



Wynn Bruce

Life after Four Deaths

by Christopher Sassano

This article is an edited version of a talk by Christopher Sassano on his near-death experiences, given in Boulder, Colorado, in the fall of 2006.

My story is a little different from the usual near-death experience (NDE) because I've had four. I was on a roller coaster ride, safely guided through each step by spiritual beings. For me, death was and is an absolutely safe experience.

In America today, NDEs are much more prevalent than most people realize. I didn't study the phenomenon until I was in my forties when I met Dannion Brinkley, the author of *Saved by the Light*, and appeared on television with him. He was a CIA assassin who had experienced the typical stages of an NDE. Then I read Dr. Raymond Moody's books on his NDE research and discovered that people all over the country, medical doctors included, were conducting studies on NDEs, trying to understand them.

My first NDE occurred when I was 11 years old. I was living in a nice, suburban town outside New York City. There were a couple of lots next to our house where all the kids played wiffle ball. Apparently I had stood on a hornets' nest and the insects came flying out, went up my pants and into my shirt. I ran next door, waving my arms and yelling at the top of my lungs. My mom ripped my clothes off, got me into the shower, and tried to drown the wasps. I was stung about 700 times. She didn't call an ambulance. She just threw me into the car and off we went to the local medical clinic.

In all my four NDEs, there has been a point where I couldn't get another breath. At the clinic I couldn't breathe. I was puffing up like a blowfish and breaking out in hives. The medical staff was trying to get tubes down my throat and I was in terror.

None of my NDEs was dream-like; all were very intense, high-energy events that released massive amounts of adrenaline. There in the clinic I wanted another breath and couldn't get one. Then, all of a sudden, everything became peaceful. I experienced myself in the room, my mom and the doctor standing over me. My mom was crying, telling the doctor to "do something!" Later, I was able to recount to them their conversation. I remember looking at the clock and yelling, "I'm fine! Hey! Look! I'm fine!" My body was lying on the table, but I felt completely at peace, within a field of love. I noticed a being off

to my right, an illuminated spiritual guide of some sort. I saw a tunnel of light form in the right corner of the room and then, whoosh!—down we went. In later years, my mom told me I had flatlined for about a minute and was in a coma for many hours before I came to.

The following year, I was swimming off Cape Cod. Suddenly, I was a long way from the shore, floundering and panicking because of the current. I was trying to swim against a rip tide even though I knew I was supposed to swim along with it. Fortunately, a lifeguard on the beach had been watching my progress, and he set out after me in a little boat. Meanwhile, water was getting into my lungs and I was completely stressed out. My arms were like lead and I felt I couldn't move any more. Then just before I died, everything became peaceful (like my first NDE), and I was no longer worried about my body.

I floated serenely above the ocean. I didn't see the lifeguard coming in his boat, but I did see a being of light to my right, and a tunnel of light forming as before. This time I went down the tunnel and met my grandmother and some of my maternal great aunts—people I had never actually met in life because, while alive, they had lived a thousand miles away in Illinois. They had come to welcome me, but they also told me that I was going back. The next thing I knew I was spitting up water on the beach, and people around me were crying. The lifeguard was pumping me out, and my mother was in tears because her son had nearly died—again.

My NDE at age 21 changed me most profoundly. I was living a typical guy's life in London. I'd been a high school jock—a starting quarterback, a pitcher—and my goal in London was to have sexual encounters (without, I might add, any success). It was 1969 and the "summer of love." A couple of the guys and I had tried to meet girls in the clubs—and I had gone to a block party near Notting Hill Gate, where I lived.

To this day I'm not sure what happened that night in the middle of July. I hadn't been sleeping in my flat because I couldn't stand the noise of London. My habit was to jump over the fence and sleep in nearby Bannister Park because no one

ever checked the parks in London at night. (I remember Bannister Park had peacocks, parrots, and all kind of other birds. In the middle of July it's light until 11:30pm, and the sun comes up around 3am.) I'd eaten a lot of fish at the party, so I've always said it was food poisoning. I was very sick with some nasty stomach cramps. I was lying with my blanket, alone under a tree when it happened—I couldn't breathe.

This time there were no paramedics, no doctors, no lifeguards. My struggle for breath worsened. The intensity was incredible. I just wanted one more breath! Then my consciousness split and I found myself watching scenes from my life, moving backwards to my childhood. During this time I was still fighting for breath, curled up in a fetal position. As I arrived back at my birth at the moment of my first breath, I simultaneously experienced the moment of my death because I could no longer get a breath. I opened my mouth to scream but nothing came out, and I popped out of my body.

