

# SOME IMPLICATIONS OF PARAPSYCHOLOGY FOR THEOLOGY

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THE MORE usual view of theologians today is that the Christian revelation of God is not given directly in propositions. It is seen rather as an event, an experience, a meeting with God in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Subsequently, propositional judgments are legitimately made about this experience. However, the experience itself is always mediated to some degree by one's own world view, by one's philosophy. As Karl Rahner has written, one cannot hear another's word "without confronting it with the rest of what is already present in one's mind and consciousness."<sup>1</sup> ". . . Faith is already a human activity in which man's own subjectivity, together with its logic, its experience, native concepts and perspectives, already enters into play."<sup>2</sup> The hearing of the message is "hearing by means of categories already possessed from elsewhere, a reception within previously given horizons, however much these horizons themselves may be altered by this hearing," and hence the hearing of revelation itself "necessarily implies philosophy, i.e. a previous, transcendental, as well as historical self-comprehension of the man who hears the historical revelation of God."<sup>3</sup> It is impossible, then, for man to escape the necessity of bringing to the experience of revelation something of his own world view.

This world view includes insights gained from psychology, sociology, the physical sciences, and one's own, even implicit, philosophy. It is the conviction of this essay that today one can no longer exclude parapsychology from those human efforts which influence man's world view. The Parapsychological Association was accepted as an affiliate member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1969. Parapsychology challenges some of our scientific models. It has implications for philosophy, and theologians in particular owe its findings a new respect.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Theology in the New Testament," *Theological Investigations* 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966) 28.

<sup>2</sup> "What Is a Dogmatic Statement?" *ibid.* 48.

<sup>3</sup> "Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations* 6 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) 73.

<sup>4</sup> The most authoritative survey of the field is *Handbook of Parapsychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977). The best research tool is *Parapsychology: Sources of Information*, ed. L. White and L. Dale (2nd ed.; Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1976). Cf. also *Philosophical Dimensions of Parapsychology*, ed. J. Wheatley and H. Edge (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1976); J. Randall, *Parapsychology and*

In this article I will discuss some of the recent work in parapsychology, particularly where it touches most closely on theological issues concerning life beyond death.

In parapsychology one may make a rough distinction between three types of evidence: (1) *controlled experimental evidence* which can be worked with under laboratory conditions; (2) *recurring spontaneous experimental evidence* where strict laboratory conditions are not possible but where a trained investigator is present; (3) *anecdotal evidence* or stories people pass on which may be true but where no sophisticated critical techniques are employed.

Anecdotal evidence for paranormal phenomena is notoriously untrustworthy. Yet it was this type of evidence which gave rise to the more scientific study of paranormal phenomena. To the degree that a class of paranormal phenomena has been subjected to continuing scientific and logical analysis, to the same degree this evidence moves out of the "occult" and into the domain of parapsychology. The best-known milestones which mark this transition for some paranormal data are the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in London (1882), the founding of the American Society for Psychical Research (1885), the beginning of the work of Joseph B. Rhine at Duke (1927) and of S. G. Soal in London (ca. 1925). It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the historical development of this young science.<sup>5</sup> However, I think it can be said that among those who have carefully considered the evidence, apart from a few respected conservative critics<sup>6</sup> and some well-known magicians,<sup>7</sup> the existence of telepathy (the paranormal perception of the mental state of another person) and clairvoyance (the paranormal perception of objects or objective events) is generally admitted today. Experiments have been repeatedly conducted in which the odds against a chance happening are statistically enormous.<sup>8</sup>

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*the Nature of Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); *Parapsychology: Its Relation to Physics, Biology, Psychology and Psychiatry*, ed. G. Schmeidler (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent history, cf. A. Gauld, *The Founders of Psychical Research* (New York: Schocken, 1968).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. Ransom, "Recent Criticisms of Parapsychology: A Review," *Surveys in Parapsychology: Reviews of the Literature with Updated Bibliographies*, ed. R. White (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1976) 401-19; C. Hansel, *ESP: A Scientific Evaluation* (New York: Scribner's, 1966); P. Kurtz, T. Rockwell, *et al.*, "The Humanist's Crusade against Parapsychology: A Discussion," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* (hereafter cited as *JASPR*) 72 (1978) 349-64.

<sup>7</sup> M. Christopher, *Mediums, Mystics and the Occult* (New York: Crowell, 1975); J. Randi, *The Magic of Uri Geller* (New York: Ballantine, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> R. Thouless, *From Anecdote to Experiment in Psychical Research* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972) 84-93; S. Krippner, "Telepathy," and R. Stanford, "Clairvoyance,"

Telepathy and clairvoyance, at least in the laboratory, occur in contexts that give no indication which allows an observer to call them anything but strictly "natural" events. Thus, when St. Francis Xavier, while preaching on the island of Ternate in the East Indies, had a vision of a factual occurrence, the sinking of a ship far out at sea, our first explanation must be a natural one. Many humans have these powers apart from any special religious connection (though in one sense we might say that all nature is "religious" throughout).

Psychokinesis (the evidential influence of mind on matter without any known intermediate energy) was once considered one of the more fantastic "occult" beliefs. Today it is generally accepted by respected parapsychologists. Helmut Schmidt and W. G. Roll in America, Hans Bender in Germany, Haakon Forwald in Sweden, and serious investigation in Russia have provided solid evidence for its existence.<sup>9</sup> PK is evidently connected with many poltergeist manifestations and it seems to be operative in at least some cases of alleged possession.

In this article, however, I will forgo discussion of possession and paranormal healing (which also may be related to PK). Rather, I will focus on data which are considered by some as empirical evidence for the existence of man beyond death. First I will consider deathbed visions, followed by out-of-the-body experiences, then apparitions in general, and finally mediumistic studies.

#### DEATHBED VISIONS

Raymond A. Moody, Jr., M.D., in his well-known book *Life after Life*, presented the results of his study of 150 dying patients who claim to have had apparitional and out-of-the-body experiences.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, he does not tell us the percentage of patients who experienced each of the phenomena, but the general pattern he found was as follows. (1) The experience involved a sense of ineffability together with feelings of peace

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*Psychic Exploration: A Challenge for Science*, ed. E. Mitchell and J. White (New York: Putnam's, 1974) 112-51; J. G. Pratt, "A Decade of Research With a Selected ESP Subject: An Overview and Appraisal of the Work With Pavel Stepanek," *Proceedings JASPR* 30 (Sept. 1973) 1-78.

