

Q and A with P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.)

An in-depth look at the near-death phenomenon

January 2005



P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D. (Hon.), is one of the original researchers in the field of near-death studies, having begun her work in 1978. She is one of the very few top NDE researchers who have actually had a NDE. [Her website](#) is filled with very interesting NDE research information and articles of hers. Her contribution to near-death studies is considered to be one of the most important as her first two books, [Beyond the Light](#) and [Coming Back to Life](#), are deemed the Bibles of the near-death experience by

researchers and a multitude of experiencers and enthusiasts. Using her firm understanding of police investigative techniques as a protocol, she has specialized in original fieldwork and research that also included sessions with significant others. Her findings are contained in six books (see right). Some of her findings have now been clinically verified. Her research is referenced in the distinguished Lancet medical journal, December 15, 2001 ([the landmark Dutch study by Pim van Lommel, M.D.](#)).

For more information about Dr. Atwater's contribution to near-death studies, [download her press kit here](#) in PDF format. You will need the Adobe PDF Reader installed on your computer to read the file. If you don't have the Reader, download it by pressing the Adobe Reader icon provided on the right.

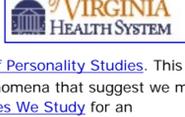


ANNOUNCEMENT: I have just sold another book, this one to Inner Traditions. Look for [The New Children and The Fifth World, Prophecy and Evolution](#) on store shelves around August 2005.

ANNOUNCEMENT: [We Live Forever: The Real Truth About Death](#) has now gone into its second printing. That's really wonderful as the book just came out last June/July. I am hearing from ever so many people who are comforted by this book, they say as never before. Truly, it is my most friendly, intimate book - not at all your typical book about death and dying. You will be surprised at what's in it.

ANNOUNCEMENT: If you have had a near-death experience or other unexplained experience, you are invited to be in communication with [Dr. Bruce Greyson](#) and his team of

researchers. Dr. Greyson would like to correspond with as many NDErs as possible. You can read about the research Dr. Greyson's team is doing on their website at the [University of Virginia's Division of Personality Studies](#). This research includes not only NDEs, but deathbed visions, and other phenomena that suggest we may survive bodily death. Visit the website and click on [Types of Experiences We Study](#) for an interesting read. Then you can respond by contacting Dr. Greyson at cbg4d@virginia.edu to report near-death experiences; or Dr. Jim Tucker at jbt8n@virginia.edu to report children with memories of previous lives; or Dr. Emily Kelly at ewc2r@virginia.edu to report any other experiences - such as apparitions, deathbed visions, and communications from deceased loved ones.



QUESTION: I'm very interested in NDEs and have read your Q & As with great interest. I have a question that Kevin Williams was not able to answer: I've heard that it's possible souls leave bodies just before imminent death. I remember reading about [the woman who witnessed the terrorist plane crash at the Pentagon on 9-11](#), and just one second before impact, she saw 'glowing orbs' exiting the top of the plane. I've read that the reason for this is not only to spare the pain, but that after a body is damaged, the actual soul will arrive in heaven malformed, and must be tended to (this is according to the book, [Destiny of Souls](#)).

If this is true, my question regards the poor civilian in Iraq who had his head cut off with a knife, which took an agonizing one minute. Do you think the soul exited early, knowing that there was no chance for survival? And if it did, would the body that's left continue screaming while the cutting is still going on? Or would all consciousness and bodily functions cease as soon as the spirit departs?

