Are Angels and Heaven Depicted Correctly in Films?



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To Earl, my beloved husband and earth angel

for his eternal love and support

and

To all my soul mate angels in heaven

as always

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by Pratibha A. Dabholkar, Ph.D.

Introduction

The primary purpose of films is entertainment. Most of the movies discussed here fulfill that purpose very well. Only a few of them do not. But even the entertaining ones do not always succeed in the secondary purpose of enlightenment; for some, it is not even an objective.

This book examines how films have portrayed angels, heaven, and supernatural phenomena, and how closely these depictions tie in with knowledge we have gained from the near-death experience (NDE) and after-death communication (ADC) literatures. [If you are unfamiliar with NDEs, ADCs, and other spirit experiences, please first read the Glossary (pp. 115-116) and my book *Heaven is Not a Distant Place*.]

It is impossible to write evaluations of movies in this context without giving away parts of the plot or the endings. Most likely, readers will already have seen many of these films, so it should not be an issue. But if this is of concern to you, note the titles in the filmography first, see the movies you have missed, and then read the book. Alternately, you can read and enjoy the book first, and then see the films (even the ones you have seen before) to appreciate them from a different perspective.

Angels

Most films correctly show angels as good, but a few show them as evil. I do not include the latter type. They are not only wrong-minded, they violate the reason for our being here, which, as people who have had NDEs (i.e., near-death "experiencers" or NDErs) tell us, is to spread love and joy, become wiser, and grow spiritually.

But who exactly are angels? Moviemakers tend to portray good people (even after they die) as different from angels, based on archaic religious myths. But we know from NDEs and ADCs that this is not the case. Any departed soul that has gone to the Light (another word for heaven or for God) is an angel.

The excellent *Highway to Heaven* television series (1984-1989) correctly shows Michael Landon's character as having lived on earth before he became an angel. Several films, *Angels in the Outfield* (1951), *Charley and the Angel* (1973), and *A Rumor of Angels* (2001), also accurately depict that angels are simply people who have lived previously on earth and are now in heaven.

Both NDEs and ADCs reveal that departed spirits in heaven are fully capable of all the "magical" actions people often attribute to angels. An angel is not a separate entity but simply a spirit created by God, that has spent some time on earth and is now back in the spirit realm.

Our Connection to God

The truth is we all come from God and our souls are made of consciousness and energy, just as God is. We know this from NDEs as well as mystical experiences that people have had. Of course, God, the Creator of everyone, is boundless in love, wisdom, and understanding, whereas humans have many faults to overcome. Nevertheless, when people have NDEs or mystical experiences, they intensely experience the wonder and expansive love that is God, and realize that we are all an intrinsic part of God.

The remarkable movie *The Razor's Edge* (1946), based on an unusual book by Somerset Maugham, is unique in suggesting this temporary merging with God. The protagonist, played by Tyrone Power, is desperate to understand the meaning of life. Alone in a mountain retreat, he has a mystical experience in which he feels one with God and blissfully feels deep love for everyone and everything, which is exactly what NDErs have felt during their time in heaven.

In contrast, *Defending Your Life* (1991) does not acknowledge God, and sees the universe as a big machine. *Phenomenon* (1996) does not mention God either, but it correctly says our souls are who we really are and our essence is energy. Many films do refer to God, which is good; but they do so in religious terms, not recognizing the deep metaphysical connection of our souls with God.

In *Resurrection* (1980), Ellen Burstyn plays a woman who has an NDE (in an accident where her husband is killed) and experiences the Light before being pulled back to her body. Although she does not explicitly say that the Light is God, she implies that it is. She says that the Light is bright and loving and you realize that you are part of it. This is exactly as reported in the NDE literature, which recognizes the living, loving Light as God.

Most films lack this deep understanding about God. For example, in *The Preacher's Wife* (1996), a prayer starts with, "Lord, I know you're especially busy this time of year," showing a simplistic conception of God, similar to that of Santa Claus. Also, it is strange for a preacher to say, "Lord, if you're really up there, I need some help," when his car does not start. It shows doubt in the existence of God, to say the least. There are also songs about God as King and God's throne, which show the movie's lack of real understanding about God. (The film does have some correct depictions, discussed later in the filmography.)

Guardian Angels

We know from NDEs and ADCs that guardian angels are our own departed loved ones. NDErs have related that they met their loved ones in the spirit world, and were told that these angels were watching over and protecting them. ADC recipients have asserted that loved ones in the spirit dimension communicated that they were looking

after them and helping them through earth life. It is not a worker who has to "earn his wings."

And yet, many classic films that show spirits or angels helping people, such as *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (1941) and *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), err in showing them as workers for God, assigned to help someone, and unrelated to them except as part of their job. Similarly, *Defending Your Life* (1991) and *Afterlife* (1998), which depict way stations rather than heaven, show case workers assigned to help incoming souls.

Ironically, even the *Highway to Heaven* television series which correctly shows an angel as having previously lived on earth, shows him as God's employee assigned to help different people in every episode. It works well as a plot device (and it is humorous that he calls God "boss") but this depiction is totally incorrect based on knowledge gained from NDEs and ADCs.

The same is true for the movies *Charley and the Angel* and *Angels in the Outfield* mentioned earlier. In *Charley and the Angel*, it actually would have made sense to show the angel as Charley's departed father or uncle, since it was just for one story and not for repeated episodes.

In *Angels in the Outfield*, on hearing that the angel is a former baseball player, the team's manager asks the angel if they knew each other. But the angel says "maybe" and refuses to reveal who he is. When the manager says it

would be nice to know, the angel rudely replies that it is none of his business. This is exactly the opposite of loving ADCs where the recipient knows who is communicating and values this precious knowledge.

In the same film, the angels are "assigned" to the team by an archangel, which devalues the truth of guardian angels being our own loved ones. Also, a minister in the movie states, "to deny angels is to deny the bible" which further misinterprets who angels really are. A rabbi in the film says, "angels have helped people through the ages," which is true, but this does not contradict the reality that departed spirits have always helped their loved ones on earth. Whenever they have, most people recognized that someone was helping them and rightly thought of them as angels; they just did not realize the personal connections.

In *The Bishop's Wife* (1947), the angel is incorrectly depicted as being different from a departed soul and as assigned to a case. But what is worse, the end of the film has him pitifully saying that he is tired of going where they send him, never back to the same place, to avoid forming any attachments. This same false idea shows up years later in the pilot episode of *Highway to Heaven*.

In both cases, their first wrong assumption "that angels are assigned and unrelated to those they help" leads them to create a second untruth—that angels are denied love connections with people. This makes God's plan appear cruel and uncaring about angels, when actually it is a

perfectly loving plan for everyone. The negativity in both cases is due to a lack of understanding that our guardian angels are our own departed loved ones, and that avoiding attachments is contrary to the spirit world.

Aside from ADC recipients who know their loved ones are watching over them, and NDErs who realize the same truth, only a few people seem to understand who our guardian angels really are. As a striking example, Catholic Monsignor Jean Vernette told researcher Evelyn Valarino, "Our departed ones are present with us.... We can talk to them and they can hear us.... And they are ready to lend us their real and effective help if we ask for it."

A Rumor of Angels (2001) correctly shows the spirit of a departed soldier connected to his mother, and trying to help her as a beloved guardian angel does in actuality. He tells her he is safely on the other side, and yet he can communicate with her. He even says "I am not a ghost, but a being just as much as I ever was." This aspect of the film is taken from a true story, *Thy Son Liveth* (1920).

The movie *Beyond Tomorrow* (1940) shows a departed spirit who is *not* assigned, but trying to bring a separated couple back together on his own initiative. This part of the depiction fits the guardian angel concept, because the spirit knew the separated couple and cared about them. But a major error this film makes is to portray that this departed soul is not yet in heaven. In fact, he is warned that if he does not leave earth right away, he will have lost

his *one chance* to leave. The moviemakers did not understand that departed spirits *are* in heaven, while they watch over and communicate with loved ones on earth, as ADC reports reveal. Also, it is not true that souls have only one chance to move upward. We can go to higher planes in the spirit realm at our own pace, as NDErs attest.

It is commendable that *The Human Comedy* (1943), *Miracle in the Rain* (1956), and *The Sea of Trees* (2014), weave stories where departed loved ones are clearly watching over the bereaved. It is not explicitly shown in *The Sea of Trees*, as it is in the other two films, but it is implied in many clever ways (see filmography).

In *Miracle in the Rain*, a soldier's spirit appears to his grieving fiancée and tells her that he is fine, and delighted to discover that love never dies. Not realizing it is his spirit, she thinks the news of his death was wrong, and asks him why he did not reply to her letters. He says he could not, because there are no mailmen where he was. He then assures her that he will always stay by her and love her. This clearly depicts him (to the audience) as her guardian angel, who is in heaven and yet with her.

Three excellent movies, *Cockeyed Miracle* (1946), *Somewhere in Time* (1980), and *What Dreams May Come* (1998), correctly suggest that departed loved ones are guardian angels by having them come to fetch someone when they die. But in *What Dreams May Come*, it is not clear to the father for quite some time that the spirits

helping him are his own children. Although this is not true to spirit experiences, this was obviously done to make the story interesting, as the father gradually realizes that the spirits helping him are his beloved son and daughter.

Later in the same film, the son tells the father to remember exactly what he said to the mother when she was distraught after the children's deaths, and to use that very approach in taking her out of hell. The son's advice to his father shows that the children's spirits had been watching over the parents all along, and knew all they had been through, which fits the role of guardian angels.

In keeping with how NDErs are met by loved ones in the spirit world, *Dragonfly* (2002) shows the wife's spirit meeting her husband's spirit in his NDE, when he nearly drowns. She passes along critical information to him about her own death. She also starts to pull him out of the water, but her hand quickly changes to the hand of the local guide who pulls him out. This part is very subtle and is probably missed by most viewers, but it indicates her acting as a guardian angel.

Soul Mates

The NDE literature reveals that each person has many soul mates— a group of souls eternally bound in love. So we can also think of our departed loved ones as "soul mate angels." For people who have not lost loved ones, other soul mates, who chose not to come to earth at the

same time, watch over them as guardian angels. Thus, everyone (bereaved or not) has soul mate angels watching over them, which is a comforting thought.

Most people seem unaware that each of us has many soul mates. For example, *What Dreams May Come* incorrectly says that soul mates are very rare. This view seems based on the traditional definition of soul mates only as a couple, combined with the fact that many people do not find their "soul mate" even after searching, and end up spending their earth life with someone else. It is worth noting that the alternate ending (which was dropped) supports the idea of soul mates beyond the traditional view. In this ending, the mother looks at her children in their grown-up forms (moreover, with the son as African-American and the daughter as Oriental) and says happily, as she hugs them close, that she would know them anywhere. This scene clearly suggests a group of eternal soul mates, although the movie does not say this.

When the spirit of the soldier appears to his fiancée in *Miracle in the Rain*, he tells her, "Time doesn't matter….I love you as if I'd always known you….I love you forever." This clearly supports the concept of eternal soul mates, and even hints at knowing each other before this life.

In *Phenomenon*, when the man discovers that he will die soon, he asks his lover, "Will you love me for the rest of my life?" She replies, "No, I will love you for the rest of *mine*." The response is meant to show her devotion, but it

totally misses the point that love between eternal soul mates is forever and not merely to the end of an earth life.

The movies *Made in Heaven* (1987) and *Defending Your Life* (1991) fail to understand that everyone has eternal soul mates. We do not go to the spirit world and "meet" someone new and fall in love, as these two films suggest. We know from the death-bed vision (DBV) literature as well as NDE reports, that our soul mate angels come to meet us when we die, and it is a blissful homecoming when we go to heaven. Even when we fall in love with someone on earth, it is often one of our eternal soul mates that we had planned to meet. This is why we get a déjà vu feeling on falling deeply in love. We sense that we already know this person. And in fact we do—at the soul level.

In its failure to understand eternal love connections, *Defending Your Life* portrays a mother in the spirit world who does not miss her young children greatly or show much concern for them. In reality, they would be part of her soul mate group and she would be deeply connected with them. Instead, she is consumed by her excitement about the "new" man in her life, and the discovery that she can eat all she wants without gaining weight.

In contrast, *Beyond Tomorrow* and *Cockeyed Miracle* have a departed loved one mention to the newly transitioned soul that "mother" is waiting to meet you. *Cockeyed Miracle* goes further by saying that people who *want* to be together in heaven *are* together. These ideas

correctly depict that not only do our departed loved ones come to take us to the spirit world when we die, but we meet all our soul mate angels on going there.

Resurrection shows the woman having an NDE seeing many souls in the tunnel going to the Light. They smile or wave at her (although it is difficult to see this because they are all backlit). Later, she tells her grandmother that she saw her deceased mother and other relatives there; she also recognizes people in a photo album who she saw in the tunnel. They all seem to have appeared there to greet her. Thus, the film correctly hints that we see our departed loved ones in heaven.

Incorrect Depictions of Angels

It is ironic that even while films tend to incorrectly depict angels as *different* from departed spirits who have gone to the Light, they show angels as having *human characteristics*. But the NDE and ADC literatures reveal that we operate at a higher spiritual level once we are in heaven. So portrayals of angels with human failings are a misrepresentation. For example, in *Ghost* (1990), a policewoman says that if spirits are all around us, she will have to watch out while undressing. In reality, any spirits around us are our own soul mate angels. They look at us with love, and are not interested in people undressing.

The angel in *The Bishop's Wife* (1947) is wrongly shown as falling in love with the titular character. He

takes the wife on various outings, mostly focused on fun rather than on helping anyone, which audiences may enjoy, but it is not what he came to do. He makes the bishop very jealous of him; the bishop even calls him a thief for stealing his wife's and daughter's affections. The filmmakers utterly failed to understand that angels do not "fall in love" as humans do, because they are fully aware of and connected with their own eternal soul mates.

A Guy Named Joe (1943) and its remake *Always* (1989) incorrectly show spirits being jealous because the person they love on earth is loved by someone else. Actually, departed loved ones in heaven are full of higher love and wisdom. They *want* the bereaved to find happiness again, even as they continue to act as guardian angels, as NDErs tell us and as ADC experiences show. The movie *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947) similarly shows a spirit who is jealous as a human might be. The spirit was not depicted this way in the book (1945), on which the film was based.

