
A Catholic Understanding of

The Near Death Experience

Revised Edition

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Dedicated to all persons who will ever live. NDE accounts have them greeted as hero's after their trials in this life.

Also by the author:

“Jesus, a Novel”

“The Gospel of Thomas, a Catholic Perspective”

“A Maximum Understanding of the Body of Christ”

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All the major components of the near death experience are within the boundaries of Catholic dogma. The light tunnel is now part of common culture, and it is no real challenge for any theology. However, a casual reader may not be aware of other NDE elements such as reincarnation, previous lives, and “the contract”. ***These are mislabeled, misunderstood and wrongly presumed, but are also within the bounds of Catholic theology.***

The near death experience is a visit to the afterlife, and is enormous in the information and inspiration which may be extracted from it. Each NDE is unique, and there is no systematic NDE religion or doctrine, but there are major repeating elements. NDE's are unique, private, post-Biblical revelations which must be individually evaluated.^A

We shall examine how it occurs that a person shows up at the gates of Heaven *by mistake*, before his time. We will examine the reasons why Christ makes incarnation in the first place, and why a person with one human life under his or her belt would care to leave Heaven and live another.

The NDE is typically a very positive experience for those who have had one, usually instilling a new or renewed commitment to God, faith and virtue. It is impossible to disregard the thousands of NDE reports as false and unwise to ignore them, as they are a wealth of contemporary, first person knowledge of our most important task.

^A The Catechism of the Catholic Church, section 67 defines private revelation, which NDE's fall under. 1Thes 5:19-22 instructs the Church to be open to private revelations, but evaluate them.

NDE's are private revelations of God. Private revelations are instances of God or an agent of God, (angel, saint) making some sort of revelation to the individual. Moral conscience, speech, visions, dreams, locutions, and more may all be means of private revelation. Private revelations are binding on the individual, and the most common private revelation is moral conscience. A personal revelation of moral conscience may for example direct a person to become a nun or a mother; to defend one's life or to sacrifice one's life.

In the famous private revelation to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France the Virgin Mary gave information about herself that became dogma. To date, no NDE has been evaluated as private revelation, (to the author's knowledge).^B There are many instances of saints being given visits or visions of Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.

Private revelation is binding upon the individual, even if it turns out to be erroneous, moral conscience for example must be obeyed, even though it can err. As a form of private revelation, NDE's are actually part of the Catholic faith.

Approximately five percent of persons worldwide have had an NDE.^C Most never see a tunnel of light and even fewer meet the light as a person or experience other components of the NDE. NDE's

^B Within Catholicism exists 2000 years of non-NDE visions or mental revelations of Heaven, beginning with the apostle Paul. Two of the more detailed non-NDE visions are those of St. Suso, and the Irish monk Adamnán. Visions of Purgatory and Hell are also numerous recorded. Those having a NDE seem to be in complete mental control and reason. Their visions do reflect their personal and societal culture overlaid upon the absolutes of Heaven.

^C Five percent is a maximum figure. A near death experience is a condition such as heart stoppage, which requires resuscitation of the patient. Restarting a heart is not an uncommon medical event, it is not death, but it would qualify as a near death experience. If the heart stoppage continues for some time, the patient may have an out of body experience. An NDE is an out of body experience caused by temporary bodily death.

occur in the hospital where one is declared dead, but also at accident and trauma scenes with no medical staff.

The major components of the NDE which will be examined from the perspective of Catholic teaching are:

- Out of body experience
- Light tunnel
- Light being(s)
- Boundary of Heaven
- God
- Jesus
- Previous lives
- Reincarnation
- Life contract and task
- Consensual incarnation
- Life review
- Heaven: characteristics and citizens
- Ancient NDE's
- Unconditional love
- Salvation
- Religion
- Spiritual level (vibration of spirit)
- Spiritual efficacy
- Omnipresence of God
- Purgatory
- Hell
- Distressing NDE's
- NDE's and the book of Revelation
- NDE other worlds
- Ketamine induced NDE
- Hypoxia induced NDE
- NDE's, culture and religion
- Verification of the NDE

- After effects of the NDE
- NDE's as dogmatic progression

The NDE need not stand alongside the Catholic Church as either erroneous or valid religious expression; the NDE should be seen as contained within, and confirming Catholic doctrine as private revelation. The Catholic Church has for centuries evaluated private revelations occurring outside of a near death experience. These revelations may be found to be fully, partially, or not at all in conformance with Catholic doctrine.

It will be seen in this book that many NDE elements are mislabeled and mistakenly presumed in their theology. These elements are in fact expressions of Catholic doctrine such as the body of Christ, human incarnation and divine omnipresence. The ideas in this book are out of necessity theological theories, which the author believes will show that the major, repeating elements of the NDE are within the bounds of Catholic theology and doctrine.

We shall begin with two constructed NDE's, one typically positive and the other containing distressing elements, which must be examined in any meaningful NDE study. Few NDE's have all elements, so constructions are useful and they reference actual NDE's. Most of the referenced NDE stories are available online from three of the major NDE websites.^D There are also a hundred or more books and studies available, many by those experiencing NDE's first hand. The actual NDE's used are cited as endnotes in the appendix.

^D "www.near-death.com, notable experiences"; "www.iands.org"; "www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's"

First NDE construction of Jane Doe.

“It was midnight and I was walking to my car which was parked on the street. A man emerged from hiding and demanded my wallet and keys. He had a knife. I dug into my purse for the wallet and pulled out my pepper spray, but he stabbed me before I got off an effective spray. He stabbed me once more then ran.”

“I started my car and drove towards the hospital which was several miles away. On the way I passed out and hit a telephone pole. The next thing I was aware of was looking down at a woman in an emergency medical clinic.¹ She had been stabbed and the staff had just stopped resuscitation attempts.”

“It then occurred to me that the woman might be myself. I was near the ceiling, but I could see the entire area of other rooms. I went down to the woman to examine her ring which looked like my own class ring. As I was beside her, trying to lift her arm the nurses moved right through me, and my hand was likewise unable to grasp the victims' hand.² I arrived at the certainty that the victim was me because of a tattoo, scars and dental work.”³

“I was then aware of being pulled into a tunnel of light, and being propelled toward a singular point of light at the end. I felt no fear, and was entirely at peace. I arrived at the light, which would be unbearable in intensity, but again I felt only peace.”

“The light then took the form of a man.⁴ I recognized him as my brother who had died several years ago.⁵ Other people came into view, I did not know their faces, but I felt that we were all family. All the while I felt an intense love from all of them. One held a cat that also projected love to me.”⁶

“My brother spoke to me, telling me how proud everyone was of me. I asked him who were these people and where was I? He pointed to a gate and said it was the entrance to Heaven, but it was not yet my time and I could not enter. He also said that Jesus would be pleased to speak with me.”

“I consented, but all the time we were communicating without words, we used only thought. Someone then said, ‘I am pleased to see you Jane’.”

“It was Jesus.⁷ I was not told this, but I knew who he was with certainty. He was of medium height with brown hair and quite beautiful.^E It was now just Jesus and me, and I wondered how he could run Heaven *and* take time out for me alone.”

“Jesus asked me to look at something. I agreed and immediately I was shown my entire life up to the present. It might be described as an interactive holograph. I not only saw, but felt all the effects, good and bad of all my actions. I alone judged myself, but not against my usual indifference or selfishness, but now compared to my new understanding of love, and its real effects. Jesus made some mild comments, such as ‘What were your other options here?’ We both viewed an event from my childhood. As a girl, I dumped a cooler of ice but made the extra effort to dump it on a tree. We both saw this, and Jesus seemed very impressed with this small act of selfless love.”⁸

“Jesus pointed skyward to rays of light traveling to and from earth, saying that these were prayers and their responses.⁹ We walked further and I saw ideal landscapes, joyful, engaged people, bounding animals and I felt as if I were one with all of it, and one with God.¹⁰ I observed a sort of spiritual vibration emanating from all people and all things, and was told that each unique person had a unique spiritual print or vibration that was formed from God’s own spirit, and he was the master spirit who kept all else in existence and gave people their own quality of spirit, based on their life on earth.”¹¹

“Jesus then brought me before a council of elders, who explained much to me and then told me I must return to earth.”¹² I

^E In NDE's Jesus is the single most frequently encountered person, but any member of the body of Christ may be encountered: guardian angel, deceased family, saints, Moses, Buddha.

was told that before birth I was an eternal thought of God, I was internal to God. I became incarnate of my own consent with the goal of spiritual advancement which can only come when dealing with a body and especially with the trials of fallen earthly existence. I agreed to this and it is held as a contract or covenant which I am expected to fulfill.¹³ I was told that after my life on earth, I would return to God and become Christ himself, this was the body of Christ that I had so often heard of.”¹⁴

“I was advised to completely forgive the man who had killed me, and to practice unconditional love to all who were put in my life.¹⁵ I was to detach from the accidents of this life and use my religion to further my love of God and others.”¹⁶

“With that I regained sight of my body on the table and reentered it to the astonishment of the medical staff. In time I recovered and think often of my life now and to come.”

Second NDE construction of John Doe.

This NDE has distressing elements, and these occur in perhaps a quarter of NDE's.^F Catholic teaching includes the idea of Purgatory and an eternal Hell, but acknowledges it is unable to say if anyone actually exists in eternal Hell. NDE's are similar in theology and do include visions of Hell, but some NDE's speak of the ultimate reunification with God of all persons, even those now in Hell. The actual NDE's used are cited as endnotes in the appendix.

“...As I lost sight of my body on the operating table, I arrived in what seemed to be a waiting area. As I examined it, other people came to my attention, and one who I sensed was out of place. This man held me alone in his attention and spoke, “John, by the prayers of your mother on earth, you have been given a great grace. I will

^F “The Handbook of Near Death Experiences” reports that of 1369 subjects, in twelve studies, 23 percent had distressing NDE's. During a positive NDE the patient's soul has acute sensation of peace, love and harmony, but during a distressing NDE the soul senses disorder and evil, to some degree great or small.

show you the pains of Hell, which you currently pursue, and I will offer you an alternative.”

“I could only follow my guide, and we arrived at different locations on earth. At one location I saw a woman trying desperately to drink alcohol at a bar. She was a spirit and was simply unable to drink it. In other locations I saw a man yelling serial complaints at persons on earth, who likewise could not hear the man who was now a spirit.¹⁷ I was told that these people were in a state of purgatory and were slowly exhausting their compulsions.¹⁸ These compulsions were ingrained in their will and as they eventually saw the futility of it, they would direct their wills toward the better things of Heaven.”

“We entered an area where I saw people who had killed themselves. Some were eager to tell my guide that they knew now that they should have lived even the most difficult parts of life.¹⁹ They were being taught this by others who had triumphed over feelings of despair and did stick it out. My guide was quite happy to hear of their progress and promised to pass on news of their progress.”

“I was shown people being beaten by demons and incredibly told that this was not Hell, but the lowest level of Purgatory. My guide asked me to notice how those being beaten did not strike back. He said that such behavior indicated an ideal higher than self was directing their wills, and that such ideals had their origin and sustaining link to God, whether within religion or without. Those being beaten wanted to strike back, but their refusal to retaliate raised them toward a higher level.”

“Finally, I was shown the lowest level of Hell. There was no real boundary. The difference was those in Purgatory still had an inkling of remorse or virtue and this would eventually release them from Purgatory. My guide told me that the highest levels of Purgatory were more like Heaven, and that anyone who was able to,

may move from a lower level to a higher level, and then to Heaven, and with God's gratitude."

"I asked if any of these demons can ever be released from Hell? My guide answered, 'Yes, if they are willing to be released. God does not condemn, nor retain them in Hell, they condemn themselves.²⁰ Selfishness is the act of distancing one's own person from God. One withdraws from God into self, and the virtues of God are directed toward self.'"

"They must somehow realize the futility of self pursuit, then make a change of will away from self. Time is on their side, they have forever to do it. Once the universe attains its perfected state, they will have no other real conquests and they will run in circles torturing only each other. If they do see the futility of this with their limited self understanding, they will have taken the first step in repentance."⁶

"Finally, my guide returned me to my body on earth after having taught me much and I reentered my life on earth with gratitude for a renewed chance to live a better life."

The elements contained within these two constructed NDE's will be examined in light of Catholic theology. Many NDE's

⁶ NDE's do include Hell in all its horror, but they also allude to, or speak directly of ultimate universal salvation, with Hell being eventually overcome. Christ will overcome not only death, but Hell itself. This eventual victory over Hell itself is not expected by current Catholic doctrine, but it is acknowledged as a possibility. By Catholic theology, God cannot possibly produce Hell, or assign and retain people there, because it is an evil with no possible good outcome, therefore it is within the realm of divine power that Hell itself may be one day destroyed. This would require direct intervention of Christ, those in Hell cannot work themselves out of it. See also the section titled "Hell" in this book.

have elements which are mislabeled and mispresumed. The following two sections are explanations of spirit and the body of Christ. Both topics are essential to our further discussion of NDEs. This book gives ***theological explanation*** of NDEs and a foundation in these elements are essential in making an evaluation. For instance, many NDE elements conform to the Catholic teaching that the faithful are the literal body of Christ, and the single person of Christ is now all who are members of the body of Christ. This is one element pre-examined.

Spirit

Spirit is the “mechanism” as created by God by which creation operates. Events in creation are not a consequence of God pulling strings from Heaven; they are a consequence of humanity pushing levers on earth. These interconnecting levers are spirit: respect, moderation, reverence, love, hate. Just like matter, spirit is a creation of God. God is not a creation of the spirit world; rather, God creates and what he creates is first of all, spirit.

Spirit is intangible but as real as matter; and it has real effect. Spirit is immaterial being. Being is anything that exists: a rock, an idea, energy, emotion, logic, a person. Patience, respect, hate, reverence, morality, memory, free will, are all spirit, and all have real effect in our world. Spirit is the underlying framework of all creation, and corruption of the willed moral virtues degrades the operation of all creation.

Spirit forms matter, spirit forms spirit, spirit forms events. Consider that anything that can be described in terms of logic, will, virtue, act, emotion, mathematics or physical law has these same immaterial spirits or qualities as its foundation. It is commonly known that energy and matter are the same substance in different configurations. Spirit, matter and events, likewise have an

equivalence. Gospel accounts of this equivalence are the episodes in which Jesus makes bread, arms, legs (Mt 15:31), from nothing but his will; even events may be formed, the many biblical prophecies by Jesus and others link moral action to distant future events. Immaterial acts are real, and have real effect in our world, beginning with ourselves. Spiritual efficacy is the principle of the real effect of spirit.

Spirit by definition has no finite boundaries, will is the boundary for spirit—God’s will, man’s will. Because of moral free will, virtue may be corrupted into vice. ***God is not the origin of evil; abuse of virtue by moral beings is the origin of evil.*** Deviation from the original perfection of God’s moral design necessarily causes disorder in our world. Any deviation from perfection can only be degradation.

We might observe that the material world is the real and normal order of creation, but before our material world existed, spirit alone was the medium of existence, (as with the community of the angels). This spiritual universe was no less real, and cause and effect were real within this spiritual realm. Indeed, the world of matter is more like an overlay for the world of spirit. Spirit is the unseen framework of the entire universe, and was created as such by God. The practical consequences of this are that acts of patience, moderation, justice, generosity, chastity are real with real effects. The vices of these virtues are also real with real effect in our world. Spirit forms matter; spirit forms spirit; spirit forms events.

The idea that everything has a spirit is a necessary truth because everything has some immaterial qualities: logical or mathematical descriptions, willed moral virtues, time, emotions. Hundreds of years ago, St. Thomas Aquinas spoke of any *thing* having an underlying spirit that is mineral, vegetable or animal in nature.

Disorder in our world is actually virtue which has become (partially) corrupted due to a lacking or misproportion. This corruption by misproportion comes about by willed mischoice by humanity. We must give correct attention to God, ourselves and others in all our actions. If we fail in this, the resultant act is weighted towards self (usually), at the expense of God or others. Our disordered act then affects the spiritual framework of creation, starting with ourselves.

To take the quality of respect for example; we observe that when we give undue effort to self, respect is corrupted into arrogance. If we fail to give proper moral effort to God, then irreverence results. If we fail to give others their due, then disrespect results. From this we see that moral corruption is a matter of lacking or deficit of virtue that should be present. The results are not theoretical, but take the forms of war, hatred and disease.

Spirit interacts directly with spirit according to common elements. The biblical ideas of a family or a nation sharing in the effects of virtue or vice are examples. If a virtue is corrupted by a person of ancient Israel (to take a common biblical example), then all who share common virtues will suffer to some degree. Persons who are of the same: family, tribe, nation, world will all feel the effects of another's good or bad action.

This is the basis for the Biblical belief that children benefit or suffer from their parent's virtue or sin. It was true for Adam and Eve, and it is still true today. *This communal nature of spirit was created by God to benefit humanity,* but with the advent of the disorder of sin, disorder was shared in addition to goodness.

God's good judgment is also a factor by which spirit affects other spirit, matter or events. God is incapable of creating evil, but as our parent he does assign the evil of our sin to creation, according

to his good judgment. In assigning the evil created by humanity, its disorder must be felt, but God could not assign evil with only an evil outcome possible.

A criticism of monotheism is that God seems to punish people by directing disorder (war, famine) upon them. In reality this evil generated by humanity must be effected within creation (absolute divinity cannot be corrupted). God as our parent directs our evil according to his good judgment, for the highest goal — the salvation of souls. It is not a matter of God punishing our bad behavior, but of God assigning our disorder. 1Cor 5:5 describes our evil being effected in this life, sparing condemnation in the next.

Just as goodness may be mediated into evil, evil may be mediated into goodness. It is a matter of anger being morally mediated into patience, greed mediated into moderation and trust, indifference into piety.

The human soul is a spirit; the soul is a “form”, which gives function and purpose to one’s body and actions. A human person might be thought of as a soul to which the property of physicality had been added. One’s soul is the totality of one’s immaterial attributes, and the operating principle of one’s being.

Animals are considered to have a soul (though not immortal as in humans), which governs their operations. The human soul has traditionally been partitioned into that part which governs moral activities (superior partition or spiritual soul), and that part which governs non-moral activities and the body, (inferior partition or material soul).

It is thought that the human soul is created by God using both direct and indirect means. Those faculties of the soul which govern the body are created at conception by biological means. Those faculties of the soul having a moral dimension are thought to be created directly by God.

The human soul is not static, but has the ability to “grow”, and change. We may know our soul by observing our will, which in turn governs our thoughts and actions. Intellect, will and memory are properties of our soul.

Injustice and suffering in our world may only be truly eradicated by restoring its damaged spiritual foundation, which is the cause of evil. To give assistance after the fact is good, but even better is to prevent the disorder by avoiding those moral acts that degrade the spiritual foundations of our world and its people. This prevention is difficult to observe, because we are attempting to observe that which is prevented.

There is not a lack of good ideas in our world, but these do not take root in hearts because of moral disorder (sin) which corrupts will, faith, brotherhood and reasoning. War, hatred, greed and even disease, catastrophe and natural disasters are caused by the ongoing damage to the spiritual foundation of our world.

Christology

God the Trinity

We cannot speak of God creating any part of himself, but God does progressively reveal himself, to humanity and even to his own self. The Trinity is three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not three Gods, but three divine persons, the three of which constitute the one God. The Trinity of God is a mystery—not fully understood, and incapable of full understanding by any human. The Son of God is begotten of God the Father, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both, and all three had their first revelation as Godhead.

Godhead is undifferentiated, unexpressed, absolute and singular being. Godhead is the simple, essential, unified, core God. Godhead is the necessarily first and fundamental revelation of God. Every movement of God — every act of thought, will and love further reveals and defines God. “When” Godhead acts in such a way as to reveal the divine Son, Godhead reveals himself to be God the Father. God makes revelation simply by thinking or willing — when God thinks of himself, his image the Son of God is revealed.

The revelation of Godhead as the three distinct persons of the Trinity is thought to be non-optional. “When” Godhead thinks, he “first” thinks of himself, (what else, no creation yet). In doing so, Godhead reveals the trait of intellect, beyond the trait of pure being of the Godhead. When Godhead thinks of himself, he generates the complete image of himself who is the Son of God; and Godhead is now God the Father. The Son of God is the fullest expression of God. The Son of God himself is not yet *fully* revealed; the human children of God are called to be yet more expression of the Son of God, as the body of Christ. Godhead which is the essence of God, necessarily remains in the three persons who are God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Father and the Son directing their wills toward each other generates the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may be thought of as the bond of love (commitment) between the Father and the Son. In example, think of two people having a common pursuit; this might be marriage or a business perhaps. As this pursuit is cultivated it becomes a real separate entity, this third entity becomes more than words. A marriage or a corporation is given a certain legal status and rights of its own. The efforts of the two people give real form to the third entity.

This example is necessarily inadequate. *When God thinks and wills however; it is as real as it gets.* The love of the Father and

the Son toward each other is divine, selfless, full, intense, real, and permanent. Included in these thoughts is the possibility of creation outside of God. The Holy Spirit who results is divine, independent, full, intense, and permanent.

The Holy Spirit is the acting agent of creation, sent by the Father and the Son, and is a real and complete divine person. The Holy Spirit is the result of the mutual willing of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not necessarily God's *proportional* will. It is possible, even likely that the Holy Spirit is God's compete, but weighted will, with favoritism toward mercy, joy and peace.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the created human nature of the Trinitarian Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God extended into creation. The doctrine concerning the divine and human natures of Jesus is summarized in the Catechism, CCC 464-483. Existing dogma of this hypostatic union limits itself to declaring that in the single divine person of Jesus Christ there existed a complete man, and complete God. Jesus had a human body, soul, intellect and will; and every faculty of God was part of Jesus, including the divine intellect and will. These existed in the one divine person of Jesus Christ; distinctly and functionally, without confusion or opposition.^h

^h Definitions must be understood when speaking of the person of Christ:

– “Person” is the title given to a moral being. A person is considered human or divine according to his highest mode of existence. Jesus was a complete human man, and completely God. Since Jesus’ highest mode of existence is divine, he is considered a divine person.

– “The Son of God”, is the second person of the Trinity of God, also called Trinitarian Christ. The Son of God may include others into his person, and does just this in enlarging the body of Christ. Jesus was not included into the Son of God, but originated from, and existed within the Son of God.

– “Christ” is first of all the Son of God. “Christ” is used Biblically as a title for the Messiah, but its present meaning is the entire body of Christ: Trinitarian Christ, Jesus Christ, angels, the faithful.

The *distinct* faculties of soul of Jesus and the Son of God — will, awareness, intellect — are shown by the many instances of Jesus exhibiting will, knowledge and consciousness distinct from God, (Mt 26:39, Jn 6:38, Jn.5:30, Mt 24:36).

We have likely never considered the idea of one man having two intellects and two wills, (human and divine no less!) which operate seamlessly. There is no dogma as to this operation, but we may feel out an explanation.