In my experience, we're not "here" until that first breath. I'm not sure what happens with a fetus in the womb because we can certainly communicate with the soul of a baby before it is born. However, I do not believe that abortions kill conscious, incarnated entities. I learned that I did not incarnate—I did not slide into my body—until that first breath.

Back in Bannister Park that night, I was no longer in my body but standing next to it, relaxing into a sea of love. I knew we all existed within this sea of love and moved within it. This sea was like liquid light and we were like fish moving within it. The light moved in currents like rivers across the earth. Although it was night I could see everything clearly, and I felt at one with everything. The liquid light was dense and layered. Those closer to the ground were less pleasant in color, more of a gray or brick-red as opposed to a golden white. My experience was of being one with God. I felt that the universe had the body of a being and I was a small part of that being.

Within seconds I learned so much about myself; the biggest blessing was to learn that we are always connected. God has



gifts. Our gifts are not for us; they are for other people, and other people pull them out of us. We're here to learn compassion, truth, sensitivity, and how to listen. And we're here to learn how to love.

The light being who appeared was the same being from my first NDE. We all have a spiritual guidance team and we're their "project." If the team is good at its job, we will not know it's helping us. Anthroposophists¹ believe that our goal is to mature to the point that we no longer need the guidance of this spiritual team. We must establish our own heart-mind connection. I learned that we only meet certain people who are part of our destiny and that we also have a spiritual family. We arrive on earth in groups of 20 or 30 family members. We love this spiritual family dearly and have a heart connection with them that is below our conscious threshold.

given us the gift of the Heartmind. Our Heartmind is always connected to the great oneness of God, the great spirit world of light-love. It is never confused; it always knows what's best for us. The Heartmind exists, but we are so noisy and it is so still. In our lives we behave as if we are in endless meetings with ourselves. So many people live in their minds, and it is as if they are just visitors to their meetings.

Everything happened so fast. I felt like an atom in this being's body. Light fields rayed out from it, into the distant universe. I could see 360 degrees around me. That was unnerving and I did not like it at all! Then all of a sudden, my vision returned to normal.

During this part of the NDE, there was no tunnel of light, no spiritual being by my side. I was simply in a world of pulsing, swirling colors. Everything—every tree, plant, the earth—had an auric glow, and currents of liquid light moved through them. Once I discovered that I could move, I abandoned my body and started flying around, traveling at incredible speeds. I learned that the birds in Bannister Park could see me because I scared them when I flew about 20 feet

above the ground. The peacocks up in the branches took flight when they saw me. The scene reminded me of a Goya painting with its thick colors. There was a thickness to everything. I became aware of the sun, which I could see right through the earth. The sun had a really strong pull for me. I soared so far up into the atmosphere I could see the whole of England, France, and Spain.

I became aware of a cord that extended from my navel and went down through the clouds over London. Years later, I read about the silver cord, and how cutting this cord signifies death. The cord exists in many traditions, even in the Bible. My silver cord was still intact; I still had form. When I was high up over Europe, my teacher, the light being, came, and I

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downloaded information about myself and our world, seemingly within seconds. It felt as if I were in my ancient home. I knew I had lived many times before and that this was not my first incarnation on planet earth. I became aware of the existence of other worlds, worlds where it was possible to live between lifetimes. I learned that we come here to give our

After a while, up above the clouds of Europe, my teacher told me it was time to check in on my body. I had been observing the sun directly without burning my irises, and it had a great pull for me. I connected it with the Christ. The next thing I knew, instead of going up to the sun, I was standing next to my body.

When I oozed back into my body, it felt creepy, all clammy and stiff. I sat and cried for the longest time. I had lost all my paradigms. I knew I had been saved from the stupid life of a jerk, that of a shallow American teenage boy. I was 21, but I felt like a high school kid again.

That morning in the park, the light was just coming up as I wandered around. I could still see the waves of light and their beautiful movement. I knew that God existed. When I jumped the fence out of the park, I was in a state of grace.

On the path before me was an elderly lady in a wheelchair, and she said something that made me think she knew what I had just experienced. I fell on my knees, put my head in her lap, and began to cry. This crippled, old woman held me and blessed me.

One negative result of my NDE is that my breathing is messed up. I often hold

my breath, which makes sense when you think of my trying to get that last breath during each of my NDEs. It's as if I do not want to let go of my breath again.

