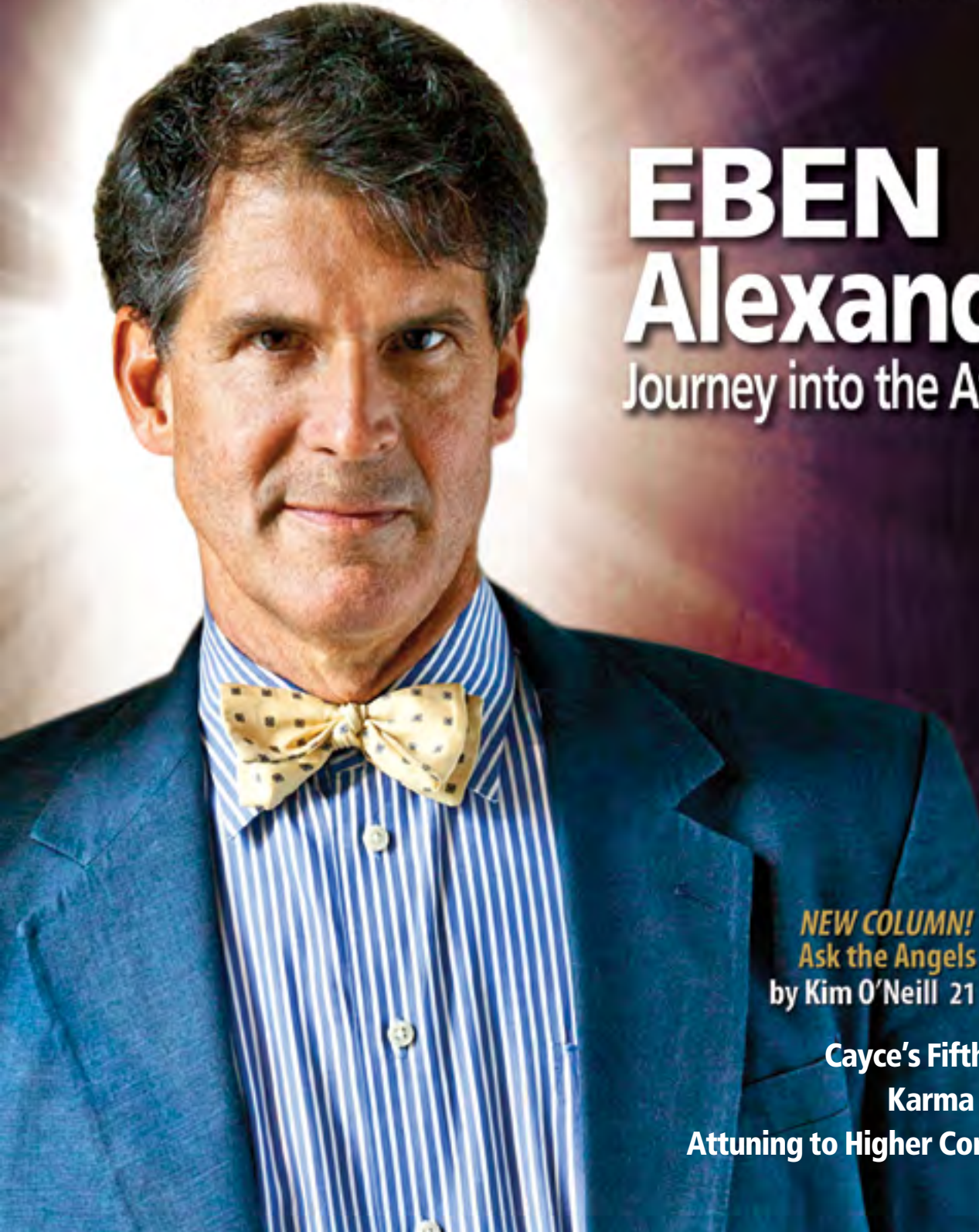




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# Venture Inward

The Magazine of Edgar Cayce's A.R.E. | Atlantic University | Cayce/Reilly® School of Massotherapy



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# A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife—

## *Proof of Consciousness... and Love*

BY EBEN ALEXANDER III, MD

Science doesn't contradict  
what I learned up there.

