

The Unholy Legacy of Abraham shows how human body function apparently proves the reality of the soul, an eternal afterlife, and God, as well as discussing the consequences of literal interpretation of texts in the Torah, Bible, and Koran.

The Unholy Legacy of Abraham

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The Unholy Legacy of Abraham

The Unholy Legacy of Abraham
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This book is a study of the biological basis of belief in religion written in the form of Socratic dialogues. So while the physiological and physical facts are true, as are the citations from the holy texts of various religions and books, the characters and events presented in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

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11

She was dead!

It was another warm sun-drenched afternoon. Smiling, chattering, brightly dressed people were everywhere to be seen. The whole city seemed suffused with a bright and sunny mood. A cheerfully humming Thomas sauntered along the canals and through the winding streets of Leiden on his way to meet Ben at the terrace of a café situated on one of the more beautiful canals at the edge of the old city. Suddenly he stopped. His humming ceased as he read the graffiti on an alley wall where someone had written in fluorescent, almost poisonously green paint, “God hates everyone!”

Thomas stopped for a moment, frowned thoughtfully as he considered the text, and continued further on his way to meet Ben. ‘Is this piece of ugly graffiti more than it appears?’ he mused. ‘Is it an expression of some vague dissatisfaction? Is it a howl of despair? It was arrant nonsense of course! After all, God certainly loves Christians. God also loves the followers of Judaism and Islam, and even loves the followers of other religions. Even so, it was a curious piece of graffiti... Strange...’

Musing on the implications of this graffiti he arrived at the café and sat himself on a chair next to Ben on the sunny terrace. ‘Ah...’ Thomas sighed contentedly as he sat, ‘Nice... What a magical day!’

‘I agree. It’s a shame they don’t happen more often. But I guess we wouldn’t appreciate them as much if they were so common. What do you want to drink? I was thinking of some cold rosé. Perfect weather for it.’

‘Sounds good to me.’

Service was good, and soon they were sipping a delicious cool rosé. It was a perfect accompaniment to the day.

Thomas told of the graffiti he had seen on his way to the café, and how it had struck him as a wail of despair. ‘It’s nonsense of course. Have you any idea why anyone would feel so alienated from God that he would write something like that?’

Ben sipped his rosé as he collected his thoughts. ‘Actually it’s quite an understandable opinion. If you look carefully at the texts of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic holy books, you quickly come to the conclusion, that God does indeed hate everyone, and may even just be toying with humanity, so that they can later be tormented for eternity in hell.’

‘Rubbish!’ laughed Thomas. ‘The Torah, the Bible, and the Koran are full of expressions of God’s love for humanity. So how could this misguided and evidently unhappy graffiti writer, or you for that matter, come upon the dementedly insane idea that God hates everyone?’

‘Because the texts of these holy books tell us that God hates everyone. I’ll prove it with the very texts that you say prove that God loves everyone. According to me God loves no-one, is intolerant of everyone regardless of religion, and even stoops to deceiving people so they can be tortured for all eternity in hell!’

‘Absolute drivel!’ retorted Thomas. ‘This is awful! You’re really going to have to squirm and wriggle to prove all these things. I’m going to enjoy this, because it’s impossible to prove, even for a hard-line atheistic sophist like you.’ He leaned back in his chair, took a sip of wine, and looked expectantly, even challengingly at Ben.

‘Hmmm...’ mused Ben, as he contemplated the fact that Thomas did not rant and scream at such evident heresy. ‘This really is a change of attitude. He’s actually challenging me instead of resorting to dogma. Is he becoming a critical theologian, or has some weird and wonderful epiphany converted him into a closet humanist?’ He sipped his rosé as he ordered his thoughts. ‘I don’t know who wrote the words of the graffiti you saw, but they are so redolent of despair that they cannot be anything but a desolate howl of impotent rage. Why desolation and rage? Because the statement reeks of a despair derived from an ultimate understanding of the true meaning of predestination, of an understanding of the intolerance of Judaism, Christianity and Islam for each other, even though they worship the same God, as well as an understanding of the horrid deceit openly admitted by an all-powerful God to condemn more souls to the unspeakable eternal torments of hell. So tell me Thomas, do you believe Judaism, Christianity, or Islam truly encourage free and critical thought?’

‘Such passion and such rhetoric Ben! It is a tricky question though. I do know Christianity encourages free thought, but I don’t know about Judaism or Islam.’

‘Then I’ll disillusion you about all these religions. Judaism certainly doesn’t encourage free and critical thought. After all, the Jewish holy books state that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (see also Bible, Job 28:28, Proverbs 1:7 & 9:10).’

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The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all they that do his commandments: His praise endureth for ever. (ASV Bible, Psalms 111:10)

‘And,’ continued Ben, ‘as if that were not enough, those who are not terrified enough to slavishly carry out every law, wish, and whim of this same so-called loving and merciful God must be killed (see also Bible, Deuteronomy 13:6-10, 30:16-19).’

*And they entered into the covenant to seek Jehovah, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul;
and that whosoever would not seek Jehovah, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.
And they swear unto Jehovah with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.
And all Judah rejoiced at the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and Jehovah gave them rest round about. (ASV Bible, 2 Chronicles 15:12-15)*

‘The logical conclusion of this chain of thought is that killing apostates and unbelievers is a good and holy deed, because then God can begin torturing them in hell sooner than if they were allowed to die of old age.’ Ben paused to drink more wine. ‘And now we come to the matter of deceit on the part of God.’

‘God would never deceive,’ protested Thomas, ‘and certainly not the Jews who were originally the chosen of God.’

‘Unfortunately you’re wrong there. God does admit to deceiving individual Jews and non-Jews alike, even to deceiving whole populations of Jews and non-Jewish peoples (see also Bible, Isaiah 6:9-10, Jeremiah 4:10, 15:18, 20:7, Ezekiel 14:9).’

O Jehovah, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways, and hardenest our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants’ sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. (ASV Bible, Isaiah 63:17)

‘Then this same deceitful and so-called merciful God of the Jews tells of punishing those he deceives, Jews and non-Jews alike! This doesn’t seem to me like the way a loving God treats his chosen people, and is certainly a very unpleasant God for those who are not Jewish. So much for the loving nature of the God of the Jews,’ Ben paused to drink more wine. He looked at Thomas, but Thomas remained silent. ‘Now we come to the God of Christianity, which also

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happens to be the same God as that of the Jews, but with the one true and improved message of God – at least according to the Christians. Yet when you look at the mercy displayed by this God, you find absolutely no difference to that displayed by the God of the Jews.’