We routinely think multiple thoughts. We might be cooking, ironing or even driving while our thoughts are fixed on our family, job or monthly budget. Likewise for our will; we routinely

– “Jesus” is the man Jesus, who is now the pre-eminent individual of the person Christ. “Jesus of Nazareth” describes the human nature of Jesus. “Jesus Christ” describes the divine nature of Jesus. These two natures constitute one person, who is called Jesus, or Jesus Christ.

– “God” is all that has absolute existence and being. It is impossible to become God, because God cannot be brought into being. However, God is free to include others into his person, and does this via Jesus who is the human nature of God.

– “Divine” refers to all who are fully and irrevocably included into the absolute being of God, via the body of Christ. This idea of divinization has been spoken of by the apostles and saints for 2000 years. The idea of our divinization is supported in catechism and scripture, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 398, 460, 795, 1988); St. John of the Cross also spoke of this idea. The book “Mystical Evolution” by Fr. John Arintero, is an extensive study of spiritual advancement from humanity to divinity and is still in print.

NDE’s sometimes speak of additional incarnations of Jesus. As frequently occurs, terms are mislabeled and theology presumed. Trinitarian Christ (not human Jesus, who did not then exist) appeared as Melchizedek in the Old Testament. Melchizedek was “Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life...”, (Hebrews 7:3). Melchizedek was, and remained eternal, he only took on a temporary human appearance, unlike Jesus who was fully human. Christ again took on a human appearance and appeared to Abraham in Genesis chapter 18.

We observe that the many instances of angels taking on a human appearance does not make them human, they remain angels and not humans. Christ has taken on several human appearances, but only one human incarnation.

exert our will in two areas simultaneously. We may now envision two minds and two wills working seamlessly within the single person of Christ who had both human and divine natures. The divine nature of Jesus existed always, while the human nature of Jesus came into being at a specific time in history.

One way to envision this arrangement is to recall the Trinitarian Son of God as having a mind and a will. Now the Son of God extends himself into creation as the human Jesus. Along with the human body, Jesus is given a human mind and will. *The human mind and will of Jesus might be thought of as a subset of the divine mind and will.* Jesus is free to use his human mind and will within the bounds of the perfect divine mind and will of the Son of God.

The divine will of Jesus did not micromanage his human actions, rather he really used his human will, which operated within the larger bounds of the divine will. Jesus' human will was used for human actions, while he had recourse to his divine, all powerful will in supernatural acts, to perform miracles for example. Likewise, the divine intellect of Jesus was used in prophetic knowledge, rather than in his work as a carpenter. The man Jesus was not a person separate from the Trinitarian Son of God; while fully human he might also be thought of as an intelligent physical member of the Son of God. Jesus is the human nature of the Son of God.¹

Christ is now the entire body of Christ. It is no longer a matter of one divine intellect and one human intellect. The entire

¹ The cross reveals to us, the human or divine status of each attribute of Jesus. On the cross, every human element of Jesus was corrupted by sin, "he became sin for us", 2Cor 5:21. Jesus' emotions, logic, body were all assaulted by sin, the divine will of Jesus alone remained uncorrupted. The will of Jesus was distinct and human, but also a subset, or contained within the divine will, and necessarily remediated the assaulting sin into virtue.

body of Christ has millions of human minds and wills, not to mention its angelic members. We begin our participation in the body of Christ as a member of the human Christ.^J The human Christ is now the many fallible members who constitute the **ongoing Christ** on earth. We work toward perfection, in hope of one day sharing in the divine nature of God, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988).^K

Our participation in the body of Christ is first in the human nature of Jesus Christ (which explains why we are not divine in this life), then finally in the divine person of Jesus Christ in Heaven.^L It is

^J We become a member of the body of Christ by inclusion via the sacraments. Both Catholic doctrine and NDE's allow non-human members of the body of Christ. Recall that Christ is Heaven itself (Jn 11:25), and will include even the lion that lies down with the lamb, and former pets. We observe that animals in Heaven will then have immortal souls in accordance with eternal Heavenly existence. Dr. Pim van Lommel has interviewed hundreds of NDE patients, and notes that some do speak of their pets being in Heaven, ("Consciousness Beyond Life", page 74).

^K The destiny of every member of the body of Christ is divinization, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 398, 460, 795, 1988), in which our created nature is included into the very divine nature of Christ. The human Jesus is no exception. The human nature of Jesus is now divine and has no contact with sin. God relies on the ongoing human Christ on earth (that's us), to remediate sin. The apostle Paul speaks of this necessary and ongoing remediation of sin in Col 1:24, as does Peter in 1Pet 2:21.

^L Because of sin, and imperfection in our soul we may not share in the divine nature of Jesus Christ, until we attain perfection of will. If after death, we are still imperfect the soul lives on, but still in a situation short of full divine inclusion, which we call Purgatory. Christ attempted inclusion of the angels, who were either fully perfect, or fully evil. The perfect ones made immediate divine inclusion, while the evil ones were completely excluded. The proof of angelic divine inclusion is the fact that some angels are now devils. This exclusion came about as an unintended failure of divine inclusion or communion. This communion that Christ desires for all creation is what we call judgment, now with Purgatory and Hell as possible outcomes. God may not desire evil, and cannot assign anyone to Hell, because it is an evil with no possible good.

Catholic doctrine that the faithful are the literal person and body of Christ, (CCC 795, 789; 1Cor 12:27, Rm 12:5, 1Cor 1:2, 1Cor 6:15).

The Catholic Church uses the term “mystical body of Christ”, with mystical meaning mysterious, but not symbolic. The single person Christ is now all who are members of the body of Christ, (CCC 1213, 795). The faithful on earth constitute the human nature of Christ, and those in Heaven are the divine nature of Christ.^M

Elements of the NDE

Out of body

The out of body event is in no way disallowed by Catholic theology, and it need not be assumed to be false. Historically many such events are recorded by trustworthy persons.

The core of the NDE is not near death, but a visit to the world of the afterlife, an out of body experience which are repeatedly recorded in the lives of the saints. Brain seizure, extreme stress, hypoxia, even orgasm have all produced out of body experiences; clinical death is just the most common means.²¹ None of these things produce an NDE; they chemically reconfigure the brain to perceive spiritual worlds.

^M The Catechism of the Catholic Church states explicitly that we become Christ in at least two paragraphs: (1) CCC 1213, “Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ.”; (2) CCC 795, “...Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself...he and we together are the whole man.” The idea and term “Whole Christ”, occurs at least six times: CCC 795, 796, 797, 1136, 1187, 1188. Christ is now all who constitute the body of Christ: Jesus, Eucharist, humans, angels.

NDE's as discussed here are real experiences of the preliminary stages of the afterlife, due to the soul's short term loss of its human body. If the body fails to a sufficient degree, the soul loses the services of the body including its limited physical perception. The soul may then observe the world of the spirit: Heaven, Hell and Purgatory which are always present, but rarely observed, (Heb 12:1).

A person, out of body in an NDE may be accurately aware of persons and events even far beyond the location of his (former) body. This is simply one's soul, unbound from the physical senses, observing beyond its former limitations. As a person enters further into physical death, the NDE is more extensive. The out of body experience is just the first NDE element encountered.

Many out of body experiences are verified between hospital staff and patient, with the revived patient reporting something not observable from the operating table, and impossible for the unconscious patient to observe. Persons and events in other rooms, or even other locations are accurately described.

A meaningful study of the numbers and depth of the NDE was conducted by Dutch cardiologist Dr. Pim von Lommel from 1988-1992. The study was professionally conducted, and in a statistically unbiased manner and included ten hospitals, and both physicians and psychiatrists.²²

344 survivors out of 509 patients participated in the study, all were resuscitated survivors of heart stoppage, 62 persons (18%), retained memories of their NDE. Of these 62 people, 31% reported the light tunnel, 20% reported meeting deceased relatives, 23% reported communicating with "the light" and 8% had a life review. Asking about a distressing NDE was intentionally avoided, so that no

survivor would avoid the interview. Other studies put the percentage of distressing NDE's at 10%-25%.

Factors which were examined, but made no difference in the numbers were: duration of cardiac arrest, medication, religion or education. The reader may consult the website of the International Association for Near Death Studies, www.iands.org, for a listing of the many NDE studies made.

Light tunnel

The tunnel of light is most often described as a tunnel with a light at the end. The patient is drawn without effort toward the light. The light does not remain simply light, but becomes one or more persons.

The persons who are formed are members of Christ, (the body of Christ), and they may be any member of the person of Christ: Jesus, deceased family, Moses, a saint, guardian angel, Buddha. The most commonly encountered individuals are Jesus, family and angelic guides, (tours of Heaven are common).

The tunnel was explained by Jesus himself to Barbara W. as being a conduit between different 'worlds' or levels of spiritual advancement in the universe, with Hell being the lowest and darkest, and Heaven being all light.²³ Jesus compared this conduit or tunnel to a stack of cd's, and said that if it were room height, earth would be only twelve inches from the floor, with more perfect realms increasingly higher. Distressing NDE's may report little or no light. This tunnel of light has been recorded for centuries and again presents no particular problem for any theological system.

Light beings

Those NDE's progressing to a meeting with a light being often tell of the light source at the end of the tunnel forming into a person. Just as often, the light is already in the form of an

illuminated person. This person is most often a family member, a guide, guardian, or Jesus.

In scripture and post biblical accounts, Jesus is referred to, and claims to be the light. God is indeed light, but not all light is God. Perhaps light is God's native form. The presence of light beings is no real challenge to any religious theology. What they say varies considerably, and this will be examined by topic in the following sections.

"Light beings", that is persons who exist as light, who then form into a human person are very diverse in their person and function. Brian H encountered a light being who became an adolescent girl, then told Brian that she was his guardian angel.^N

^N Angels are among the nine orders of Heavenly beings; the apostle Paul lists four of them in Col 1:16-17. All in Heaven are members of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ, who is Heaven itself. Christ is the Trinitarian Son of God, (Jesus is the human nature or incarnation of Christ). Christ desires union with all of his creation, so that "God will all in all", (1Cor 15:28).

All the orders of Heaven, including angels, are now members of Christ, who is the entire body of Christ. Angels now "participate in the divine nature", (2Pet 1:4). This is the intended destiny of humans, angels and all creation, (2Pet 1:4, 1Cor 15:28).

Judgment of the angels was the cause of their separation into Heaven and Hell. This judgment was their originally planned communion. Those angels who made communion with Christ, the Son of God (directly, since human Jesus did not then exist), now "participate in the divine nature of God", (2Pet 1:4). The angels who were judged were either fully perfect, or fully evil, so Purgatory was not an option. Those who were sinless made communion into the divinity of the Son of God. All of creation: angels, humans, the lion who lies with the lamb, pets, etc. are intended for inclusion into Christ. The book of Revelation shows angels as members of Heaven, all in Heaven are necessarily divinized as members of Christ. The inclusion of the angels into Christ sets back the date of Christianity thousands of years before Jesus. Christianity at its core is a person's (human or angelic) inclusion into Christ.

In thinking of Christ as Heaven, recall that all elements of creation existed within Christ prior to their creation. Humans, angels, heaven, earth, physics, logic, virtues, emotions existed internal to Christ, prior to their creation outside of Christ. The person of Christ is our resurrection (Jn 11:25), and our Heaven; our beginning and our end, (Rev 22:13).

Incredibly, Brian survived head strikes, 27 stab wounds, and nine hours in a dumpster, before returning to this life. He could not yet enter Heaven because his guardian angel told him he still had things to accomplish in this life.²⁴

According to Catholic theology, the head halo of light, or the whole body halo occurs because that person is sanctified and is a “child of the light” (1Th 5:5), with the light being Christ of course. In NDE’s both the light form and the human form is seen. All Heavenly beings are light, which may assume human form. Mt 17:2 tells of Jesus becoming a being of light.

Boundary of Heaven

We have only NDE accounts of those persons who choose not to cross over into Heaven. Of those reporting their NDE, some are offered the choice to enter Heaven or return to earth. Most perhaps, are encouraged or required to return to their earthly bodies and lives.

Ninety-five percent of people dying do not return to life, and they are placed somewhere in the afterlife. Of these people, it is known from NDE accounts that some are given the choice of entering into the afterlife, or returning to earth.

Jesus most often speaks for Heaven in the matter of staying or returning. Those given the option are told that if they cross over into Heaven, they may not return to their earthly life. The boundary of Heaven may be a line, or a gate, or not observed. Sometimes the silver cord of Ecclesiastes 12:6 is observed unbroken.^o

^o It is not a matter of Heaven being an actual place, or a state of being, it is both. The same could be said of Hell. The actual and the symbolic are both true aspects. Brad N (www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4040), observed evil spirits near earth during his NDE, but was told that they were bound to (fallen) earth, and may not venture to higher realms. Heaven is not in the sky...but it is, in that it is far from our imperfect earthly existence.

Few who sample Heaven want to return to their earthly lives. Many must be prodded or reminded. The most cited reason for returning is family well being or an unspecified task that requires completion. *At times Jesus or a Heavenly elder will remind the visitor that he or she agreed to a contract or covenant (life mission), that must be fulfilled in their earthly life.*

The real task that must be done is not so much material care for family (Jesus has no lack of resources, and can make these arrangements), but spiritual growth that occurs when caring and dealing with one's family and the world. Spiritual growth is the reason anyone is incarnated.

It is quite unknown how many people are offered, and accept an early entrance to Heaven during an NDE. Most people dying likely do so according to God's schedule and their death is not early. NDE patients who do visit the gates of Heaven are told that it is not yet their time. They are presumably at the gates because of some sort of cosmic mistake. Jesus said just this to Betty Eadie, "You have died prematurely, it is not your time."²⁵

Anything this side of Heaven is subject to sabotage by the disorder caused by sin. Death was never intended, but even the disorder of death is subject to failure in timing and cause.

Jill D. was wandering about outside of Heaven during her NDE and was told to see the man at the desk.²⁶ Yes, a desk. The clerk at the gates of Heaven (named Peter no doubt!), looked at her suspiciously and said, "What are you doing here?" He checked, then sent her back to earth.^P

^P The desk clerk at Heaven knew that Jill was supposed on mission, on earth, and not yet due back in Heaven. Our lives, our purpose and our circumstances are determined by Christ, for the purpose of spiritual advancement, which advances ourselves and all of Heaven upon our reunion with the body of Christ.

NDE's are not all mistaken early deaths. One of the most interesting and detailed NDE's is that of Howard Storm. *Howard seems to have been selected for an early unscheduled death, so that he might experience Hell, Heaven, and Jesus, and tell others about his experience.* Howard got the grand tour including a sort of question and answer period.²⁷

Why not a sinner prophet? By his own admission, Howard was pursuing nothing more than his self vanity and satisfaction, with little regard for others. His first visit was to Hell, where he was attacked by its occupants. An interior voice told him to pray to God, and Howard stumbled through all the religious words he could remember.^Q It was enough to remove him from Hell, and into the presence of Jesus and his angels.

Of those given a choice to stay or return, many return based on a vision of their family future without them. Michael J. was given such a prophetic vision of the world without him.²⁸ In the

^Q Howard's is not the only recorded NDE in which a prayer, plea or admission of belief to God brings deliverance from Hell. Belief is the first and most basic participation in God. Even if we have the smallest participation in Christ, we are a member of the body of Christ, and not eligible for Hell. Thought and especially will, is real participation in the object of thought or will. According to Jesus in Mt 5:27-28, to think or will toward adultery is to commit adultery, we have a first stage participation in the act of adultery, just by inclining our will toward it. Instead we should incline our entire "heart, mind and soul" (Mt 22:37), toward God. This would be a real participation in God.

This evidence of the power of prayer is motivation to cultivate our own prayer life. Sincere prayers for ourselves are always a participation in God. Prayers for others go far in preventing their condemnation. Prayer should be viewed as a real act of construction and not just words.

Howard's sins were forgiven after death, which is implied in Mt 12:32. This verse says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this life or the life to come, thus implying some other sins may be forgiven after death. The reason why speaking against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven, is because the Holy Spirit is the agent delivering graces of all types including forgiveness. If we reject the Holy Spirit, we reject the graces he offers. Mt 12:32 shows the danger of atheism and its more harmful variant, anti-theism.

absence of his stabilizing presence, his sister damaged her life with drugs, his parents divorced over his death, and his father killed himself. He also saw a parade of people who he was intended to influence, but did not, if he were to choose to stay in Heaven, rather than return to earth.

This idea that we have intended life tasks and life interactions is both a Catholic and an NDE teaching, and it really comes under scrutiny from several angles during an NDE visit to Heaven.

God

Many who undergo an NDE, experience the presence of God. The NDE experience presented here is typical in content, but extraordinary in length of description. It is the NDE of a woman (initialed JB), who deeply viewed the essence of God.

This NDE cannot be specifically classified into any particular religion, although she does observe the Word of God in it. “The Word of God” as understood within Catholicism is the Son of God, or Trinitarian Christ, and his human incarnation as Jesus.

“I am in the operating room of a small private hospital. On the operating table, I stare without emotion at the wall facing me. There is a black and white photograph of an old man. I imagine he is the founder of the hospital. I am reassured, administered anesthesia through a mask and rapidly begin to disassociate from my physical senses.”

“I was plunging rapidly into my body. I felt that I was getting entombed. I was falling into myself and into an inner, ever expanding, deep darkness. The normal sense of time, place and space became non-existent. After I had been in this engulfing darkness for what seemed to be a very long time, I suddenly became

aware that I was on some sort of horizontal escalator or a conveyor belt, that was moving incredibly fast almost at the speed of light or greater, intentionally taking me somewhere. I felt I had traversed millions of years and millions of miles. At some point during this journey, I became aware that I was traveling in a pitch black tunnel. This moving through the tunnel went on for quite some time, almost an eternity.”

“Then all of a sudden, I was approaching an amazing, truly indescribable white shining, light. This light was scintillating, every particle of it alive and full of the purest, highest love. It was tantalizing, brilliant, beautiful, living and moving.^R This light was at the end of the tunnel or by its very presence ended the tunnel. As I came closer, still moving at the incredible speed, I began to feel a mounting sense of exhilarating anticipation. I felt I was approaching a truly great, magnanimous, magnificent and beneficial event. In complete clarity, I thought and felt. This is what I have been waiting for all my life, this is what had been missing all along, this is why no event, no relationship, no possession, no achievement, no desire hankered after or possessed had ever felt complete. This is the reason why I have never felt fulfilled. Every bit of me desired to completely go into this living light and these thought-feelings seemed to add an additional momentum to the escalator's speed. I sped to the Light but at the very moment of union, I heard a loud, sonorous, authoritative, masculine voice, coming into me from all directions ask, 'Are you ready to die?'"

“When I heard this, everything came to a stop. I was completely aghast. I was, and had been, totally ignorant that reaching, meeting and going into this 'beyond everything else' and

^R NDE patients speak of sensing love from all beings during their visit the boundary of Heaven. This love is proactive, unconditional, and immense beyond words. This love is the religious ecstasy that many saints have experienced.

'all knowing light', astonishingly meant my death! I felt betrayed. Then, filled with great fear in my thinking and responding (both occur simultaneously here), I quiveringly asked, 'Why must I die?' Instantaneously the Voice replied, 'You must die, because you have failed to do what you promised us.' (No wiggle room here. My death was imminent.) Confused and frightened, I fell to my hands and knees (metaphorically speaking), and began begging for my life. I begged like I have never begged before. Groveling like a worm beseeching a human not to stamp on it, I implored, 'I don't remember what I promised, and I don't know why I must die. Please give me another chance. I don't remember what I promised!'"

"The Voice answered. 'You promised us that you would help others. You have failed to do this, therefore you must die.' At this point, I was begging in a manner, which could be equated to convulsive crying from my deepest depths. I had no idea what promise the Voice was confronting me with, but deep inside me, I knew that the Voice knew more about me than I did and that it was behaving justly; I was getting exactly what I deserved."

"After hearing my desperate pleas and acknowledging my sincerity, the Voice, with a gesture of benevolence (like a sweeping motion of a hand in gushing wind) announced, 'You have a second chance.'"

"Everything was still very dark; except for the presence of the Light. Then the Voice changed its judgelike manner and became instead, a teacher. Still very just and awesome but now, much kinder. What followed was even more mind-blowing."⁵

"I found myself suspended and moving in a pitch dark, empty, endless cosmic space (no escalator this time!). I was just a

⁵ This change in God's tone of voice, or focus occurs in the Bible. The Old Testament records God's justice, and the New Testament records God's mercy. Both attributes are authentic elements of God.

tiny dot of consciousness. I had no remembrances other than that I was an 'I'. The only ground (metaphor) to hang on to was my 'I'. I was getting smaller and smaller until I became an even smaller 'I'. There were no reference points, no up, no down, no right, and no left. Just my concentrated essence, my 'I' that had been falling into and onto itself and becoming smaller and smaller. I became aware that there were a multitude (infinite) of other 'I's around me, like stars studding the sky. They were 'I's'; 'Ego's'. These 'All Seeing Eyes' were scrutinizing me. 'They' who are the One Voice (the voice that had been communicating with me all along) began to tell me things. They transmit, convey, and tell. 'They' as the One Voice, with a finger (metaphor) drew a white, brilliant, fluorescent, living plasma-like, and palpable-light graphic in the darkness. This was a circle. Its entire circumference moved in a clockwise manner. Then arrows were drawn on the circumference to show me the direction of movement.”

“I then heard the following, 'In the beginning was The Word, and The Word was with God, and The Word was God. The Word made all things. Humanity cannot understand The Word. The Word is always (seeking) chasing after humanity and humanity is always chasing The Word (seeking). This is the way it was, this is the way it is, this is the way it shall ever be.'”

“The finality and truth of this sacred communication, naturally and instantaneously dissolved my every barrier to humbleness, and apprehending the circle, I was spontaneously made part of a dynamic living cosmic revelation. I was placed in THE WORD. It is difficult to fully describe this immersion for what it was in actuality. Adjectives and descriptions herein are only feeble attempts.”

“I was in, and surrounded by The Word. I was made an integral part of it but I was not 'absorbed' into The Word for I fully

retained my awareness as a separate I.[†] The Word is a supremely alive, charged, scintillating, dynamic, exquisite and eternal flowing of fine living particles. The Word is true wisdom, true knowledge, eternal truth, all pervasive, all knowing, everywhere, in all, outside all, all powerful, complete, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is that in which everything has its origin, its life and its return. But nobody can go beyond the Word because there is a permeable membrane, a force-field like barrier and through its pores (not a metaphor) oozes out this subtle, but most substantial holy, sacred, pure, dynamic ceaselessly-in-motion energized particles. These particles are both homogeneous and heterogeneous, fully self-sustaining and all-sustaining truth-wisdom substance; a substance which is the be-all and end-all of all that is possible for all beings, animate or inanimate. This is not figurative substance, but literally 'substance'. It has 'being-ness'. It is a being. Naturally, this substance is not at all the material substance that we all know of ordinarily, yet it is related to it in a (some) extremely remote sense. It's some sort of living force made up of the above described lively and living particles. It is the basis of all other substances and forces as we experience them in ordinary daily consciousness. It penetrates and reverberates in all."