<sup>9</sup> Thouless, *From Anecdote to Experiment* 143-54; H. Schmidt, "Psychokinesis," *Psychic Exploration* 179-93; W. Roll, *The Poltergeist* (New York: New American Library, 1972); G. Schmeidler, "PK Effects upon Continuously Recorded Temperature," *JASPR* 67 (1973) 325-40; H. Bender, "Modern Poltergeist Research—A Plea for an Unprejudiced Approach," *New Directions in Parapsychology*, ed. J. Beloff (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1975) 122-43; J. Pratt, *ESP Research Today: A Study in the Developments in Parapsychology since 1960* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1973) 55-83; D. Scott Rogo, *Minds and Motion: The Riddle of Psychokinesis* (New York: Taplinger, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> *Life after Life: The Investigation of a Phenomenon—Survival of Bodily Death* (Atlanta: Mockingbird, 1975). This was followed by *Reflections on Life after Life* (New York: Bantam, 1977).

and serenity. (2) Generally the experience began with a noise, either a buzzing, roaring, banging sound, or whistling music. (3) The patients experienced a sensation of being out of the body (labelled OOB and more lately OBE in parapsychological literature). For example, from a distance they "watched" the doctor working on them as they lay on a bed with their eyes closed, apparently unconscious. They felt they were hovering over the scene and often correctly noted details in the room. Most felt they were in a kind of "spiritual body," though a few experienced a consciousness without any sense of a "body."<sup>11</sup> (4) Other spirit-like persons were met, both known and unknown. (5) There was a meeting with a being of indescribable light, known as personal, with whom a direct transfer of thought took place. This being was not identifiable. Some Christians identified it as Christ, some Jews as an angel, etc. (6) There followed an intense review of one's life. (7) There was an experience of a border or limit of some sort which could not be passed. At times loved ones who had died were seen beyond the border. (8) There followed a return to the body which was generally reluctant. (9) There was a subsequent change in one's life-view in which there was less fear of death and less of a reward-punishment model of afterlife—the being of light responded not with anger but with understanding, even humor. (10) Lastly, there was a corroboration of details, especially of technical medical details of operations, etc.

The first impact upon reading *Life after Life* is quite strong and leaves one with a sense of plausibility. Yet, due caution and patience is needed before forming even solidly probable conclusions. Much more scientific research is needed in this area. However, even before Moody's work appeared, Dr. Karlis Osis, Director of Research at the American Society for Psychical Research, had published some excellent studies on deathbed observations.<sup>12</sup> Osis' samples reveal the same sense of calm or even of an elevated mood,<sup>13</sup> the same reluctance to return to everyday life,<sup>14</sup> and the experience of a "life-film rapidly unfolding" but without the sense of an acceleration of time.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that Osis' subjects do not specifically mention OBEs, but there is a sense of "being in another world." Cases of paranormal knowledge also are rarely mentioned. But Dr. Osis tells me that neither of these two phenomena was capable of check or verification in his survey. Thus no discrepancy may yet be claimed between his work and

<sup>11</sup> *Life after Life* 36.

<sup>12</sup> *Deathbed Observations by Physicians and Nurses* (New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1961); cf. also "Deathbed Observations in India," *ASPR Newsletter* 19 (Autumn 1973) 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> *Deathbed Observations* 73, 83.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 84.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 76.

that of Moody on these points. Similarly, there is no specific mention of the "indescribable light" in Osis' studies. Yet, there is specific reference to religious figures such as Christ or God, the common denominator being the religious apparitions which possess qualities of a numinous experience of varying degrees of intensity.

The more recent work by Osis and E. Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death*,<sup>16</sup> studies 877 cases in the U.S. and India. The subjects are terminal or near-death patients who see apparitions either of persons or places or unexpectedly become serene or elated. The data are subjected to careful statistical analysis in an effort to test two hypotheses: (1) that these experiences are totally subjective hallucinations prior to the destruction of personality; (2) that they are intimations of another world. The authors make a good case in support of the second hypothesis as the most coherent explanation of the data.

The book is so crammed with interesting detail that I can give here only a meager sampling. For example, while drugs, high fever, and uremic poisoning increase the number of purely subjective hallucinations, deathbed visions relating to post-mortem existence are relatively unaffected by medical conditions. Clarity of consciousness decreases as drug- or fever-induced hallucinations increase, but in deathbed visions clarity of consciousness is evident. The persons seen were mainly apparitions of dead relatives (U.S.) or of religious figures (India). Primarily, these figures had a "take-away" purpose, a purpose which at times contradicted the intentions of the patients. Places seen were mainly scenes of beauty, intense color, and peace. While hallucinations usually are rambling and incoherent, one finds in deathbed visions a coherent orientation related to a transition experience.<sup>17</sup> Deathbed visions often cut across individual, national, and cultural lines. The content is often contrary to religious expectations, at least as presented in the Bible and the Bhagavad-Gita. Severe stress or lack of education seem unrelated to deathbed visions.

The authors clearly point out that there are subjective factors involved in the experiences.<sup>18</sup> While they are moderate in their conclusions and discuss other possible interpretations, their thesis is that there is a cross-cultural core of phenomena that suggests something objective beyond the cultural differences, and that the most coherent hypothesis is that the dying are experiencing a phenomenon of transition to another life.

<sup>16</sup> New York: Avon, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 182-204. The authors mention that during the deathbed visions, in the majority of the cases, the patient's normal perception of the rest of the room was intact. Interestingly, Dr. Kubler-Ross has spoken about her own experience at the time of her father's death: "My own father talked to his father who had been dead 30 years, and then turned back and spoke rationally to me" (*People*, Nov. 24, 1975, 66).

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Hindus do not see Christ, nor do Christians see Krishna.

However, the authors seem not to have given sufficient consideration to a third hypothesis: that the experience may be one of the deep unconscious in the Jungian sense in which archetypal images are found.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that a great deal of further research is needed to separate, if possible, cultural accretions from the core experience. But this study is an impressive effort.

