months when they first came through. Came through? Spirits don't have physical bodies, so they can't speak out loud or write out a message in the way we do. That's why they resort to mediums.

Some religions take a dim view of mediums and warn that messages coming to us from the Other Side are from the Devil.

Many scientists, on the other hand, tell us not to pay attention to such 'messages' because there is no such thing as spirits and life after death. Other people take a middle path, including some of the world's best scientists. They bring a critical but open mind to the topic. That is the attitude I take and encourage you to take.

What exactly is a medium, and what do mediums do – or claim to do? They are gifted people, more often than not women, who are able to stop their minds from thinking and feeling – blanking them out, if you will – so that a spirit can make use of them. Some mediums go into a trance, either deep or shallow, while others remain awake and aware of what is coming through them. Some write out the message, while others speak or even type it out. Almost all first-rate mediums marvel at what comes through them. Often ideas or points of view totally alien to them turn up. Often information comes through them that they had no way of knowing. This information, they claim, doesn't come from theological surmise or philosophical argument, but from spirits directly telling us about the world they now call home.

Mediums such as John Edward, the TV celebrity, are famous for ostensibly putting deceased relatives in contact with their grieving relatives. Spirits use his mind to communicate their presence and prove to the grief-stricken that they are still very much alive, and usually quite happy. We are not interested in this kind of communication. Here we will be studying communications that describe the world in which the spirits live – and that presumably we will go to when we die. What you make of them I cannot predict. But I think that many of you will be amazed at what you find. Wherever they come from, they are fascinating and often inspiring. They reveal an astral world of amazing beauty and stepped-up intensity of thought and emotion; an overall plan that explains not only the spirits' purpose over there but ours right here; and a mysterious grandeur that surpasses the ability of our language to describe it adequately. The feeling of being thrilled by the orderliness, justice, and magnitude of the

Introduction

divine plan it lays out; of seeing with clarity what is expected of us here and now, and what the consequences of success and failure are; of coming to know that death is not the end, but that a mighty world lies just ahead; of glimpsing a personal future that inspires, here and now, a dedicated commitment to bettering our own world – all this, and much more, comes through these readings.

Christians are starved for more clarity about the afterlife. I know several who go to church faithfully but don't even believe in an afterlife, so implausible (they feel) is the Church's account of it. Heaven, hell, and maybe purgatory – so medieval, so Dante-esque – can it really be like that? Then there is the other extreme: tit-for-tat reincarnationists who insist that everything that happens to us is karmically necessary and therefore just – from the earthquake in Haiti to the flat tire you get on the way to the airport. I believe that conventional beliefs regarding life after death are antiquated and that this book will bring them up to date. And for those believers, or would-be believers, who are troubled by the secular bias against all talk of a spirit world, there is even better news. What they read here is likely to bolster their hopes, perhaps dramatically. Nihilistic materialism and atheism, one of our young century's most woeful pathologies, is contradicted at every turn by our spirit friends.

There is, of course, no finally conclusive evidence of what to expect when we die. But the messages here, from different times and backgrounds, are consistent with each other. After reading several dozen of these accounts, you can almost predict what the next one will say. This fact suggests that they are revealing a real place or state, for what else could account for the similarities among the accounts? Hikers on a mountain trail will notice many different things along the way, but after listening to all of them tell their story, it won't take long before you realize they are talking about something they all really experienced, not something they each separately dreamed up.

Other factors point to the same conclusion. Helen Greaves, one of the mediums we'll be getting to know (Chapter 6), wrote after reading what came to her in a light trance:

My pen scarcely lifted from the page. When I read through what I had written my astonishment grew. This happened for several days and I became more astounded at the subjects upon which I had written. I could not, without effort and without definitely searching my limited imagination, have invented such stories as poured through me.

She goes on to explain, 'There was hardly a correction made in all the hundreds of words written, though I was never aware of what I was going to write.'

In the first chapter we'll meet one of the greatest mediums in history, the English clergyman Stainton Moses. Though not in trance, he was completely unaware of what he was writing. He explains:

I cultivated the power of occupying my mind with other things during the time that the writing was going on, and was able to read an abstruse book [held in the left hand] and follow out a line of close reasoning while the message was written [by the right hand] with unbroken regularity, [with] no fault in composition and often a sustained vigour and beauty of style.

