

“My Proof of Heaven”: A Review and Theological Commentary

The “Conversion” of a Skeptic?

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there ye may be also*. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Jesus, John 14:1-4, KJV

Recently, *Newsweek* magazine flaunted a cover title **HEAVEN IS REAL**, with the subtitle, *A Doctor’s Experience of the Afterlife*. [1] The experimenter of Heaven is Dr. Eben Alexander, a neurosurgeon who has taught at, among other academic institutions, Harvard Medical School. In other words, he’s familiar with the intricacies and workings of the human brain. As a scientist, Alexander confesses he did not believe in near-death (NDE) or out-of-the-body (OBE) experiences for he “believed there were good scientific explanations for the heavenly out-of-the-body journeys described by those who narrowly escaped death,” but when he experienced one, his worldview shifted. [2]

Consciousness beyond Cortex

Four years ago, Dr. Alexander contracted a rare bacterial infection that penetrated his cerebrospinal fluid and began to eat away his brain, causing “the part of the brain that controls thought and emotion” to shut down. [3] For seven days he lay comatose with his “higher-order brain function totally offline.” [4] Just as his attending physicians were weighing options of whether or not to continue treatment, Alexander relates that his “eyes popped open” and he returned to consciousness. During the days when he was physically brain dead, Dr. Alexander testifies that his “conscious, [his] inner self—was alive and well.” He states:

While the neurons of my cortex were stunned to complete inactivity by the bacteria that had attacked them, my brain-free consciousness journeyed to another, larger dimension of the universe: a dimension I’d never dreamed existed and which the old, pre-coma me would have been more than happy to explain was a simple impossibility. [5]

Alexander’s experience might be explained by paraphrasing a description of death given to us by the Apostle Paul; and that is, *to be absent from the body is to remain in consciousness*. [6]

The Shift

Later he adds concerning the shift that altered his view of reality: “The universe as I experienced it in my coma is—I have come to see with both shock and joy—the same one that both Einstein and Jesus were speaking of in their (very) different ways.” [7] Alexander relates that the universe, as he views it, consists of a quantum reality of unity (Einstein) and love (Jesus). Dr. Alexander has become a believer in an afterlife.

Previously, he considered himself to have been a “faithful Christian,” but confesses that before his experience of heaven, he was more so “in name than in actual belief.” [8] In other words, his Christian faith, like so many other American churchgoers these days, was nominal. His Christianity was forms and feelings absent substance. On this point, it should be noted that while Christianity may be more than cognitive (i.e., doctrine or teaching), it certainly is not less (as nominal Christianity would have it) than teaching. For example, a few key teachings of the Christian faith concern Jesus’ incarnation, substitutionary death for sin, bodily resurrection from the dead, and physical Second Coming. These beliefs form a *sine qua non* (without which nothing) of Christianity that differentiates it from other of the world’s religions. In other words, devoid of distinctive teachings which are to be believed, Christianity is simply not Christianity. The religion may serve as an ethical guide for life (follow Jesus’ example), or as an aesthetic stimulus for inducing religious experience in a church building through music, stained-glass windows, art, pageantry, liturgy, organ vibes and so on, but provide no assurances regarding the afterlife. So Alexander attributes his transformation into an after-life believer to his OBE. But does his reported experience comport with the *scientia* of Scripture? Does the account of it fit the biblical paradigm of heaven and the afterlife? As will be demonstrated, it does *not*.

Currently, Dr. Alexander serves as director of the research division of The Monroe Institute, a retreat center located in the foothills of Blue Ridge Mountains near Lynchburg, Virginia, an organization that specializes in exploring altered states of consciousness. [9] In a 1971 book *Journeys Out of the Body*, the institute’s founder Robert Monroe (1915-1995) popularized the term “out-of-the body experience” (OBE). About life, Monroe’s assumption was that, “The greatest illusion is that mankind has limitations.” In other words, among other things, Monroe believed that the human soul could explore different worlds. By his association with The Monroe Institute, Dr. Alexander indicates that he is *not* the most neutral or clinically detached scientific observer of the paranormal.