One of the most profound teachings I received was that everything I had learned to that point was either wrong or irrelevant. This so turned my world around that I was unable to return to college. I couldn't do my schoolwork. I couldn't take tests (and I had been good at them). My parents completely freaked out. On my return to Connecticut, I began working in a health food store. In 1969, the state was brimming with amazing teachers, and I was attracted to an Eastern spiritual path. I lived in communes. I needed quiet. No more rock and roll concerts for me. (In London, I had been working for *Billboard* magazine, reporting on Beatles' and Stones' concerts.)

I met an 80-year-old Rosicrucian man, a German, and he took me under his wing. He guided me away from the Eastern path where I believed I was going to merge and disappear into nirvana. I really wanted to do that because every time I died, I merged with the oneness of God and love and light. But the German man told me I was here to stay. He said I needed to learn techniques to be present and learn to grapple with the world. His philosophy was: You didn't come here for a vacation! That was very healing.

I began having precognitive experiences, psychic experiences, intuitive experiences. I moved out to Yosemite on the edge of Nevada where all the gas stations were casinos; we'd go to Reno to shop. I played a little game where I would allow myself one bet. On the way to the bathroom, I would walk by the machines on my left hand side and play the one that felt warm. I won every time, about 30 times in a row. I still have that habit. Brinkley, of course, talks about winning tens of thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, I just won gas money.

Eventually, I joined a spiritual group near Yosemite and studied meditation. I lived seven years in the desert by myself and loved being there. I needed that stillness. I have learned that there are four pillars to the temple, and spirituality is just one

of them. The others are relationships, health/chi, and life practice and work. It took me a long time to figure out some of these. For many years, I was definitely a more incarnated person, always wanting to re-merge with that great life force. I can always feel it and I can feel it in other people. When we die, we realize it was always right there, this Heartmind. The early Christians called it *gnosis*, the part of us that is not confused, that is connected, that knows what we are supposed to do and knows our gifts.

When I was in my mid-40s, I became aware of Dr. Moody's books,² and I started learning about the seven, eight, or nine steps (depending on what you read) of an NDE. I read about the life review and what a wonderful experience it could be. I thought, What a bummer! Why didn't I get to do the life review? I went backwards to my birth, but it was all so fast. Then a week after I lamented this omission to my wife, Sage, it happened.

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I was now 49 years old and in my backyard, when a bunch of wasps flew up and stung me. Within about 15 seconds, I realized I was going to die again. Yes! I thought. I started puffing up, breaking out in hives, and I could feel the energy pulsing. I ran inside and told Sage what was happening. She immediately said, "We're going to the hospital!"

"No we're not," was my response. "I'm lying down and going for the ride!" When I couldn't breathe, I began to wonder whether this was a good idea. I had given Sage permission to call the hospital if absolutely necessary. Just as I was getting to my last breath, the whole room became peaceful and everything was blissful again. I still couldn't breathe when the being of light appeared. By now Sage had fallen asleep. Rudolf Steiner³ says that the spiritual world operates in what we could call lower theta or the sleep realm. Sage had locked into this when she fell asleep. Most people can't remain conscious when they're in the presence of spirit beings unless they are, for example, trained

meditators. In the Bible, an angel shows up at Jesus's tomb and everyone falls asleep.

When the tunnel of light opened up on my right, I thought, *I don't want to die*. I also wasn't sure I needed to go down it. I saw the floating light field and the liquid crystal light. I looked through the walls of houses into what I always think of as the third or fourth heaven around the earth. I expressed to the being of light that I didn't want to die, but I did want a life review. The being thought this was wonderful. Out of his heart center came a blue ray that reached to my throat and allowed me to breathe. The being asked me what I wanted to review and I said, "All the experiences I've had with women in my life, and whatever else you want me to review."

My life review was like a holodeck: as if I was in a three-dimensional recording of my life. (The holodeck is a technology on *Star Trek*.) During it all, I was in a room and did not leave my body. The tunnel of light disappeared. I was in this third or fourth heaven with the realms of light, and I was connected with God, light pulsing through my heart.

I could see my whole life as if I was watching it in a movie theater. I just slid into the experiences. I began to feel everything I had caused others to feel. If I had said a mean thing and thought, *Oh, they'll get over it*, now I felt what they felt. If I had told a lie, it was as if I had murdered someone. It was soul-wrenching. (Dannion Brinkley's experience is that if you were unconscious about your actions when they occurred, reliving them is less painful.) I have no idea how Dannion ever went through his. I mean, he was an assassin for the CIA; he murdered people! I did experience being nice to an elderly woman and helping her cross the street. I could feel how this event rippled through her life. She was so grateful for this kindness and passed it on to others. I got to feel the repercussions of the time I went into a bank and was rude to a female bank teller. I experienced how she went home and was mean to her kid. She kicked the dog in anger and slammed the door. I realized my action had triggered this.