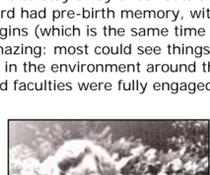
These are difficult questions, I know, and we can't be certain. But I would appreciate any comments you might have. -- *Fred*



PMH Atwater's reply: In esoteric traditions dating back several hundred years (written) and much further back in oral histories, it is said that the soul usually leaves the body before death occurs. We are also told that the way to tell if the soul is gone, is that the body will continue on in a mundane, habitual way but without the creative spark that once animated it. You can readily decide for yourself if this is true or not when you visit nursing homes, hospitals, or the very ill. There is a marked difference between those bodies that still have a soul in residence, and those which do not. The creative spark is real, active, and undeniable. It is our Holy Fire. When it is gone, the person's body seems to go on "automatic pilot," functioning as if by rote, talking and moving as if an

automaton. You see the same thing with newborns. They are listless until the soul settles in. Then, all of a sudden, you have a lively baby who makes itself known. With the very old or the very young, if the soul is not in residence, they appear as if "no one is home."

And, remember, the soul can go in and out. It does not have to remain once "inside," nor does it have to stay away once "outside." In my research of child experiencers of near-death states, one-third had pre-birth memory, with that memory beginning about the time when the third trimester begins (which is the same time the fetus can feel and respond to pain). That pre-birth memory was amazing: most could see things outside the womb, hear their parents speak, sense what was going on in the environment around them, and remember all of it - as if their brain, nervous systems, and faculties were fully engaged - as if they were a 100% real baby, and not a "fetus."

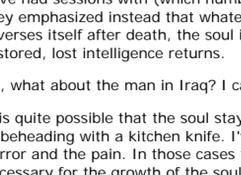


The soul is unlimited in its choices and functions (unlike we humans who are still wearing bodies). Because souls are not limited, we must be careful what we ascribe to them. What I am implying here, is that there is no "rule" that says all souls leave their bodies before death. Most do, and there is ample evidence to back this up. But just because most do does not mean all do. Again, you can tell. I have been a bedside when a soul went right through the death experience and did not exit until until last breath: some remained in the body for minutes afterward; some left but hung around the body for quite some time; some refused to accept the death verdict and simply would not cooperate with any prayers or attempts to help them. (This is why groups of people practice "rescue work," for those souls who refuse to accept their death or who do not know they have died.)

I consider it irresponsible for anyone to say or imply that if a body is damaged before death, the soul will be damaged after death. THIS IS ALMOST NEVER TRUE! I have heard of this happening, but it generally does not happen. Quite the opposite appears to be true - at least most mystics have noted this, most psychics and channelers agree, but what impresses me is that all the near-death experiencers I have had sessions with (which numbers nearly 4,000), not a single one said anything like this - they emphasized instead that whatever the condition of the body before death, that condition reverses itself after death, the soul is blemish free, handicap free, illness free, missing limbs are restored, lost intelligence returns.

So, what about the man in Iraq? I can only conjecture.

It is quite possible that the soul stayed with its body and experienced the bloody and painful death of beheading with a kitchen knife. I've seen souls do similar things like this before, go through the horror and the pain. In those cases that I have witnessed, I was shown that the experience was necessary for the growth of the soul. In one particular incident involving a young girl, the soul had never experienced a violent death before and wanted to feel what it was like to die that way. In another incident I witnessed, the soul being in residence at death added more emphasis to the event, made it more real and intense so that the family and friends would be more impacted. There are reasons, you see, probably as many as there are people who chose to do this. Sometimes by consciously dying in a painful way, karmic tension is created, and that is exactly what the soul intended - for revenge or whatever.



I suggested that in this case the soul could have stayed and screamed its way through death - because the event was filmed and the individual could make a powerful statement by remaining fully conscious throughout every agonizing moment. Political statements can be made that way. A point of view can be underscored that way. A departing soul can underscore a belief that way. The culture in Iraq is so different than ours or anywhere else in the industrialized world, that we are challenged to see events through Arabic eyes instead of our own. In this country, I would have said the man's soul was probably gone before the knife's first cut. But in Iraq, and especially considering the current mindset and values the people have, what would apply here may not apply there. We can hope his soul was gone, but, considering what is filmed with these beheadings, that soul may well have still been engaged.