First, though Alexander’s reported experience appears surreal to others, it was real to him. When his brain died his consciousness personally journeyed to another world. Second, as the director of research at The Monroe Institute, he possesses a vested interest in explaining the afterlife from an occult and New Age spiritual perspective, which is exactly what he does in the *Newsweek* article, and presumably also in his about-to-be-published book.

New-found Mission

After holding for years, along with the rest of his scientific colleagues, that “the brain, and in particular the cortex, generates consciousness” (in other words, no brain, no consciousness), Alexander now acknowledges that his previously held theory of human awareness (i.e., that when brain matter dies consciousness dies) is bankrupt. So based on his OBE, he intends to spend the rest of his “life investigating the true nature of consciousness” and trying to persuade fellow scientists and the general public that “we are more, much more, than our physical brains.” [10] So during his seven days of being in an altered state of consciousness, how does Alexander describe his journey?

Beyond the Brain: Alexander’s OBE

Of the record of Dr. Alexander’s experience, long-time OBE researcher Raymond Moody exults:

“Dr. Eben Alexander’s near-death experience is the most astonishing I have heard in more than four decades of studying the phenomena.

[He] is living proof of an afterlife.”

—Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.,
author of *Life After Life* [11]

In a wordless state of consciousness independent of his brain’s function, Alexander relates that he found himself floating among clouds—“Big puffy, pink-white ones that showed up sharply against the deep blue-black sky.” In this fantastical world, he observed “flocks of transparent, shimmering beings [Whether birds, angels or butterflies, who knows?] . . . leaving long, streamerlike lines behind them [like those which can be observed from jets flying at high altitudes].” These beings, these higher forms of life, produced a joyous chorus of scintillating and synchronous sounds, something Alexander describes as “palpable and almost material, like a rain that you feel on your skin but doesn’t get you wet.” [12] In this wonderland of consciousness, Dr. Alexander experienced something he describes as a “hyper-vivid and completely coherent odyssey.” [13]

The highlight of his consciousness being in heaven involved encountering a goddess-like-young woman who, as they rode together on an intricately-patterned (fractal) wing of a butterfly, exuded a look of love that while similar to and inclusive of the love he had experienced on earth, was a far more dynamic and expansive experience. [14] Her gaze of love communicated a three-part message to him:

“You are loved and cherished, dearly, forever.”

“You have nothing to fear.”

“There is nothing you can do wrong.” [15]

In that Alexander typifies—though he explains his experience from a neurosurgeon’s perspective which seemingly makes his story more credible—what so many, both inside and outside the Christian faith, are experiencing, what are Bible believing Christians to make of it? [16] Regarding his report of his afterlife experience, Alexander tells us that one of the few places where his explanation of the afterlife gets a ready reception is “church.” If untutored in matters regarding the faith’s substance, some churchgoers may un-discerningly believe his report as authentically Christian. So as one who has spent the greater portion of his life in church ministry, and as one who six years ago had a NDE while on a teaching mission in Eastern Europe, I feel compelled to review the *Newsweek* article that serves to introduce and publicize his book. [17]

One Point of Agreement

Like Dr. Alexander, the Bible teaches that human beings are more than just matter-mind. Foundational to his experience, one must note how he differentiates between the brain’s physicality and function and human consciousness. To Alexander, these two essences of being human are not synonymous. In his view, the reality of consciousness exists independent of brain function, especially that of the cortex.

On this point, Alexander's view finds vague confirmation in the creation account of Genesis (Though I recognize he is nowise a creationist.). In the account of human origins, Scripture states: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground [the human body, including brain matter], and breathed [*naphach*] into his nostrils the breath [*neshamah*] of life; and man became a living soul [*nephesh*, i.e., the human soul, as distinct from brain matter]" (Genesis 2:7). In this narrative, one must envision Adam's dust-of-the-ground body laying inanimate and immobile until the moment when God fused His "nephish" into Adam's body, and he became a living soul [*nephesh*]. From Moses' description of creation, the reader can observe that human materiality existed prior to and independent of the soul-consciousness that God later infused into the first Adam. Thus, the body (man's material-corpse) may be differentiated from the soul (man's immaterial-consciousness). So Alexander does depart from the strictly materialist premise of life that's foundational for modern speculative science, a premise which assumes that when the human body-brain dies, consciousness (i.e., *psuche* in the New Testament) ends with it. **[18]**

Jesus too differentiated between body and soul. He told His disciples: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul [*psuche*] and body [*soma*] in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Jesus also promised the dying thief who recognized His innocence and asked to be remembered in the kingdom, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus promised the dying man that in the consciousness of the afterlife, he would be with Him.

