

Review: Eben Alexander, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 2012

Pages: 196

Spiritually Dangerous for the Undiscerning

While the author no doubt had a near death experience (NDE), metaphysical conclusions he reaches are subjective, and must be tested against some objective standard for verification.

Importantly, Eben is obviously still an unsaved man, a believer in the religion of evolution and its tenet of Deep Time [pp19-20,84], and prior to his NDE clearly subscribed to scientism (pp34-35). This is what drives his ungodly NDE conclusions of:

-Pantheism: you and the universe are one, and you and God are one, therefore, all is God. In fact, there are many universes!
[pp48,70,76, 157,160]

-God associated with the sound “Om” (and so might be Hindu). Amongst its attributes listed on p47, “all just” is conspicuously absent.

-No judgment: his NDE never has a hell, the closest is an ugly threatening environment at the beginning [p31], which is quickly banished. Then there is only beauty, love, and forgiveness. [p71]

He also had an angelic tour guide; the “Girl on the Butterfly Wing”.

The above is largely what the demonically-sourced New Age movement teaches, mortal enemy to Biblical Christianity.

The book contains far too many chapters, and switches between hospital events during his coma and fight with bacterial meningitis, flashbacks, and the NDE itself. This combines to make for a disjointed read.

Prologue (pp. 1-10)

Dr Bruce Greyson, “Dr Alexander’s neuroscience taught him that NDEs are brain-based illusions.”

The ‘spot’ in a parachute jump is two-minutes’ descent above the surface. Air collisions would cause bodies to explode.

Stereotactic radiosurgery targets radiation beams deep in the brain.

At fifty-four, Eben’s neocortex was attacked by a suspected *Escherichia coli* infection.

If you don’t have a working brain, it can’t be used to explain an NDE.

Eben was conscious and completely free of physical brain limitations.

I) The Pain (pp. 4-16)

II) The Hospital (pp. 17-22)

Meningitis is a swelling of the meninges which line the spine and skull insides.

Bacterial meningitis infection fatality rate ranges from 15-40%.

The cortex (Lt. “bark”) governs memory, language, emotion, visual and auditory awareness, and logic.

WBCs issue from the spleen and bone marrow to fight infection.

III) Out of Nowhere (pp. 23-24)

IV) Eben IV (pp. 25-28)

Healthy cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is 80mg/dL; 20 is perilous, and Eben’s was just 1.

The longer a coma lasts the more likely a permanent vegetative state.

V) Underworld (pp. 29-32)

There is no sense of time, nor memory of prior existence in an NDE.

Eben initially encounters a foul place with demonic-like reptiles but was able to will it away since, “he didn’t belong there”.

VI) An Anchor to Life (pp. 33-37)

Eben had, “grown up wanting to believe in God and Heaven and an afterlife, my decades in the rigorous scientific world of academic neurosurgery had profoundly called into question how such things could exist. Modern neuroscience dictates that the brain gives rise to consciousness – to the mind, to the soul, to the spirit ... I had little doubt that it was correct.” [p34]

“Over the years my scientific worldview gently but steadily undermined my ability to believe in something larger. Science ... pushed our significance in the universe ever closer to zero ... science is not concerned with what would be nice. It’s concerned with what *is*.” [p35]

VII) The Spinning Melody and the Gateway (pp. 38-41)

VIII) Israel (pp. 42-44)

E. coli can swap DNA with other gram-negative bacteria.

In 1996, a new strain was found having an enzyme *Klebsiella pneumoniae carbapenemase* (KBC), said to give it immunity to all antibiotics.

IX) The Core (pp. 45-49)

“Om” was the sound Eben remembers as associated with God.

Evil is said to be necessary to allow for free will.

Cause and effect exist in higher realms, and learned knowledge is said to be stored permanently.

X) What Counts (pp. 50-58)

XI) An End to the Downward Spiral (pp. 59-69)

XII) The Core (pp. 70-73)

Eben receives some deceitful:

“You are loved and cherished.”

“You have nothing to fear.”

“There is nothing you can do wrong.”

XIII) Wednesday (pp. 74-75)

In a coma the body is there but the “essence” elsewhere.

XIV) A Special Kind of NDE (pp. 76-79)

Eben “knew” he was part of God in his NDE. [p76]

XV) The Gift of Forgetting (pp. 80-86)

Scientists see consciousness as a form of digital information, just as a computer.

From the “Core”, Eben “understood” what dark matter and dark energy were [even though they are unscientific Big Bang rescue devices!].

Our role here is said to grow toward the Divine.

XVI) The Well (pp. 87-88)

XVII) N of 1 (pp. 89-94)

The comatose lose eye and pupil coordination.

XVIII) To Forget, and to Remember (pp. 95-96)

XIX) Nowhere to Hide (pp. 97-101)

XX) The Closing (pp. 102-104)

At the edge of the “Gateway”, Eben could go no further and the gates of Heaven were disappointingly closed.

XXI) The Rainbow (pp. 105-107)

XXII) Six Faces (pp. 108-110)

XXIII) Final Night, First Morning (pp. 111-114)

XXIV) The Return (pp. 115-119)

XXV) Not There Yet (pp. 120-123)

XXVI) Spreading the News (pp. 124-125)

XXVII) Homecoming (pp. 126-128)

XXVIII) The Ultra-Real (pp. 129-130)

XXIX) A Common Experience (pp. 131-135)

Like many doctors, Eben had simply “known” NDEs were impossible.

The medical community revised death definition away from the heart towards brain activity.

Within seconds of cardiac arrest, blood flow cessation to the brain causes wholesale malfunction and loss of consciousness. However, as long as there is some supply of oxygenated blood the person will stay alive and can recover.

XXX) Back from the Dead (pp. 136-139)

XXXI) Three Camps (pp. 140-146)

All drug-induced NDE hypotheses rely on a functioning neocortex, including N,N-dimethyltryptamine [DMT] (dump from the pineal gland). The same applies for Rapid Eye Movement intrusion.

NDE uncanny vision and thought clarity suggest *higher* brain function, the exact opposite of accident victims.

Terminal lucidity is mystery for doctors since the brain is at its most degraded point right before death.

XXXII) A Visit to Church (pp. 147-148)

Eben “knew” God, without any mention of Jesus!

XXXIII) The Enigma of Consciousness (pp. 149-161)

The problem of consciousness centres around three questions:

1. “How does it arise out of brain function?”
2. “How is it related to behaviour?”
3. “How do the perceived and real worlds relate to each other?”

[Of course, Q1 presupposes it does, and Q3 that there *is* a “real world”.]

XXXIV) A Final Dilemma (pp. 162-164)

Eben’s NDE convinced him of a secret part of man which records every aspect of his earthly life.

XXXV) The Photograph (pp. 165-171)

Appendix A (pp. 183-184)

E coli meningitis is rare at 10^{-6} in the U.S. p.a.

Appendix B: Neuroscientific Hypotheses I Considered to Explain My Experience (pp. 185-1)

-A primitive brain stem “program” (evolutionary argument).

-Recall from deeper parts of the unaffected limbic system.

This can’t account for the interactive nature of the NDE

- Endogenous glutamate blockers with excitotoxicity (similar to ketamine)
- A DMT dump.
- Isolated cortical region preservation.