‘Really Ben, this is too much! How can you say that?’ spluttered Thomas.

‘Well, to begin with, it would actually be quite surprising if there were any difference. After all, the God of the Jews is also the same eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-pervading God of the Christians. So you would not expect to find any significant differences in the behaviour of this God between these two religions. You can read the proof of this in the New Testament. To begin with, Jesus and the prophets of Christianity all profess the reality of predestination (Chapter 1, see also Bible, Acts 13:45, Romans 8:29-30, 9:11-22, Ephesians 1:4-5). Then they go on to threaten dire punishments for heinous crimes such as intellectual freedom, freedom of thought, and criticism: all of which were predestined by God anyway!’

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh
(for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to
the casting down of strongholds),
casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the
knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of
Christ;
and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be
made full. (ASV Bible, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)*

‘In other words, because all these things were predestined, God was the originator of the very sins and disobedience that God avenges! So as you can appreciate Thomas, the founders of Christianity were not one whit better than the founders of Judaism. They both preach the same thing. There is one difference though, people who strayed from the true religion of Christianity, or whom were not Christian at all were never punished on earth. Instead, God and Jesus promise everlasting vengeance and torment in the fires of hell during an eternal life after death.’

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall
be condemned. (ASV Bible, Mark 16:16)*

‘Good rousing stuff Thomas. It all means that if you’re not a baptized Christian you’re doomed to go to the eternal fires of hell. In other words, both the followers of Judaism and the followers of Christianity say the same about

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sinners and the followers of other religions. To make matters worse, the Christian God also deceives the wicked, deluding them to make sure they stay wicked, so that they may be punished with eternal torment in hell (see also Bible, John 12:40, Acts 28:25-27)!

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (KJV Bible, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12)

‘Yes Thomas, well may you gape. That’s really the only reaction possible to insanity like this. If this is a God of mercy and love, why doesn’t this God try to save the evil and the sinners from themselves? Instead, this God apparently spares no effort to ensure their eternal damnation by sending them delusions to make sure they continue their evil ways! God’s arrogance and lust for earthly glory and power is revealed by another passage, where God tells the prophets that it is God who determines what happens to the souls of people after death – telling us in no uncertain terms that it does not matter how people think, how they speak, or how they act – God determines their fate in a life after death.’

Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?

Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?

What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction:

and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared unto glory, (ASV Bible, Romans 9:20-23)

Thomas began to look increasingly unhappy as Ben continued. ‘So not only does God ensure the eternal damnation of many people, but God also actually creates people whose function is to live lives of sinful wickedness and evil, and who are automatically doomed to eternal torment in a life after death so they can function as examples revealing the “glory of God”! When you read passages like

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this you realize that this eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing and all-pervading God has some decidedly strange and even human traits: such as a lust for human recognition of the power of God, a refusal to accept other points of view, and a very malignant lust for vengeance and torture. Depressing isn't it?

'Incredibly,' was the terse response of Thomas, as he drained his glass.

'This brings us to the situation of Islam. Allah, or God, is the same eternal, all-pervading, all-powerful, and all-knowing God as is worshipped by the Jews and the Christians. The followers of Islam claim the revelations of God through the prophet Mohammed are the final and true revelations of God, even though this same claim was also made by the Jews and the Christians many centuries before the birth of Mohammed. Who knows which of these three religions is correct? I don't. In any case, Islam also propounds the philosophy of predestination (Koran 6:2, 7:34, 11:6, 16:1, 39:42, 63:11), which means that God is actually the creator of wicked people, sinners, heretics, apostates, and unbelievers. Islam also says that all wicked people, sinners, heretics, apostates and unbelievers are destined to suffer the horrors of everlasting torment in hell (Chapter 1). In other words, Islam is as fundamentally intolerant of other religions as are Judaism and Christianity, and says exactly the same things about the ultimate afterlife destination of wicked people, sinners and heretics. No real difference there at all. Furthermore, just as in Judaism and Christianity, the God of Islam also leads people astray so that they can later undergo ghastly torments in hell for all eternity (see also Koran 7:178, 7:186).'

And We never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them. Then Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (Koran 14:4)

Ben paused, drained his glass with a satisfied, 'Delicious,' and paused to order more rosé. 'God also revealed to Mohammed that it does not matter what individuals think, want, or do, it is God who ultimately decides the fate of each individual during their mortal life, as well as in a life after death (see also Koran 2:142, 7:178, 14:4, 22:18, 81:29).'

Lo! thou (O Muhammad) guidest not whom thou lovest, but Allah guideth whom He will. And He is best aware of those who walk aright. (Koran 28:56)

'Now Thomas, you may think this passage merely reveals a dogma similar to that of Judaism and Christianity, but it is actually more than that. It is a startling passage with far-reaching implications. Consider the various collections of the deeds and sayings of Mohammed called the Sunnah. These have almost as

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much authority as the Koran itself, and their use is even justified by a revelation in the Koran.’

Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the last Day, and remembereth Allah much. (Koran 33:21)

Ben paused to drink more rosé, and continued, ‘This verse is the Koranic justification for the use of the Sunnah. Yet while the Koran is believed to be a product of direct revelations of God to the prophet Mohammed, and therefore infallible, the Sunnah is merely a compilation of the sayings and deeds of Mohammed as he lived, preached, and worked. The prophet Mohammed may have led an exemplary life as the passage above suggests, but he was still a man, so not all his words and deeds during his daily life were directly controlled by God.’

‘Just a moment,’ interrupted Thomas. ‘As a Christian student of theology, I don’t believe in the sacred nature of Mohammed’s revelations from God for one moment. However, just for the sake of argument, let’s just assume that Mohammed truly was inspired by God, so what do you mean by saying that not all his words and deeds during his daily life were controlled by God?’

