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To die is to be born in the beyond

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Introduction

The many questions that human beings have about death can be reduced to five main issues. These are related to the Who, Where, Why, How and When of the event.

More precisely, they are:

- What, within us, dies or survives?
- Where do we go after death? Is there even a "somewhere" to go to?
- Why do we die? What is the necessity, the meaning of this event?
- How do we die? What happens within us when we die?
- When do we die? Is the moment predetermined? Can it be modified and with what effects for us?

These five questions, each of which is the subject of a chapter, cannot be answered satisfactorily if we only resort to medical and biological knowledge. Such an approach, limited to the material aspect of death, only takes into account its physiological aspects.

However, death is more than a bodily phenomenon. The immaterial "ego" of the human being, his spirit, also called soul, must also be taken into consideration.

Taking the spirit into account corresponds to adopting a spiritual approach. This does not deny material realities. It fully accepts the latter, but complements them by taking into consideration supraterrrestrial realities.

The image that one then obtains of death is vast and coherent and allows one to free oneself from the apprehensions that one might have had towards it.

Chapter 1 What, within us, dies or survives?

Death manifests itself by the cessation of the organic functions: the heart stops beating, the lungs no longer receive the oxygen necessary for the cells, energy production is suspended, exchanges are interrupted... it is the cessation of all life, as witnessed by the inert body of the deceased.

Many people think that the interruption of the organic functioning automatically leads to the dissolution of the personality, i.e. to the end of the existence of the "ego", also called the inner self, that has been manifesting itself until then. The latter is supposed to disintegrate and disappear completely. Such an end seems quite logical at first glance, since no evidence of a consciousness or a will emanates any more from the now motionless body.

That the death of the body simultaneously leads to the death of the consciousness, and therefore to the definitive end of the human being, would be true if we were only our body. But are we only a being of flesh and blood? Does our consciousness really have our physical organism as its starting point?

Innumerable facts and many situations that we ourselves have experienced clearly suggest that we are not our body, but something that is independent of it and directs it; in other words, that our true "ego" is of a completely different nature and survives the death of the body.

The body, something external to oneself

Unconsciously, we feel perfectly well that we are distinct from our body, since we say "I have a body" and not "I am a body". This way of expressing ourselves shows that the body is something possessed by the I who speaks, but that it is not the possessor. Under these conditions, who is the latter?

The body is distinct from our "ego", it is autonomous and functions according to its own logic. Indeed, how do we participate in the fact that our heart beats night and day, that our kidneys filter waste products from the blood, that our food is digested or that our immune system defends us when an infection occurs? We don't participate! It's all done for us.

In fact, it's easy to see that we and our body function according to two different logics. If we were really our body, everything that affects it should also affect us. We should be internally tired (at the level of our "ego"), when our body is tired. But how often do we want to keep up an effort or stay awake while our body prevents us from doing so? Conversely, how many times wouldn't we wish to fall asleep while our body, for one reason or another, is too restless or over-excited to let us fall asleep?

The dissociation between the body that follows its own logic and ourselves can also be observed when we fall ill. The discomforts and pains we feel physically are not wanted by us, they settle in against our will. We even wish the opposite, but the body continues its own functioning and logic.

If we were really only a body, any important modification affecting it, the amputation of a limb for example, would have to deeply affect the integrity of our inner self, since an important part of the substance with which we are made would be missing. However, someone who loses an arm or a leg, does not at the same time lose a part of his human qualities, his intelligence or his will. He does not find himself diminished psychically; on the contrary, such people often seem to gain inner strength.

Some will retort that the "ego" does not identify with the body as a whole, but only with the brain.

Is the brain our "ego"?

The first scientific conclusions about the brain were indeed that the brain was the centre of our consciousness, that the brain and our "ego" were one. More recent research, however, contradicts this. Indeed, the more work progresses, the more scientists realise that, although the brain is highly sophisticated, it does not contain the capacity to be the starting point of our consciousness and intelligence.

Sir John Eccles for example, winner of the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1963, explains that since neurons only have the capacity to receive and transmit messages but can not elaborate anything, the brain, which is a collection of neurons, is not capable of doing so either. In other words, the brain is incapable of grouping information, making judgements, etc., and is therefore unable to take decisions. If there is elaboration and synthesis ... it is therefore that the brain is used as a tool by an active and independent "ego", external to it.

If the brain was really the centre of the human "ego" and its faculties, the greater the brain mass, the more gifted, intelligent, voluntary its possessor should be. Now, the measurements of the brain volume of great men, taken from their skulls once dead, have shown that while some of them did indeed have a brain mass that gave their brains a weight above the general average of 1500g, for example Bismarck 1800g and Victor Hugo 2250g, many others were in the average, or even below, without being humanly speaking inferior; for example the American poet Walt Whitmann 1300g and the French writer Anatole France 920g.

Similarly, studies of hydrocephalus, i.e. people whose brains are up to ten times smaller than average due to the presence of water in the skull, have shown that they do not have a lower IQ, but are perfectly average and often above average.

Everything therefore depends on the "ego" that uses the brain and not on the brain itself. But what is this "ego" that has been discussed so far?

The real "ego" of the human being

What uses the brain and the body, but is neither brain nor body, is the spirit taken in the sense of the soul. Being external to the physical body and totally independent of it, it is not material but immaterial, which is why it is invisible to the earthly eyes. The spirit is built with materials that are of a different kind from those of the body, materials which are much finer and ethereal.

The spirit penetrates the body and binds itself to it. It inhabits it for the duration of the earthly life. In this respect, we speak of an incarnation, that is to say of an entry (in) the flesh (carne). By incarnating, the spirit does not merge with the body, because their constituents do not mix to form a common mass. This is quite impossible, since the materials with which they are made up are of different kinds. They only bind to each other. Air and sand, because of their difference in kind, do not merge either, at most they can mix with each other during a sandstorm.

The connection of the spirit and the body is more or less tight or loose depending on the circumstances, something we can feel.

When we fall asleep, the connection between the spirit and the body loosens. Most of the time, we fall asleep all of a sudden without feeling anything, but sometimes the process of distancing becomes perceptible: half asleep, we feel ourselves leaving our body, "flying away", before sinking into unconsciousness.

The jolt accompanying a dream of a fall, which interrupts the period in which we are falling asleep, also testifies to the separation. Throughout the day, the spirit works to overcome the forces of gravity in order to keep the body upright and moving. However, when the connection between body and spirit becomes distended during the sleep phase, the spirit feels as if the body escapes it and falls. It suddenly seizes it again, to hold it back, by incarnating completely in it, hence the jolt.

On waking up, the spirit, which until then had been slightly detached from the body, unites closely with it again. This reintegration is a process that takes time. In a sudden awakening from a deep sleep, the spirit that had been released from the body may find it difficult to reintegrate. This is the case when in the middle of the night we are shaken violently to be woken up. At first we are vaguely aware that something is happening but we don't really know what. Then we become aware of what is taking place but cannot react. It is only after a few moments that we manage to move our limbs and then express ourselves.

A multitude of expressions in everyday language show that intuitively we are aware that our "ego" and our body are two separate things. These expressions most often use the word soul, as it is more commonly used than the term spirit.

If one can give oneself "body and soul" in one's work or that "to drink and to eat, keeps body and soul together" (German proverb), it is because we are not just a body. If character traits such as tolerance and kindness are referred to as greatness of spirit, it is because we feel that these faculties come from a higher and nobler reality than the physical body.

In the face of adversity and problems, the spirit must be very present to defend itself and overcome the obstacles in its path, hence the expression "to have the soul firmly anchored to the body". If the spirit has been painfully affected by the events, then one speaks very rightly of "wounds of the soul" and not of wounds of the brain.

In the event of death, it is often said that this or that person has "given up his soul". This is because the soul leaves the body and separates from it for good. There is not only a loosening of the connection as during sleep, but a total rupture. Sleep is, therefore, the little brother of death.

If the expression "to give up the soul" is based on a correct conception of the constitution of the human being, namely a soul incarnated in a physical body, it nevertheless contains an erroneous notion. Indeed, by saying that Mister X gave up the soul, we consider that what was Mister X was his body, and that at the end of its life, the body gives back to nature or to God something external to it: the soul. But Mr. X does not have a soul, he is a soul. It would therefore be more accurate to say that the soul gives his body back to the earth, since the body is derived from it, which would correspond better to reality.

From this point of view, it is also by falsely considering the human being as being only his body that we say: "Mister Smith was buried on Tuesday". In a burial, it is not Mister Smith's "ego", his soul which is buried, but his body!

"No one ever came back to talk about it."

Many people consider that to think that the human being is a soul incarnated in a body is a simple hypothesis, certainly seductive and encouraging, but which still remains to be proven.

For them, the best confirmation of this hypothesis would be that after death, a deceased person would manifest himself to the living to tell them that he is indeed still alive, that his life is still

going on despite the death of his body. But as these detractors so willingly say: "No one has ever come back to testify that it is indeed so".

This argument, which claims to be irrefutable by those who use it, is not. In any case, not since the second half of the 20th century, when it was brought to the public's attention, particularly through the books of Dr. Raymond Moody, as well as those of other authors (see bibliography), that many people who died in road accidents, acute illness or surgery have been brought back to life thanks to today's modern resuscitation procedures.

Some of them have recounted what happened at the time of their death, i.e. during the short period of time between the interruption of the organic functions and the return to life, thanks to resuscitation.

The number of testimonies - several hundred thousand - pleads for their veracity. These people have told how they did not cease to exist when they died. Their "ego" did not disintegrate, nor did it fall into a nothingness that would have made them lose all their faculties and rendered them unconscious. On the contrary, they were still conscious of themselves, that is to say, of their "ego". They could still see and hear what was happening around them. They could also act, move around, think, take decisions.

Here are, among many others, some significant examples of these testimonies. First of all, two examples in which we see how the soul leaves the body:

"I became very seriously ill, and the doctor put me in the hospital. This one morning a solid grey mist gathered around me, and I left my body. I had a floating sensation as I felt myself get out of my body, and I looked back and I could see myself on the bed below and there was no fear. It was very quiet – very peaceful and serene. I was not in the least bit upset or frightened." (1)

For his part, a soldier wounded in the head by a bullet during the Second World War recounts:

"When the blood began to invade my brain, it was as if I was pulled upwards. I found myself outside my body and looked at myself, lying below me. At that moment I thought, 'I am dead. So that's how it is, I didn't feel any pain and I felt very well.'" (2)

In the examples that follow, we can see that the soul remains conscious of itself, and that its faculties of reflection remain intact even though it is no longer clothed in a physical body:

"I was out of my body looking at it from about ten yards away, but I was still thinking, just like in physical life. And *where* I was thinking was about at my normal bodily height. I wasn't in a body, as such." (3)

"I thought I was dead, and I wasn't sorry that I was dead, but I just couldn't figure out where I was supposed to go. My thought and my consciousness were just like they are in life." (4)

Conscious of itself, the soul can see and hear what is happening around it.

"I watched them reviving me from up there! My body was laying down there stretched out on the bed, in plain view, and they were all standing around it. I heard one nurse say, 'Oh, she's gone!', while another one leaned down to give me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. I was looking at the *back* of her head while she did this. I'll never forget the way her hair looked; it was cut kind of short. Just then, I saw them roll this machine in there, and they put the shocks on my chest". (5)

"I heard this awful sound - through a darkness, an enclosed space. It was very quick. Then, I was sort of floating about five feet above the street, about five yards away from the car, I'd say, and I heard the echo of the crash dying away. I saw people come running up and crowding around the car, and I saw my friend get out of the car, obviously in shock. I could see my own body in the wreckage among all those people, and could see them trying to get it out". (6)

The ability to move and act remains, but because the soul is made of materials more ethereal than those of earthly matter, it has no hold on the latter, once it has left the body. As a result, it cannot grasp earthly objects and that which is an obstacle for our physical body, the wall of a room for example, is no longer one for it.

"The doctors and nurses were pounding on my body to try to get IV's started and to get me back, and I kept trying to tell them, 'Leave me alone. All I want is to be left alone. Quit pounding on me.' But they didn't hear me. So I tried to move their hands to keep them from beating on my body, but nothing would happen. I couldn't get anywhere. It was like - I don't really know what happened, but I couldn't move their hands. It looked like I was touching their hands and I tried to move them - yet when I would give it the stroke, their hands were still there. I don't know whether my hand was going through it, around it, or what. I didn't feel any pressure against their hands when I was trying to move them". (7)

A woman who died momentarily as a result of complications arising during a caesarean section recounts:

"I was floating just under the ceiling, watching as the doctors feverishly tried to revive my body. But I felt good and laughed about it. During the operation I was able to float to the next room and see the nurses bathing my newborn daughter." (8)

These people are devoid of their physical body but can still communicate. However, communicating does not take place as on earth: sounds do not penetrate from the outside through the ears, but are heard from the inside. It is a direct transfer of information, from spirit to spirit.

If the number of people who have had such experiences, known as Near Death Experiences (NDEs), was small, their veracity could be questioned. But since the time when Dr Raymond Moody published his first book on the subject, in 1975, based on a few hundred testimonies gathered and studied by him, thanatology, or the science of death, has taken off enormously.

All over the world, researchers are working on this subject in universities and research institutes. Documented and verified cases now number in the hundreds of thousands. And these are just the cases that have been studied. The number of people experiencing such experiences is therefore much higher.

So it can no longer be said that no one ever came back to talk about what happened after physical death. This argument is completely outdated.

But more than the number of cases, what is striking is the similarity of the experiences of these people. None of them experienced something different, unrelated to the experience of the others, which would have been the case if they had invented or imagined what they had told. Regardless of their gender, age, nationality, race, culture or profession, all experienced similar events. They went through different stages that followed one another in the same order, which made them appear to be governed by natural laws. These stages, eight in number, thus take on a universal character.

Of course, depending on the circumstances of the death and the personality of the subject concerned, the event takes on a particular colour, but the main characteristics of NDEs remain the same for all.

The eight stages covered during a near-death experience are as follows:

1. Feeling of calm and peace

No matter how painful the injuries or manifestations of the disease that led to death may have been, as soon as death occurs, the suffering disappears. It is not that the centre of consciousness which could feel them no longer exists - it is still there and fully conscious - it is that the connection with earthly matter has become strongly distended and the spirit no longer perceives what emanates from the body.

Physical distress now gives way to a great sense of well-being and a state of relaxation and calm. A great peace invades the "deceased", he feels deeply happy and light; everything is fine, as if nothing painful had happened.

If we are talking about pain here, it is not that dying is a painful process. In itself the separation of spirit and body is painless. What can be painful is what causes this separation: the injuries from the accident or the illness. Someone who dies a natural death, i.e. without being ill but because of wear and tear and fatigue of the body, feels no pain.

2. Decorporation

Shortly afterwards, the deceased sees the body that he has used as a tool lying at the scene of the accident, on his hospital bed or on the operating table, as the case may be. He sees it as if he was a spectator or a third person present at the scene. He therefore sees it from the outside and not from the inside as usual.

This is a great surprise for him. He can't believe it. Indeed, accustomed as he was to identify with his own body, he is deeply moved when he sees that he is outside it and, despite everything, still alive and conscious. It is generally at this moment that he becomes aware that he must be dead, or what is called being dead, since he is still alive.

Although devoid of his physical body, the deceased does not feel that he is without a body. On the contrary, he feels that he has one and that it is of a different kind, much lighter.

Not only do the deceased see their physical body, but they also see the people around their earthly tool and the place where it lies: the resuscitation room, or the crossroads where they had a car accident. They are therefore able to testify, after reintegrating their bodies, at the end of the NDE, about what happened, who was there and what was said, even if they were terrestrially unconscious.

More than one member of the nursing staff, doctor or nurse, was stunned to hear people brought back to life not only tell them what happened in the operating room, but also describe what they would not have been able to see physically. For example, giving details of a surgical operation performed on their spine, i.e. on a part of the body that someone lying on his stomach can not see!

Decorporation during an NDE has the consequence that the infirmities that used to affect the body no longer limit the spirit. The blind see again with the eyes of their soul, the deaf hear again, the crippled walk.

