

Reflections on Lucid Dreaming and Out-of-Body Experiences

FATHER "X"
A Catholic Monk

Note from Guest Editor, Kathryn Belicki: The following are excerpts from a series of letters written primarily to Charles Tart, with a few to Stephen LaBerge, by Father "X" from 1982 to 1988. In them, he describes his lucid dreams and OBEs, which commenced in 1974 and have occurred sometimes as frequently as three to four times per week. These experiences were not deliberately sought but occurred spontaneously. In fact, initially Father "X" underwent extensive neurological testing because he assumed a neurological problem was causing his experiences. When he discovered that he was not alone in having them, he began his fascinating correspondence with Tart and LaBerge, always sending copies to Jayne Gackenbach. In these letters he details his experiences, struggles with their possible meaning or significance, and speculates about their origin. With Father "X"'s permission, I have organized the following excerpts around several themes which emerge from his letters.

On the Need for More Investigation Into These Phenomena, and, More Generally, for Greater Understanding about Them by Both Professionals and the Public

January, 1982. I delayed writing to you because I am a Catholic monk, and I feared that if my experiences were made public I might possibly wind up becoming an embarrassment to my monastic community. This would grieve me deeply. On the other hand, I felt a strong obligation to reveal my experiences to some professional psychologist who is investigating this field, in the hope that my experiences might make some contribution to understanding this phenomenon.

I better say right at the beginning that my lucid dream experiences are tied up with another, even stranger phenomenon, which I can only describe as "out-of-body" experiences. I realize that the mere mention of this phenomenon raises smiles and sneers on the faces of a great many people, and believe me, there was no greater skeptic than myself until I began to have my own out-of-body experiences.

... I did not reveal my experiences to anyone, for fear they would give me the same answer I was giving myself: that I was having hallucinations. Instead, I began prowling through the psychology section of our library to try to find some scientific or non-scientific explanation for these weird experiences. Finally, I came across a book entitled *Altered States of Consciousness*, edited by Charles Tart of the University of California at Davis. ... I can't tell you how reassuring it was to know that instead of hallucinating myself into a nervous breakdown, I could possibly be having a legitimate psychological experience, albeit highly unusual. As I began to have more and more of these experiences, my fear of them decreased sharply, because

just as in the paralysis attacks, neither my physical nor my mental health seemed to suffer from them; consequently, my intellectual curiosity was aroused and I began a concerted effort to glean as much information from these experiences as possible.

October, 1982. I wonder if he realized how hard it was for me to write that letter: I agonized over it for months before I mailed it. It was not easy for a person who always thought of himself as being a fairly normal, well-adjusted adult, to have to confess that he was having experiences that defied rational explanation. Finally I became firmly convinced that my experiences were significant, but it would take a trained scientist to interpret them, and this was the motivating factor that caused me to write the letter. Any embarrassment I might encounter is surely a small price to pay.

March, 1983. The trouble with having frequent out-of-body experiences is that they force you to walk a very lonely road; you would like to talk to someone about them but where can you find someone who won't think that you are a prime candidate for a mental institution? Orthodox medicine would be of little help: some of the doctors I know think it is rather strange for modern men to be living as celibate monks, so it would not be too difficult to imagine their reactions if I revealed my experiences to them—lack of normal sex life has obviously unhinged my mind. Many of my brother monks are loving, generous men but they would not know how to incorporate this sort of thing into their world; it would be completely foreign to their training unless it had spiritual overtones, which my experiences do not seem to have, at least not of a positive kind. . . . I have often tried to put myself in the position of the third person listening to someone telling me of his out-of-body experiences, without ever having experienced them myself; and as open-minded as I would hope to be, I would probably conclude that this person was a good candidate for extensive psychotherapy. It is really terrible the way we have all been programmed by our culture into believing that any psychological experience that deviated from the accepted norm must be labeled as an illness. I often wonder how many of us realize that the root meaning of that often ill-used word "hallucination" is "wandering in the mind." What greater experiences can a person have than to explore the depths of his own mind?

March, 1988. But my major disappointment about my visits to this sleep laboratory was that nobody there seemed to know anything about lucid dreaming or the research that was being done on it. One of my motivations for going there was the hope I might find someone knowledgeable in the field who I could talk to about my experiences. Therefore it was a real disappointment that no one knew what I was talking about when I used the term "lucid dream." I'm sure the psychiatrist thought I was talking about some vivid, unconscious dream; and when I started talking about out-of-body experiences and a possible demonic aspect to some of my experiences—well, I suspect that any possibility of my being taken as a rational person probably went out the window right there.

