

THREE TIMES INTO THE LIGHT —

Mark Giordani's Journey (Part Two)

In Vital Signs' previous issue [#2, 2002], Mark Giordani told of his battle with Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome and, by age 30, the evolution of that condition into the first of his three near-death experiences. That first NDE began with a gray void, from which Mark was moved through several stages, including viewing his own wake from within an open coffin, and traveling up a spiral tunnel past luminescent beings into an ecstatic light. This installment continues his story from within that light.

To my surprise, I then was moved out the other side of the light. I was puzzled. It didn't make any sense that I didn't stay within the light—or at least go back down into my body the same way I'd come up.

Yet I was moved, *away* from where I'd been, out the other side. The light *extruded me*, as if I were one of its rays, much like the sun's rays that emanate outward into space. Though I still felt connected to the light, its center now was behind me.

Then I began to burn—downwards from my head and upwards from my toes, both at the same time. It was a titanium-white fire. Even though I had no clear image of a body, I knew where the burning was. There was no pain, but as more and more of me disappeared towards my middle, I wanted to know: “When this ends, do I die—or will I be healed?” Of course I had already gone through a whole process of dying, so I don't know why I would ask such a question at this point. But “die” seemed to mean that I'd finally turn into nothing; and “healed” would mean that I'd come back to earth with none of my illness.

Whatever was left of me kept moving faster and faster, becoming smaller and smaller. Do you remember the old-fashioned TV sets—when you'd flip off their switch, the picture would contract to a dot? That's what happened to me; eventually all that was left was a little dot, a “seed” of me in my middle. Yet I could still think; I still had awareness. So whatever I was at that moment—my spirit, my consciousness, my semblance of a body, I don't know what you'd call the state I was in—was now an intense ray of white light: bright, and speeding forward. The rectangular tunnel had become round, and I was illuminating it; the whooshing sound changed to silence. I'm a laser beam, shooting through a tube at the speed of light.

When the mounting acceleration can increase no further, I explode. As if smashing through a prism, I'm split into thousands of pieces of cosmic glitter. My consciousness, scattered widely, twinkles festively against a deep, black backdrop of nothingness. My soul—or whatever we specks are at that moment—feels like a rainbow shimmering with the rest of everything; a vast potential yet to be realized. I am at one with *all* energy in the universe.



Then I wake up in my body. And throw up all over the clinic room. My doctor looks at me, noting that my skin has changed from pale to flushed, my body temperature from cold to warm, and says, “I think I may have saved your life.”

I check in with my body and notice that I still have sharp abdominal pains, my face still hurts—nothing's much different there. So I'm confused. As I was burning up a few moments ago I'd wondered, “Will I be dead or will I be healed?” Now it turns out to be neither. Instead it's: “You're back inside your sick body, and you have no choice but to endure it.” It didn't seem fair.

Like people who survive a car accident or other major trauma, when you come back, you want to tell everyone what happened. But you're almost too tired to even contemplate telling them, so at first I just wanted to sleep. I slept a lot for the next few weeks, and each time I emerged from a rest, I'd tell pieces of my extraordinary experience to a few close people. I kept wondering, “What really happened? What does it mean?”

My friend saw a change in my eyes: I'd become determinedly curious to learn what this bizarre experience had been about. I no longer wanted my life to end right away—not until I understood the mystery I'd just been through. Wanting to solve that mystery in fact gave me a will to live.

The doctor needed to perform another surgery—in total there were four areas of deep infection that had to be cleaned out from my jawbones—so a few weeks later I was in the operating room again. During the intervening weeks I'd continued to feel weak, my body still ached, it still over-reacted to the environment and to so many foods that were supposed to nourish me—so life had continued to be nearly hell, even though (and in painful contrast to the fact that) I had, for one moment, experienced ecstasy. So I didn't walk into this surgery with real hope, and perhaps because of my gloom, soon after the procedure

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started I found myself again in the frightening gray void.