But after this general point—that man is more than material—my agreement with Alexander ends. He tells us that he has come to view the universe's reality to be as both Einstein and Jesus declared it to be. To understand Alexander's experience of the afterlife, one must be aware of the quantum spirituality upon which the doctor's experience is premised, a foundation that weds Einstein's relativity to Jesus' spirituality. So how does he assert that these two disparate figures of history, one modern and the other ancient, view the universe?

Einstein's Reality—"Unity"

Alexander informs readers that, "Modern physics tells us that the universe is a unity—that it is undivided." He goes on to explain:

Though we seem to live in a world of separation and difference, physics tells us that beneath the surface, every object and event in the universe is completely woven up with every other object and event. There is no true separation. **[19]**

Because in theory "every object . . . in the universe is *completely woven up with every other object*," there hypothetically can be interplay between, in and among any of the places that might comprise the parts and places in the universe. In other words, a person's soul or consciousness could find itself located in any realm of reality, whether on earth or in heaven. And because "every . . . event in the universe is *completely woven up with every other . . . event*," persons in their consciousness can find unity with the various happenings in the various realities that comprise a holistic universe. That's why a church's stained glass windows could remind Alexander of "the luminous beauty of the landscapes [he'd] seen in the world above,"

why the organ's deep base notes reminded him of "how thoughts and emotions in the world are like waves that move through you." In other words, by experiencing a real beauty below we experience the ideal Beauty above because the unity of the whole generates synchronicity of the parts. Welcome to Plato's world. On this point, it can be noted that Plato's philosophy inspired the idea that souls enjoyed consciousness before their incarnation. So if, according to Alexander, persons are continuing consciousness after death, why could they not have been continuing consciousness before birth? Why not go back to the future too? The theory of the universe being woven together in a quantum way would seemingly allow for it. (I merely raise the issue.)

A quantum physical worldview theorizes that the universe is all there is (a solitary system), and that its unity consists of a composite of parts and events where every function (or malfunction) of the smallest part (the microcosm) can affect the function of the whole (the macrocosm). As such, quantum theorists postulate that a butterfly flapping its wings in the Congo might stimulate a hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean. Welcome to Chaos Theory 101. But to Alexander, there exists a fractal power inherent in the universe which can organize beauty out of chaos and turn malevolence into benevolence. It's the power that Jesus spoke of, the power of love.

Jesus' Reality—"Love"

After reporting how "church" is one of the few places where his OBE report gets positive reviews, and (to repeat something previously stated) after relating how the stained-glass windows and the organ's deep and quivering base notes reminds him of the sights and sounds of his experience in heaven, Alexander informs,

And most important, a painting of Jesus breaking bread with his disciples evoked the message that lay at the very heart of my journey: that we are loved and accepted unconditionally by a God even more grand and unfathomably glorious than the one I'd learned of as a child in Sunday school. **[20]**

Such a worldview, that unites reality and permeates it with love, makes more credible, at least in theory, Alexander's experience of his version of heaven at a time when though his brain was dead on planet earth, his consciousness was alive and experiencing afterlife. This worldview assumes that reality, both immediate and ultimate, is oneness and love—one soul, one world, as above, so below. Author Graham Hancock explains the latter concept: "There seems to have been an ancient idea, as above, so below, to bring down the perfections of the heavens to earth, and in some way unite heavens and earth." **[21]** According to Magee, this Hermetic assumption is "the central tenet of Western occultism." **[22]** It is pantheistic monism, a belief system which identifies the divine and nature to be one essence. In other words, to a pantheist if the universe did not exist, God would not exist. So Alexander views that Einstein and Jesus, though from different perspectives, function as revealers of a pantheistic reality of oneness and love. This quantum-spiritual worldview is not Christian for in merging heaven and earth, it denies the separateness of God from nature. **[23]** Furthermore, in such a quantum-love worldview mysticism becomes the only spirituality by which people can experience oneness with nature. **[24]**