Some films take this erroneous "angels as humans" idea too far. *Blithe Spirit* (1945), a delightful movie, nevertheless suggests that a spirit can have a head cold, poke and tease someone, and play jokes on people. It even depicts a spirit slapping another spirit. *Michael* (1996) has an angel smoking and being vulgar in many ways. *Made in Heaven* (1987) shows God's "special agent" (as if there is one) chain-smoking. *Wings of Desire* (1987) utterly misrepresents angels by depicting them as unhappy, and longing to go to earth so they can smoke,

drink, and avail of physical pleasures. This film has almost everything wrong, down to its title. The only spirits that crave smoking, drinking, or physical pleasures are low-level entities, as explained below. Another terrible example is *Topper* (1937) where departed spirits drink and deliberately hurt people, while supposedly doing a good deed to earn a passage to heaven. All of this contradicts knowledge gained from NDEs and ADCs.

Negative behavior by spirits suggests a case of ghosts rather than angels. Ghosts are spirits who are trapped, unable to reach the Light. We learn about this from NDErs who were trapped at first due to negative emotions. We also know this from encounters people have had with ghosts engaged in obsessive behavior, oblivious of their death, and still attached to earth life in a negative way.

In the film *Ghost* (1990), when the protagonist is viciously killed, he refuses the Light when it first comes for him. He is not a "ghost" in the literal sense, because he is not oblivious of his death, and not trapped by an inability to reach the Light. He stays back deliberately, to find out what happened, and to do something about it. Of course, this is not really possible, but we accept it as part of the fantasy. He is not shown as a higher-level spirit either, because he is bent on revenge. In fact, other than being invisible and unable to grasp objects, he acts very much like a person, walking and using escalators, for example, instead of traveling as a spirit would.

The movie also shows a ghost on a train, addicted to smoking. This depiction fits with Professor Ian Stevenson's explanation that low-level spirits often stay bound to earth, trying to continue their addictions or vices, and that they are trapped in repetitive behavior. Some scholars say that ghosts are immersed in their own world and not aware of other spirits. So the interactions between the ghost on the train and the main character's spirit would not really be possible, but they are part of the plot. Other sources say, however, that ghosts *can* interact with people, but they are unaware that they have died. Both situations are depicted in *The Sixth Sense* (1999).

The film *Beyond Tomorrow* (1940) seems confused about the difference between ghosts and angels. When the three elderly friends in the story are killed in an airplane crash, they appear at their shared home and behave exactly like ghosts. They continue to "smoke" and "drink," as they stay in the house, having no clue as to what has happened. Once they realize their condition, one of them decides to take on the role of a guardian angel to a couple, as mentioned earlier. But he continues to act like a ghost, simply tagging along and mostly ineffective in his help.

Wonder Man (1945) also shares this confusion. The twin on earth hears "harp music" when his departed twin is trying to contact him, but he also feels "cold and damp" as if a ghost is nearby. When the spirit appears for the first time, it looks like "light" and then manifests itself as an apparition, matching some ADC reports. At the same

time, the spirit often acts in a spiritually bereft way and it seems appropriate that his brother refers to him as a ghost. There is a joke at the end where the departed spirit stops his twin from kissing his bride, laughs mockingly, and says, “I’m a little devil, ain’t I?” It might work in a movie (as low-level humor), but departed spirits do not play tricks on their loved ones. They are focused on loving and helping their soul mates, as the ADC literature shows.

In *Angels in the Outfield* (1951), the angel who interacts with the manager is very rude, telling him to “shut up,” “close your fat mouth,” and “none of your lip or I’ll boot you.” This is hardly angelic behavior. He even says, “Stand still or I’ll blast you with a bolt of lightning,” showing that the filmmakers had no clue about the reality of loving, wise angels, and were aiming for very cheap humor.

We know from NDEs and ADC visions that higher-level spirits are beautiful and luminous. *Blithe Spirit* (1945) shows departed spirits as a sickly green all over with bright red lips, but perhaps this is okay in this film because the spirits are depicted as low-level beings.

The same movie incorrectly depicts spirits as having no power to be where they wish—they can be called to earth by anyone (with no love connection to them) and are stuck there until whoever called them sends them back. The film also claims that spirits can only come to earth if they are “called.” Instead, we know from the NDE

literature that spirits can travel to anywhere in the universe (including earth), instantaneously.

Abilities of Spirits

Here Comes Mr. Jordan (1941) and its remake *Heaven Can Wait* (1978) show spirits fading at times and appearing elsewhere, correctly showing their ability to travel instantaneously to anywhere. *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* even mentions and marvels at this, which is a nice acknowledgement of spirit capabilities.

There are reports in the literature that spirits can enter someone's body temporarily. Patients who had out-of-body experiences (OBEs) during surgery have recounted seeing a luminous spirit enter the surgeon's body to guide the operation. Bereaved people have mentioned feeling unusual strength in crisis situations, as if someone was inside them, helping them to shout loudly or to run fast, to scare away intruders or avoid accidents. These instances went beyond adrenalin, because often these "rescues" took place even before the recipients of this type of guardian angel protection knew what was going on.

Some films, such as *Wonder Man* (1945), *Hearts and Souls* (1993), and *Just like Heaven* (2005), amusingly show spirits entering someone's body and taking it over temporarily. But *Forever Darling* (1956) gives the incorrect impression that spirits can merge forever with the soul of the person they enter. *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*

and *Heaven Can Wait* take this idea to a ridiculous extreme in suggesting that a soul can live again in a dead person's body, but it works as a fictional plot device.

NDErs have shared that as spirits (that had just left the body) they could go through objects but could not grasp them, or that people did not see or hear them and even walked "through" them. Several classic movies, *Wonder Man, Blithe Spirit, Here Comes Mr. Jordan,* and *Cockeyed Miracle*, show spirits walking through objects, and also show people not hearing or seeing spirits, and sometimes walking through them. Needless to say, all of this creates humorous scenarios and the films make the most of it. All the films mentioned, except *Blithe Spirit*, also include funny scenes where spirits are unable to grasp objects.

And yet, we know from ADCs that spirits can move objects with energy to communicate with the bereaved or to protect them. This seems easy for spirits once they are in heaven, at a higher level of spirituality. The ability to move objects is correctly shown in a few films, but it is not necessarily associated with high-level spirits. *Blithe Spirit* shows spirits moving vases, opening doors, and blowing out matches, even though the spirits here are far from angelic. This ability is also shown in *Dragonfly* where it varies from a low-level, sudden disturbance of objects to startle someone, to gentle ways of moving things that fit angelic ADCs.

Blithe Spirit goes a bit far, however, in showing spirits able to materialize suitcases out of thin air, snatch a sandwich from someone, drive a car, and mess up a car's brakes so it crashes. All of these are inaccurate depictions, but very funny as portrayed.

NDErs say that when they were in heaven, they were delighted to find that they were still the same person, although at a higher level of consciousness. Catholic Monsignor Jean Vernette has corroborated this in telling interviewer Evelyn Valarino, that the departed "retain the integrity of their personality and character, along with all their affection and tenderness; nothing is lost."

The film *Cockeyed Miracle* shows this clearly where the spirits of the father and son are very much like the individuals they were on earth, in temperament and demeanor. *What Dreams May Come* also shows spirits retaining their individuality through their interactions, as well as in the way they create their own heavens. In *Miracle in the Rain*, the grieving fiancée of the departed soldier tells his spirit that he is the same as he was (before the war), still funny. Although she does not know that it is his spirit (and thinks he is back from the war), the audience knows he is dead, and so the point is made about retaining individuality.

Here Comes Mr. Jordan and *Heaven Can Wait* have an amusing twist to show that preferences and idiosyncratic tendencies continue after death. The protagonist (Joe)

continues to play his saxophone badly, which helps his trainer recognize him in different physical forms.

Receiving ADCs

Even ADCs show that spirits retain their individuality and this often colors the messages they give. In fact, ADCs are received by the bereaved in amazingly different ways (see the Appendix in my book, *Heaven is Not a Distant Place*, for more details). In *A Rumor of Angels,* an old lady receives dramatic ADCs from her soldier son's spirit using Morse code. Unfortunately, the film shows a boy who has lost his mother desperately trying to reach his own departed mother using Morse code, and not getting a reply. The moviemakers lost the opportunity to say that Morse code was a special way of communication for the other mother and her son, but it is far from typical for ADCs. All that the boy needed to do was to talk to his mother in his mind, and to be aware that she might connect with him in ways unique to their relationship.

ADCs are sometimes manifested as visions, including glimpses of the departed spirit. ADCs can also be auditory where a departed person's voice is heard. Brief versions of both are shown in *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* (1955) where a grieving woman sees and hears her departed lover.

In *Liliom* (1934) and its musical remake *Carousel* (1956), the daughter sees and hears her father's spirit.

This could be viewed as a visual and auditory ADC even though she does not know it is her father.

Wonder Man shows extended scenes of the apparition of the departed twin, which can be viewed as visual ADCs. The departed twin also talks to the surviving one, which can be viewed as auditory ADCs, except that real ADCs do not include conversations. All of this is done in a light-hearted way to effectively move the plot along. Similar depictions are shown in *Blithe Spirit*, where the departed wife appears and talks to the husband. These portrayals are also too lengthy to be real and involve conversations, but as in *Wonder Man* they are essential to the plot.

The angel's talking to the manager *in Angels in the Outfield* could represent auditory ADCs. Among other things, the angel tells the manager that one of the players is to die next spring. This is a precognitive ADC, which influences the manager to start with this player as pitcher, and it helps the team win the pennant.

The movie *Miracle in the Rain* includes not only a vision but a spirit visitation, where the soldier's spirit hugs his fiancée, who still does not realize it is his spirit because the hug seems so real to her. Although rare, there are a few accounts of ADCs where the spirit appeared physically solid and the hug felt completely real.

Miracle in the Rain also has the spirit return the lucky coin she had given him before he left for the war, saying

he does not need it anymore. When he kisses her, walks away, and disappears, she faints. As she lays unconscious, she is found by a priest and her best friend, who see the coin clutched in her hand, and realize that the soldier's spirit returned to give her the coin. This scene, obviously linked to the title of the film, is a good example of an ADC in the material world, where an object is transferred in a miraculous way to communicate with the bereaved.

The ADC literature tells us that departed loved ones often communicate through dreams. *Resurrection* shows a brief dream visitation, where the bereaved wife sees her husband in the backlit tunnel looking straight at her, raising his hardhat, and smiling. The movie quietly conveys that he is telling her he is okay.

Dragonfly shows the departed wife's spirit contacting her husband through a dream, in which he hears her calling out to him. The film also suggests that the wife's spirit makes lights flicker and moves objects to get his attention. Although such ADCs (through electricity and movement) are commonly reported, the depictions in this movie are often shown in scary ways that belie the love and peace associated with actual ADCs.

The film also shows many ADCs involving dragonflies (both real and symbolic) but overdoes this aspect as well. Moreover, the only reason these ADCs are given is to get the husband's attention so an important message can then be passed on. In contrast, the literature includes

thousands of ADCs given to the bereaved to simply say, “I love you” and to help them heal and be happy.

NDErs tell us that on their return from heaven they began to connect to God through nature. ADCs are often made through nature as well. There are many reported instances of butterfly ADCs, and spirit communications through plants or favorite flowers. In *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*, a butterfly lands near the grieving woman to let her know that her lover is with her. Earlier in this movie, a butterfly was used to symbolize someone watching over the two lovers. *The Sea of Trees* uses an orchid (the departed wife’s favorite flower) as one of many ADCs to the husband.

Phenomenon shows trees gently swaying in the breeze that calm a bereaved woman. It could be interpreted as an ADC through nature from the John Travolta character’s departed soul to his grieving lover. However, the film used swaying trees earlier to soothe the Travolta character and suggested it was done by aliens from UFOs.

We know from the ADC literature that our guardian angels can create illusions to comfort or enlighten us. The movies *Dragonfly* (2002) and *The Sea of Trees* (2014) and two television series *Highway to Heaven* (1984-1989) and *Touched by an Angel* (1994-2003) correctly show that departed spirits or angels can create illusions for various purposes, including angelic protection.

NDE narrations mention that communication in the spirit world is telepathic. Accounts by recipients of ADCs also show that departed spirits often give telepathic ADCs to their loved ones. Indeed, several films, such as *Beyond Tomorrow*, *A Guy Named Joe*, and *Carousel*, show departed spirits putting thoughts in people's heads.

In *Beyond Tomorrow*, the spirit puts simple thoughts in the housekeeper's mind and she acts on these. *A Guy Named Joe* shows telepathic ADCs from the spirit of the dead pilot to the pilot he is supposed to guide. But it is a bit overdone in the sense that the pilot being guided understands every word and command, and follows it instantly. Also, the spirit cannot get through telepathically to the woman he loves, except when he helps her in the dramatic bombing at the end. In reality, he would be much more likely to get through to someone he loves.

In *Carousel*, the father's spirit attends his daughter's high school graduation and whispers brief, sound advice in her ear. His message changes her attitude and she interacts in a positive way with people, instead of being a surly, self-determined outcast as her father was. This is a nice example of a loving telepathic ADC. The father also whispers of love to the mother, and she smiles as if she senses it, subtly depicting another telepathic ADC.

Angels in the Outfield says that former ballplayers, who are now angels, will stand behind the players and "throw out hunches," which the players will pick up on and it will

guide their moves. The film even shows a few examples of this and it represents telepathic ADCs.

In *The Bishop's Wife*, the angel tells a little girl that angels put ideas into people's heads to guide them. He also says the people are unaware of this and think it is their own idea. This phenomenon is reported in the ADC literature, where people thought something was their own idea, and only realized later, after getting additional information, that they had received telepathic ADCs.

But, we also know from the ADC literature that such communication sometimes gets through, and sometimes does not. The reason it does not may relate to the difference in vibrations between the physical and spirit worlds, or because the targeted recipient is not open to spirit communications.