"As I was experiencing this profundity, I began to have a strange feeling of claustrophobia. I felt irrevocably enclosed; I wanted to break through this thing-in-itself, the all encompassing Word. I felt deep within me that there is something else and I must go to it. I was drawn to The Word's cosmic boundary. Boundary, not as a metaphor but as it actually felt and showed itself to me. It is truly a boundary. I tried to go through it but was unable to. Then

[†] This is an accurate description of the body of Christ in Heaven. Christ is now all individuals who constitute the body of Christ. These individuals retain their former attributes (individual awareness and will), but are now the single, divine person of Christ, the Word of God. Those individuals (formerly human persons) in Heaven are now members of the single, divine person Christ, who is Heaven.

'They' as the 'One Voice' told me that no one can cross this boundary, except that which emanates through it; The Word."^U

"Being in The Word was discombobulating and anti-climactic, yet The Word is complete, just and fully integrated, full of reason, logic, wisdom, the container-holder of past, present and future, the all-sensible, all knowing in its every particle. I believe that the Logos substance is the actual substance of the 'Other'. The 'Other' is the rest of the Logos or some superior and/or different part of it that is on the other side of the boundary. I experienced this entire event in a unique state of timelessness where the past, present and future are one. I was told that I had made a promise to the spiritual world, which I had failed to keep. I was told that my purpose on Earth is to help others. I was also shown my previous incarnation on Earth in great detail.^V I was told that I had to regain

^U Because Heaven is the person of Christ, only those who are Christ (who is now the entire body of Christ), may enter into Heaven...who is Christ. This whole idea seems like the beginning is the end, and that is exactly how Christ describes himself in Rev 22:13.

A more specific truth that JB observes is the difference between The Word, and its creation. The Word of God is non-optional (see section on Christology). Creation is optional, it has no inherent right or necessity to exist, The Word does.

^V In NDE's the idea of past lives is not uncommon, and sometimes called reincarnation. This is a mislabeling of the Christian idea of the "ongoing incarnation of Christ", and is discussed in detail in a later section. The basic idea is that Christ in Heaven includes specific dimensions of himself, these dimensions become humans, angels, rocks and trees when they are incarnated, or enter into creation. The prophet Jeremiah was such a dimension of the single person of Christ in Heaven before his incarnation as a human, (Jer 1:5). Later when Jeremiah made communion with Christ, he again became a dimension of the single person of Christ, (and he brought his hard gained virtues, which somehow added to the perfect virtue of Christ). The set of dimensions of Christ we call "Jeremiah" may be incarnated again if Christ desires, (this likewise happened when Elijah was incarnated again as John the Baptist, Mt 11:14). This is not a "bank of souls", or reincarnation which is the serial migration of a soul amongst bodies, but the "ongoing incarnation of Christ". The single person of Christ incarnates selected dimensions of himself at his pleasure, and some of

what I have spiritually lost; that which is known as Samadhi consciousness. I have also been told explicitly how I am to help others; however, this is not an easy thing to do.”

“Afterwards, I fuzzily saw several beings in white robes with blurred halos surrounding me. I had died and gone to heaven. 'Are you angels', I asked? The blurring cleared and I saw smiling, relieved human faces. One of the doctors said, 'You gave us quite a scare. We almost lost you.'”

“The operation had taken no more than an hour and a half, but to me it felt like I was gone for billions of years to a place trillions of miles away.”²⁹

The woman JB, who experienced this NDE speaks of the Word of God as the expression of God, which the Church understands to be the person of Jesus Christ. She seems to be a student of religion, and makes a brief remark about the Hindu/Buddhist idea of Samadhi consciousness, which is the highest state of consciousness. In Buddhism God is recognized as a possibility only, but in her NDE, JB had a definite experience of God, and even the Word of God, which is a Christian idea.

these dimensions may have been incarnated previously.

One possible source of previous existence would be cyclical creation which exists as a possibility in the Big Bang theory of an expansionary universe. Most theories of the Big Bang include general or localized gravitational collapse of the universe, returning it to its infinite point of initial creation. At this point God would make his expected communion with all of his creation, not already in communion with him. “When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”, (1Cor 15:28). The created nature of all things, even the humanity of Jesus will attain its divine union with God, as intended from the beginning, (CCC 398, 1Pet 1:4). God may at his pleasure make another cycle of creation. Pope Pius XII was the first pope to state that scientific models of a non-static universe were possible.

Those NDE patients sensing or seeing Christ and his love are ecstatic, overwhelmed, heightened, enamored, and completely committed to his presence. Mickey R, described his ecstatic vision of Christ, “His magnificence pierced me like a laser. All that mattered was that I stay in his presence.”³⁰

Jesus

Jesus is the most frequently encountered person in NDE’s, and NDE Jesus satisfies Catholic theology:

- Jesus is in charge of Heaven. He is not just a human of history who lived and died.
- Jesus saves. Many NDE visitors call on Jesus and are saved from Hell.
- Jesus is Heaven itself, and all who are residents. We do not live our lives in Heaven, but as Christ in Heaven; who is our life and our resurrection; and our Heaven as well, (Jn 11:25).
- Jesus is merciful, just and attuned only to our development in the attributes of Christ, especially unconditional love. Our resumes are left in the trash can at the gates of Heaven.
- Jesus is just, and not a simplified satisfying construction. NDE accounts have Jesus or his court of Heaven assigning people to Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.

Jesus is always identified by the NDE visitor, and they are certain of his correct identity. Communication during an NDE usually occurs without spoken words, but by spiritual communication.

NDE Jesus does express a shift of emphasis from the Biblical Jesus. NDE Jesus repeats his request to love one another, seemingly to the exclusion of other moral teachings...or is it a summation of all

moral teachings. We observe however that these moral teachings are examined in one's life review, and Heaven, Hell or Purgatory are consequences of the life review.

NDE's are not intended as instruction, they are mistaken visits to the afterlife, and the current task of Jesus is to operate Heaven, and those in Heaven now have no contact with sin. That portion of the body of Christ charged with sacrificial remediation and teaching is the ongoing Christ on earth, (that's us).

This change of emphasis is actually to be expected, and does not void any aspect of Christ's teaching. We see this change of emphasis by the same God between the Old and New Testaments. New Testament Jesus did not void any of the Old Testament teachings, and NDE Jesus of Heaven does not void the teachings he made on earth.

It is a Catholic teaching all persons in Heaven are members of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ. There is no particular reason that Buddha, Mohammed, Moses or any other member of Christ would not be seen in Heaven, or even greeting someone at its gates, and this does occur in NDE's.

Previous lives

Casual readers of NDE accounts are certainly aware of the light tunnel, and the friendly light beings. Further study of NDEs will reveal elements termed by the NDE visitor as reincarnation and previous lives. At first glance, these seem to be incompatible with Catholic teaching. **We will now see that *previous lives and reincarnation* are mislabeled and presumed, but are actually within the bounds of Catholic theology.**

***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you."*, (Jer 1:5).**

Jeremiah 1:5 is enormous in the information which may be extracted from it. Prior to our human incarnation we had existence; we were a dimension of Christ. We were not a human person, but we were an individual discernible within Christ.^w As a dimension of Christ, our individual life was under the stewardship of Christ, then later under the stewardship of our own person.

As a dimension of Christ how developed were we? Was Jeremiah fully able to understand his life and mission assigned, and

^w NDE's show the body of Christ in Heaven existing as individual members both prior to incarnation, and after salvation. These members of Christ seemingly exist as human persons, but anyone in Heaven actually exists as dimensions of the single person of Christ.

NDE's show Christ in Heaven having individual points of awareness and will. These individuals would be called human or angelic persons, but they are actually the single person of Christ existing as human or angelic dimensions of Christ. Catholic theology does allow Christ to exist in Heaven in any configuration he desires.

John 3:13 tells of Jesus being the first to Heaven. Those members of Christ in Heaven incarnating prior to Jesus would presumably rejoin the body of Christ only after the coming of Jesus, such a limbo of the just occurs in 1Samuel, chapter 28. If some sort of cyclical big bang/big crunch of creation exists, it is possible that lives were lived and returned to Heaven before our current existing cycle of creation, at least one NDE speaks specifically of this ongoing cycle of creation.

John 3:13 must be understood within its context, Jesus was speaking to and of humans. Christ desired divine communion with all his creation as part of the original plan. The coming of Jesus Christ was not an emergency rescue operation after sin. Jesus came as planned but first had to remediate sin before communion with humanity. Christ came as human Jesus, not because of sin, but in spite of sin.

Angels, principalities, thrones and dominions of Heaven (Col 1:16), were likewise always intended for divine communion with Christ their maker. The angels and the Heavenly orders made communion with Christ directly, before the existence of the human Jesus. The proof of this communion is the existence of the devils. Christ attempted communion with the angels but not all made it.

Hell was not a punishment assigned to the bad angels, while the good angels remained as they were. Hell is the failed portion of Christ's attempt to make communion with all the Heavenly orders.

consent to it. We shall later examine the NDE idea that each person gives free consent for his creation into our world.

Certainly, when we rejoin the body of Christ in Heaven, we are fully mature and aware.^x When we rejoin Christ in Heaven, we are again a human-like dimension of the single person of Christ. Christ may at his decision give creation again to any of his dimensions. NDE visitors use the term reincarnation for this idea, but this is not the migration of a human or animal soul among bodies, it is the ongoing incarnation of Christ.^y

Prior to creation, everything and every person had existence internal to Christ. From Jeremiah 1:5, we learn that each individual internal to Christ was discernible as an individual dimension of Christ. We do not say that internal to Christ there are many individual human persons, because Christ is one person.

Each member of Christ has a distinct and discernible life within the larger life of Christ.^z This is what NDE patients are observing when they speak of previous lives.

^x Heaven is simply our perfected existence as a dimension of Christ, before or after our creation. Heaven is the person of Christ. In John 11:25 Jesus teaches that his own person is our resurrection, and our eternal life which we call Heaven.

^y When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly by giving form to nothing, creation results. Creation results when Christ donates selected attributes to give form to a core of nothing. This new creation operates with a core of nothing rather than its previous absolute core.

^z The Catechism of the Catholic Church states explicitly that we become Christ in at least two paragraphs: (1) CCC 1213, "Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ."; (2) CCC 795, "...Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself...he and we together are the whole man." The idea and term "Whole Christ", occurs at least six times: CCC 795, 796, 797, 1136, 1187, 1188. Christ is now all who constitute the body of Christ: Jesus, Eucharistic bread and wine, humans, angels. Jesus often said, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is upon you." The kingdom of Heaven was Jesus Christ himself, who spoke the words.

From Mt 25:40 we learn that when we feed, clothe, or show any sort of

Consider that the human Jesus had a human will and intellect; these were distinct from God the Father, but freely operated within the will and intellect of God the Father. Those in Heaven (before creation or after redemption) also have distinct wills and intellects that operate within the will of Christ. Therefore, their acts chosen, constitute an individual life. NDE visitors are glimpsing their lives under the stewardship of Christ, then later under their own stewardship.

The book of Revelation reveals an entire active world of human and angelic individuals in Heaven. This active world of individual lives all occurs within the single person and life of Christ. Such an active world is also possible within Christ prior to the creation of persons.

In thinking of Heaven as being the person of Christ, consider that all of creation existed first as thought and will internal to Christ. Every person, tree and atom were first a distinct thought of Christ.

Those humans and angels rejoining Christ, retain all their individual awareness and attributes, but are now individual members of the single divine person of Christ.

The purpose of all this creation and reunion is the spiritual advancement of each individual and ultimately of God. Those making moral growth in our world, reunite with Christ bringing new dimensions of love and virtue. *God who cannot gain in virtue has found a way to do just that. Spiritual advancement is the reason any person is given created existence.*

kindness to the least of people, of the body of Christ, we do these things to Jesus, who is now the entire body of Christ. From Acts 9:4 we learn a similar lesson that any evil done to a member of the body of Christ is done to Jesus, who is now the entire body of Christ.

Finally, there exists the possibility of past or parallel universes in which people live or lived prior lives. Some NDE's do speak of such things. Betty Eadie spoke with three Heavenly guides who said that they had known her for many eternities.³¹

The possibility of a Big Crunch goes along with the possibility of a Big Bang. A repeated Big Bang/Big Crunch, would mean a cyclical creation cycle, which some NDE's do speak of, (see section on "other worlds").^{AA}

NDE patient Leonard was given to understand this expansion and contraction cycle during his NDE. Leonard's story pushes the limits of Christian theology, but not God's ability, "One day we shall all be reunited again, and again we shall 'explode' and everything shall start again, this is an unending circle! True life, true reality is in the other world. I remember the light told me that there is more than one universe, there are billions of them, and earth is not the only planet we may choose to incarnate on."³²

Leonard's understanding is that creation alone, will contract back to its origin. This NDE says nothing about the revelations of

^{AA} A Big Crunch scenario would have created energy and matter regressing back to its original singularity, or infinite point of being. Annihilation of creation is not the same as communion with Christ. At this point of singularity, Christ could make communion with it, so that "God may be all in all", (1Cor 15:28). In a creation cycle, Christ would be "The first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega", (Rev 22:13). The created nature of Jesus himself would assume final divinization, again from 1Cor 15:28, "...then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." The church accepts both the Big Bang and Big Crunch as possibilities; in the event of a Big Creation Cycle, the new creation would likely not be identical to the first creation cycle, and the human nature of the Son of God, might be some other human than a first century carpenter.

This idea, that our creation cycle may not be the center of the universe, so to speak, may be the 21st century version of Galileo's idea that earth was not the center of the universe. Howard Storm's video interview (not his book), speaks of the Holy Trinity of God being the absolute, but also of many other worlds with living moral beings, some of which accepted an incarnation of Christ, rather than crucify him when he came to make union with his creation. Big Bangs, Crunches, and Cycles would all be the will of God of course.

God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) contracting back into the first revelation as Godhead, (see section on “God”).

In summary, NDE past lives would be drawn from three possible sources:

1. People who lived previously in the current creation cycle. Additionally, it is possible that there are people currently living in unknowable dimensions. See also section on “other worlds”.
2. People who have lived in past creation cycles. This would be a Big Bang/Big Crunch cycle proposed by science. With God as the prime mover of course.
3. People who have lived as Christ in Heaven, as internal dimensions of Christ.

Reincarnation

The NDE idea termed “reincarnation” is really the ongoing and repeated incarnation of dimensions of Christ (via nothing).^{BB} These dimensions of Christ become individual human persons at their creation. At death, a person may rejoin the body of Christ, to again become a dimension of Christ. This dimension of Christ may (at Christ’s decision) be given creation again. This is not a human soul reincarnating, but Christ repeatedly incarnating.

This is not a matter of a human soul migrating from body to body, any human soul has its existence as a dimension of the single person Christ prior to its incarnation, or even its repeated incarnation.

^{BB} **When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly by giving form to nothing, creation results.** Creation results when Christ donates selected attributes to give form to a core of nothing. This new creation operates with a core of nothing rather than its previous absolute core.

In Romans 12:5 we read, “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” This principle gives increased possibility to the NDE idea of past lives and repeated incarnation. The body of Christ in Heaven is the single person of Christ who has lived, is living, and will live a life on earth. Individual members of Christ who make NDE visits to Heaven are given a glimpse of these past lives.^{cc}

Persons having an NDE usually do not have advanced study in the theology of the body of Christ, and they use labels such as “reincarnation of persons”, rather than “ongoing incarnation of the body of Christ”. There is a vital difference. In the case of reincarnation, a human soul serially inhabits bodies.

In the second case, the single person of Christ (made of many individual members, having human faculties of awareness, free will, etc.), incarnates as human persons (or angelic persons for that matter). This is how people are created, and they may return at death to again become the single divine person of Christ, who we call ‘the body of Christ’.

Even as Christ reunites with his children, he continues his creation, and these many new lives come from the single person of Christ. NDE patients observe these many lives which Christ has lived, is living, and will live.

^{cc} Pope Benedict XVI repeatedly made statements that Heaven is the person of Christ. From his Mass homily at Monte Cassino, May 24, 2009, “...this word Heaven does not indicate a place above the stars but something far more daring and sublime: it indicates Christ himself...”

From his book “Dogma and Preaching”, under the article of “The Meaning of Christ’s Ascension”, “...we go to heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into him. Heaven is a person: Jesus himself is what we call heaven.”

For explanation of NDE “reincarnation” and “past lives”, the idea that *Christ in Heaven is all who are members of the body of Christ*, works as well as the idea of *the person of Christ is Heaven*. Both of these ideas, have dimensions of Christ incarnating, rather than Christ directing the reincarnation of people.

Christ goes forth as free human persons and returns to become Christ again. If one of his human dimensions remains imperfect after some time on the proving ground of earth, he may incarnate it again. This takes on the appearance of reincarnation, but it is actually the ongoing incarnation of dimensions of Christ.^{DD} Human persons are not reincarnated, Christ is continually and even repeatedly incarnated, and it happens every day. The birth of an individual is just this. Catholic theology does permit Christ to incarnate particular dimensions of himself as often as he wishes.^{EE}

^{DD} John 3:13 (Jesus was the first to Heaven), does not preclude the repeated incarnation of a particular (human) dimension of Christ. It would restrict it to a time after Heaven was opened to all. Recall also that Jesus was speaking of humans of his era. Those angels obtaining salvation did so before the human Jesus existed; they were included into the Trinitarian Son of God directly. The evidence for this communion is that some angels failed, and now live in a state of Hell.

NDE patients undergoing clinical death always return to life, and NDE visits themselves are neither reincarnation nor the ongoing incarnation of Christ. The earliest known NDE report is written by Plato, in the tenth book of "The Republic". NDE's are really visits to the afterlife, or the boundary of Heaven and they are recorded throughout Church history, the apostle Paul made such a visit, (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). Paul's visit to Heaven may be his NDE which occurred 14 years prior in his stoning and apparent death recorded in Acts 14:19-20.

A similar incident may have happened to Buddha, but his was an out of body experience (as may have been Paul's). After years of asceticism and meditation, Buddha was able to detach his consciousness from his body and had an OBE under the Bodhi tree. He gained awareness of past lives, and the ongoing incarnation of persons, spiritual efficacy (karma), and finally of moral detachment from selfish desires. He did not see Jesus, because Jesus would be born 400 years later, but other truths of Heaven were revealed to him in his OBE.

Non-Catholic faiths are not assumed to be devoid of truth. Jewish monotheism began 4000 years ago; but did God simply abandon his other children outside of the small Jewish tribe (before or after Judaism), or did God give all people adequate knowledge of purpose, faith and morality? Hinduism, Buddhism and all other faiths prior to the birth of Christ, necessarily did not speak of God made man. This does not render void what God did reveal to these religions. With the advent of Christianity, the faith took the slow route of Roman roads, and sea routes, over a thousand years, all by God's will.

^{EE} Catholic teaching supports a literal re-incarnation of our soul at the

Jesus Christ himself speaks of repeated incarnation. In Mt 11:14, Jesus teaches that John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah come again. 2Kings 2:11 has Elijah taken to Heaven by divine action, rather than experience death. Elijah seems to be an incarnation of the prophetic attributes of the Holy Spirit. Jesus teaches this same spirit of prophecy is incarnated again in John the Baptist, (Mt 11:14).

The case of John the Baptist being Elijah come again may be some sort of third case. Elijah appeared from nowhere...no family, no record. He may have been an apparition of the Holy Spirit.^{FF} He

resurrection. Our soul will again be incarnate with a body. Catholic teaching rejects the idea of transmigration of a soul, in which a human soul progresses from body to body. At our death, we join the body of Christ in Heaven, and we are again a dimension of Christ. Christ may again use this dimension of himself in his act of creating a human person. This operation is not a human soul progressing serially through bodies.

It is useful to remember that there is only one person in Heaven – Christ, who is now constituted of many individual members, dimensions and attributes. Anything occurring in Heaven occurs within, and to Christ, not a human person. Christ is one divine person, having one immortal soul, and many individual points of awareness and human ability. These are former human persons who now make up the single person of Christ. They lose none of their former abilities, but now constitute the single divine person of Christ. Christ desires to incarnate into human persons, and NDE's reveal that there is much work done in both preparation to incarnate, and later reception into the body of Christ.

^{FF} A human incarnation (not just an apparition) of the Holy Spirit is not impossible. No one expected a human incarnation of Christ...until it happened. The most likely candidate for this status is Virgin Mary. She was sinless, and made complete union (marriage) with the Holy Spirit at the annunciation. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was total, and Mary is now the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Mary also attained divinization at her marriage to the Holy Spirit. Divinization is the intended end for all people (CCC 398). Ours occurs after death, Mary could not die, and hers necessarily occurred during her life.

The ideal for marriage, and the ideal that God can only pursue, is union of persons to the greatest possible extent. Human marriage has its limitations, and two persons can never fully become one in this life. When marriage is contracted by God however, it is an unlimited, total, perfect and permanent union of

did not die, such as is demanded of humans, but was assumed into Heaven. John the Baptist had a record of humanity, and died a human death. Were the prophetic attributes of God lived in the two lives of the spiralic Elijah and the human John the Baptist?⁶⁶

Online NDE accounts that refer to “reincarnation” and “previous lives”, (remember these are mislabeled) are: www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s 1957; www.neardeath.com, notable NDE’s Thomas Sawyer; www.near-death.com, notable NDE’s Lynnclaire Dennis.³³

Each NDE account is unique, and a few speak of ideas which can in no way be included within Catholic theology. **However, all the major and repeating NDE elements are within the bounds of Catholic theology.** NDE accounts are properly seen as individual post-Biblical revelations, each to be judged on its unique merit. This is just an application of the Catholic idea that it denies nothing that is true or holy wherever it is found.

We must now ask and answer the question, “Why does Christ continue creating?” He could have shut down the whole operation after sin damaged it, but Christ continues to incarnate as individual humans into a fallen world.

Our incarnation fulfills not only God’s desire for children, but God’s desire to grow in love. The Absolute cannot grow...but a non-absolute, human dimension of Christ can grow. These human persons triumph in a fallen world, then return to Christ to become

persons. Mary is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit because of her unlimited, total, perfect and permanent union with the Holy Spirit. This is a possible fifth Marian dogma which continues to be studied.

⁶⁶ “Spiralic”, the Holy Spirit is said to be a spiration (breath like action) of the Father and the Son.

the body of Christ, thus giving God wider and deeper dimensions of love.

The reason that Christ makes repeated incarnation of particular dimensions (that's us), is for their perfection...and a perfection that can only come through triumph in a fallen world. These dimensions which incarnate into human persons will one day attain perfection and, "He who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out no more.", (Rev 3:12). NDE's give real life meaning to this idea. NDE stories are really the lives of the saints.

Consensual incarnation

NDE's speak of our own consent to enter into creation. A person's existence may be under the moral stewardship of Christ (in Heaven), or of human free will on earth. The personhood of our eternal ideal may be as a dimension of the divine person of Christ, or as a human person on earth. Our morality may be absolute as a dimension of God, or non-absolute under our human free will. This idea is not the pre-existence of human souls; it is the pre-existence of dimensions of Christ which may incarnate as human persons.

