

The Search for God and Afterlife in the Age of Science **by Ken R. Vincent, Ed.D.**

Abstract:

NDEs and other transpersonal experiences are as old as recorded history. Ancient first-hand accounts are rare and others are "much-told tales." Scientific investigation began 150 yrs ago with physicians, professors and preachers verifying case studies and making observations. At the same time, social science was invented, and comparative religion and critical analysis of religion became topics of study. Currently, the NDE and other transpersonal experiences are investigated using virtually all scientific techniques available to the social sciences and bio-medical sciences. Survey data reveal the NDE is a common occurrence in patients who are resuscitated, and other transpersonal experiences happen to a large number of the population. (It was once believed that only Saints and other rare individuals had these experiences.) Advances in psychiatric diagnosis enable the differentiation of the NDE and other transpersonal experiences from mental illness. While the NDE and other transpersonal experiences do not prove the existence of a personal God and afterlife, they definitely point to it. Research into the aftereffects of the NDE and other transpersonal experiences document positive changes in the areas of spirituality and well-being.

Books in print from the First Period of Scientific Research into NDEs & other Transpersonal Experiences (1850s-1920s):

The Varieties of Religious Experience by William James - This is THE classic study of transpersonal experiences. It is still relevant 100+ years later.

Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death by F.W.H. Myers - This book is packed with wonderful 19th century accounts of after-death communications (ADCs), an NDE and other paranormal phenomena.

Psychical Research and the Resurrection by James Hyslop - This book includes death-bed visions, ADCs, and an analysis the similarity of modern visions and the Biblical resurrection stories.

Books in print from the Second Period of Scientific Research into NDEs & other Transpersonal Experiences (1960's to Present):

Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience by Kenneth Ring with Evelyn Elsaesser Valarino - This is a readable overview of the research on the NDE to date. It includes NDEs of people who are blind.

At the Hour of Death by K. Osis & E. Harroldson - This is a cross-cultural study of death-bed visions and NDEs comparing India with the United States.

Religion, Spirituality, and the Near-Death Experience by Mark Fox - This book is a scholarly overview of the research on NDEs. The chapter on mysticism compares the experiences

of mystics with those of NDEs taken from the files of the The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre.

Otherworld Journeys by Carol Zaleski - This book compares modern NDEs with Medieval NDEs and ADCs.

Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence by E. Cardeña, S.J. Lynn, S. & Krippner - This is the scholarly analysis of research on NDEs, mysticism, OBEs, reincarnation, etc..

Reunions, Visionary Encounters With Departed Love Ones by Raymond Moody and Paul Perry - This book is about conjuring up ghosts in the laboratory.

Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today by Phillip H. Wiebe - This book makes a strong case that there is no difference between Biblical, medieval, and modern accounts of visions of Jesus.

Something There by David Hay - This is a critical analysis of research on mystical (aka spiritual/religious) experiences to the present .

Life Before Life: A Scientific Investigation of Children's Memories of Previous Lives by Jim B. Tucker - This is a great overview of the scientific research on reincarnation.

Websites:

The Division of Perceptual Studies (DOPS), a unit of the Department of Psychiatric Medicine at the University of Virginia

<http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/personalitystudies/>

Near-Death Experiences and the Afterlife

<http://www.near-death.com/>

International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS)

<http://www.iands.org/>

The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre

<http://www.lamp.ac.uk/aht/Home/home.html>

Society for Psychical Research

<http://www.spr.ac.uk/>

American Society for Psychical Research

<http://www.aspr.com/>

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<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/origen021.html>