In *Wonder Man*, the spirit starts interacting by putting thoughts in his twin's mind, but at that early stage, the twin does not understand what they mean. The films *Cockeyed Miracle* and *Hearts and Souls* humorously show that telepathic communication from departed spirits does not always get through.

What Dreams May Come shows the husband's spirit trying to communicate with his widow in different ways and failing. Although she senses his touching her lips, talking to her, and trying to hug her, she gets freaked out every single time. This reaction contradicts the love and

peace that the vast majority of ADC recipients feel. Only a few react negatively, because they cannot accept spirit communications as real. Such rejection of ADCs parallels negative experiences that some NDErs have, typically due to their reluctance to die. Once they accept dying, their experience changes to the positive NDE that is widely experienced. Because the film shows the grieving wife unable to accept continued existence after death, her extreme negative reaction to ADCs makes sense for her character, who says, “When you’re dead, you disappear.”

The wife later makes a new painting of a beautiful Jacaranda tree in bloom, and for a moment, she hopes her husband’s spirit can see it. Indeed, our soul mate angels can see everything we do. In the film, he is no longer in touch with her because she rejected his attempts to connect. Yet the tree magically appears in his heaven to signify their deep soul connection. Sadly, the wife sinks back to negativity and destroys the painting, thinking her husband no longer exists. At this, the tree in the spirit dimension loses its beautiful blue flowers and deeply pains the husband. This is excellent symbolism for how the rejection of loving ADCs can hurt soul mate angels.

A Rumor of Angels mentions that soldiers’ spirits were deeply hurt when their families continued to grieve for them indefinitely, and could not accept their loving ADCs. This revelation is also taken from the true story in the book *Thy Son Liveth*, which inspired the movie.

Ongoing ADCs

Many people erroneously believe that ADCs are given only once (or for a brief period) and then the departed spirit moves on. Some books on ADCs encourage this misguided thinking as well, even though there are many reports of ongoing ADCs. *Ghost* and *Dragonfly* also suggest that departed loved ones only stay around long enough to do or convey something urgent and then leave.

A Guy Named Joe (1943), its remake *Always* (1989), and *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (1990) go further to claim incorrectly that the departed spirit *has* to "let go" to allow the bereaved to find love again. Actually, departed loved ones continue to watch over the bereaved, are happy to stay connected, and this does not prevent the bereaved from seeking a new love. There are several accounts in the ADC literature of widows and widowers joyfully connected with their departed spouses' spirits, even as they go on to have happy second marriages. The new spouses also seem enlightened, realizing there is no jealousy in heaven and grateful to have angels watching over them as well.

In the book, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, Captain Gregg's spirit stayed with Mrs. Muir, and communicated with her for all her life, which matches ongoing ADCs. Regrettably, the film changed that to have the spirit leave and erase all memory of the encounters. As a result, Mrs. Muir in the movie led a long, lonely life.

The truth is that our departed loved ones (or our soul mate angels) are always with us, as we know from NDE and ADC reports, and from personal encounters. Only a few films, *The Human Comedy* (1943), *Hello, Dolly!* (1969), and *A Rumor of Angels* (2001), seem to get this concept.

Two movies, *The Human Comedy* and *Cockeyed Miracle*, correctly show that our departed loved ones can be right next to us, and can see, hear, and kiss us, even if we are not always aware of this. The film *Cockeyed Miracle*, however, does not seem to understand the reality of ongoing connections with the spirit world. At the end of the movie, the spirits are seen leaving for heaven, as if it is a distant place—as almost all movies dealing with heaven portray. In contrast, *The Human Comedy* nicely depicts the ongoing role of guardian angels, by showing the departed father looking in on the family at various times.

In *Hello, Dolly!* Dolly Levi asks her departed husband Ephraim to give her a sign that it is okay to marry Mr. Vandergelder. He does so (even though it has been several years since his passing), gently underscoring the fact that our departed loved ones are always with us and ready to guide us. This perfectly fits with what we learn from NDE reports and ADCs about soul mate angels.

In *A Rumor of Angels*, the old lady tells the boy who has lost his mother about continuing ADCs from her deceased son. The film, inspired by an actual instance of ongoing ADCs, tries to show that our departed loved ones remain

close to us, and suggests that keeping our minds and hearts open will help us receive repeated ADCs.

In *Wonder Man*, the surviving twin's bride asks him if the departed twin will keep visiting them. He confidently asserts that they will never see his twin again. But, as mentioned, the spirit pushes him away from his bride when he tries to kiss her, showing that he is still with them, but not in a loving way typical of ongoing ADCs.

In the movie *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (1939), based on the life of the dancing couple, Vernon dies in a plane crash. The original ending had his ghostly image dancing with Irene as his voice-over says, "I'll always be with you." Unfortunately, this ending was changed to Irene's *memory* of the couple dancing together as she watches from a window. Filmmakers were reluctant to show that a spirit could stay close to a loved one and still be in heaven, because that fact contradicts traditional religious views. But it is remarkable that a scriptwriter of the era had conceived a better ending, based either on personal experience, or simply an instinct about our departed loved ones always being close to us.

Dying

Having examined various depictions of angels, their abilities, and their communications to the people they love, we can now step back a bit and view how dying is shown in films, before we go on to see how heaven is

portrayed. In *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* and *Heaven Can Wait*, Joe is not supposed to die until about 50 years later; in fact, both films give exact dates of his death. Although this sounds fanciful, some NDErs were actually told their planned date of death, often years into the future. But they were given to understand that this was only a plan, and things may happen to change that.

In the same two movies, the angel escort is chastised for taking a soul out of the body before traumatic death. He is told this is never done, and that one must await the outcome. Contradicting this, NDErs often relate how they were already out of the body before the moment of violent or painful "death." Even some ADCs have indicated that the departed souls were "out" before the traumatic moment. This does not mean that intense pain is not experienced in dying. Some NDErs recount excruciating pain, which was gone once they were out of the body. Others, it seems, went out before the worst of it.

The film *Somewhere in Time* correctly suggests a death-bed vision (DBV), where a dying man smiles as if he sees someone he loves. This is followed by an out-of-body vantage point as the spirit leaves the body, and then a window curtain flutters to suggest the spirit's leaving the room. This sequence fits the literature on DBVs and spontaneous OBEs. Finally, we see him reunited with his lover in a heavenly setting. This matches what NDErs tell us about a reunion with departed loved ones on dying.

Other movies also have correctly shown dying and moving into the spirit world. *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* shows Mrs. Muir dying and Captain Gregg's spirit appearing immediately to take her to heaven. In *A Rumor of Angels,* the old lady hears angelic music right before she dies. Both depictions corroborate the DBV literature.

In *Resurrection*, the main character sees her wrong-minded father in a dream vision in the tunnel (where she had her NDE) and realizes he is dying. This idea ties to the precognitive abilities some NDErs acquire after their experience. She then goes to her father's bedside and tells him that love is all that matters and that other family members will be there to meet him, which also match NDE revelations. When she says he should not be afraid of dying, he mumbles "The Light" as if he sees it. Of course, given how cold and hateful he was in his earth life, he would have an extended life review (see next section). But even so, he could briefly go to the Light first and be met by departed loved ones before his life review, as many NDErs have experienced.

The director of *What Dreams May Come* notes that he filmed the main character's fatal accident in a tunnel to represent the tunnel experience in an NDE. He also shows this character attending his own funeral and trying to comfort his widow. This depiction fits the reality of many ADCs given at funerals, which reveal that departed spirits want to help their grieving families understand that they are fine, and that they continue to be with them.

Even the comedy *Blithe Spirit* mentions that someone's spirit attended her own funeral, which very likely is true for most people. But it also mentions that she was exhausted by the experience, which is humorous and possibly not too far from the truth.

Life Review

The NDE can be seen as a preview of what happens when we die. In addition to the tunnel experience and meeting departed loved ones, NDErs went through a life review process. Everything they did in their earth lives was now experienced from the perspective of those at the receiving end of their actions. They deeply and fully felt all the good and bad they had done to others.

This intensive life review is to help us learn from our mistakes, by actually *experiencing* the harm we have done to others. From this learning, we are able to advance spiritually. The review takes place in the presence of "beings of light," who have also lived on earth, but are now at a much higher level of spiritual growth.

The film *Liliom* correctly shows that our whole lives are recorded. This matches the concept of Akashic Records that mystics speak of, where every thought, word, and action is recorded permanently. When Liliom tries to deny his bad actions, he is shown a film where he

is beating his wife. He is also made to listen to a soundtrack of his thoughts that impugn him.

Actually, there is no question of trying to defend your actions; the life review is not a courtroom scenario. In fact, when a few NDErs tried to argue that what they did was not so bad, they were met with silence from the beings of light present. When the NDErs caved in and admitted they were wrong and felt truly remorseful, the review continued to the next event.

Thus, *Defending Your Life* is another movie that has the whole concept wrong, right down to the title. The one thing it shows correctly is that every action of ours is recorded. But in the film only a few cases are chosen at random to be judged. This is far from what actually happens, because NDErs report that they experienced every single action of theirs. They say it happened quickly, almost simultaneously, in a panoramic format. They were able to understand everything because their consciousness was far more advanced than on earth. Also, the idea of the life review is *not*, as the movie portrays, to judge the dead and then decide where they should go. It is a learning experience, after which all souls can progress.

Instead of the life review process, *Outward Bound* (1930) and its remake *Between Two Worlds* (1944) show a cold "examiner" after death, who readily hands out judgment as he sees fit. Even worse, in *Defending Your Life*

(1991), the lawyers and judges mockingly laugh at “earth people” who they refer to as “little brains.”

In contrast, NDErs recount that the life review takes place in the presence of loving, wise, and supportive beings of light. These beings will not let someone get away with being defensive, but they do not reprimand (or mock) souls either. They quietly wait till the souls realize they were wrong. For those who feel deep remorse on understanding (from the life review) that their words or actions hurt others, there is an outpouring of love from these beings to help them cope. The idea is not to punish (or belittle) but to help us learn and grow.

Defending Your Life claims that children do not have to go through the judgment process. Actually, NDErs have experienced (in their life reviews) all the wrongs they did, even as children. We are accountable for all our actions from a very early age. This film also says that teenagers go elsewhere because they are too troublesome. Even though this is meant as a joke, it is worth noting that everyone goes to the same place and through the same process, as NDErs attest.

Afterlife shows souls reviewing their entire lives but it is only to pick a memory that they will have to re-live through eternity—which is an absurd concept, despite the cinematic strengths of the movie. The review shown is not a deep learning experience, as is the actual life review that all souls go through after dying. Even the title of the film is

misleading, although it fits many people's erroneous conception about heaven. NDErs unanimously declare that they had been in the spirit world before. They were sure it was their eternal home. So heaven is not just about "after" life on earth, but "before" life on earth as well.

What Dreams May Come says there are no judges in the spirit world, to send someone to heaven or hell. Although true, this ignores the life review process and the fact that we judge ourselves in the presence of beings of light. The film suggests we are not responsible for our wrongdoings.

Similarly, *Resurrection* does not mention the life review, nor does it need to, as far as the story goes. But the protagonist's willingness to readily forgive those who have harmed her, creates an impression that people are not culpable for their negativity. So it is instructive to examine the film as a framework for discussing life reviews. It is obvious that the woman's father, her boyfriend, and *his* father would all undergo extended life reviews for their closed-mindedness and hateful behavior. But people may not realize that the boy who carelessly skateboarded in front of the car causing a fatal accident would have to experience (in his life review) all the pain and misery he caused. There is no excuse for thoughtlessness at any age as the NDE literature shows.

Even the husband who played a practical joke to make his wife believe he had lost a finger in a painful way would have to experience the shock and sadness she

experienced, though brief. Nothing is too small to be pushed under the rug. Practical jokes are not funny, even if the victims pretend to be “sporting” about them. An NDEr recounted that he experienced all the shock, fear, and humiliation he caused people on whom he had played practical jokes, even as a child. We are accountable for everything we do to others, as NDErs consistently tell us.

Soul Purpose

The life review is tied to how well we achieved our “soul purpose," or the main reason we came to earth. Several classic films, *The Human Comedy*, *The Razor’s Edge*, and *It’s a Wonderful Life*, correctly show that our soul purpose is to be loving and caring. *Resurrection* underscores this idea throughout, as the protagonist offers her healing ability freely and lovingly to all.

The Razor’s Edge says further that we are supposed to enjoy earth life, delight in nature, and truly help at least a few people. The movie correctly suggests that we are not meant to change the world. Instead, if we can help some people in meaningful ways, they will help others, and it can all spread in gentle waves across the world.

Even the simple, loving things you do for your own family are greatly valued in the spirit world, according to NDE accounts. Not understanding this, an episode of *Touched by An Angel* says that a teenaged girl who died “made a difference after all” because she donated her

organs. While organ donation is indeed commendable, this line denigrates the girl's loving interactions with her family, suggesting that her love for them was not enough to make a difference, whereas in reality it would be.

Phenomenon rightly says that love, partnership (or cooperation), and compassion lift us spiritually, whereas fear, competition, and greed hold us back. All of this exactly matches what NDErs discovered while in the Light and what mystics have realized. Ironically, this scene is deleted from most DVD versions of the movie by someone who failed to realize its significance.

Other films are also correct in expressing soul purpose. The housekeeper in *Beyond Tomorrow* says that "the way to be happy is to serve others." The guardian angel in *Forever Darling* tells the wife in the story to be more loving to her husband, and that deep love arises from looking at the soul inside a person.

Angels in the Outfield suggests that prayers for a baseball team to win are answered, contradicting NDE reports that any focus on winning and competition is misplaced and not valued in the spirit world. The angel does eventually say that there are more important things in life than baseball. This is good; but throughout the film the angels are quite intent on helping the team win.

Defending Your Life erroneously claims that souls are judged by how well they overcame fear while on earth.

Although fear is indeed a negative emotion, it can be caused by a multiplicity of factors, and in many instances, it can propel an individual to correct action. So fear cannot be used as a measure of a life. Instead, as NDErs tell us, souls have to answer the question: "What did you do to help others (in a positive way)?" It is all about love and caring—for people, animals, and nature.