As an individual proceeds from an internal dimension of Christ to incarnation as a human person, that person is given a mission for his life, (see Jer 1:5). Furthermore, out of justice God obtains our consent to be incarnated. Our human free will begins with our consent to become free humans.^{HH} If we are to make truly free acts in our life, we must be free first in choosing life.

^{HH} This is essentially Christ asking one of his dimensions if it wants to enter into the realm of creation. Can a dimension of Christ give a meaningful free answer? Consider that Jesus was a dimension of Christ, extended into creation. The divine will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will of Christ, the Son of God. Jesus freely acted within the boundaries of the will of the Son of God. Yet Jesus was free to drink the cup of suffering or to do not. This was a matter of a member of Christ acting morally free within Christ.

The idea of consent for incarnation is largely new, but it fits the human model much better than the unsupported idea that we are incarnated without any consent. ***God's own ideal of human free will demands our consent.*** The idea of non-consensual incarnation is a prevailing, vague, unstudied and unsupported teaching, and it must go.

The Contract

NDE's speak of a "contract" or covenant between Christ, Heaven, and every person. This contract is our life mission, which we are expected to fulfill.

The ***life contract*** was explained to Jeffery C. by an elder in Heaven. Jeffery thought life was unfair and tried an early out; in his NDE he lodged his complaint with the council of Heaven, but was told that he himself asked to be born into this world, for the purpose of spiritual advancement.¹¹ *Jeffery had previously presented his own life plan, means and goals to the council of Heaven and it was approved.*¹¹

When considering the metaphysics of NDE's, which stretch our current understanding, we should consider how mystical our standard dogma is: God became a man; we are called to share in the very divinity of God (CCC 398); matter, spirit and time exists in whatever form God chooses, etc.

¹¹ We observe here that anyone, in any circumstance is capable of spiritual growth, which is our purpose of life. Therefore, no life is useless. Unborn persons have not yet developed a rational moral will, but will do so in their normal growth, and must be protected as persons. Persons with reduced rational morality due to mental illness may still live spiritually good lives. Persons in comas are protected under God's original plan, since no such condition was intended, but only came about as a result of original sin.

¹¹ This is really a matter of Christ choosing the life circumstances for Jeffery. Prior to his creation, Jeffery was a dimension of the single person of Christ. The council of Heaven are individual dimensions of Christ. Elders of Heaven are mentioned in the book of Revelation, and the court of Heaven in several bible passages. Individual members of the body of Christ retain their free will and

He had entered into a contract or covenant by doing this and was expected to fulfill it.³⁴ This is simply the existing idea that Christ chooses many of our life circumstances — both prior to, and after our creation. Further, Christ creates us not simply to observe us, but that we make spiritual development, (CCC 398).

During her NDE, Betty Eadie was given knowledge of this divine plan of spiritual advancement, “I saw that in the pre-mortal world we knew about and even chose our missions in life. I understood that our stations in life are based upon the objectives of those missions.” Once this idea is considered, it is impossible to fall back to a belief that is short of a divine plan for our lives. Furthermore, the divine plan from the beginning was for our ultimate reunion into the divinity of Christ, from which we were created, (CCC 795). Such pre-destination of purpose is written of in John 9:2-3.

All this was part of the original plan for humanity. Jesus Christ was not planned as a rescue operation from sin, but as our divine destiny. Christ came not because of sin, but in spite of sin, (CCC 398, 2Pet 1:4).

We take for granted the privilege of a fallen earthly life...yes, a fallen earthly life. It was explained by Jesus to Thomas Sawyer, who was given a choice, “You may stay and become part of the light if you wish. If you do, you will not be able to choose by your sole decision to live an earthly life again.”³⁵

Our opportunity to advance is now, on earth not later in Heaven. This is certainly part of Catholic teaching, but the idea is better presented in NDE's, which are in fact Catholic private revelations.

rationality, while constituting the single divine person of Christ.

John S. was asked by Jesus, "Why is man given life?"³⁶ Jesus continued with an answer, "He lives to become part of something much greater, to become part of God, all life and all things. Man was given life for the reason of finding his way through it. There is no such thing as a useless life...there are no pawns, every life has great meaning, and we fail so that we can learn."^{KK} NDE's dealing with the repeated incarnation of Christ are: www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 1734.

Life review

"What did you do with your life?" This is the question that Jesus asks during a life review.^{LL} Even NDE visitors to the gates of Heaven are asked this question.

The optimal answer would be, "I was unconditional love at every moment." Unconditional love is the repeated request of Jesus to visitors.

We might assume nothing and simply ask the question, "What was I supposed to do?" The Catholic answer is "To love and serve God in this world, and to be with God forever in the next."

^{KK} The traditional Catholic teaching is that Jesus was born to rescue us from impending Hell. The current Catholic teaching acknowledges this, but has our creation as being for the purpose of our own spiritual evolution, to the point of sharing in the divine life of Christ, (2Pet 1:4; CCC 398). Jesus was our intended means to rejoin God, with or without original sin. The book "Mystical Evolution" by Fr. John Arinterro is an extensive study of spiritual evolution from humanity to divinity and is still in print.

^{LL} The purpose of our lives is not to seek refuge in Heaven, since sin spoiled the original plan. The original plan continues, even though modified by sin. The original plan was that we perfect our human lives, so that we may then "participate in the divine nature of God", (2Pet 1:4). We bring the spiritual growth gained by mastering life in the created realm, and our conquest of sin makes it that much more. We bring our acquired virtue to our incorporation into Christ, and even Christ will gain in some way from our inclusion into him.

The NDE answer is similar, but more open ended. To Brad N., his angelic guide said, "Humans are created and come to earth to evolve their soul."³⁷ The Catholic understanding of this evolutionary goal is divinity (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988), for the purpose of sharing the life of God. Christ incarnates into humans who grow in love in our fallen world, then rejoin the body of Christ, as Christ.

To Dr. George Ritchie, Jesus said, "Have you loved others as I am loving you? Totally? Unconditionally?"^{MM}

Life reviews are usually shown as a sort of movie or hologram, during which the viewer feels the emotions of those he is interacting with.

Life reviews often include knowledge of the role that others had or were to have in our own life. Lynnclaire Dennis was treated to this first hand during her NDE life review: "...the meadow became an amphitheater and I saw every person who played a role in my life. I was greeted by acquaintances, friends, extended family. I realized the depth of meaning we have in every life. I understood each person aside from the labels we assign, and the cubbyholes we place them in."³⁸

Rene Hope Turner was also surprised that small events in her life actually had great meaning. She learned this during her own life review, Jesus was the reviewer, "He stood beside me and directed me to look to my left, where I was replaying my life's less complimentary moments; I relived those moments and felt not only what I had done but also the hurt I had caused. Some of the things I would have never imagined could have caused pain. I was surprised that some things I may have worried about, like shoplifting a

^{MM} During NDE's Jesus (and all the citizens of Heaven), love unconditionally, but are aware of, and disapprove of the failings of any person. These two principles may exist side by side.

chocolate as a child, were not there whilst casual remarks which caused hurt unknown to me at the time were counted. When I became burdened with guilt I was directed to other events which gave joy to others. Though I felt unworthy, it seemed the balance was in my favor. I received great Love.”³⁹

Ranelle Wallace skipped over some events during her life review, she had made permanent correction to these failings and they no longer existed, or were no longer needed for learning.⁴⁰

NDE’s speak of the “Book of Life” (those saved), and books recording each life, and these ideas mesh precisely with biblical descriptions. The apostle John records, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the book.”, (Rev 20:11-12). “Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.”, (Rev 20:15).

One of the most informative life reviews involves a record search in Heaven. Hal’s life was being reviewed and the event is paraphrased here.^{NN}

“They found my life record, which was unexpectedly written old style on hide. It was no larger than a business card. I

^{NN} This complete NDE story shows the dimensions or virtues of Christ to be the focus of creation. Human lives, bodies, circumstances are all arranged around the advancement of these incarnated dimensions of Christ, (that’s us). Christ could have remained in fulfilled perfection, but he chose to incarnate, probably knowing of the fall of humanity. Triumph over sin results in a deeper quality of love for Christ through the members of his larger body of Christ.

asked how my entire life could be contained in a few lines of writing.”

“I was told that the writing told of my moral make up and the moral abilities and the damage or limitations done to them by original sin. I was also told that a person always tries to make the best decision according to his or her imperfect abilities, and in this way our choices are made by free will, but are also predictable.”

“I was also told that my free will could make a leap of faith so to speak, and make a decision which was not limited by my moral resources, and all this was somehow known by God who also reserved the right to arrange the prior circumstances and to distribute the results, to bring about his plan.”⁴¹

A pioneer NDE researcher and cardiologist Dr. Pim van Lommel observes, “People can talk for hours or even days about their life review, even though the cardiac arrest lasted only a couple of minutes.”

A life review of sorts is in the prophecy of two modern Marian apparitions. Marian revelations, like NDE’s are private revelations. The Virgin Mary’s appearance at Garbandal, Spain from 1961-1965; and at Medjugorje, 1981-present, both include prophecy of a revelation of moral conscious, to each individual in the world. It will be a simultaneous event and all people of any, or no religion will know their standing before God. Details beyond that are not known, but it will be a life review in some way.⁴²

Heaven: characteristics and citizens

Thankfully Heaven does not involve sitting on a cloud strumming a harp...unless that’s what you enjoy doing. Heaven is a real flesh and bone, extended family exploring life...and everyone gets his or her own idea of a mansion.

One of the most interesting visits to Heaven was given to Cynthia H., “Jesus and I walked, observing the animals. We walked by a farmhouse, and a woman came out and gave us a loaf of twelve grain bread, fresh from her oven. Jesus and I ate it, and he said it was his favorite kind.”⁴³

“We continued into another cabin, and spoke with a woman who was sweeping the floor, she said that her husband was out hunting.^{OO} I was surprised that hunting was allowed in Heaven.”

“A third cabin we entered was my own, it was just as I wanted — cozy, with a fireplace, yarn, and a stove.”

Other descriptions of Heaven or of advanced Purgatory have people engaged in all sorts of arts and sciences. Every meadow, home and person is individually idealized of course.

Sharon M. met her brothers, both of whom had been miscarried by their mother.⁴⁴ Sharon was not previously aware of these brothers, and it was confirmed by her mother.

We reestablish forgotten bonds within our large Heavenly family, and meet members of our family who were generations past. We may have lived a prior incarnation with these members, this idea occurs in NDE accounts.^{PP}

The following account of an NDE visit to Heaven could be considered typical for a deep or extended NDE. “I was thinking of a

^{OO} Mt 22:30 teaches of no marriage in the resurrection, or presumably Heaven. The likely situation here is that this couple simply wanted to remain together. It is unlikely that any sort of forced and enforced family separation occurs in Heaven.

Our marriage in Heaven — our permanent union — is to Christ and as Christ. This woman was actually married to the human like dimension of Christ, who was her husband on earth. Therefore, no violation of Mt 22:30.

^{PP} The idea (when it is expressed) in NDE's is that the virtues of Christ are primary, and the person who controls them is secondary. The Biblical example is the second, human life appearance of Elijah. The idea of prophecy is an eternal thought of God; this one life may be under the life stewardship of Elijah or John the prophet. Jesus give witness to this, see footnote K, this book.

lady that was incredibly happy on earth, and I was certain that she should be around here. Out of the blue before I could finish my thought there she was walking past me only 10 times happier. I just thought of the particular person and right there they appear in front of me.”

“...I immediately recognize them as the apostles, Elijah and David of the Old Testament. I was amazed to see them. It was like you knew everyone for a long time and just forget who they are. In the middle sat someone that seemed to emit such great light it was so bright and powerful that you really couldn't look right at it. I just knew it was Jesus.”⁴⁵

In NDE accounts Heaven is physical, and is likely the actual and simultaneous resurrection. NDE visitors to Heaven physically see, hear and feel. We assume that Heaven is a spiritual existence awaiting fulfillment in the physical resurrection, but we observe Jesus in his resurrection just three days after death.^{qq}

NDE's show the resurrection is not a one time group event, but the entry into physical perfection which each part of creation will undergo, according to its own ability to do so. The Catholic Church also teaches of a final judgment and resurrection of all creation.

Most significant is that the resurrection (of the just) is the literal person of Christ. This teaching is made by Christ himself in Jn 11:25, where he declares his own person to our eternal life (Heaven), and our resurrection. It is a Catholic understanding that both the resurrection and Heaven is the very person of Christ.

^{qq} In scripture, Heaven is used as a term of perfected existence rather than a strictly spiritual existence. Bible descriptions of Heaven, Limbo and the Devil involve physical perception and interaction, and all this now, before the final day of the physical resurrection.

Those in Heaven participate in the divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4), but they largely act with a human physicality that retains its limitations. NDE's have persons of Heaven, walking, eating, studying, playing, learning in ways that they did on earth. There are many exceptions, but God made us human, and even when we gain a divine nature in Heaven, we do not lose our human nature.

Is this what we can expect...to continue doing things the hard, human way? No, the enjoyable human way. The human way is hard because of sin, ego, pride, greed. In Heaven we will have an eternity to enjoy exploring and learning. Start making the mental and willful shift now, and you will be that much ahead later.

Those in Heaven will not lack energy, nor need to repair cells and muscles, yet banquets occur in NDE's. Loved one's materialize from light, and move across vast distances at will, yet their usual means of travel seems to be walking. People are recorded working to compose music, they do not snap their fingers and produce it. We will make spiritual communication that needs no words, but if we want to learn a new language, we will have to study it, even in Heaven.

Jesus was the real human nature of the divine Son of God. He could move across the universe at will, but he walked the length of Israel. He could have created silver coins, but he chose to work for them as a carpenter. He had divine access to all knowledge and ability, but usually did things the human way. This seems to our mode of operation in Heaven, based on many NDE's that record activity in Heaven.

Both Catholic doctrine and NDE accounts speak of Heavenly beings tasked by Christ with the operation of creation. The bible lists nine such Heavenly orders of beings: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels, and Angels.

An account from the IANDS website (which does not reveal contributor's names) is as follows:^{RR}

"I remember learning about the jobs of angels. They count everything, births and deaths. I learned different areas of heaven are assigned for different areas of earth life (animal lives, water, medicinal advances people are making), and angels oversee it all."⁴⁶

From this same website, we read another account of a Heavenly being who operates creation. This one is certainly in the highest league of workers, she appears to be Wisdom herself, as written of in the biblical book of Wisdom.

"A female voice told me that what I create is mine. I then looked at the direction where this voice was coming from and I saw her. She was consciousness itself. She was like a huge orb of white light with many hands going in and out of her. She was like billions of conscious minds put together".⁴⁷

This idea has not only Christ and the heavenly workers making creation, but our own selves as well. This is perhaps mystical theology, but it is not really new theology.

Ancient NDE's

The first known NDE was recorded by Plato, at the conclusion of his book, "The Republic", written 380 BC. It is the story of the warrior Er, who was killed but twelve days later, on his funeral pyre, rose, dodged the flames and climbed off of it to recount his

^{RR} Heavenly principalities participate in creation and maintenance of our world. Just like the bad angels, there exists bad principalities, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, (Ep 6:12). This explains how original sin is propagated in our world.

To this day, creation comes from Christ and heaven perfect, without flaw. The evil principalities which were banned from Heaven continue their work in exile, and their now flawed actions of creation distort Christ's perfect creation as it enters into the realm of creation.

afterlife story, as follows.⁴⁸ All narrative in quotations, are Plato's paraphrasing of Er's account of the afterlife.

Er was shown openings in the sky, from which good people ascend and descend. He is also shown openings in the earth from which some people are released after punishment [Purgatory]; others may never be released from this netherworld.

Judges assign individuals to the heavens or the underworld, and gather the good on the right and the evil on the left. Those leading a wicked life on earth enter into these subterranean pits. Each person wears a symbol of their deeds. The judges told Er to report all that he witnessed, as a message to mankind.

Some interpretation is needed for the reminder of Er's afterlife tour. In Heaven, Er sees people choosing their next life and "returning" to earth. This would now be interpreted as Christ choosing his next incarnation on earth.⁵⁵ Er sees Heavenly beings

^{ss} When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly by giving form to nothing, creation results. Creation results when Christ donates his own selected attributes to give form to a core of nothing. Every tree, animal and atom was once a part of Christ. Thought, emotion, logic, animals, humans, angels all first had existence as selected attributes of Christ in Heaven. In Er's NDE, he observes Christ forming newly created people and animals. It is not a matter of people becoming animals (as told by Er), but of the single divine person of Christ creating animals from his own person, and "sending" them to earth. Christ may make creation directly from himself, or via nature and biology, or both. If he uses nature, he first creates nature from himself and sustains it from himself.

Er observes people (that is dimensions of Christ), choosing powerful lives on earth, that face the dangers of egoism, greed and tyranny. In fact, Christ incarnates dimensions of himself into these dangers in our world. Those who successfully master such dangers might be Gandhi, saint Claire of Assisi or her friend saint Francis. These people could have been wealthy tyrants of some sort, but they chose a better life. Christ delegates much of creation to the principalities, thrones, dominions, etc. of Heaven. Er may be observing these Heavenly powers in the act of creating animals and people.

Plato wrote "The Republic" in 380 bc, Er observes people going to some sort of paradise or heaven, yet Jesus was the first man to Heaven, (Jn 3:13). The people Er observed must have gone to some sort of lower heaven, or a paradise sort of limbo. See also section on "previous lives", page 33.

and powers, who he labels according to his own culture as “the Spindle of Necessity”, sirens and various powers of heaven according to Greek religion.

Er observed those arriving in paradise in a description that could be from the vision of a saint, or a modern NDE. Those newly arriving, “...seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath.”

“Some of those arriving in paradise had come from under the earth [Purgatory], and were likewise greeted. And they told one another of what had happened, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth...”

Er was an enlightened warrior for his day, his new understanding of his vocation did not include pillage, rape or enslaving populations.

“...for every wrong which they had done to any one they suffered tenfold; or once in a hundred years, such being reckoned to be the length of man’s life, and the penalty being thus paid ten times in a thousand years.”

“If, for example, there were any who had been the cause of many deaths, or had betrayed or enslaved cities or armies, or been guilty of any other evil behavior, for each and all of their offences they received punishment ten times over, and the rewards of beneficence and justice and holiness were in the same proportion.”

“I need hardly repeat what he [Er] said concerning young children dying almost as soon as they were born. Of piety and

impiety to gods and parents, and of murderers, there were retributions other and far greater, which he described.”^{TT}

Plato was a seeker of moral knowledge and adds his own comments, “Let each one of us leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only, if by venture he may find someone who will make him able to learn and discern between good and evil...”

Saint and Pope of the church, Gregory the Great records at least three NDE’s. Pope Gregory reigned as pope from 590-604 and his book “Dialogues” records many afterlife revelations including three NDE’s, all of which he felt were trustworthy.⁴⁹

The first is of a desert monk named Peter, who died and visited Hell, seeing many people in the flames. Peter understood that he was deserving of Hell by his unworthy way of life. An angel interceded in his death and said to him, “Go thy way back again, and hereafter carefully look unto thyself, how thou ledest thy life.” At this, he returned to life. The monk Peter lived his vocation with renewed commitment, giving himself fully to prayer and fasting, as was befitting of a desert monk.

^{TT} Infant children were (as expected) admitted to paradise. Er’s comment concerning piety to one’s gods, makes a certain sense. To give loyalty to one’s idea of the supreme being (even if limited or erroneous), is to obey one’s moral conscience which is really the final standard of judgment. The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs on the requirement to obey one’s conscience, (beginning at paragraph 1776), even though it may err.

The god’s were a moral guide which usually contained a moral code that was better than nothing. Obedience to the gods gave a person paradise instead of Hell in the afterlife. Without the god’s, heaven and Hell were no longer sought and avoided, and behavior slipped. The Stoics and other religions used impersonal moral ideals, which affected one’s afterlife. An afterlife goal of some sort usually produced better behavior. The God of Abraham, and then later Jesus, were simply unknown to most of the world’s people, for most of history. The idea of a god is not so much false, as it is a distorted and distant idea of God, which all of humanity once knew. God allowed this idea to remain in place, while he restored the idea of gods to its proper form as God.

The second NDE is of a businessman Stephen, who mistakenly died and was brought before an unnamed judge at the gates of Hell. The judge told the angels that he wanted Stephen the blacksmith, not Stephen the businessman. Stephen the blacksmith died that same hour, and Stephen the businessman returned to life.

Stephen the businessman did not fully reform and at his second death, he was seen in our third NDE, of a soldier. Stephen the businessman was generous in almsgiving, but lacking correct chastity. The soldier saw Stephen the businessman being pulled toward to Hell by his hips, and pulled up toward Heaven by his arms. The soldier returned to life not knowing the outcome of this tug of war.

During his NDE the soldier saw three people, (1) Stephen the businessman, who died, three years after his NDE (recounted above); (2) Peter a papal steward, who was in Hell (or possibly Purgatory) for excessive cruelty when he punished criminals; (3) A priest who walked over the bridge from Purgatory to paradise, because he led a worthy life.

In the each of the three NDE's, there is observed a bridge from what is called Hell to paradise, and the NDE visitors observed people crossing over. What is labeled Hell, may actually be Purgatory since those in Hell would have no possible bridge crossing to Heaven.

The scholar-monk Bede tells of the man Drythelm and his NDE in his book, "Ecclesiastical History of the English People."⁵⁰ Drythelm died in the evening, and came to life again the next morning, abruptly sitting up on his former deathbed, to the astonishment of the surrounding mourners.

At his death Drythelm was met by a guide who first brought him to a valley in which men and women are hurled from one side of flames, to the other side which is ice. Drythelm was told that the people were deathbed converts, who now needed prayers, Masses

and fasts for their release. Their whipsaw Purgatory reflected their whipsaw last minute conversion.

These people had it much better than the next group who Drythelm saw...those in Hell, burned without end in a bottomless stinking pit.

Finally, Drythelm was shown the antechamber of Heaven, which was a paradise of happy people, then he was given a brief glimpse of some level of Heaven, which was even that much more glorious. He was admonished to lead a life worthy of Heaven and returned to life. Drythelm explains all this to his wife, and retires to a Benedictine monastery to lead a life of prayer and devotion.