On the Relationship Between Lucid Dreaming and Out-Of-Body Experiences

January, 1982. After undergoing hundreds of these experiences, covering a period of seven years, I came to the conclusion that lucid dreams (or any type of dream) and

out-of-body experiences are one and the same, which means, I suppose, that when we dream, we are actually undergoing an out-of-body experience; we have released some sort of "dream-body." This is, of course, all speculation on my part, based solely on my own subjective experiences and not on any hard psychological facts.

I believe that these experiences did not just come upon me "out of the blue," but were the end product of a strange paralysis which afflicted me for years. It was back in the early 60's when I began to have sudden attacks of this paralysis during the evening as I lay in bed. It was right at that point when consciousness has let go and sleep is about to take over. The attacks seemed to last some ten or fifteen seconds, and although I was aware of my surroundings, I could not move a muscle from head to toe. The attacks kept coming, and along with them came a great deal of noise—sounds similar to an engine cranking up, . . . or the screeching of railroad wheels. If this were not enough, my body was trembling from head to foot with severe vibrations, and sometimes (not always) there were voices that seemed to be making small talk far off in the distance. . . . That is how it went from year to year until a night in late 1974 when something happened that gave me the scare of my life. I was lying in bed waiting for sleep to come on when I felt the paralysis beginning to take hold of me: sometimes I can fight the paralysis off if I catch it in time, but this time it swept over me too fast, so I just settled back to let it run its course:

. . . when the vibrations began, they were stronger than I have ever felt them and all of a sudden I felt myself being lifted off my bed and flung through the ceiling; the next thing I knew, I was floating in the air about 500 feet above the ground; but I was not outside my monastery: it looked like I was flying over a typical outlying suburb of any American city. After flying around for a few minutes I finally "landed." It was around dusk, and I started walking up a street which had houses on either side of it. I reached a house where there was a young girl sitting on a porch; I noticed she had a bruise on her leg; as I had no idea of what to say I just blurted out the first thing that came to my mind: "Is there a church around here?" I asked. "Yes," she replied, "there is one on the campus of National University." "Is it a Catholic church?" I asked. "Yes," she replied. She gave me directions, and as I resumed walking I could see the headlights of cars coming down the street, but before I reached the corner, I found myself back in bed.

Little did I know then that this was to be the first of hundreds of similar experiences which I refer to as "out-of-body" experiences for want of a better term.

. . . The lucid dreams began the week following my first out-of-body experience: I was having a normal dream (by this I mean a dream in which I have no awareness that I am dreaming unless I wake up and reflect upon it) when all of a sudden something triggered complete consciousness in me:

I was now fully aware that my body was lying in bed and here I was in this "dream-world." Recalling my out-of-body experience from the previous week, I jumped up in the air to see if I could float around, and sure enough, there I was, floating around like an astronaut in his weightless environment.

October, 1982. The reason that I made the supposition that out-of-body experiences and lucid dreams were one and same was because the only difference I could see

between them was the way I entered them. The world I was entering appeared to be the same for both phenomena. My out-of-body experiences always began with a period of paralysis and vibrations throughout my whole body; next, I would feel myself leaving my body, and off I would go. The lucid dreams always began with a normal dream (possibly a better term would be "non-lucid dream") which turned into a lucid dream. In some mysterious way my subconscious mind (which I assume is controlling my non-lucid dream) relinquished control of my thoughts and actions back to my day-conscious mind. But what about the dream-world environment that I am still in? Who or what is controlling that? Surely it could not still be my subconscious mind, unless it relinquished only a portion of control and still manifested control over the environment; but could this be so? Well, as I said, I am only a novice when it comes to understanding psychology of the mind.

January, 1986. I believe you (LaBerge) are absolutely right when you suggest that out-of-body experiences should be more accurately described as "Wake-initiated" lucid dreams (WILDs) because the people having these experiences are not traveling in physical space but in mental space, and consequently, have not left their bodies. I am sure that your idea will meet with a lot of resistance since most of us are so conditioned into thinking in terms of three-dimensional physical space, that the concept of mental space would be difficult to conceive.