Just this, the followers of Islam say Mohammed was a prophet inspired by God, hence all his words and deeds were divinely inspired. But Mohammed was also a man. So tell me, were his urination and defecation under divine control? Were his eating, going to the market for food, and his haggling over the price of food under divine control? He was married with many wives. Were his sexual activities and settling of personal marital problems divinely inspired? Other followers of Islam, and even godless unbelieving-dog heathens, perform these same activities without any evident divine control by the God of Islam. At these times, his deeds and his words were almost certainly his own, because I cannot imagine that the urination, defecation, eating, buying food in the market, or the sexual activities of Mohammed were divinely controlled by God. This means that Mohammed was certainly not receiving revelations from God all the time. Unfortunately, the Sunnah does not differentiate which of the words and deeds of Mohammed were from Mohammed himself, and which originated from divine revelation. This is an important weakness of the Sunnah which no-one has ever completely explained to me. There is another, even more important weakness in the Sunnah. The revelations of God in the Koran are considered to be true revelations from God. But in this very same Koran, even though God said that Mohammed is a good example to follow (Koran 33:21), God also revealed that regardless of what Mohammed desired, did, or said, it is God who ultimately determines what happens (Koran 28:56). Accordingly, these mutually

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inconsistent passages also undermine the authority of the Sunnah, by undermining the use of the sayings and deeds of Mohammed as a supplement to the Koran. After all, the Sunnah tells only us what Mohammed desired, did, and said, but does not tell us whether God approved of everything Mohammed desired, did, and said. And we cannot know what God really wants, because God is unknowable. I suppose that all you can do to get out of this quandary, is to compare the deeds and speech of Mohammed as reported in the Sunnah with the Koran, accepting only those things that agree with the text of the Koran. This is actually really fascinating material Thomas.'

'Certainly is Ben. There is nothing like a good, rousing theological argument. But I do believe you're digressing. So how do you conclude from all this that God hates everyone?'

'Sorry about that. Digression is a bit of a habit of mine as you will have noticed already. Oh it's easily explained, but first one last thing.' Ben was evidently in his stride. 'The holy texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all propound a form of predestination where God has determined the exact lifespan and fate of each individual long before their birth.'

My frame was not hidden from thee, When I was made in secret, And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance; And in thy book they were all written, Even the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was none of them. (ASV Bible, Psalms 139:15-16)

'And Thomas, this is just an example from the Bible, and is from the Old Testament, which is both a Jewish and Christian holy text. But the Koran of the followers of Islam says exactly the same (Koran 11:6, 39:42). These texts have far reaching implications. They mean that God is not only a God of deceit, but is also a God who has planned the deaths of all humans long before they were born: by miscarriage, abortion, murder, accident, and disease! Accordingly, it might even be considered sacrilege to prevent miscarriages, abortions, murders, lethal accidents, and lethal diseases, because after all, they are all the will of God. This means that the God of Abraham, and now the same God worshipped by Jews, Christians, and followers of Islam alike, is not only a God of inconceivable malevolence, but is also a God of an unholy trinity of deceit, disease, and death! But I suppose we shouldn't be too surprised by all this, because God is unknowable as well as all-powerful, and as mere mortals we cannot even begin to understand the purpose of God in all these things. What do you think of that Thomas?'

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‘That you’re quite a demagogue... However, I suppose there is a sort of perverted logic in your arguments, although I’m sure it’s no more than a form of delusional sophistry,’ retorted Thomas. ‘But get on with your main argument – explain why you think God hates us.’

Ben paused to sip some wine, and continued, ‘Very well, here it comes. Followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all profess to worship the same God. Yet each of these three religions sets its followers against the followers of the other two religions, as well as forbidding conversion from one to another of these three religions on pain of death and everlasting torment in hell. It does not matter whether a person is a follower of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam; God promises to torture the followers of each of these religions for an eternity in hell for not being followers of one of the other of these three religions. At the same time, God deceives and deludes the followers of each of these religions into believing they are following the correct religion, and afterwards subjects them to everlasting damnation in hell. As if this were not bad enough, all those who do not believe in believe in Judaism, Christianity, or Islam at all, will certainly undergo eternal ghastly torment in hell. When you consider these texts, you realize God is actually trying to get the souls of as many people as possible into hell so they can be subjected to hideous sufferings for all eternity! Followers of all religions have deluded themselves for millennia by seeking comfort and succour from a horrifically malignant God of inconceivable mendacity! But why is God so unspeakably cruel and sadistic? Only two conclusions are possible – God is a God of lies, and God really does hate everyone! This is the despairing cry you read in the graffiti you saw.’

‘I must admit, you’ve presented an interesting argument,’ said Thomas reflectively. ‘However, last night I was watching television and saw a program about near-death experiences. This program presented the story of a woman called Pam Reynolds. She underwent a dangerous brain operation with a revolutionary operation technique where her body was cooled to 15 degrees Celsius (normal body temperature is 37 degrees Celsius), after which her heart and breathing were stopped, and the blood was drained out of her head for the duration of the operation. In other words, she was dead for the duration of the operation! While she was clinically dead with no brain function at all, she had a near-death experience during which she departed from her body, heard and saw things in the operating theatre she couldn’t possibly have heard or seen while in her body, and after passing through a dark vortex, she met with her relatives in a wonderful world inhabited by the souls of the dead. This amazing story was verified by her doctors who were there at the time. Pam Reynolds’ story is proof that consciousness really is something immaterial and continues after death of the body, as well as indicating there must be more to this universe than just this

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physical material existence. Moreover, the reality and truth of this story doesn't correspond at all with your speciously reasoned belief in a future ghastly eternity of torment inflicted upon us by a monstrously sadistic, hateful, and lying God.'

'Of course this near-death experience doesn't correspond to the reality presented by holy books,' said Ben. 'What I've been talking about is what we learn about the hateful nature of God from the holy texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. However, as a result of my extensive studies of religion and the paranormal, I don't believe in a conscious life after death for one single moment, and certainly not in a God as horrendously malignant as is revealed by the texts of these holy books. If there is anything like a God, then such an entity would not concern itself with individuals, or small tribal groups on one of the undoubtedly countless billions of planets in this universe on which sentient life exists (Koran 42:29). Notwithstanding the fact that an afterlife is no more than a wishful fantasy, there are still many people who believe they will go to some sort of paradise after death. Yet this belief is only supported by some very disputable texts in their holy books, and their faith in what is expounded by these texts. So these believers welcome near-death experiences such as that of Pam Reynolds with open arms and cries of joy, because such near-death experiences buttress their hope and belief in an eternal afterlife in some sort of paradise. The apparent confirmation provided by these wondrous stories makes people feel all is well, and makes them feel there is a real chance of going to heaven. It gives them a warm and gooey feeling that there truly is a wondrous reward for the faithful at the end of a hard life. Nonetheless, this belief is totally unfounded, and even though the story of Pam Reynolds truly is wondrous, it is no proof of an afterlife.'