A different interpretation of the experience is presented by Dr. Russell Noyes, Associate Professor at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, who has collected 114 cases.<sup>20</sup> He also found the experience of the life-review and the experience of transcending the body. But he believes that the life-review could be the result of a rapid regression to prior life to escape a frustrating reality and thus reach an intrinsically pleasant state. The experience of body transcendence would be the result of a type of dissociation (depersonalization) through which the reality of death would be excluded from consciousness. This allows one to pretend he is only witnessing it as a spectator. Freud said our death is unimaginable and we have to perceive it as a spectator, for in the unconscious everyone of us is convinced of his own immortality. However, this position does not account for the paranormal perceptions of the patients in Moody's work (seeing the doctor, the operation, and the deceased who one did not know were dead). Noyes admits definite mystical overtones in the experience but his explanation is similar to Freud's, who practically reduced mystical experience, the "oceanic feeling," to a regression to the security of early infancy. Many psychologists today believe that it is illegitimate to base all later "peak" experiences on the model of the young infant's pleasure-seeking instinct. However, Noyes's nuanced explanation seems to stop short of Freudian reductionism. He endeavors to remain more open and presents an excellent phenomenological description. This type of description may be very helpful as we endeavor to come to definite conclusions about the nature of the experience.

Moody himself has discussed the similarities of OBEs to cases of epileptic seizure and cerebral anoxia (lack of oxygen in the brain) and he finds the conditions and effects quite different.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Of course, as Jung held, the unconscious itself may be a genuine experience of a transsubjective ground of reality. Cf. the pertinent discussion of archetypal images found in LSD research in S. Grof, M.D., and J. Halifax, *The Human Encounter with Death* (New York: Dutton, 1977) 108-57. Also note the visions of "hell" found in M. Rawlings, M.D., *Beyond Death's Door* (New York: Nelson, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> "Depersonalization in the Face of Life-Threatening Danger: An Interpretation," *Omega* 7 (1976) 103-14; "The Experience of Dying," *Psychiatry* 35 (1972) 174-84. See also M. Sabom and S. Kreutziget, "Physicians Evaluate the Near Death Experience," *Theta* 6, 4 (1978) 1-6.

<sup>21</sup> *Reflections on Life after Life* 108-11.

In view of the evidence so far collected, in my opinion one should be most cautious about accepting deathbed-apparition evidence alone as strong evidence for the truth claim of the experience. Yet, I think there is sufficient evidence to show that some type of paranormal perception is present in many cases. Furthermore, I think that the evidence is not only consistent with some form of belief in "survival," but that there are further *indications* of some contact with a not purely subjective reality, and thus further research is without doubt called for.<sup>22</sup>

#### OUT-OF-THE-BODY EXPERIENCES

As we have seen, OBEs are often connected with deathbed visions. However, there is a vast body of literature on OBEs which are not connected with death, and thus I will handle this subject under a separate heading.<sup>23</sup> OBEs are taken in much of the popular literature as evidence for life beyond death. If there were a real separation of body from spirit at death, there would seem to be a conflict with the general opinion of theologians both today and in the tradition. Catholic theologians, working either from biblical data or from Aristotelian-Thomistic psychology, see man as a body-soul unity, an embodied person. Karl Rahner, for example, asserts that man will never exist as pure spirit. At death he will continue to have an intrinsic relationship with matter through some type of union with the physical cosmos.<sup>24</sup> Others hold that man will be immediately incorporated by God in a spiritual body, an idea developed by St. Paul in 1 Cor 15 and 2 Cor 5. However, if a person is capable of having an out-of-the-body experience, then we would seem to be forced back to a kind of dualism, often called a Platonic dualism.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, this apparent conflict may not be irreparable. Some parapsychologists writing on this topic refer to the many religious traditions that speak about a "spiritual" or "astral" or "subtle" body which remains with the center of consciousness in an OBE. If this were true,

<sup>22</sup> Among other centers, the Psychical Research Foundation in Durham, N.C., is pursuing this research. Cf. W. Roll, "A Study of the Process of Dying, Death, and a Possible Continuation of Consciousness After Death," *Theta*, 4, 3 (1976) 1-5.

<sup>23</sup> C. Tart, "Out-of-the-Body Experiences," *Psychic Explorations* 357-62. For surveys of the various experiments, cf. D. Black, *EKSTASY: Out-of-the-Body Experiences* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975).

<sup>24</sup> *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961) 27-31.

<sup>25</sup> On dualism in theology, cf. R. Aldwinckle, *Death in the Secular City: Life after Death in Contemporary Theology and Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 68-100; J. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 112-28. On its relation to parapsychology, cf. C. D. Broad, "Personal Identity and Survival," *Philosophical Dimensions* 353-57; H. D. Lewis, *Persons and Life after Death* (London: Macmillan, 1978); C. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life after Death* (Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1961) 59-120.

there would be no dualism between the spirit and the body which we know. We will return to this point later.

First, however, let us consider some of the evidence for the existence of the OBE. There is an impressive array of *anecdotal* evidence for the experience, as well as experiential accounts of people who have become proficient at producing it;<sup>26</sup> and in recent years a sufficient number of experiments have been conducted in laboratory work to allow for some modest conclusions.

John Palmer of the University of Virginia tentatively defines an OBE as "the distinctive experience of perceiving the environment from a location in space outside one's physical body."<sup>27</sup> In one famous experiment Charles Tart of the University of California at Davis had his subject, "Miss Z," wired to instruments for observation. One night she correctly identified a five-digit number which had been placed on a shelf high above her head, from which position she claimed to have read the number.<sup>28</sup> The odds of doing this in any one try are about 100,000 to 1. Other subjects, such as Blue (Stuart) Harary, Alex Tanous, and Ingo Swann, have been tested at various centers such as the ASPR in New York, the Psychical Research Foundation at Durham, and the Stanford Research Institute. In some cases the results appear to be beyond chance expectation.<sup>29</sup>

The difficulty with the experiments is that thus far it has been impossible to tell whether the results are caused by clairvoyance from within the body (which has been well established) or by a real movement out of the body. To obviate this difficulty, perspective tests have been conducted in which a box is placed on a shelf high above the subject to be tested. The box has a slit with a distorting mirror behind it. When one looks through the slit, one sees the reverse of what is in the box. For example, one sees a "d" instead of a "b." If one could see through the box apart from the slit (as may be the case with clairvoyance), one would see the "b." At least such is the theory.

Psychics like Ingo Swann and Alex Tanous, tested at the ASPR, have successfully identified the view in perspective tests. On first thought, this experiment would seem to verify the supposition that the subject has left his physical body and that his center of consciousness has moved to the

<sup>26</sup> R. Crookall, *The Study and Practice of Astral Projection* (Secaucus, N.J.: University Books, 1966); S. Muldoon and H. Carrington, *The Phenomenon of Astral Projection* (N.Y.: Weiser, n.d.); J. Monroe, *Journeys Out of the Body* (New York: Doubleday, 1971); Rogo, *Man Does Survive Death* 13-50.