I have always been uncomfortable with describing some of my experiences as "out-of-body" experiences for the following reasons:

1. Even when these experiences were extremely lucid and I had the vivid bodily sensation of moving around with the utmost ease, I always had this vague physical sense that I was still lying in my bed.
2. Then there was always the question of why I had never observed my body lying in my bed as Monroe and others have reported; even in those experiences where I found myself in a room similar to my own with a bed in it, the bed was always empty: on a few occasions the blankets were pulled back and there was an impression on the bed that a body had been lying there, but there was never any body.
3. Finally, and this is the most important one, there were always those even stranger experiences when I had returned from an experience (either an out-of-body experience or a lucid dream, it didn't matter which). If I could feel the paralysis and vibrations still active in my body, all I had to do was just lie there and about sixty percent of the time I would reenter the experience I had just left or enter a completely new one. It was totally without the sensation of leaving my body—it was instantaneous. One second I would be lying on my bed and the next second I would be back in this strange dream world. I couldn't call these experiences "lucid dreams" as they were not preceded by a normal dream, nor could I label them "out-of-body" experiences because I did not have the sensation of leaving my body, so what could I call them? It would seem that they would fall perfectly within your category of "Wake-initiated" lucid dreams.

So, even though I would place my "out-of-body" experiences within your category of "WILDs," I am not sure that Monroe's experiences could also be placed in that category, specifically because of his having observed his body lying in his bed, which would seem to indicate something other than a lucid dream; but I am getting out of my depth here so I will leave that question to you and other researchers.

On the Relationship Between Lucidity and Dream Control

October, 1982. Although it is true that in these experiences the environment does occasionally change, it is not due to any conscious effort on my part that I am aware of. In *A New Model of the Universe* by the Russian scientist, P.D. Ouspensky, the chapter on dreams makes for fascinating reading, especially where he describes his attempts at changing the environment of his dreams while in what he calls a "half-dream state." He apparently was successful more times than not. I have made similar attempts in some of my experiences, but I have never been successful; consequently, I am led to conclude that the environment my experiences take me into is under the control of a source other than my own mind—conscious or subconscious.

... During most of his experiences, Monroe seems to have full control over his "Second Body," as he calls it, but this is not always the case with me. There have been many times when I could move around as freely as I do in our world, but there have been other times when I felt like I was walking through a sea of glue, with any movement painstakingly difficult. And there are varying degrees between these two extremes. Sight also can be a problem; again, sometimes I can see as well as I do in our world, but other times it is as if I am looking through a dirty windshield.

September, 1984. I can corroborate some of Dr. Tholey's findings from my own experiences, but some of his other findings are contrary to mine. For example, I can support totally his supposition that the dream world seems to possess, at times, (more often than not in my case) an "inertia" or "lawfulness" all its own rather than being the dreamer's subjective creation; in fact, I offered this suggestion in my original letter to Dr. LaBerge—that part of this world I entered seemed to be connected to my past history, but most of it was totally foreign to my experiences. Also, on any number of occasions I have tried to change the scene that I was confronted with but was totally unsuccessful, scenes do change and people do decrease in size but it is completely outside of my control.

There is something to his theory that fixing one's gaze on some stationary object while in the lucid dream experience helps to dissolve the experience; on any number of occasions in my experiences while I was attempting to read some sign or paper, or concentrating heavily on the scene so as to impress it on my memory so I could write about it later, the scene began to fade and I found myself back in my bed. In a recent experience I tried his suggested technique of restabilizing the dream by lancing about, but it did not help at all—in fact I am convinced that it only helped to dissolve the dream. It is my feeling that if one could only just "flow" with the experience and not try to concentrate too heavily on it, the experience would probably last

longer. But these experiencers are so extraordinary, how can you not concentrate on them in an effort to understand them? It is something like walking on thin ice; if you can keep your mind off how thin the ice is, it may not break, but how can not think about it?

