

## Out of Body Building

The juggernaut of scientific debunking rolls on! The latest sacrificial victim flung beneath its all-consuming wheels is the out-of-body experience. You know the sort of thing: the victim of a car crash feels himself floating above the smoke and twisted metal as he observes the paramedics putting the paddles to his lifeless corpse. Suddenly re-enfleshed, he revives and signs a book contract.

Turns out the whole thing has to do with a stick, a fake hand, and the fact that five senses can become at least one too many for the brain to keep track of.

Researchers placed subjects in a position that hid one of their hands from sight and had them look steadily at a rubber hand placed on a table in front of them. The scientists then began stroking both mitts – the hidden real one and the visible fake – with a stick. Next, they bashed the phony hand with a hammer. The human lab rats often yelped with pain.

Now, if one happens to be a fundamentalist atheist, the conclusion is obvious: the experiences of Christian mystics are all a matter of a fuddled nervous system and there is no God. To me, this involves a leap of faith which would make Kierkegaard himself ask for a parachute.

Mystical experience has never been seen as a proof of our faith. In fact, St. John of the Cross, a rock-star of mysticism, said the whole business of visions and voices was pretty much just a distraction and advised hitting the "mute" button. The apostle Paul had an either-in-or-out-of-body experience but didn't think it worth mentioning for a decade and a half and only brought it up when the Corinthians dragged it out of him. Indeed, he concluded that the whole thing was pretty much one big pain in the side. (2 Cor 12.1-9)

Calvin Miller points out in his book *Once Upon A Tree* that the real proof of our faith remains what it has always been: cross-living in the name of a crucified Lord.

A baptismal certificate will tell you only that a man has been baptized. A form letter will tell you he is a church member. But only a cross borne on his back will tell you if he is a disciple. If a man has no cross, he is not a disciple.

Or as Paul put it, summing up his own foray into the paranormal, "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor 12.10)

A fake blow to a false hand can produce a misleading experience in a deceived subject. The real scars in the glorified hand of the risen Christ promise genuine salvation for a believing soul. And the painful employment of one's own hands to touch others in the name of Jesus leaves fingerprints of unimpeachable proof on the crime-scene of Christian love.

Undeceived,  
Doug