Mysticism

In describing his OBE, Alexander employs oxymora (i.e., figures of speech that represent the attempt of mystics to describe the spiritual ecstasy they experience upon reaching an illuminated state of euphoria in which contradictions no longer contradict, i.e., shore-less lake, silent thunder, dazzling darkness, inaudible whispers, etc.). The use of oxymora by mystics typifies their attempt to describe spiritual flights into fantasy that they take in their consciousness. For example, Alexander describes the sounds of heaven to be “like a rain that you can feel on your skin but doesn’t get you wet.” [25] In another description, he described seeing in his consciousness an immense pitch-black void, “an inky darkness that was also full to brimming with light.” He claims the duality of darkness-light “was home of the Divine itself.” [26] From time immemorial, this is the way mystics have described “the ecstasy of self-transcendence where we meet the self-transcending, ‘ecstatic’ love of God.” [27] But as have mystics before, Alexander describes his consciousness flying into the dark despite the Lord Jesus’ declaration, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12); and despite John the apostle’s assertion, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5; Compare 1 Timothy 6:16; James 1:17.).

Yet if it is assumed that everything in the universe is woven together (as above, so below), then darkness becomes the equal of light, and mystics are free to speak of the duality as one (as an *inky darkness full of light*). If however, as Jesus described it, separation (a state which defies the theory of the universe’s quantum unity) from God can exist by being cast “into outer darkness” where there is no light, then darkness is not the equal of light, and approaching it in one’s consciousness does not indicate that a mystic is entering into the presence of the Divine. In fact, the exact opposite might be the case (See Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:20.). Encountering the darkness may well signal an encounter with the deceptive Prince of Darkness and his evil spirits, for Satan and his emissaries are ever about the business of tricking people into equating darkness with light and evil with good.

Consciousness and Christianity

In the aftermath of his experience in heaven, Dr. Alexander tells readers that, “One of the few places I didn’t have trouble getting my story across was a place I’d seen fairly little of before my experience: church.” [28] So it must be asked, is the description of his OBE consistent with the Christian faith? For a number of reasons, it is *not*.

First, Alexander’s view of the afterlife in heaven may be described as *continuing consciousness in a non-material state*. This of course, is at odds with one of the great, if not central teachings of the Christian faith—the personal, physical and bodily resurrection of first, the Lord Jesus Christ, and then, the rest of the humanity, both believing and unbelieving (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; John 5:25-29). The New Testament tells us that after death, Christian resurrection involves not only uninterrupted continuing consciousness—and perhaps an intermediate body (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Corinthians 5:1)—but also a future personal, physical and bodily resurrection comparable to that of the Lord Jesus Christ’s, a state of being that will involve a unified reality of soul-consciousness and a material body (1 Corinthians 15:1-58). As John wrote:

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, *we shall be like Him*, because we shall see Him just as

He is.” (Emphasis added, 1 John 3:2)

In the aftermath of His resurrection, Jesus possessed a body that could be seen and touched. Though glorified with the ability to appear and disappear, His body was essentially material (John 20:19-20, 25-28). As Jesus told His disciples: “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit [consciousness?] hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). Dr. Alexander’s explanation of the afterlife as continuing consciousness is Platonic and Gnostic and therefore does not do justice to the Christian promise and prospect of being materially raised from the dead. In the future resurrection, everybody’s some**body**!

Second, neither does the three-part message he intuited from the beautiful young woman while riding on a butterfly’s wing with her (You are loved and cherished, dearly, forever—you have nothing to fear—there is nothing you can do wrong.) comport with the reality of Jesus’ message. The message Dr. Alexander received communicates universalism; that is, for reason of divine love eclipsing divine wrath, everybody’s loved and consequently, everybody’s saved. In this life people are free to believe in universal salvation, but to their shock will one day stand before Judge Jesus who will administer a personal judgment to them that will end in *either commendation or condemnation* forever (John 5:26-29). Though they are free to believe in universal salvation, humans are not free to say Jesus taught it. He did not. And neither did the other prophets and apostles of the New Testament (Compare Acts 17:30-31.). **[29]**

Alexander informs readers that a picture of The Last Supper hung in church reminds him of the Jesus-message that lies at the very heart of his consciousness journey—that we are loved unfathomably and unconditionally by God. But any pictorial reenactment of this scene begs the question, “What about Judas?” In the biblical reality during that supper, Jesus identified the traitor-disciple in the following dialog:

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but *woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.* Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. (Emphasis added, Matthew 26:24-25; See also Mark 14:21; Luke 22:21-22.)