On Unpleasant Experiences in Lucid Dreaming, OBEs and Related Experiences

October, 1982. One of the most stunning similarities between Monroe's experiences and mine is that we have both experienced "the man on our back." It has happened to me several times, and all were equally frightening. They usually happen to me when I am literally pulled out of my body and propelled through the sky above the clouds at a terrific rate of speed; if it is daytime, I can see the ground through the breaks in the clouds; if it is evening, I can see lights below. It is when I start to slow down and descend that I begin to feel a heaviness on my back. When I reach the ground, I usually regain control over my body and am able to shake him off. The first time it was a young white male who said his name was Alan; another time it was, again, a young white male who asked me for an aspirin. The latest one was the most unusual because I was not taken outside and driven through the sky, but was kept inside and propelled through a series of strange rooms until I was finally deposited in a room with three young women, and a short, fat, smiling, middle-aged man with glasses jumped off my back. In all these experiences the conversations was hard to pick up and the experience was very short.

. . . Another aspect of this world is that there don't seem to be too many people smiling and laughing; and when you study some of their faces, there seems to be a hard cast to them, and sometimes there is a strange light in their eyes which is, to say the least, very unsettling.

. . . Monroe, at times, also seems to have had the same difficulty that I had in attempting to read any printed matter—it is either out of focus or unintelligible. He also has met with the same wariness and caution that I have met, while endeavoring to obtain information about dates and localities from the residents of this world. If I persist in my questioning they get angry and sometimes downright hostile. . . . An atmosphere of menace can come about in different ways; sometimes just by the very fact of a non-lucid dream becoming lucid. Let me cite a recent experience which is a good example of this type: About a month ago in a nonlucid dream:

I found myself in some sort of restaurant having dinner with two acquaintances. After finishing our dinner we got up to leave; it was then I noticed my jacket, which had been hanging on the back of my chair, was missing. I became very upset, and we began looking for it. The other restaurant patrons, about seven or eight, also helped; even the cook came out of the kitchen to lend a hand. Then, all of a sudden, in some mysterious way, complete lucidity came over me; I now had my complete day-conscious mind about me. I knew everything about myself, my past, my present—that my body was in my bed asleep and I was in a dream. I spoke in a loud voice, "My God! I'm in a dream again!" (No matter how many times this has happened to me, it still astonishes me). My acquaintances and the other patron of the restaurant looked at me with what I can only describe as a malevolent look in their eyes, and a few of them said in a menacing voice,

"Yes, you are in a dream, aren't you?" Then the cook walked towards me with what looked like a saw in his hand and said, "Now we will show you what it is like to be in a dream." He then proceeded to try to saw my head off; the next thing I knew I was back in my bed, head intact, I'm glad to say.

. . . In another experience, a few years ago, a middle-aged man with a sinister face came up to me and said, again in a disdainful voice, "Why don't you people give up that old supper of yours?" His reference to "old supper" I took to mean the Christian Eucharist we celebrate at mass. There is another aspect to this particular experience which makes it unusual, and that is the fact that he initiated the contact with me; in the great majority of my experiences, I am usually the one who has to make the first move at conversation.

If I related these experiences to some of my brother monks, they would have no doubt as to what is going on here—it is obviously the work of the demonic, and there is a good possibility that I have been selected to be a candidate for demonic possession. I hardly think I am worth the trouble, but if some diabolical powers are planning to do some nasty things to me, they are certainly going about it in a very curious way. As I said previously, when I enter this strange world, the people I meet are usually completely indifferent towards me; I have a sense that they know I am there, but, apparently, they couldn't care less. I am usually the one who has to initiate the conversation, and it is only when I start to pump them for information that they get angry and hostile.

. . . I was deeply touched by Mr. Monroe's very personal account of the collapse of any religious faith he once had in a purposeful universe, watched over by a wise God, full of compassion and love for his creatures. I know how devastating it can be when the values of a lifetime begin to slip away and are found to be, if not entirely untrue, at least to be standing on a very shaky foundation. As you may have guessed, I now exist (partly because of my experiences) on a knife-edge between belief and doubt. But so far I have not succumbed to the temptation to view my experiences as opening the door to the ultimate reality; rather, it may only be a way-station to a further, deeper reality which is still closed to us; at least, this is what I hope and pray for.

March, 1983. I was forever searching for a mirror to see what my reflection looked like; finally in one experience I found one, and to this day it still gives me chills up my back when I think of it. The experience began as a normal dream which turned into a lucid dream:

I found myself in what looked like a motel room as it had all the furnishings associated with that type of room; I spotted a dresser with a large mirror on it, and I immediately walked over to it and looked into the mirror. The reflection that I saw was me all right; I was wearing a monastic robe, and the face that looked back at me was my face, but it had a sinister, almost evil cast to it and my eyeballs were revolving in their sockets and I could see the whites of my eyes.