Defending Your Life even fails in evaluating the incidents it shows as part of the judgment. When the protagonist protects himself (at age eleven) from a playmate's blows but refuses to fight back, he is branded as fearful. In a real life review, he would be commended for his stance, whereas the boy who was hitting him would have to undergo all the pain and negativity he caused. The film also shows the protagonist reprimanded for being fearful when he accepts a low salary, or does not invest in a promising stock; instead he is praised for being fearless in paying first-class airfare, when it represented one-third of all the money he had. Soul purpose is not about money or fear. Love is all that matters.

Spirituality and Love

In fact, many NDErs have attested that only love is important to God, and that religion is not so significant. The literature reveals that all NDErs felt deep love in the spirit world. But whereas some religious people were shown images from their religion to comfort them, spiritual people (those who believe in God and in

universal love) saw and felt only the beautiful, living Light. NDErs who asked about the essence of God were told that the Light and its boundless love was God.

This does not mean that religion is wrong. If people need religion to help them do the right thing, that is fine. But according to NDE reports, religion is unnecessary if you already know how to live your life with love and wisdom. Of course, you can continue to celebrate religious holidays and follow religious traditions if it gives you joy. As long as you practice love toward all, it is a path to God. But any religion that claims superiority over others, or that it is the only path to God, is totally misguided. The only thing God cares about is love.

The Razor's Edge correctly depicts this view of spirituality and love over religion (but without fanfare) when the mystical experience that the protagonist had is discussed later in the film. Several other excellent movies, *Cockeyed Miracle, Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*, and *What Dreams May Come*, also support the idea of love in heaven without mentioning religion.

Resurrection supports this revelation throughout the film. When a bigoted minister (and his equally wrong-minded son) rail at Ellen Burstyn's character for not attributing her healing ability to Jesus, she refuses, saying she does not know how she has this ability. Instead she offers her healing in the name of "Love." The filmmakers obviously wanted to depict that no particular religion is

superior to any other and that "love" is the only thing important to God. Also, the gas station where the protagonist ends up spending her life has a sign that says "God is Love." That is exactly what the NDE literature and mystical experiences tell us about God.

As for the healing ability shown in the movie, there are reported cases of NDErs having some type of healing ability on their return. They attribute it to being exposed to the loving, living, spiritual Light that they encountered, and that they understood as God. Not all of them have this ability, and many lose it after a while, so the filmmakers of *Resurrection* may have exaggerated this ability in order to make a point. Or, they may have depicted the story of a particular NDEr, who had this ability to a greater extent.

Heaven and Hell

Although religion by itself is not important to God, it is instructive to note universal ideas about heaven and hell across religions. Most religions speak of a permanent heaven and a permanent hell. This is probably done to scare people into leading good lives. In fact, many movies, *Liliom*, *Topper*, *Ghost*, and *Michael*, suggest that people are either eternally rewarded or eternally punished.

But most thoughtful people realize that a permanent hell does not befit the mercy of God. Surveys in Western Europe and the U.S. have repeatedly shown that more

than 75 percent of people believe in an eternal heaven, but fewer than 25 percent believe in an eternal hell.

Indeed, we understand from NDE accounts that everyone goes to the spirit dimension. There is no separate place that matches the religious conception of hell. However, the life review can indeed be "hellish" for some, depending on how many people they have hurt and to what extent. But after *fully* experiencing for themselves what they did to others, these souls too have an opportunity to grow and move upward.

"Moving upward" refers to going to higher planes within the spirit realm. A line from *What Dreams May Come*, which says everyone is equal in heaven, obscures the fact that there are many planes in the spirit world, representing different levels of spiritual growth. NDErs tell us that each spirit first goes to the plane which matches its own level of growth. But on advancing spiritually, it can move higher. This applies to people who have led good lives as well as bad. The former go to a level which is beautiful, and they can stay there for a long time after their life review. Spirits at this stage are able to act as "angels." As they grow spiritually by helping others, they can move even higher. The latter go to a level which may be mostly uncomfortable, but it is not a permanent hell. They too can advance after their life reviews.

Related to this, it is not true that bad or misguided people have no souls as *Beyond Tomorrow* claims.

Everyone has a soul even when someone appears to be "soulless" due to their evil deeds. Such souls are simply in darkness, devoid of divine Light. But they can, after experiencing all that they did to others, advance as well.

In a similar vein, *Defending Your Life* claims that someone who does not get it right after several tries (of earth lives, or incarnations) is "thrown away." The truth is we are all part of God and all of us are immortal. Even those who are in darkness are never destroyed. They have the opportunity to seek the Light at any time.

In addition to "hellish" life reviews, which people bring about by their own bad actions, the dying experience sometimes starts as negative or frightening, as mentioned earlier. Based on NDE narrations, this happens to people who resist death because they are afraid of where they will go, or they are just not ready to die, or they do not believe in anything beyond the physical dimension. Their own fear, resistance, or denial creates negative images, which disappear when they accept dying or pray for help.

What Dreams May Come correctly reflects these realities where people create their own hell. The movie figuratively depicts hell with many trapped souls (in sand or in water) and other souls carrying heavy baggage on land. Their loss of movement and being weighted down contrasts well with the lightness, running, and flying of spirits depicted in heaven in this movie. In the same film, the wife's hell matches her view of life (after her children

and husband die in vehicular accidents). Her vision shows their house in ruins and everything inside broken down, dark, and dreary. When the son's spirit tries to help his father find the mother, he creates his own image of hell, with burning ships and wicked warriors, based on what he finds fearful.

The reason the wife in *What Dreams May Come* is in hell is related to her suicide. The movie takes pains to explain that it is not punishment, but her own inability to forgive herself. She blames herself for the deaths of her children because she did not drive them to school that day, and thinks that if she had, she might have prevented the accident. She also believes she is responsible for her husband's death on the road because she asked him to bring something to her, and he was hit on the way. The film says her self-absorption in these thoughts keeps her from realizing she is dead, and so she remains in a hell of her own creation—a broken down version of her home.

This is a good explanation, but the *real* reason she is in hell is that she does not believe in the spirit realm, which the movie makes clear. It is this aspect that precisely matches NDE reports of negative experiences in the spirit world—for those who did not believe in life beyond earth.

Further, the film errs in stating categorically that all suicides go to hell and that no suicide has been brought out of hell. This is completely false. NDErs discovered that whereas suicide is definitely wrong, it is dealt with in the

life review, as are other misguided actions. The soul can thereafter progress to become an angel. Even ADCs have confirmed this when departed loved ones, who had committed suicide, assured the bereaved via telepathy or dream visitations, that they were happy and with God.

Nevertheless, movies like to show suicides being punished in a severe way. *Outward Bound* and its remake *Between Two Worlds* incorrectly show suicides punished eternally, as in the case of the ship's steward who has to ferry souls forever. Even though he has been doing this stoically for eons, he is given no reprieve. But, in an obvious contradiction of its own stance, a couple that committed suicide is eventually allowed to go back to living on earth.

Liliom also shows harsh punishment for suicides—a fiery purgatory; we actually see the raging fire through a door he walks through. In the remake *Carousel*, his death (while committing a crime) is accidental rather than by suicide, and so the punishment is less severe—he is made to polish stars. In both films, part of the punishment was for leaving his pregnant wife and for beating her earlier. Both versions send him back to earth for one day to try to help his now-teenaged daughter. This is supposed to determine if he will end up in heaven or in hell. In both movies, the daughter sees the father, but does not know who he is and tells him to go away. At this, he slaps her hand in frustration.

In the 1909 stage play of *Liliom* in Hungary, and in many adaptations that followed, this action (slapping his daughter's hand instead of helping her) sends Liliom to hell. But in the 1930 and 1934 talkies, in a new bizarre scene, the daughter tells the mother that the slap felt like a kiss, and Liliom ends up in heaven. *Carousel* also has this strange scene, and in all three films it is supposed to help the mother realize that her husband's spirit had just been there. The convoluted logic (of the slap that feels like a kiss) is that although her husband beat her, the wife knew he loved her—which is shocking given present awareness of domestic abuse. In *Carousel*, the father does get another chance and redeems himself through loving telepathic ADCs to his wife and daughter, as discussed already.

What Heaven is Like

We know from NDE accounts that the spirit dimension is brilliantly colored, with light emanating from everyone and everything; and that the earth is only a pale imitation of it. This fits with what mystics have experienced as well. *What Dreams May Come* correctly shows that heaven is brilliant and beautiful. Similarly, *Made in Heaven* depicts a colorful heaven, after initial black and white scenes on earth, to indicate the difference in beauty of the two places. But two movies, *Stairway to Heaven* (1946) and *Wings of Desire* (1987), show heaven in black and white and earth life in color, reversing the truth.

In *Resurrection*, we do see color and light radiating from spirits, but the entire NDE is shown *in the tunnel*, possibly to simplify the moviemaking aspect. Clouds are shown briefly and multi-colored light breaks through at times, but the bright backlighting of these scenes makes it look like a tunnel experience throughout. When the camera pulls back, away from the light, it suggests the return journey, back through the tunnel, that some NDErs have recounted.

NDE reports say that the spirit realm is full of love and God's "Light." *The Razor's Edge* and *Resurrection* correctly suggest this, as previously discussed. But many films, such as *Liliom*, *Stairway to Heaven*, and *Wings of Desire*, incorrectly show no love in heaven, depicting it as cold and impersonal.

We know from the NDE literature that spirits in heaven may have a male or female appearance but they connect only through spiritual love. Contradicting this, *Made in Heaven* shows a new soul born in heaven as an offspring to a couple. Actually, all souls are created by God, and there is no sex in heaven as the movie implies. *Defending Your Life* is similarly wrong in explicitly suggesting that sex continues in the spirit world.

The latter film also portrays hotels, steakhouses, bowling alleys, golf courses, and television, which shows how earth-bound the film is. In a lower key, but incorrect, nevertheless, *Afterlife* shows old buildings, rooms, and

even bathrooms. It also shows a city scene where a case worker goes shopping, which displays how closely its view of the spirit dimension is tied to earth.

The idea that you can eat all you want without gaining an ounce is hyped a lot in *Defending Your Life*, as the lead characters dive into food repeatedly. *Made in Heaven* also shows people eating and drinking in heaven. *Outward Bound* and its remake *Between Two Worlds* show people eating and drinking on the ship *before* they know they are dead, which can be viewed as an illusion. But the stage play even mentions plans to have dinner when they land, on what is both heaven and hell. This is *after* everyone knows they are dead. It also mentions regular meals in the next world, which *Between Two Worlds* does as well. In a more subdued manner, the characters in *Afterlife* drink tea. Interestingly, NDErs say that spirits can indeed create illusions of food and drink in heaven, but that higher-level souls have no need of this. *What Dreams May Come* shows coffee in one scene, but rightly admits it is an illusion, as is everything else.

NDErs tell us that spirits continue to grow in heaven. The life review teaches them what they did wrong, and they realize that love drives everything. In support of this, the father's spirit in *Cockeyed Miracl*e tells his son's spirit that he is "kind and lovable" now. He also reminds the son to be angelic, when the son wants to continue his grudge against an erring friend. In *Blithe Spirit*, the husband tells the wife's spirit more than once that he is surprised that

she has not improved the least bit after seven years in the spirit world. His saying so shows some understanding that we are supposed to grow spiritually in heaven.

But in *Between Two World*s, one soul is sent to heaven where he is to meet old friends and play golf. There is no thought of continuing spiritual growth, as there is in NDE reports. A mother, who is allowed to be with her son in heaven, still feels guilty about having given him up for adoption. She insists that he not be told who she is, and wants to be his "housekeeper" for eternity. And even though her son has admitted his failings, and he is supposed to spend eternity reflecting on this, the mother praises him as wonderful and important, and denies that he needs to learn and grow. This contradicts reality where eternal soul mates meet with love and joy, and help one another advance spiritually. Also, there is no way to hide the truth in heaven, so this is another flaw in the logic of the mother appearing as a housekeeper to the son.

Carousel rightly depicts that you cannot hide your thoughts in heaven. Indeed, as all communication in the spirit world is telepathic, there is no way to keep your thoughts to yourself. Whatever you think is instantly comprehended by other spirits near you, as seen in many NDE accounts.

Beyond Tomorrow correctly shows that there is no pain in the spirit realm and that spirits have perfect vision. NDEs corroborate that they felt no pain as soon as they

were out of their bodies, and that they had perfect 360 degree vision. But for some strange reason, *What Dreams May Come* shows a spirit in heaven with eyeglasses.

Made in Heaven correctly shows that spirits can go anywhere just by thinking of a place or person. But it erroneously limits this ability to places or people in heaven. In reality a spirit can go anywhere, even on earth, just by thinking of a location or a person, as NDErs tell us. Even people who came out of comas, or those who had spontaneous OBEs, have recounted that they could go anywhere just by thinking of it.

In *A Rumor of Angels*, the soldier killed in the war communicates to his mother that angels (meaning departed souls) do not have wings, but that "we can go anywhere without fatigue." This line is taken from actual ADCs reported in the book, on which the film is based.

Although *What Dreams May Come* shows spirits traveling freely, it claims that a spirit called a Tracker is needed for the husband to find his wife in hell. In contrast, NDErs recount that they could find anyone in the spirit world just by thinking of them, even if those souls were in a different plane. The husband in this film does eventually find his wife on his own, by intensely focusing on her.

In *A Guy Named Joe*, the pilot mentions feeling completely alive when flying very high, "close to heaven." This matches NDE reports that spirits felt more alive in

heaven than they ever had on earth. In the same movie, a commanding officer's spirit says that every pilot in the war is helped by angels because everyone is connected. The idea that everyone and everything is connected surfaces constantly in NDE accounts and mystical experiences. Also, soldier's spirits, who gave ADCs to their loved ones after World War I, talked about many spirits gathering to help wounded soldiers. It makes sense that in times of world crisis, angels help people undergoing great suffering, even though they are not their soul mates.