3. The tunnel

In this stage, the deceased is torn from the place where he is and carried away at a very high speed through an obscure space whose shape is described as a kind of pipe or tunnel, but also as a chimney, shaft or cylinder .

As they progress through the tunnel, they hear a deafening noise, described as a humming or buzzing sound depending on who reports it.

Looking towards the end of the tunnel in which he is advancing, the deceased sees a light in the distance which becomes brighter and brighter as he progresses.

4. Contact with beings

At the end of the tunnel, the deceased enters a very beautiful region where a bright light shines but does not dazzle. He then becomes aware that he is not alone. Other beings are there. Some of them are known to him. They are friends or relatives who welcome him joyfully, smiling and holding out their arms. Other people present are unknown to him, but their behaviour is benevolent.

These people are felt by him as helpers whose role is to facilitate his passage into this other world, to support and help him. It should be emphasised that, very logically, the acquaintances encountered are always people who have themselves died, never people still living on earth.

In the rare cases where a person after an NDE has told, to everyone's surprise, of having met someone who had not died, it turned out, not that they had been wrong, but that this person passed away, while everyone was still unaware of it.

5. Encounter with a being of light

The deceased is then confronted with a light that he feels as a being from which emanates love and warmth that surpasses everything else. The impression is so strong, that it is considered by all those who have experienced it outside their bodies as the most decisive, the one that has left the greatest impression.

The being of light then enters into communication with the deceased, and asks him various questions that aim to make him reflect on his past life and his death. He asks him for example: "Are you ready to die?" or "What have you done with your life that is sufficient?". (implied: so that you can leave the earth) or "Who was happy that you existed?".

The questions asked do not contain the shadow of a reproach or a condemnation. They do not contain any judgements of value, they only aim to provoke a reflection and an awareness.

6. Panorama of life

To be able to answer these questions, the deceased can visualise his past life. The various episodes unfold before him like a film, but in three dimensions. He sees them, not as if he were the actor, but as a spectator. Yet he feels all the emotions, pains and joys that were his, as well as all those that his actions have awakened in the protagonists of these episodes.

It is therefore a total immersion in the events, which allows him to fully grasp the effects that resulted from his decisions, thoughts, words and deeds.

Although the film of his life unfolds at high speed, the deceased follows it and grasps every aspect of it. Throughout this projection, the accompanying being of light emphasises the importance of two fundamental duties: to love one's neighbour and to acquire knowledge.

7. Boundary or limit

A number of testimonies - but not all - mention a boundary or limit that the deceased subsequently encountered. It may take the form of a body of water, a gate, a hedge, a fence or a field.

It is felt as a dividing line which, if crossed, allows one to advance further into the realm of the dead, but also represents a point of no return. Once the boundary is crossed, reintegration into the body becomes impossible.

8. Return and reincorporation

The return occurs quickly and is experienced more or less consciously.

Some people live again the experience of passing through the tunnel, others do not. The decision to continue one's earthly life and return to one's body sometimes comes from the person themselves. In this case, the person has felt that he is not yet ready to leave, or that he wants to carry out one of his duties. For example, for a mother to finish raising her children. Other times, the decision is made by someone else, and the deceased has to return to his body without knowing the precise reasons for this choice.

But in all cases, people who have had a near-death experience change internally. They become more reflective and grateful for what life brings them.

Did we have to wait until the 20th century and the development of thanatology for humanity to realise the existence of the soul and its survival after death? No, Near Death Experiences have taken place in all eras, even in the most remote periods, as ancient texts such as those of Plato and the Tibetan Book of the Dead testify.

The ancient accounts were few and scattered. What has changed today is the high number of documented cases. But looking into the world of the dead is not the exclusive prerogative of those who have experienced an NDE. Other people have had the opportunity, without having to leave their bodies: dying people, shortly before their death.

Vision of the deceased by the dying

NDE's stories give the impression that at death, the separation between the spirit and the body is always abrupt, without transition. This is only true because NDEs occur following an accident, during surgery or in the acute phases of illness. They are violent deaths and not a natural, gentle death, in which, on the contrary, the separation takes place very gradually.

In the case of a natural death, the separation is a process that takes some time. The connection gradually becomes more and more distended, and the dying person becomes increasingly aware of himself as a spirit separate from the body. The separation becomes more and more accentuated, until the bond is broken. The spirit then separates completely from the body, this is earthly death.

But before this happens, several days or weeks may pass. During this period, the connection goes through phases of relaxation and tension. The spirit thus finds itself more or less incarnated in the

body. From the outside, an observer will say that the dying person goes through phases where he is more or less present.

When the connection is sufficiently distended, without however having broken, the released spirit ceases to see through the eyes of the physical body; it is then the eyes of the soul that are in function. Being of a different kind, they perceive what is of the same nature as themselves, in other words, what is from the beyond. People who have already died can therefore appear to the dying person. They are, as in the NDE experiences, relatives or friends who await with benevolence the spirit that is going to leave the earthly plane, in order to help and support it, on its arrival in the beyond.

The dying person is therefore lying on his bed. Suddenly his gaze is directed towards a specific place in his room. He seems to be absorbed by something that the people who surround him do not see. Suddenly, he smiles, nods his head as if he were talking to someone. Sometimes he is even more demonstrative, reaching out his arms and saying a few words to the person in the beyond he is talking to.

The beings that appear to the dying person are easily recognisable to him. He can tell who appeared to him and what was said to him. He can even recognise someone he did not know on earth, but who was close to him, as witnessed by the story of an 11-year-old girl, among others, who died of a heart disease, story told by a relative.

"Her illness had again entered a critical phase when she told how she saw her mother, who was dressed in a pretty white dress, and who presented her precisely the same dress for her. The girl was very happy, she smiled and asked me to let her get up and go to the other side. Her mother was ready to take her with her for the journey. The vision lasted half an hour. It made the dying girl serene and peaceful." (9)

It should be noted that this young girl had never known her mother, who died at birth. However, at the last hour of her child's life, the mother was there.

Dying people who have such experiences are not in a state of mental confusion or delirium. On the contrary, studies carried out by psychiatrists show that these visions occur precisely when the subject is clear-headed. The deep impression that these events produce on him and the resulting benefits for his inner well-being and his attitude towards his impending death, moreover, plead for the authenticity of these visions, and prove that they are not the result of a troubled imagination.

The number of those who have such visions is very high. There isn't exceptionally a case here or there, on the contrary, they are very numerous. Those who regularly accompany the dying in their final days say that it is extremely rare that they do not have such visions. It is therefore a common experience, which is not surprising, since it is the logical continuation of a natural process: the loosening of the connection between spirit and body at the end of life on earth.

Other kinds of contact with the deceased

Apart from the experiences of NDEs and the vision of the dead by dying people, there are still other kinds of situations in which the human being comes into contact with a dead person and thus becomes aware of the survival of the spirit after death.

These contacts take place shortly after the departure of a relative or a friend: the latter then manifests himself to a loved one left on earth, either by appearing to him visually, or by communicating with him orally, or through intuitive feelings.

Such contacts are not uncommon. The majority of people have probably already heard a member of their family or circle of acquaintances say that they have already experienced such a situation.

In the case of visual apparitions, the person, going about his or her daily business, suddenly sees the deceased appear to him. Sometimes the whole body is visible, and sometimes only the face. Some people describe the dead person as slightly transparent or ethereal, others as perfectly consistent. In any case he is clearly recognisable, although his appearance is not exactly the same as it was on earth. He generally has a younger and healthier appearance, and is free of the scars and deformities that his body was afflicted with when he was incarnated. His smiling attitude is friendly and encouraging. He is felt to want to reassure and console.

These appearances sometimes take place during sleep, that is during a dream. But this one is different from the confused, dull and unbelievable dreams we often have. It is very clear, vivid, meaningful and intense. The impression it leaves is strong and deep, and can last for months or years, unlike the illogical and superficial dreams that quickly disappear from our consciousness.

In addition to visual contact, the deceased can also manifest themselves through oral contact. The dead person speaks to a person in a state of wakefulness on earth who, very surprised, hears what is communicated to him. The words spoken are not, however, perceived by the ears of his physical body, but enter directly into the field of his consciousness. They are therefore heard from within, in the same way that one can hear the voice of one's consciousness, or the small inner voice that speaks to us. Most often the dead person says that he is still alive, that everything is going well for him and that the one who hears him must stop moping and worrying about him.

Finally, the dead person can be perceived through an intuitive feeling. Whoever experiences this suddenly has the distinct impression that the deceased is present, either right next to him or in the room. The awareness of this presence is so strong that it is almost felt physically. It is so clear, that even in the absence of any visual or auditory sensation, what radiates from the disincarnated person allows him to be identified without hesitation. Here too, this experience is comforting, because it is felt "objectively" that the deceased person has not ceased to be.

Death and the Bible

In the course of his life, the human being has the opportunity to make multiple experiences that lead him to recognize that he is not a body of flesh, but a spirit incarnated in this body. Is this knowledge confirmed or not by religious teachings, which, after all, are intended to give a more global picture of things?

What about the Bible, for example?

The human being is clearly presented there as a spirit distinct from the body. This is already apparent from the vivid description of man's creation in Genesis. "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul". (Genesis 2:7)

We can see that two processes associate. The first uses the "dust of the earth", in other words the materials of the earth plane to form the physical body. The second draws from another origin - from the breath of God - what is necessary to form the soul.

The human soul, as opposed to the body, is mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible. It is independent of the body, since what happens to the latter does not necessarily affect it. "Fear not those who kill the body and cannot kill the soul..." (Matth. 10,22).

What then is death? It is the fact of the soul leaving the body, we can read in Genesis: "And as she (Rachel) was about to give up her soul, because she was dying...". (Genesis 35:18).

The soul that separates from the body survives, it is not annihilated as "fools" think: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torture will reach them. In the eyes of the foolish, they seemed to die, their departure was considered an unhappiness and their journey away from us an annihilation; but they are at peace". (Wisdom 3:1-3).

What is the form or nature of this surviving soul? The question was put to Paul. Here is his answer: "But someone will say, 'How do the dead rise again, and with what body do they return? Foolish!... There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies: but other is the brightness of the heavenly bodies and other is the brightness of the earthly bodies... What I say, brethren, is that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and corruption does not inherit incorruption.'" (1 Cor 35-40-50)

In other words, the soul (the heavenly body), which is not made of earthly materials, does not decompose at death, as does the physical body. It continues its existence. Only it can ascend to heaven (inherit the Kingdom of God).

After his death on the cross and the three days spent in the kingdom of the dead, i.e. in the beyond, Jesus rose again and appeared to his disciples on several occasions. Although the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh states that Jesus rose again with his physical body and appeared in this form to his disciples, what they saw of him was not his body of flesh, but his soul.

This is shown by the fact that once, in order to appear to them, Jesus had to go through the walls of the room where they were gathered together because "the doors of the place where the disciples were, were closed because of their fear of the Jews. And Jesus came and stood among them..." (John 20,19).

How could Jesus have walked through the walls if he had still been in his physical body? This is quite impossible. On the other hand, for the immaterial soul it is possible, as corroborated by the testimonies of people who have done an NDE, and for whom walls were no longer obstacles.

Each time Jesus appeared to the disciples, they only recognised him with great difficulty. Mary Magdalene confused him with the gardener (John 16,15), the disciples on the road to Emmaus walked with him for hours before recognising him (Luke 24,13-31). If it was so difficult for the disciples to identify him, it was because the appearance of the soul is not identical to that of the body. If Jesus had appeared in his physical body, which was well known to the disciples, they would have recognised him immediately.

Chapter 2 Where do we go after death?

The real "ego" of the human being, the spirit, is distinct from the body. At death, the spirit separates from the body, which served it as a tool during its earthly stay, and moves away from it.

A fundamental question arises here: where does the spirit go? Where does it go when it has freed itself from the body? But, perhaps one must first ask oneself whether there is even a "somewhere" where to go.

We hear about the beyond, an astral plane, as well as other planes that would form creation. Do such planes exist? How do we know whether or not they are a reality?

The perception of the visible and the invisible

On earth, we perceive reality through our five senses. It is because we can see, touch, hear, taste and feel that we declare that something exists. When the observed object is too small or too far away to be perceived directly by the senses, we use instruments such as microscopes or telescopes. But even with the help of these tools, it is still our senses that see the reality of the observed things.

While the ability of the senses to grasp the multiple aspects of the reality around us is wonderful in itself, it is nevertheless limited. Already each sense is only capable of grasping what is in affinity with it. Colours and shapes for the eyes, sounds for the hearing, flavours for the taste, etc. On the other hand, the eyes are completely incapable of perceiving flavours, or the ears of perceiving colours. The senses therefore always capture only a precise aspect of reality.

What is true for each sense taken separately, is also true for the five senses as a whole. Since they are all dependent on physical organs of our body of gross matter, they can only perceive what is of the same kind as themselves, that is to say, what is also of gross matter. Anything of another kind, an immaterial kind for example, necessarily escapes their capacity of perception. We cannot therefore expect the five senses to be able to help us discover whether the beyond, or planes of creation other than the earthly plane, exist.

Does this necessarily mean that these other planes do not exist? That there is nothing outside matter? This is what materialists think. For them, the dead fall into nothingness, in other words, where there is nothing. Therefore, for them, there is no beyond, nor any other planes than the earthly plane.

In reality, there are other things to see, feel and hear than what is of gross matter. Proof of this is given to us, among others, by people who have had a Near Death Experience. If it is true that, as soon as they leave their physical body, their vision is limited to the environment that we are also able to see - the scene of the accident or the hospital room - it is no longer the same once they have passed through the tunnel.

What they perceive then belongs to another world. It is possible to say that it is indeed another world because the place where they are staying is different in various ways. This can be seen from the descriptions that are made of it, but the feelings of those who mention it are also an explicit indication of this.

"I 'died' from a cardiac arrest, and, as I did, I suddenly found myself in a rolling field. It was beautiful, and everything was an intense green – a colour unlike anything on earth. There was light – beautiful, uplifting light – all around me. I looked ahead of me, across the field, and I saw ..."

"...From the age of four I always knew I had a guardian angel. Now I could feel him taking my hand and we seemed to be moving upwards, towards a bright light, as if we were in a lift. There, flowers, trees and beautiful music were waiting for me. There were all the wonderful things that there are also on earth, but thousands of times more beautiful." (11)

On the "other side" there are therefore also landscapes, but they are of a different kind since they are perceived with the senses of a body other than the physical body. Besides, the relatives or friends that people doing an NDE meet in the beyond are all deceased, and for some of them long dead. They have consequently left the earthly plane and are by force of necessity elsewhere than on this plane. The way people communicate or move there is also different, which proves once again that it is another place than the earth.

What is seen and experienced by those who do an NDE does not seem to vary over time, since Gilgamesh, hero of an Assyro-Babylonian epic more than 4,000 years old, describes his passage into the beyond in the same way as those who have experienced an NDE do in our time; he too describes another world.

"Gilgamesh left the world and crawled through a dark and endless tunnel. It was a long and uncomfortable path... but, at last, he saw light, and when he reached the end of the dark tunnel, he saw a beautiful garden. The trees bore pearls and precious stones, and the rays of a wonderful light were shining down on the whole. Gilgamesh would have liked to stay in the other world..."
(The Epic of Gilgamesh)

Apart from NDEs, confirmation of the existence of other planes can be made by the souls of deceased people who communicate with people still on earth. It can be a deceased person who shows himself to someone he has left behind, in order to reassure him. For example, a young man who, a month and a half after his death, appears to his mother and lets her know that :

"Everything is going well. Don't worry about me anymore. I'm in a new place where I'm very happy." (12)

A more unusual case is that of the English poet, H. Dennis Bradley, who disappeared in 1934. Before he died, he promised his loved ones that once he was on the other side, he would do his utmost to contact them and give them news of him. With the help of a medium he succeeded in doing so and described his place of residence as follows:

"The landscape in which we live is a great deal different from that of the earth. It is of a blessed purity and clearness. There is a tremendous amount of light, and nothing is grey or even dark. There is soil here too, as well as an ocean, trees and flowers, but everything is more beautiful and more wonderful than on earth.