Many blessings,
P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D., Ph.D.
www.cinemind.com/atwater or www.pmhatwater.com

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"We cannot keep the life we have on the earth realm, not our possessions or attachments or relationships. What we can keep is our memories and our feelings of what we have integrated into our heart of hearts from the experience of being here, plus the love we have shared with others." - Dr. P.M.H. Atwater.

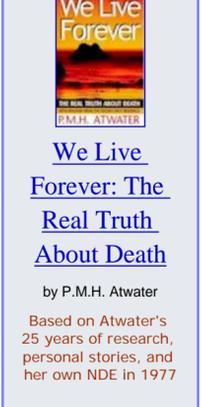
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Last modified: May 14, 2005



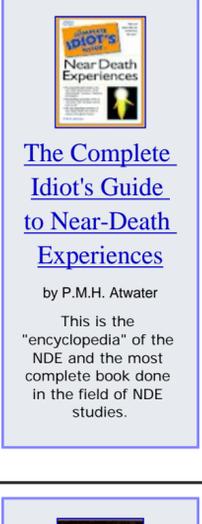
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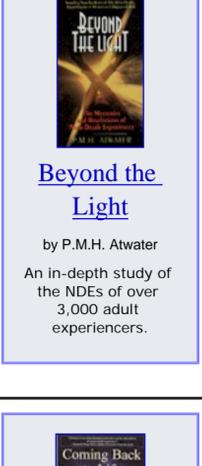
[We Live Forever: The Real Truth About Death](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
Based on Atwater's 25 years of research, personal stories, and her own NDE in 1977



[The New Children and Near-Death Experiences](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
An expansion of Atwater's original book "Children of the New Millennium" taking it to another level.



[The Complete Idiot's Guide to Near-Death Experiences](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
This is the "encyclopedia" of the NDE and the most complete book done in the field of NDE studies.



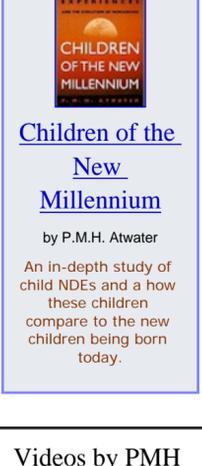
[Beyond the Light](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
An in-depth study of the NDEs of over 3,000 adult experiencers.



[Coming Back to Life](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
Looks at all aspects of the NDE and its aftereffects including possible changes in the brain.

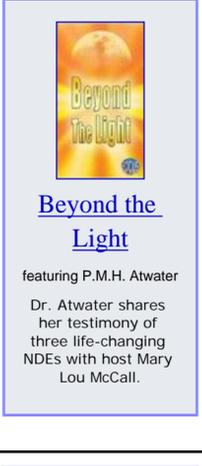


[Future Memory](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
Deals with the transformation of consciousness and what that might portend to future memory.



[Children of the New Millennium](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
An in-depth study of child NDEs and a how these children compare to the new children being born today.

Videos by PMH Atwater

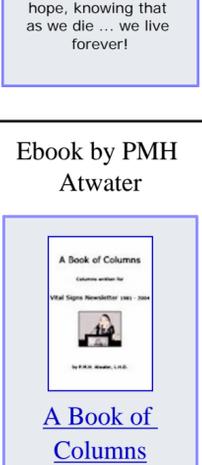


[Beyond the Light](#)
featuring P.M.H. Atwater
Dr. Atwater shares her testimony of three life-changing NDEs with host Mary Lou McCall.



[As You Die](#)
featuring P.M.H. Atwater
Available in CD-ROM, DVD, and VHS formats!
Atwater leads people through the wonderful journey which begins as one lays hovering between life and death, then leads them away from any fear and despair towards a peace and unquarable hope, knowing that as we die ... we live forever!

Ebook by PMH Atwater



[A Book of Columns](#)
by P.M.H. Atwater
This ebook contains all of Dr. Atwater's columns from the IANDS newsletter "Vital Signs" from June of 1981 until 2004. Proceeds go to support IANDS and its mission.