

Review: Melvin Morse, *Closer to the Light: Learning From Children's Near-Death Experiences*, Souvenir Press, NY, 1990

Pages: 206

Closer to What Light?

This is exactly what one would expect from a secularist studying NDEs; an overly-positive mixture of wonder and mystery couched in spiritual deception.

For the Christian, however, there are major warning signs, e.g:

-Those who see “Jesus”, or “God”, often come back as ‘better’ people with faith in a ‘higher power’, yet there is little desire to seek out a Church or read the Bible. In this way, the experience itself becomes their religion.

-An absence of negative NDEs: there doesn't seem to be a hell per his study. Granted, the sample are children, but some would be old enough to be held spiritually responsible for actions. In the older NDEs none were cited.

On the investigative side, the evidence is persuasive such experiences are real. Multiple testimonies of intricate operating room procedures, observation of objects outside the room, etc., can only be dismissed by *a priori* materialist philosophy.

On the medical side, there is no good reason reality-altering drugs can promote reality-enhancing NDEs, or brain chemistry. The only substances which can bring on NDEs are shown to be deadly themselves, e.g. CO₂ inhalation.

The only true light is found in Jesus Christ as John's gospel proclaims, not in NDEs, although they are powerful tools for refuting today's religion of materialism across the West.

Foreword (pp. ix-xi)

The brain's genetically-coded 'NDE area' is said to be close to the right temporal lobe.

I) Katie Meets Elizabeth (pp. 1-16)

Chemotherapy is tested on rat brains for efficacy.

Dangerous arterial catheterisation is valuable since it allows alive reading of blood oxygenation.

Basal intubation is rare as most doctors intubate orally.

An angel Elisabeth accompanied Katie up a tunnel where she met Jesus and the Heavenly Father where she made 'new friends', who were "souls waiting to be born". Katie's mother was a nominal Mormon [Katie never saw Joseph Smith though?].

Some NDER's call the glowing personages "God", Allah", or "The Man".

Morse's goal is to determine whether near death is a prerequisite for NDEs, and how NDEs affect children longitudinally.

II) The Seattle Study (pp. 17-43)

In Seattle, a young woman Maria had a cardiac arrest and floated outside the hospital, seeing a shoe on the fifth-floor's window ledge. The doctor subsequently climbed outside and saw the shoe.

The Seattle Study had 121 critically-ill children as controls, with an estimated 5% mortality chance. The study group had 12.

None of the controls had an NDE.

Morse also interviewed a separate 37 children treated with mind-altering drugs; none had an NDE.

No child NDER was adversely affected by his experience.

One boy: “My body was lit up with a light, like there was a light bulb inside me.” [p25]

Chris (treated with many narcotics and Valium, which causes short term amnesia): “Mother, I’ve been climbing a staircase to heaven.”

Michelle: “In front of me were two buttons, a red one and a green one. The people in white kept telling me to push the red button. But I knew I should push the green one because the red one would mean I wouldn’t come back.”

About 50% of children made some sort of conscious decision to return to their bodies (in adults this is 20%).

At nine months, Mark had a heart attack: “One can double jump in heaven”.

Tracheolalacia is a floppy windpipe.

Crack addict Cindy had a heart attack aged seventeen: “My dead grandfather came to help me. He was a very religious man, “Go back to your body. You have work to do.”

Linda, 13, was injected with epinephrine to restore breathing.

Daniel, 6: “I was standing watching the doctors load me into the ambulance.”

III) Predeath Visions (pp. 44-68)

ICU time and motion studies show as patients become sicker, physicians spend more time on procedures and less on psychological comfort.

Regarding a dead child, doctors tell patients they might have their child after he has died, auditory ‘hallucinations’ may persist for three to six weeks.

Cory, suffering leukemia and undergoing chemotherapy: “Don’t worry

about my leukemia, I have been to the crystal castle and have talked with God ... [in a place called Summerland]”. He described God as “an old man with a beard and a halo.

Seth, 7, with leukemia was given some morphine and Valium. He said Jesus was in his room and that one could double jump in heaven.

Cystic fibrosis causes lungs to fill with scar tissue and stop functioning. Greg, 13, had this: “I can sometimes see a cross of light”. He said that he looked forward to becoming “one with God” when dead.

IV) Spirit in Medicine (pp. 69-93)

“Death and dying has replaced sex as the forbidden topic”.

Secularist doctors tell a “loving lie” that patients would soon recover due to a new medical treatment.

The Egyptians knew red onions and garlic supported the immune system.

In the Aztec *Song of the Dead*, the legendary god-king Quetzalcoatl discovered arts, science, and agriculture.

Dr Elizabeth Kubler-Ross holds the five stages of dying to be: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

A 7-year old boy on chemo: “Jesus and I were above you watching you put a tube in my throat. Then you shocked me with that machine, and you made Jesus go away.”

V) The Seat of the Soul Hypothesis (pp. 94-114)

A quarter of NDERs have had OBEs.

Ben, 14, looked down at his body and saw he was linked to it by a silver cord attached to his foot.

VI) The Pure Light (pp. 115-134)

The visual fields collapse during death which leads to “tunnel vision”, therefore, one would assume visions of *darkness* rather than light.

A drowned 14-year old boy: “[the Light] It was all the energy on the Universe forever in one place.”

Teen Michelle Sorenson: “ I felt a longing for my husband and children even before I had me them.” She is now a vegetarian with a deep belief in God, but doesn’t attend church regularly.

VII) Transformation (pp. 135-163)

A 64-year old woman: “I looked down into a round void opening in the black void in which people were walking around in white robes. Some people remained in the void, especially if they had committed suicide.”

No child NDEr had a life review experience.

Ed, age 5: when a preacher was talking about a fearful and terrible God, this disturbed him, so he didn’t want to go to church anymore.

After Cindy, 15, had an NDE, she believed in reincarnation, but not God: “My experience didn’t show me a God.”

One woman gained telepathy powers after her NDE, or very good intuition.

VIII) The Seattle Study Revisited (pp. 164-181)

EEGs read a “P-330 brain wave”.

Appendix: Why They Aren’t NDEs (pp. 182-193)

LSD: people *know* they’re high and their reality is altered, whereas NDErS have *real* experiences.

Morphine and heroin: both cause pleasure but there are no tunnels, spirits, heaven, or God. However, there are negative effects; one test subject shortly after became homicidal and felt he had no soul.

Anaesthetic agents: no mystical hallucinations are found in the literature.

Ketamine: causes hallucinations often fearful and paranoid, also, subjects know they are on drugs.

Autoscopic hallucinations: seeing one's double (occurs in 2% of the population).

Endorphin model: holds NDEs result from a large brain dump of catecholamines upon death.

Hypoxia: *does* cause NDEs, especially via the Medune (CO₂) mixture [30% CO₂/70% O₂].