Even the plumage of the birds is more radiant and more colourful. But strangest of all are the flowers. They not only exude fragrance, but also emit delightful sounds which the physical ear can not hear, and which are different for each kind of flower.

There is no weariness here and no need for rest, instead one feels oneself always overflowing with a wonderful strength. Time is of no importance. One is always busy, for there is a million times as much to be learned as on earth.

There are millions and millions of departed souls to be found here. The spirits can communicate with one another, even though they spoke different languages during their earthly lives.

The ability to move from one place to another is also wonderful. It is not the same as on earth, for there are no physical bodies here. Even though I do have a form that could be compared with a body, it does not bind me.

Here it is enough simply to wish to be somewhere, and immediately you are there.

In the future it will probably again be possible for human beings still on earth and souls in the beyond to communicate. But for this it is necessary for the human being in simple trust to open the gates of knowledge which he has closed to himself by his lack of belief." (13)

The possibility for a medium to enter into communication with a deceased person and receive a message from him is not denied by the Bible. On the contrary, it is confirmed, for example, in the story of King Saul, who, abandoned by God for not following his ways, seeks to discover the outcome of a great battle he must fight. To this end, he consults "a woman who invokes the dead" (1 Samuel 27:7). The value of the information transmitted depends, of course, on the soul that speaks. This is why Saul does not ask the woman to contact just any dead person, but the one he trusts; in this case, the prophet Samuel.

The various testimonies quoted all show that there is a place where the soul can go and stay after death. Emptiness does not surround the earthly plane. There is a place where the soul of the deceased can go. This place is not elsewhere on earth, in a faraway country or island, or even underground - thus still part of the earth plane - as some peoples of the past imagined it to be. Nor is it on a distant planet, because all the stars also belong to the plane of gross matter. This place lies somewhere else than on earth: in the beyond.

The term "beyond" refers to a region of creation that is beyond the perceptive abilities of our five senses. It is, however, perceptible to those who find themselves there, because the senses of the body they possess there are of the same kind as their environment. But the beyond is not a single great plane in which the dead dwell. It is composed of several sub-planes which can also be called regions or spheres. How did we get to know them?

Existence of different planes

If, during an NDE, the majority of the people who have crossed the tunnel and entered a luminous region where they are welcomed with joy, return shortly afterwards in their bodies, a small number of them continue their journey a little further on. However, the descriptions of the places they go to are not similar.

Some speak of an even more beautiful and luminous region that is situated higher up and where the peace and serenity they experience is even more intense. Because of the higher characteristics of these experiences, they are called ultimate NDEs.

Others, on the contrary, go down to regions which they describe as dark and sad:

"Then I went further, but it was in a very murky area - quite the opposite of the previous radiant brightness... Those who were there went head down. Their faces were full of sadness and despair." (14)

Messages from the deceased transmitted through mediums also confirm that there are different planes in the beyond. One of the deceased, for example, speaks of a lower plane than the joyful and luminous one where he had arrived immediately after his death:

"Once here, and the first moment of blessed deliverance and joyful seeing past, we descend into a more or less obscure region..." (15)

In a book entitled "Franchezzo", the hero relates through a medium what happened to him after his death. It follows his journey on the different planes of the beyond, the appearance of which he describes and which turn out to be very different from each other. About these changes of levels, he writes that "the passage from a lower sphere to a higher sphere is usually, but not always, accomplished during sleep, which resembles the death of a human being when he abandons his earthly body". (16)

This fact is confirmed by some NDE stories which speak of a moment of "emptiness", of "blackness", which precedes the one where the soul suddenly sees its physical body at the scene of the accident, but also, for others, a moment of emptiness and unconsciousness before arriving at the other end of the tunnel.

In the book of Enoch, probably dating from the 2nd century BC, an apocryphal gospel here in the West but a canonical gospel for the Ethiopian Church, the patriarch Enoch relates his journey through different heavens, in other words the different planes of creation, in which he receives various revelations which are recorded in his account.

"At that time a whirlwind took me from the face of the earth and deposited me on the fringe of heaven." (XXXIX,3)

"Then it came to pass that my soul was taken up and lifted up into heaven." (LXXI,1)

From the lower planes of the beyond, here called the "fringe of the heavens", Enoch was then transported in spirit, that is to say without his body, into the heavens themselves. From there he rose again to "the highest of the heavens". (LXXI,5)

Jesus confirms several times the existence of different heavens. For example, when he announces to his disciples that he is about to die, and they show their desire to follow him. Jesus replies that they cannot go with him where He is going, but that they should not worry because "there are many mansions in my Father's house". (John 14,2)

At the time Jesus spoke these words, the Jews thought that the dead went to a unique dwelling place far from God, called Sheol, or perhaps, for the best of them, to a higher plane called the bosom of Abraham. Jesus teaches them that, on the contrary, there are different dwelling places or planes in heaven, where they can stay once He has returned to the Father.

The existence of different planes of creation is also mentioned in the story of Lazarus, a poor beggar who, miserable and sick, lives in front of the door of a rich person who leads a joyful life, without worrying about alleviating the hunger and ills of the one who lives so close to him.

"The poor man died, and was carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died, and was buried. In Sheol he lifted up his eyes; and while he was in torment, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am suffering cruelly in this flame'. And Abraham answered and said, 'Child, remember that thou hast received thy good things in thy life, and Lazarus had evil things in his; now he is comforted here, and thou sufferest. Besides, there is a great abyss between us and you, so that those who would pass from here to you, or from there to us, cannot'." (Luke 16:22-26)

This account shows not only that there are other planes than the earthly plane, but that these are strictly separated by kind, since one cannot pass indifferently from one to the other.

From which plane does the spirit originate?

It is significant that of all the stories, testimonies and descriptions that we possess about the beyond, none ever says that the human spirit, originated from this region. Not having its point of origin either on earth or in the beyond, where does it come from?

The spirit has the same origin as the materials with which it is built. These do not belong to gross matter like its physical body, nor to the beyond like the various bodies (envelops) that allow it to dwell there. The spirit being much finer, lighter, ethereal and richer in possibilities than these bodies, it can only come from an even higher plane. This plane is called the spiritual plane, since spirits come from it. It is located above the beyond.

It is the paradise of the Christian and Muslim religions, the "heavenly home of souls" of the Near Eastern religions, the "world of light" of the Indo-Iranians, the "happy kingdoms of heaven" of the Buddhists, the "Champs Elysées" of the ancient Greeks, the "land of eternal hunting" of the American Indians, etc.

All over the world and in all eras, human beings have believed in the existence of a plane situated much higher than the one they are in, and have considered it to be their plane of origin.

It is quite understandable that human beings invent a wonderful heavenly paradise to calm their fear from the apparent annihilation of death. But it is much less understandable that, everywhere in the world and throughout history, they would also consider themselves to have originated from this plane. And yet, in spite of different cultural traits, this conception is universally widespread.

The planes of creation

Why does the creation consist of several superimposed planes rather than one large plane? Moreover, why are there different kinds of planes rather than a single one?

To answer these questions, which go beyond what science can answer since it is limited to understanding the material world, we need to call upon spiritual knowledge, such as that found in the work "In the Light of Truth, the Grail Message" by Abd-ru-shin, which gives a vast and complete view of reality, in its material and immaterial dimensions.

Don't we risk being confronted with explanations that go beyond what we can grasp and that we cannot control, because they are too foreign to what we know here on earth? This would be the case if the laws governing all phenomena were different from one plane to another. But this is not the case. On the contrary, they act uniformly across all the planes of creation.

This unity of action allows us to understand what is happening "above", because phenomena there are similar to those that take place here on earth. This similarity of action thus allows us to control what is said about what is invisible to our physical eye, because as soon as the interpretation of a phenomenon does not fit with the logic of the laws, the explanation given is wrong. The aphorism "what is below is like what is above" is therefore also valid in the other direction: what is above is like what is below. This similarity also exists between the infinitely small and the infinitely large. Just think, for example, of the electrons of the atom that rotate in different orbits around the nucleus and the planets that do the same around the sun.

Why are there different planes? This is the result of the formation of creation, explains the Grail Message.

In the beginning, there was nothing apart from God and his immediate radiation, that is, the abyss that surrounded it was empty. Only when the Creator uttered the words, "Let there be Light", did the formation of creation begin and the forms appeared. The light in question here is not the light of a star, but the original Light that came from God and comprises not only the Force necessary for the formation and maintenance of creation, but also the germ of all the forms that would develop in it in the course of evolution.

So it was on the first day that the Force was sent into the abyss, and with it, creation appeared.

The intensity of the Force that "descends" in creation from the Creator is naturally greater near its point of emission than at a greater distance. It diminishes as it moves further away. This property does not only belong to the Force coming from above. Here on earth, the same phenomenon takes place. In an electric wire, the voltage is high near the power plant but lower at the end of the network. Likewise, the pressure with which water comes out of a pipe is lower the longer the pipe is.

The flow of force therefore slows down with distance, resulting in cooling. There is a loss of heat. Indeed, whether something is hot or cold depends above all, physically, on the rapid or slow movement of the atomic particles of which it is made up. Electrons move much faster on their orbit in a hot object than in a cold object. Therefore, to increase the temperature of an object, it is not necessary to heat it. All that is needed is to accelerate the speed of movement of its particles. This is what we do by rubbing our hands numb from the cold to speed up blood circulation. The same principle is used for microwave ovens. The amplitude and high frequency of the waves emitted by these ovens accelerate the movement of the electrons in the food and heat it up.

However, if the slowing down of the flow of force causes cooling, it also causes condensation or precipitation of some of the elements contained in the force. This phenomenon of precipitation is easily observable on a small scale on the Earth's surface. When a mixture of water and earth that has been placed in a jar is given a strong rotary motion, the constituents of the earth mix completely with the liquid mass. Only when the rotary motion of the mixture slows down will they form a precipitate, i.e. fall to the bottom of the container.

However, not all components of the mixture precipitate at the same time. This is true both for the water-earth mixture and for the elements contained in the Force emanating from the Creator, elements that we have mentioned as the germs of everything that will take shape in creation in the course of its evolution. Because of their kind differences, some elements will precipitate much earlier than others. They will then be distributed in layers, the lightest element in the upper layer, the heaviest in the lowest layer, which is easily observed in the water-earth mixture. At the top is a layer of water, then plant debris (humus), soil, clay and, at the bottom, a layer of sand.

The different components are deposited one on top of the other, in layers that are clearly distinct and superimposed, according to their density and their different kinds, in perfect accordance with the law of gravity. This phenomenon, which on earth generates what in geology are called sedimentary layers, leads - at the level of creation - to the formation of the different planes of which it is made up.

Thus, to take up again the general description of the process: as it descends into the abyss, that which is contained in the Force coming from above, condenses and precipitates as it moves away; then, at a certain distance from each other, the different planes of creation appear.

These are each of a distinct kind since they are separate. Indeed, if two planes that follow one another were of the same kind, they would not have condensed one after the other, but at the same time, and would not have formed two planes.

The fact that something heavy and dense, like the matter of the earthly plane, can be derived from something fine and light, like the invisible creative Force, may at first glance be surprising and seem contrary to common sense. However, one only has to think of a few earthly examples to realise that this is in no way in opposition to the laws of nature.

Water may be fluid and light, but as it cools, it turns into hard, compact ice. The same phenomenon of densification by cooling can be observed when making a fire. Where the heat is most intense, near the embers, the gases released by combustion are invisible, they cannot take shape. It is only at a short distance, but a sufficient distance for a slight cooling to take place, that certain elements contained in the gases take shape and become visible to us as flames. At a greater distance the still invisible elements contained in the flames can in turn take shape and become visible to us as smoke.

Moreover, this smoke, which consists largely of water vapour, can turn into liquid droplets and finally into snowflakes or hail, if the temperature drops sufficiently. A body of heavy density can therefore come from something more subtle than itself. This is what physicists confirm by saying that matter is originally only condensed energy.

Distribution of the planes of creation

Different types of planes, superimposed one on top of the other, therefore form the creation. Their names change from one tradition to another. In the rest of this presentation, we will use the distribution and names given in the Grail Message since this book is the foundation on which we base ourselves to explain what is said here and what will follow.

In this book, creation is presented as being made up of three main planes. First, starting from the top and going down, is the spiritual plane or paradise; this is the highest plane of creation. It is followed, as it descends, by the plane of ethereal matter which constitutes the beyond. Then comes the plane of gross matter, that of our physical environment.

Although the two lower planes, the plane of ethereal matter and the plane of gross matter, both have the term matter in their names, they are of different kinds. The first one is not of the same kind as the second one, being perhaps more refined, or more subtle. No, they are of a totally different kind.

The three main planes mentioned just now are subdivided into sub-planes. The total number of these varies depending on how this subdivision is made. Each tradition cites a certain number of them. If the apostle Paul speaks of three heavens (2 Cor.12,2), in Iran and India there are five heavens, whereas Buddhists have 26 different planes.

For our purpose it is important to know the sub-planes of both kinds of matter. Ethereal matter is made up of a multitude of sub-planes of a progressively greater density as one descends. The gross matter that follows is subdivided into three sub-planes: fine, medium and then heavy density.

This gives the following topography:

1. The spiritual plane (origin of the human spirit) ;
2. The ethereal plane, formed by numerous sub-planes: the beyond;
3. The plane of gross matter including :
 - a) the sub-plane of gross matter of fine density,
 - b) the sub-plane of gross matter of medium density,
 - c) the sub-plane of gross matter of heavy density, or the earth plane.

Let us now look in more detail at the characteristics of these different planes, but this time from the bottom up.

The plane of gross matter of heavy density is made up of everything that is visible or palpable. This includes the rocks and stones of the ground; rivers, lakes and seas; plants and animal and human bodies, as well as any object built by man: tools, machines, buildings, works of art.

The plane of gross matter of medium density is no longer visible or palpable to the physical body. Although terrestrially invisible, this plane is very well known. It is generally referred to as the astral plane. It is on this plane, and the next one, that people in NDEs find themselves when they see their body at the scene of the accident and hear what the people who are rescuing them are saying.

The plane of gross matter of fine density is the plane where our thoughts manifest. These, once emitted, take shape on this plane. The form corresponds to the content of the thought and, is therefore called a thought-form. Each one of them is perfectly distinct from the others; these thought-forms are visible to clairvoyants. It is probably an intuitive feeling of the existence of these thought-forms that makes us say that "a thought was in the air", when several people, without knowing or meeting each other, start to do or say something new after having captured the same thought-form.

The three sub-planes mentioned just now belong to the kind of gross matter, but in each of them the density manifests itself a little differently, it acquires more and more lightness as the sub-plane is situated higher.

The sub-planes of the ethereal matter, always starting from the bottom, have a rather heavy density compared to those situated higher up. In spite of the designation "heavy density", they are of a much lighter nature than the plane that precedes them, that of gross matter of fine density, because the general type of ethereal matter is itself lighter than the type of gross matter. By arriving on these planes, one enters the beyond, which is also the dwelling place of the souls of the dead. It is here that the souls who have passed through the tunnel arrive during the NDEs. They no longer see what is of gross matter. They move in an environment different from that of the earth, and meet here, very naturally, acquaintances who have left the earth before them.

The planes of ethereal matter are those where thoughts that one has felt intuitively take shape, i.e. thoughts that come from "the heart" or the spirit, as opposed to those that come from the brain and the intellect. These intuitive thought-forms shape the planes in question and all the sub-planes of ethereal matter of medium and fine density that follow them upwards and form, together, the dwelling place of the deceased. They are all the finer, more beautiful and luminous the closer they are to the spiritual plane.

The great plane that follows upwards from the planes of dense and ethereal matter is the spiritual plane. It is the plane of origin of the human spirit, paradise. It surpasses all other planes in beauty and harmony.

Is there a "somewhere" to go after death?

The earth, the planets and the countless galaxies around us belonging to the realm of gross matter are only a part of the global creation. In fact, the smallest part, since it is the densest and most compact.

What is lighter is more expansive, and takes up more space. This is the case of the domain of ethereal matter which, although still belonging to matter, is much larger than gross matter. The spiritual plane situated above is naturally even more extensive.