Judas’ case, along with other despots of human history, does raise questions about God’s love being unconditional and unfathomable for everybody from all time. William S. Plumer (1759-1850), New Hampshire lawyer, politician and Bible scholar, commented that “The doctrine of universal salvation has no countenance in Scripture.” After stating there is much in Scripture that contradicts universal salvation, Plumer goes on to state:

It is disproven by the case of Judas. If, after many thousand years of suffering, he shall rise to everlasting happiness in the skies, it will be good for him that he was born. Eternal happiness far outweighs all temporal suffering, however protracted. Any existence which terminates in eternal glory will prove a blessing beyond all computation. All temporal suffering can be gauged. But who can fathom the sea of love, the ocean of

bliss, made sure to all believers? And eternal misery is as dreadful as eternal glory is desirable. Oh! how fearful must be the doom of the incorrigibly wicked, when in their case existence itself ceases to be desirable, or even tolerable! It is true of every one who dies without repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that—"It had been good for that man if he had not been born." [30]

Third, one part of the message Alexander's consciousness received in heaven was, "there is nothing you can do wrong." This message he received while in an ethereality of consciousness is polar opposite from what the biblical historians, poets, prophets, apostles and Jesus indicate (See Ezra 9:7; Psalm 106:6; Jeremiah 3:25; Romans 3:10, 23; Mark 7:14-23; etc.). Both testaments provide ample commentary on the fact that there is much that we can do wrong, and for these sins only the atonement of Jesus Christ is sufficient to make our wrongs right before God (Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19); that is, if the Gospel has any meaning at all (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). If there is nothing we can do wrong, then why did Jesus die? Why the Cross, another one of Christianity's central teachings? Did He die just to show us a selfless example to imitate?

Fourth (and this point must necessarily be extended), based upon his fairy-tale like description of what he experienced when his consciousness journeyed to heaven, there exist legitimate questions as to whether Alexander visited God's eternal dwelling place, the third heaven. According to the Apostle Paul's testimony, he personally visited, whether in the body or out of the body, he did not know, the third heaven, the abode of God (2 Corinthians 12:1-6). From the apostle's testimony, we can assume that if a third heaven exists, then there also exists a first and second. In order, we might call these three realities the *immediate* heaven (the air we breathe and the atmosphere planes fly in), the *intermediate* heaven and the *ultimate* Heaven (where God dwells). By deduction, the question then arises, "Who-what exists in the *intermediate* heaven?" To discover that, we need to connect the dots, to follow the clues Scripture provides.

The Scriptures tell us that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). The Bible also informs us that our spiritual struggle is not earthly, but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). In his hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," Martin Luther called Satan "the prince of darkness" for good reason. At one time, Satan ministered in God's presence, but because of his "I-willing," was cast out of Heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Compare Luke 10:18.). Though banned from residence in the Third Heaven, he still had access there (Job 1:6-7; 2:2). But Scripture also informs us that one day the earth will be judged and God will cast the devil down to earth (Revelation 12:0). It may be fairly deduced therefore, that the intermediate heavens—the high places in which principalities and powers operate—is the primary abode of Satan and the base of his operations. Apparently in this sphere, the archangel Michael disputed with the devil over Moses' body (Jude 9) and the prince of Persia warred against Gabriel and Michael (Daniel 10:12). In my finite understanding, this middle heavens, the *high places* Paul wrote of, is not only the base of Satan's operations, but in addition to earth, a place where he deceives and destroys (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Job 1:12-2:10). So the question must be asked: Might this be the sphere into which people journey in the illumination of their

consciousness during an OBE or NDE? Is this the alternate reality to which people in their consciousness make visitations, see visions of, and hear voices in? I only raise the question.