'That sounds really arrogant Ben. How can you say there's no afterlife? After all, for many thousands of years people of all races and creeds have always believed in some form of life after death, which means there must at least be some truth in this belief. Otherwise how could such a belief have arisen and continue unabated for thousands of years? Pam Reynolds' story truly is proof of some sort of afterlife, because even doctors cannot explain her experience except with the reality of an afterlife of some sort, and you arrogantly say it's not proof of an afterlife! Okay, it's wonderful weather, we're sitting in a beautiful place, and I'm in a good mood today. So prove me wrong, and I'll pay for the next bottle of wine,' upon which he looked contentiously at Ben as he settled in his chair.

'Done! Order a bottle now! I'm not going to miss this opportunity to drink free wine! We'll decide whether you're going to pay after I've explained this story,' agreed Ben with almost indecent alacrity.

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‘I’ve got a suspicious feeling this is going to be an expensive afternoon,’ groaned Thomas theatrically as he ordered a bottle of the same rosé they had been drinking. ‘But do continue... Maybe, just maybe you can earn your wine.’

Ben emptied his remaining half glass of rosé with evident pleasure. ‘Ahhh... Wonderful. Warm afternoon sunshine, a beautiful view, and wine paid for by someone else. This is the true meaning of paradise. Now the fact that people have believed in some form of afterlife for many millennia is no proof of the reality of an afterlife. I can’t see this afterlife. I can’t experience this afterlife. I can’t detect this afterlife with any device. This either means I’m just an unbelieving dog, or it means the supposed reality of an afterlife is merely a product of fervent hope and faith, because as I said already, the story of Pam Reynolds in no way proves the reality of an afterlife. I can say this with some confidence because it just so happens I know a lot about this particular near-death experience, and can explain every detail of Pam Reynolds’ story.’

‘Ohhh...’ groaned Thomas again. ‘I should have known better than to challenge you. Okay, get on with it.’

‘The report of Pam Reynolds’ story was first published in a book called *Light & Death* written by an American cardiologist, Doctor Michael Sabom (pages 37-51 in Sabom 1998). This is actually a quite accurate account, and contains more than enough information with which to explain this quite astonishing story. Furthermore, being the first report of this story, it also has the advantage of being free of the inaccuracies, contaminations, and outright fantasies now circulating as a result of the telling and retelling of this story.’

‘So you claim this story has become wilder and more inaccurate with the retelling?’

‘I certainly do. Pam Reynolds’ story as you tell it is wondrous, astounding even, but does not correspond at all with the original accurate report of this story presented in the book *Light & Death*. In fact the story you told me is a gross misrepresentation of the story, which would certainly lead people to believe they have a consciousness or soul that can temporarily depart their bodies during sleep or death – precisely is as stated in the Koran (see also Koran 39:42).’

It is He who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that ye have done by day: by day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled; In the end unto Him will be your return; then will He show you the truth of all that ye did. (YA Koran 6:60)

‘Yes, Thomas this, and similar other texts sound like a miraculous confirmation of her story. But her story doesn’t confirm this text at all. Let’s examine

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her story as told by Michael Sabom in the book *Light & Death*. The woman whose pseudonym was Pam Reynolds was 35 years old in 1991 CE when she underwent an operation to remove a giant swelling (an aneurysm) of the main artery supplying her brainstem with blood (the Basilar artery). The operation was necessary because the wall of the aneurysm was so thin and weak it could burst at any moment, depriving her brainstem of blood, and result in her immediate death. The size and position of the aneurysm were such that a special surgical technique was required to remove it. Her neurosurgeon decided on a technique where he would surgically expose the aneurysm, while at the same time cardiac bypass tubing would be connected to the large blood vessels in her groin. When he was ready to remove the aneurysm, her body would be cooled by the cardiac bypass apparatus to 15 degrees Celsius, her heart and breathing would be stopped, and the blood drained from her head to make removal of the aneurysm safe and very much easier. After the aneurysm was removed, her body would be warmed up again to her normal body temperature of 37 degrees Celsius, her heartbeat would be restored, and she would receive artificial respiration until she awoke again.'

'But she would have been dead if this was done!' said Thomas. 'How could she survive a period of no heartbeat and no breathing, as well as draining the blood from her head?'

'Well Thomas, the principle is the same as keeping meat fresh in the refrigerator. Cold meat decays more slowly than warm meat. The same is true of the living tissues of the body. The cooler the tissues, the lower the rate of metabolism, and the longer the tissue can survive without any circulation at all. For example, it's known that increasing degrees of brain damage begin to occur after the flow of blood to the head stops for more than 3 minutes at the normal body temperature of 37 degrees Celsius, but when the body is cooled to 10 to 15 degrees Celsius, about 45 to 60 minutes can elapse before any significant brain damage begins to occur. This is why profound cooling of the body has been a technique used to provide ideal surgical conditions for some types of brain and heart operations since the 1950's. During these operations, the bodies of the patients are cooled to about 8.4 to 15 degrees Celsius, and their breathing and heartbeat stopped for up to 45 to 60 minutes during which the surgeon can operate upon their hearts (Dobell 1997, Gordon 1962), or their brains (Koch 1991, Williams 1991). So as you see, the technique employed by the neurosurgeon of Pam Reynolds was nothing new or revolutionary. It was a known, albeit infrequently used method for enabling such difficult operations. Anyway, that's the background to the technique used for the operation on Pam Reynolds.'

'I see...' said Thomas. 'But you still haven't got to the specific case of Pam Reynolds.'

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‘Patience young man, patience.’ Ben sipped some wine, and paused for an irritatingly long period. ‘The best way to look at the story of Pam Reynolds is to examine the timeline of her operation in relation to the experiences she reported. If you carefully examine the excellent account of her experience in *Light & Death* (pages 37-51 in Sabom 1998) you can construct just such a timeline. Now, as chance would have it, I also saw exactly the same television program on which this garbled version of her story was presented. I just knew you would want to talk about it, which is why I wrote down the timeline of the main events of her operation.’ Ben took a piece of paper from his pocket and laid it before them.

07:15-08:40 hours.