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Then we were at the state basketball championships during my high school years. I wasn't a big guy then, but I was still a decent basketball player. In the game I scored 22 points during two overtimes, and my teammates carried me out on their shoulders. Our team had upset the number two seed. When I got to see this, I thought, cool! But the light being told me I had already had my reward—and instead I experienced my seven-year-old sister trying to congratulate me outside the basketball gym. The pretty cheerleaders

were checking me out and wanting to congratulate me, so I ignored my sister. My sister remembers this event vividly, and she was upset at the time.

Reliving these experiences was incredibly healing. Some teachings advise you to do this every night, so you don't have to wait for the big, epic review when you die. Then, before everything faded and I parted from my spirit guide, I was also able to download more useful life information.

As I re-entered by body, Sage woke up. The light fields slowly disappeared, but the auric colors stayed for days afterwards. Then I began to see accidents—playing like a video—before they happened. I would be driving, turn a bend, and narrowly avoid the site of a nasty wreck. I would touch people and know exactly what they were ashamed of or what they were hiding deep down inside. Eventually, I asked for the “knowing” to stop—and it did. Brinkley uses his psychic abilities in his teaching, but I found it too painful to know and feel everyone's pain. I never touched anyone who wasn't hiding something.

Two weeks after my last NDE, I was again in the backyard, tossing a hay bale, when out came a swarm of wasps. They got into my shirt and my hair, so I started ripping off my clothes and headed for the shower. I was at the front door with very little on when I realized that the wasps weren't stinging me. Not one of them stung me. Then I heard a voice say, “These things don't happen by accident.” Near-death experiencers say, “I was just minding my own business, living my life, working in the backyard, swimming in the ocean, playing wiffle ball, sleeping in the park—and all of a sudden, I was fighting for my life.” So I will repeat this: Death is an absolutely safe experience. All my NDEs were planned by my spiritual guidance team to wake me up. Each time one occurred, I was in chaos, but these beings were all waiting for me. “Okay, he's almost here! Here he comes!” 🌐

Notes:

1. Spiritual philosophy developed by Rudolf Steiner.
2. Raymond Moody, Jr., MD, PhD, author, researcher into near-death experiences at www.lifeafterlife.com.
3. Rudolf Steiner, Austrian philosopher and clairvoyant.
4. Institute of HeartMath at www.heartmath.org.

Q: Do the dead attend their own funerals?

I believe that everyone goes to his or her own funeral. We're all curious about what's going to happen. When people have died, they are initially in a state of confusion. They're blissed out; they don't yet know that everything is connected. They haven't really learned anything yet from being dead. Just because you die, you don't suddenly become wise. I am more inclined to talk to the spiritual teachers than to my ancestors. Usually, all that the dead can share is how wonderful it is on the other side. They are ecstatic and loving. I think people go to funerals, and then they cross over the energy river around the earth. We used to have names for it—the River Styx, for example. Once you cross it, your life goes on.

My experience is also that the spiritual realms are full of schools and temples. Eventually, you return to your spiritual family whom you love. Not all members of our spiritual family incarnate at the same time. Half of them are here on earth, and the other half are on the other side.

Q: Are there any practices that you do now that can bring you close to that same experience of peace?

I've spent my whole life trying to understand this heart-knowing mind. Over the years, the HeartMath Institute⁴

has developed some practices you can learn, and one of them is to find your heartbeat in a given situation to learn to be present. Find your heartbeat while you're talking to someone and feel that center. I also practice meditations that are centered upon the heart. One of my early teachers gave me the practice of loving God with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Q: Can you give an example of a practice we can do for people who are dying?

One of Dannion's techniques for being with the dying, if you are connected with them, is to find your heartbeat, and to slow it down to match their beat. If you have meditation skills, you can also match your breath with their breath, then switch your breath to the opposite of their breath. When the angel comes and the tunnel of light appears, you experience it too. At first, it's confusing, but on this side, you are holding steady, locked into a nice, meditative state. You're rocking with the person; you're breathing with them. You've got your heartbeat entrained. When a parent dies, you can travel down the tunnel of light and hand them off to grandparents or others who are waiting. The person on the other side still feels connected to you, but you let them go. You experience that death is not the end but is, instead, a new beginning.