In their NDEs or OBEs, people so often report passing through a telescoping dark tunnel towards a distant circle of light, which light they assume to be the divine presence or Heaven. But let's look at such reports through a lens other than experience, the lens of Holy Scripture. The Bible informs us that Satan is the Prince of Darkness (The dark tunnel?). The Bible also tells us that Satan can transform himself "into an angel of light" (The light at the end of the tunnel?). On this point, we also know the name Lucifer means "light-bearer" (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:14 and Isaiah 14:12). Based upon this scriptural evidence, and that Jesus called the devil the father of deception (John 8:44), can any Christian be certain that, whether in a state of contemplation or during the consciousness of an NDE or OBE, the hybrid darkness-light they experience seeing is necessarily beatific? I don't think so. In the reality of it all, such visions may be of the malevolent "god of this world" who, when it suits his purpose to deceive and/or our desire to fantasize, morphs into a deceptive "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 4:4). It appears that the devil tempted Jesus' consciousness in this way.

While the Lord was physically located in the wilderness, the devil first took Jesus "up into the holy city," and then later "into an exceeding high mountain" where he showed "him all the kingdoms of the world" (Matthew 4:5, 8). Question: How was the devil able to abruptly relocate Jesus to the holy city or on a high mountain even though He was physically in the wilderness? Were the temptations visionary? Was an alternate reality involved? Perhaps there was, and if so, the temptation of Jesus indicates that the devil will employ altered states of consciousness in his deceptions and enticements. Believers beware.

No Graven Images

Jesus stated that God is a Spirit (John 4:24), meaning that in the essence of His being, God possesses no body. He is incorporeal. A theologian comments:

Indirectly, this is implied in the Second Commandment, which forbids us to make any graven image [Hebrew, *pece*] or likeness [Hebrew, *temuwnah*] of him. God has no physical, measurable form. Hence, we are not to make any image of him, either physically, or in our imagination. **[31]**

The only ordained image (Greek, *eikon*) of God is to be found in God's self-disclosure in the person of Jesus Christ, "Who is the image [*eikon*] of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). As John wrote of Jesus, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:14). All other images (icons) distract people from the unique incarnation of the Son of God witnessed to and depicted in Scripture (John 5:39; Luke 24:27). Obviously then, one temptation for humans is to create graven images to be their gods (Exodus 20:4; See Jeremiah 10:1-5.). But there can be, I believe, a temptation in the opposite direction, into the realm of pure spirit.

No Graven Imaginations

The devil tempted Eve that she might imagine her consciousness to be of the same essence as

God's (i.e., "ye shall be as gods, **knowing**," Genesis 3:5). In committing idolatry, men can either make God their material lesser, or imagine they possess consciousness that is God's spiritual equal. Either way, whether by the images they craft, or by the consciousness they imagine, God's glory is obliterated.

Forever the Creature

The predisposition of humanity to commit idolatry by assuming a divinity of their non-material consciousness may explain why God has purposed that a physical and bodily resurrection awaits all men, from everywhere and from all time (John 5:28-29). The possession of a resurrection body will eternally remind every human being that God alone is God and He is their Creator! Whether in time or eternity, human beings are not, and will never become, gods. As John saw worship given to the Lord by the creatures in Heaven: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for *thou hast created all things*, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Emphasis added, Revelation 4:11). Seemingly, the reason why much (if not all) religion denies the physical resurrection—believing rather in reincarnation or continuing consciousness after death—is to deny God His rightful place in the universe as the Creator, and somehow incorporate themselves into the spirit of divine consciousness.