I remember thinking, ‘Oh—this feels familiar. Try not to be scared; try to relax; it might turn out okay.’ So I talk my way past my fears, even though it means, in effect, choosing to die. I feel no struggle about leaving my family and friends behind this time, or disappointing my doctor, as had happened with me in the first experience. My soul, or whatever, already knows that it’s okay to go. And this time I experience no wake! It’s as if, having broken my bonds with earthly life during the first NDE, there’s no reason now to ceremonialize that break a second time. So I find myself moving smoothly from the gray void up to the tunnel entrance. Yet significantly, I don’t feel as though I’ve been ‘let off the

hook’ in any way, or have detoured around anything. Quite the opposite—as I’m moved from the void towards the tunnel, I feel as though I contain, spiritually and knowledge-wise, the same understanding that I experienced when earlier I did let go of my earthly life. The change which that step had created in me during the first NDE I feel now again, completely.

At the tunnel entrance I again am infused with all-knowledge from the TV screen—but at a much faster pace. In fact, in this NDE everything goes faster than in the first one; I feel like I’m living through a videotape on fast-forward. Yet it’s just as powerful, and just as entrancing, as the first time. I’m moved up the angled spiral tunnel, again hearing the zooming sounds—ZZZZZZ, ZZZZZZ, ZZZZZZ—past openings through which I see, and feel, extraordinarily beautiful

landscapes. My physical pain and mental fog dissolve, and are replaced by a wonderful warmth in my body and clarity in my mind. Near the top of the tunnel I encounter, and commune with, powerful translucent beings. And then, when I think I can’t get any happier, I round the last corner of the tunnel and see—and am astoundingly flooded by—the light.

I used to tell people that this light looks like the sun, but I can also say it looks like an extremely bright full moon on a very dark night, because you *can* look straight at it. You see its rays of light come streaming toward you, and you feel its strong gravitational pull. Before

rounding the last corner, I’d already felt *completely filled* by its merely reflected rays, as they came into me off the tunnel walls. Now, as the light-source comes into full view, and I’m face-to-face with it, the majesty of it—the love pouring

from it—the enormity of it—saturates me. I’m no longer separate from it; I AM a beam of this light source. And I’m being drawn back up into it, into Home.

Once inside the light, there’s no more ‘Mark’. I’m all light. Like a drop of water in the sea, I’m made of the same substance as the whole. The light and I are energy—unconditional love—and one ounce of us is as unconditional as a thousand tons.

I bask in Being.

For a timeless duration.

And then, as amazed as I was the first time, I’m sent out the other side of the light, focused into a single beam, and sped up. Like the first time, I’m further condensed and accelerated until I become a laser beam of speed and force, eventually exploding into an ethereal, universal glitter of creative energy—angel-like dust within a massively black

backdrop.

But again I wake up in a painful, yet stimulated body; intensely curious; in awe; and fully spent.



The fact that I’ve now made the same journey *twice* begins to work on me. Although the first NDE felt life-altering, there still could have been some room for—if not exactly *doubt*, then I still might not have gotten *anchored* by the experience to the same degree. Because of all the other things I was struggling with, day after day, I’d had no energy to grapple with the enormity of the experience. But the fact that I’ve now gone through this second trip, equally as magnificent as the first, leaves no part of me capable of discounting or ignoring it.

So as the first experience had made me curious to keep on living, this second one now re-fuels me with a will to live, to keep on trying to get healthy. And my body, too, shows me some results: as I leave the medical clinic I look down at my usually pale hands and see them ruddy with vital blood flowing through them. Each NDE has temporarily re-energized my body, and has refreshed my memory of what it feels like, at least momentarily, to be without pain. But it remains to be seen if I’ll actually wind up on the road to real health. The doctor tells me I won’t need any more surgeries right away, so I travel back home, wondering if I may hope that, someday, I’ll have a chance at a normal life.