<sup>27</sup> "Symposium: Research on Out-of-the-Body Experiences: Where Do We Go from Here? Some New Directions for Research," *Research in Parapsychology 1973*, ed. W. Roll, R. Morris, and J. Morris (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1974) 107.

<sup>28</sup> *Psychic Exploration* 366.

<sup>29</sup> *EKSTASY* 53-71; M. Ebon, *What's New in ESP* (New York: Pyramid, 1976) 50-63.



level of the slit in the box. But as the parapsychologist D. Scott Rogo observes, the hypothesis that clairvoyant vision is different from normal vision (with its specific perspective) is quite questionable. He cites the German parapsychologist Hans Bender in his studies with "Fräulein D.," in which he showed that clairvoyant vision "did indeed seem to mimic normal sight quite explicitly."<sup>30</sup> More research is required in this area, since it is crucial to show a difference in the mode of perception in OBEs from that in clairvoyance if one is to show that one's center of consciousness does move away from the body.

Much work is now being done by means of Kirlian photography to study the "aura," a corona of light around the body and most objects. A number of psychics maintain that this aura is the reflection of a subtle or ethereal body which separates from the known physical body in OBE experiences. But this phenomenon may be the result of known forces, perhaps even of the conduction of moisture around an object. It seems to have some function in paranormal healing, but it cannot yet be considered evidence of a "second" body.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Celia Green, Director of the Institute of Psychophysical Research at Oxford, has gathered a number of OBE cases which are experienced as asomatic; that is, the subject does not seem to himself to have another body. He feels as if he were a completely disembodied spirit.<sup>32</sup>

A fruitful study was undertaken in India by Karlis Osis of the ASPR. Osis studied claimed cases of bilocation by some Indian gurus. Many witnesses, some of them trained research scientists, were interviewed who claimed to have seen the guru, Sathya Sai Baba, while he was many miles away.<sup>33</sup> Again the question arises here as to whether the event is one of an OBE or of telepathy and/or psychokinesis.

If it were clearly shown that there is a center of consciousness completely detachable from the body, this would represent a problem for recent theological body-spirit theory. But solid evidence of this has not

<sup>30</sup> D. Rogo, in review of Black's *EKSTASY* in *Parapsychology Review* 6, 6 (November-December 1975) 13. Rogo cites J. Rhine, *New Frontiers of the Mind* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937) 135-39, but Bender's experiment merely showed that clairvoyance improves gradually just as normal vision under dim light improves as the lighting is increased.

<sup>31</sup> H. Montandon, "Psychophysiological Aspects of the Kirlian Phenomena: A Confirmatory Study," *JASPR* 71 (1977) 45-50; T. Moss, "Psychic Research in the Soviet Union," and W. Tiller, "Devices for Monitoring Nonphysical Energies," *Psychic Exploration* 469-521; K. Johnson, *The Living Aura, Radiation Field Photography and the Kirlian Effect* (New York: Hawthorn, 1975).

<sup>32</sup> C. Green, *Out-of-the-Body Experiences* (New York: Ballantine, 1968) ix, in foreword by H. H. Price.

<sup>33</sup> "Field Research in India," *ASPR Newsletter*, Summer 1975, 3. Cf. also E. Haraldsson and K. Osis, "The Appearance and Disappearance of Objects in the Presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba," *JASPR* 71 (1977) 33-44.

yet been presented. Michael Grosso, a religious philosopher from Jersey City State College, theorized that everyone is already "in substance" out of the body or partly so, and that OBEs are merely more dramatic instances of this state. The body is in a field of consciousness which extends beyond the body.<sup>34</sup> However, in order to test this theory, we would need much more evidence than the present slight indications we have that there may be such a state as a genuine OBE which is not a case of simple clairvoyance.

#### APPARITIONS

The British investigator G. N. M. Tyrrell distinguished four types of apparitions: (1) crisis apparitions (before and up to within 12 hours after death); (2) post-mortem apparitions (after the 12 hours following death); (3) continued or ghost apparitions; (4) experimental apparitions.<sup>35</sup>

Many excellent but anecdotal cases of crisis and post-mortem apparitions have been recorded. For example, cases exist in which information is transmitted which does not seem to be in the possession of any living person. In the Chaffin Will case, an apparition of James L. Chaffin, a North Carolina farmer, allegedly appeared in 1925 to his son. Clues were given as to the location of a second will which the farmer had made before his accidental death. The will, found in an old family Bible, was accepted as genuine in the State of North Carolina, partly due to the testimony of handwriting experts.<sup>36</sup> There are also numerous and rather reliable anecdotal cases in which apparitions have been seen by a group of people (e.g., Fatima). These would seem to be the result of some agent external to the group, unless one accepts the theory of "contagious ESP." Yet, in many cases animals have reacted in the direction of an alleged apparition. Are these animals reacting to a nonsubjective phenomenon or are they too subject to contagious ESP, i.e., are they subject to the mind of a person close to them? "Contagious ESP," however, is a theory which has not as yet been verified.

One type of evidence which lends credibility to the not-totally-subjective hypothesis is the good but meager experimental evidence we possess. For example, S. H. Beard, a friend of Edmund Gurney who was one of the founders of the SPR, experimentally projected his apparition to his fiancée, L. S. Verity. Both she and her sister saw the apparition. Beard was also successful in an experiment in which Gurney was the experi-

<sup>34</sup> M. Grosso, "Some Varieties of Out-of-the-Body Experience," *JASPR* 70 (1976) 179-194.

<sup>35</sup> *Apparitions* (New York: Collier, 1963) 35-36.

<sup>36</sup> Ducasse, *A Critical Examination* 157-158, taken from *Proceedings SPR* 36 (1927) 517-24.

mental witness.<sup>37</sup> In such cases one cannot attribute the apparition solely to a totally subjective hallucination on the part of the recipient.