If the existence of the invisible planes close to the earth could be discovered by man himself, thanks to the faculties of clairvoyance, through experiences on the threshold of death (NDE), or contacts with the deceased, through astral travel and many other means, the existence of the higher planes of creation, such as paradise for example, was communicated to him by revelation. Someone from these planes came down to earth to speak of it. These are the envoys of all the great religions.

The acquisition of knowledge by revelation is not unnatural, it also takes place here on earth for earthly things. Indeed, how could the first men have known of the existence of distant islands or continents, such as America for example, except by going there themselves, or by hearing about it from someone who came from there; in other words, someone revealed to them the existence of something that they did not know and that they could not see.

And, once brought together, human discoveries and divine revelations finally gave a general picture of the structure of creation.

Humanity has known for a long time that creation is made up of different planes. If this knowledge is less present today, it is because the materialistic orientation of modern man leads him to believe that only that which is material exists. However, it is enough for him to open himself spiritually to awaken in him the presentiment of the existence of a paradise as a dwelling place for accomplished spirits; of a beyond or purgatory (ethereal matter) as a place of perfection for evolving souls; and, lower than the earth, of a dark plane, hell, the domain of those who do not wish to evolve towards good.

There is therefore a place to go to after death. There are even different places or planes that can welcome us. These are not empty and desolate, as some pretend, but full of life.

Chapter 3 Why do we die?

Why must we die? The verb "must" is used here, because it is indeed a fatality from which there is no escape. What is the meaning of this end and this apparent annihilation? Couldn't we live forever?

These questions, and all those of the same kind that so many people ask themselves, do not concern the spirit, since it is not annihilated by death but survives and continues its existence. These questions really only concern our body, and should rather be formulated as follows: why doesn't the body last forever? Does it necessarily have to come to an end? Does it make sense that the limitations of the body restrict our stay on earth?

The physical body and the law of the cycle

Science devotes all its attention to observing the workings of nature and has discovered that natural phenomena do not take place in a variable manner over time, but always follow constant guiding principles that can be expressed in the form of laws.

Among these is the law of the cycle, which states that everything that is of gross matter goes through a cycle that begins with birth (or formation), continues with growth and maturation, and ends with decomposition.

Various minerals agglomerate to form a rock that grows as other minerals combine with the first ones. Then comes the moment when this rock is subjected to the phenomenon of erosion by the elements: water, wind, frost, etc. Gradually, it decreases in volume and finally disappears completely, all its constituents having been washed away by natural forces.

Plants also take shape thanks to the combination of various substances. The more numerous these substances are, the larger the plant. Once the plants have reached maturity and produced fruit, they decompose and their constituents return to the soil.

The same happens with animal bodies. After they have taken shape and reached maturity, they cease to exist and decompose.

The cycle that ends is not a definitive end, but the beginning of a new cycle. The basic materials resulting from decomposition return to the earth and can now be used to build other rocks, plants or animal bodies. They will therefore allow a new cycle to begin.

Nothing escapes this cycle. Everything material is subject to it, including the human body.

In our regions, the human organism survives an average of 80 years. Physiologists suggest that, with proper hygiene, the human lifespan could easily reach 120 years, or a little more! There is much discussion as to whether this is really possible. But in any case, lifestyle could at best only extend life expectancy by a few decades, and not to infinity to escape death, as some would like.

According to the law of the cycle to which it is subjected, the human body therefore necessarily reaches a stage where it is no longer able to shelter the spirit, and the latter separates from it.

This separation is generally considered bad and unfortunated. Is this the case?

There are many reasons that bring us to think that it is not the case, if we consider things not from a narrowly earthly point of view, but with a broad vision that includes knowledge of our spiritual origin and that of our evolutionary journey through the different planes of creation.

As spirits, we do not originate from the plane of matter, but from the spiritual plane. Our homeland is therefore not here on earth. We are strangers on this plane, where we only stay temporarily. We are only travellers in the "deep valley of matter", where we are only passing through.

We are of course very much involved in everything we experience on earth, since the spirit has to experience it in order to learn and evolve. This evolution is a necessity because it is also a great law of creation.

The law of evolution

Everything around us is pushed forward by the forces of nature. They do not promote stagnation, status quo or regression, but on the contrary stimulate progress, improvement, evolution and fulfilment.

The first plants, microscopic algae and lichens consisting of a single cell, did not remain as they were, but evolved and diversified into a multitude of plant varieties with different colours, shapes and sizes. The animal kingdom has also progressed from the smallest and simplest animals, barely able to feed and move, to animals with increasingly complex, numerous and sophisticated faculties.

The universal nature of the laws means that the law of evolution also applies to immaterial things, and therefore to the spirit.

The need for the spirit to develop, to perfect itself... to evolve, is easy to see. Weaknesses of character, lack of consideration for one's neighbour and for nature, the inadequacies of human institutions, show that the human spirit has not been created perfect and accomplished, but has yet to become so.

Precious faculties lie within it, but it must develop them and bring them to their full development. They have been deposited in it by the Creator - for man does not create his own faculties - and he must develop them, so that they can unfold and manifest themselves in all their fullness.

Just as the grain of wheat, whose various potentialities will only manifest themselves when it has germinated in the earth and has become an ear, the human spirit, which begins its existence as a "spirit-germ" - to use the terms of the Grail Message - will also develop its potentialities through the experiences it makes.

But just as a grain of wheat must be planted in the ground in order to germinate and grow, so the spirit-germ must descend into the planes below its original plane in order to develop its faculties.

Why must this evolution take place on denser planes? The reason is that faced with the gravity and resistance of these planes, the spirit is obliged to call upon all its resources and potentialities to face and overcome obstacles. As it is forced to react and make efforts, its faculties come into action and are gradually strengthened.

The situation is much the same as that of an athlete who runs in the sand or water to develop his muscles. His muscles, faced with unusual resistance, are forced to make a greater effort than they are used to. They increase in volume, become stronger and firmer.

The evolutionary path of the human being

The evolutionary journey of the human being, as presented in the Grail Message, unfolds as follows:

The spirit, departing from the spiritual plane as a spirit-germ, first enters the highest sub-plane of ethereal matter, and then continues on its journey towards those of greater density. In each of these sub-planes, which become denser and denser as they are situated lower and lower, it must deploy more force to overcome the gravity and increasing density that reign there. Its effort is each time more important, but it is able to do so, given that it has already developed its faculties a little on the previous planes; and its faculties having gradually taken shape, it is consequently already sufficiently strong to face a slightly higher effort.

After having crossed the sub-planes of ethereal matter, the spirit crosses the planes of gross matter of fine and medium density to then incarnate on earth. The earth plane of gross matter of heavy density is the one where it must deploy the most force, since it is the heaviest and most compact. There, its faculties finish taking shape. Does this mean that the spirit is able to return immediately to the spiritual plane? No, because if its faculties have taken shape, they still need to be developed and perfected to reach the nobility and finesse that reign in paradise.

This refinement takes place on earth during various incarnations, but also during the spirit's ascent to heaven. As the spirit passes through increasingly lighter, more ethereal, beautiful and luminous planes, it learns to act according to the laws of creation with ever greater delicacy and finesse, in other words with ever greater love and nobility. There comes a day when its development has reached the degree of perfection required to enter paradise.

This ascent does not happen at a stretch. Stays on the planes of the ethereal matter of the beyond are interspersed with stays on earth. Here the spirit reincarnates to further develop and perfect the different facets of its personality.

The existence of this evolutionary path cannot be proved materially, since it goes beyond the earthly plane. But the image of the evolution of the spirit that is given through this journey has the merit of being logical, of corresponding to the laws of creation and to religious teachings, especially those of Christianity. In fact, a clear parallel can be drawn between what has been said and the expulsion of the spirit from its original plane, paradise; between the sweat on his forehead (Ge. 3.19) caused by the efforts he has to make to survive during his temporary exile on the lower planes of creation and the need to learn and acquire knowledge, to be just and do good in order to be able to return one day to the spiritual plane.

Law of affinity, law of gravity

When the human spirit leaves the spiritual plane to enter the first sub-plane of ethereal matter, it enters a totally different kind of environment. Because of the difference in kind, the spirit cannot see and feel what is around it, nor can it act in that environment. The spirit is too fine, to grasp the denser and heavier reality that surrounds it.

To get in touch with its new environment, it must equip itself with a tool that is in affinity with it, and therefore of the same density; a tool that will enable it to see, grasp and move. This tool is an envelope of ethereal matter of very fine density, which he puts on like a piece of clothing, or more precisely, like a body.

This body is equipped with eyes to see, and limbs to move and act.

The need to put on an envelope when we change our environment also manifests itself here on earth. To explore the seabed, which is a foreign environment for us who live in the dry and the air, we put on a diving suit. Likewise, explorers in the far north equip themselves with special warm clothing to withstand the cold.

The envelope covering the spirit has yet another function than that of enabling it to act in the environment it enters. Thanks to the weight that is given to it by a heaviness and density slightly greater than that of the spirit, it maintains the latter on the plane where it has just arrived. Indeed, the spirit cannot remain on a plane denser than itself, if it is not retained there by the weight of the envelope it has put on, the density of which corresponds to the plane on which it wants to stay.

By leaving this sub-plane to go to the one just below, the spirit is once again confronted with the need to equip itself with an envelope. It will therefore take on a new one having the same density as the sub-plane on which it is now arriving.

This obligation is found, moreover, for each new sub-plane crossed during its descent towards the earthly plane. The spirit thus puts one envelope on top of the other as it descends; the last one, the one belonging to the plane of gross matter, is the human body as we know it. Although we identify strongly with our physical body, it is, like all the other envelopes, only a tool at our disposal.

By putting on a new envelope, the spirit does not remove the previous ones but keeps them. They thus accumulate on or around it, like the different layers of clothing we put on top of each other when we want to protect ourselves from the cold, or like the different Russian dolls that we fit into each other to form one.

Once on earth, the spirit is therefore clothed in as many envelopes, or bodies, as there are sub-planes through which it past. These bodies all have a human form. This happens not to adapt to the shape of the physical body, which is also only an envelope, but because the spirit has a human form. This is the reason why it gives its shape to the envelopes and not the other way round. Our earthly clothes are also modelled on our body, and not the opposite.

The first part of the evolutionary journey of the human spirit led it into the dense earthly matter. In the second part, it will climb up from plane to plane to return to its country of origin, the spiritual plane. Now, if during the descent, the spirit has clothed itself with envelopes, during its ascent, it will gradually get rid of them. This ascent is also made thanks to the law of gravity.

The first envelope that the spirit deposits is the physical body. Its abandonment corresponds to earthly death. By freeing itself from it, the spirit gets rid of some of the "ballast" that holds it down. It can therefore go back up into the sub-plane just above. The same process takes place for each passage from one sub-plane to another, until the spirit returns to its homeland, the spiritual plane.

This is the broad outline of the path the spirit travels, as is explained in the Grail Message. However, this path can include many intermediate episodes, because the ascent of the spirit depends on its inner evolution. For example, several earthly sojourns are necessary for the spirit to learn all the lessons of this plane. He will therefore reincarnate several times on earth, each of these incarnations being followed by a sojourn in the beyond. During these sojourns in the beyond - as indeed during his earthly sojourns - the spirit sometimes makes wrong decisions, which darkens its ethereal envelopes, and makes them denser and heavier. Under the action of the law of gravity, it is then dragged towards a sub-plane of ethereal matter inferior to the one in which it was.

All these turns and detours enable him, if he aspires to it, to return one day to the spiritual plane as an accomplished spirit. Then real life begins. Indeed, until then, it was only a matter of learning:

and just as a student only enters real life when he has finished his studies, so the human spirit is only truly accomplished when he has completed his journey through the planes of dense and ethereal matter.

Death, a necessary passage

By leaving the earthly plane, the spirit gets rid of its tool, the physical body. In front of this lifeless organism, some people speak of a definitive end. But death is only the necessary abandonment of an envelope, in order to pass on to another plane.

One therefore only dies on earth because one has to go to another plane. And what is experienced as a separation and an end by those who remain on the earthly plane is felt by those who are on the plane that will welcome the spirit, as a reunion and a beginning.

The English poet William Blake (1757-1827) expressed this beautifully and vividly:

"I am standing on the beach.
A sailing ship passes in the morning breeze, and sets out towards the ocean.
She is a beauty, she is life.
I look at her until she disappears from the horizon.
Someone at my side says, "She's gone!"
Gone? Where? Gone from my sight, that's all!
Her mast is still as high.
Her hull still has the strength to carry its human load.
Her total disappearance from my sight is in me, not in her.
And at the very moment when someone says :
"She's gone!"
there are others who, seeing her dawn on the horizon and coming towards them,
exclaim with joy :
"Here she is!"

This is death!"

So death is a transition, the beginning of something new. We can even speak of birth, since by entering a new plane, the spirit is a newcomer, a newborn to the life of that plane.

"The process of dying in itself is nothing but birth into the Ethereal World, similar to the process of birth into the Gross Material World". (Volume II, Lecture 30), we read in the Grail Message.

To die in order to be reborn is a natural necessity. The caterpillar in its cocoon must also 'die' to become a butterfly. If nature did as those who wish never to die, the caterpillars would remain caterpillars, and there would never be any butterflies. "Unless a grain of wheat that has fallen into the earth dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit", we read in the Bible (John 12:24).

The global existence of the human spirit is made up of successive stays on different planes, which are like so many periods of learning, or classes, in the great school of life.

And if life on earth seems so important to us because we are living it now, it is nonetheless only one sequence among all those that comprise the global existence of our spirit. Moreover, when we consider the number of sub-planes of the beyond, and therefore the number of different sojourns that we can live there, the total duration of these must greatly exceed the duration of our sojourns on earth.

Death is willed by the Creator

As one of the events foreseen by nature, and therefore by the Creator of nature, death is willed by God.

But since God is essentially Love, death cannot in itself be bad, frightening, painful and unjust, as it is so often wrongly considered.

If it frightens so many people, isn't it because they don't know what it is, how it happens and what comes after?

This ignorance stems from the fact that questions about death are usually approached with the intellect rather than the spirit. The intellectual faculties come from the activity of the brain, which, being of gross matter, is only able to grasp what is of gross matter like it. Indeed, according to the law of affinity already mentioned, a kind can only recognise its own kind.

Anything beyond its kind - such as the beyond, the immaterial spirit and God - the brain cannot grasp, since these are kinds that escape it. It therefore regards them as non-existent. Moreover, after death, the brain decomposes and returns to the earth. It never experiences the beyond as the spirit does.

Research and reflections on death, carried out using only the brain and its intellectual faculties, inevitably lead to the conclusion that death is an end and a destruction. Indeed, only the existence of the body is considered, body which decomposes with death and ceases to exist. And when proof of a possible life after death is requested, it is always material evidence that is asked for. However, gross matter cannot provide evidence for things that exist outside it.

On the other hand, when someone uses his spirit and the intuitive faculties that come from it, he can understand what death is. He will feel it as just and necessary, because the immaterial spirit is able to grasp the immaterial part of this event.

But to open oneself intuitively is the fruit of a will. The will to open up to another way of looking at things must be present. A spiritual opening is necessary.

Many people don't want it, because they are afraid of losing their footing. They fear having to believe without proof, of taking a leap into a world they don't know. Yet how many decisions, and often very important decisions, have they not made without any material evidence to motivate them. They took them only because they intuitively felt they were right. Achieving an ideal, setting up a business, choosing a spouse... is always a leap into the unknown; more often than not, there is no material evidence to guarantee future success, yet they feel intuitively this choice is the right thing to do.

However, this inner feeling does not come from the intellect but from the spirit. It is by weighing the decision internally, not intellectually, that the decision is made.

Moreover, if you think about it, taking a spiritual point of view is not so much a leap into the unknown, since we are a spirit. What is spiritual should therefore be closest to us. Much closer than matter, in which, as a spirit, we only stay momentarily.

God - who can only be intuitively sensed - being Love, death cannot be painful. Suffering is not willed by God. It is only the result of not respecting spiritual and natural laws. It is because man does not love his neighbour as himself, that suffering results for him and others. It is because man

does not adopt a healthy lifestyle that he falls ill. Illness then makes him suffer, as does the process of death that results in some cases.