St. Theresa of Avila had a similar private revelation, her's was an out of body experience, in which she writes that while at prayer, she was transported to Hell, to see the place reserved for her, merited by her lax life as a nun. She reformed her life as a nun, and went on to become one of the Churches great mystics.^{UU}

Here is the NDE account of British Rear Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort who is remembered today for devising the Beaufort Wind Scales. Admiral Beaufort fell into Portsmouth harbor in 1795; clothed and booted, and unable to swim, he promptly sank. Writing of it later, "Though the senses were deadened, not so the mind,

^{UU} A simple private revelation is one in which God or an agent of God (angel, moral conscious, etc. reveals himself or a message to the recipient, whose body and locus of awareness remains as it was. During an out of body experience the recipients location of awareness is moved to Heaven, Hell, Purgatory or some other place to receive a vision or message. A near death experience is an out of body experience, triggered by the soul's lose of the services of the body. During bilocation the body is physically extended in a sort of duplication to some distant location, and this distant location is the temporary new locus of awareness. An apparition is the appearance of some Heavenly being to a person who uses his normal senses to perceive. There are many variations: locutions, sense of God's will alone, intellect, love, and more. The Catholic church accepts all of these as real, and evaluates each according to its content.

which considered much — the event occurring now...the awkwardness producing it...the bustle it must have occasioned...the effect on my most affectionate father...the moment in which it would be disclosed to my family, and a thousand other circumstances minutely associated with home were the first reflections. Then they took a wider range, our last cruise...a former voyage and shipwreck, my school and boyish pursuits and adventures. Thus travelling backwards, every past incident of my life seemed to glance across my recollection in retrograde succession; not however in mere outline, as here stated, but the picture filled up with every minute and collateral feature. In short, the whole period of my existence seemed to be placed before me in a kind of panoramic review, and each part of it seemed to be accompanied by a consciousness of right or wrong, or by some reflection on its cause or consequences; indeed many trifling events which had been forgotten then crowded into my imagination, and with the character of recent familiarity.”

Admiral Beaufort had a solid religious upbringing, but his NDE did not advance to meeting God or a light being of Heaven. He limited his speculation to asking, “...might it not, in some degree, warrant the inference that death is only a change or modification or our existence, in which there is no real pause or interruption?”

The first modern NDE might be considered as George Ritchie’s (a summary of which appears in this book). George’s NDE occurred when he was a soldier in 1943; he later became a doctor specializing in psychiatry. Dr. Raymond Moody was inspired by George’s NDE account and wrote a pioneering book dealing with near death experiences in 1975; “Life after Life”, which is still in print.

NDE afterlife accounts occur in all cultures, but for reasons unknown are more frequent in western cultures, or possibly just

more frequently reported.^w NDE accounts from diverse cultures, and for two-thousand years are amazingly similar.

Unconditional Love

We study NDE's for profit, not entertainment. We will one day be asked a profound question, "*What did you do with your life?*". We may prepare our good answer at any stage of our life, and in any circumstances.

Our best answer of course is to speak of our unconditional love in every circumstance. This love is for every person (including ourselves), and every virtue. This love requires practical and even heroic commitment. It may cost our life, our job, our friends, but so much more the profit.

But why unconditional love? Because that's what God is, and we are to be rejoined to God. We cannot observe God or love in its entirety, it would be a case of the part attempting to understand the whole. We may however attempt to define love, or God. This imperfect definition of God or love is 'commitment'.

We may love our spouse, our auto collection, our cable channel. But what does God love? God's perfect love, loves God...what else. God's commitment to God sounds a bit selfish at first, but consider that God seeks to include all that is not God into himself. God goes so far as to make our sin into his own virtue, that's what remediation is. This is how we rejoin Christ, he takes on our sin, and by moral mediation, makes our sin into his virtue, the

^w Scientific and psychological study of the near death experience became significant only after 1970, at this point religions were more willing to consider them as real. With the advent of the internet there is now a database of thousands of NDE accounts. There still exist institutional obstacles, Islam generally does not recognize NDE's, Buddhism has problems with soul and God as they occur in NDE's. Christianity does not subscribe to the NDE terms "past lives" and "reincarnation". China is reluctant to admit to any authority or influence above the state.

result is our union with God. Everybody wins. In doing this, God increases dimensions of his love, and all creation benefits.

As the ongoing Christ on earth, we are called to this same unconditional love. How many times do we, who are the body of Christ — the current Christ — fail to remediate the evil we encounter. So often we propagate it, or even expand it. One incident in a thousand requires police action, the others may be remediated with “excuse me”, “you first”, or simply to ignore it and add a silent prayer. If everybody did this, poverty would be eliminated and nuclear weapons would rust away unused and unwanted.

What would happen if everyone loved unconditionally? Salvation for everybody, Purgatory for no one, and end to war, poverty and disease, and Christ would move up the date of his second coming to earth, (Rev 21: 1-4).

Let us recall how sin and moral remediation works. In a properly formed action we give due regard to God, self and others. A corrupted action is one that is lacking or misproportioned in one or more of these requirements. Sin is usually misproportioned toward self, and under proportioned or completely lacking in its regard to God.

Once this corrupted virtue exists in our world, it is usually propagated or even increased in its deformity. When we are criticized we all too often pass it along. A child growing up in a criticizing, yelling, swearing, selfish environment would be expected to learn and pass on these disorders.

Jesus takes on these disorders and by moral effort, remediates them into virtue; he blesses when cursed, pardons when struck, prays when cheated. That’s how Jesus (and the entire body of Christ) saves us. Jesus accepts our sin, rather than deflecting or propagating it. By moral effort he makes our sin into his virtue. In

this process our failings are made into Christ's own virtue and person.

The original plan was one step simpler. With no sin to remediate, Jesus Christ would take our virtue into his own virtue. We would retain all our human traits, but we would gain inclusion into the divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4, CCC 398).

Jesus needs the "Ongoing Christ on Earth" (that's us) to continue his work. All those in Heaven have no contact with sin, and may no longer take on sin for remediation. Proactive faith, hope and love are their action, and it helps us on earth. The Eucharist has an ongoing remediation value, but we observe that disorder is still widespread. We are the ongoing Christ on earth, and we have daily contact with sin, if we were to remediate it into virtue, all the disorder in our world would soon be loved out of existence.

Part of total love is commitment to the teachings and commandments of Christ, (If you love me, keep my commandments, Jn 14:15). Recall that Christ is not only a human face, but eternal elements of virtue. This and the sacraments make the Catholic Church the most effective tool in our efforts to deepen our life as the body of Christ. NDE's expand current teaching on Christ and give great inspiration to us in our efforts.

Mohammad Z. took unconditional love to a heroic level, and it cost him virtually no effort.⁵¹ As a boy he dumped some water, and made the effort to do it on a nearby tree. At his NDE life review this small event was greatly applauded.^{ww} That's unconditional love — easy, hard; big, small; thought, action.

^{ww} This event gives insight into the way God judges an act. It would confirm what is already known, that God discards the accidental form of an act and judges according to its conformance to his own fundamental virtues.

In Mohammad's efforts, the vital part of love is the subject making the love (himself), and not the object receiving the love. The vital element was that Mohammad gave love to the least of creation. During his life review, the court of Heaven applauded this small act as one of his greatest acts of love...and why not, all of creation benefited, starting with Mohammad.

One of the greatest teachings, or reminders of the NDE is of the transitory and accidental nature of our earthly lives. We are guaranteed to one day lose it all: life, home, job, status. We will then pick up with what we really gained in this life: love and virtue — specifically the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit:

Love	Generosity
Joy	Gentleness
Peace	Faithfulness
Patience	Modesty
Kindness	Self-control
Goodness	Chastity

In mnemonic form it is: Loving Jesus Please Provide King George Great Gentleness For Maintaining Self Control.

Salvation

It may surprise the reader to learn that it is a matter of Catholic doctrine that God's original design was the divinization of each individual, (CCC 398).

Incorporation into Jesus, first the human nature of Jesus then his divine nature was God's intended life path for every person. The cross was not part of the original plan, but a latter obstacle which Jesus overcame, (CCC 398, Ep 1:4, Mt 25:34). God's union with man proceeds as planned, not because of sin, but in spite of sin.

With no death as part of the original plan, our divinization was to occur in this life.^{xx} Jesus would have come as planned, but found no sin or sinners to overcome prior to making union with us. Heaven (who is the person of Christ) would have literally been on earth, and those attaining divinization would have guided the upcoming generations.

This Catholic idea meshes with the NDE idea that our goal in life is spiritual growth and evolution. Our salvation is to become the body of Christ. From eternity God planned our communion with him, not as our salvation, but simply as the final step in our growth as persons. The idea that God planned communion with humanity from eternity has support in scripture (Ep 1:4, Mt 25:34, 2Pet 1:4) and the Catholic catechism, (CCC 398). Jesus Christ came as planned to make this communion, but because of intervening original sin, he first had to make the necessary reformation of sin into virtue.

^{xx} We were never intended to die, so our divinization (CCC 398, 2Pet 1:4), was to occur in this life on earth. We would have entered directly into the divine nature of Jesus; what prevents this direct divinization now is sin and imperfection, so now our first participation in Christ is in his human nature, (which explains why we do not walk about divine), then in his divine nature, after we attain perfection of will. We would have entered into the body of Christ via the Eucharist.

Those we call saints have often attained the divine union or marriage in this life, their supernatural miracles are an indication of this, but not the core of it. Divine union in this life is limited to union of wills, the body stills dies.

Regarding entry into the body of Christ via the Eucharist – this was likely the only originally designed means. Baptism (which also repairs sin), was devised by Christ as a response to sin, but sin was never intended and Baptism was devised by God only after sin affected creation. Our original destiny was divinization as the body of Christ in the absence of sin (CCC 398), and the Eucharist was likely the intended means of this inclusion into the body of Christ.

Jesus speaks of this original sanctifying purpose in Jn 53-54, “I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.” With the onset of sin, baptism is now the sanctifying grace, and the Eucharist is now understood as an actual grace.

It is a worthwhile topic for meditation to examine how creation might have proceeded in the absence of sin. Humanity would have perfected community living and personal morality, and would be ready for communion when Jesus arrived. We would have skipped Heaven altogether and entered into the divine Christ here on earth via the Eucharist. “Resurrection” would not be part of our vocabulary, and we might speak of the “Perfection” instead.^Y

But sin did enter into creation, and it is something that must be understood. Sin is a lacking in the wholeness of an act. Sin is often effected as proactive evil, but it has its beginning as deficiency.

The effect of sin, which is a lacking or privation of goodness proper to the act, may be effected as a proactive evil. A proactive good act will become a selfish act, but will remain proactive. In this way evil may not only be deficient in good, but proactive in its evil.

In correct moral functioning, we give due regard to self, others and God. If we give unjustified emphasis to self, or we choose to disregard God or others, our act is then lacking what should be part of it. The resultant act is (usually) weighted toward self. A practical example might be the virtue of prudence, which when corrupted toward self, becomes hoarding or greed; self respect becomes arrogance.

As designed, humanity had both individual and communal attributes. Goodness, both physical and spiritual, were intended to be shared among one family and larger community. With the advent

^Y Sanctifying grace is the means by which anyone or anything is included into the body of Christ: humans, angels, Eucharist, and in the final formation even the lion that lies down with the lamb. Even God cannot make more God, and our divinization is by inclusion into Christ via sanctifying grace. The Holy Spirit is the giver, and one of the gifts of sanctifying grace, the end result of which is membership in the body of Christ.

of sin, the communal attributes of humanity propagated sin along with goodness.

It is worth the time to study the virtue/sin transformation, since it may be reversed for spiritual advancement or salvation of others, and the betterment of our world.^{ZZ} On the positive side, the overwhelming example is Jesus, and now the entire body of Christ.^{AAA} On the cross, the bodily suffering that Jesus underwent atoned for sin, thus allowing sinners to be incorporated into the body of Christ. Sin may also be reformed into virtue by moral trial and triumph. Jesus did this in the Garden of Gethsemane.

In a related case, in 1Cor 5:5 a man suffers his own sin in his body rather than in his virtues or soul, so that he may still attain salvation. Here the suffering is not taken on voluntarily, nevertheless the effect is the same. The book of Revelation speaks of this involuntary reformatory suffering on a world wide scale. To take on suffering voluntarily like Jesus, produces a better quality of virtue.

A textbook example which really lays out sin for examination, its causes, effects, and interchangeability occurs in 1Chronicles chapter 21. King David takes a census of Israel, which is an offense against God. The people of Israel belong to God (not David), when David counts them, he is implying that they are his to count. God offers him the choice of punishments: famine, war or plague. David chooses plague which kills 70,000.

^{ZZ} Remediation of evil and salvation of soul are two distinct events. Remediation of evil into virtue is the necessary step prior to one's communion with Christ.

^{AAA} One theory of how exactly Jesus turns our sin into his virtue, and our self into his very person is as follows. Jesus accepts rather than deflect or propagate another's sin, and willfully turns it into virtue: greed is made detachment, irreverence is made reverence, anger is made patience. In doing this, Christ makes our sin into his very virtue...union with God.

The theology of the matter is that as God's particular people they are under God's greater protection, but as David's people, they do not enjoy the same degree of protection. In this episode the choice to sin is fulfilled in the consequences of sin.

A lesson from this tragedy is that even our immaterial actions have consequences, and they may not be in the same form as our offense. We recall the ten commandments in which offenses against God are at the top of the list.

God cannot make evil of any sort, but as our parent, he does assign our evil (generated from our sin), so that the maximum good may come of it. God may make this assignment directly or via natural means.

There is much more good news than bad in NDE salvation. Francine B. was quizzed by devils as to her religious beliefs, when she replied that she believed in Jesus, she was released from impending Hell.⁵² By her belief alone, Francine had a participation in Christ, she was a member of Christ, who is the entire body of Christ, and was not eligible for Hell.

Judas was saved, or so it seems from the account of Jeffery C., who found himself on the brink of Hell, only to have Judas recommend that he pray to Jesus for salvation.⁵³ He did so, and was rescued. A condemned Judas would be incapable of recommending prayer to Jesus.

The main judgment event is the life review, in which one judges one's self against the ideals of God, of which the NDE visitor now has profound knowledge. Trial scenes are occasionally recorded, but we seem to place ourselves where we belong, with those victorious in life receiving a great homecoming celebration. Those unable to join Heaven seem to seek out the highest level into

which they are “allowed”, and engage in any available purgation activity.

Religion

NDE patient Howard Storm was told by Jesus and his angels that any religion has its value according to its results in bringing one closest to God.⁵⁴

In a general sense, our religious efforts toward God are means, and not ends in themselves. It is Catholic theology that anyone regardless of religion or even non-religion may be saved, by obeying their conscience.^{BBB} *The greatest value of any religion is promoting moral and spiritual development in their members; in this way each religion is of great value.* God gives, and uses the sacraments, but is not limited to their use alone.

The most obvious example is the Jewish faith which contains no Christian sacraments. Yet the Jewish prophets attained deeply into Heaven. Those with a great love even prior to Judaism may also be expected to have attained Heaven.

Buddhists seeking ideal forms of love, Greek and Roman Stoics doing likewise, and anyone reaching outside of self interest is liable to incorporation into Christ. The development of the Christian religion took centuries, but at every stage God revealed ideals of personal morality through individual conscience, and religions such as Buddhism, Stoicism, Confucianism. In this way, each religion gives guidance to personal morality, which both the Church and NDE’s

^{BBB} Both Catholic and NDE teaching have an individual’s moral conscience as the pivotal factor in salvation. Christ forms every person and every moral conscience. Layers of religions and traditions shape conscience, but Christ remains at its core, and to follow one conscience is to follow Christ. Conscience may err, but we must follow both its positive promptings and its negative prohibitions, (CCC 1776). The Christian religion is the gift of most intimate union with Christ, who is God. Other religions that promote denial of self, toward union with God are of course legitimate.

view as the decisive factor in judgment. Christianity is the highest cultivation of religion due to its intimate union with Christ, who is Heaven itself.

In NDE's, agnostics and even atheists seem to be judged on their personal morality rather than any lack of religion. Most seek a relationship with God after their NDE. Many people who never practiced religion, began a deep relationship with God after their NDE. Many saw in detail the results of their large and small actions and inactions, and became much more mindful of the morality of their actions. *NDE's have a far greater moral conversion rate than any religion.*

The idea that NDE's are tricks of the Devil has no foundation. During NDE's patients are made aware of Heaven and the conditions for attaining it; Jesus is often encountered, and Hell and Purgatory are shown as places to be avoided. There simply is no trickery.

This book promotes the Catholic faith as the best means available for one's deepest sharing in Christ. The evidence for this is the ongoing supernatural virtues of its members (Jn 10:38; Mt 17:20). These miracles are evidence beyond human abilities, and they result from a participation in the divinity of Christ. To share in the divine nature of God (2Pet 1:4, CCC 398) is not frosting on the cake of salvation, but the very reason we are given creation. It is our fullest union with God, and we bring our perfected virtues of this life.

Sacraments offer reform of the obstacle of sin, and a renewed opportunity at divine union with God. Our divine union with Christ was God's intended destiny for humanity (CCC 398), and it was to be made in this life. It follows that a religion devoted to union with Christ (Christianity) would be the highest development in religion. Any religion can ultimately end in salvation, but valid

sacraments offer a sharing in the divine person of God, now in this life.

The response of Catholics to NDE revelations should be one of encouragement. Recall that NDE's are not meant to be Christian instruction or doctrine; these already exist in the Church. NDE's confirm what is already doctrine and give us a glimpse of the pay off.

Those experiencing NDE's are often victims of this unfair life, but they confirm that God is aware of this, and wants us to push on in faith. NDE victims of suicide are turned back at the gates of Heaven and told to stick it out. NDE's reveal the enormous importance of our every act, and its profound consequences. NDE's confirm the primacy of the life of the spirit and the temporary nature of our earthly existence. We should make ourselves ready to step into the next life at any moment and give good answer to Christ's question, "What did you do with your life?"

We are joyful for those having gone before, knowing that the all loving God now fulfills their every goodness. Every disorder in our lives on earth will be reformed into perfection by the efforts of the body of Christ, of which we are members. We will see every act of faith existing as eternal glory.

Spiritual level (vibration of spirit)

NDE visitors to Heaven often speak of every entity having a unique spiritual frequency of oscillation. Catholic theology does not speak of such a spiritual oscillation at all, and there is no contradiction to existing teachings.

Such an oscillation is expected from our knowledge of science however. Physics speaks of every entity as having a wave nature, which may also become a material nature. Our underlying nature is spiritual, and it may be observed in some manner. This frequency of oscillation would be an expected observation. Science

currently understands that everything is based on vibrating super strings of energy.^{ccc}

NDE visitors describe all of creation as having a frequency of spirit that is derived from the spirit of Jesus, (who has the highest frequency). This is just a rewording of the idea that all creation comes from Christ, and we are made in the image of God.

Arthur Yensen observed this aspect of spirit, and it was explained to him by an elder of Heaven, “Everything is maintained by an all pervading master vibration of spirit which prevents aging and breakdown. Your thoughts are vibrations which are controlled by the master vibration which neutralizes all negative thoughts and lets you think only good thoughts of love, freedom and happiness.”⁵⁵

This rather new age sounding explanation has sound basis in Christian theology. In Heaven (who is Christ), our own free wills, shall operate within the bounds of the will of Christ. The “master vibration” that the elder of Heaven speaks of may be some principle of nature created by Christ.

Spiritual efficacy

Spiritual efficacy is the principle of the real effect of spirit, and it is often demonstrated in NDE accounts. To repeat from a previous section of this book:

Spirit is intangible but as real as matter; and it has real effect. Spirit is immaterial being. Being is anything that exists: a

^{ccc} Physics of the “Big Bang” gives an indication of eternal being. It is thought that the universe was a single super dimension, static until the big bang. At this event the super dimension unfolded into specific offspring dimensions such as time and space. From theology we know that eternity is the unified existence of cause and effect, God is the cause, and God is the effect. At creation this closed cycle of eternity subdivides into lesser dimensions, that we call creation. These unfolding of dimensions were detached from God’s absolute will, making them a created entity.

rock, an idea, energy, emotion, logic, a person. Patience, respect, hate, reverence, morality, memory, free will are all spirit, and all have real effect in our world. Spirit is the underlying framework of all creation, and corruption of the willed moral virtues degrades the operation of all creation.

Every moral (willed) act has a real effect on all of creation. Our thoughts are more than thoughts, and acts comprised of thought, will and action are of triple effect. Mohammad Z. was shown this during his NDE life review. He relived an event in which he beat up another boy, from the victim's viewpoint. Mohammad felt not only the injustice and pain, but he saw how the disorder of his act affected all of creation. He also understood that any good or evil performed had its first effect on the person acting. This is hardly new Catholic doctrine, but reading Mohammad's private Catholic revelation — his NDE account — makes it real to the reader.⁵⁶

Kate D. was put on trial for her childhood crime of biting another girl in retaliation, rather than forgive her.⁵⁷ The prosecutor, who was blonde, suave, calculating Satan sought to include the biting incident into a larger murder charge.

Jesus who was judge, stood by ready to forgive, but the charge was entered as murder. Jesus explained it to Kate before forgiving it. It was a lesson in spiritual efficacy.

“Being angry with another is really murdering that other person. Failure to forgive is like a seed without its sunlight. You starve yourself also. All that we give is first generated by our own soul. If we fail to generate forgiveness which is unconditional love, neither we nor our neighbor will have it.”^{DDD} Deborah L. was told

^{DDD} The question arises, “Will opponents meet in Heaven, and how will they respond to each other?” It is virtually certain that victim and perpetrator will meet; we observe that forgiveness is the norm for Heaven, or even the price of entry. We further observe that every person (attaining the age of moral reasoning, age 7-10) is both victim and perpetrator, even those who do not

this idea by her deceased brother, “Any bitterness or hatred toward others poisons your own heart first. Think of sinners, even the greatest of sinners, as souls who are spiritually handicapped.”⁵⁸

Divine Omnipresence

Catholic theology has Christ everywhere...in Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, not just aware of everything, but in everything...in an apple, an atom, an angle...inside our head, our will, our ideas. This principle is called *divine omnipresence*, and the Christ who creates is part of every creation. The free, online 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia gives a good explanation under the heading “God, attributes of”:

“...God is really present everywhere in creation, not merely in virtue of operation, but in virtue of essence. In other words, God Himself, or the Divine nature, is in immediate contact with, or immanent in, every creature — conserving it in being and enabling it to act.”

Everything has at least the attribute of being. God’s attribute of being resides in creation. If a thing does not have being, it ceases to exist, and this being can only come into creation from God. God may use nature, or humans, or dominions and principalities, but these pass on God’s attribute of being which he donates to creation. Divine omnipresence gives existence to

directly assault another, do so by immaterial sin which corrupts the spiritual framework of our world. The most upstanding secularist would fail in love of God. The finest Christian would fail to fully love God.

The result of this corruption is disease, war, poverty and more. None of these were part of God’s plan for humanity, but they all came about in some manner from human sin, which corrupts the original perfect spiritual framework of creation. In Heaven we will clearly see the profound results of every act.

It is interesting to note that St. Pio (Padre Pio), said that he believed the Italian dictator Mussolini had been saved. Mussolini was a pioneer in the use of chemical weapons against civilians...but also had half a nation praying for him.

everything regardless of its moral standing. Even those in Hell are sustained in existence by God.

This idea was written of by Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas, (Summa Theologica, first part, question 8, article 1;); he went so far as to say God has a non-moral presence even in demons; they were created as angels with the attribute of being, and as devils they retain this non-moral attribute of being, if not they would cease to exist. The idea also appears in scripture (Heb 1:3 Col 1:17, 1Cor 8:6).