But life just doesn’t appear normal to me, at times, because of where I’ve traveled to twice. I’ll be in an ordinary situation, doing nothing unusual, when suddenly I no longer see it from ‘here’; instead I’m switched to the perspective of ‘there’. For instance, one evening I was at my girlfriend’s house; we were sitting together on the living room couch, watching a video. I felt happy and safe; her pet cat was purring nearby; we felt like a secure family. It then occurred to

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ON AUDIO TAPE

IN HEAVEN AS ON EARTH: A VISION OF THE AFTERLIFE

By M. Scott Peck, MD

Read by David Duker

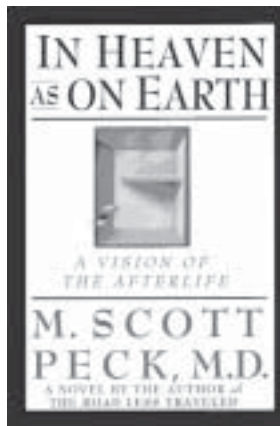
Reviewed by Paul Bernstein

M. Scott Peck is perhaps best known as the author of *The Road Less Traveled*, the 1978 popular, pioneering set of essays that brought a synthesis of psychology with spirituality to mainstream readers. Since then, Peck has published *Further Along the Road Less Traveled* (which some consider more valuable than his first volume); *The Different Drum*, which presents methods for bringing people closer into community; *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*; and eight other books.

One of those other books is the novel, *In Heaven as on Earth: A Vision of the Afterlife*, which I recently came across in audiobook form (by Dove Books Audio; available also by electronic download from audible.com).

Sometimes a book that doesn't initially appeal to many readers can be more successful if actors bring its characters to life through their trained skills in voice and emotional expression. This appears to be the case with Peck's *In Heaven as on Earth*, as some readers had initially complained that the book seemed "strangely unemotional", "a bit bland", or "lacking warmth". But experienced film and TV actor—and Tony Award nominee—David Duker works nobly on this recording to give the listener a distinct feeling for each of the novel's eight characters.

The story begins with a classic NDE, as the main character Daniel (a psychiatrist like Peck), is being visited while seri-



ously ill in the hospital by his two grown children. Suddenly Daniel sees his own body below him, and realizes that he has floated out of it, up to the ceiling of his hospital room. Soon he is traveling through a vortex-tunnel, at the end of which he experiences a brief life review in the presence of an extraordinary being of light. After 'passing out' from astonishment, Daniel finds himself alone, in an unfamiliar small 'room', and begins to confront the several issues of personality and metaphysics that Peck wants the audience of this story to wrestle with:

- Who are we—as a self? as a body? as a soul?
- What is heaven? what is hell? what is purgatory?
- After leaving the earthly plane, how long do we feel concerned about those we've left behind?
- In our 'moments of truth', whether on the Earth or in the afterlife, what must we do to choose knowledgeably between good and evil?

During the course of the story, Daniel gets to visit with previously departed family members, and also learns how to return to Earth at any era of his choosing, including times before his birth. So Peck has given himself and the book's audience plenty of room for imaginative adventure. But he keeps the content of those adventures focused on his social concerns—hell is depicted, in part, as a large corporation Peck calls "Amalgamated Systems"; and on his concerns for personal ethics—Daniel at first judgmentally rejects, but later comes to feel affection for, his nearest neighbor in the afterlife.

Peck also gives himself room to enjoy speculating on how 'heaven' might be governed—by committees (!) apparently, and also by a meritocracy of awareness.

Accompanying Peck—via his alter-ego, Daniel—through these dramatized ruminations on the nature and purpose of life can be quite enjoyable, provided the listener expects ahead of time to be participating in a philosophical quest, more than expecting a richly-detailed literary entertainment.

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me that there was something a bit strange about this situation: two human beings, side-by-side, watching a lighted box (the TV). I thought, "What strangeness this is, we humans, doing this—what *are* we; what am I *actually* doing—what *am* I anyway?" And as soon as I asked that question, I popped out of my frontal view and began to observe the situation from behind my own head. In a moment my perspective broadened to include the entire room, as if I'd moved further back and upwards. A moment later, I saw the

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whole house from above—I was outside looking down on the roof. Next, I could see the entire block where my girlfriend's house was. And then, like a satellite zooming out from the Earth, I saw in successive 'snapshots', her town, the county, the state, the United States, the continent, the oceans, the Earth.