Dying naturally, i.e. neither through illness nor accident, does not bring suffering. In itself, death is not painful. The NDE testimonials show that the pain and suffering of the patient or the injured person stops instantly with decorporation, and that a great well-being takes its place.

If we falsely associate suffering and pain with death it is perhaps because those left behind by the deceased feel a moral pain due to the separation. But then, it is something else. Separation from a loved one, as can happen during exile or immigration, naturally gives rise to regret, a certain sadness and questioning in the face of the absence of the person one used to be with. But what the relatives experience is different from what concerns the deceased himself.

The more one approaches death with a materialistic view, the more difficult it is to live with it. Imagining that the deceased has definitively left us, that he no longer even exists, is obviously much harder to accept than if we know that he continues to exist, but lives elsewhere; that the separation is not a farewell but a goodbye; that it takes place because the time has come for him to pursue his evolution on another plane, and that we can meet again afterwards.

Death is not unjust either. The efforts made throughout life to learn to do good and to develop the capacities that lie within us are not lost by death. What each person sows, he will reap, either in this life or later in other lives on earth, or in the beyond, since physical death does not suspend the reaping intended for the spirit.

The works of our spirit follow us into the beyond, because they are connected to the spirit. As such, the latter carries them within it, whether it is clothed in an earthly body or not.

The unjust character attributed to death comes from the same error that makes some people consider births unjust. In both cases, it is not taken into account that the human being is a spirit which is still alive after leaving the physical body and which was already alive before incarnating in it.

If a child is born healthy or sick, in a privileged or poor environment, it is not by chance, but the effects of the law of sowing and reaping that the spirit triggers by its decisions. These situations can also be imposed on the spirit by the wisdom of the laws to favour its evolution, since, faced with them, it is compelled to react and develop faculties accordingly. Whether a spirit separates from its body in a gentle or painful way is therefore related to what it has sown. The plane of the beyond to which it will go and what it will experience there also depends on what it has "sown" by its way of being and acting.

Help for the passage

The Love of the Creator of all things, therefore also of death, is also manifested in the fact that for its passage into the beyond, the human spirit is not abandoned to itself without support and help. Nor is it suddenly pushed into the process of decorporation without warning or preparation.

On the contrary, it is given multiple aids, so that everything takes place smoothly. These aids are in activity more or less long before death. Let's first look at the help that manifests itself throughout old age and which is to be related to temperaments.

Temperaments emanate from the physical body. Depending on the constitution of the body, i.e. the strength or weakness of its various organs, they have an influence on the way in which a person acts.

There are four basic temperaments. Someone with an choleric temperament, for example, has a muscular and athletic body which pushes him into action, and this in a dynamic, impulsive and lively manner, whereas someone with a phlegmatic temperament, whose muscular system is poorly developed, unlike the digestive and lymphatic system, will have little inclination for physical activities and will prefer a sedentary and meditative life.

Known above all for their influence on susceptibility to disease and behaviour, temperaments also have an effect in the different stages of life. According to the Grail Message, each period is marked by the imprint of a specific temperament; under its influence, the human being is pushed to act in a corresponding manner, which is beneficial to his evolution during the period in question.

The correspondences between age of life and temperament are as follows:

- Childhood - sanguine temperament
- Adolescence - melancholic temperament
- Adult age - choleric temperament
- Old age - phlegmatic temperament

Let us now follow the normal course of a human being through these four periods:

During childhood, the spirit that has just incarnated must learn to use the new tool that has been provided to it: the physical body. It must also discover the new environment in which it now finds itself. At this period of life, the playful naturalness and the spirit of discovery conferred by the sanguine temperament favour the smooth running of this learning phase for the spirit, because they give it curiosity and the desire to act.

The unconsciousness of childhood is followed by the nostalgic daydreams of adolescence which are the hallmark of the melancholy temperament. The young adult in the making can no longer be content to live in the present without worrying about anything. He must prepare himself for the constructive action and responsibilities that await him. The melancholic tendency of this period makes him take things a little over the top - all the misfortunes and injustices of the world weigh on his shoulders - but it makes him aware of the seriousness of existence and the need to become a responsible being. The high ideals to which he is particularly sensitive at this age also gradually help him to direct himself according to what is good, just and respectful.

Now, ripe to enter adulthood, the spirit can undertake, realise, build. It is helped by the creative impatience that the choleric temperament gives it. This impatience pushes it to move forward and to act. It gives the entrepreneurial spirit and the impetus to achieve, transform, innovate and discover. Working, creating... is by no means a chore, but a need and a joy.

By the way, if active and enterprising parents often don't understand their teenagers who are so passive and dreamy, and vice versa, it's because each one is bathed in the vibrations of his own temperament, and sees the other through different "glasses". But that there are differences between the ages of life is normal and beneficial, as the duties of each period are also different.

With the passing of years, the human being is gradually approaching the end of his life on earth and the moment when he will have to leave the earthly plane to pass into the beyond. In preparation for this, the spirit will gradually detach itself from matter. It is helped in this by the phlegmatic temperament which marks it more and more at this time.

The need to act diminishes and is replaced by the desire to take stock, reflecting on the meaning of all that has been experienced so far. This is very visible, since older people have in common the

characteristic of looking back to the past and talking to their loved ones about it. However, since the meaning of life goes beyond the earthly, since it is spiritual, the aspiration to take stock conferred by the phlegmatic temperament helps the spirit to turn upwards, to the beyond, where its evolutionary journey will soon lead it.

The changes which take place during old age help the spirit which acts in the direction of this help to gradually detach itself from gross matter in general and from its physical body in particular. This gradually prepares it to leave the earthly plane when the time comes. It becomes serene in the face of death. This is what makes it say "that it is ready to die", "that nothing holds it back".

The spirit even greets this coming end with joy, because it feels very well that its time on earth has come to an end and that the weakness of the organism no longer leaves it the freedom of action as it had in the past. It then naturally longs for a new beginning and a new field of action.

Temperaments are a help, but one must grasp them and act in their direction, redirecting one's aspirations. Not accepting the changes of old age, for example, rebelling against them and striving to live as if one were much younger than one actually is, does not help this new orientation and openness.

Other aids

Apart from the help provided by the phlegmatic temperament in old age, preparation for the passage to the beyond at death is facilitated by premonitions that the departure is near. A premonition is not the ability to guess in advance what will happen and possibly when it will happen, but it is an information transmitted from the beyond and received by the person concerned, which enables him to prepare for it all the better inwardly.

As we saw in chapter 2, further help is also provided shortly before departure, when the dying person sees the beyond to which he will soon be going and some relatives who are already there and who will welcome him. Thus he does not advance blindly.

But there is more. If the dying person sees the beyond and briefly experiences different things with those who are there, it is because he has partly freed himself from his physical body. He reintegrates it each time, but this "coming and going" familiarises him with the process of disengagement, or decorporation, which he will have to accomplish fully in order to leave the earth. He becomes accustomed to functioning without the physical body, and thus gradually becomes accustomed to the conditions of life in the beyond. All these experiences on this threshold are for him as so many preparatory exercises.

Additional help is given to him immediately after his passage into the beyond. The being of light, mentioned by people who have experienced an NDE, welcomes and assists him during his first steps in the other world. A lot of love and solicitude therefore accompanies the one who passes from the earth to the beyond.

Why do we die?

Death is necessary to allow the spirit to continue its evolution. By changing the plane in which it is, it is confronted with other situations and, through this, experiences other things.

A rich and active life therefore awaits the spirit in the beyond. A life all the richer the higher it climbs on higher planes. We are far from the eternal rest that is supposed to await the human soul after death.

In the overall evolution of the human spirit, death means progress.

Everybody would agree that if pupils of a given level always remained in the same class, always repeating the same programme throughout their schooling, they wouldn't learn anything anymore. The same is true in the great school of life. A spirit that could eternally continue its life on earth would end up stagnating and would no longer evolve. However, moving on to the next class is not possible without leaving the previous class.

Chapter 4 How do we die?

How does death occur? Is it instantaneous? Are we conscious and alive one moment, only to be unconscious and dead the next? What exactly happens? How does the spirit separate from the body?

As death is a natural thing, it does not take place arbitrarily, but in accordance with the laws of nature. The process of death, as well as the changes of state that take place, can therefore be followed and grasped by the human reason, just like any other natural phenomenon.

However, before we can see how the spirit separates from the body, we must first know how it is linked to it. According to the Grail Message, it is connected to the body through the blood.

Blood as a connecting element

Since our body becomes “one” with the clothes we have chosen to wear for the day, one would think that our spirit also automatically becomes one with the different envelopes it puts on. In other words, it is enough for it to put on the physical body to be able to move and direct it.

However, this is not the case; for if our clothes and our body belong to the same kind, the gross matter of heavy density, it is not the same for our spirit surrounded by its finer envelopes and our physical body. Between the astral body, the densest envelope which the spirit puts on before incarnating, and the physical body which the spirit clothes itself with to stay on earth, we pass from gross matter of medium density to that of heavy density.

Although close, these two kinds are not similar. A gap exists between them. It prevents the establishment of a connection that would at the same time constitute a communication channel. However, a bridge must exist so that the information received by the five senses and centralised by the brain can be transmitted to the spirit and, conversely, the will of the spirit can be communicated to the brain so that it can carry out its will on the earthly plane.

However, just as no communication is possible if a radio receiver is not set to the same wavelength as the transmitter, so the difference of kind between the physical body and the astral body prevents a connection and exchange of information. A subtle link, of intermediate kind, must bridge the gap between the two in order to establish the connection. This element is constituted by the radiation of the blood.

As all objects do, blood radiates, i.e. it emits invisible waves which propagate in the space around it. These waves or radiations are more ethereal than the blood, they are of a different kind than the blood. This kind is very close to that of the astral body, without being quite the same.

However, the astral body also radiates. The heaviest radiation it emits is similar to the one emanating from the blood. So the radiations come together and form the bond.

The astral body (and with it the spirit) is therefore not linked directly to the physical body, but indirectly, through a bridge of radiation. Although invisible, this bridge is powerful.

The link between spirit and body is like two large magnets placed face to face. It takes a great deal of force to move them away from each other, yet nothing materially visible holds them together. The efforts made are against something ethereal, subtle: a bridge of radiation.

The phenomena that take place during a blood haemorrhage clearly show that blood has a bridging role. The more blood the injured person loses, the looser the connection between the spirit and the physical body. The spirit loses more and more awareness of its earthly surroundings, because it is no longer sufficiently connected to the body. When too much blood flows out of the vessels, there comes a time when there is not enough blood to maintain the connection. The spirit is no longer retained, it leaves the physical body, which is equivalent to earthly death; the death of the body, not that of the spirit, which continues to exist.

Apart from the quantitative aspect mentioned just now, the blood and its radiation are all the more capable of acting as a bridge if the composition of the blood is qualitatively adequate, for the radiation of the blood varies according to the components of the blood. However, the composition of blood depends on physical and psychological factors.

Food plays an important role, since the vitamins and minerals we consume are directly involved in the composition of the blood, either by their mere presence in the blood or indirectly by serving to produce red blood cells, platelets, etc. Organs such as the liver and kidneys also play a fundamental role. The liver, because its job is to maintain constant levels of glucose, protein and many other substances in the blood, and the kidneys (and in fact the liver too), because they rid the blood of the waste products it carries. A deficiency of these organs therefore automatically has an effect on the blood radiation (for more information, read from the same author "The Spiritual Mysteries of Blood", Healing Arts Press, Rochester, Vermont USA).

The influence of the psyche is also significant. When, in a situation of danger, fear invades us, the radiations that emanate from our spirit are tinged by this fear. This characteristic is then transmitted to the radiations of the blood, which are modified accordingly. This will in turn affect the composition of the blood, which will be characterised by a strong presence of adrenaline. If, instead of fear, it is joy and serenity that radiates from our spirit, the composition of the blood will be modified by a strong presence of endorphin. A psychic factor can thus influence the composition of the blood.

Blood radiation and old age

With age, the physical body inevitably becomes worn and tired. The organs that produce blood (bone marrow, spleen,...) and those that take care of its composition (liver, kidneys,...) no longer perform their work as well as they used to. Hormonal secretions decrease, metabolisms slow down and assimilation is reduced. In short, the body's strength and resources are diminished, and this without any illness.

The inevitable consequence of these changes is a gradual modification in the composition and radiation of the blood, leading to a loosening of the connection between the spirit and the body, which contributes to the appearance of the phlegmatic temperament characteristic of this age of life.

But the less the spirit is involved in the mundane, the less it feels attracted and concerned by it. Its radiations become more ethereal, which further reduces the radiation of the blood.

The connection between spirit and body is thus very gradually loosened. The spirit does not start to "hover" or "float in the clouds", it is still there, but not as closely linked to the body. It's a bit like driving a car with the clutch disengaged: the engine (the spirit) is still present and active, but its possibilities of action are modified.

The connection is, of course, much weaker than that of the spirit of a young adult who aspires to achieve earthly projects. Shaped by his aspirations, the radiations emanating from his spirit will be

denser because they are turned towards the earth. Because they are denser, they will bind him more closely to the body.

Throughout our life, we go through periods when the connection between spirit and body is more tense or more relaxed than normal. This is what we translate by the expressions: "today he is a little absent" or "he is not quite there" and, conversely, "he is very present", "he has a great presence of mind".

The big difference between old age and youth lies in the fact that in old age the phases of loosening and tightening take place from a permanently weaker basic connection.

Blood radiation and death

The solidity of a radiation bridge, like that of any other bridge, depends on the quality and strength of the two pillars on which it rests, in other words, for the human being, the radiations emanating from the blood and those coming from the spirit. However, at the end of life, these radiations are strong neither on the side of the body which is tired, nor on the side of the spirit which detaches itself internally from matter and turns upwards. And the more this binding force diminishes, the more the soul is capable of liberating itself from the body or, which amounts to the same thing, the more the body can be easily abandoned by the soul which had been vivifying it until then.

Then comes a moment when the bond is so weak that life is only hanging "by a thread". The slackness and distance soon become too great for the spirit to still animate the physical body. No longer being invigorated by the spirit, the body ceases to function. The heart stops beating, the lungs stop breathing, blood pressure drops and all metabolism stops, causing the body to become cold.

To take our example of magnets, as long as they are close together, their reciprocal force of attraction attracts them and easily presses them against each other. If you gradually increase the distance between them within certain limits, the two magnets will attract each other, but with increasing difficulty. The attraction is still present, but weaker. However, there comes a point of no return: the distance between them has become too great. Although they are still in their mutual field of attraction, but at the extreme limit of it, they can no longer get any closer and remain at a distance from each other.

At death, the cessation of organic functions means that the blood gradually radiates less and less. Gradually, since this is a process that takes a certain amount of time. The blood does not suddenly stop radiating, it only loses this capacity little by little. On the one hand, because the organism also loses heat only gradually, and on the other hand, because the spirit, although separated from the physical body, still stands close to it. Its radiation - which is not strong enough to attract it to the body - nevertheless radiates towards the blood, as we have seen with the example of the magnet. The blood is therefore still in its radiation field, which has the effect of invigorating it a little more. This very weak but nevertheless real vivification is due to the fact that the blood does not die at the same time as the rest of the body. It retains its constitution several days after death. In other words, it is present in the vessels, and although it no longer circulates in them, it remains as it is.

Since the spirit is bound to the body by blood, it is natural that the blood survives longer than the body, since it is more directly subject to the radiation of the spirit than is the body which receives it through it. With the passage of time, however, the spirit, which is more and more oriented towards its life in the beyond, gradually ceases to radiate towards the blood, which finally, after a few days, is generally no longer vivified by it. The blood then dies in its turn. It decomposes and disappears

from the vessels, which now contain only a few residues. Death is definitive since, with the disappearance of the blood, the possibility for the spirit to be incarnated also disappears.

Theoretically, this means that until then, despite the cessation of the organic functions, a reintegration of the spirit into the body is still possible. Is this the case in practice? We know it is, since we have seen that people who have lived an NDE experience have been brought back to earthly life, although the signs usually considered as those of death, cessation of respiratory, cardiac and cerebral functions, were present. Their blood, however, was still capable of being a bridge to the spirit, since these recalls to life took place, according to medical reports on NDEs, at most a few minutes to half an hour after death.