NDE visitors to Heaven speak of God as being everywhere, and in all things, and as all things; even things we think of as nonliving.^{EEE} This conforms to the Catholic idea of Heaven, and all in Heaven as being the living person of Christ.

Mellen-Thomas Benedict was given to understand, “All energy and spirit is light. Everything is made from the light of God.”

^{EEE} We should not mistake divine omnipresence for pantheism, which some NDE visitors do. Pantheism has God as everything; divine omnipresence has God inherent in, and sustaining everything. NDE visitors sometimes observe the presence of God sustaining earth for example, and label this the goddess Gaia. This again is NDE mislabeling of Christian theology. It is a Catholic understanding that principalities, dominions and the like (Col 1:16) are tasked by the Trinity with governing nature. In Ephesians 6:12 we learn that, like the angels, some of these heavenly powers became corrupted.

St. Henry Suso observed the former angel of speech, now as the devil controlling blasphemy; our choice of speech is a moral decision and we are not forced to share in such corruption. Other attributes affected by the corrupted principalities are more non optional in nature: reason, love, sexuality are non optional parts of our being, and they have been damaged by the principalities who distribute these attributes to each person and generation. This is one way in which original sin is propagated and shared in by each generation of humanity.

Beyond divine omnipresence is the Catholic idea that Heaven and the resurrection is the very person of Christ, (Jn 11:25). Still beyond this is the final form of the universe when “God will be all in all”, (1Cor 15:28). This will be the completed goal of Christ to attain fullest union with his creation. Hell, of course would be the spoiler to complete inclusion of creation into Christ.

This is a fine impression of the omnipresence of God.⁴⁰ This observation of God as all, is an observation of Heaven, not creation (which is not God). NDE truths must be sifted from their general statements.

Purgatory

We first examine the Catholic idea of Purgatory, then we compare them to NDE accounts.

Purgatory is the state of existence as the body of Christ, which is short of full divine union. We begin our Purgatory at our entrance into the body of Christ at baptism, and what we purge is our burden of original sin, which distorts our will. We are careful of course not to add to this burden with our own careless actions.

Our Purgatory begins now on earth, if necessary we may, (must) continue our purgation after the death of our body. We advance in the body of Christ, starting in the human nature of Christ, then finally to a sharing in the divine person of Christ, as we rid our soul of self interest.^{FFF}

The Heavenly wedding feast that Christ speaks of is our full divine union, when we shall participate in the divine nature, (2Pet1:4). This divine union as the fullness of Christ cannot occur until we are free of all traces of sin and even self. ***We cannot become Christ if we remain self.*** From 1John 3:2-3 we read, "...we shall be like Him [God], for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He [God] is pure." Because God offers to share his life with man (2Pet 1:4), anyone joining God in his life must be free of every imperfection. If Christ forgives our sins of impatience for example, we are not turned into a perfectly patient

^{FFF} This intermediate stage participation in the human nature of Christ was never intended, but is now necessary because of sin. Sin was never intended, and none of its effects were part of God's original plan.

person. Forgiveness is more than a declaration; it is real reformation of soul.

The apostle Paul speaks in some detail about a state of purgation after death in 1Cor 3:10-15. Here Paul speaks of building a structure upon an existing foundation of Christ, (salvation). If a quality structure (gold, silver, gems) having no impurity is constructed, it will stand at judgment. If an imperfect structure that will combust when subjected to the flames of the Holy Spirit, (wood, straw) is built, then it and the builder, (the student and instructor) will need purgation by this fire prior to Heaven. Here purgation due to erroneous teaching is discussed, but willful moral error and imperfection also requires reformation before the attainment of Heaven. Error, distortion and the like are separation from God; we cannot fully participate in Heaven (who is Christ), until we are purged of every distortion and error which separates us from Christ.

Catholic teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. With the coming of Christ, the holding area of Limbo was no longer needed, those able to entered Heaven, those needing purgation entered Purgatory. Limbo no longer seems to be operational.

Purgatory has not only students but teachers as well, this was shown to Amy C., who spoke with a man who was tasked with the spiritual education of a group in Purgatory.⁵⁹ This teacher was a man who cultivated the virtue of humility during his stay on earth, and was teaching its principles to others.

He told Amy that all of life's lessons are much easier to learn in this life. Our bodies and especially our fallen world and damaged virtues give these lessons a real depth that cannot be had as a spirit, or in a perfected realm.^{GGG}

^{GGG} With or without NDE's, life's lessons are certainly not forgotten in Heaven. In

Jean R. was shown a perhaps unexpected dimension of purgatory, “Whenever a person asked God for help, they were removed to another better place. But many were stuck, never asking God for help.”⁶⁰

This makes sense if we understand self as removal from God, and Purgatory as purgation of self. One would advance toward God as self has less control over the will. As self has lesser control over one’s will, one is more likely to go beyond self containment and ask assistance of God.

During his NDE, Mohammad Z. observed who could have been Jesus or any member of the body of Christ, and he saw the effects of excessive attachment to this life; “I had a vague feeling that there was a presence that was following me all the time, like a shadow. But I was so absorbed in the wonder of this whole experience, my thoughts, what was going on, and those people I was visiting, that I didn’t really pay attention to that presence. Eventually, I noticed him. He was an amazing, divine human-like figure who radiated lots of love and light. Instantly, I fell in love with this holy and immensely beautiful presence. I noticed that he loves me deeply and unconditionally. First, I thought he must be a [human] prophet or religious figure, but then I thought that he is even above all that. I realized that he has always been with me throughout my life, always. He was my guide.”

“I got the understanding that everybody who dies has a guide. But some humans are so attached to their physical and material world that they are still worry about their money, possessions. or power even after death. They don’t notice their guide and might not even notice that they are dead! Their soul can stay earth-bound for a long time after their death. For example, my

fact, all members of the body of Christ may make use of the life lessons of any other member. This puts early death on earth in a different perspective.

guide showed me a man who apparently used to be in a position of authority and power back on the earth. After this man's death, he still went to the office he used to work in, trying to sit at the same chair and sign documents. He was oblivious to the fact that his signature does not leave any marks and he has no power and effect in the physical world. He kept going to that office trying to sign things and act as he was still working there, not realizing that he is dead. I got this understanding that any strong earthbound attachment can keep our souls from soaring.”⁶¹

Jean K. observed what could be either Purgatory or Hell, “Below me I could hear people in distress. I knew that if they would turn toward the Light, their suffering would end, but they would not.”⁶² This NDE account is an application of Mk 3:29, that sin against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. The Holy Spirit is the giver of the grace of salvation; if we reject the Holy Spirit we forgo the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including salvation.^{HHH}

George Ritchie’s NDE is one of the most detailed and expansive on record, he was given the grand tour —Heaven, Hell and Purgatory. He saw people working through their obsessions, addictions and sins in a long and grinding fashion. It is not a pleasant observation, but one that must be understood.⁶³

“I noticed a certain phenomenon repeatedly — people unaware of others right beside them. I saw a group of assembly-line workers gathered around a coffee canteen. One of the women asked another for a cigarette, begged her in fact, as though she wanted it more than anything in the world. But the other one, chatting with her friends, ignored her. She took a pack of cigarettes from her coveralls, and without ever offering it to the woman who

^{HHH} This shows the danger of atheism and its more harmful variety anti-theism. NDE’s do not show God automatically rejecting atheists, but anyone rejecting God does put himself in danger of an afterlife without God.

reached for it so eagerly, took one out and lit it. Fast as a striking snake the woman who had been refused, snatched at the lighted cigarette in the other one's mouth. Again, she grabbed at it. And again ... With a little chill of recognition, I saw that she was unable to grip it. Like me in fact, she was dead."

"In one house a younger man followed an older one from room to room. 'I'm sorry, Pa!' he kept saying, [author's note: if this were Hell, there would be no selfless remorse]. 'I didn't know what it would do to Mama! I didn't understand.' But though I could hear him clearly, it was obvious that the man he was speaking to could not. The old man was carrying a tray into a room where an elderly woman sat in bed. 'I'm sorry Pa,' the young man said again. 'I'm sorry Mama.' Endlessly, over and over, to ears that could not hear."

"Several times we paused before similar scenes. A boy trailing a teenaged girl through the corridors of a school. 'I'm sorry, Nancy!' Also, a middle-aged woman begging a gray-haired man to forgive her."

"What are they so sorry for, Jesus?' I pleaded. 'Why do they keep talking to people who can't hear them? 'Then from the Light beside me came the thought: 'They are suicides, chained to every consequence of their act.'"ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱⁱ We observe that these victims of suicide are in Purgatory, not Hell. Suicide however is a sin, and those committing suicide by definition die with an imperfectly formed soul. If the sin is forgiven, the imperfections of the soul remain, and must be worked through prior to attaining Heaven. Our prayers for the souls in Purgatory have great effect. We should offer the Eucharistic sacrifice for them. One of the duties of the common priesthood is to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. We should never simply take communion, but always offer it for a worthy cause.

As to Jesus' idea of a chain of consequences (last sentence), the fullness of any act extends backwards in time to all the causes of the act, and forward in time to all the effects of the act. On the positive side, when we remediate a vice into a virtue, our chain of remediation may restore many prior acts which influence the current local act.

Jesus and Ritchie continue their observations at a bar where people actually seem to enable or prolong the addictions of the invisible souls of Purgatory. Ritchie observed a sort of barrier between the souls of Purgatory and the people on earth. In the bar, when a patron became drunk, this barrier was removed and the addicted souls of Purgatory entered into the actions of the drunken patrons.

This strange observation is possible in that each of our actions affects the entire universe of creation. We may help those in Purgatory by our prayers, fasting, and good actions; but anything this side of Heaven is subject to negative influence as well.^{JJJ}

Ritchie's tour proceeded from Purgatory to Hell, where he saw horrible people attacking each other, their selfishness had advanced to the point that they could not accept even the existence of other people.

Hell

The subject of Hell can be a matter of contradiction, but not irreconcilability between the Catholic Church and some NDE accounts. CCC 1033-1037 confirms Christ's teaching of an eternal Hell. Christ (Mt 25:41), and the apostles speak of eternal Hell, and the Church must also speak of it.^{KKK} In contrast some NDE's speak of

^{JJJ} As designed, all of creation had both individual and communal attributes, and virtues had by one were shared by all. With the advent of sin, disorder was now also shared within the community of creation, (Ex 20:5,6). Even unwilling illness has a link to its original willed disorder (devils). In Luke 13:10-16, Jesus attributes a crippling illness to the Devil. In Luke 11:14 Jesus drives out a demon causing muteness. Other examples are the many instances of demons protesting as they are removed by Jesus as he heals an illness, (Luke 4:40-41). The apostle Peter was surprised to learn that even disordered thought retains this link (Mt 16:23).

^{KKK} "Eternal", is the unified existence of cause and effect. It is usually used when describing God; God is the cause of God, and God is the effect of God. All

Hell as a place of great but non-eternal punishment — a severe Purgatory.⁶⁴ Hell and Satan do occur in NDE's, but when speaking of duration, NDE's have Hell being ultimately conquered by Christ.

An idea of Hell common to both Catholic and NDE teaching might be that of Jesus speaking to Cynthia H., "Some people chose to go to hell, I have already forgiven them; but they must forgive themselves."⁶⁵

Where Hell is viewed in an NDE it is exceedingly horrible. Tammy H was shown relatives on fire in Hell for various uncorrected sins, and was told that she must correct herself in order to avoid Hell.⁶⁶ In her NDE she was admonished not only for major sins, but also for cynicism, negative and mean disposition.

Catholic theology affirms the idea of Hell, just as Jesus spoke of it, but cannot say with certainty if anyone actually exists eternally in Hell. NDE's state with certainty the existence of Hell, and its occupants, but also allude to, or state directly of Christ overcoming not only death, but Hell itself.

The Catholic faith does not insist upon Hell, it expects eternal Hell, and soundly so, based upon the teachings of Christ. The

thought, will and action are internal to the closed cycle of God.

Creation is an incomplete act of God, requiring our action to complete it. When God allows one of his actions to remain incomplete so to speak, it terminates outside of God, this is creation (which God desires to eventually reunite with). Each person is called on to complete God's creation of that person, by reuniting with God.

Hell has its own sort of eternity in that it cannot escape itself. Hell is a closed cycle of self serving. God does have the ability to break this cycle of eternity, at one end by making creation outside of his eternal being, and at the other end by imposing his virtues upon the closed cycle of Hell.

The NDE life contract, which all persons agree to prior to incarnation, does raise a question on the eternity of Hell. Would any person choose to enter into creation with eternal Hell as a possibility? NDE's have Christ conquering not only death, but Hell itself.

Church would also welcome Christ's ultimate triumph over Hell itself, and acknowledges this is within the abilities of God. This article details the standard model of Hell, then the idea of universal salvation.

When the angels cast themselves away from God, they did so with full knowledge of their act. They may not have had perfect knowledge of all consequences, but they knew perfectly that their action was in opposition to God.

Hell is an unintended by product of failed final communion. Just as humanity was created for the purpose of divine inclusion into Christ (CCC 398), so too were the angels. In making this inclusion into the divine Christ, no sin could be allowed. When Christ attempted communion with the angels, those owning sin could not make it, this was the first stage of Hell.

What we now call judgment, is this communion of Christ and the angels. Trinitarian Christ (human Jesus did not yet exist), made the communion, taking all goodness into himself.^{LLL}

Left behind was evil and those owning the evil...this was the formation of Hell. Those angels left behind had absolutely no goodness in them, they were unable to reach beyond self, and certainly could not reach out to God. They existed in a self-perpetuating cycle of evil. They had truly condemned themselves to

^{LLL} Christ's communion with the angels makes Christianity as old as this first communion. The date for Christianity is pushed back thousands of years prior to Jesus Christ, to when Trinitarian Christ made communion with the angels. We recall that Christianity at its core is communion into Christ. We are certain that the angels were judged, with some not making their intended union with the divine Christ. This judgment was actually their intended communion into Christ, just like humans are intended for divine communion from the beginning, (CCC 398). The necessary conclusion is that other angels did make their intended union with Christ; this dates the formation of the extended body of Christ to a time earlier than the last supper, with the first communicants being the angels, rather than the apostles. Was St. Michael the archangel the first Pope of Christianity? Such an idea is not impossible if Christ appointed a leader angel.

existence without God. From this we see that Hell is a rejection of union with God, rather than God rejecting anyone.

Hell exists as a failure of final communion, and not as a deliberate punishment. God cannot make an act that has only an evil outcome, and condemning a person to Hell is an act with no possible final good. God does not desire condemn anyone, God desires union with all. Those persons (human or angelic) owning (mortal) sin, cannot make communion with Christ.

Hell is produced by the condemned themselves and it occurs in two degrees. *The first degree of Hell* is internal to a soul, and occurs at judgment when that soul rejects and abandons God. The result of this willful separation is total *internal* corruption as goodness is abandoned. Catholic terminology for this first degree is the “particular judgment”.

The second degree of Hell is yet to come. This is the general judgment when God unites with all goodness from creation. God will take with him all the goodness abandoned by the reprobate, what remains will exist undiluted with goodness, this will be the final Hell. This Hell is what remains after God reclaims all goodness abandoned by angels and humanity.

Again, the *personal communion* planned by God is now corrupted by sin into the personal judgment, and now with Hell as a possibility. The *general communion* is now the general judgment with Hell as a possibility. This general communion was Christ’s desire to reunite with, and fulfill all of creation. Everything comes from Christ, (Jn 1:3), and all is intended to rejoin Christ (Rev 22:13), even the lion who lies down with the lamb in divine Heaven.

Donna experienced an NDE when her boyfriend raped and strangled her. He gained a drug induced demonic face as he

assaulted her, and they both passed out. They had simultaneous NDE's, it was his second NDE warning.

Donna had a classic early stage NDE, she saw her body on the bed and ascended in the light tunnel. She felt at peace, but was then thrust back into her body, which had just started breathing again as her boyfriend passed out, and released his grip. Donna started CPR and her boyfriend regained consciousness.

We cannot speak of a "body of Antichrist", such as we speak of a "body of Christ". Those in Hell are entirely self. It is possible there are many, but there can be no community. Respect, organization, joy and fulfillment are virtues of Christ, and will not be found in the final assembly of the Antichrist. There is no master plan for Hell, and its inhabitants will be left to their own devices. From 1Jn 2:18, we learn that the Antichrist is not only a singular Devil in the end times, but all who share now in the corrupted spirit of the Antichrist.

As originally planned, all created goodness was to finally share in the very divinity of God. God would incorporate the goodness of creation into his own being. This plan has not changed, all goodness will have its final destiny in the divine life of God. Left behind will be all remaining evil, which will be physical Hell.

The preceding article makes a strong case for eternal damnation, yet the possibility of universal salvation does exist in the Catholic Church, in that we are just not certain that anyone is in eternal Hell.

NDE's speak of Hell, but also of the ultimate universal salvation of all persons. Hell does exist, but were its eternity is spoken of, NDE's have Christ conquering not only death, but somehow overcoming Hell itself.

Juliet Nightingale observed what could have been Hell or Purgatory and was also told that all people would ultimately have reunion with God, “They were clearly suffering and in great agony and anguish. I saw these souls as damaged souls - ones who had committed unspeakable atrocities during their previous incarnations. I have used the analogy of a soul being 'retrograde' — much in the way a planet will have the appearance of going backwards. The prevailing feeling that I had whilst observing these souls was one of deep compassion and a yearning to comfort them. I wanted so much to see them relieved of their horrible suffering. But, alas, as painful as this scene was, I was reassured that these souls were here only temporarily and that they, too, would heal and move back in a forward direction and ultimately return to the Light. All souls, without exception, eventually return to the Light.”⁶⁷

In his extensive eighteenth century NDE, George de Benneville is shown the various degrees of Hell, but also told that all persons without exception would attain salvation and reunion with Christ.⁶⁸

Pope, now saint John Paul II states in the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, August 4, 1999.

“Eternal damnation remains a real possibility, but we are not granted, without special divine revelation, the knowledge of whether or which human beings are effectively involved in it.”

Again, the great theologian John Paul II, speaks of universal salvation in his message to the Abbess General of the Order of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget.

“Christ, Redeemer of man, is now and forever 'clad in a robe dipped in blood', the everlasting, invincible guarantee of universal salvation.”

The idea that God intends reunion with all his creation, so that “God will be all in all”, (1Cor 15:28), gives added weight to the possibility of ultimate universal salvation.

By nature, God’s actions begin and end within himself; this is eternity which is the unified existence of cause and effect. God’s act of creation ends outside of himself, awaiting completion on our part to make union with God. God is not satisfied to leave his act of creation unfulfilled, and he does have the ability to impose his goodness into Hell so as to bring about even its reunion. In Lamentations 3:31 we read, “For no one is cast off by the Lord forever.”

The possibility of universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility because Christ does not retain anyone in Hell. Eternal Hell is an evil with no possible good effects. Because God may not will anything that has only an evil outcome, God may neither assign, nor retain anyone in eternal Hell. Anyone in Hell is not kept there by God, and the possibility exists that God will ultimately triumph not only over death, but over Hell itself.

Christ has the ability, even to force the salvation of a person, even upon a devil.^{MMM} Christ has the authority to make any necessary exceptions. Christ has the desire to do this, (1Tm 2:4). In

^{MMM} This is usually done indirectly. The real life example of St. Monica praying for her son St. Augustine brought graces of good action (actual graces) upon Augustine. These were imposed upon Augustine without his consent, but they led to a change in his free will toward God and salvation. We observe that the devil acts within the willful boundaries allowed by God. Exorcism of devils is God’s will enforced over the objections and will of demons. Catholic Bishop Robert Barron gives video lectures on the idea of uninhabited Hell and many other topics on YouTube.com. NDE’s have uninhabited Hell being a future event.

the end, evil is not stronger than good, and God retains authority over the Devil. Universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility. The Church encourages us to hope and pray for the salvation of all persons, and without regard to time of death.

It is possible that our prayers now, saved an angel prior, by making his Hell into a purgatory. St. Pio once explained that his prayers now for his deceased uncle were applied to his *salvation* prior. The science of relativity has time being unique for every entity, and theology understands God as omnipotent.

It is possible that the prayers and sacrifices of the faithful for the salvation of others are in fact completely successful, when joined to the sacrifice of Christ. In taking this positive view, we add that much more hope to our prayers, which has great power in salvation.

Hope is like a blueprint for a project. Without hope, the project cannot proceed. Hope in universal salvation is a worthy and commendable act, and should be made by all the faithful. If there is no hope in the ultimate salvation of all, then it will not happen. Christ is thankful for our prayers for the salvation of all.

A powerful NDE account of Hell and sinful behavior is given by Dr. Gloria Polo. Dr. Polo is a dental surgeon from Columbia, and was killed by lightning, then resuscitated. During her time of death, she traveled to the brink of Hell, and Jesus gave her a detailed account of the behavior that earned her condemnation:

- Use of birth control
- Lack of time and commitment to her children
- Cursing
- Judging others
- Ridiculing others
- Ingratitude
- Abortion

- Counseling others to abortion
- Immodest dress
- Wastefulness
- Vanity
- Sins of omission

Gloria was hardly a monster, and lived a life like many others. She would never deliberately harm someone — according to her own set of ethics. But her actions were habitually in opposition to the eternal ethics of Christ, and she was unable to attain union with Christ at her death, (her NDE).

She was saved by the prayers of her mother, and especially those of a poor, pious man unknown to her, who went out of his way to make prayer for those in need. She encourages people to use her experience for their benefit, and her NDE account is widely published on the internet.

Just type in her name as a search topic and several websites will be presented. Her testimony spans several pages, and is of great value in our spiritual lives.

The NDE idea of universal salvation is that God will triumph not only over death, but Hell itself. NDE's certainly testify to the existence of Hell, but put no limits on God's ability or love. Ultimate universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility.

Some NDE's seem to place a person's afterlife within his understanding of God. This idea is not foreign to Catholic theology. Consider that the person who has no practical participation in God, will live his life (in this life and after death) without God.

Perhaps Buddhists will receive their ideal of God as the tranquility of virtue which they call Nirvana. Such an undifferentiated divine essence is termed Godhead in Christianity.

Will Muslims submit themselves to a royal God of authority? Will Christians participate in the humanity, brotherhood, love and forgiveness of God? *Each of these ideas is a dimension of God, and it all occurs within the person of Christ.* The Heavenly existence of any person within Christ may indeed be very diverse.

Where NDE patients (of any or no religion) identify a judge or ruler of Heaven, it is always Jesus. Some NDE's allude to the continuation of one's religious culture also. As more NDE's are collected, our understanding will become more defined.

Finally, we propose that God may have some moral presence even in those condemned. This idea is based upon Catholic traditional and NDE limitations of moral action in Hell.

