



THE CORNER STONE

ON LIFE
AFTER
DEATH



WALTHER HINZ



Walther Hinz (1906–1992)

It can be considered a stroke of good fortune when an academic of international renown chooses to write a clear and accessible book addressing the fundamental questions of life.

Born in Stuttgart in 1906, Walther Hinz taught as a professor at the University of Göttingen, specializing in the history of the Near East and Oriental philology. His impressive body of work, spanning decades of groundbreaking research, includes deciphering the Elamite script of the twenty-third century BC, for which he was awarded an honorary doctorate. Walther Hinz died in Göttingen in 1992.

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On Life after Death

ABZ VERLAG ZURICH

You are no longer foreigners and strangers,
but fellow citizens with God's people
and also members of his household,
built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.
In him the whole building is joined together
and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Ephesians 2:19–21

THE world in which we live is out of joint. People no longer know what they can rely on. An outer veneer of prosperity and pleasure barely masks their inner emptiness, but in the depths of their hearts there is fear. They long in vain for a feeling of inner security. The message of the churches has lost its power of persuasion. Shadows of worry, of hopelessness, are spreading everywhere.

But if someone were able to view the events of our time from a point beyond this world, they would interpret the signs of the age with confidence. They would see the chaos that surrounds us as the birth pangs of a new era. Behind all the horror and darkness of today, they would perhaps see the dawning of a happier tomorrow.

This book is an attempt to focus a ray of this coming light into our present age. It endeavors to provide answers to life's pressing questions. Only insight into the higher dimensions of life can give us that inner certainty, that peace of mind for which we long. People will find inner security only when they possess knowledge of where they have come from, of the purpose of their life on earth, and of their ultimate destination. They will then no longer need to fear what awaits them when they depart this world. Our deepest anxiety is fear of the unknown. This fear cannot be banished by the hesitant teachings of the churches, nor by the findings of modern science. Only an answer that unites science and faith is capable of doing so.

Admittedly, most people today consider such an answer unattainable. On our imperfect earth, knowledge and faith appear to be mutually exclusive. Faith and knowledge are, however, just different aspects of the same human existence – in reality they form a unified whole. On a higher plane they merge: faith

becomes knowledge. Our task, therefore, is to penetrate that higher plane. We need, as it were, an otherworldly viewpoint. Whoever attains this will experience inner peace filling their soul. With such a vantage point, they will once again feel inwardly secure. Secure within the truth. Has not the Teacher of humankind promised us that the truth will set us free?

In order to arrive at this truth, we will now explore new paths together, seeking and testing, holding on to what is best.

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AS we set out on these new paths, the first question we must consider is this: Is there a life after death?

A materialist believes that “everything ends” with earthly death. Many religious people also have their doubts. Indeed, there are even theologians who maintain that the soul dies with the body (Christian mortalism). Is it not shocking that we can find only contradictory answers to this most fundamental question of human existence?

Yet personal survival after death has been scientifically proven. In the nineteen-thirties, Dr. Emil Mattiesen compiled evidence of life after death. I was personally acquainted with this outstanding individual and academic, and was able to assist in the publication of his groundbreaking collection of empirical evidence, the three-volume work *Das persönliche Überleben des Todes* (Personal survival after death), which took place in spite of the prevailing sentiments at that time.¹ The first two volumes appeared in 1936, and the third followed in 1939. The Berlin-based renowned academic publishers Walter de Gruyter took the risk of publishing this work; a reprint was issued in 1962 because of continuing demand, followed by a second in 1967.

Mattiesen’s work justifiably bears the subtitle *A Presentation of the Empirical Evidence* (in German). How is it that neither

the academic community nor the general public was willing to acknowledge this empirical evidence?

There were various reasons for this. First of all, every new branch of science finds it hard to be recognized by the established disciplines. This applies especially to the field of metapsychology advanced by Emil Mattiesen, since it goes beyond the boundaries of conventional science. But the main reason this evidence of personal survival after death does not find recognition is because it does not fit in with the materialistic worldview of the twentieth century. Moreover, the idea of life after death is to many people uncomfortable, even repugnant. They prefer to behave like the proverbial ostrich in this regard, but they do not alter the facts by doing so.