Recently, in work done at the Psychical Research Foundation, there have been indications that Blue Harary has been able to project a sense of his presence to animals and an orb of light to a parapsychological investigator.<sup>38</sup> But not enough work has yet been done in the laboratory to allow one to speak of scientific evidence. Still, from the few experimental cases we have, from cases in which knowledge is given which no one on earth is known to have possessed, from apparitions seen or experienced by a group of people or by animals, it seems that we already possess some evidence that not all apparitions are the result of purely subjective factors.<sup>39</sup>

This conclusion would seem to have some theological implications. For example, Rudolf Bultmann once wrote:

Now that the forces and laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in *spirits whether good or evil*. . . . It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.<sup>40</sup>

Bultmann's world view, however, would have difficulty in the face of modern parapsychological research. (Consider paranormal healing research as an example outside our present focus.) Besides the evidence already mentioned which is contrary to the supposition that all apparitions are purely subjective hallucinations, there have also been many thoroughly investigated haunting cases in which a group of witnesses view an apparition of whose identity they were unaware but whose prior existence is later verified. I do not have the space to discuss these very complicated events; but the point I wish to make here is that theologians

<sup>37</sup> Cf. D. Rogo, "Apparitions, Hauntings and Poltergeists," *Psychic Exploration* 376-77. Cf. also G. Tyrrell, *Apparitions* (New York: Collier, 1963) 142-48; C. Tart, "Out-of-the-Body Experiences," *Psychic Exploration* 349-52.

<sup>38</sup> D. Black, *EKSTASY* 67-70; Rogo, *An Experience of Phantoms* 147-54.

<sup>39</sup> This is not to deny that many apparitions may be subjectively caused. Cf. I. Owen with M. Sparrow, *Conjuring Up Philip* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). This is the study of a group in Toronto which devised an imaginary character, Philip, whom they desired to make appear. Philip did not appear, yet psychokinetic phenomena were set in motion, such as table rappings, spontaneous movements of the table, etc., which seem to have been the result of the "group psyche." For a scientific criticism, cf. R. Reichbart, "Group Psi: Comments on the Recent Toronto PK Experiment as Recounted in *Conjuring Up Philip*," *JASPR* 71 (1977) 201-12.

<sup>40</sup> R. Bultmann *et al.*, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961) 4-5. Bultmann with his deep religious faith affirmed that we will share in Christ's resurrection, but he considered the resurrection of Jesus as a mythological way of affirming the saving efficacy of the cross (38-39).

seem unduly uninterested in these studies. One of the few theologians interested in the question, Wolfhart Pannenberg, succinctly summarized his view as follows:

Recent studies in the field of parapsychology (extrasensory perception) [he cites Joseph Rhine's *New World of the Mind*], including such things as prophetic intuition (precognition), clairvoyance, and telepathy, have reopened the question of the objective reality of unusual occurrences. One should be on guard against drawing direct conclusions for our question about the reality of the Easter appearances from such investigations. Up to now they show nothing more than the possibility of visionary experiences that are not merely to be judged as subjective projections but—in statistically demonstrable numbers—involve something to which they coincide; that is, they lay hold of extrasubjective reality. Nevertheless, in any case one conclusion may be drawn: precisely in the area of the history of religions, where only exceptional phenomena are handed down, the psychiatric concept of "vision" may not be postulated unless a more specific point of contact for it is given by the tradition.<sup>41</sup>

Apparition experiences, Pannenberg rightly suggests, may not be *automatically* extrapolated as a univocal base for understanding the Resurrection appearances. The tradition has always considered these experiences as a unique irruption of the divine in human life. On the other hand, one may not claim today that the Resurrection appearances must be considered, even on scientific grounds, as purely subjective phenomena.

Yet, a few Christian authors have attempted to apply the tentative principles found in apparition study directly to the Easter appearances.<sup>42</sup> I believe it would not be sound at this stage of research to rely on such conclusions. It may be true that we can even exclude *in principle* any such application in the future. I would hesitate, however, to go this far. It is, after all, possible even in a unique divine break-in in nature that the general "laws" or patterns of human creaturehood are still respected—a point we see more and more accented in studies on the Incarnation and Christology.

An example of what I believe to be an illegitimate attempt at such an application would be the following. In the parapsychological literature I

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus—God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968) 95. Pannenberg further writes: "If by 'vision' one understands a psychological event that is without a corresponding extrasubjective reality, then one can not certainly presuppose such a 'subjective' concept of vision for the resurrection appearances as self-evident. Only if the corresponding psychiatric point of contact can be inferred from the texts could this understanding of vision be used" (ibid.).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. C. Pearce-Higgins, "Biblical Miracle II," *Life, Death and Psychical Research*, ed. C. Pearce-Higgins and G. Whitby (London: Rider, 1973) 147–56; R. Haynes, *The Hidden Springs: An Enquiry into Extra-Sensory Perception* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972) 147–51.

have found no apparition experience in which the phantom is not recognized when it is the appearance of a person one knows. Would this lend support to studies by exegetes that the pericope in Luke 24:13-35 in which Jesus is not recognized by the disciples on the way to Emmaus is a secondary, nonhistorical addition? On the other hand, in Luke 24:43 the resurrected Jesus is seen to eat fish, a pericope which many exegetes consider a secondary addition. But in extremely rare cases in parapsychological literature, as in Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yoga*, an apparition, it is claimed, was seen eating. Would this lend credence to the older position that the episode is historical? Or, similarly, the passage in John 20:24-29 in which the doubting Thomas is asked to place his hand in Jesus' side (though it is not said that he did so) is also considered by many exegetes as a secondary addition. Yet, there are apparition experiences in which the *experience* of touching is present. Would this represent evidence against the position that the text is a secondary addition?

I believe that the attempt at such application must run into a cul-de-sac. We simply do not know enough about the principles underlying apparitions in general, or about the nature of the unique divine activity in the Resurrection in particular, to draw valid conclusions of this nature.<sup>43</sup> Yet, the really important point, in my judgment, is that, while the understanding of the Resurrection appearances may not be deepened by apparition study, the claim that the Easter appearances are automatically to be considered either as symbols or as experiences with a purely

<sup>43</sup> R. Fuller writes: "They [the apparition stories] are not to be objectified and considered as experiences to be analyzed for their own sake. . . . It is, therefore, impossible to categorize the Easter appearances in any available this-worldly language, even in that of religious mysticism. . . . The ultimate reason for this difficulty. . . is that there are no categories for the unprecedented disclosure of the eschatological within history" (*The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* [New York: Macmillan, 1971] 32-33). Similarly J. Alsup: "We have stressed, however, that these stories participate in a specific form as *theological statements* and the consequence of this radical tenacity in form seems to indicate that they are not primarily interested in or capable of delivering essentially historical information as eyewitness reports. They seem to resist probing inquiry into the 'how did it happen question.' This deals, of course, a severe blow to the parapsychological explanation of the appearance stories, because the vehicle of expression itself inherent to the *Gattung* closes the doors on all attempts to speculate about the frame of mind or general proclivity of the participants towards mental aberration. . . . Accordingly, therefore, we would affirm that while the stories are not anti-historical as such, their choice of expression makes it impossible to understand them correctly outside the context of that choice" (*The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975] 273-74). This would *in principle* exclude the use of modern parapsychological evidence for understanding the Resurrection appearances. Yet, one may fully accept Alsup's point about the theological nature of these narratives and still not rule out *any* assistance from parapsychology for our understanding of them. Cf. P. Badham, *Christian Beliefs about Life after Death* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976) 18-64.

subjective origin can no longer be claimed to be a scientific judgment or an a priori certainty.