The idea is simple: In biblical and NDE accounts of Hell, and especially in the many private revelation of the saints, who have seen Hell, those in Hell never **fully** engage in the evil acts which they desire. Violence against each other is shown, but it is never a matter of a sexual orgy, or limitless intoxicants, or many of the other evils, that earned these people their place in Hell. Those in Hell would be compelled to engaged in such activity, even if it brought them no pleasure.^{NNN}

God must be placing some sort of moral limits on their behavior. What they do experience is very similar to accounts of a severe Purgatory. *Something* prevents unlimited vice from occurring, perhaps to the point that those involved are in some sort

^{NNN} Pleasure, order, discipline are all gifts of God, and would not be found in Hell. Those in Hell would still be compelled to engage in vice, even if the result were pain. Here the condemned would be experiencing non-voluntary moral formation, something like being on a desert island without cigarettes or television, such discipline can effectively break bad habits. Theoretically those in Hell could not even avail themselves to any sort of discipline or advancement, but this would be possible by an extraordinary act of Christ. It is certain that Christ limits the Devil in the actions which he is allowed to make. The book of Job has God allowing the Devil to inflict incremental trails upon Job.

of rudimentary discipline. This something which limits immoral activity in Hell can only be Christ's moral decision or will which exists even in Hell.

It is within the power of God to directly intercede and raise their status to a true Purgatory. Such an act would of course be unmerited by the residents of Hell. Eternal Hell is self imposed by the condemned, but Christ is able to break this closed cycle of selfishness.⁰⁰⁰ He is in no way obligated, nor is he prohibited from doing so.

If residents of Hell, are upwardly mobile to Purgatory, this need not happen at the end of time; it could be happening now, with new members of Purgatory coming from two sources: earth and Hell. Those who receive a lesser condemnation would likely be among the first to make the advancement.

Distressing NDEs

There is no distinct line that can be drawn between pleasant and distressing NDE's. Recall also that the NDE visitor is not being assigned to Heaven, Hell or Purgatory, they are visitors only. "The Handbook of Near Death Experiences" reports that of 1369 subjects, in twelve studies, 23 percent had disturbing NDE's, this seems to be at the high end, most other studies place this figure at 15% –20%.

The mildest possible NDE is one in which we see our failings and feel remorse; this is typical of the life review. The most distressing includes all the classic Hellish elements. Professor, now

⁰⁰⁰ God is a closed cycle, but incredibly Christ is able to act outside of this eternal cycle. Christ does just this when he makes the act of creation. Eternity is the unified existence of cause and effect, thus a closed cycle, and not really an infinitely long time, or a sentence of time. If those in Hell would make a simple act of faith, they would have a participation in Christ, and would no longer be in Hell. Those in Hell cannot break their closed cycle, but Christ may do it.

Reverend Howard Storm's NDE is a classic: www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Rev. Howard Storm.

Howard Storm is one of many NDE patients who experienced the distress of visiting Hell and Purgatory, then knowing (in small part) the overwhelming love of Heaven.

NDE's and the book of Revelation

The prophecies contained in the biblical book of Revelation are remarkably confirmed and expanded upon by a number of NDE's. Most of these NDE patients had never read the book of Revelation, but what they were shown by Jesus or the angels is astoundingly similar.

The book of Revelation makes prophecy of a final worldwide destruction, and a following period of peace on earth, where God himself will come down from Heaven to dwell on earth with his people. Sin will either be conquered or separated from our world, and there will be no more death, want or war.

This final period of "Heaven on earth" seems to be a restoration of God's original plan. The original plan had us making divine union with Christ in this life on earth, (CCC 398). Humanity would have worked toward perfection while awaiting the Christ, God who would become man. Jesus Christ would have come as planned, but no obstacle of sin would exist and he would make communion with the people via the Eucharist. This was the original plan and the book of Revelation has it being restored. NDE's confirm this plan of restoration, and also the many chastisements written of in the book of Revelation.⁶⁹

Modern Marian apparitions at Fatima, Garabandal and Medjugorje speak of warnings.⁷⁰ The Garabandal and Medjugorje apparitions foretell a worldwide revelation of moral conscious for each person, and a permanent divine sign left on earth.^{PPP}

PPP The Marian apparitions at Garabandal and Medjugorje speak of a world wide spiritual revelation. Each person will see himself compared to his intended

NDE patients George Ritchie and Howard Storm were given knowledge of a coming perfection of our earthly realm. Both accounts first have earth suffering horribly prior to its perfection. These two prophecies are similar to those spoken of in the book of Revelation. As to the following perfection, God has been calling us to such heights of being since the beginning. Jesus and the apostles speak of Christ's return to earth (Rev 21), preceded by extensive calamities on earth.

George Ritchie's classic NDE dating from 1943 speaks briefly of calamitous weather, earthquakes and volcano eruptions; increasing arrogance among people, and explosions of an incredible magnitude. This destruction is followed by peace and brotherhood.⁷¹

Howard Storm's NDE is more detailed and puts the period of peace and perfection 200 years in the future, (from 1985).⁷² His angelic guide speaks chastisement, and the following period of peace when all persons will attain a perfection comparable to the saints, to the point where "miracles" are just a part of daily life when deeply sharing in God. The daily miracles spoken of by Howard Storm are in line with a person's "participation in the divine nature" of God, (2Pet 1:4), which will be the norm, when Christ returns to earth to live with his children.

An account from the IANDS website, "...another male figure appeared in front of me. In his arms and on his shoulders sat dozens of small babies or cherubs. He pointed at me, and they all seemed very interested to see me. I remember wondering who he was and

divine perfection, and will make efforts to realize it. Once we make such moral and spiritual perfection, we may directly and fully participate in Christ. Will we make the change in time to avert the calamities?

who the children were. Eventually, he pulled the blind down and they all disappeared.”

“After the man and cherubs disappeared behind the blind I found myself floating outside of the window in my bedroom. What I saw before me was a world that was completely destroyed as if from a nuclear bomb. Everything was burnt and lay in rubble. Suddenly, a large crucifix raised from the rubble with Jesus on the cross. The crucifix and Jesus stood miles high.”

“After a moment the crucifix sunk into the ground. Soon thereafter, the world began to replenish and grow. Trees began to bloom and everything turned green before my eyes. Even monkeys appeared and swung from the trees.”⁷³

From the book of Revelation itself, “Then I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.””, (Rev 21:1-4).

NDE other worlds

NDE’s do sometimes speak of other worlds, that is other realms of existence which we do not have direct knowledge of. This idea also exists as current doctrine.

Current doctrine acknowledges the existence of Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, angels, devils, principalities and powers. These are “places” or persons existing in the spiritual realm and we have no direct knowledge of them, we know of them by some sort of

revelation. These are other worlds, and there may be additional unobserved worlds of energy and matter, and even other worlds of virtues and moral beings. We would know of them only by revelation, and NDE's are private revelations, which sometimes speak of these additional other worlds.

Catholic understanding of a "Big Bang" act of creation has energy and matter, and possibly created moral virtues, unrolling from a single super dimension. The whole of creation came about by this act of creation willed by God. It continues to this day, and even with God's direct intervention, such as in the creation of souls.

Included in this expansionary type of creation model is the possibility of its retraction back into its own first (created) super dimension, and even the repetition of this cycle, this is the Big Bang/Big Crunch cycle of creation, as proposed by many scientists and acknowledged as a possibility by the Church. In accepting a scientific "Big Bang" type model of creation, the possibility of the "Big Crunch" and the "Big Cycle" goes with it.

This cycle of creation (directed by God), necessarily includes a multiple number of other worlds. It would be possible and even likely that Christ the creator might direct his creation in different ways during each creation/redemption cycle.^{QQQ}

^{QQQ} In understanding the Big Bang, first make a thought experiment in which the Big Bang remains internal to God. God would be further revealed as additional dimensions, but these dimensions would not be creation. Now think of this Big Bang originating from within God, but detached from his absolute attributes. God did not create by placing his image alongside himself, so to speak. There was no "alongside", God was the entire universe. The image of God, (creation) expanded from God himself.

This is how "divine omnipresence" came about. It was not a matter of God inserting his sustaining presence into creation, but a matter of God remaining in creation, expect for his absolute will. St. Thomas Aquinas constructed the idea of divine omnipresence, which says that God's non-moral presence is in all creation sustaining it and keeping it in existence.

This idea modifies, but does not violate the idea that God created the universe from nothing. God wraps his selected attributes around a core of nothing, rather than his own absolute being. The instant before creation, creation did not exist, it was nothing. Upon this nothing was formed creation. Furthermore, God sustains the form of creation with his own attributes in some way. If God withdrew his sustaining form, then creation would revert to nothing. Since creation draws its form and being from God, *creation is formed around nothing, but not truly from nothing*. God creates from nothing...plus his donated attributes, which enter into the realm of creation when they are detached from his absolute being. Creation from nothing is atheist dogma, and it requires no God.

The Big Bang model has energy and matter being created. It is possible that our own created moral virtues were not created in the Big Bang, but their creation emanates directly from Christ. God simply detaches his absolute will from moral virtues and attaches these created virtues to each individual. This agrees with the idea that the human soul is created directly by God.

We note the difference between Christian and atheist creation models. One has creation formed from nothing, by nothing. The other has creation formed from nothing, by God. Additionally, true nothing does not exist in the universe. The vacuum of outer space, or the empty space within an atom is shown to be dark energy which spontaneously produces matter/anti-matter paired particles. These reunite and convert back to energy; they do not produce nothing, and they do not come from nothing.

One interesting variant of the Big Bang has local galaxy crunches along with continued expansion outside of the local crunch. It has been observed that the universe is increasing its rate of expansion, which may lead to localized crunches due to an overabundance of local gravity. Those regions which continued in their expansion would eventually have no interaction with our local universe and would form additional universes within the multiverse. This could produce localized creation cycles. It is possible that super black holes are the remnants of local crunched creation cycles. Black holes themselves are thought to eventually cease existence.

Hell is a possible obstacle in the cyclic creation idea. While it is expected that anyone divinely existing within the body of Christ would survive the annihilation of creation during its contraction, what would happen to those in Hell? Would they be annihilated along with the rest of creation, would they rejoin God in uncreated eternity as NDE's tell of, or would the eternity of Hell prevent the annihilation of creation thus preventing a creation cycle? Any of these options are within the abilities of God.

The Big Bang expansionary model was first proposed scientifically by Catholic priest and physicist Georges Lemaitre. The idea of an expansionary universe from a single infinite point, its contraction and repetition was first recorded 3500 years ago in Hindu scriptures. Pope Pius XII was the first pope to

It is a moral assumption that Christ would make communion with his creation before its retraction back into its primal state. The Trinity, and the Trinitarian Son of God, (Christ) are necessary elements here, but any incarnation of the Son of God, might differ with each creation cycle.

The apostle Paul seems to confirm this idea that all creation including the created humanity of Jesus will retract into the person of God. The divinity of Jesus, which is the Son of God will remain, and whole of the universe will again be uncreated God alone, awaiting the next creation cycle. “And when all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all.”, (1Cor 15:28). From Mt 24:35, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” These two verses strongly support the idea of a Big Crunch, and it is God’s decision whether to create again.

The second person of the Trinity, who is Christ the Son of God, is the non-optional revelation of God, but his incarnation as a human person, or an angelic or Martian person is optional. This is the idea that was understood by Howard Storm during his extensive NDE.⁷⁴

The idea of cyclical creation and reunion is the 21st century version of “earth as the center of the universe”, which pitted the Church against science and its spokesman Galileo. In the matter of a Big Bang/Big Crunch model, it is legitimate to understand God as the absolute, rather than our current cycle of creation. If creation is cyclical, then Christ is its principle and creator, and there is no rule that says each cycle need be identical. Furthermore, Christ is not obligated to crunch one creation before making another. Some NDE’s speak of current other worlds of moral beings.⁷⁵

accept the theory as possible in God's creation of the universe.

On the reunion side of creation, as we advance in Christ, our lives have more elements of eternity in them, until finally full inclusion into Christ, who is not only human Jesus, but the principle and end of creation.

Other worlds, either current or of a past creation cycle, having moral beings would be a source of past lives mentioned in some NDE's.

Ketamine induced NDE

Ketamine is a legitimate prescription drug. An overly large dose may induce a real and complete NDE (except for clinical death). NDE's may also be induced by brain seizure or extreme stress. None of these things produce an NDE, they chemically reconfigure the brain to perceive spiritual worlds.

Fred B. used ketamine ten times to induce NDE elements and had fairly complete NDE's (except for death). He ended his experimentation when the citizens of Heaven who had previously greeted him, started chanting, "Cheater, cheater!". In his tenth ketamine induced NDE, he saw his parents in Heaven who told him to stop inducing NDE's.⁷⁶

It all points to NDE's as real events, with our ability to observe the other side dependent on body chemistry. The world of the afterlife is always present, but rarely observed.

Hypoxia induced NDE

Lack of oxygen to the brain is by far the most common cause of NDE's. Drowning, profuse bleeding, heart stoppage, cessation of breathing, all quickly starve the brain of its needed oxygen.

Medical and test pilot experiments which limit oxygen do bring on early NDE like symptoms, such as tunnel vision, and more if it continues. In real world emergencies of oxygen deprivation, which

continues for some time, all of the NDE elements have been experienced. These are not pseudo NDE's, but real near death conditions, in which an out of body experience and even the preliminary stages of the afterlife are experienced. The NDE is experienced as the soul loses the services of its body, most commonly due to hypoxia.

NDE's according to religion and culture

NDE's and observation of the afterlife, do vary according to ones cultural understanding of life and death.

Judaism, Islam and Christianity all deal in human, angelic or demonic beings in the afterlife, and the essence of God may be seen as light, with no theological problems.^{RRR} Buddhism would see afterlife beings as persons who have died and not yet advanced to Nirvana. Buddhism might even accept a non-personal light as somehow being a manifestation of Nirvana. Atheists or nihilists either explain away the NDE as a hallucination, or are converted to an understanding that life extends beyond this existence, or even of a divine power.

Members of every religion or no religion have NDE's and most never even see the light tunnel, a few advance to meeting relatives or light beings, fewer still are able to identify God in some way. Hindu's who have a near death experience are recorded as seeing semi-human appearing Hindu deities, and we now examine this phenomena of non-Christian afterlife figures using Hinduism as an example.

It may surprise the reader to know that the Hindu religion is monotheistic at its core. Brahman is the Godhead, the essence of

^{RRR} Many Muslims may be discouraged from having religious "visions". To do so is to assume the role of prophet or revealer of Heaven, which is already Mohammed.

the Supreme being. The gods are manifestations of the one God. A statue or “murti”, is a symbolic representation of the particular god. For instance a statue of Ganesha has an elephant’s head and trunk, because he is tasked with removing obstacles of all sorts, just like the Indian work elephants do.

This discussion of the appearance of Hindu gods in an NDE, is applicable to other religions having gods, or non-Christian afterlife beings. What does the appearance of a Hindu god in a NDE, mean for that NDE? Is it a trick of the devil, a hallucination or does it have some basis in reality? This book promotes NDE’s as real and meaningful afterlife events, and puts forward the best case for them.

A thought scenario would be useful here. At the death of a Hindu for example, Christ (who is God) could say to this man, “I am as noble as a lion” (biblical example), or Christ could say “I am as powerful as an elephant” (Hindu example).

Christ could also communicate this idea by an image of himself as a lion or an elephant. *Christ does just this in the book of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation.* Both books have the one God as a living being having four faces: lion, man, ox, eagle. This image and its idea was communicated to the prophet Ezekiel, then later to the apostle John. God is the noblest, wisest, strongest, swiftest being, symbolized by a lion, man, ox and eagle.^{SSS}

At the core of God’s nobility, wisdom, strength, and speed, are not a lion, man, ox, eagle; at God’s core are these virtues

^{SSS} These Heavenly beings are seraphim or cherubim and are in the highest order of God’s Heavenly beings. All in Heaven are now divine members of the divine body of Christ; we are non-divine members of the human body of Christ, but divine membership is our goal. Heavenly beings started out as non-divine, but gained their intended divine communion (CCC 398), when the Trinitarian Christ made communion with them. Some failed and are now the devils. The communion particulars as to each Heavenly order are not fully known, but some of the angels, archangels and virtues did not make the communion. Good messengers became bad tempters, and the operation of the Heavenly order called the virtues now has a parallel operation of vice in our world.

themselves. These creatures are manifestations of God's attributes, in the realm of creation. God's attributes are real, and the seraphim themselves are real, but the ox faced seraphim is God's symbolic communication of strength to the viewer. God could communicate his strength to a Hindu, by appearing as the strongest local animal, an elephant. God is not saying he is an ox or an elephant, God is stating some of his attributes in symbolic imagery.

Likewise when Christ shows himself to a Hindu as the god Krishna (god of love), Christ is symbolically communicating to the Hindu man in his own religious language. God is telling the Hindu man that he is love. When God appears in a vision, as an ox or an elephant, both the Christian and the Hindu know that this is not who God is, but a symbol of an attribute of God.

We do observe that in the case of Ezekiel and John, God is proactive in assigning symbols to his nobility and wisdom, while in the second case, Hindu speculation on God assigned the symbol. It is further acknowledged that persons of any religion may mistakenly assign undue holiness to an image or a statue.^{†††}

There is the possibility that some non-Christian afterlife beings are real, and not symbolic. Within Catholicism there certainly exists guardian angels of persons, tribes, countries. There are saints

^{†††} From Deuteronomy 5:8, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." This commandment was given to the first revealed religion, which was Judaism. Religions prior to revealed Judaism were necessarily informed speculation upon God. From the beginning with Adam and Eve, God informed each personal conscience with the core moral commandments of God. Due to the obscurity of God (due to original sin), humanity overlaid God with cultural particulars.

Non-revealed religions developed in parallel with the revealed religions of Judaism and Christianity, and are not fully accountable to the precision of the revealed religions. God calls members of each religion or moral culture to adherence within that religion. Therefore it is no infraction for a Hindu to think "God is as strong as an elephant", and for God to symbolically confirm this with a vision of an elephant headed afterlife being.

who are assigned patronage over trades, tasks, illnesses and even mad dogs (St. Sithney and St. Hubert). There is no reason that India or ancient tradesmen were not assigned Heavenly angels or protectors thousands of years ago. What if over the years, such a protector was acculturated into Hinduism and called a god? It is possible that such a “god” could be seen during a NDE.^{uuu}

Hindus often see a Yamdoot as they are dying, whether they survive or not. A Yamdoot is an angel of death. In Catholicism it is thought that one’s guardian angel may escort a soul to Heaven, it is even possible that a demon may lay valid claim to a soul, creating a distressing NDE. The Yamdoot’s seen by Hindus may indeed be real afterlife beings.

Afterlife beings according to Catholic theology may be divinized angels or humans, non-divinized souls of Purgatory, or a demon who is condemned and evil. Hinduism has similar categories, but they use the term “god” even to refer to the Devil proper, and demons in general, who are named Kali. Therefore in much of the world a NDE might contain a “god”, with no attempt to equate the god to God. If such culturally specific beings are seen during a NDE, it does not invalidate the NDE as being false.

God has been engaged with all peoples, for all time. It was not until the time of Abraham that God began instruction by direct divine revelation. Before that time, those good people seeking knowledge of God, relied on informed speculation, which was overlaid with local culture, and human imperfections.

Finally we note that anything this side of Heaven is subject to error or falsehood in some way. NDE’s accounts themselves have Heavenly guides reminding the patient that if he steps over the

^{uuu} Hindu NDE accounts are a bit scarce, a book which contains dozens is “At the Hour of Death”, by Osis and Haraldsson; it compares Hindu to western NDE’s

boundary into Heaven, his current life is over. NDE's are distinctly this side of Heaven.

Verification of the NDE

Many NDE's are objectively verified, but this usually occurs at a family level, based on family information previously undisclosed. An example would be the meeting of miscarried siblings, known to a mother, but not to her child meeting the miscarried sibling during a NDE.

This occurred to Sharon M. Sharon was never told of her deceased brother who died in a miscarriage. She met both her deceased brothers in her NDE, and understood (NDE communication is usually spiritual, not spoken) that one of the men was her miscarried brother. When asked about this, Sharon's mother confirmed that she had a miscarried brother.⁷⁷

The out of body element is often confirmed by medical staff. This is usually the patient's observation of people and activities outside of the treatment room, which would not be known to a patient on a table or bed. It is not uncommon for a NDE patient to observe and later accurately describe persons and activities in other nearby rooms of the hospital!

A good online source for NDE verification is <http://www.near-death.com/science/evidence.html>. An extensive discussion of the verification of the NDE may be found at www.near-death.com/science/evidence.html. Scientific studies of the NDE may be found at the iands.org website, under the "research" tab on the home page. "The Self does not Die", is a book published by the International Association of Near Death Experiences, which examines NDE's which are verified in some manner, such as discussed here.

To date, there have been no political or commercial motivated NDE accounts. A NDE that endorsed or criticized a ruler or politician would be suspect, likewise would be a NDE that endorsed a product or service.

After effects of the NDE

Priests wish their homilies had the effect that NDE's have. Only 20% of NDE patients reported no effect, or a negative effect on their lives. More extensive NDE's generally have a more profound effect. Most NDE patients by far report the NDE as being real, and not a dream or hallucination, and those having a life review can never go back to a life of indifference. Those attempting suicide return from their NDE with a real purpose of life, that of spiritual advancement, even during difficult circumstances.

Those committed to a religion usually increase their commitment, but with emphasis on practical love and forgiveness. Those having no relationship with God usually cultivate such a bond, even if outside the bounds of religion. Four out of five NDE patients make a practical effort towards moral improvement, and especially love of others. They view this life as a precious gift, beginning in the womb, and interconnected with all others; "...we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.", (Rm 12:5). They see the purpose of life as being spiritual advancement, which will bring them greater fulfillment in the afterlife.

NDE's as Dogmatic Progression

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.", (Jn 6:12-13).

This verse in John 6:12-13 was spoken by Jesus at the end of his ministry. Additional and ongoing revelation was to be expected. Public revelation ended with the last of the apostles, private revelation will continue until the end of creation.

NDE's offer no really new elements of Christian teaching. They do realize much of what is currently thought of as outlying possibility. An example of this is the recurring NDE idea that we choose our parents. This NDE idea is again a mislabeling of the Catholic idea that Christ chooses many of our life circumstances, including who we are born to. Recall that prior to our creation and incarnation we are a dimension of the body of Christ, and Christ does choose or reserves the right to choose all the circumstances of our birth and of our life.

We could imagine the council of Heaven (book of Revelation), advising during a life review and judgment, but could we see this same council advising Christ as to the circumstances of life and birth of an individual? There is no reason why the council of Heaven, who is the body of Christ, may not advise Christ in the choice of parents and life circumstances, and this is an idea that occurs in the NDE.^{vv}

NDE's are part of the progression of the revelation of God. God's first revelation to Abraham was as his personal tribal God. To Moses, God revealed the dogmas of Judaism, covenant and justice. To the apostles, God revealed himself as human and unbounded love. NDE's reveal the life of Heaven and unexpected metaphysics of pre-incarnation, repeated incarnation and the probability of

^{vv} This is a matter of dimensions of Christ advising Christ. This occurred daily when human Jesus would penetrate deeply into the divine knowledge of his own divine nature who is the Son of God. God would consult God, when Jesus consulted with God the father. Within God, the three persons of the Trinity each have free will, and within the single person of the body of Christ, there are many individuals, each having free will, and they may consult the expertise of other members.

universal salvation. NDE's are not in competition with the Christian Church, they are revelations of the Christian Church.