It was many weeks before I got over this experience, and I am not too eager to search for any more mirrors. . . .

September, 1984. Another puzzle I began encountering in these experiences was that of conflicting dates. In one experience,

I found myself in some sort of business office; I noticed that there were three calendars on the wall and each one had a different year printed on it—1970, 1971, and 1975—and when I pointed out to him the different dates on the wall calendars, I was met with sly, sneering looks and threatening gestures from him and the other office workers. This is another facet of my experiences which keeps popping up—if I question the accuracy of these statements, these people become angry and hostile.

January, 1986. There was one early experience that I related to him which I never told you about, primarily because I was afraid that you might be turned off by its religious overtones. It preceded all my out-of-body experiences and lucid dreams, and in terms of fear and terror it was the granddaddy of them all. What makes it so mysterious is the fact that it was neither a lucid dream nor an out-of-body experience. In the monastery we lived in cells or cubicles in a dormitory. One night late in the evening as I was lying in my bed trying to go to sleep, but as usual, being unsuccessful:

I suddenly became aware that the normal sounds that one hears in a dormitory at night—people moving in their beds, snoring, coughing, wood creaking, overhead fan blowing, etc.—all these sounds had ceased, there was absolute, total, dead, silence. My bed was facing a window and I found myself staring at the top of the window; there was nothing there but I just couldn't move my eyes away from it. Then all of a sudden, a tidal wave of fear swept over me, the likes of which I have never before or since felt. For the life of me I couldn't understand what was happening; it was so irrational as there didn't seem to be anything to fear, but there I was, lying in my bed literally paralyzed with fear. I couldn't move a hair, I just kept staring at the top of the window. Then the air around me started to take on a strange heaviness as if some intangible force was pressing down on me. Suddenly, out of the blue, a thought flashed into my mind: it was a passage from a book I had read a few months before; a biography about one of our Catholic saints, a little French nun, St. Theresa of Lisieu, who died in the early part of this century. At the end of the book when she is on her death-bed, she asked one of the nuns standing by her bed to move the crucifix as close to her as possible because she was feeling the power of evil so intensely; and that is the thought that flashed into my mind and could not be dislodged no matter how hard I tried. How long did this experience last? It is hard to measure these sorts of things but I would guess that it was at least fifteen minutes or longer. Finally, as quickly as the fear came over me, so did it vanish and along with it the heavy air that seemed to surround me. Then I started to hear the normal sounds of the dormitory and I was able to move my eyes away from the top of the window.

As you may imagine, I didn't go to sleep the rest of that night. I just lay there trying to come up with some rational explanation as to what had happened, but no rational explanation was forthcoming. About a week later I moved out of the dormitory and into one of the small rooms for snorers which had become vacated, then a few nights later my out-of-body experiences and lucid dreams began.

It has been almost fifteen years since I had that experience and I can still remember it vividly. As I said, I have had a number of subsequent experiences where I was terrified, but they were nothing quite like the fear I experienced that night. I

realize that there are few, if any, psychologists around nowadays who believe in the reality of the demonic. As I have stated in a previous letter, even I am somewhat dubious about it, but I am still not totally convinced that it does not have some subtle influence, however small, over my experiences.

Reflections on the Origin or Nature of Lucid Dreams and OBEs

October, 1982. I realized that some people see out-of-body experiences as confirming the existence of a soul, but I believe that they are making a mistake; whether a person has an immortal soul (in the theological sense) or not, is solely a matter of religious belief; you either believe it or you don't, and that is all one can really say about it.

... What could this "unknown source" be? Could it be the "Collective Unconscious" that some people have speculated about, an unconscious which we all share in, or could it be an even stranger phenomenon, some sort of "Parallel Reality" which impinges on our sense-world and occasionally a "crack" opens and some of us are able to peer into this strange world with our conscious minds. Please understand that I am not speaking from a religious point of view; religion to me is a matter of faith, not of science; I am simply trying to make some sense out of these bizarre experiences which I have been undergoing for the past seven years.

... Every day for the past several years I have been facing a question that seems to have only one of two possible answers. One is that my experiences are nothing more than wild hallucinations brought on by a subconscious mind that has somehow slipped its moorings and run amuck, firing off unknown neurons in my brain; therefore, I had better get myself to a psychiatrist, posthaste, to restore my disordered mind back to the normality, whatever that may be. The second is that this world I have entered is real, that it does exist, possibly in some other space-time continuum, and it does have some relationship to our world.