Conclusion

Though mystery does surround the afterlife in the Old Testament, Yahweh promised to raise-up a Prophet who would reveal more about it (See Deuteronomy 18:9-***15**). Of course, that Prophet was Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16). For true believers, it's enough to know that in accord with His promises, the resurrected Jesus will care for us in the afterlife. To this end, He comforted His disciples:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:1-3)

As such, Christians should not attempt to fill in any void of knowledge regarding the afterlife by engaging in occult activities (Leviticus 19:31) or paying attention to the reports of the OBE or NDE experiences of others because curiosity can kill the Christian and "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Seeking voices other than the Prophet's regarding matters of the afterlife betrays a heart of unbelief. By His words and His works, the Prophet (Jesus) has informed us about all we need to know of Heaven and how to go there when we die. As Peter answered Jesus when He asked the disciples if they, like others, were going to desert Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? *thou hast the words of eternal life*" (Emphasis added, John 6:68). From eternity Jesus stepped into time. He came from Heaven to earth. But He's now in Heaven, and from there He's coming back. So any void we might feel regarding our understanding the afterlife should be filled by faith in Jesus' promises to us (John 10:27-28). As Paul explained, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but *then shall I know* even as also I am known" (Emphasis added, 1 Corinthians 13:12). In the words of Richard Baxter (1615-1691):

My knowledge of that life is small,
the eye of faith is dim;

but 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
and I shall be with him.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

Endnotes

[1] Dr. Eben Alexander, “My Proof of Heaven: A Doctor’s Experience with the Afterlife,” *Newsweek*, October 15, 2012, 28-32.

[2] Ibid. 29.

[3] Ibid. 30.

[4] Ibid. 30.

[5] Ibid. 30.

[6] The biblical text reads: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8).

[7] Ibid. 32.

[8] Ibid. 30.

[9] “Research Collaborations at the Monroe Institute,” The Monroe Institute: Exploring consciousness ~ Transform your life (<http://www.monroeinstitute.org/research/research-collaborations-at-the-monroe-institute>). On its website, The Monroe Institute describes itself to be “a non-profit research and educational organization dedicated to enhancing the uses and understanding of human consciousness.” Then the site goes on to explain: We are not affiliated with any religion, philosophy, or spiritual practice. We ask only that you consider the possibility that you are more than your physical body.

[10] Alexander, “My Proof of Heaven,” 32.

[11] Front Cover, Eben Alexander, M.D., *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2012). Though now available in digital form, the book is soon to be published in printed copy.

[12] Alexander, “My Proof of Heaven,” 30-31.

[13] Ibid. 30.

[14] One can note aspects of resemblance between Alexander’s experience and that of Mack in *The Shack* which the author portrays like a Thomas Kinkade painting. Amidst that surreal world, Mack encountered the goddess-like-judge Sophia who caused him “to feel her words rain down on his head and melt into his spine, sending delicious tingles everywhere.” See Wm. Paul Young, *The Shack* (Los Angeles, CA: Windblown Media, 2007): 153. Like Alexander’s

OBE report, Young's religious allegory also presents a scheme of universal salvation. See chapter "The Shack and Universal Reconciliation: Rebels, Rules, and Reconciliation," in Pastor Larry DeBruyn, *Unshackled: Breaking Away from Seductive Spirituality* (Indianapolis, IN: Moeller Printing Company, Inc., 2009): 79-96.

[15] Alexander, "My Proof of Heaven," 31.

[16] Betty Malz, *My Glimpse of Eternity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, Baker Publishing Group, 1977). Todd Burpo with Lynn Vincent, *Heaven is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2010). Judy Franklin and Beni Johnson, *Experiencing the Heavenly Realm: Keys to Accessing Supernatural Experiences* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, Publishers, Inc., 2011). Dennis & Nolene Prince, *Nine Days in Heaven: The Vision of Marietta Davis* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006). Choo Thomas, with Foreword by Dr. David Yonggi Cho, *Heaven is So Real!* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 2006). See also Lisa Miller, *Heaven: Our Enduring Fascination with the Afterlife* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010).

[17] On November 9, 2006, I caught a vicious flu while on a teaching mission in Hungary. Dehydration caused blood clots to form and I suffered a major coronary infarction. On a one and one half hour ride to a public hospital in Budapest, my heart had to be defibrillated seven times. By God's sovereign intervention I survived. But because my heart attack occurred the "old way" without the administration of needed medications, I developed Dressler's Syndrome (where excess fluids accumulate around the heart and lungs which constricts breathing). This required seven subsequent hospitalizations upon returning to the United States. On two of those hospitalizations, my life was also endangered. All of which is to say, I too, though not as prolonged as Alexander's, experienced a NDE (near-death experience).