The pilot in this movie also mentions that flying very high feels like being halfway to heaven, with no sense of time, but instead a feeling of "always now." This perfectly matches the NDE literature, which reveals that time is irrelevant in heaven, and that the past, present, and future are all simultaneous—an idea understandably difficult for us to comprehend.

Most filmmakers do not seem to know that time does not matter in the spirit world. In *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* and *Heaven Can Wait*, the protagonist's body is already cremated when he returns to earth. In reality, the time it would take to find his body, make all the arrangements, and cremate the body is far longer than the few minutes he spends in the way station before returning. Moreover, NDErs, who returned after having flat-lined for only a few minutes, still experienced heaven in all its glory, met and interacted with loved ones, and had life reviews. This is because time seems greatly expanded in heaven. So the

protagonist and the escort could have been back in less than a minute of earth time after the accident. Of course, the hasty cremation is a fundamental aspect of the plot and we can accept it as that.

In *What Dreams May Come*, when the husband goes to hell to rescue his wife, he is told he has only three minutes after which he will be trapped as well. Of course, the three-minute limit makes no sense because time is meaningless in the spirit dimension. They could have simply said, as they did later in the movie, that if her reality became his, he could not return to heaven. Interestingly, his becoming dull and less alert (the longer he stayed with her) matches how some NDErs felt when they explored a lower level than the one they initially went to on reaching the spirit realm.

NDErs tell us that there is instantaneous, telepathic access to complete knowledge in heaven. Contradicting this, many movies show departed spirits, angels, or "case workers" as having no clue about what has transpired in the lives of people they love or are supposed to help. Examples include *Cockeyed Miracle*, *Liliom*, *Carousel*, *Afterlife*, and *Hearts and Souls*.

Most films do not show that information is accessible telepathically and instantaneously in the spirit world. *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* shows spirits in heaven calling a registrar to check on information about a person. *Heaven*

Can Wait has someone check information on a computer. At least in both cases, the information is quickly available.

In the *Touched by an Angel* television series, the angels hardly ever seem to know anything that they should understand instantaneously and telepathically. For example, in one episode about an asteroid, they have to actually read all publications about asteroids since the year 1500. Similarly, the German film *Wings of Desire* shows angels reading travel guides to learn about Berlin.

In addition, international movies like to paint heaven as a bureaucracy, often inefficient. The British movie *Stairway to Heaven* shows interactions with clerks in heaven to create accounting records for souls. The French film *Liliom* has information on everyone stored as film or audio, and several levels of officials to manage everything. The Japanese movie *Afterlife* shows each soul's life captured on videotapes, and the case workers have to send out for this and wait a day to get it. In the British film *Blithe Spirit*, the wife's spirit claims that she spent hours waiting in drafty rooms on the other side, to fill in forms required for a return visit to earth. Actually, not only is all information instantly available to spirits, there are obviously no drafty rooms and no forms to be filled out in heaven. Angels can visit earth any time they wish.

In addition to everything described about heaven so far, NDErs mention that the beautiful scenes they saw resonated with them personally. Consistent with this

revelation, *Beyond Tomorrow*, *Made in Heaven,* and *What Dreams May Come* suggest that we create the visual fabric of our heaven. In *Beyond Tomorrow,* a man chooses the picturesque location of Simla, India, where he had been stationed as a British officer. *Made in Heaven* shows spirits creating their own individualized spaces, whether indoors (with paintings and furniture) or outdoors (with flowers and trees). *What Dreams May Come* portrays a magnificent heaven for the husband, created out of his wife's paintings that he loved, and a magical one for the daughter, that matches favorite objects in her bedroom.

The actual depiction of the personalized heaven in *Beyond Tomorrow* is poorly done, with obviously fake coconut trees in the foreground of a mountainous scene (even though coconut trees only grow at sea-level). In contrast, the different heavens in *What Dreams May Come* are amazingly spectacular, and evoke the beauty of the spirit realm that NDErs describe. This film even makes the bold statement—that in the spirit realm you create a world with your imagination—which perfectly fits mystical experiences. *Made in Heaven* also accurately portrays that it is easy to create illusions in heaven.

The NDE, ADC, and DBV literatures also reveal that spirits can appear as they wish, usually as younger versions of themselves. This is correctly shown in *Somewhere in Time*, where even though the woman dies in her old age, she appears to her lover as a young woman. Similarly, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* shows an old

woman dying in a chair, and her young self stepping out of the body. The spirit even looks back at the chair, so the audience can see the old woman still there, and figure out that she has died. Of course in the case of children, they would typically appear as adults, as correctly shown in *What Dreams May Come*.

In *Cockeyed Miracle,* the father's spirit explains to his son's spirit that everyone looks as they think of themselves, and if you change your thoughts about yourself, you can change your appearance. This matches ADC reports where the spirits of loved ones appeared as younger, healthier versions of themselves.

Reincarnation

Professor Kenneth Ring writes that more than three-fourths of NDErs believe in reincarnation after their time in heaven, but *not* as a reward or punishment. NDErs explain that reincarnation is an opportunity to learn and grow spiritually, and it is voluntarily undertaken rather than being imposed on souls.

In two movies, *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* and *Dragonfly*, a couple talks about coming back as birds in the next life. In the first film, they then agree to come back as people and find each other again. In the second, they even mention coming back as rabbits, so it seems to be a fanciful conversation, just to introduce the reincarnation concept to audiences. The husband at least must see it as

a fancy, because he is shown as not believing in the immortality of the soul at the start of the movie.

Most films do not address reincarnation. It is interesting that those that do, fail to understand that spirits choose their parents on earth, who typically are their own soul mates. Instead, most movies show people being born to someone as random events. An exception is *A Rumor of Angels,* where the son's spirit tells his mother in an ADC that he knows spirits return to earth many times, but he is not sure how this happens. He adds that if he came again, he would want to be her son. This excerpt is also taken from the true story that inspired the film.

It is nice that some films do acknowledge reincarnation but most get several aspects wrong. For example, *Made in Heaven* first correctly says that everyone can reincarnate on earth, and that some return quickly, while others take a long time. It even shows a man who was in heaven earlier to be on earth later, showing that he had reincarnated. Then it contradicts all this by the special agent's refusing to allow the protagonist to reincarnate. Even though it is first correctly presented as each soul's choice, he is illogically denied this option because he wants to reincarnate to be with the woman he loves, who is about to be born on earth. Actually, we know from NDE accounts that this is exactly what soul mates plan and do.

The man is then grudgingly allowed to reincarnate "as a special case" with the caveat that if the lovers do not

find each other in 30 years, they will never see each other, even when they get to heaven again. This concept is simply ludicrous—there is no question of *not* meeting your soul mate(s) in the spirit realm. We know from NDEs that soul mates will be together for eternity, even if they miss meeting each other on earth in a few lifetimes.

Finally, in a huge failing of common sense, the newly born man and woman look exactly like themselves in their previous existence. If this was done simply as a device to let the audience know who they are, that would be fine. But the fact that the man's parents from his previous life recognize that he looks just like their son (but nearly 30 years younger) shows that they are *suppose*d to look like themselves. Tied to this, both keep having memory fragments of their time together in heaven, and this is what helps them find each other—because they look the same! There is no comprehension that we are supposed to find our soul mates by sensing a soul connection, and not by simply recognizing a face from a past relationship.

The Love Letter (1998) makes the same glaring error in showing that the lovers look exactly like themselves in their past and present lives. Just like *Made in Heaven*, this is also done in a literal way. The man in the future life and the woman in the past life exchange photographs (as part of the time-travel fantasy). This is how the woman recognizes him in the past life; she meets a man with the same face as the man she loves from the future, and so

she knows it is him. And at the end of the movie, the man in the future sees a woman (who has the same face as the woman in the past) and this is how he knows she is his soul mate. If only it were that easy!

Defending Your Life portrays reincarnation as punishment and that too for frivolous reasons related to the faulty judgment process. The movie includes a past-lives pavilion which is presented as a joke, with Shirley MacLaine hosting, and freaky images from past lives that have people shrieking in horror.

Reincarnation is fleetingly mentioned in *Hearts and Souls*, but it is wrongly portrayed. The film shows that the moment each of the trapped souls finishes its unresolved business, it is pulled away because "a baby is waiting to be born and needs a soul." This is not how reincarnation works, and it contradicts NDE reports. NDErs say that spirits typically spend a lot of time (in human years) in carefully planning their next earth life, along with soul mates whose earth lives will be intertwined with theirs. They plan who will be the parents, how they will meet, who will be the children, and the aspects each one will work on to facilitate spiritual growth. Not everything that is planned will happen, but it is planned nonetheless.

In *Chances Are* (1989), a man who dies in an accident insists on being born immediately without any thought as to his next life. Also, on growing up in his new life, he recalls an injustice from his past life and is able to set it

right. Let us evaluate these two depictions. The man's rushing to the next life without thought contradicts the NDE literature about careful planning. And yet, some souls do make hasty decisions about their next incarnation, as shown in rigorous past life research by Professor Ian Stevenson. Also, past life recall about specific injustices is common, especially for souls who return too soon, according to Professor Stevenson. Tied to NDE accounts, this suggests that not spending enough time to plan the next physical life, creates the likelihood of too much focus on the most recent earth life, and this is what engenders past life memories for some people.

In the same movie, the man's attraction to his daughter from his past life apparently turned off many viewers. But NDE reports say that such changes in relationships in future earth lives are entirely feasible among soul mates. So the film seems to have done well in all three of its reincarnation depictions, although serendipitously.

In *What Dreams May Come*, reincarnation is mentioned early when someone points to spirits on their way to help others be born on earth. Nothing is mentioned as to why the souls are being reincarnated, which is fine at this stage. But in the movie's ending, the husband suggests to his wife that they should reincarnate just for the thrill of finding each other again. This is a frivolous reason for reincarnation, especially when they are already together in heaven after his terrifying trip to hell to rescue her. It also wrongly suggests that heaven is boring and they need

to go to earth for excitement. In sharp contrast, NDErs admit they were reluctant to return to earth given the incredible beauty and abundant love in heaven, the ability to go anywhere instantly, and the absence of physical constraints. Even when it comes to reincarnation, NDErs explain that it is difficult to forego the absolute freedom, joy, and love in the spirit world, and that typically souls plan to return to an earth life only if there is something they need to work on for their spiritual growth, which cannot be done in heaven.

The movie's alternate ending shows reincarnation as voluntary atonement by the wife for having committed suicide, which seems reasonable. However, saying that every religion mentions this type of atonement for suicide adds an incorrect note that views suicide in an especially harsh way compared to other wrongdoings. As an aside, when the husband decides to join his wife on earth, they should have stopped rolling film where he says, "See you in a heartbeat" and kisses her. Instead, it drags on to show two painful deliveries of babies—a depressing way to end the movie. The ending that was kept shows them meeting as happy kids, drawn to each other by their idiosyncratic behavior, which at least ends the film on a positive note.

The Special Case of Children

Most people think that when children die they go to heaven "as children," and grow up slowly there as they would have on earth. This is probably why ADCs given by

children's spirits (usually in dream visitations) typically present themselves as children to comfort their bereaved parents. In fact, they often appear with another departed relative, so their parents will not worry about who is taking care of them. In some cases, they do appear as adults, possibly to convey that they are mature spirits, capable of taking care of themselves. Indeed, the NDE literature tells us that we are all eternal souls, and we were mature spirits before coming to earth for a particular existence. Thus, when children are back in heaven, they are free to assume their mature form.

Blithe Spirit suggests that children's spirits remain at the age they died. This could be the case if the spirit is trapped and remains at a low spiritual level, as a ghost. But most children go to the Light, and are free to appear in their adult form. In support of this idea, *What Dreams May Come* correctly depicts the children's spirits as "grown up" to the father, throughout the movie. Oddly, it shows them to the mother as children in the film's ending. The original ending (labeled as the alternate ending on the DVD) did show them as adults to the mother, as mentioned earlier. The full alternate ending is not necessarily better, but this aspect, showing them as mature spirits at the end (as was done throughout the film), ought to have been retained.

But *What Dreams May Come* also shows other children in heaven, some running on water, and others flying or having fun in some way that is different from what we can

do on earth. *Made in Heaven* also shows children, some taking ballet lessons, others learning computer skills. NDE accounts do not mention seeing children in the spirit world. And yet it is not impossible that some mature souls may want to appear as children, especially when they just want to have fun or when they are learning basic skills. After all, it is clear that we can take on any appearance we wish to in the spirit world. So these depictions add an interesting layer of imagination to our conception of heaven that may actually be possible.

We do know from the ADC literature that children (on earth) are more likely to see spirits than are adults. Some scholars propose that children's so-called "imaginary friends" might be spirits of guardian angels that only they can see. Several films, *Angels in the Outfield*, *Wings of Desire*, and *Just like Heaven*, show children seeing angels or spirits when adults cannot. Of course not all children are capable of this as *Wings of Desire* portrays.

What about Animals?

The *Going My Way* television series (1962-63) had an episode where a boy's dog dies. When the boy says, "I'll see him in heaven," the priests tell him he will not, because "dogs do not have an immortal soul." They say a dog's heaven is that he stays in our hearts. It is true that NDE accounts do not mention animals in the spirit realm. But this may be because such experiences are not as full in content as they would be after death.

Soldiers who died in World War I, and communicated with their families as spirits, mentioned meeting beloved dogs or horses in the spirit realm. Even recent ADC reports mention sensory contacts, dream visitations, and other types of ADCs from cherished pets. This suggests that animals do go to heaven, at least those that had love connections with their owners. *What Dreams May Come* correctly shows this when the husband meets the family's beloved dog in heaven. In keeping with knowledge from visual ADCs, the dog is a healthy, happy version of her earth-self, in which she was shown as ill and in pain.

The ADC literature also reveals that animals (on earth) are more likely to sense spirits than are people. Several films do depict pets sensing a spirit. *Blithe Spirit* shows a parrot squawking, and *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* shows a dog growling, when a spirit appears. In *Ghost* and *What Dreams May Come*, the animals seem frightened, even though in these two movies it is the owner's spirit that has manifested. This contradicts ADC accounts, which mention that pets are happily excited when a loved one's spirit appears. In any case, it is nice that all these films show that animals can sense spirits when people cannot.