But it is possible for the spirit to reintegrate the body well beyond half an hour. These reintegrations took place, it is true, in special circumstances, since they were recalls to life carried out by Jesus. It is interesting to dwell for a moment on these cases, as they confirm the truth of what has been said previously about the blood.

There are two important points to be made about these recalls. Firstly, they always took place in the days following death, never weeks or months later, in other words, always at a time when the blood of the deceased was still present in the vessels (not to mention the presence of the silver cord - another kind of link between the spirit and the physical body, mentioned in the Bible and visible to seers - which we are only quoting so as not to complicate our subject). Secondly, the accounts of these miracles show us that Jesus did not act on the body or on the blood, but that he always called the spirit and exhorted it to return to the body.

In fact, the further away the time of death was (and therefore the blood radiation weaker), the more imperatively Jesus' call to the spirit of the deceased became: "Child, arise" (Luke 8:54) Jesus simply said to the daughter of Jairus who had just died. "Young man, I tell you, get up!" (Luke 7,14) Jesus says more insistently and urgently to the young man of Nain who is already being carried to his grave. For Lazarus, who has been resting in his tomb for four days, Jesus prays first, before shouting in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out!". (John 11:44).

The absence of blood in the vessels is therefore a sign of a certain, irreversible and complete death, because the spirit is then definitively no longer able to reintegrate the body or to feel anything that happens to it. In medicine, this criterion should replace all those currently used to determine when it would become possible to remove organs for transplantation (as long as one believes that it is beneficial).

The criterion of brain death used today is insufficient, because at this stage the organism continues to function, either on its own or with the help of devices. In both cases, however, blood is present and circulating. The spirit of the "deceased" is therefore still connected to the body. If it is upset by the attempt to remove organs from its body, and it tries to reintegrate it to defend it, the result is a reinforcement of the radiation it emits towards its physical organism, and thus a strengthening of its connection with it. As a consequence, it feels all the pain caused by the surgical operation to remove organs from its body.

This explains why more and more donors, although declared "dead", are anaesthetised before the operation. Often donors would struggle so vigorously, with arm and body movements, to avoid having an organ removed, that this disrupted the smooth running of the surgery and terrorised the medical staff. What some people claim to be only reflex movements are in fact the defensive reactions of a spirit still bound to the body by its blood radiation.

Visual or auditory phenomena... on the verge of death

The loosening of the connection between spirit and body leads to various changes in the perceptions of the spirit, all of which are in line with the logic of events and are therefore perfectly explainable. If at the end of life, i.e. before death, the spirit sees not only its earthly surroundings, because it is still in the physical body, but also the astral plane to some extent, since it has already loosened its connection with the body, this possibility of semi-vision of the beyond ceases with death.

Indeed, at death the spirit separates itself from the physical body. From now on it sees with the eyes of the densest envelope that remains: the astral body. As the spirit now stands next to the physical body, it is normal that it can observe the latter from the outside, as people who have experienced an NDE relate.

However, the spirit's distancing from the physical body does not stop at the astral plane. As it moves towards ethereal matter, it also leaves behind the astral body which it no longer needs. Now, when it is in the process of disengaging itself from the astral body, the spirit finds itself for a short time in a situation where it is no longer able to see with the eyes of the astral body - which it is still in the process of getting rid of - but not yet with those of ethereal matter, since the astral body is not completely disengaged.

In this transitory state the spirit therefore sees nothing, and it has the quite normal impression of being in darkness. The same situation can be experienced if one takes an old lift. When you arrive between two floors, you can see neither the lower floor nor the upper floor, but only the darkness in between.

This phenomenon explains why people who have experienced an NDE talk about a zone of darkness that they had to go through to reach a higher plane, the plane of ethereal matter, before being welcomed by a being of light. Depending on the experience and the way of expressing things, this transitory state without visibility is described as being a dark tunnel or conduit, a dark valley, a great black void, etc.

What has just been said here is above all true in the case of brutal deaths as in the cases of NDEs. During a natural death, a semi-vision has time to settle so that the spirit of the deceased does not pass through areas of darkness.

The passage to a higher plane, through darkness during NDE, is accompanied by acoustic phenomena such as buzzing, rumbling, whistling, detonation,... What do these noises come from?

By moving from the plane of gross matter to that of ethereal matter, the spirit radically changes its environment. The plane it enters being of a more ethereal and subtle kind, everything is lighter and more mobile, therefore everything happens there with greater ease and intensity. The plane has a higher "vibration", a higher rhythm.

However, we know in physics that when two different movements of vibration meet, an acoustic phenomenon occurs. This is the case, for example, when a door slams. The rapid movement of the door meets the different, i.e. inexistent, movement of the frame. The same applies to the diver entering the water, the hammer hitting the nail, the cork of a bottle of champagne being opened.

The spirit that leaves the gross matter to enter the ethereal matter is in the same situation. The movement of the moving spirit suddenly meets the faster movement in the plane of ethereal matter. The difference in speed creates the rumbling, or detonation. The fact that these noises are described

as violent testifies to the great difference in speed, and therefore the great kind difference, between the plane of gross matter and that of ethereal matter.

The higher rhythm in the plane of ethereal matter is clearly palpable to those who penetrate it. Many people who have experienced an NDE express it by saying that "everything accelerates". This manifests itself in different ways. Communication between spirits is a direct exchange of thoughts and no longer goes through the stage of verbal exchange. During reflection processes, answers to questions arrive much faster than on earth. Moving through space is also very fast, since wanting to be in a certain place is already being there. Also, just think of the dizzying speed with which the panorama of life unfolds during NDE experiences.

If the general vibration of the plane of ethereal matter is higher than on earth, it is because this plane is higher in creation. It is therefore closer to the source of sustenance, and more permeable to the force emanating from it, than the plane of gross matter.

In spite of the rapid rhythm of the ethereal plane, the spirit is not overwhelmed or stressed, but it lives everything fully, because the ethereal envelopes that surround it are lighter, more permeable and transparent, in other words less compact than the physical body in which it was previously incarnated. Impressions from the outside therefore reach the spirit much more easily. The latter can also act and make an impression on the outside much more easily thanks to the lightness of its envelopes, and therefore it experiences more. In one day it can experience much more than in a similar time on earth. Hence the biblical expression: "and a thousand years are as a day" (Ps 90:4), which, it is true, speaks of the speed of the spiritual plane, not of the ethereal plane, but which refers to the same phenomenon.

Does decorporation change the spirit?

Has the spirit, having freed itself from the weight of the physical body through death and being covered only with ethereal envelopes, changed internally? Having reached the more ethereal planes of creation, does it suddenly become wiser, more enlightened, even omniscient?

"The only additional knowledge that a departed being possesses following his transformation is that he has not really ceased to exist after so-called death", we read in the Grail Message (Volume II, Lecture 12). The knowledge of the spirit therefore does not increase suddenly. Nor does death make it free of faults or weaknesses, as if by some magical trick. After death we are inwardly as we were before it. What does this come from?

Spiritual knowledge is rooted in the spirit. Whether it is covered with dense or subtle envelopes, or even no envelopes at all, does not change what is inside it.

After death, what the spirit has acquired remains with it. But an important distinction must be made, for spiritual knowledge is of a completely different kind from intellectual knowledge.

Intellectual knowledge comes from the organ of gross matter which is the brain. It is a knowledge that concerns only material and earthly things, since according to the law of attraction of the affinities, a kind can only recognise or grasp what is of the same kind as itself.

Yet however much knowledge the intellect has, it is only useful on the earthly plane, since what it relates to does not exist in the beyond, let alone on the spiritual plane which follows it upwards. They are related to the brain, which is only an organ of the densest envelope. The spirit leaves them behind when it penetrates the ethereal matter. Moreover, they disappear at the same time as the brain decomposes.

Intellectual knowledge includes geography, history, meteorology, traffic regulations, human laws, mechanics, languages, to name but a few.

Does this mean that it is a waste of time and energy to acquire this knowledge sometimes so painfully? Not at all, it is necessary, but we must be aware that its usefulness is ephemeral, since it is only valid for the duration of our life on earth. They must be relearned at each new incarnation, as opposed to the spiritual knowledge which is an integral part of the spirit and accompanies it from incarnation to incarnation, as well as throughout the sojourns in the planes of the beyond.

Of all that it has learned on earth, the spirit only benefits from what has touched and marked it inwardly. If by learning law and exercising it as a profession, the sense of justice develops in the spirit of the lawyer, this sense of justice, which is a spiritual faculty, remains in him after death, but not the articles of law that may have aroused this awakening. In the same way, a teacher of art history does not take with him the names of painters and artistic currents, but only the sense of beauty that will have developed in him, since this sense is also a spiritual faculty.

What is of real benefit to the human being is what he experiences with his "heart" (the spirit) and not with his "head" (the brain). It is the experience that counts, because it anchors itself in us, shapes our personality, and subsequently guides our way of thinking and acting, without our needing to think about it. It is not external knowledge stored in the brain, but internal knowledge that is part of the real self: the spirit. This knowledge we have "in the blood", as the popular expression goes, which is quite apt, since blood is the bridge to the spirit.

Also belongs to spiritual knowledge, all the knowledge that one can acquire about the human spirit, its ethereal envelopes, its journey through the different planes of creation, the purpose of its existence and the different incarnations it carries out, since all these things go beyond the plane of gross matter and therefore cannot be grasped by the intellect.

Life in the beyond and the laws of creation

In NDE's stories, the continuation of existence on the planes of the beyond, which follows the projection of the panorama of life, is most often described in the most marvellous terms. It is presented as an existence bathed in light and endless happiness, as the following example shows:

"It was like a total immersion in light, clarity, warmth, peace, security. Being outside my body, I felt nothing at all. I couldn't see my body or anyone else. I had just suddenly arrived in this marvellous clear light. It's difficult to describe, in fact, it's impossible to describe. There are no words for it. It was like being one with the light. I could say: "I was peace, I was love. I was clarity, it was part of me..." (17)

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a pioneer in accompanying the dying, who through her books has made a major contribution to broadening the public's understanding of death, wrote:

"Death is only a passage from this life to another existence, in which there is no longer any pain or fear. All bitterness and conflict dissolve and the only thing that will remain for eternity is love." (18)

The visions of the beyond presented in this way are very beautiful. However, they do not correspond to reality. It is possible to know this, because they are in contradiction with the laws of creation.

The ethereal matter of the beyond to which the deceased go is made up of a multitude of sub-planes. The most ethereal, light, luminous and beautiful ones are at the top. As one descends, the sub-planes become heavier, denser and duller.

Now, the ethereal envelopes that surround the spirit that reaches the beyond are more or less light or heavy depending on its aspirations. According to the law of attraction of the affinities, the spirit is attracted to the sub-plane which has the same weight as its ethereal envelope. It will inevitably be led there, on the one hand because the law of affinity attracts it there, and on the other hand because the law of gravity pushes it there.

The more a spirit has aspired to the good and has endeavoured to achieve it, the clearer, and hence lighter, its envelopes are. This lightness enables it to ascend to the upper sub-planes of ethereal matter. On the contrary, the dark and heavy envelopes of a spirit oriented towards evil make it descend towards the lower planes of ethereal matter.

The spirits of the deceased are thus distributed according to their qualities and faults on the different planes of the beyond. There, they continue to learn and evolve through the experiences they live. Surrounded by spirits similar to themselves, they can become aware of the rightness or wrongness of their way of acting, because the spirits around them act like them.

By feeling the benefits that result from the actions of good spirits like it, a spirit is encouraged and stimulated to continue to act in the same direction. A vile spirit, on the other hand, suffers from the evil that vile spirits like it impose on it, which will encourage it to improve.

The distribution of spirits in the beyond is very precise. It ensures that all liars, the envious, the violent, but also all the altruistic, patient, helpful people, each find themselves in a specific sub-plane, since these different faults and qualities give a different weight to the envelopes. The beyond is therefore a place that differs from the earth by the great separation of kinds.

According to the decisions it makes through its free will and its experience, the spirit causes the weight of its envelopes to change. Its stay in the sub-plane in which it finds itself then comes to an end and it goes to a higher or lower plane, depending on the kind to which it now belongs. Its journey also sometimes leads it to return to the earthly plane, which offers it different experiences, since spirits of many different kinds mix there.

The highest plane which the spirit can reach at the end of its evolution is the spiritual plane, or paradise, which is situated above ethereal matter. The lowest plane is what is called hell. It is the heaviest of the ethereal matter and its gravity has been further increased by all the evil that some human spirits generate.

The notions of paradise, purgatory and hell, which are found in many religions, are therefore not the fruit of imagination but correspond to a reality. Paradise is the spiritual plane, purgatory consists of the ethereal planes of the beyond, and hell of the lowest plane of ethereal matter.

Life in the beyond is therefore not necessarily and in all cases, beautiful and sweet as one could deduce from the NDE stories. If at the moment of passage the welcome by the parents and acquaintances of the deceased, as well as by the being of light, is warm, this does not prefigure the rest of the stay. What follows will only be beautiful and luminous if the soul is also beautiful and luminous.

On earth, at birth, the soul that arrives clothed in the body of the newborn is also welcomed with warmth and love by his parents, the midwife and relatives. This does not mean, however, that his

whole earthly life will be similar to the welcome. The spirit of the newborn baby may have to walk a rocky path of disappointment and suffering.

Infernal NDE, ultimate NDE

The fact that life in the beyond is not necessarily beautiful is confirmed by a particular kind of NDE experiences which, because of their dark, frightening and painful character, have been described as infernal NDEs.

First of all, here is a testimony that describes the environment, totally devoid of light and heat, in which one of these experiences was lived:

"... everything was black, as if I was floating in the universe and no stars were shining. The darkness extended in all directions and seemed endless, but it was not only black, it was also empty, without light." (19)

The two following testimonies describe the state, in no way jubilant, of the people met:

"Their heads were deeply bowed. The features of their faces were full of sadness and despair. They seemed to drag themselves about, like a troop of prisoners carrying heavy chains". (20)

"These creatures seemed to be linked to evil inclinations, hatred, sensuality and destructive thoughts and conceptions..." (21)

What about the so-called ultimate NDEs during which the deceased claims to have seen God or to have merged into Him? In this case too, knowledge of the activity of the laws can help us to see clearly.

As Creator, God is outside his work, that is to say outside creation. Not being spiritual, but of a higher and quite different kind, he is not in the spiritual plane, which is the highest plane of creation, let alone in the planes of the beyond that lie beneath it.

Since one kind can only grasp the kind that is like itself, the human spirit can never see what is of a higher kind than its own as is God. It is because of this impossibility that religions speak of the invisible God and that man has been given the commandment not to make an image of God.

If he cannot see the Creator, could the spirit merge into him? Judging by the law of gravity, the spirit can never rise higher than the plane to which it belongs. Therefore, it cannot leave the spiritual plane to ascend towards the Creator and merge into Him.

The experiences lived during these NDEs have been misinterpreted. Something wonderful may well have happened, but not what those who have lived it claim, because according to the laws of creation, it is in the realm of the impossible.

Chapter 5 When are we going to die?

Human beings do not decide how long they will live. Death comes one day, without them having decided it and without them having a say in it.

The length of life varies. It is longer for some than for others. What does this come from? Is it chance? Does someone or something decide it for him? And if so, according to what criteria? Is this length predetermined from birth or is it decided along the way?

Longevity

It would seem logical to think that the length of our life depends on our body's ability to function and that when it is no longer able to carry out all its tasks, it stops functioning, which leads to our death.

In the middle of the last century, it was believed that man was potentially capable of living forever on earth. According to experiments, the cells of the physical body seemed to be able to divide without limitation. As new cells were constantly replacing old ones, the body therefore possessed the ability to regenerate itself as it went along. Unless something happened, it was theoretically capable of living forever.

More detailed research later revealed that the multiplication of human cells was in fact limited to about fifty divisions. After that, they died and brought with them the death of the organism. However, this fifty or so divisions did not limit much the longevity of the human being, since this was estimated at around 120 years, a figure confirmed by various branches of research.

