

Descriptions of the City of Light

To the Editor:

I have just read two articles in the Summer 1993 issue of the *Journal* on the hierarchies in and physical aspects of the City of Light, so often referred to by near-death experiencers (NDErs) when recounting their experiences. The first is "Social Positions in the City of Light," by Craig Lundahl and Harold Widdison (1993); the second, "The Physical Environment in the City of Light," by Widdison and Lundahl (1993). I must admit to having difficulty understanding the points of both, especially as they each seemed to indicate that NDEs are physical rather than symbolic experiences, that they happen in a physical place ordered with physical rules.

The article on social positions appeared to be a cross-cultural study of the subculture of Mormons, in which that group's interpretation of the afterlife, based on the NDEs of some of its members, was summarized. However, nowhere did Lundahl and Widdison mention that this was the case. Neither did they opine on the structure of the Mormon society in *this* reality, a very strict patriarchal and hierarchical system with very distinct and structured religious beliefs, and how those beliefs may or may not influence the interpretations of the near-death experiences of its members. Rather, this article came across as a model for the structure of the afterlife. The second article seemed to build on this model by providing, through descriptions of physical aspects of the City of Light, a place in which this hierarchy may reside.

In the conclusion to the second article, Widdison and Lundahl mentioned a "study of the physical environment in the other world" (1993, p. 245). This is an impossibility. There is no physical environment in the nonphysical reality. There is only the individual's interpretation of what was experienced, an interpretation that must filter

through a physical brain into a physical environment. I think this point was entirely overlooked in both these articles, and that is why I have difficulty understanding the reasons behind them. Why report on something that isn't there?

I readily admit my comments stem from my own interpretation of the meanings in the NDE based on my own experiences rather than actual research, but I feel my point is as valid as those presented by the authors. I also feel that Lundahl and Widdison might better utilize their obvious talents by studying and reporting on the symbolism in near-death and related experiences. I think greater meaning and understanding of the NDE and reality in general would undoubtedly be the result of such efforts.

References

- Lundahl, C. R., and Widdison, H. A. (1993). Social positions in the City of Light. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 11, 231-238.
- Widdison, H. A., and Lundahl, C. R. (1993). The physical environment in the City of Light. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, 11, 239-246.

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