And then my vision changed from seeing the Earth as a human being does, to seeing the whole universe from the perspective of being *inside the light*, the very same light that I had been inside during my near-death experiences. From that vantage point one sees EVERYTHING—everything that ever was, ever could be, all of eternity, all of space, time, the continuum of life. Everything.

Simply because I'd asked, "What am I anyway?"—as if the cosmic answer to that question was, "If you want to know, Mark, just take off your blinders." You pop out of your body, zoom all the way back to your source and realize that you *are* that light.

It seems that in order to exist as an individual human being, we've all zoomed down and narrowed our daily focus to a single point perspective, the person we ordinarily think we are. But apparently, we have the potential to go—*phoom*—all the way back out.

As soon as I was back inside my body, in my girlfriend's living room, I was unable to do anything but collapse off the couch onto the floor in tears. This expanded identity was way too much for my still-weak body to contain. Fortunately, my girlfriend held me until the sobbing ran its course, and I could begin to see things again from within the more narrowed, human perspective.

Because there was never a sense of 'dying' during this journey, and because I'd 'backed up' into the light by expanded perspectives on the everyday world—rather than starting out in a featureless void and moving *forward* to the light, up a tunnel—I didn't consider this another near-death experience. Also, it hadn't come at a moment of despair like my two near-death experiences. Instead, it came at a time when I was feeling somewhat at peace. So I called it a "vision", and had divided feelings about it. On the one hand, I began to think about checking myself into the looney bin, particularly because the vision seemed to happen without any control on my part. On the other hand, its stepwise expansion of this-worldly perspectives intrigued me. But its overwhelming potential frightened me, so I decided to treat this power with great respect. Still, my curiosity led me to think, "Maybe once my body's strong enough, I can learn a little more about this." That helped deepen my motivation to get healthy as fast as possible.

But instead of improving steadily, my health—and therefore my outlook—kept oscillating. The surgeries had probably removed a lot of the infection, but my body was actually too weak for my jawbones to fully heal. [I realize this now, but didn't understand it at the time.] So my immune system was constantly under challenge, and it would over-react to chemicals in the environment and to so many foods that I needed to eat. Since I couldn't get properly nourished, I had too little energy to work steadily—instead, I often needed to sleep through large portions of the day.

This only deepened my despair. I kept seeking new information about ways to alleviate my medical condition. I subjected myself to many injections, to antibiotics, to the

nausea and other debilitating side-effects, but nothing was giving me permanent improvement. Eventually I ran out of options, the suffering became unrelenting. So at one point, after lying exhausted in bed for days, I simply pleaded with God, "Kill me, or cure me"—over, and over, and over again. "Please end my misery. I can't face this futility anymore."

And then it began: I found myself in the gray void again. And like the second NDE, this journey went faster than the first. It even went faster than the second. Not only did the wake stage not occur this time, but I sped past the information download at the tunnel entrance, gulping in the all-knowledge in a nanosecond, and moved up rapidly through the tunnel without encountering any waystation or lenticular beings. I felt wonderful, and merged with the light. Bathed. In ecstasy. Timeless. But again I was extruded out the other side, much to my amazement. Accelerating as a laser beam to fantastic speeds, I again exploded, experiencing the glory of becoming all colors of energetic, cosmic glitter, sparkling in the limitless black.

Then I was back in my body, lying in my bed. It had been an express-train, round-trip to the light. A cosmic carrot—or tease; as if to motivate me to keep on living. Though none of my NDEs ever contained a spoken message, the message my body *felt* from this third one was, "Despite all the suffering you're going through, you

are still *good*. You are utterly of the best stuff there is—love.

And, you are loved.

You are safe."

The light and I are energy—
unconditional love—and one ounce
of us is as unconditional as a
thousand tons.

Mr. Giordani's journey concludes in the next issue of Vital Signs. We are very grateful to Melissa Fellows for transcribing portions of Mr. Giordani's public talks, which served as one source of this narrative. ☯

To read more first-person accounts of near-death experiences, please visit the IANDS website, particularly

www.iands.org/msgboards/messages/544/544.html?1022121637

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