### Like Being Struck by a Freight Train

The morning I almost died, I awoke with a wave of pain down my spine. It became worse and worse, until I was paralyzed with pain, unable to even arise from my bed. My wife suggested calling an ambulance, but I told her no, already too far gone to realize how dire my predicament was. Later in the morning, she found me having a full-blown epileptic seizure, so she immediately called the EMTs. After two hours of groaning and screaming between seizures in the ER, I shouted three words: *God, help me!* I remember nothing of my time in the ER, including shouting out that plea, and spent the next seven days in coma.

“Cases of bacterial meningitis are uniformly fatal if untreated. Even when treated rapidly, the mortality rate ranges from 15-40%...Of those who arrive in an ER with a rapid downward spiral in neurologic function, as I did, only 10% are lucky enough to survive...and many of them will spend the rest of their lives in a vegetative state...My spinal fluid was full of pus.” (pp.19-21)\*

### The Earthworm's-Eye View

“Darkness, but a visible darkness—like being submerged in mud yet also being able to see through it...Consciousness, but consciousness without memory or identity—like a dream where you know what's going on around you, but have no real idea of who, or what, you are. Sound...a deep rhythmic pounding...like a heartbeat?...I didn't have a body...I was simply...there.” (p. 29)

For months after my recovery, I believed that this realm was the best consciousness that my brain could muster while soaking in pus. Having read much more of the afterlife literature, I now believe this may have been the commonly reported lower level, or the bardo [Tibetan word meaning in-between state], often encountered *en route* from the physical realm towards the spiritual.

### The Gateway

“The darkness...radiated fine filaments of white-gold light...so the darkness around me began to splinter and break apart. Then I heard...a living sound, like the richest, most complex, most beautiful piece of music...Then, at the very center of the light...an opening...I began to move up...and found myself in a completely new...most beautiful world I'd ever seen...brilliant, vibrant, ecstatic...I felt like I was being born. Below me was countryside...green, lush...I was flying, passing over trees and fields and waterfalls...people sang and danced in circles...I'd see a dog, running and jumping...full of joy...I was absolutely sure of one thing: this place...was completely real...I don't know how long I flew along. Time in this place was different from the simple linear time we experience on earth...

next to me was a beautiful girl...we were riding along...on an intricately patterned surface alive with...vivid colors—the wing of a butterfly...Without using any words, she spoke to me. The message went through me like a wind and I instantly understood that it was true...

You are loved and cherished, dearly,  
forever.

You have nothing to fear.

There is nothing you can do wrong.”  
(pp. 38-41)

## The Core

“Higher than the clouds...flocks of transparent orbs, shimmering beings arced across the sky, leaving long, streamer-like lines behind them...the beings ...were quite simply different from anything I have known on this planet...Higher. A sound, huge and booming like a glorious chant, came down from above...seeing and hearing were not separate in this place... Everything was distinct, yet everything was also a part of everything else...like the... designs on a Persian carpet...or a butterfly’s wing... Each time I silently posed a question, the answer came instantly in an explosion of light, color, love and beauty that blew through me like a crashing wave...They answered them...in a way that bypassed language...I was able to instantly and effortlessly understand concepts that would have taken me years to fully grasp in my earthly life...I could sense the infinite vastness of the Creator...“Om” was the sound I remembered hearing associated with that omnipotent and unconditionally loving God...This vast, inky-black core was the home of the Divine itself...Om told me that there is not one universe but many... but that love lay at the center of them all.”  
(pp. 45-48)

## What Is Consciousness?

Severe bacterial meningitis should have disabled all but the most rudimentary of experiences, and yet I remembered a rich odyssey, which originally comprised 20,000 words. It all came packaged with a vivid, paranoid, delusional nightmare right after I emerged from coma and was taken off of the ventilator—a contrasting foil to validate the ultra-reality of the experience deep within coma.

