

Atwater, 1

P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D.
atwater@cinemind.com
www.pmhatwater.com

A CHALLENGE TO THE IDEA OF "WALK-INS"

by P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D.

Throughout recorded history and in myth, people who suddenly appeared out of nowhere, aided a human being in trouble, and then vanished, were called "walk-ins." Some claimed that angels were also walk-ins, miracle workers who made a difference – like the modern-day report of the man driving a tow truck who rescued a family stranded in a snowbank because their car slid off the road, then promptly disappeared, poof! truck and all, no good-byes, no noise, no tire tracks in the snow to prove he was ever there, even though everyone saw and experienced the exact same event and all were left with the same puzzled looks on their faces.

Incidents like this share equal space with stories of beings who "step" into the earthplane from some parallel or distant dimension, stay for whatever reason however long, and then "walk" out – appearing to enter and exit through some kind of "window" or time aberration. I've seen one of these walk-ins myself. My son has seen several, as have friends of mine. When it happened to me, I felt chills coursing up and down my body. I was startled at first, then I laughed for I knew what I had just seen. My son Kelly was upset about the carload of people that vanished in front of him as he was bicycling home from a day of swimming, until I relayed my own walk-in encounter and those of other people he knew. Once he realized he wasn't the only one who witnessed such things, he breathed a sigh of relief and was okay about it.

Yes, it is possible that some of these sightings could be of *doppelgängers* (a German term for the ghostly double or counterpart of a living person that appears and disappears without the person so "pictured" actually being present or even nearby). This phenomenon, and that of *biolocation* (the ability to be in two or more places at the same time), have been part of the human story since time immemorial. However, the scientific premise that "imaginary projections from the brain" create all such phantoms does not explain away either the frequency or the complexity or the physicality of such reports.

The term "walk-in" has become part of today's lexicon, not because of consistent sightings the likes of which I have just mentioned. . . but because Ruth Montgomery's "spirit guides" coined the label for other purposes. A former newspaper journalist, Montgomery has done well in the metaphysical marketplace, tempting and tantalizing her readers with abstract concepts and "higher truths."

Her book *Threshold to Tomorrow* (Putnam, New York City, 1983), posits walk-ins as supposed "advanced souls" who are somehow "allowed" to walk in and inhabit recently vacated bodies. In order to accomplish this feat, these so-called advanced souls agree to revitalize the recently vacated body and execute whatever remains of the former soul's obligations before they begin their own mission to help humankind. Montgomery claims that the reason for such "switches" is to enable advanced beings to take a shortcut into earthly existence. The soul formerly in residence within the body is apparently "excused" from finishing out the life and is freed to either develop elsewhere in other realms or receive another body through the natural process of birth.

Montgomery goes on to state that these switches occur during extended periods of unconsciousness or during near-death experiences. She has no idea how

the switch works, but claims an agreement must be reached between the two souls involved or the switch cannot take place.

Montgomery identified a number of people, both living and dead, as walk-ins, people such as Anwar Sadat and Einstein. One living person so identified is Reverend Carol W. Parrish-Harra, founder of Sancta Sophia Seminary, who had believed herself to be "another person" long before Montgomery ever wrote books on the subject. In response to publicity generated when she was so named, Parrish-Harra wrote her own book entitled *Messengers of Hope* (New Age Press, Sancta Sophia Seminary, Tahlequah, OK 1983). "Messenger" is her version of Montgomery's term "walk-in."

Parrish-Harra's near-death experience occurred during childbirth and, of course, changed her life. Her story of struggles and transformation is inspiring, as was her quest to "find herself." I first met her in 1984 and have since spoken with her many times. To say I am impressed with her ability as a teacher and speaker would be an understatement. She is *very* talented! Still, there is nothing in her personal story that would set her apart from any other near-death experiencer who had undergone an intensely transformative experience, or that would indicate she might be a walk-in – except for her belief.

Ruth Montgomery's original description of walk-ins and how to recognize them *mimics the average behavior of the typical near-death experiencer, or, that of someone who has undergone a spiritual transformation no matter how caused.*

It is *normal* for such people to believe themselves new and different

It is *normal* for such people to even look different and act as if they were "other" than themselves.

It is *normal* for such people to be revitalized, more knowing and able, to possess skills and talents new or expanded from before.

All of this is perfectly normal given the incredible power of true transformations of consciousness, no matter how they are caused. The physiological and psychological aftereffects pattern details what these people can go through afterward and the extent of change that typically occurs.

There are hundreds of millions of people throughout the world who fit the pattern of a walk-in as described by Ruth Montgomery, including myself. Are we all advanced souls supplanting our lesser fellows in an attempt to prepare the masses for a new age? I think not. But, since this notion is so confusing to so many people, let's give it a fresh look.

There *are* historical references to Montgomery's walk-in theory in mystical and metaphysical literature and in legends from various cultures, although terminology differs. *Exchange* was the expression used most often to describe souls who traded places in a given body. Stories about "exchanges" are no different from the current renderings of near-death experiencers and those like them.

If you examine the historical material, then compare what you find with modern renditions, you can't help but notice this recurring pattern: declaring oneself "new" instead of "changed" puts less pressure on the unenlightened and ensures a safer political climate in which to live and work. Socially, it is more acceptable for individuals to grapple with a mystery than to admit that they might have been in need of personal transformation themselves. After all, the public, any public, has always preferred entertainment to embarrassment.

Nonetheless, I have met three people who I think really are the type of walk-ins Montgomery describes in her book. Two are adult women, the other is a very confused young man. All three have unusually bright eyes that intently search what can be seen, rather than just look; and the vibration around them, their presence, does feel at variance to anything I have sensed from an individual before. I cannot explain this, but I can be tolerant. With what I've experienced in my life, I have long since learned that this wonderful world of ours is a treasure trove of miraculous oddities.

I do want to extend a caution, however. Every walk-in Montgomery wrote about went through extensive and lengthy periods of confusion and depression, with little more to offer than disconnected, dreamy ideas. None had the ability to utilize the knowledge they claimed to have or to empower others until after they had engaged in years, and I do mean years and years of study and training, to learn how. This hardly constitutes "a shortcut" or even a sensible way for "advancements" of the so-called advanced. All the historical figures she said were walk-ins, all of them, of record, had gone through what appeared to be near-death experiences (most during childhood). I discuss some of these in my book *The New Children and Near-Death Experiences* (Bear & Co., Rochester, VT, 1999/2003), in the chapter on Historical Cases.

Whether people such as these are evolving through more than one incarnation during their present life, or expressing past-life or future-life personalities, or projecting a glamorous fantasy to gain attention, what I suspect is happening here is that people globally are suddenly becoming *more* of themselves. They are expanding in consciousness and they have no way to explain or

Atwater, 6

understand how that happened or why. Just because someone feels “suddenly new” does not mean he or she is a different soul in the same body.

There are many paths to enlightenment – some just involve a few more detours than others.

*

P. M. H. Atwater, L.H.D. is one of the original researchers in the field of near-death studies, having begun her work in 1978. To date, she has written 10 books on her findings. Check out her website at www.pmhatwater.com. In this article, refer to her books: *The New Children and Near-Death Experiences*, *Beyond the Light: What Isn't Being Said About the Near-Death Experience* (Avon Books, New York City, 1994), and *Near-Death Experiences: The Rest of The Story* (Hampton Road, Charlottesville, VA 2011).