- General anaesthesia was started. Pam Reynolds was now unconscious under general anaesthesia.
- Invasive monitors of vital body functions were inserted. This is often done after starting general anaesthesia because insertion of such monitors can be painful or uncomfortable.
- EEG (electroencephalogram) electrodes were attached to monitor her brain electrical activity.
- Closely fitting earplugs, with speakers were inserted into both her ears so as to administer clicking sounds for measuring her brainstem response to clicking sounds (Vestibular Evoked Potentials – VEP’s).
- Her head was fastened firmly to the operating table with a three-point head fixation clamp. This clamp prevents small movements of the head that would otherwise make using an operating microscope impossible.
- Her head was shaved, and her body draped for operation.
- Pam Reynolds received artificial respiration with a machine. Her body temperature, blood oxygen content, and heart function were normal throughout this period.

08:40-10:50 hours.

- The neurosurgeon began the operation. A scalp incision was made, and the skin covering her head was pulled away to expose the skull beneath.
- A pneumatic bone saw was used to remove a piece of bone from her skull in order to give access to the brain and the aneurysm within.
- The cardiothoracic surgeon exposed the artery and vein in her right groin, only to find these blood vessels were too small for the cardiac bypass tubing. She told this to the neurosurgeon.

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- The cardiothoracic surgeon then proceeded to operate on Pam's left groin to expose the artery and vein there.
- In the meantime the neurosurgeon also continued operating to expose the giant aneurysm. The last step of this part of the operation was to gently move the tissues of the brain aside to reveal the expected giant Basilar artery aneurysm.
- Pam Reynolds received artificial respiration with a machine. Her body temperature, blood oxygen content, and heart function were normal throughout this period.

10:50-11:00 hours.

- The neurosurgeon found, as was expected, that the aneurysm was too large to operate safely without profound body cooling and cardiac arrest.
- The cardiothoracic team inserted cardiac bypass tubing into the already exposed artery and vein in her left groin.
- The cardiac bypass machine was switched on, and started to lower Pam Reynolds body temperature by pumping her blood through the heat exchanger of the cardiac bypass machine.
- Even though Pam Reynolds body temperature was lowered at the end of this period, she still received artificial respiration with a machine, and her blood oxygen content, as well as heart function were normal.

11:00-11:25 hours.

- Pam Reynolds body temperature was now 22.8 degrees Celsius, at which time she was definitely unconscious (Fay 1941, Stocks 2004).
- Even though Pam Reynolds body temperature was lowered at the end of this period, she still received artificial respiration with a machine, and her blood oxygen content, as well as heart function were normal.

11:25-12:00 hours.

- Pam Reynolds body temperature was now 15.5 degrees Celsius.
- At this point no more EEG or VEP's could be detected.
- Potassium chloride was administered to totally stop the heartbeat and the irregular heart rhythm resulting from her low body temperature.
- Artificial respiration from the respirator was turned off.
- The body of Pam was tilted head-up to drain the blood from her head.
- The neurosurgeon clipped the aneurysm at its neck and excised it.

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12:00-12:32 hours.

- After successful removal of the aneurysm, the cardiac bypass pump was turned on again to start re-warming Pam Reynolds' body.
- Artificial respiration was resumed.
- As her body warmed up, the VEP's returned.
- Pam developed an abnormal and lethal heart rhythm called ventricular fibrillation – a rhythm where the heart just twitches in an uncoordinated manner without pumping blood.
- Normal heart rhythm was restored with a 50-Joule electrical shock.
- Even though Pam Reynolds body temperature was still low, she received artificial respiration with a machine, and her blood oxygen content, as well as heart function were normal.

12:32-14:10 hours.

- Cardiac bypass was stopped at a body temperature of 32 degrees Celsius.
- The various wounds in her head and groin were closed to the accompaniment of music, among which a tune called 'Hotel California' composed and sung by a group called *The Eagles*.
- Pam Reynolds received artificial respiration with a machine. Her body temperature, blood oxygen content, and heart function were normal throughout this period.

14:10 hours.

- Pam Reynolds body temperature was now a normal 37 degrees Celsius.
- Pam was brought into the ICU while still under general anaesthesia.
- Pam Reynolds received artificial respiration with a machine. Her body temperature, blood oxygen content, and heart function were normal throughout this period.

Sometime later that day.

- Reynolds awoke again.
- When she was able to breathe normally again without assistance, the respirator was turned off, and the respirator tube (endotracheal tube) was removed from her windpipe and from between her vocal cords.
- Only after she was awake, only after she was able to breathe normally for herself again, and only after the respirator tubing had been removed, was she able to talk and tell of her experience.

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‘So Thomas, this is a clear timeline of the events occurring during Pam Reynolds operation.’

‘Okay,’ said Thomas. ‘It’s clear what happened during her operation, but how does this explain her experience? After all, no-one else saw what she saw, or experienced what she underwent.’

‘I know, but no-one sees things exactly as you see them, or experiences what you experience inside your head either, and the same was true for Pam Reynolds too. So let’s examine her experiences in a step by step manner. The first thing she remembered after losing consciousness due to general anaesthesia, was awakening to the sound of a “natural D” and leaving her body.’

The next thing I recall was the sound: It was a natural D. As I listened to the sound, I felt it was pulling me out of the top of my head. The further out of my body I got, the more clear the tone became. I had the impression it was like a road, a frequency that you go on.... I remember seeing several things in the operating room when I was looking down. It was the most aware that I think that I have ever been in my entire life.... I was metaphorically sitting on Dr. Spetzler’s [the neurosurgeon] shoulder. It was not like normal vision. It was brighter and more focused and clearer than normal vision. . . . There was so much in the operating room that I didn’t recognize, and so many people. (page 41 in Sabom 1998)

‘Now Thomas, this all occurred during the period that the neurosurgeon used a pneumatic bone saw to open her skull. At this time her body temperature was perfectly normal, her heartbeat was normal, and her breathing was taken over by a machine because of muscle paralyzing drugs and high doses of opiates administered as part of the anaesthetic technique. So normal amounts of oxygen-rich blood flowed through her brain, and she was unconscious under general anaesthesia until the bone saw was used to open her skull. The powerful vibrations of the bones of her skull were also transmitted to other bones in her body, vibrating and activating her muscle spindles (Burke 1976), causing them to transmit sensory nerve signals to her brain, so arousing her to consciousness (Lanier-1994). These same powerful vibrations and sounds of the bone saw were also transmitted through the bones of her skull to her ears. Sounds transmitted through the bones of the skull are heard, even if the ear canals are totally occluded and admit no sound at all. This was the sound of the “natural D” she reported hearing. While so awakened, but rendered serene, uncritical, pain-free, paralyzed and unmoving by anaesthetic drugs, the changes in body position signalled by sensory nerve signals from her activated muscle spindles informed her mind that she was displaced outside her physical body. Her mind accordingly generated an image of a view from outside her body consistent with the informa-

tion from these sensory nerve signals (Chapter 6). This was her out-of-body experience.'