It is however obvious that only a small number of human beings reach this age. Many factors reduce this potential longevity, in particular eating habits, lifestyle in general, heredity, diseases, profession, etc.

One could seek to develop systems that include all these factors to try to explain why everyone dies at the age they do. But such an approach is unlikely to give satisfactory results, as it contains a basic error.

By dealing only with the body, a material factor is used to try to determine something spiritual. Indeed, the real question is not how long the body will last, but how long the spirit needs the body to stay on earth. It is the spiritual factor that conditions the material factor, not the other way round. Otherwise, it would be the secondary which would determine the principal, the weakest the strongest.

Although the body is capable of harbouring a spirit for about 120 years, this capacity is not even fully utilised. It is therefore not the organism that limits and therefore determines the length of life. The spirit that incarnates does so for specific reasons and it is these reasons that determine the length of its stay on earth.

Purposes of incarnation and length of life

Incarnation on earth is only one of the stages of the great evolutionary journey that the spirit accomplishes in creation. The purpose of its stay on earth is the same as that of the stays in the different planes of the beyond: to develop and perfect the faculties that are within it. It does this by living situations that force it to overcome itself, to adapt, to surpass itself, to make decisions, to set

goals and to work to achieve them. At the school of life, each stay on earth is therefore a new class that takes the spirit a little further in its evolution. The big difference being, however, that at school, learning is above all intellectual, whereas in life, it passes through personal experience and contact with reality.

Some of the situations that the spirit experiences on earth are new to it, and by their very novelty stimulate it in its learning to be human, others are already known to it. The law of cause and effect, also called the law of sowing and reaping, brings them back to it. It has sown them in the past and now it reaps them to taste them, in other words, to live on itself what it has done to others in order to become aware of the validity or not of what it generated. In this way, it can knowingly continue to act in the way that has produced beneficial effects and abandon behaviour that causes pain and suffering to others.

Sometimes there is a very long lapse of time between the moment when we generate a cause and the moment when the law of sowing and reaping returns its effects to us. This is why these effects sometimes surprise us greatly. Having forgotten the events that gave rise to them, we do not understand why suffering reaches us or, on the contrary, why happy events happen to us, since it seems to us that we have not sown anything that would justify these returns.

All these events and situations that come back to us is what we call fate or karma. Although it is considered by many to be blind and arbitrary, fate is only the harvest of past sowings.

A single earthly life is not enough for the spirit to reap all its karma and experience all the new situations necessary for the development of its faculties. One earthly life allows one to live only part of it.

The law of cause and effect and that of the attraction of the affinities thus ensure that the spirit is embodied in a historical, social, political, cultural, but also family context which offers it the share of situations and experiences it needs to continue its evolution, the rest being "put aside" for later. In the school of life, things happen in the same way as in an earthly school. Knowledge is acquired little by little. Each new class, or life, brings with it additional knowledge that complements that which was previously acquired.

The speed with which the spirit learns and evolves is left to its free will. Faced with each situation, the spirit remains absolutely free to choose, among all possible solutions, the way it will react. This absolute freedom depends on its will. The result is therefore very variable from one spirit to another and, as a result, leads to a different and more or less rapid evolution.

Some spirits quickly grasp the lesson to be learned from an event and adapt to it by perfecting or refining the faculties necessary for the response. Others, on the other hand, take much longer to understand the meaning of what they are experiencing and sometimes even longer to admit that they must change internally in order to move forward.

Since the spirit has a free will, the length of time it takes to learn what the situations of a given life can offer cannot be determined in advance. Uncertainty is inevitable. To believe, as some people do, that at birth the number of years, months and days that our life will last is already determined is incompatible with the spirit's ability to make free decisions about how to live its life.

We are given a certain amount of time to learn the lessons that our incarnation can teach us. The time needed for this is, at most and largely counted, equivalent to the approximately 120 years during which our body can shelter a soul in its bosom. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that the wisdom of the laws of creation would cause the sequence of events and situations for which a spirit

has incarnated here on earth - situations, moreover, specially chosen by the laws for it - to be abruptly interrupted because of the deficiencies of its tool, the body. If this were the case, it would be the world upside down, the material would direct the spiritual.

It is understandable that erroneous choices made by human beings as to their lifestyle will unfortunately shorten the duration of their incarnation, but this is not an error on the part of the laws of nature.

An earthly life therefore lasts the time necessary for the spirit to have time to acquire what it has to learn, since this is the purpose of its incarnation. Its life has no reason to continue well beyond this duration. It is therefore interrupted, and the spirit, mature and ready to enter a new phase of its learning, leaves the earthly plane. It is directed towards the plane of the beyond which offers it the experiences it now needs, just as a student is directed towards his new class when it is ready to follow the programme taught there.

Does this mean that all people who die around 80 or 90 years of age, as is often the case nowadays, have learned everything that life could teach them? For some of them, yes. But for others, death comes too early because of wrong living and eating habits. It is therefore a premature death. This does not end their apprenticeship, but interrupts it.

What are the consequences for the spirit of an early death as opposed to a natural death?

Natural death, premature death

"He passed away peacefully," is said of someone who died naturally. This passing away asleep is due to the simultaneous weakening of the two pillars of the radiation bridge. As the body is only weakly kept alive by the radiations of the spirit and the latter is practically no longer held back by those emanating from the body, the bond that still bounds them together is easily undone.

The spirit then leaves the body which sheltered it, because it has completed the learning which the life of the moment offered it, in other words, it has lived the earthly experiences which were necessary for it. Nothing connects it more to the gross matter and it aspires to continue its evolution. Aware that this can only take place elsewhere, it goes with joy towards the new life that awaits it. The beyond becomes, indeed, the best place where it can be.

Natural death is not only for the elderly. Even children can die a natural death. The earthly experience provided for some spirits requires only a short incarnation. A few years, a few weeks or even a few days are therefore sometimes enough for a spirit to live the experiences it needs at the stage of development where it is, or which are necessary for it to catch up with certain very specific parts of its karma. Once his earthly stage is completed, it can leave again. This does not mean that these spirits have reached full maturity, but the earthly conditions of the moment are no longer what they need.

When for a child or a young adult the time has come to leave, his radiation is as ethereal and directed towards the beyond as that of an elderly person's spirit. Separation is then just as easy. This explains why, for their age, these children often show a surprising maturity in the face of death. They accept it perfectly and are conscious, calm and serene.

When a death is premature, in the spiritual sense of the term, it occurs before the experiences foreseen in this incarnation for the spirit concerned are all lived. Various causes can be the origin of it. The most common is an inadequate hygiene of life. In this case, the fact of not eating properly, abusing alcohol or other stimulants, lack of physical exercise or sleep, ... accelerates the wear and

tear of the body, and often generates illnesses that lead to a premature death. What does this mean for the spirit?

If the spirit is incarnated on earth, it is because this is the best place where, for the moment, it can be and evolve. Premature death propels it to an elsewhere where it should not yet normally stay.

It is like a schoolboy who is expelled from his class. Where should he go? The previous class is of no use to him since he has already done it, and he is not ready for the next one. This situation can also be compared to that of an apple that falls from the tree before it is ripe. Its seeds have not yet fully developed and will have great difficulty in taking root in a new soil.

For the spirit, this means entering the beyond insufficiently prepared. Moreover, not having had the experiences it should have had, it will have to reincarnate later in similar conditions.

Sometimes early death is of karmic origin. It is the result of sowing seeds in this or a previous life. In this case, the fate of this spirit includes the experience of early separation from his body.

Shortening or prolonging the life span

There has always been human beings who considered that the probable length of their life was not what they thought it should be. Thus, they decided to change the length of it, either by shortening it through suicide, alone or assisted (euthanasia), or by trying to lengthen it through all kinds of procedures such as miracle cures and special medical treatments.

While the material aspects of such procedures are fairly well known, the same cannot be said of their spiritual aspects. What influence do such procedures have on the spirit? How does it live these decisive interventions?

Suicide, euthanasia

People who decide to interrupt their own lives or, with the help of others, in a medical setting, have lost hope. They feel they no longer have the strength to endure the mental or physical suffering they are experiencing. They feel abandoned and alone. They do not see the meaning of this suffering, nor the reasons for coping with it, and consequently, neither do they see the reasons for continuing their lives.

For materialists who think that life unfolds at random and ends with death, suffering is of course meaningless. It is a misfortune that prevents one from enjoying the short moment of consciousness one has before falling into nothingness. If the suffering is too difficult to bear, we might as well go straight away to the state of non-being that will be ours in nothingness. Suffering will no longer have a hold on us, since there will be no one left to feel it. For materialists, suicide and euthanasia would be justified by the fact that they would be a means of escaping the arbitrariness of a fate felt as too heavy to bear.

For someone who, on the contrary, thinks that life on earth is only one stage in the long evolutionary journey of the human spirit in creation, that other lives on earth have preceded this one and that others will follow, and that between them long stays in the beyond take place, suffering, even great suffering, has a meaning.

It is not that one has to learn to bear it, or even to appreciate it, as if it were one of the many normal things that the spirit has to know. On the contrary, we must learn not to generate it, to avoid what favours its appearance, because it is the consequence of actions that go against the laws.

Did the Creator of all things really weave pain and suffering into the natural course of events? In other words, is the human being obliged to suffer in order to evolve? No, the evolution of human beings would only bring them happiness and well-being if they acted in harmony with the laws. By listening to his intuitions, by always acting with justice and respect for his neighbour, the human spirit would only find contentment and joy.

Suffering only appears when the spirit, with the help of its free will, decides to act without respect for people, animals or the nature that surrounds it. Then its erroneous acts make it reap suffering, the same suffering it has imposed on others. Despite appearances, these karmic returns are full of love, because they have an educational purpose. They allow an awareness of what is wrong in our way of acting and awaken the desire to direct our lives differently.

The sufferings that someone endures have been caused by him, at one time or another, whether by deeds, words or thoughts. However great this suffering may be, it is in accordance with what he has sown. All religions stress, moreover, that human beings are never asked to suffer more than they can bear. This follows from the very role of suffering. Its purpose is to make people aware of wrong actions. But if it destroys the being who undergoes it, he would learn nothing. The human being is never abandoned and never alone in the face of pain. Through prayer, he can ask for help "above" and receive it, as numerous people have already experienced.

To take one's own life is to try to escape the possibility of learning that is offered. But since suicide only kills the body, not the spirit, the problem remains. Karmic returns are indeed attached to the spirit. By leaving the earthly plane, the latter thus takes with it all the still unresolved karma.

Extending life expectancy, an old dream of humanity

While some people wish to shorten their life, others are looking for ways to make it longer. Their aim is to enjoy the beauty it offers for as long as possible. It is so precious that it should be prolonged as much as one can.

Who hasn't dreamt of having more time to fulfil all their wishes? This dream can be found, among other things, in the desire to enjoy a life much longer than the one one has.

Although life expectancy was very short in the past (18 years in ancient Rome, 24 years in Geneva in the 16th century) is much longer today (78,5 years in the USA; 81,6 years in GB), the desire to postpone death as long as possible has always remained very strong.

In order to achieve this goal, a wide variety of means have been proposed over the centuries: long life elixirs of all kinds, mysterious alchemical remedies, medicinal plants from different parts of the globe, countless diets, one or the other of the many known minerals, trace elements or vitamins, but also injections of fresh cells, blood transfusions... and much more.

These different methods acting on the body aim, without knowing it, to make the blood radiate as strongly and as long as possible, in order to maintain a good connection with the spirit.

As long as harmless and natural means are used to maintain the health of the body and thus prevent it from ageing too quickly or falling ill, they are beneficial and can be considered as part of a healthy lifestyle. On the other hand, as soon as they want to extend life beyond its natural limit of about 120 years, they are unnatural and harmful to the body, but also to the spirit. Indeed, if one accepts that one succeeds in prolonging life at will, which is unlikely, fundamental questions would arise which would show the limit of such processes.

A first question concerns the duration of the extension. While many people are prepared to live a long life, very few are able to say how long they would like their life to last. 140 years? 400 years? 1000 years?

The second question is how to deal with all the extra years or centuries. Most often those who have thought about it talk about living... several different lives in the same life, changing profession, place of residence, friends, interests, etc. in order to avoid monotony and stagnation.

Another question: while many people want to live a long life, very few want to grow old! They imagine themselves wrinkled, weakened and ill, unable to move around and enjoy life normally. In addition to their desire for longevity, they also want to stay young. A search for eternal youth has therefore always very naturally accompanied the search for longevity...

Another embarrassing question facing candidates for longevity is to what age group this youth should belong. Being too young would be undesirable, because the strength and drive of youth would lack the wisdom and experience of maturity, two things that are only acquired precisely by going beyond the age of youth. To live for decades or more, at the stage of adolescence? With what aim as adolescence is a period of transition to adulthood. It should not be prolonged any longer than necessary, since adult life represents the bulk of a human being's life span. Would adulthood, which is the age of action and achievement, then be the age one should choose to extend by a few centuries? A minority of people would certainly be very happy about such a thing, since they already do not manage to carry out all their projects in the time they have at their disposal. But the majority of people would not appreciate this possibility, judging by their systematic refusal to see the retirement age postponed.

While it is understandable that man should want to live longer than is the case at present, since his life is a little shorter than it should be because of the illnesses of civilisation, it is not at all certain, in view of the paradoxical situations he would encounter, that a much longer life would be of great spiritual benefit to him.

Cryopreservation of the body for future reanimation

Some people get themselves frozen after death. Their bodies are carefully preserved in this state for the future, when medical advances will allow them to be resuscitated to continue their life on earth.

As the human being cannot, medically speaking, sustain life, but only maintain the body's ability to produce blood radiation, the dream of these people can never come true. The human body is not a simple machine that can be connected to a current. Technical devices and medicines can only help to strengthen an already existing connection, but they are not capable of creating it from scratch. After decades or centuries of freezing, such a connection no longer exists.

Assuming that a treatment could ultimately restore the bond, another insurmountable obstacle would arise. Over the past decades, the spirit would have continued to evolve and would be inwardly transformed. Its former body would no longer be able to serve as a tool, because it would no longer be appropriate. In order to return to earth, the spirit in question must necessarily incarnate in a new body.

Machines to save life?

Following a heart attack, an accident or certain poisonings, the organic functions can be so disturbed that the radiation of the blood is greatly weakened and no longer keeps the spirit linked to

the body. Death is then inevitable, since the spirit is not able to maintain the link with its radiations alone.

At least this was the situation in the past, because nowadays, with the technical progress made in medicine, the situation is different. Thanks to defibrillators, artificial respirators and other machines, many people who in other times would have died can now be resuscitated and brought back to life.

Resuscitation using these machines has two possible results.

In the first, the subject comes out of coma. He regains consciousness and, after appropriate care and a period of convalescence, regains the strength to lead an active and independent life as before. The aim of using the machines is achieved: the patient is cured and returned to life. The machines will have been only the means, the tool, thanks to which the patient has gone through a difficult period.

In the second case, the patient is wrenched from death by the restoration of his organic functions, but he does not regain consciousness. The state in which he is in, is beyond the normal coma that precedes death, which is why we speak of an irreversible coma.

In such a situation, a bridge of radiation between the body and the spirit is still present, but it is very weak. On the one hand, because the body is no longer able to actively contribute to the formation of a sufficiently strong blood radiation; indeed, it is enough to stop the machines for the body to cease functioning. On the other hand, because the participation of the spirit in the production of the radiation bridge is also deficient; the spirit is still linked to the body, but not strongly enough. This is shown by the fact that it is unable to use the brain to manifest itself through the body by talking, moving... hence the flat electroencephalogram.

The situation of irreversible coma is quite particular. It is obviously not the goal of the resuscitation, but it sometimes results from it, and it must be dealt with.

Two serious questions arise in this respect: Do the machines prolong the normal life span of the patient? Can it be called a life, since no higher manifestation of the human being, such as psychic activity, is perceptible?

Let us address the first question.

Two conditions must be fulfilled for a human being to be alive: his body must function and his spirit must be incarnated in this body. Of these two elements, it is the spirit that is the most important, for the latter is the only thing really alive in man, the body only being animated by it. Machines are capable of maintaining the functioning of the physical organism and, by this means, the radiation of the blood, but if life manifests itself in this body, it is not thanks to these machines, but thanks to the presence of the spirit.