While recuperating from my heart attack at the Bajcyc-Zsilinsky Korhaz (Hospital) in Budapest from November 9-17, 2006, one of my rehabilitation therapists, in her broken English, engaged me in a conversation. She asked me what I saw during my NDE. Without hesitation, I responded, "Nothing." Then I added, "The only thing I will tell you is, that I saw no darkness." She smiled and respectfully changed the subject.

About this exchange with the young therapist, I would make an observation and then ask a question. First, she was curious about my NDE because she had, no doubt, been exposed to testimonies of what other people had experienced during their NDEs, and quite naturally was looking for some confirmation of their reports from me. Second, why, to whatever degree, did I not see any sights or hear any sounds of heaven during my experience? Why was my NDE, given the plethora of reports from others about what's out there, experientially unexceptional (other than I thought I was dying thousands of miles away from home and would never see my wife and sons again in this life)? A Scripture in Hebrews bears upon the question. It says: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Emphasis added, Hebrews 11:1). And "without faith, it is impossible to please" God (Hebrews 11:6). In my NDE I did not experience heaven because I was at the time of it, and still am, living by faith!

So as far as concerns me, all these reports on NDEs and OBEs, especially on the part of those who claim to be Bible believing evangelicals, evidence a deficient faith. As Jesus told a skeptical disciple who finally, upon seeing His wounds and scars, accepted marks as proof of His resurrection, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:28). I feel blessed to believe even though I have not seen. Dear reader, because Jesus told His disciples that He is "the way, the truth, and the life," we are assured that our Lord delights in those who trust His person and believe His

promises. For now, end of story, at least for me.

[18] Differentiating Old Testament *nephesh* from New Testament *psuche* is difficult. *Nephesh* does not carry the meaning of awareness in the afterlife as *psuche* does. For example, though in life they had possessed *nephesh*, the inhabitants of Sheol in the Old Testament are not personified to be conscious souls, though those inhabiting the afterlife in the New Testament are (i.e., *psuche*, Revelation 6:9). But to the point being discussed, it is enough for Christians to know that Scripture declares man to be more than just material.

[19] Alexander, "My Proof of Heaven," 30.

[20] Ibid. 32.

[21] Graham Hancock, Fox News Reporting: *Countdown to Doomsday*, November 21, 2012, 9:00 p.m..

[22] Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001): 13.

[23] See chapters "The Holy God: Immanence to Idolatry" and "From Cosmos, to Chaos, to Consciousness: Quantum Physics and the New Spirituality," in my book, Pastor Larry DeBruyn, *Unshackled: Breaking Away from Seductive Spirituality* (Indianapolis, IN: Moeller Printing Company, Inc., 2009): 17-22, 39-78. The chapters are available online at the *Herescope* website: (<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2008/04/holy-god.html>) and (<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2010/11/emergent-metaphysics.html>; part six of a series).

[24] "Mysticism is the knowledge and personal experience of, states of consciousness, or levels of being, or aspects of reality, beyond normal human perception, sometimes including experience of and communion with a supreme being." Adapted from "Mysticism," *Wikipedia: the Free Encyclopedia* (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism>).

[25] Alexander, "My Proof of Heaven," 30.

[26] Ibid. 32.

[27] Rowan Williams, "Dark Night, Darkness," *The Westminster Dictionary of Spirituality*, Gordon S. Wakefield, Editor (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983): 104.

[28] Alexander, "My Proof of Heaven," 32.

[29] For a more in depth discussion of universalism, see Pastor Larry DeBruyn, "Love Loses: The Quantum Spirituality of Rob Bell," *Guarding His Flock Ministries*, May 9, 2011 (<http://guardinghisflock.com/2011/05/09/love-loses/#more-1774>); and the chapter "The Shack and Universal Reconciliation," in author's book *Unshackled*, 79-96.

[30] William S. Plumer, "Lessons from the Life and End of Judas Iscariot," *True Gospel Resources* (<http://www.truegospel.net/Plumer/001.htm>).

[31] Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Volume I (Greenville, SC: Greenville Seminary Press, 1994): 130.