As I stated in the opening of this letter, after pondering this question for several years, I still don't know which answer is the correct one. As a resident of this hectic century, I have no doubt that I have my share of neurosis, but I cannot believe that my mind, no matter how disordered, could have created this world. Every time I return from an experience, I am absolutely and totally convinced that this world exists. But after the passage of a few days, and I become involved in my day-to-day activities, doubts will start creeping in, especially the enormous one of what the impact would be on our religions and, possibly, our science—surely it would be immense.

Monroe's idea that this world may be the anti-matter world existing on the other side of a black hole is intriguing, and certainly no crazier than what many reputable scientists have suggested what may exist behind those mysterious holes. One time I had the wild idea of trying to "bring something back with me" from this world to assure myself of positive proof of its existence. It happened about three years ago:

I found myself sitting around a conference table with a group of men. I couldn't hear what they were talking about so I began fiddling with a pencil that was lying on my table; I could feel myself leaving the conference room and begin to see the vague out-

lines of my room; I also began to sense myself on my bed, but as I looked at the pencil, I could see that it was getting smaller and smaller, so I gripped it as hard as I could, and it seemed to stop shrinking, but I could now see that I wasn't going anywhere; I seemed to be suspended between two worlds. Reluctantly, I released the pencil, and the conference room scene disappeared, and I was completely back in my body, without, alas, my pencil.

... I was totally fascinated by Robert Monroe's book primarily because some of his experiences were not unlike my own. It is very reassuring to know that a successful middle-class businessman and family man, whose lifestyle must be the polar opposite of my own—a celibate monk, has had out-of-body experiences similar to mine. I dare say any psychiatrist searching for the cause of our "affliction" would have to look somewhere other than our chosen lifestyle.

March, 1983. I have always been troubled by the thought that I might go to my grave without anyone knowing about my experiences, for I sincerely believe that somewhere among all my out-of-body experiences must lie clues to the mystery of our human consciousness, but it will take a wiser man than I to uncover them. If, however, in the final analysis, my experiences are found to be nothing more than hallucination (using the term in its most pejorative sense) brought on by a disordered subconscious mind, they still might be of some interest to some Freudian psychologist. Although my experiences may not be unique, I rather suspect that they belong in a special psychological category.

... As I said earlier, I don't know why I am able to enter this other state of consciousness—if that is what it is—there is certainly nothing special about me. I am about as average a person as you could find. However, I do have a number of unresolved conflicts stirring within me which could well have put enough pressure on my subconscious mind to kick open the door to this strange world. If the good doctors at Topeka VA Hospital put me under their microscope the way they did Robert Monroe, I fear a far different picture would emerge than the clean bill of health they gave to Mr. Monroe. I am sure they would zero in on these conflicts as the root cause of my "hallucinations," and, as I say, they may very well be right. But if the price for resolving my conflicts is the closing of the door to this other world, I'm not sure I would want to pay that price. Please understand me; I don't get any emotional or sensual satisfaction from traveling in this other world; as a matter of fact, more times than not, it can be extremely frustrating—but the intellectual challenge that it presents is just too great to let pass by.

September, 1984. One problem I have in trying to understand these experiences is that so many of them seem to be totally foreign to any events in my past life. For example, in one of my earliest experiences:

I found myself in what looked like an airline terminal; as I was wandering around, a black soldier in uniform came up to me and pointed to an insignia on his uniform which read "1921 Nicaragua." He said that "it was the best thing that anyone could have" and then he walked away.

Now this happened back in 1975 before Nicaragua was in the news and I was at a loss to try to find any experience in my life to relate to it. In another experience:

I was passing what looked like a movie theatre and on the marquee I could read part of the advertisement (which is unusual because as I have said many times it is most difficult for me to understand any writing I come in contact with in these experiences), the advertisement read: "... based on books by Robert Louis Stevenson." It must be thirty years since I picked up a book by Stevenson.