'I won't dispute this matter of arousal by the pneumatic saw, but Ben, how could the vibrations of the bone saw have informed her brain she was displaced outside her body?'

'Hmmm... How can I explain it to you?' said a pensive Ben as he drank more rosé. He thought a moment. 'We've discussed how sensory signals from muscle spindles can generate out-of-body experiences before (Chapter 6). So there is nothing new there. Powerful vibration of muscles caused by the bone saw activated the sensory nerves going to her brain from her muscle spindles to induce awareness (Lanier 1986, Lanier 1994), and generated the illusion of displacement out of her body in the mind of Pam Reynolds (Goodwin 1972, McCloskey 1978, Vignemont 2005). This is how the powerful vibrations of the bone saw aroused an out-of-body experience in the supposedly unconscious Pam Reynolds. She filled in the imagery of the operation theatre in her mind, so completing the imagery of being out of her body and observing the operation.'

'But she was unconscious under anaesthesia.'

'Not at all. She was conscious. She didn't say she was having an out-of-body experience at the time, because the effects of anaesthetic drugs meant she was calm and did not even think of speaking. Moreover, had she even tried to speak, speech would have been impossible anyway, because of muscle paralyzing drugs and the tube from the respirator through her larynx. Nonetheless she was awake, because an out-of-body experience is a conscious experience. We've already discussed how people can be awake during anaesthesia even though they may appear unconscious (Chapter 10).'

'Okay,' Thomas grudgingly conceded. 'I begin to understand how the out-of-body experience could have been generated by vibrations of the bone saw, but how could she have described the shape and size of the bone saw so well? That must have been due to some form of sight or paranormal perception.'

'Not at all,' was the confident reply. 'If Pam Reynolds was 35 years old in 1991 CE, then she must have been born in 1956 CE. As a child raised in the USA during the years subsequent to her birth, she would have regularly visited a dentist where she undoubtedly saw, heard and felt the drill of the dentist. Pneumatic and electrical dental drills in use since about 1950 CE have much the same shape, and make much the same sounds as the bone saw used to open her skull. So it is not surprising she associated the two, and could make a reasonably accurate description of the neurosurgical bone saw. And remember, her description of the whole event was a memory formed within a brain influenced by anaesthetic drugs and the effects of surgery: a memory she was only able to

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recount many hours later in the intensive care after the sedation had been stopped and the respirator tube removed from her larynx.’

Thomas thought a bit as he drank a little more wine. He looked dissatisfied. ‘Okay,’ he grumbled, ‘you seem to have explained her out-of-body experience. Nonetheless, how could she have heard the cardiothoracic surgeon say her blood vessels were too small?’

Someone said something about my veins and arteries being very small. I believe it was a female voice and that it was Dr. Murray, but I’m not sure. She was the cardiologist [actually the cardiothoracic surgeon]. I remember thinking that I should have told her about that... (page 42 in Sabom 1998)

‘She heard the exact words Doctor Murray said. How was this possible Ben? After all, she was wearing closely fitting soundproof earphones to measure her vestibular evoked responses, so she couldn’t possibly have heard what the cardiothoracic surgeon said with normal hearing. This means her disembodied consciousness, or soul, must have heard these words.’

Ben laughed, ‘Oh, oh, Thomas. Look around you, and you see young people all around you wearing tightly fitting earplugs attached to electronic music players. Try these earplugs for yourself, and you realize they fit tightly and allow little sound to enter the ears. Yet these young people also carry on conversations while wearing these earplugs and listening to music, which clearly indicates that being able to hear while wearing earplugs or earphones is really nothing special. Furthermore, her skull was fixed by three screws to a solid metal clamp bolted to the operating table (the “Mayfield clamp” is an example of this type of clamp). Accordingly, the sounds of speech, or other sounds in the operating theatre, may well have induced vibrations in the thin metal surfaces of instrument trays bolted to the operating table, which would have directly conducted sounds through the bones of her skull into her ears. Such bone conduction of operating theatre sounds is another explanation of how she could hear, even though the earplugs may have totally blocked all sound transmission in her ear canals. So there you have two mechanisms by which Pam Reynolds could have heard sounds in the operating theatre.’

‘But those earphones she wore were really sound proof according to the television program.’

‘You’re repeating yourself Thomas. They do indeed say these earplugs blocked all sounds. But Pam Reynolds could still have heard the sounds of speech by means of bone conduction as I described. And we know she heard the sound of the cardiothoracic surgeon speaking. Did the supposedly separated consciousness of Pam Reynolds hear the voice of the cardiothoracic surgeon by

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means of clairvoyance or telepathy? I don't think so, otherwise she would have heard the thoughts of the cardiothoracic surgeon instead of just the verified spoken words of the surgeon. Furthermore, if the separated consciousness of Pam had clairvoyant or telepathic powers, why didn't she "hear" the thoughts of others in the room? As you know yourself, your personal thoughts go further than what you express in words: you think about what you are going to eat for lunch, you might want to go to the toilet, your clothing is uncomfortable, you are annoyed with someone in the room, you are happy about something, etc, etc. But Pam Reynolds mentioned none of these things. She only stated what the cardiothoracic surgeon said in words: no more, and no less. Could her separated consciousness have heard the sound waves of the spoken words of the cardiothoracic surgeon? This is very unlikely, because it would mean that the immaterial separated consciousness of Pam Reynolds responded to the material sound waves forming the sounds of the cardiothoracic surgeon's words. We know her immaterial separated consciousness supposedly separated from her body by passing through the solid material substance of her body, as well as through the solid material drapes covering her body. So if her supposedly immaterial consciousness failed to interact with these solid and material things, how much more likely is it that her immaterial consciousness could interact with the very much more tenuous variations of air pressure that form sound waves? As if this were not enough, we know from millennia of experience with deaf people that a person can only hear when the physical mechanisms of the body needed for hearing function, because when the physical mechanisms of the body needed for hearing do not function, the person is deaf. The many millions of deaf people now living on this world are living proof that the supposedly immaterial consciousness associated with the body can only hear sounds by means of the functioning of the physical mechanisms of the body needed for hearing. No living person hears with their immaterial consciousness, otherwise no-one would be deaf. So Pam Reynolds heard the words of the cardiothoracic surgeon with her ears.'