Conclusion

I have enjoyed most of the films discussed here; they were well crafted and highly entertaining. Only a few were terrible. But I noticed that a large number of the movies, even the well-made ones, wrongly depicted

aspects of angels, heaven, and related issues. Some filmmakers simply took an incorrect, traditionally religious view of these issues. As audiences were in tune with this, the movies were successful. Others used fantasy to present a novel approach, and this worked as well, because audiences are generally unaware of the reality of NDEs, ADCs, and other supernatural phenomena, and happy to be entertained by unusual story-telling.

At the same time, it was nice to see films accurately depict some aspects of angels and heaven. These movies went beyond amusing audiences to aim for enlightening them, which matches my hope in writing this book.

An Annotated Filmography

[This is a chronological list of the films discussed above. In the descriptions below, the focus is on (1) whether the movie depicts angels, heaven, and related issues correctly and (2) whether it is worth seeing. (I have tried to minimize overlap with discussions in the main text.)]

Outward Bound, 1930 (remake: ***Between Two Worlds***, 1944)

This story is about people who do not know that they have died. *Outward Bound* provides no explanation for why they are unaware of this. *Between Two Worlds* has them die unexpectedly (in an airstrike during World War II) which matches the confusion soldiers' spirits have felt on dying suddenly, as revealed in the ADC literature.

The stage play (1923) as well as the two films err in not having departed loved ones come to meet the newly freed souls, as we know happens from the DBV and NDE literatures. But the beings that meet them are departed souls; this at least supports the reality that all spirits on the other side have lived on earth.

The movies say that "heaven and hell are the same place" and each person is sent off to an individualized hell or heaven, which matches NDE reports. But, whereas the stage play makes it clear that anyone can advance from the level to which they were sent, the movies do not. They create an ambiguous interpretation that suggests a permanent hell or heaven, contradicting NDE accounts.

The stage play had some problems, which the original film retained but the remake corrected. For example, a mistreated husband still wants to be with his abusive wife, and she is given a villa to share with him; moreover, she is given servants, which is laughable. *Between Two Worlds* corrects all this, so that the husband realizes he does not want to spend eternity with this woman, and although she is still given a villa, she has to live all alone.

Between Two Worlds adds three characters, two of whom add to the movie's interest. The third, a sailor, drags the flow. Also, this man is correctly told that his wife and child will join him eventually, but the film misses the fact that as a spirit he can look in on them any time and help them as a guardian angel. Even the spirits helping the new arrivals (in the play as well as the movies) have no idea about the progress of the people they knew on earth.

In *Outward Bound* (the play and the film), a couple committed suicide because they could not live together and were deeply unhappy. In *Between Two Worlds,* they are happily married and the man's wanting to commit suicide because he can no longer play the piano (or because he is denied an exit visa to America) is hard to swallow. Also, in this movie, the examiner says that choice is given to people to be together or not. And yet he wants to separate this couple, arguing that the man wanted to commit suicide and the woman just went along. At that point, he completely ignores the couple's deep love for each other and their desperate wish to be together.

The stage play and the original film had the couple destined to stay on the ship forever to ferry souls, but they go back to earth with no explanation as to why. The remake says the man will stay on the ship and the woman will go to heaven. But when they both end up returning to earth, we get the sense that their deep love for each other earned them this reprieve. Overall, it is an unusual and intriguing story, especially for its time.

Liliom, 1934 (remake: ***Carousel***, 1956)

In *Liliom*, a French film based on a Molnar play, Charles Boyer gives a fascinating performance as an unappealing, selfish character. Gordon McRae and Shirley Jones charmingly play the lead roles in *Carousel*, an American adaptation as a musical.

In *Liliom*, a guardian angel is shown briefly, trying to stop the protagonist from committing a crime. In keeping with the era, it is an angel that is assigned instead of an

eternal soul mate. Liliom later sees him in the spirit world, where the angel, strangely, refuses to help him. The movie also shows two assigned, unrelated angels sent to fetch him at his death; later, the two take him back to earth for another chance at redemption. The guardian angel and the angel escorts have blackened eyes making them all look like ghouls. But the film correctly shows that all of Liliom's actions on earth have been recorded.

In *Carousel*, the "starkeeper" in heaven looks exactly like the daughter's school principal on earth with no explanation for this. And it shows McRae's character polishing stars instead of reviewing his life to grow. But it correctly shows that thoughts are read telepathically in the spirit realm.

Both movies wrongly depict departed spirits as having no idea about events in the lives of the people they are connected with. They also incorrectly present suicides as getting only one chance for redemption. Ironically, in both films the protagonist says he is *not* sorry for having beaten his wife, but he still gets this chance. Both movies have unnecessary violence as well, but are worth seeing, especially *Carousel* for its songs and dances.

Topper, 1937

Although a hit when released, this movie is based on superficiality and wrong-minded ideas. The "jokes" in the movie are aimed at the lowest common denominator. It is not only painful to watch, but also has many wrong ideas.

Contradicting the NDE literature, the film suggests that people go either to heaven or to hell, and only one good

deed can take you to heaven. It shows a couple (killed in a car wreck) realizing that they have not done a single good deed and fearing that they will not go to heaven. They then set about to make life "fun" for someone, as if that constitutes a good deed.

Moreover, they continue their earthly ways of being shallow, thoughtless, and reckless; they play spiteful tricks on people, which is hardly the way to redeem themselves. Also, as angel-hopefuls, it is strange that they continue to smoke and drink, and are thoroughly uncaring of everyone, including each other. It is sad that such a negative movie was a hit, and that audiences found jokes about hurting others to be funny.

The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle, 1939

This film has nothing about angels or heaven, because the original ending showing an ADC was replaced. But it is a love story, and you might enjoy watching Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance.

Beyond Tomorrow, 1940

This movie is about three older gentlemen killed in an airplane crash. At first, they seem oblivious about their deaths, and behave like ghosts. But as they realize that their vision is perfect or that there is no pain, the truth slowly dawns on them.

One of them is taken to what appears to be hell and the other two vaguely discuss something wrong he had done. Later, he shows up in heaven saying he let the bitterness go away from him. This fits the idea that negativity holds

us back. But there is no suggestion of a life review to answer for his bad deeds before moving upward.

The fate of the second man matches NDE reports in two ways. It shows a reunion with departed loved ones and the man is allowed to create his own heaven.

The third man decides to bring a separated young couple back together as a guardian angel might. It is laudable that he does this of his own initiative and is not assigned. But this positive depiction is totally nullified when he is warned that if he does not come to heaven immediately, he will be earthbound forever. Overall, despite a few correct ideas, it is a very confused film and not appealing either.

Here Comes Mr. Jordan, 1941 (remake: ***Heaven Can Wait***, 1978)

Both versions are entertaining and have the same core story. Heaven, or the way station as identified in the remake, is the same in both (with the spirit of the recently dead person and the heavenly escort walking on a sea of clouds) and is exactly copied in *A Guy Named Joe* (1943).

The ideas, that an escort meets the departed soul (Joe), the way station has a manager (Mr. Jordan), and newly arrived souls wait to board a plane to heaven, are all wrong. We know from the NDE and DBV literatures that our own soul mate angels come to meet us when we die, and there is no "manager" in heaven. And as spirits we can travel anywhere; no planes are needed. Also, the spirits in heaven are shown as different from departed souls, as in many films of that era and beyond.

Joe's saxophone is prominent in the plot. But how this instrument gets to the way station, how it comes back to earth in its physical form, and how Joe takes it along when he travels as a spirit, are all mysteries that the movies do not explain. Nevertheless, these depictions are allowable as story anchors that also add humor.

There are many ways the original film is better. The remake introduces foul language and overemphasizes "winning," which is not valued in heaven. The original suggests reincarnation as a way to get back to earth, which is commendable for a movie made in 1941. It then proposes the preposterous notion of living on earth by entering a dead person's body. The remake does not mention reincarnation and says "the *only* way you can live again on earth is in a dead body," which takes the idea to a ridiculous level. Neither film explains how a damaged body (drowned, shot, or dead of a heart attack) can be used by a spirit immediately in athletic activities.

There is a nice telepathic ADC in the original, when Joe tells his trainer to turn the radio on, so he can hear the boxing match. The remake dropped the ADC, and the television set (showing the football game) was on already.

In the original, Mr. Jordan tells Joe that he will show up whenever Joe needs him. And indeed he does, showing that he knows when Joe needs him *and* that he can come to him instantaneously. The remake does not highlight these important spirit abilities.

Unlike newer movies which have the returned spirits *literally* look like themselves in their previous instances, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* has Mr. Jordan carefully explain to

Joe that he looks and sounds like himself to them; but he will look and sound like the person whose body he has entered to everyone else. He even says that spiritually it would still be him, which is an important line. *Heaven Can Wait* also includes this explanation but it is not done as well as in the original. It is still far better than in *Made in Heaven* and *The Love Letter*, which fail completely in this concept, as discussed previously.

The remake improves on the original in some ways. The original starts with a disclaimer that this is a "fantastic yarn," which undermines the film before it even starts. The remake sensibly has no such disclaimer. In the original, the claim that Joe would *not* have crashed his plane and died is hard to believe. The cable attached to the rudder had snapped, and he was completely out of control. In the remake, the idea that Joe, as an athlete with quick reflexes, could have avoided the van in the tunnel (while riding his bike) is far more plausible.

Although this has nothing to do with angels or heaven, another flaw in the original is that a boxer wearing only shorts is shot in the chest by gangsters in the audience, and no one seems aware of it. When Joe's spirit enters his body, gets up, and fights, there is no chest wound and no blood. Yet later, Joe parts his robe to show the trainer his chest wound. The remake simply has the quarterback fall down, and it would have been easy to show the boxer knocked out in the original as well.

In the original, when Joe meets the girl at the end, the lines do not work well, although the concept of their recognizing something in each other is sound. In the

remake, the lines here are improved to better support the important context of souls recognizing each other.

Both films seriously err at the end in taking away Joe's memory of himself as Joe. This idea is logically flawed. If Joe is someone else now, will he have the other person's memories of childhood and youth? And the other soul (whose body Joe is in), and who is in heaven now, whose memories will *he* have?

Even more important, this ploy contradicts the earlier correct notion that a soul would always know itself. In the remake Mr. Jordan even tells Joe that he will not remember who he really is, and Joe is quite upset by this. Also, because the trainer continues to remember, unnecessary sadness is created because he can no longer connect with Joe as a close friend. It also deprives Joe of the opportunity to enlighten the girl he loves that he is the same soul she had loved before. It was a poor conception in the story, and unfortunately neither movie corrected it for a happier, more enlightened ending. Despite all the flaws, both films are enjoyable and worth seeing.

A Guy Named Joe, 1943 (remake: ***Always***, 1989)

The original is a World War II film, but it has several inaccuracies about the war. For example, the Germans did not have an operational aircraft carrier in World War II as the movie shows. The pilot is in a bomber (and not a fighter) plane and yet is able to bomb (after the bombardier bails out). A woman pilot (in the ferrying service) knows the exact location of the ammunition dump, and can bomb it without any training in bombing

missions. Despite these errors, the combat scenes are filmed very effectively, and evoke strong emotion.

With regard to the angels aspect, the spirit of the dead pilot is not the guardian angel of the woman he loves, as would be true in reality. Instead, he is "assigned" to a novice pilot to guide him in his flying expeditions. As a plot device for a wartime film, however, it is acceptable.

But the moviemakers incorrectly showed the angel as jealous of the novice pilot when he falls for the woman the angel loves. They failed to realize that we are at a higher spiritual level in heaven. The film also wrongly claims that the departed spirit *has* to end the love connection so the bereaved can find love again. Viewers too apparently like the idea of departed loved ones being jealous and having to "let go," so the ones left behind can "move on."

Moviemakers as well as audiences assign "human" motives to angels, and seem totally unaware that higher-level souls stay lovingly connected to the bereaved, and become guardian angels to them, as well as to their new loves, as seen repeatedly in NDE and ADC accounts. His telling her, "I'm setting you free. I'm moving out of your heart," completely misses the fact that the love between soul mates is eternal. There is no understanding that they will be together forever, even if not in this earth life. Her going to a new love is incorrectly depicted as a permanent goodbye to him. And yet, the film has appeal.

The remake *Always*, set in modern times, has all the misconceptions of the original regarding angels, and includes most of its dialogue, but lacks its charm. The new dialogue is inane, the added jokes are dumb, and most of

the new situations are deliberately reckless or hurtful to others. Overall, it is a superficial attempt to be "cool" and is heavy on scary special effects. It bounces between a low-level movie and a better film when it sticks to the original dialogue (except when it repeats some lines from the original several times, completely ruining the effect). Some new dialogue, where an angel tells the flyer that he will be free only when he gives the woman her freedom (by stopping his connection to her), is the exact opposite of the truth. Both NDE and ADC reports tell us of eternal bonds between soul mates, and of guardian angels constantly linked to loved ones on earth.

The Human Comedy, 1943

The film is good-hearted, but it has several silly parts, others that are overly religious but without spirituality, and some that strike a negative note. The best scenes are those between Frank Morgan and Mickey Rooney at the office, and a few other scenes are interesting.

The book, also published in 1943, had the departed husband appearing to his wife (in a visual ADC), and telling her their son would be killed in battle (which represents an auditory and precognitive ADC). The movie deleted this scene but enlarged the guardian angel aspect in many ways.

The film starts with a voiceover from the departed husband/father, who says he is always connected to and watching over his family. His spirit appears near the mother to indicate that our departed loved ones are right next to us, even though we cannot see them. When he

kisses his wife on the head, she clearly senses something, duplicating what bereaved people experience in sensory spirit visitations.

The older son is killed in World War II, and the father's spirit calms the middle son who is grieving. He floods him with inspirational words, and although it is not clear that the son can hear these, the positive feeling of the message soothes him. At the very end, the soldier son's spirit and the father appear near their house and go in together, nicely suggesting that the father and son are reunited, and that they continue as the family's guardian angels.