The idea that NDE's are "tricks of the Devil" has very little foundation. NDE's reveal a loving Christ, who encourages good moral action. NDE visits to Purgatory and Hell reveal them as places to be avoided. They reveal Heaven as the intended fulfillment and the moral discipline required to attain it. Many NDE patients are recorded as calling to Jesus for salvation from the devils, and it occurs.

NDE's are private revelations of God. Private revelations are instances of God or an agent of God, (angel, saint) making some sort of revelation to the individual. Moral conscience, speech, visions, dreams, locutions, and more may all be means of private revelation. Private revelations are binding on the individual, and the most common private revelation is moral conscience. A personal revelation of moral conscience may for example direct a person to become a nun or a mother; to defend one's life or to sacrifice one's life.

Private revelation is binding upon the individual, even though it may be erroneous, moral conscience for example must be obeyed, even though it can err. *As a form of private revelation, NDE's are actually part of the Catholic faith.*

NDE Recommendations for the Catholic Church

All major NDE repeating elements are within the bounds of Catholic doctrine, either currently or possibly. They are a tremendous source of information and inspiration and they should be put to good use. The following actions should be taken:

- Each NDE should be evaluated individually as a private revelation. Bishops have this authority, and they do just this in the case of other private revelations occurring in their diocese.
- The matter of consensual incarnation should be acknowledged and the idea documented as doctrine.
- The matter of NDE previous lives should be defined as the existing Catholic teaching that every entity has pre-existence in and as Christ.
- The matter of NDE reincarnation should be defined as particular dimensions of Christ undergoing another incarnation, (indirectly via nothing).
- The matter of “life contract” with God should be defined in union with consensual incarnation, as being our general and particular life mission.
- The matter of Christ choosing to incarnate (indirectly into human individuals) for deeper perfection of his own dimensions should be acknowledged.
- Greater emphasis should be put on our intended life path of divinization as the body and person of Christ. Rescue was not the original plan, perfection was. God does not choose a few saints for perfection, God chooses everybody for perfection.
- It should be observed that valid sacraments are not a requirement for salvation, but they are required for divine inclusion during our earthly lives. The ongoing supernatural actions of the saints should be specified as proof.
- All of this doctrinal definition should be written into an encyclical.
- Readers might consider giving a copy of this book to their priest and bishop.

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Appendix A, Spiritual Advancement

This section on spiritual advancement is taken from traditional Catholic methods, it uses the traditional three stage; and the four stage, nights of the soul by St. John of the Cross; and the more recent five step with the fifth step being divinization.

Spiritual advancement is simply a deeper sharing in the life of God, who is Christ. This occurs as we eliminate self will, allowing a deeper indwelling of God's own spirit, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our likeness and union with God.

It sounds daunting and mystical, but it's no more mystical than living a just life as a first century carpenter. To deny one's self does not require abandoning family, food, sleep, or even the enjoyments of life, rather these are had according to God's will, not our own.

Personal spiritual advancement promotes social justice, and even salvation for others. We observe how original and subsequent sin introduced mistrust, greed and hatred. These may be reformed by the mediation of spiritual advancement. When we suffer anger into patience, and greed into trust, individuals and nations are bettered, and the corruption is no longer suffered as social disorder.

The science of elimination of self is well developed; religious orders have for centuries molded their member's wills away from self, and toward God. These religious orders exist as practical aids to spiritual advancement, and their techniques may be used by anyone according to their circumstances. The seemingly pointless discipline they require has real results in mastering self will: uniforms, schedules, endless rules...there is little room for individual will. This selflessness becomes a habit, and over time a character of the soul. The sacraments they have received act with fuller effect, drawing them closer to God as self is mortified.

Conversely, our world is geared toward satisfaction, growth and indulgence of self...all to the detriment of our souls. We are told to eat richly, drink well, purchase, pleasure ourselves, get honor, find fault and demand our rights. Jesus had a different mindset. How would Jesus live if he were a reformed sinner, rich, bed ridden, a mother? Read the lives of the saints.

Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive ways

Jesus speaks, "The truest and most effective teaching that you can receive is this. Keep yourself apart from all men, if not in body, then in spirit. Keep yourself free from all unneeded images and words. Free yourself from everything that is accidental, binding or that brings worry. Always direct your spirit to the intimate contemplation of God, keeping me constantly present before your eyes and never turning them away from me. Direct all other exercises, be it poverty, fasting, vigils and all other types of chastisement toward this goal and make use of them to the extent that they advance this end."

"Do all this and you shall attain the summit of perfection that not one person in a thousand comprehends because they make these exercises their goal and therefore wander about for years."

This teaching of the prior two paragraphs, is known as "brief rules for spiritual advancement", given by Christ to St. Henry Suso. It is essentially a rephrasing of Christ's teaching in Mt 22:37, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." This phrasing by Jesus seems more attractive than the phrasing of the same idea, given to St. Suso. Suso's is perhaps more useful because of its detail.

If our salvation is to become Christ, then every faculty of one's soul must direct itself to Christ, in order that Christ may then incorporate us into his being. When one's will is fully functioning as

Christ's will, our actions are then redirected to family, job, daily routine; but now as Christ in the world.

To think of, and be Christ 24/7 sounds burdensome and impossible, but it's not. We do not become a first century carpenter, but a present day member of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ: a mother, worker, student, unemployed, reforming sinner. We do not really have to learn more, or do more, or even be more. The less we cling to the accidents of this life, the deeper our participation in Christ. On the proactive side, the sacraments are essential, as they are the agents of our incorporation into Christ, as we clear the way of selfishness.

Spiritual advancement typically proceeds in stages and in a generally predictable pattern. Our efforts to free our soul of its illegitimate attachments is termed the Purgative way. Cultivation of virtue is the Illuminative way, and elimination of self for the purpose of union with Christ is the Unitive way. At any time, our efforts are made predominantly, but not exclusively in one of these stages.

Our starting point depends on many factors, including the burden of original sin assigned to us; some have a greater burden to work through than others, (Luke 15:7). Most start their spiritual advancement in the Purgative way, and by repeated effort substantially eliminate sin from their lives.

The Illuminative stage is characterized by a virtuous and pious life, of legitimate undertakings in job, family, and all areas. The years of grinding perseverance have paid off for this person of virtue. Those courageously attaining the illuminative state, might expect a linear progression forward, but there is a necessary twist that occurs here, termed by St. John of the Cross "the dark night of the soul". It is almost always misunderstood by those entering into

the Unitive stage, and may be a pitfall if not properly understood.

Spiritual trials now occur, by consent or initiative of God with the goal of eliminating the legitimate self will of the student. These trials are misunderstood as punishments, given for reasons that cannot even be determined. These trials feel like anything other than the blessings they are. To participate fully in Christ, we cannot stop at virtuous self; self must go, that we may become Christ.

An extreme example may be found in the book of Job. Job was scrupulous and perfect in his obedience to the decrees of God, and was richly rewarded. God sought to advance Job's soul by stripping him of his good fortune, leaving only faith in his life. He was to maintain faith and virtue, simply for the sake of God. Job had no part in sin, now he was tasked with eradicating even legitimate self interest. Job persevered and, in the end, he had no attachment to this life, he fundamentally detached from it, (Lk 14:26). His love of God was undiminished. Through this active and passive combination Job attained perfection...and his former joys were restored to him.

More commonly the casualty is not our material life as Job suffered, but our legitimate material and spiritual attachments. Until now the soul had attained conformity to God by degree, and now over an extended period may attain actual union with God—we become Christ, (CCC 795, 1213).

Active and Passive Nights of the Soul

Another framework for this same process of spiritual advancement distinguishes sensual acts from spiritual acts, and active acts from passive acts. Overeating is a sensual act, while impure day dreams are spiritual acts. Active actions are

undertakings of our own initiative. Passive actions originate from God, and are his act of deepening our inclusion into himself. St. John of the Cross first observed this four stage process of spiritual advancement. He wrote of it as literature, and not as a laid out system, because of this interpretations vary somewhat.

The pattern is: we rid our soul of sin and imperfection by our active moral efforts in both sensual and spiritual acts. As this is done we then advance in Christ passively, that is Christ takes the lead. This advancement is a deeper participation in his will and his very person, (CCC 789), and it's done by Christ, our part is simply to clear the way.

The sacraments are essential. Sacraments are Christ's instruments by which we advance, but sacraments cannot do their job unless they are allowed to.

In the **active night of the senses** the student takes the initiative in properly forming habits involving physical acts, drives and emotions. Habit is the key to one's character or one's soul, and reforming existing bad habits involves repeated trial, error, and finally triumph. Not only must the illegitimate rule of the emotions be eliminated, but even legitimate emotions must be made subservient to the moral will.

The **passive night of the senses** occurs in parallel to the active night of the senses. As we actively free ourselves of sin, bad moral habits, pride and worry, we also advance in Christ in a passive manner. We see these former things as the chains that they are. We now share in Christ's own will and values. The sacraments bring this sharing in Christ, our part is making the moral effort. We clear a space for Christ in our soul. The passive nights are a matter of Christ incorporating us into his own person as we unchain each faculty of our soul. Our participation in Christ is first in his human being, then his divine being.

Our emotions might be thought of as sense organs for our virtues. They react accordingly to virtue or corruption, either proactively or after the fact as in remorse. The proper place for emotions is under control of our will. Such control will not diminish joy, but help perfect it. Emotions are the primary driving force in many people, but the goal of Christian spiritual advancement is to attune our will to the perfect moral principles of Christ, rather than emotions.

In the *active night of the spirit*, the student takes the initiative in the proper formation of the moral will, and of faith. Our actions here are all actions with no material component: faith, love, patience, joy, imagination. These have little or no sensory component, but they are real acts with real effects, and there is a right way, a wrong way, and God's way to do each.

To this point, self (self is separation from God), has been presented disguised and as our own particular failings. In the advanced stages, the saints report unexpected feelings of abandonment, and dissatisfaction against God, (St. Faustina's diary, entry 77).

This is sin presented to the student in its core form — rebellion against God. This undisguised rebellion may be presented alongside incomplete work from the previous stages, and our guide (in part) is our own imperfect soul, which we are trying to correct. Doing this cold turkey in a convent is easiest, but most people must take the home study curriculum.

We must forge ourselves into the Christ, and we do it on the cross. In the depths of the night of the spirit, the student feels abandoned, rejected, useless, sinful, purposeless, stupid. All this is unsatisfied self seeking, which must be mediated into good form and faith.

The turning point often occurs when the student finally sees the plan for him, and submits. All along has been the unfelt ***passive night of the spirit***, but now it predominates. The trials are no longer meaningless, but purposeful, and the student finally joins in and rapid progress may be made. Near the end, God takes command. The student has largely gone as far as he can. God proceeds to strip away the last remnants of self, for the purpose of divine union.

The Divine union is the final stage of our existence within the body of Christ. This is the wedding feast that Jesus spoke of. It is our divinization and it was intended to occur in this life on earth.

Because of sin, our first participation in Christ is in his human nature. Once we are completely free of selfishness, we may fully participate in the divine nature of Jesus. Those we call saints have made the effort to purge themselves of self will and have obtained divine union with Christ in this life.

Miracles, prophecy, ecstatic contemplation are all common in the divine union.^{www} The divine union may be achieved in this life. It occurs when every attribute under willful control is free of disorder, this allows the willful whole to be incorporated into the divine Christ. The Divine doctor himself conducts this soul transplant as the final stage of the passive night of the spirit. The body, which is not fully under our willful control undergoes death.

This divine union on earth was the original plan for humanity, and everyone was to have attained it in this life. No afterlife was even planned; just a perfected, divine continuation of our current existence. Day trips to Heaven to visit the angels would be allowed, but Jesus would not have died on the cross, and we would all know him here on earth. Our world would have been a

^{www} The saints report that in time the initial ecstatic state lessens, with the new personal norm being peace and fulfillment.

sort of spiritual utopia, with perfected, divinized elders (no wrinkles or arthritis) leading the upcoming generations to their intended divinization.^{xxx}

For our spiritual advancement, we might construct a three stage program, which we repeat until holy:

(1.) We identify and examine the problem and our foolish attachment to it. We do this in both structured mediation and on our feet as we encounter problems. We hold the temptation at arm's length to break the emotional cycle which feeds itself. This emotional cycle usually proceeds away from perfection and towards self: pity, indulgence, destruction.

We recall our goal (incorporation into Christ) and our reasons. We compare our proposed action to the person Christ, and not only the first century Christ, but the present day Christ: the mother, the worker, the person at leisure, danger or trouble. We think of our past failings in which we fail at the peak of temptation, only to kick ourselves later.

(2.) We ride out the peak and steamroll to virtue on the downside. We do not worry about the consequences, God will arrange those. We maintain focus on the only thing that lasts or has value, our participation in Christ.

(3.) Cultivation of peace is the next (and necessary) event. We must not eliminate vice, pride and worry, only to complain of boredom.^{yyy} Our calling is to express ourselves as Christ in the many

^{xxx} Those we call saints have often attained this spiritual marriage, or divinization on earth; they are our divinized elders guiding us. Because of original sin, this divinization on earth is of the soul only and not the body, because one's body is largely not under the control of the will, even a divinized will.

^{yyy} Boredom is disguised selfishness. We seek stimulation, rather than

ways open to us. Christ seeks to express himself in every legitimate art or enterprise, and “non-religious” acts are not less than religious acts. Indeed, to carve out a part of life for religion, implies that the other part does not seek inclusion into God. In ancient Israel there was no divide (in theory) between God, government, business, family. They were all God’s enterprises under our stewardship. With the advent of Christianity, we are not stewards for Christ, but Christ himself, and this life is our productive training ground.

Not only temptation to sin or imperfection, but decisions also should be given this program of scrutiny. A good decision may be made better by it, and we advance as Christ. Idle thoughts are not so idle, (Mt 5:28). We can and should practice the best possible thought. This is the core value of prayer, it is proactive good thought and will which has great meaning for eternity.

Prayer is a real act of construction and effort, and we can feel this. It is easier to view television for fifteen minutes that to pray a rosary. The rosary is far more productive, and as we free our soul of selfishness, the television becomes less attractive and the prayer more meaningful.

The ten commandments are in order of importance. God comes first; separation from God only brings a corresponding separation from God’s good design for our world. Praise of God implies an association of wills with God. Positive prayer joined to acts of selflessness advance our incorporation into God, and our

fulfillment. The solution is as always to ride out the problem as often as it occurs, each time gaining by habit, a deeper life in the virtues of Christ, rather than self.

The perfection of any act is simply its fullness. To eat a brownie is good if it properly feeds us. To eat a brownie only for emotional stimulation is imperfect. This wholeness of act is the basis for the prohibition of birth control in the procreative act. When we finally arrive at perfection of an act, or a life, we see that the infinite love of God can enlarge it still.

families and the world benefit. Lack of external resources does not prohibit great influence in our world.

Spiritual advancement is not primarily a matter of reading or study, but of doing and not doing. Most who have made the effort (and were literate) used only the Gospel and the Holy Spirit as guides. Confirmation is the sacrament for spiritual advancement, and adult evening classes are available.

Appendix of NDE's cited

Actual NDE stories of a similar nature come from three online sources: "www.near-death.com, notable experiences" ; "www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's" and "www.iands.org." Many such books are also available. Reading the NDE accounts of these three websites is time very well spent, and they offer many more examples of the major NDE elements than are listed here.

¹(out of body): Out of body occurs in every NDE. Either of the websites listed have numerous out of body accounts.

²(movement through objects): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3991 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Dr. Dianne Morrissey

³(out of body): www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Dr. George Ritchie ••• Virtually all NDE accounts on www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's tell of out of body events.

⁴(light): Virtually all recorded NDE's include a light tunnel, then tells of light beings if the NDE proceeds.

⁵(citizens of Heaven): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4107 ••• These citizens usually include deceased family. The NDE cited here is of a woman who met her two miscarried brothers.

⁶(unconditional love): Too numerous to recount, virtually all non-distressing NDE's that advance past the light tunnel report unconditional love from all other persons and even things in Heaven.

⁷(Jesus): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4107 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4040 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3666 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Rev. Howard Storm ••• Jesus is the most commonly appearing person in NDE's.

⁸(life review): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2855 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Thomas Sawyer ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Dr. Dianne Morrissey ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Rev. Howard Storm ••• Small selfless acts are always greatly approved of by Heaven, even a selfless act to help a tree increases our own virtue of generosity, and this event is taken from a very similar real NDE, www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3991.

⁹(prayer): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's, 2662 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2772 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4179 ••• NDE's are definitely not secular, they include God, prayer, Heaven, Hell and Purgatory.

¹⁰(God as all): www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Thomas Sawyer ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Betty Eadie

¹¹(spiritual vibration): These oscillations are the tangible nature of spirit, and are commonly reported.

¹²(council of elders): Book of Revelation, chapter four ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Lynnclaire Dennis

¹³(contract): Prior to our own creation we are internal to Christ, (Jer 1:5). We are each a dimension of Christ who he wants to perfect in the toughest proving ground in the universe — fallen earth. Out of justice Christ obtains our consent to be incarnated, and we are given our spiritual goals. All of this is our “contract”, or to use biblical terms, our covenant with God. ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE’s, Lynnclaire Dennis ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE’s, RaNelle Wallace

¹⁴(reincarnation, previous lives): Christ creates human persons from himself. After death these persons become the body of Christ in Heaven again. The body of Christ continually incarnates as human persons (indirectly, from nothing), some of these human incarnations are members of the body of Christ who have lived earthly lives before. Several relevant stories may be found at www.near-death.com/science/research/reincarnation.html#a08.

¹⁵(unconditional, love forgiveness): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s 4126 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s 3666, in this NDE Jesus advises a woman to forgive her assailant during the very act of murdering her.

¹⁶(religion): At one’s entrance to Heaven, religion in itself seems to be of little concern to Jesus and all others. They are concerned with the quality of virtue gained from using it. This NDE idea and all others listed are further studied in this book.

¹⁷(Purgatory): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s, 3991 ••• www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s, 4720 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE’s, Dr. George Ritchie

¹⁸(Purgatory): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s, 2368; Amy C. is told that spiritual advancement as a human requires a body, and trials. It is a Catholic teaching that passive purification after death is a grinding sort of exertion, rather than proactive learning as in this life.

¹⁹(suicide): www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE’s, 4720

²⁰ (Hell): Both Catholic theology, and NDE accounts have those in Hell condemned and retained there by themselves, without insistence from God.

²¹ www.near-death.com/experiences/triggers.html

²² P. van Lommel et al, "Near-Death Experiences in Survivors of Cardiac Arrest"; Lancet magazine vol. 358; year 2001.

²³ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2855

²⁴ www.nderf.org/Experiences/1brian_h_nde_8493.html

²⁵ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Betty Eadie

²⁶ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2922,

²⁷ book, "My Descent into Death", by Howard Storm

²⁸ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3700

²⁹ www.nderf.org JB NDE 3355

³⁰ book, "Falling to Heaven", by Mickey Robinson, page 97

³¹ book, "Embraced by the Light", by Betty Eadie, page 31

³² www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 1957 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Betty Eadie

³³ Several relevant stories may be found at, www.near-death.com/science/research/reincarnation.html#a08.

³⁴ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 8024 ••• www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Betty Eadie

³⁵ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Thomas Sawyer

³⁶ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4035

³⁷ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4040.

³⁸ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Lynnclaire Dennis

³⁹ www.nderf.org/Experiences/1rene_hope_turner_nde.html

⁴⁰ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, RaNelle Wallace

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- ⁴¹ www.kuriakon00.com/celestial/nde/hal.html#imGoToCont
- ⁴² www.garabandal.us/pdfs/The-Warning-and-the-Miracle.pdf
- ⁴³ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2626
- ⁴⁴ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4107
- ⁴⁵ <https://www.iands.org/research/nde-research/nde-archives31/newest-accounts/479-living-water.html>
- ⁴⁶ www.iands.org, look in "NDE's" for the title, "greeted and given a tour", <https://www.iands.org/research/nde-research/nde-archives31/newest-accounts/871-greeted-and-given-a-tour.html>
- ⁴⁷ <https://www.iands.org/research/nde-research/nde-archives31/newest-accounts/565-billions-of-conscious-minds.html>
- ⁴⁸ www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332, "Otherworld Journeys", by Carol Zaleski is the best single source on ancient NDE's
- ⁴⁹ book, "Dialogues" by Gregory the Great (1911) book 4, chapter 36; www.tertullian.org/fathers/gregory_04_dialogues_book4.htm
- ⁵⁰ www.ccel.org/ccel/bede/history.html
- ⁵¹ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3991
- ⁵² www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 7892
- ⁵³ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 8024
- ⁵⁴ book, "My descent into Death", by Howard Storm, page 73
- ⁵⁵ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Arthur Yensen
- ⁵⁶ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3991
- ⁵⁷ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3169
- ⁵⁸ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4126
- ⁵⁹ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2386
- ⁶⁰ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2932
- ⁶¹ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 3991

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- ⁶² www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2555
- ⁶³ <http://bibleprobe.com/drrichie.html>; Ritchie's NDE story is widely propagated and on many websites. His book, "My Return from Tomorrow, and my Life after Dying", includes the full account.
- ⁶⁴ www.near-death.com, notable NDE's, Juliet Nightingale
- ⁶⁵ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 2626
- ⁶⁶ www.nderf.org/Experiences/1tammy_h_possible_nde.html
- ⁶⁷ www.near-death.com/experiences/notable/juliet-nightingale.html
- ⁶⁸ www.christianuniversalist.org/resources/articles/nde-debenneville/
- ⁶⁹ www.near-death.com/science/research/future.html#a07
- ⁷⁰ www.garabandal.us/pdfs/The-Warning-and-the-Miracle.pdf
- ⁷¹ see endnote 53
- ⁷² book, "My Descent into Death", pages 44-48, by Howard Storm
- ⁷³ <https://www.iands.org/research/nde-research/nde-archives31/newest-accounts/1294-apocalyptic-vision-during-high-fever.html>
- ⁷⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqJECcP04Ls; this is a video interview of Howard Storm, and it goes into detail not contained in his book. In this interview, Howard tells of current other worlds, and human and non-human moral beings. Videos are sometimes removed, but a video search for "Howard Storm interview", will likely bring it up.
- ⁷⁵ book, "Embraced by the Light", by Betty Eadie, pages 87-88 ••• www.nderf.org/Experiences/1roger_c_nde.html
- ⁷⁶ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 7748
- ⁷⁷ www.nderf.org, exceptional NDE's 4107

Consider giving this book to your priest or bishop