Every independently minded person has a duty to familiarize themselves with the facts that shape their own destiny, even if these feel uncomfortable to them at first. Let us turn without hesitation, therefore, to the evidence that sheds light on the process of dying and on the conditions that follow death. From the abundance of material on this subject, I have chosen only a few cases that are especially relevant.

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A preliminary and rather common stage in the dying process seems to consist of a person temporarily “stepping out” of their body, particularly in the case of serious illness. During this experience, they are astonished to see that their spirit-self also has a bodily form. An American physician, Dr. A. S. Wiltse, has given us an especially insightful account of such an experience.²

He was suffering from typhoid and so acutely ill that he had neither a pulse nor a perceptible heartbeat; indeed, his relatives believed he was dead. After a period of unconsciousness, Dr. Wiltse once again regained consciousness outside of his body, as he later recorded:

“I realized my condition and reasoned calmly thus: I have died, as men term death, and yet I am as much a man as ever. [...] I watched the interesting process of the separation of soul and body. As I emerged [from the physical body], I saw two ladies sitting at my head. I seemed to be translucent, of a bluish cast. [Following the gaze of one of those present in the room] I saw my own dead body. I was surprised at the paleness of the face. I had not looked in a glass [mirror] for some days and had imagined that I was not as pale as most very sick people are.”

Dr. Wiltse tried to attract the attention of those in the room, but without success, which made him laugh out loud. But, to his astonishment, the mourners did not hear him. “They see only with the eyes of the body,” he said to himself, “they are watching what they think is I, but they are mistaken. That is not I. This is I and I am as much alive as ever.”

He then made his way through the door, down the stairs, and out into the street. “I stopped and looked about me. I never saw that street more distinctly than I saw it then. I took note of the redness of the soil and of the washes the rain had made [during the time I was bedridden].”

The observations made by Dr. Wiltse inside the room and on the street were, as subsequently verified, completely accurate. With all due caution, we can draw the following conclusions from his notes, which I quoted in abbreviated form:

Embedded within our coarse earthly body is an ethereal spirit body. It has the same form as the earthly body, but is invisible to human eyes. The soul animates both the earthly body and spirit body; it is the bearer of our true, spiritual self with its perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The spirit (spirit body and soul) is able to temporarily detach itself from the earthly body during a human being's lifetime (during sleep, for example). But the complete separation of the spirit from the earthly body obviously results in physical death.

THE critical question now is whether the soul maintains a conscious existence once the earthly body has died and decomposed.

To answer this question, I have selected a particularly well-authenticated report on the dying process. The case was documented by Dr. C. Renz in San Francisco and published in the prestigious *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*.³

The account was given by a businessman, Mr. G, who is described by Dr. Renz as an extremely calm, level-headed, and strong-willed individual. Dr. Renz had been treating his terminally ill wife. On the afternoon of 23 May 1902, Mr. G was sitting at the bedside of his dying wife, holding her hand. In his account, Mr. G states that at a quarter to seven in the evening, “I happened to look toward the door, when I saw floating through the doorway three separate and distinct clouds in strata.” Mr. G got up and opened the door, but no one – least of all a suspected smoker – was to be found in the hallway or adjoining rooms. The “clouds” had meanwhile approached the bed and “completely enveloped it.”

“Then, gazing through the mist, I beheld, standing at the head of my dying wife, a woman’s figure. She was transparent, yet like a sheen of brightest gold; a figure so glorious in its appearance that no words can be used fitly to describe it. She was dressed in the Grecian costume, with long, loose and flowing sleeves – upon her head a brilliant crown. In all its splendor and beauty the figure remained motionless with hands uplifted over my wife, seeming to express a welcome with a quiet, glad countenance, with a dignity of calmness and peace. Two figures in white knelt by my wife’s side, apparently leaning toward her; other figures hovered about the bed, more or less distinct.