The proclamation at the beginning (and repeated at the end) that "the end is just the beginning" acknowledges the spirit realm, but in a limited "after-life" perspective, not surprising for the era. There is no understanding that we were eternal souls *before* coming to this earth life. Overall, it is worth seeing for the heart-warming sections.

Wonder Man, 1945

This is a hilarious comedy with a double role by Danny Kaye. The lengthy interactions between the twins could be seen as extended visual and auditory ADCs.

The film correctly shows a spirit putting thoughts telepathically into someone's mind, and being able to go through objects but unable to grasp them. Interestingly, the movie also shows a spirit able to move objects, and even to move a person a bit, matching some ADCs people have received. It also correctly shows a spirit entering someone's body temporarily, that we know from the ADC literature happens in some cases of guardian angel help.

It also has nonsensical parts such as the spirit running out of ectoplasm so it cannot manifest itself anymore, getting drunk when his twin on earth drinks (and the spirit happens to be *inside* him), and not answering calls for help because he has a hangover. Despite these crazy depictions and some other silly scenes, it is a well-crafted film that is very funny and memorable.

Blithe Spirit, 1945

This is a highly entertaining movie, despite its many flaws in depicting spirits. It does get some aspects right such as spirits walking through closed doors, and people walking through spirits.

But it incorrectly shows departed spirits as "humans," being jealous or spiteful, and playing jokes on people. It wrongly depicts a child's spirit remaining as a child after 100 years, and imagines that a deaf person would still be deaf in the spirit world. It also shows a spirit returning after seven years with no idea where she was all this time, but contradicts this later by claiming that she was pining for her husband all the time on the other side.

The spirits seem to have no control over where they are, just the opposite of what is possible in the spirit realm, where spirits can go instantaneously wherever they wish. The movie also makes ridiculous claims that ghosts cannot travel over water and that someone can smell ectoplasm.

Nevertheless, Noël Coward's play is hilarious and most of it is reproduced in the film. Even better, his original

negative ending, which ruined the play for many, is cleverly changed by the screenwriter to an upbeat one.

Cockeyed Miracle, 1946

This is a very funny and touching movie. It hints at departed loved ones being guardian angels by having the father (Keenan Wynn) come to meet his son (Frank Morgan) when he dies. But it wrongly shows that the father's spirit has no intimation of what has occurred in the lives of his family on earth.

The film mentions the importance of forgiveness and kindness in heaven, supporting NDE accounts about a higher level of understanding and wisdom in the spirit world. It correctly shows spirits going through walls and ceilings. It depicts spirits unable to grasp objects, which is true for spirits before they go to the Light, but not for the father's spirit which has been in heaven for 50 years.

It comically (but correctly) depicts that not all telepathic communication from departed spirits gets through to the bereaved. Although it rightly shows that departed loved ones can appear near the bereaved and touch them, there is no comprehension that they can continue to be connected over time. Despite a few flaws, it is an excellent movie, worth seeing for its message of eternal love, superb acting, and comic touches.

The Razor's Edge, 1946

This film, based on a book by Somerset Maugham, is unique and worth seeing. The protagonist is disturbed that during World War I a soldier took a bullet to save

him. He goes to a monastery in India to work things out.

His narration of a mystical experience is accurate. It includes an out-of-body experience, bliss, full knowledge, and becoming one with God, which fits the NDE literature precisely. His discussion of creation as a manifestation arising from perfection (God) fits the understanding gained from actual mystical experiences. Some discussion about God (with the monks) is contradictory, reflecting some of Maugham's misinterpretations of philosophical literature, but these are minor flaws.

The idea that salvation can come through love, positive actions, or wisdom is true. The notion that it is important to love everyone is correct. Showing that even helping a few people is worthwhile, and that money and status are unimportant, match what NDErs learned in heaven. The movie is recommended for all these correct depictions, as well as for fine acting by Tyrone Power and others.

Stairway to Heaven, 1946 (original title: ***A Matter of Life and Death***)

This is a movie about a British pilot in World War II, who appeals to a heavenly court to remain on earth, after a messenger from heaven fails to find him when he falls from his plane. The film starts with a disclaimer that the other world "exists only in the mind of the airman whose life and imagination have been violently shaped by war." So let us begin by accepting the disclaimer and examine everything as the pilot's hallucinations. In this case, we cannot critique how heaven is depicted. But there are several errors, even with this lenient approach.

The movie claims that the pilot did not die because the heavenly messenger did not find him in a fog. But if it was all a hallucination, there was no messenger. So how is it that the pilot fell without a parachute, from a burning plane, and still did not die?

The film stresses that the pilot's hallucinations started when the messenger first appeared and froze time. But what about the extended sequence of heaven shown *before* the messenger showed up? Whose hallucination was that? Also, how does the chess book disappear, and later reappear, if everything was a hallucination?

What exactly is causing the hallucinations? The movie changes the reason every time the issue is mentioned—a concussion, adhesions to the optic nerve, retinoid adhesions to the olfactory nerve, and other gobbledygook.

The doctor decides brain surgery is needed without consulting the airman, and against the operating surgeon's advice. This is certainly unethical. He also insists the surgery *has* to be performed that very night, because that is when the airman thinks his appeal is being heard in a heavenly court. This is illogical. Why does the surgery have to be rushed to match the details of the pilot's hallucinations? Later, the doctor says, "If we don't operate tonight, he'll go insane." Still later, he says, "If we don't operate tonight, it's life or death." Just as the description of the medical issue keeps changing, the reason for performing the surgery that night keeps changing. Obviously, no one bothered to read the script carefully to eliminate such problems.

The presiding judge in heaven is the same man as the operating surgeon, whose face the pilot has never seen. So how could he imagine him?

Finally, after the surgery is over, the pilot refers to his appeal in heaven and tells his girl, "We won." If all of this is *still* in his mind, the surgery did not "cure" him, did it?

As an aside, there is a startling resemblance between the messenger and the pilot's girlfriend. Also, when the messenger yells, "Peter, come back!" as the airman is running down the stairway back to earth, the girl is also yelling the same thing, as Peter slowly wakes up. Perhaps the filmmakers wanted to show that the hallucination about the messenger was tied to the girl's appearance.

As another aside, the face of the dead radio operator is repeatedly shown in a grotesque view, which is most jarring for viewers. The moviemakers did this to ensure that the audience would recognize his spirit in heaven, but it was quite unnecessary to do it so crudely.

Now, let us examine the mistakes if everything the airman experiences is real. An assigned spirit is sent to "fetch" him, instead of a departed loved one, based on the NDE and DBV literatures. The messenger's not finding him in a fog seriously underestimates the abilities of angels. Heaven is shown in black and white and earth life in color, which contradicts NDE reports about the immense beauty and color in heaven, compared to earth.

Instead of the actual instantaneous, telepathic access to information in the spirit world, all information is shown stored in physical records, with a file for each person, and invoices to account for dead souls. A huge number of dead

pilots walk in together, carrying wings in plastic bags. This is certainly not how people reach heaven in reality. Also, the pilots are asked their names and ranks by a clerk, instead of loving beings of light meeting them. This depiction may simply be symbolic, to depict huge losses of fighting men. But the film also shows a large number of women in uniforms, which is unhistorical for World War II because women were not in combat in that war.

The courtroom scenario, where the pilot has to fight for a chance to continue living on earth, contradicts the NDE literature about love in heaven. It pits, as one viewer put it, "the power of love" (of the pilot and his girlfriend) against "the powers that be" (heaven), totally missing the fact that God and heaven embody love far more than do humans. The movie repeatedly says that the earth is ruled by love and heaven is ruled by law, which is nonsense.

The film's depiction of heaven is extremely limited in other ways. No one grows in this heaven. All are stuck as they were when they died. The prosecutor, killed by the British in 1775, still hates the British. The pilot refuses Plato as defense counsel because he was too old, aged 81, when he died. He refuses all great men "since they know nothing of problems today." There is no understanding of the growth and wisdom attained in heaven.

The heavenly prosecutor says, "We're not alive," failing to realize that we are far more alive in the spirit world than on earth, as NDErs have repeatedly attested. When the doctor dies and discovers that the pilot's story about the messenger from heaven is true, he does nothing to try to stop the unnecessary, scheduled surgery (as an angel

would). Instead, he becomes the defense counsel for him. The pilot is ultimately granted his wish because he is "uncommon," wrongly suggesting that a common man would not get the same privilege.

At the end of the trial, after the jury has given the verdict that the airman be allowed to return to earth, the defense counsel (who is supposed to represent the airman) does something bizarre. He forces the girl (whose spirit has been called to heaven while she is asleep) to take the pilot's place in heaven while the pilot returns to earth. This is completely illogical, because the appeal was for them to be together. Moreover, the jury has allowed them to do so, and even the prosecutor, who was against the appeal, has agreed. But neither the pilot nor the girl questions this silliness. The girl cries, but starts going up the stairway; all of a sudden it stops moving, and she runs down the stairs, back to earth. No explanation is given for this unnecessary and distracting rigmarole. Despite all the flaws, it is an interesting movie, cinematically well-made, and with impressive special effects.

It's a Wonderful Life, 1946

This classic film makes the important point that the way to live is to love and help others. But typical of the era, the angel is assigned to a job, instead of being related to the person. In fact, the movie makes a big deal that there have been a lot of prayers for the protagonist, so they *have* to send someone, and they ask whose turn is it, as if they are all workers for an organization. They then decide to send someone who has to "earn his wings."

This angel worker is then shown the major events of the protagonist's life. A soul mate angel would have known that already. But it is planned this way, partly so the audience can learn what this man did in his life. At least the angel comes prepared with all the information, so he can help the man see the difference he made by being born, and the audience can too. Also, he does act as a guardian angel in preventing the man's suicide.

It is nice that the film depicts the angel communicating at times with unseen angels. Spirits are always in touch with other spirits, as NDErs tell us. But it is odd that the angel and even the man (after his wish, that he had never been born, is granted) are seen by everyone and can interact with them.

Even though the movie is a favorite with many, and understandably a huge hit when it was made by Frank Capra, it does not bear repeated viewings today because of too much overacting by Jimmy Stewart, especially after he meets the angel, which can be rather jarring to today's sophisticated audiences. The simplest notions are over-emphasized to ensure that the viewers of 1946 would get it. If you can ignore the overacting, there are aspects that are still heart-warming.

The Ghost and Mrs. Muir, 1945 (book), 1947 (movie)

The book was written by Josephine Leslie (under the pseudonym of R. A. Dick) who seems to have read about mystic experiences, because her descriptions of the spirit world closely match NDE reports. Captain Gregg tells Mrs. Muir that the spirit dimension is ineffable (i.e., difficult to

describe), that time is irrelevant, and that spirits do not age. He reveals that the other world has beauty, serenity, and nobility; the finest sunsets and the greatest music; no "fleshly desire," only spirituality; and the most generous feelings (another way to say "love"). He explains that it is a dimension where people realize and learn, and then they can move higher. All of this matches NDE accounts. He also says he spends some time in heaven and some time with her, paralleling revelations in the ADC literature that our guardian angels are in heaven *and* with us.

One mistake in the book was to call the entity a ghost instead of an angel, but that is due to these terms not being differentiated at the time. Another mistake was that the "ghost" was not a soul mate angel to the woman in the story; he simply connected with her because she came to live as a renter in his old house.

The film dropped characters and tightened the plot for better flow. It also changed the telepathic ADCs in the book to visual ADCs, which is logical for a visual medium. Unfortunately, it dropped all of the accurate descriptions of the spirit world, which could have enlightened viewers.

It also made changes that created false depictions of spirits. It incorrectly shows the spirit to be jealous of the realtor (as a human might be), and relieved when he finds out that Mrs. Muir was merely interested in finding other lodgers to share the rent. His not knowing why she had invited the realtor over is another wrong depiction. The book had correctly shown that the spirit could read Mrs. Muir's thoughts, and knew why she was doing something.

In another case of his jealousy, the spirit ought to have known that the man Mrs. Muir was enamored with was already married, and he should have warned her about it. In fact, the spirit does exactly that in the book and saves her from making a mistake. In the movie, Captain Gregg leaves when Mrs. Muir falls in love. He is unaware of the man's background and trying to do what he thinks is best for her, which very much distorts the reality about spirits having complete access to knowledge and information.

The worst change the film made was that Captain Gregg's spirit erases Mrs. Muir's memories of their many positive interactions. This idea of suppressing memories is not anything guardian angels actually do. Also, they do not deliberately stay away when someone they love needs them. The moviemakers misrepresented reality and created unnecessary sadness, merely to set up what they thought would be a surprise ending, but which is actually quite predictable.

Even though the "ghost" returns to meet her spirit after she dies, the fact that she never remembers their interactions in her long, lonely life is inexcusable. In the book, the spirit did leave briefly, but watched over the family, and later returned. He then interacted with Mrs. Muir for all her life, and guided her to be a better person than her own inclinations led her to be. The film deliberately changed this to a tragic romance, with Mrs. Muir trying hard all her life to remember something, but being unable to. Despite the unwarranted changes from the book, the movie is engaging and worth seeing.

It also led to a television sitcom (1968-1970), with the same title, but with new scripts and situations. The ghost here is even more human, in terms of pettiness and foibles, than the spirit in the film. But he is appealing even so, and most of the episodes are clever and amusing.

The Bishop's Wife, 1947 (remake: ***The Preacher's Wife***, 1996)

The Bishop's Wife is a popular film, with good acting and a few entertaining segments. However, there are major flaws in the plot and script, particularly in depicting angels, as discussed previously. Near the end, the angel also says that he is tired of never being hot or cold, and never being hungry or full, thus suggesting that he craves a mortal existence. This is both pathetic and misleading. Angels have lived before as mortals and can do that again if they wish; it is not as if earth life is forbidden to angels.

Even minor things are wrong, such as the angel looking up and saying "Just a minute, please," as if someone is rushing him to his next assignment. Angels have complete control over how much they help us, unlike this depiction.

He knows the names of all the boys in the choir, but no one questions how he knows this. He waves his arms and doors open, but no one is surprised. He has already appeared suddenly to the bishop (and disappeared too), and yet the bishop asks him to prove that he is an angel. Much of the movie is aimed at unquestioning audiences.