... So why am I going through all this? Mainly, I suppose, to convince myself what I have always thought and suggested to you in one of my early letters—that underlying all my experiences is some subtle demonic force at work. I realize how hard it is for scientists to accept this premise. It is equally hard for me to accept it, but there have been times in some of my experiences in which I felt a presence that literally froze my blood, and if I could have seen myself I'm sure that my hair was standing straight up. Therefore, since I am only a simple monk and not a reputable scholar, I would like to make the following wild speculations. Could it be that one of the individuals I met in my out-of-body experience was indeed one of Henry James' creations and by giving him life on the printed page, James also gave him life in another level of consciousness; or could it be that James simply delved into his own subconscious realm where many spirits abide and plucked one out to give it life on the printed page?

I have also been doing some reading on the life of Emanuel Swedenborg, specifically a book on his work by Wilson Van Dusen, entitled *The Presence of Other Worlds*. But I must confess that I don't understand a lot of what Swedenborg is talking about; and the little I do understand, a lot of that I find hard to swallow. But I do believe (and can corroborate from my own experiences) Swedenborg's main premise; that man's life involves an interaction with a hierarchy of spirits.

... It is really tragic that science with all its vast resources refuses to acknowledge the existence of any other realm of being outside our own known world. However, if my reading of the scientific journals we get is correct, that attitude may be changing; a few brave physicists are now maintaining that modern physics has reached a new way of looking at things; they are saying that the classical idea of a world divided into separately existing parts which interact is no longer valid.

... Another possible explanation for my experiences that I have been thinking about might lie in that mysterious concept of the Fourth Dimension. I understand that with the advent of computer graphics, scientists are now able to do some amazing things; and for not a few reputable scientists, the possible existence of a fourth dimension is no longer considered as absurd. Well, in any event, I am no longer obsessed with the need to find an explanation for my experiences. I simply regard them as another facet of my existence.

March, 1988. If we believe that the mind is nothing more than a process emanating from the electrical and chemical reactions in the brain, then where else would lucidity be triggered except in the brain? Possibly we will have to wait for more sophisti-

cated machines of the future before that question is answered. It might also be helpful if we could develop a new vocabulary for describing these types of experiences, especially for that term, "out-of-body," which I have never been comfortable with, since there is so much metaphysical baggage attached to it. Even though that is how the experience feels, it is very unlikely that anything really leaves the body. But on the other hand, I don't think that I can still accept LaBerge's idea that it all happens in the mind (brain?). Then what does that leave us with? I suspect that we are in a situation similar to that of the physicists when they began probing deeper into the subatomic world and found that the customary terms like "subject-object," "cause-effect," "space-time," "observer-observed," etc. didn't seem to carry much meaning in that strange new world. Well, I will let the professional researchers worry about that as it is way beyond my capacity.

... And that brings me to another facet of my experiences which I fear will make you as a scientist a bit uncomfortable; but the title of your newsletter, "The Open Mind," encourages me that you will give it a fair hearing. I am talking about what I refer to as the demonic. These types of experiences seem to be increasing of late, particularly in the last couple of years. One in particular I would like to draw your attention to, because it shook me up so much I had to talk to someone about it.

... This experience occurred just before the bell rang for the 7:00 a.m. office.

I was just lying in my bed wide awake waiting for the bell to ring when I began to feel these strange chills throughout my body. This usually means that the vibrations are not far behind, and after that an out-of-body experience; but the vibrations did not come, just these strange chills getting colder and colder. Then I began to hear some mumbling off to my right, and when I looked over there, I saw this little man, looking like a ventriloquist's dummy, smiling at me and chatting away in some incoherent language. When I asked him who he was and what was he doing in my room, he just kept smiling at me and mumbling away in that strange language. I got out of bed and grabbed him by his foot, then I bounced him off the ceiling like a rubber ball; when he came down I tried to grab him again but he scooted under my bed and came up on the other side. He then turned his face away from me so that I could only see his profile, and then he spoke these three short sentences which I heard as clear as a bell and had no trouble understanding, "We have Him. Christ is burning. The hummingbird men have Him!" When I tried to grab him again he disappeared and I was back in my bed.

I just lay there in bed, literally terrified by what I had just seen and heard, and trying in some rational way to understand what had happened. . . .

... As for myself, prior to my experiences, I counted myself among those "modern" religious believers who saw the devil as nothing more than a quaint symbol for my own disordered passions, but now, after all these strange experiences—well, now I'm not so sure about that any more. It is really mind-boggling—the fellow that we thought we had ridiculed into oblivion may actually exist. He is, after all, the second-most important figure in the New Testament.