'Aha, but Pam Reynolds was clinically dead, with no heartbeat or breathing when she heard the cardiothoracic surgeon speaking. This means she must have heard the surgeon with her disembodied consciousness in spite of all you say.'

'Ridiculous! Twaddle! Absolute nonsense!' snorted Ben. 'Just look at the timeline of the operation. Pam Reynolds was very much alive at the time the surgeon made this statement. The surgeon had just found that the blood vessels in Pam's right groin were too small for the cardiac bypass tubing, which means she was definitely not yet on cardiac bypass. Accordingly, her body temperature was normal at the time, she had a normal heartbeat, and she received artificial respiration from the anaesthetic machine. So Pam Reynolds was certainly alive

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and conscious when she heard the surgeon saying the blood vessels in her right groin were too small for the cardiac bypass tubing. Her words even indicated that her brain function at the time was abnormal, because she also said something very strange, “I remember thinking that I should have told her about that...” Tell me Thomas do you know the sizes of the veins and arteries in your right groin?’

‘Er... No.’

‘Nor do I, and nor does anyone else for that matter either. The very fact Pam Reynolds actually thought at the time that she knew the sizes of the blood vessels in her right groin, and that she should have told the cardiothoracic surgeon about them being too small for cardiac bypass tubing beforehand, certainly indicates her brain function was rendered abnormal by the effects of anaesthetic drugs. And we definitely know these anaesthetic drugs must have affected her brain, because even though she was conscious, she felt no pain from the operation, proving that the powerful painkilling drugs used for anaesthesia were working, removing pain, which means they very definitely had altered her brain function. She was simply awake, even though she appeared to be unconscious under anaesthesia. We’ve talked before about people who are awake, even though they appear unconscious under general anaesthesia (Chapter 10). This is the explanation of her ability to hear the words of the cardiothoracic surgeon.’ Ben looked at Thomas with a smug mile, as if to say, ‘I dare you to contradict that!’

‘Hmm...’ sighed Thomas. He lapsed into a short silence, digesting what he had just heard, and drinking more rosé before Ben got the chance to empty most of the bottle. ‘But what about the experience she had while clinically dead during her period of profoundly low body temperature, at which time her heartbeat was stopped, and the blood was drained from her head?’

‘Oh you mean her experience of passing through a dark vortex into a place of light where she had contact with her grandmother, grandfather, as well as various aunts and uncles, all of whom were bathed in light, communicated telepathically with her, and fed her in some way before finally bringing her back to her body.’

‘Yes. How do you explain that? She must have seen them during the period the blood was drained out of her head and she was clinically dead.’

‘Not necessarily Thomas. This part of her experience is reasonably easy to explain. Her experience of falling into a dark vortex was very likely due to rapid onset of profound muscle relaxation as she descended into unconsciousness during the period of rapid cooling of her body. This is a sensation very similar to the falling sensation people sometimes experience in the period just between awake and falling asleep. Her near-death experience in this period was an

absolutely stereotype experience undergone by a person expecting to undergo a potentially lethal event (see figure 7.1 in Chapter 7). This is why she had a near-death experience with affective and transcendental components, where she entered a transcendental world to meet other deceased people who acted as guides or mentors in this world. Typically, as a person born and raised in the USA, she saw her deceased close family members (see figure 7.2 in Chapter 7), encountered a barrier, and returned to her body. So her experience is exactly what you would expect from a person with her background.'

'But how could she have such an experience while she was clinically dead without any heartbeat, breathing or flow of blood through her brain. She was dead, so if she had an experience like this, then her consciousness was very evidently something separate from her body.'

'Ohh Thomas...' groaned Ben, as he theatrically rolled and closed his eyes, 'Ohhh Thomas... What have I been telling you all the time? Experiences like this don't have to last a long time. They sometimes only last seconds, even though the person themselves feel as if they last a long time. This experience evidently occurred during a period of awareness either before, or after she was unconscious due to cooling of her body. People are simply unconscious below a body temperature of 26 degrees Celsius (Fay 1941, Stocks 2004), and while unconscious a person can have no conscious experiences such as a near-death experience, out-of-body experience, or any other type of dream, hallucination, or conscious experience for that matter.'

'But isn't it still possible?'

'No,' was the very definite reply. 'Look at it this way Thomas, if I hit you on your head with a brick so that you drop unconscious to the ground, would you expect to undergo any experience while lying unconscious there on the ground.'

'Er, no, I guess not.'

'Precisely. Your period of unconsciousness would be a black hole during which no conscious experience occurred at all, so why would you expect other people to have some sort of wondrous experience while they are unconscious. Unconsciousness means just that – no conscious experience. The only experience you might have after being hit on your head with a brick is that I might try rifling your pockets for money, so you could pay for all the wine we're drinking today. But you wouldn't notice that, because you would be unconscious at the time.'

'I understand what you mean Ben. But even so, there is a problem with your explanation. The conscious experience of Pam Reynolds was continuous from the moment she departed from her body to the end. She reports being conscious the whole time, from the beginning of the experience, when her skull was sawn open, until she was brought to the intensive care after completion of

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surgery. How could this be possible unless her consciousness was somehow separated from her physical body?

'Oh yes, that old argument of a continuous conscious experience,' sighed Ben, and emptied his glass. He looked unhappily at the now empty bottle, and sighed again. 'Waiter, another bottle of the same again please! Now Thomas, this argument of a continuous conscious experience is absolute nonsense! Pam Reynolds could only remember those experiences she had while conscious, because while unconscious she had no conscious experiences at all. Her periods of unconsciousness were simply a blank emptiness. In addition to this, she was simply unable to tell of her experiences as she underwent them: during her periods of consciousness she was sedated with anaesthetic drugs, the respirator tube between her vocal cords made speech physically impossible, and her muscles were paralyzed with a curare-like drug which made it impossible to move or breathe, let alone speak. Furthermore, she was kept in this condition after the operation was finished, as well as during the time she was transported to the intensive care unit where she eventually woke up several hours later at the earliest. Only then, only after she was able to breathe again, and the respirator tube was removed from between her vocal cords, was she finally in a condition where she was able to relate her experiences. All these things mean that the wondrous experience related by Pam Reynolds was a remembered experience. So what she did was to string her periods of consciousness onto a superficially continuous timeline, threading the individual beads of short episodes of consciousness onto a string to form the necklace of a continuous conscious experience. This is why her experience sounds like a continual unbroken period of consciousness, even though this wondrous so-called continuous experience was actually no more than a chain of remembered snippets of consciousness.'