#### MEDIUMS

It is well known that mediumship is an area in which fraud has been widespread. Even the famous medium Arthur Ford, who most probably possessed genuine paranormal powers, was found after his death to have gathered obituaries from newspapers on acquaintances of those who came for seances.<sup>44</sup> It seems that even some mediums with genuine paranormal abilities discarded their ethical sense when they had to operate under the forced pressure of publicity (or under the glare of TV lights, as with Ford.)

Furthermore, against the claim that mediums actually communicate with those who have died, there has arisen of late what is called the "Super ESP" hypothesis. This hypothesis has gained more credibility because of certain experiments. "Super ESP" would be an ESP power which ranges much wider than the type of ESP found in laboratory experiments. The Super ESP hypothesis attributes claimed contact with the dead and factual information coming therefrom to a remarkable ESP power to range across space and gather information from the living who possess the information on those who have died.

In 1909 the psychologist Stanley Hall invented a dead niece, Bessie Beals, and then received from the respected medium Leonore Piper (1859–1950) of Boston the details about the fictitious niece which he had worked up in his own mind.<sup>45</sup> So too S. G. Soal, an outstanding British parapsychologist, received communications from a "deceased" John Ferguson through the medium Blanche Cooper.<sup>46</sup> The details matched an imaginary scene with Ferguson in Soal's mind where Ferguson existed only as a fictitious character.

These cases, however, may be examples of simple telepathy and not of a Super ESP. There are many other cases which are not so simply explained. This is particularly true in what are called "cross-correspondence" cases. For example, after the deaths of three founders of the Society for Psychical Research, Edmund Gurney (1847–88), Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), and Frederic W. H. Myers (1843–1901), various women began to produce automatic-writing scripts and mediumistic communication which claimed to originate with the three scholars. For the most

<sup>44</sup> A. Spraggett with W. Rauscher, *Arthur Ford: The Man Who Talked with the Dead* (New York: New American Library, 1973) 245–68; also W. Stringfellow and A. Towne, *The Death and Life of Bishop Pike* (New York: Doubleday, 1976) 208–39.

<sup>45</sup> C. Broad, *Lectures on Psychical Research* (New York: Humanities, 1962) 426.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* For a more detailed account, cf. A. Parker, *States of Mind, ESP and Altered States of Consciousness* (London: Malaby, 1975) 63–64.

part, the mediums were not acquainted with what the others were doing. Geographically they ranged from Mrs. Verrall (1859–1916) in Cambridge, England, to Alice Fleming (1869–1948), Rudyard Kipling's sister, known as the medium "Mrs. Holland" living in India, to Mrs. Leonore Piper (1859–1950), a Boston medium studied by William James, to Mrs. Coombe-Tennant (1877–1956) in London, a British delegate to the League of Nations and known as "Mrs. Willett," and a few others.

A pattern of "cross-correspondences" was found in the manuscripts accompanied by a claim that this pattern originated from one of the three men. This continued over a period of thirty years. There were scattered and unexpected allusions to classical legends or to English poetry which were discovered to form a coherent picture when linked with messages from other mediums.<sup>47</sup> The finished product resembled an elaborate jigsaw puzzle characteristic of the style and interests of the three deceased psychic investigators. The scripts were gathered by the Society for Psychical Research in London. Researchers such as Gerald Balfour (1853–1945) and Eleanor Sidgwick (1845–1936), the brilliant wife of Henry Sidgwick, believed the scripts showed evidence of purposeful design beyond the competence of the mediums involved.<sup>48</sup> Outstanding and critical investigators such as Gardner Murphy, C. D. Broad, and C. D. Ducasse all felt that this was the more probable experimental hypothesis in a number of cross-correspondence cases.<sup>49</sup>

In these cross-correspondence cases and in the case to be discussed below, the only other solid working hypothesis was a "Super ESP" ability of one of the participants. Yet, the most likely person, the one with a deep knowledge of the Latin and Greek classics, was Mrs. Verrall, but the scripts continued somewhat after her death.<sup>50</sup>

One example of automatic-writing communication which is not a cross-correspondence case is that of the alleged communication after her death of the aforementioned "Mrs. Willett" (Mrs. Coombe-Tennant) with the outstanding Irish medium Geraldine Cummins (d. 1970).<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Coombe-

<sup>47</sup> Perhaps the best cross-correspondence study is H. Saltmarsh, *Evidence of Personal Survival* (London: G. Bell, 1938; reprint edition Arno, 1975). For an excellent detailed description, cf. G. Murphy with the collaboration of L. Dale, *Challenge of Psychical Research* (New York: Harper, 1961) 199–273. For a solid brief presentation, cf. R. Heywood, "Death and Psychical Research," in A. Toynbee *et al.*, *Man's Concern With Death* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968) 213–50.

<sup>48</sup> Ducasse, *A Critical Examination* 189–90.

<sup>49</sup> Murphy, *Challenge of Psychical Research* 273; Broad, *Lectures on Psychical Research* 426–30, and "The Relevance of Psychical Research to Philosophy," *Philosophical Dimensions* 28.

<sup>50</sup> Saltmarsh, *Evidence of Personal Survival* 134.

<sup>51</sup> *Swan on a Black Sea: A Study in Automatic Writing: The Cummins-Willett Scripts*, ed. Signe Toksvig, with a Foreword by C. Broad (rev. ed.; New York: Weiser, 1970).

Tennant died August 31, 1956. The psychic investigator W. H. Salter wrote to Geraldine Cummins in Ireland to try to get a message from a deceased mother for her son, a Major Tennant. Geraldine was given the name of the son and scraps of the mother's writing. No "sitter" was present, although the absent sitters might be considered Salter and Major Henry Tennant in London. (A "sitter" is the one who sits with the medium and allegedly communicates through her with the deceased.)