Where did it occur? Outside of the brain and physical realm, yes. But *where?*

In trying to answer that question, I had to review everything I thought I knew about consciousness, about the mind-body debate, about Platonic concepts of a world of forms, about the enigma of the interpretation of quantum mechanics, about the very nature of reality and existence. And all in a fashion that incorporated the infinite unconditional love of the Creator for the creation, so clear to me throughout my journey deep in coma.

## Manifestations of Consciousness

Conventional physicists, at least those who fully subscribe to materialism, are in a headlong rush to prove there is no material—to *the material world!* Rather, that we are in a world of vibrating strings of energy in higher dimensional space-time, or some similarly abstract basis of reality. The inability of anyone to explain how consciousness might emerge from the physical brain, or the “Hard Problem of Consciousness,” and the enigma of quantum mechanics (the suggestion that “consciousness paints reality” that drove the brilliant founding fathers of quantum physics, such as Schrödinger, Heisenberg, and Bohr, into mysticism) remain crucial in my ongoing search for understanding.

The thing that actually exists is the self of which we are conscious. Descartes knew as much. *That* consciousness is the only thing we know exists. Also, our concept of time is emergent from our consciousness on this side of the veil. Yet, it is not some fundamental aspect of reality, at least not in the form that it appears to us. Space, time, mass, and energy—while emergent properties of an underlying existence—are not what they appear to be.

“Each of us (is) intricately, irremovably connected to the larger universe. It is our true home, and thinking that this physical world is all that matters is like shutting oneself up in a small closet and imagining that there is nothing else out beyond it... The universe is so constructed that to truly understand any part of its many dimensions and levels, you have to become a part of that dimension.” (pp. 155-156)

## Spiritual Transformation

My odyssey deep in coma proved that rich consciousness exists when our awareness is freed from the reducing valve and

filtering effects of the brain, which serves to “dumb down” our consciousness. In fact, many thousands have reported spiritually transformative experiences (STEs) that reveal a much higher non-local consciousness, often when freed from the shackles of the physical human brain. Knowing that a higher consciousness exists independently of the brain is a giant step toward revealing the eternity of our soul or spirit. It suggests that the whole realm of the near-death experience and other such literature has a basis in a fundamental reality that is the basis of this physical realm.

The apparitions of STEs such as near-death experiences, death-bed visions, shared-death experiences, after-death communications and the like, tell us even more about the realm of spirit—of how it is right *where we are*, not distant—and that our souls are eternal. **The flow of time in that realm is much more free, not at all encumbered as is the flow of time in the earthly realm.**

Such questions around such transformative experiences are not new. Plato writes of the near-death experience in *The Republic*. In it, he relates the story of Er, a soldier who awoke from being dead and described the account of his journey into the afterlife. Even America’s founding fathers, many of whom were Masons, inspired by their new philosophy of freedom and by the newest experiments in physics, pursued mysticism in search of deep answers.

## Love Is the Basis of Everything

“Love is without a doubt the basis of everything... This is the reality of realities... the truth of truths that lives and breathes at the core of everything that exists or that ever will exist... this is the single most important emotional truth in the universe... the single most important scientific truth as well... Science doesn’t contradict what I learned up there. But far, far too many people believe it does, because certain members of the scientific community who are pledged to







## Questions to ponder:

- What are the boundaries of self, and where do these dissolve towards Oneness?
- Does causality involve free will, a divine plan, or an amalgam, and how does it operate? Does God intervene?
- What of healing energy, and the power of prayer?
- How might we harness the tremendous healing power of some transcendental NDEs?
- How much is the global awakening in consciousness coming for a grander reason?
- What is the extent of cosmic consciousness?

the materialist worldview have insisted... that science and spirituality cannot coexist. They are mistaken... **The unconditional love and acceptance that I experienced on my journey is the single most important discovery I have ever made, or will ever make... sharing this simple message... is the most important task I have.**" (pp. 71-73)

Although the meningitis had wiped most of my memories of my previous life away, it was the strong connection I sensed with my 10-year-old son, Bond, that forced me to return to this realm. My only defense during much of my journey had been the misperception that it did not matter whether my existence continued, or ended. Only by Bond's pleading with me, and my sensing our connection (even though I did not know his name and could not understand his words) did I feel the powerful draw of the love I felt for him, and the urgency with which he needed me to prevail, that I struggled back to this realm, instead of passing on to the next.