'I understand,' was the reaction of Thomas. 'So you mean that the last part of her experience when they were closing her wound to the accompaniment of the song "Hotel California" was simply a period of awareness while apparently unconscious under anaesthesia.'

'Indeed I do. At the time of her experience they were closing her wounds, so she was disconnected from the cardiac bypass tubing, her body temperature was normal, she had a normal heartbeat, and received artificial respiration from the anaesthetic machine. She was also very much alive at this point, and very evidently aware of what was happening around her. Her description is an absolutely typical experience of awareness during anaesthesia.'

When I came back, they were playing 'Hotel California' and the line was 'You can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave.' I mentioned [later] to Dr. Brown that that was incredibly insensitive and he told me that I needed to sleep

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more. [laughter] When I regained consciousness, I was still on the respirator.’ (page 47 in Sabom 1998)

‘Examine the wording carefully Thomas. Pam Reynolds said the wording of the song was incredibly insensitive. I suppose if you were Pam Reynolds, then it certainly would appear that way. After all, she was awake and felt no pain, but could neither move nor speak because of muscle paralyzing drugs. In other words, she was locked inside her body, even though she tried to leave the imprisonment of the anaesthetic drugs paralyzing her body. And then she mentions that she lost consciousness yet again, awakening later while still on the respirator. This latter indicates she realized she underwent periods of consciousness and unconsciousness during the whole procedure. In other words, Pam Reynolds tells us in these few expressive words that she was not continuously conscious during her experience! So there you have it Thomas, the wondrous story of Pam Reynolds explained.’

‘Now Ben, I would tend to agree with you, if it weren’t for one thing still bothering me.’

‘What’s that?’

‘Her story is so coherent, so clear, and not at all like the vague and disjointed story told by someone delirious or confused by drugs. This was obviously an experience undergone by a person with a fully functioning consciousness. How would you explain this?’

A short silence fell as both men basked in the sun and sipped wine. Ben took another sip with evident relish, ‘It actually seems incredible to most people, but periods of awareness during anaesthesia are often very clear, and people often tell a very coherent story about what they heard and felt during such a period of awareness (Editorial 1979, Mainzer 1979, Schwender 1998). The story of Pam Reynolds is a report of several remembered periods of awareness, and is typically clear, and superficially unaffected by any mental effects of the anaesthetic drugs. I say superficially, because her mental function was very definitely affected by anaesthetic drugs. There is evidence for this: she was calm and not at all frightened during her periods of awareness, she seemed to think she knew the sizes of the blood vessels in her groin, and she felt no pain even though she was undergoing an operation. So the functioning of her brain was definitely affected by the anaesthetic drugs. Furthermore, her story is a report of a remembered experience, because it was physically impossible for her to relate her experience until the anaesthetic drugs had worn off, and the ventilator tubing removed from between her vocal cords. All these things mean she could only relate her story while awake in full possession of all her mental faculties, and because she was

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awake and in full possession of all her mental faculties, she was able to relate a very coherent story.’

‘So you’re saying that this story is simply a product of anaesthetic drugs and being awake during the operation. Then what about the vestibular evoked potential (VEP) monitoring which indicated she was unconscious?’

‘Electronic monitoring of the level of consciousness with all manner of modern electronic devices, and measuring techniques, or parameters such as VEP monitoring is never 100% accurate (Loveman 2001). VEP monitoring results are also considerably influenced by body temperature, and Pam Reynolds was subjected to extreme lowering of her body temperature, which changed the meaning of the VEP measurements, rendering interpretation of the measurements inaccurate as to determining of loss of consciousness (Thornton 1998). Moreover, during 1991 CE, analysis of VEP’s was done manually which is never as accurate as computer trend analysis. This is why all scientific associations recommend that anaesthesiologists never rely totally upon electronic devices to determine whether a person is conscious or unconscious, simply because some people are conscious at the same time as these monitors indicate they are unconscious (ASA 2006). So even though the VEP monitor indicated Pam Reynolds was unconsciousness, she was very definitely conscious at times. Her story indicates and proves this was so. All these things explain the wondrous story of Pam Reynolds. The experience of Pam Reynolds is not proof of the reality of an immaterial soul or mind which can exist separately from the body. Instead her experience was a product of anaesthetic drugs, abnormal interpretations of bodily sensations, together with a perception of imminent personal death, all of which caused her body to function in such a way that she underwent a truly wondrous experience. I do not belittle this experience, because it was a truly wondrous experience, even though it was a product of abnormal body function. Her experience possibly confirmed her vision of the world, possibly even gave her a new vision of the world, and possibly even gave her a reason for existence. To Pam Reynolds, and indeed to us all, this experience is significant, for all such stories are powerful and wonderful demonstrations of the functioning of the human body, as well as demonstrations of the true nature of our being.’

‘I guess you’re right again Ben,’ sighed Thomas. ‘It cost me a bottle of wine, but it was worth it. The second bottle you ordered goes on your bill. I didn’t order it, you did.’

‘Okay, okay,’ grumbled Ben. ‘Sounds reasonable. What about some food? I’m feeling hungry after all this wine. They serve really quite decent meatballs with French fries here. So let’s live up to the reputation Jewish priests once gave Jesus!’

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The Son of man [Jesus] is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! (ASV Bible, Luke 7:34)

Ben continued, ‘This reputation was good enough for Jesus, so it’s good enough for me. There’s nothing wrong with publicans and sinners, and I also happen to enjoy food, especially after a lot of wine which I enjoy even more! Waiter! More of the same wine and the menu please!’

The Unholy Legacy of Abraham shows how human body function apparently proves the reality of the soul, an eternal afterlife, and God, as well as discussing the consequences of literal interpretation of texts in the Torah, Bible, and Koran.

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