Geraldine gave details about the mother's life which were not available until two years later. In fact, she also gave detailed information about incidents in the mother's life of which the two sons were unaware until they were later discovered in a diary she had kept.<sup>52</sup> Mrs. Coombe-Tennant's personality came through exactly as she was, a bit haughty, utterly honest, forthright, very strong, and a bit regretful about mistakes made in rearing her son—all verified. This has been considered one of the outstanding cases of recent times and was thoroughly researched by Professor C. D. Broad of Cambridge (1887-1971).

It would seem that here either there was a genuine communication from mother to son, or else Geraldine Cummins, who did poorly in quantitative ESP tests, had an incredible ESP power, including the ability to read an unknown document by "psychometry," a technique of using an object, like a letter which a person wrote, to tune in on that person's earthly life after he or she has died.<sup>53</sup>

Limitations of space prevent discussion of the research work done on these and many other cases or of some of the precautions taken. William James, for example, once had the famous Mrs. Piper shadowed by a detective over a period of time. Whichever hypothesis is accepted, however, one must conclude, it seems, that either there is empirical evidence for existence beyond death or else that the latent powers of the psyche transcend space (and also that they may transcend time, if we include precognition experiments, which I am unable to discuss here).<sup>54</sup> In short, parapsychological work in this area is not of interest chiefly for "speaking to the dead" but for the impact it has on our modern world-view and on our knowledge of the nature of man. With regard to the Super ESP

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 54-55, 100.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 2. Actually, Miss Cummins composed three scripts before she used the specimens of the mother's writing as objects for psychometry.

<sup>54</sup> L. Rhine claims that "Today the evidence for it [precognition] is too strong for reasonable doubt" (*PSI: What Is It?* [New York: Harper & Row, 1975] 41); Cf. E. Dean, "Precognition," *Psychic Exploration* 153-77; H. Ullman and S. Krippner, *Dream Telepathy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973). I have also had to omit consideration of I. Stevenson's exhaustive research on reincarnation, which too involves either survival or an incredible Super-ESP. Cf. *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation, Proceedings ASPR* 26 (1966); *Cases of the Reincarnation Type 1: Ten Cases in India* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1975).



hypothesis, the philosopher Hoyt Edge has written:

However, to argue this, i.e., that survival is not proven, we must realize that we have to argue not only for the existence of ESP, but for its existence in a fantastically extended fashion. To say that we have no proof for survival is to assert the existence of ESP. And to say that such ESP exists is to say that we have evidence that undercuts the naturalistic view of man, which, in turn, is the main reason for one to reject the possibility of disembodied survival.<sup>55</sup>

An aspect of man seems to transcend space and time and the powers of matter as we know them, and this stands as a conclusion drawn from critical investigation.

The alleged messages from the dead are subordinate to this other profound insight, which harmonizes with philosophical and religious convictions. In saying this, I am not denying genuine communication with the departed, since, as we have seen, in some cases there is no better working hypothesis than that information has been received from beyond death. I am simply pointing up the difficulty in taking literally the pattern of detail in the "messages" themselves. In a mediumistic situation there are: (a) the alleged communicator; (b) the medium; (c) the "control," represented as a spirit contacting other deceased but generally today considered as a part of the unconscious of the medium; and (d) the "sitter," who carries on the conversation with the "deceased." When all these elements are taken into consideration, it is clear that even if there is a genuine communication, it is very difficult to distinguish what is contributed by which persona.<sup>56</sup>

It is worth mentioning, if only in passing, mediumistic cases called "drop-in communicators" and "xenoglossy" cases. Drop-in communicators are deceased persons who allegedly communicate but are known to no one involved in the group receiving the message, yet whose identity is at times established by later research.<sup>57</sup> Xenoglossy cases are those in which the medium speaks for a deceased person and in his language, a language not known to the medium.<sup>58</sup> This speaking consists not in the

<sup>55</sup> "Do Spirits Matter: Naturalism and Disembodied Survival," *JASPR* 70 (1976) 298. See also J. Randall, *Parapsychology and the Nature of Life; Transpersonal Psychologies*, ed. C. Tart (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

<sup>56</sup> Parker, *States of Mind* 54-74; Broad, *Lectures on Psychical Research* 253-333.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. the detailed research of I. Stevenson, "An Experiment with the Icelandic Medium Hafsteinn Björnsson," *JASPR* 68 (1974) 192-202; "A Communicator of the 'Drop-In' Type in Iceland: The Case of Runolfur Runolfsson" (with E. Haraldsson), *JASPR* 69 (1975) 33-60; "A Communicator of the 'Drop-In' Type in Iceland: The Case of Gudni Magnusson" (with E. Haraldsson), *JASPR* 69 (1975) 245-62. For a popular presentation, cf. S. Smith, *Life Is Forever* (New York: Putnam's, 1974) 173-82.

<sup>58</sup> I. Stevenson, *Xenoglossy: A Review and Report of a Case* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1974); also "A Preliminary Report on a New Case of Responsive Xenoglossy: The Case of Gretchen," *JASPR* 70 (1976) 65-78.

mere repetition of a few foreign phrases (recitative xenoglossy) but in a continuous flow of intelligible conversation in an unknown language (responsive xenoglossy). While words or phrases may be lifted from another person's mind by telepathy, there is no known power by which a *skill* can be so derived.

#### TRADITIONAL PROHIBITIONS AND CAUTIONS

There are passages in the Bible (e.g., Deut 18:10, Lev 19:31) which condemn consulting the dead or soothsaying. Also, the Catholic Church in decrees of 1898 and 1917 condemned the practice of automatic writing and communication with the dead.<sup>59</sup> However, the biblical prohibitions apparently were directed against aims and motives which are quite different from the aims and motives of modern researchers. Rev. Donald Bretherton of London University writes:

Whereas clearly seventh-century [B.C.] psychism sought to undermine the moral authority and credibility of Yahweh, modern practice seeks to do just the reverse. . . . 'Seeking after the dead' in ancient times was designed to show Jahweh as either incompetent or untrustworthy, whereas modern mediumship seeks to show the reality of the claim that 'underneath are the everlasting arms.'<sup>60</sup>

Many parapsychologists might not put it precisely in this way, but they would insist that they are attempting to gain a deeper empirical understanding of the nature of man. Similarly, phenomena such as psychokinesis which in the past were connected with the devil are no longer universally so connected.