This points with some force to another mind doing the writing through Moses' hand.

In still other cases, the handwriting of the medium is not her own. And in the case of voice mediums, the voice is not her own. The celebrated Irish medium Geraldine Cummins, the subject of this book's fourth chapter, produced about fifty different personalities, handwritings, and literary styles in her career, many

matching deceased persons known to their surviving loved ones. While in a light trance she wrote at great speed with no idea of what her hand was producing.

Another way of evaluating the genuineness of a mediumistic account is through 'evidential.' An evidential communication is one containing correct information that the communicating spirit would be expected to know but that the medium would not. For example, if a medium were to reveal the whereabouts of an important deed in the spirit communicator's personal library back on earth that was unknown to anyone else, and the deed was later found at that very spot, the communication would be said to have evidential. There is a great deal of evidential in some mediumistic accounts, less in others.

On balance, I find that all these considerations make a strong case for the authenticity of our best channeled literature.

But not so fast. There are reasons to doubt the genuineness of spirit communications.

Our senses tell us that the dead are, well, dead, and mediums are asking us to deny our senses. We simply have no empirical evidence that the world they describe exists. We have no photos and no instruments that all agree register such a world. It may be no more real than the world imagined by a science fiction writer. In addition, most mediums, like most of us, would like to believe that life continues beyond death. Perhaps their books describe their hopes, not an actual world. Further, even if the medium were in contact with a spirit, there is no guarantee that she (or he) would be channeling the spirit cleanly. In fact, many spirit communicators complain *through their mediums* that the medium's biases sometimes get in the way of a clear channel, like a virus in a computer. Mediums are usually the first to admit the possibility; that is why they are so delighted when they read back what they have written but, in their view, could not have imagined.

Let me tell you what I think. First, there is absolutely no

chance that all or even most of the mediums featured in this book are conscious frauds. But there is a slight, a very slight possibility that all seven accounts have been unintentionally fabricated by their subconscious imaginations. We know what elaborate stories patients sometimes tell their hypnotists when they are regressed!

Though confident that much, even most of this material is authentic, I am less confident that everything you read here came through exactly as the spirit communicators intended. For there is the ever-present danger, as we just saw, that the medium cannot be trusted to be a completely uncontaminated receiving station, and will instead unintentionally let her own ideas intrude and corrupt the message. My own view after reading complaints by communicators is that this does sometimes happen, though usually not to such a degree that the overall meaning is crucially tainted. I am very nearly convinced that *most* of what you read here really came from the Other Side and came through accurately; in other words, that it is a true revelation. Once you see how similar the accounts are, in spite of coming from sources so far apart, I think you will be inclined to agree.

These accounts are potentially useful for two types of people: the dying and the healthy – in other words, just about everyone! *Testimony of Light*, the book I end my Death course with at the university where I teach, and the subject of Chapter 6, creates a real stir in my students. Fundamentalist Christians and Muslims often dislike it, and hard-core materialists usually express contempt for it. But the majority of the class are intrigued, and more than a few have told me it's the most important book they ever read, for it tells them not just what to expect when they die but, more importantly, *what the purpose of life is here and now*.

What of the dying or the very old who read a book like this for the first time? If I had made a bad job of my life, I would be concerned; I might even prefer extinction to the afterlife world described here. But for a decent person with a few months to live, this book would be, I am sure, a godsend. The otherworldly

Introduction

visions of dying patients that are recounted by hospice nurses produce great joy and peace in the dying, and the near-death experience almost always removes the fear of death from the one who has it. It is hard to imagine a greater blessing for people close to death. All the better if we not only lay aside our fear of becoming nothing when we die, but have something concrete that we can look forward to. Mediumistic accounts of the world awaiting us at death provide just that. I'll bet that most of you who believe in an afterlife have only the vaguest notion of what it will be like. That's unfortunate; such vagueness chips away at faith, and faith is what we need at death. There is nothing vague about the afterlife world revealed here. You could even make a movie out of it – as Robin Williams did a few years ago (*What Dreams May Come*, based on Richard Matheson's well-researched novel by that title).