For the first 50 or so years of my life, I was blessed with wonderful adoptive parents and family, and had resolved my early feelings of abandonment and rejection by my birth mother. However, I learned in 2000 (prodded by my older son in pursuit of his school project on family heritage) that my birth parents had gotten married (a tremendous surprise, given all I had been told from the beginning). Not only that: I had three younger birth siblings, one of whom had died before I met the family. Over those two minutes of revelation, I was also told "it was not a good time to come back in their lives." It took me years to realize how devastating that second rejection had been, and it crushed any last hope for a loving God or answer to prayers out of me—until I came out of coma almost nine years later. My odyssey deep in coma left me knowing forever the power and love of that omniscient God!

"My discoveries beyond the body

echoed the lessons I had learned just a year earlier through reconnecting with my birth family. Ultimately, none of us are orphans. We are all in the position I was, in that we have *other family*: beings who are watching and looking out for us—beings we have momentarily forgotten, but who, if we open ourselves to their presence, are waiting to help us navigate our time here on Earth. None of us are ever unloved." (pp. 95-96)

"NDEs (have)... a consistent list of features... one of these is a meeting with one or more deceased people that the NDE subject had known in life. I had met no one I'd known in life... Four months after my departure from the hospital, my birth family sister... (sent) me a photo of my birth sister (who had died)... She looked hauntingly familiar... There was no mistaking her, no mistaking the loving smile... It was she (the girl on the butterfly wing)... In that moment... the higher and the lower worlds met." (pp. 162-169)

## Knowing Consciousness


"You don't have to almost die to glimpse behind the veil—but you must do the work... we each have to go deep into our own consciousness, through prayer and meditation, to access these truths." (pp. 157-158)

Since my near-death experience, which was really my "more-life" experience, I have explored several types of meditation, prayer, and contemplative practices. Many are very effective in calming the mind and opening to greater consciousness. In particular I have found meditations using binaural beat technology (most recently with Sacred Acoustics, at [sacredacoustics.com](http://sacredacoustics.com)) to be helpful in reconnecting with the spiritual realm of my journey. As the musician or surgeon hones his craft over time, so too one must be dedicated to practice in order to reap the greatest rewards of incorporating centering prayer and meditation into one's life.

## Still Searching and Learning

"Each one of us is more familiar with consciousness than we are with anything else, and yet we understand far more about the rest of the universe than we do about the mechanism of consciousness... The greatest clue to the reality of the spiritual realm is this profound mystery of our conscious existence." (p. 154)

My education will never be complete. I am more excited now than ever, to learn and grow and experience the mystery of consciousness and the gift of unconditional love. I have co-founded a nonprofit organization, Eternea.org, to offer education, research, and community programs on these essential areas and more.

I invite you to join with me, and others, in the continuing exploration of who we are—and can be! 

\*All quotations used by permission from the book *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, by Eben Alexander, MD (2012). New York: Simon & Schuster.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**EBEN ALEXANDER III, MD**, author of *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife*, has been an academic neurosurgeon for over 25 years, including almost 15 years on faculty at Harvard Medical School. In 2008,

his own remarkable near-death experience radically transformed his understanding of consciousness and the brain, indeed of all existence. Dr. Alexander's message is about bringing unconditional love, compassion, and forgiveness into daily life, and better understanding the nature of consciousness. He is grateful to Elizabeth Hare for her editorial assistance in preparing this article.

Join Dr. Alexander, Robert Brown, Suzanne Giesemann, Maureen Hancock, and others, May 17-19 at Virginia Beach Headquarters for **Our Soul Life: Near Death, Afterlife, Life Between Lives, and Reincarnation**. Visit [EdgarCayce.org/conferences](http://EdgarCayce.org/conferences) or call 800-333-4499 for more information. 