There is, then, a change of climate today in the study of paranormal phenomena connected with survival studies. There is a genuine effort by some scholars to approach these studies with a scientific attitude, at least in a wide sense. There still may be dangers involved in using ouija boards, e.g., where one toys with a powerful unconscious at the very least.<sup>61</sup> Insofar as something is not understood and not approached in a discerning manner, great caution is called for in this area. This seems to be the spirit behind the Church's decrees.

A well-known psychologist is quoted as saying with regard to Moody's work, "Intimations of immortality don't come from vaporous experiences at life's end but from the love and creativity we exercise to overcome life's tragedies." One can only endorse the general thrust and religious

<sup>59</sup> Cf. H. Thurston, S.J., *The Church and Spiritualism* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1933) 17-18.

<sup>60</sup> "Psychical Research and the Biblical Prohibitions," *Life, Death and Psychical Research* 108. The interest of the Vatican itself in parapsychology is evidenced by the course given to graduate theology students at Rome's Lateran University by Rev. Andreas Resch.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *The Satan Trap: Dangers of the Occult*, ed. M. Ebon (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

sense of this statement. But it does not seem that "love and creativity" should exclude responsible research. Actually, as Marjorie Suchocki has recently said, "Theologians have joined secular thinkers in renunciation of immortality, adding theological reasons to the material evidence against this hope."<sup>62</sup> Some theologians believe, she says, that "aspiring to an immortal condition" is "the sin of idolatry, of self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness." Again, we understand the importance of this warning. There is a self-centered seeking in some psychic writing for "immortality and me." On the other hand, we read many works whose emphasis is on a transpersonal "selfless" relation to "the One." In some of the literature it is clear that the lover of the eternal kingdom is aspiring for the presence of God. In the areas we have been discussing, I believe theologians should turn an eye to the evidence and be more hesitant in labeling human aspirations as sinful. Perhaps we are being offered another chance to look through Galileo's telescope.

As was said at the beginning of this article, one's world view always enters to some extent into one's apprehension of Christian revelation. The apostles themselves, it seems, held the Pharisaic belief in a final resurrection beyond death, and this allowed them, many think, to enter more wholeheartedly into the experience of Jesus' resurrection. A world view which is a leftover from a more mechanistic model of science seems today to remain a controlling influence on a few theologians' understanding of the gospel message. But parapsychological studies are without doubt acting as a solvent on this older, congealed world view. These studies have already begun to leave their first imprint not only on the physical sciences but also on psychology and anthropology.<sup>63</sup>

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I would say that the study of deathbed visions gives some indication of contact with an objective reality beyond the visible world, but the evidence is not compelling and much further research is needed. As Osiris has shown, however, at present the best working hypothesis to explain

<sup>62</sup> "The Question of Immortality," *JR* 57 (1977) 288. However, this is by no means to deny for theologians the importance of other insights like those of B. Collopy, S.J., "Theology and Death," *TS* 39 (1978) 22-54. He has written a powerful atonal symphony on death's blankness. His "dark model," a "thanatology from below," evokes with great impact a bleak archetypal human experience. This type of phenomenological description is important. It keeps theologians from falling into a blithe "denial of death." As he says, "As such, the resurrection of Jesus does not serve as a shelter from the awful cost and cruelty of death. . . ." However, it is not clear that there is simply a "clueless dark," and there is the "good news."

<sup>63</sup> Cf. n. 4 above. Also C. Burt, *ESP and Psychology*, ed. A. Gregory (New York: J. Wiley, 1975); *Parapsychology and the Sciences*, ed. A. Angoff and B. Shapin (New York: Parapsychology Foundation, 1974).

the data is the continued existence of man beyond death. Research on out-of-the-body experiences has moved into new and important avenues of investigation. As yet, however, no strongly probable position as to the separation of the spirit from the body has been established. Apparition study and research with mediumistic communication demand much caution and patience. Yet, there are many cases in which the best working hypothesis at present seems to be the survival of human personality beyond death, however much we must be careful not to rely on the exact pictures and general details of the messages. Apparition study also is important for showing that the presuppositions held by some of the critics of the narratives concerning the Resurrection appearances are untenable precisely as presuppositions. Still, the Resurrection stories are of a theological genre which prevents any simple and direct transference of the tentative principles drawn from apparition study to the Resurrection appearances. Briefly put, these are but a few indications as to the type of influence which parapsychological investigation may have on future theological endeavor, particularly in fundamental theology.<sup>64</sup>

I wish to conclude with two important points. Parapsychological study is not a substitute for faith. One is a Christian through Christian faith and not because of his scientific views or even his philosophy. Many Christian believers may not be open to, interested in, or convinced by parapsychological research. This, I believe, is perfectly legitimate. But there is another point I wish to make, and I think that E. Schillebeeckx presents it succinctly. He says that, as the domain of scientific phenomena became enlarged,

... theology had to retreat more and more, first relinquishing the cosmos, then the world of evolution, then society and the depth dimension of human behavior. By giving up phenomena, theology lost almost everything. . . . No one seemed to realize that the sciences form a part of our developing history, a subdivision of the story of mankind. In any case, theology cut itself off from these sciences. By this dissociation from the empirical sciences, theology became marginalized; it was isolated from concrete history in which it had always discovered God's saving activity. . . . Theology finds its identity not alongside or above the other sciences, but in and through them. Like the gospel, theology must exist for the other sciences as well as for itself.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> For some recent work, cf. H. Neff, *Psychic Phenomena and Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971); M. Kelsey, *The Christian and the Supernatural* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976); R. Ellwood, Jr., "Theology and Psychological Research," *Spiritual Frontiers* 6-7 (Autumn 1974-Winter 1975) 13-28; J. Schoneberg Setzer, "Parapsychology and the Doctrine of God," *ibid.* 29-60; J. Heaney, "Beyond Death," *Thought* 50 (1975) 35-55; Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* 129-46 and *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> "Interdisciplinarity in Theology," *TD* 24 (1976) 140-41. This is a digest of "Kritische Benennung op Interdisciplinariteit in de Theologie," *Vox theologica* 75 (1975) 111-25.

At the same time he stresses, as I have done, the difference between this activity of theology and faith:

Although acquaintance with the sciences is needed for 'theological rationality' (the old *ratio theologica*), theology has to remember that it lays no foundation underneath the Christian faith. Thank God, religious faith does not stand on a rational, safely controlled foundation. Theology advocates what man can become and be beyond the describable and the analyzable.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 142.