These accounts would also be good for society at large. They make it clear that our station in the afterlife depends on the kind of person we choose to be in this life. If taken seriously by the whole society, the confident expectation of accountability would have a profoundly salutary effect on it. No one could be happy about landing in the Shadowlands, or the Realm of the Unprogressed, or the Lower Astral found in these accounts. And most of us are humble enough to admit that we need a karmic prod every now and then to keep us from degenerating into unethical selfniks.

On the other hand, the vivid, beautiful, attractive worlds awaiting the good would provide a strong positive incentive – the carrot rather than the stick – for virtuous action. All these accounts point out the importance of forgiving each other while still in the flesh. All make it clear that a famous name or big bank account means nothing in the world to come. All emphasize the spiritual growth and eventual happiness that come from handling life's hardships with grace and dignity. These accounts make it clear, vividly clear, that there is a direct cause-effect

The Afterlife Unveiled

relationship between virtuous living in this world and a happy life in the next.

Many people today, especially our youth, resort to bad behavior because they don't see any harmful consequences coming from it. If they did, if they *had a map* showing what the consequences were, they would be more careful. If a whole society knew that no one ever got away with bad behavior – from rape or character assassination to fighting or gossiping or just plain laziness – far fewer would allow themselves such license. Virtuous behavior emphasizing humility, kindness, honesty, courage, forgiveness, self-control, dedication to purpose, and self-sacrifice might become habit-forming. And our world would be much, much happier for it.

I look forward to the day that authentic mediumistic literature will become more widely available and more universally respected. The best parts of the world's several scriptures deserve to endure, but the worst provoke exclusivism and generate misery on a vast scale. In addition, no scripture comes close to revealing what truly awaits us when we die. The world is hungry for something better, something that can serve as a reliable revelation that knits together people and cultures rather than dividing them further. Anyone who reads this book is likely to come away feeling that life is meaningful and good, and that each of us has an important part to play in its proper unfolding. Authentic mediums might well be the closest thing to the voice of God that our planet has.

The Protestant reformer John Calvin thought it wise to resist the temptation to say much about the afterlife, since the Bible says so little about it. Others, including several of my friends, both atheist and Christian, are convinced that it's impossible to know what, if anything, follows death. We are like fish swimming in the ocean, unable to know what might lie above it. Having an opinion about the afterlife is as silly as thinking we understand what it's like to live on some extra-galactic planet.

Introduction

This stance, while becoming in its modesty, is unnecessarily defeatist. As we will see, the afterlife world is nearby, and there is no reason it should remain forever inaccessible to us. It is not light-years away, but as close to us as dark matter. In any case, the advice of these naysayers is being ignored today, and rightly so, by millions of curious seekers, of all ages, whether near death or not, who are discovering the literature of afterlife – from books about the near-death experience (NDE), to accounts by the slowly dying who report seeing visions of the world to come, to the ever-growing literature said to come from the dead themselves speaking through mediums. This last kind of literature is the focus of this book.

In the chapters that follow, the actual words of the spirits will appear in bold print. The seven chapters are presented in chronological order. As pointed out earlier, you will find quite a bit of repetition – what you would expect of a world the spirits share rather than some sort of fabrication from each medium’s subconscious. Then again, there is enough dissimilarity to suggest that there are many levels or spheres in the Afterworld. It is clear that the communicating spirits do not all exist at the same level. A 20-year-old Texan (Chapter 2) who begins to communicate shortly after his death is not likely to live in the same realm as the English co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research who died at a more advanced age and has been dead for 20 years (Chapter 4) when he comes through. Their descriptions reflect their different backgrounds and life experiences. For the reader, this divergence could be important. Chapters 1, 4, and 7 will appeal to the more philosophical reader interested in the laws governing the Afterworld, while Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6 will probably appeal to the reader more concerned with the landscape, geography, and technology of the Afterworld. There is no need to start with Chapter 1 just because I did. Each chapter can stand alone.

In the concluding chapter I will put all this information

The Afterlife Unveiled

together and describe the Afterworld as I see it. It might be presumptuous of me, but I think I know, based on the 'maps' we've looked at here, quite a bit about what's coming after death, and I'd like you to know it too.