Machines alone are not capable of producing life, and of giving a dying person a longer life than he should have had. At most, they can prolong his life to the normal length of the earthly stay that would have been his, had it not been shortened by illness or bodily injury.

If the spirit has served its time on earth, nothing will succeed in keeping it there, however sophisticated the machines and remedies that may yet be invented. The radiation from the spirit would be irretrievably lacking and is beyond the reach of technical means.

Keeping someone in an irreversible coma alive does not therefore mean artificially prolonging the duration of his stay on earth beyond its normal time.

But, can we call this prolongation a life, since there is no evidence of the presence of the spirit?

Brain death is not death

The materialistic approach considers that the real “ego” of man, the centre of consciousness and will, is in the brain. It is therefore normal that the cessation of brain function, as revealed by the flat electroencephalogram of people in a coma, is invoked to affirm that the person in question is dead.

This way of defining death is used by those who fight against therapeutic relentlessness and by the supporters of organ transplants. The former because they wonder why a dead person's body should be kept functioning, the latter because if the person is dead, organs can be removed.

In contrast to materialists, people who have a spiritual approach believe that the real “ego” of the human being is the spirit. As long as it is linked to the body, the being in question is alive, whether the brain is functioning or not. However, at the time of brain death, the spirit is still linked to the body. Admittedly it is not able to manifest its presence outwardly, but it is able to feel what is happening with its physical body and also to perceive, up to a certain point or from time to time, what is happening around it.

Many facts show that this is indeed the case. We have already spoken in chapter 4 about the defensive reactions of brain-dead people who have had organs removed, reactions which show the presence of the spirit, its suffering and its willingness to defend itself.

In some brain diseases, the affected person may remain in a coma and brain death for months or even years, gradually waking up, becoming more conscious and able to move, until they can lead a normal active life again (22). During all this time, the spirit was always connected to the body. It simply lacked the possibility to express itself externally, due to the momentary deficiencies of the brain.

Brain-dead people, although unable to react visibly to external stimuli, are nonetheless able to sense what is happening around them. They hear what is being said to them and are aware of who is at their side. On the level of the spirit, they experience things. Even if one has the impression that nothing is happening, they can on the contrary learn and make a lot of progress by living this difficult situation.

Such people may not be aware of their surroundings all the time, but at least part of the time, as the following story shows.

After spending the whole day in the intensive care unit at the bedside of his wife Liselotte (short: Lilo) who is in an irreversible coma, her husband decides to go home for the night:

"Around 6.30 p.m. I was tired and wanted to go home to lie down. At that time I still thought that my wife couldn't notice that I was in the room. - So I put on my coat and stood for a few moments in front of the door, looked at her calmly, observed at the monitor where the regular image of the heart rate was recorded, and then I said: "Lilo, I'm going home now".

At the moment I pronounced "I'm going home now" in mid-voice, the two curves on the monitor swung up and down - to the edge of the screen. To me it sounded like a scream: you can't leave me alone now! A silent cry of fear, in a body that could no longer move - but a cry that sets the heart in

motion, that changes the electric current, that starting from the soul reaches the screen. It wasn't a device that reacted, it was my Liselotte who screamed.

...Of course, I stayed all night in the intensive care room, sometimes sitting next to the bed, sometimes standing in front of the window. We were a few weeks away from our silver wedding. Now, hour after hour, I could whisper to her: what has been good about these 25 years? What wasn't so good? To ask her for forgiveness or to make promises. There was no monotony, it was a kind of open-ended dialogue. The screen gave me the answers. Each time the frequencies went up and down. It was as if Lilo's heart trembled at particularly important points in our life together." (23)

The persons who accompany the dying have similar stories to tell, testifying to the presence of the spirit in an irreversible coma:

"How often did we see people remain in a coma for weeks, when medically we could absolutely not understand why they were still alive. They were waiting for the visit of someone who didn't come, someone who was far away. It was just as if they had been put on hold to wait for something to close up. It's very impressive to see that. Once the visit had taken place, they were perhaps waiting for a word... or the permission to die, the person actually died." (24)

Situations of irreversible coma are very difficult to manage ethically. Should the machines be unplugged or not? Is it morally allowed or not? It is generally believed that only those at the controls of the machines should decide. The examples above show that this is not the case. The spirit of the person concerned also has a say, but in order to hear it, it must be considered that this person is still alive.

Organ transplants

With organ transplants we find ourselves in a situation similar to that of attempts to prolong life by machines. Neither does the transplanted organ bring life, it only reinforces an already existing radiation. One can transplant as many organs as one wants, it will never give life to the body, if the spirit has already separated from it. Organ transplants therefore avoid premature death but do not allow the incarnation of the spirit on earth to be prolonged beyond the duration it would normally have had.

Ethically speaking, the question of organ transplants arises as follows: Is it desirable to take from a living being, with all the suffering and anguish that this implies for him, an organ that will make it possible to prolong the life of someone else? It is indeed undeniable that the donor is still alive. If this were not the case, the organ would be dead and, therefore, of no use. The reason for this is that the recipient's body is incapable of reviving a dead organ. If a transplant is successful, the organ was alive, and in this case it was taken from a living being.

Duration and purpose of life

Unless it is shortened deliberately or through negligence, everyone's life has the necessary length of time to make the experiences he needs and that this earthly life can offer him. What is important, therefore, is to try to live it as well as possible.

By living well, one must of course understand to live well spiritually. It is the only way for the spirit to perfect itself sufficiently to be allowed, later on, to return to Paradise, to live there... eternally.

It is therefore not quantity but quality that we must seek. Or, as the saying goes, one should not add years to our life, but life to our years.

Chapter 6 Accompanying the dying

Although one cannot accompany a dying person to the beyond, it is nevertheless possible to be at his side when he prepares himself for it and when he leaves. Most of the time, he appreciates this presence, as few are the human beings who, during the great moments of their lives can do without the support and care of those close to them.

As death is a natural process, the different stages that the dying go through are the same for everyone. Accompanying a dying person therefore consists above all in helping him to adapt to the natural course of events, but only to the extent that he wants this support. It also involves adapting oneself to the logic of the event, so as not to thwart the dying person's efforts.

So what are these steps? There are four main ones: awareness of the approaching death, its acceptance, preparation and the actual departure.

Awareness

Every human being knows perfectly well that one day he will die. But more often than not, that day seems so far away that he doesn't think about it.

Suddenly, however, he is confronted with the reality of his impending death. Either his own condition tells him this very clearly, or a medical diagnosis leaves no doubt as to the outcome of an illness he is suffering from.

Death then ceases to be an abstraction, or a possibility, and becomes a reality. The day of departure becomes clearer, it is not so far away. It comes inexorably closer and nothing seems to be able to postpone it.

Suddenly there is a total change of perspective. Until then, the person had plans, he was building for the future. He was struggling to regain his health and heal. He still had many days ahead of him to achieve this. Death was for later and for others, not for him.

Suddenly it is for now and for him.

Some people easily make this realization. They even welcome this end with relief, because, feeling that they have done their time on earth, they are happy to leave. Tired, lacking in physical strength, they long for a new beginning elsewhere.

Other people, on the other hand, encounter great difficulties. They are unable to admit the situation and try to avoid it by all means. It is here that gentle and tactful guidance can be very beneficial. Indeed, whoever, in such circumstances, is able to help the dying person to become aware of his situation and to accept it provides enormous support. It is much better and easier to experience an event by approaching it consciously and with confidence than by running away from it.

Four main strategies, identified by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (see Bibliography), are often used to escape from reality.

Denial

The dying person simply denies that he is dying. He removes this thought from his consciousness and represses it every time it reappears. He acts as if nothing was the matter, refuses all evidence and seems to hear none of the allusions made on this subject.

The revolt

When, after a deterioration in his health, he can no longer harbour any illusions about his condition, he feels rejected and excluded. He feels like a victim and subjected to an injustice. He rebels against his fate and often, in order to vent his fear and anger, he attacks those around him for the most futile reasons.

Bargaining

The dying person sometimes also seeks to haggle with himself or with fate. By promising to improve one of his character traits, or to refrain from doing this or that bad thing in the future, he hopes to escape the inevitable and postpone the deadline.

Depression

When he becomes unable to fight the evidence any longer, some of the dying people "give up" and fall into a state of depression. The state of apathy in which he is immersed protects him from confrontation with reality.

Depending on the case, one or more of these strategies are used. The best that can happen is that the dying person finally decides to abandon them to accept his situation.

Acceptance

He who has inwardly accepted his impending death - whether this acceptance was easy or the result of an intense struggle - gains serenity and assurance. For him, death ceases to be a danger to be fled from and becomes an event to be experienced. It is not a battle to be fought against something dreadful, but the surrender to a natural process.

Of course, the dying person's conviction that death is imminent will be reflected in the conversations he has with those close to him. The greatest support they can give him is not to oppose, under any pretext whatsoever, what he says, but to enter into his views and talk about it quite naturally with him.

It is not to betray him, abandon him, reject him or be cruel to him, but to rally to the conviction that is his and that is in line with reality. What service is done to a dying person by assuring him that he will soon regain all his strength and that everything will be as it was before, if this is not the case? Good intention may guide this, but it goes against the truth.

Of course, it is not always easy for relatives who have supported and hoped with the dying person for weeks or even months to admit the situation and face the truth. But many stories from people accompanying the dying show how important it is for them to accept, and to leave the dying person free to leave.

One example is the story of Mr M. and his fiancée Hanna, told by a carer. Lying on her bed for days, Hanna suffers greatly from her illness and the breathing difficulties it causes. Her fiancé has already made it clear to her that he has accepted her departure and that he is inwardly ready, but this doesn't seem to have been enough. One day, he wonders about the meaning of this suffering:

"Why can't she leave, it doesn't make sense for her to torture herself like this, and yet I've already let go!" My astonishment was great (says the accompanist) and I asked him: "Please, tell her again, maybe it wasn't clear...".

I was not very comfortable expressing myself in this way, but this young man, in my presence, immediately said to his beloved: "Listen, you can leave quietly; you know that I am strong. I'll manage well."

And what followed was like a gift for this so brave friend: Hanna got on her back and opened her eyes. Her face took on the same luminous expression I had seen the night before.

Mr. M. thought she was really awake and, very agitated, he called her by her diminutive. I whispered in his ear, "Be calm, look, she wants to show you something!" And indeed, her gaze began to wander calmly through the room again and what she saw was reflected in the radiance of her face which had become supernaturally beautiful. We watched in amazement. Then, suddenly, she went back to sleep.

"It looks beautiful where she is going," I said to him after a long silence. He just nodded his head. Maybe he was only able to fully let go once he had understood what was waiting for his dear Hanna in the beyond.

The next night she fell asleep and never woke up again. No one was with her. I think that everything had been expressed and neither of them were holding the other one back any longer?" (25)

Preparation

Just as before leaving on a long journey many preparations are necessary, not only for the journey itself but also to put in order the things that are left behind, so a dying person may have different things that he still wants to sort out before leaving.

Some are very mundane, such as establishing his succession. Others are more spiritual. For example, the dying person may wish to see certain people again, to thank them or to make a recommendation. Sometimes, too, to try to close a dispute or to clarify, at the last minute, a misunderstanding that had arisen between them.

Spiritual preparations also include the exchanges that he may have with his spouse or a friend, on the meaning of life and the true origin of the human being, on the existence of the beyond and that of the Creator.

The term "unfinished business" is used by those who accompany the dying, to refer to the things that a person close to his end still wishes to resolve before leaving, and which hold him back on earth until they are resolved.

A person accompanying a peasant woman who had reached the final stage of an incurable disease tells the following story:

"One day she said to me: "What have I got from life? I worked, I had children, and then I worked again, and now I'm sick!" There was a great bitterness in her words. I certainly couldn't have talked about the meaning of life with her. So I asked her what her children did and whether she had grandchildren, and she started to tell. She wouldn't stop. You could see how important her children and grandchildren were to her, and that she was even proud of what each of them were capable of. When she stopped, I said to her, "And yet you still say that you've received nothing from life?" She hesitated for a few moments before answering me: "Yes, all considered, it was beautiful!"

The next day, when I came back, her bed was empty. She had left in peace during the night. I can't tell you if she would have past away that night without this exchange. In any case, it was good for her to leave this earth satisfied. It can easily conceive that great dissatisfaction with one's life, as well as reproaches to the Creator or similar thoughts, can prevent someone from leaving this earth; and this naturally prolongs the suffering.

If we are able to help a dying person to "make peace" with his fate, with the Creator, with his family, and if he is able to forgive, we make it easier for him to leave." (26)

Departure

At the end of life, the radiation bridge between spirit and body becomes increasingly slack. At certain moments the dying person is in contact with his earthly surroundings, at others with the subtle environment of the beyond. Those who accompany him must be aware of this and adapt their help accordingly.

It is difficult for a dying person to accept that his loved ones do not believe him when he tells them about the other world he already sees. For him, the landscapes he sees, the people he talks to, or the music he hears, are an irrefutable reality.

This experience fills him up, reassures him and encourages him. What a shock, if he is not believed, or worse, if we consider that he has lost all his head, that he is rambling. He no longer feels considered and fully respected as he used to. This obviously doesn't favour a harmonious departure.

In the course of his contacts with the beyond, the spirit of the dying person is completely absorbed by what it sees and experiences, and momentarily is no longer present to what is happening in its earthly surroundings.

The people who visit him may then be surprised that he does not seem to notice their presence: he does not listen to them or only very superficially. His gaze is not directed towards them but fixes a point in the distance. He doesn't even seem to be happy about their visit.

These moments of "absence" should not be interpreted as a real disinterest. It is not that the dying person no longer loves his loved ones, but only his body is present; his spirit is elsewhere. More often than not, those who are about to leave appreciate having calm and understanding people at their side. They are a powerful support for them during their moments of consciousness, and as a guard to their body, when they have been released from it a little, during their contacts with the beyond.

This does not mean, however, that the dying person wishes to have someone permanently at his side. Some of them, for example, only die when they are alone. Their loved ones are often very saddened by this, because they have accompanied him faithfully day and night for weeks, and he leaves them for the short time they are away. Why didn't he wait for them, they ask themselves, slightly hurt. Maybe he just couldn't tear himself away from them as long as they were near him. Or maybe he didn't want to impose the moment of his last breath on them.

After the cessation of the organic functions that characterise death, the connection between spirit and body is not yet broken, but only very strongly distended. It takes several days for the radiation that had connected them until then to dissipate.

Relatives must therefore be careful not to let their pain burst out too strongly. Otherwise, it is explained in the Grail Message,

"When the grief at parting is too strongly expressed, the person in the process of detaching himself, or who is perhaps already standing beside his body in ethereal form, may hear or feel it and be emotionally disturbed by it. If then pity awakens in him, together with the wish to say a few words of consolation, this again binds him more strongly to his physical body through the desire to make himself understood by the grief-stricken mourners.

He can only make himself understood on earth by the use of his brain. This effort, however, makes for a closer connection with the physical body, and indeed this is a necessary condition. The result is that not only does an ethereal body still in the process of detaching itself re-unite itself more

closely to the physical body but, if it is already standing detached beside the physical body, it will be drawn back into it once more. The final result is that he will once again feel all the pains from which he had already been delivered.

When the process of detachment is renewed it is much more difficult, and may even last for some days. This brings about the so-called prolonged death struggle, which becomes really painful and difficult for the soul wanting to depart". (27)

In order for the spirit to leave the body, it is necessary that the bridge of radiation that connects them weakens sufficiently. This can take place, among other things, by reducing the presence of oxygen in the blood. The state of under-oxygenation is obtained by slowing down the breathing rhythm, i.e. by increasing the lapse of time between each new breath.

These phenomena have not only physiological causes. The spirit which is ready to leave its body also participates, as for any other circumstance of life, it modifies the breathing rhythm to adapt it to what it is doing.

The spirit does not suffer, but participates and directs, therefore according to the end-of-life carer the last breath should not be perceived as a failure, but as a victory; it is not a groan of burden, but a sigh of relief on the part of the one who has completed the passage into the beyond that the laws of nature demand of him.

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