The film correctly mentions that angels can put thoughts in people's heads, although he never does this in the movie. He does make members of the bishop's

household happy, prevents accidents, warns a mother to take better care of her baby, inspires a professor to write a book, and persuades a rich widow to give money to feed and clothe poor people instead of building a cathedral.

Ironically, his assignment was to guide the bishop, who was wrongly focused on ego, money, and prestige. But instead of getting the bishop to see why helping the poor is more important than building a cathedral, he convinced the rich widow of this himself. The bishop was unhappy when he found out that the cathedral would not be built, showing that he did not learn much from the angel's visit.

When the angel (wrongly depicted as falling in love with the wife) abjectly tells her at the end not to send him away, she is disturbed and runs upstairs, crying. When the bishop asks if he will come again if they need him, he vehemently says he will ask to be assigned to the other end of the universe instead. He admits his jealousy and tells the bishop, "Kiss her for me, you lucky Henry," which sinks him even further from a real angel.

Perhaps in this particular case, it was fine to erase everyone's memories, because the angel created a lot of angst before leaving. Of course the idea of removing memories is logically flawed. For example, how would the rich widow forget him, and still donate her money to the poor? How would she reconcile (in her mind) the reason for the drastic change in her plans? The same applies to all the people with whom the angel interacted.

The remake, *The Preacher's Wife*, is a vehicle for Whitney Houston's songs, and this format tends to overwhelm the story. It also has a simplistic conception

of God, as discussed earlier. But on a positive note, the preacher in this movie is a much better person than the bishop in the original film. The bishop is focused on building a huge cathedral for egotistical reasons. The preacher is against the idea of a huge new church, and is focused on helping the community.

When the angel arrives on earth, he is very excited to be here and happy to eat pizza, which is unlike real angels, as we know from the ADC literature. He says he has lived on earth before, which recognizes that angels are people who have lived on earth, unlike the depiction in the original. But he also says "I'm an angel, like in the bible," which refutes what he just said.

Like the earlier movie, which did not understand soul mate angels, he was sent in answer to a prayer, and assigned to the case. Worse, he says he had to wait in line to get this job, because there is so much competition to come to earth (shades of the misguided *Wings of Desire*). We know from NDE narrations that competition is frowned upon in the spirit realm. Also, the idea of having to wait in line devalues the reality of angels being able to come to earth (as spirits) any time they wish.

As in the prior film, the angel in the remake falls in love with the wife. But he realizes this is wrong and gets the couple back together without much heartache, unlike in the original. At the end, however, the angel imagines himself as the husband in a wedding picture, which is funny, but the fact that he is still attracted to the wife is unangelic. Memories are erased once again, without much

thought as to how people will recall the events in which the angel participated without remembering him.

Interestingly, just as for the predecessor, there is a connection to *Highway to Heaven* for the remake. The movie draws on the television series in many ways, which appeal to audiences, but are inaccurate in depiction. For example, the angel acts as if he has an unusual, close personal connection to God, he easily turns a villain into a good guy, and every time he does something he should not have, there is thunder to indicate God's disapproval.

Angels in the Outfield, 1951

This film is moderately enjoyable. It shows the spirits of baseball players trying to help the current team. Thus, angels are correctly shown as departed souls, some of whom may know the people they are trying to help. Unfortunately, they are not soul mate angels and are assigned to the job by archangel Gabriel. This religious spin takes away from the fact that guardian angels are connected with us in eternal love.

The depiction of a child seeing angels when others cannot is correct. But she sees the angels warming up once, which is silly for several reasons. Angels do not need to warm up physically. Also, what they do in the movie is to give telepathic ADCs to the ballplayers, for which no warming up is needed.

The contact angel is rude and unangelic, as discussed previously. Even the earthly ballplayers are often mean, trying to deliberately rile the manager, when he is being

pleasant to everyone, as part of his deal with the angel. Of course, angels do not make deals with people, but we can overlook that aspect as a necessary story anchor.

The fans who get upset when the team is losing, and yell and scream at the manager, are also very low level in a spiritual sense, as some real sports fans tend to be. Even the townspeople lack spiritual understanding, laughing mockingly on reading newspaper articles about angels helping the team, or about the manager talking to angels.

The depiction of foul language (to sound like gibberish) is ingenious. We know from the reactions of others that the manager is swearing, but we do not have to hear it. This is a refreshing difference compared to modern films. The movie also rightly shows that psychiatrists often lack the wisdom to acknowledge and understand the spirit realm. The secondary thread about a family forming while all this is going on is heart-warming.

Love Is a Many Splendored Thing, 1955

The film shows a brief vision, a brief auditory ADC, and an ADC through a butterfly, all given to the bereaved lover of a correspondent killed in the Korean War. Earlier there is talk of reincarnation between the lovers, who plan to come back to earth and find each other again. It is a praiseworthy movie about eternal love between soul mates. It is also to be commended for its strong message throughout—about love toward all being the most important thing in the world.

Forever Darling, 1956

This tedious Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz film has a mix of correct and incorrect ideas about angels. It incorrectly says that everyone is assigned a guardian angel at birth. There is no understanding of departed loved ones (or other soul mates) as guardian angels. The husband, a scientist, is shown as a reductionist, not believing in angels or anything without evidence. The wife, who at first thinks it is a hallucination, comes to believe in guardian angels. But she wrongly says that guardian angels are not like angels from heaven; she thinks they look like people, but childishly believes that angels from heaven have wings.

The fact that the angel looks like James Mason, who the wife is crazy about, has some basis in how NDErs are shown images in heaven that appeal to them personally. The angel even says, "I look the way you want me to look." He adds that if he was the husband's angel, he would look like Ava Gardner, supporting the reality that angels can take on any appearance, not restricted to one gender.

The wife's attraction to the angel is a twist on the "angel in love with a human" plot. Both ideas, of course, are incorrect in terms of eternal soul mates. The angel does correctly explain that deep love is based on looking at someone's soul, rather than their physical appearance. He also rightly tells the wife that she needs to grow up and behave lovingly to her husband.

But in a strange scene at the end, the movie shows the angel merging with the husband while the couple is kissing, and this delights the wife who kisses him back

passionately. The film does not show the angel leaving the husband's body, creating the impression that the angel has merged with the husband's soul forever, which of course is ridiculous. But even if the moviemakers meant to imply that the merging was only temporary, it is sad that this is what makes the wife attracted to the husband.

Miracle in the Rain, 1956

This film offers a strong portrayal of eternal love. Set in New York, it nicely emphasizes the strengths of that city, almost making it a character in the story, with many picturesque scenes of Central Park.

The story is about an exuberant young soldier, who falls in love with a shy New Yorker. They plan to marry after he returns from the war. She gives him a lucky coin to keep him safe, but he is killed in battle. She grieves deeply for him, falls ill, and catches pneumonia.

In the movie's ending, as she is walking in pouring rain to the cathedral, his spirit comes to her and hugs her. He returns the lucky coin, and tells her he loves her forever and he will always be with her. Thus the film correctly depicts a departed loved one as a guardian angel. It also shows a complex ADC with a vision, a spirit hug, and the transfer of a physical object with meaning to both parties.

Unfortunately, there is a suggestion that St. Andrew answered her prayers by sending the soldier's spirit to her. This sort of religious perspective detracts from the reality that departed loved ones in the Light are angels, and can communicate with the bereaved on their own.

And sadly, there is a voiceover at the end saying, "We'd like to believe it's true," which jarringly reduces the impact of the powerful ending. This, in turn, is somewhat mitigated as the camera pans to the New York skyline and the sky, which *could* be interpreted as his spirit being in heaven and yet close to her.

Hello, Dolly! 1969

This film, preceded by other movie versions and stage plays, is about a matchmaker who ends up finding a match for herself. Early in the film, the protagonist "talks" to her late husband, showing the audience that she feels connected with him even after several years. She tells him she has made a decision and wants his approval. We guess she has decided to remarry. But she does not say what her decision is, and does not wait for his answer.

Later, when the storekeeper asks her to marry him, she specifically asks her husband's spirit to give his approval. He does so right away, in a clever way. His immediate response supports the reality that our departed loved ones are constantly watching over and guiding us.

Moreover, unlike many movies that show departed spirits being jealous of the new loves in the lives of their loved ones (and being forced to "let go" and other such earth-bound ideas), the husband here is a higher-level spirit, eagerly guiding his wife to her happiness. In addition to this enlightened aspect, this is a well-made musical, well worth watching for its dances and its excellent direction by Gene Kelly.

Charley and the Angel, 1973

An angel arrives to tell Charley his time is up. The angel is correctly depicted as having lived as a human, but wrongly depicted as a worker assigned to the case, instead of a departed loved one. In fact, as opposed to the loving guardian angels that all of us have, this angel is indifferent to Charley's fate to begin with, and only later grows to care for him. The angel also incorrectly paints heaven as a confused place that does not know if Charley *has* to die now or not.

The movie does correctly show some angelic abilities such as suddenly appearing or disappearing, being seen and heard only by Charley, and the ability to fly. In addition, the angel hears Charley (presumably from heaven) when he calls for help, and comes to him at once. The first half is enjoyable, but the second half of the film has unnecessary violence and physically threatening situations (as many Disney films ironically do) that mar whatever charm the movie had.

Somewhere in Time, 1980

Christopher Reeve stars in this engaging time-travel love story (which for the most part is *not* about angels or heaven). The end of the film hints at a departed loved one being a guardian angel by having her come to fetch her lover when he dies. It also accurately suggests a death-bed vision, an out-of-body perspective, and a reunion with a loved one in the spirit realm. The acting is superb, and the movie is highly engrossing and touching.

Resurrection, 1980

This film is to be commended for making a powerful statement about NDEs, very soon after the phenomenon first received scholarly notice. The acting is impressive, and the movie has several important points to make.

It correctly depicts some aspects of an NDE—seeing loved ones in the spirit world, brilliant light, and the healing ability that some acquire after experiencing the Light. It emphasizes the importance of loving everyone and reaching out to people, as the protagonist (Ellen Burstyn) does. It also shows a dream visitation from a departed loved one and a precognitive dream.

Early in the film, Burstyn interacts with the owner of a gas station, who shows through his loving manner to everyone that he is enlightened. It is clear that this interaction, and the sign "God is Love" displayed at the gas station, draw the Burstyn character to spend the rest of her life working there and healing people who stop by.

The movie does have a lot of negativity embodied in the protagonist's father, her boyfriend, and *his* father (a minister), and one wishes all three characters were not in the film. But apparently they were included deliberately to make the critical point (that NDErs have revealed) that God cares only about love and that religion is not so important. Twice in the movie a sign saying "God is Love" is displayed. And yet, some viewers wrongly concluded that the movie is *not* about God but about love. They completely missed the point the moviemakers tried hard to make—that God *is* love.

Highway to Heaven, television series, 1984-1989

The series correctly shows Michael Landon's character, Jonathan, as having lived on earth before he became an angel. But it also shows him as God's employee, assigned to help different people in every episode. This is totally incorrect based on NDE and ADC reports, which reveal that angels who help us are our own soul mates.

In the few episodes where Jonathan has to help his wife (from his earth existence), he knows nothing of what has transpired in her life, which is not the case with departed loved ones. Nevertheless, these episodes are charming, as is the whole series, despite several major misconceptions about how angels actually help people.

Jonathan can read people's thoughts and create illusions, in keeping with angelic abilities as revealed in NDE and ADC accounts. He typically does not reveal that he is an angel, but helps people out of their difficulties through befriending them, which is an appealing way to approach the topic of angelic help in a fictional setting. His interactions with his friend Mark provide humor (and sometimes pathos), and the majority of the episodes are heartwarming.

Made in Heaven, 1987

The film is panned by a critic for "imagining" that one can create illusions in heaven, and for being able to go anywhere one wishes simply by thinking of it. Ironically, that is exactly what the NDE literature tells us is true in the spirit realm, so it is nice that the movie shows this.

A mistake the film makes, in this regard, is that it fails to understand that spirits can go in the same way to anywhere on earth, especially to check on loved ones. For example, the young man could go to see how his parents were faring after his sudden, drowning death, but he seems to have little thought for them.

The movie correctly shows meeting departed loved ones in heaven. But these spirits do not seem to know what has transpired on earth related to their loved ones, which is incorrect.

The idea that everything starts in heaven and then is replicated on earth is borne out in NDE discussions of how spirits in heaven inspire artistic endeavors on earth. Showing the spirit realm as a beautiful place, full of love and creativity, with reference to God but not to religion, and the ability to read thoughts, are all aspects supported in NDE narrations. These are the few scenes worth seeing.

But the film has many flaws. It incorrectly depicts that God has a "special agent" who, moreover, chain-smokes. It portrays a soul born in heaven to a couple, whereas in reality all souls are created by God, and there is no sex in the spirit world, as the movie suggests. It also fails to understand that everyone has eternal soul mates; no one "meets" someone new in heaven and falls in love.

The film mentions that reincarnation is practiced in general, but then contradicts that by depicting that it is granted to someone as a special case. It also adds a strange clause that if the lovers cannot find each other within 30 years, they will be doomed never to see each other again, even in heaven. This paints the rules of

heaven as irrational and harsh, whereas in reality God's plan is perfect. The NDE literature tells us that soul mates are together eternally in the spirit world, even after lifetimes on earth where they do not meet.

Wings of Desire, 1987

This German film won an award and praise at Cannes from critics who obviously have no conception about the reality of angels and heaven. The movie portrays heaven in black and white and earth life in color, showing its totally misguided lens. NDErs have consistently reported how much more beautiful heaven is than earth.

The film incorrectly depicts angels as different from departed souls, and also wrongly shows them as longing to be humans. It completely misunderstands angels by assuming they want to smoke, drink, and have sex. Only low-level souls, or ghosts, have such desires. All the angels who are on earth supposedly to help people are shown as dull, bleak, and lacking in love and wisdom. They go around reading random people's thoughts without any intention of helping anyone. Actually, angels readily help people connected with them in eternal love.

Even in a few points that have some basis in reality, the depictions are unbelievable and simplistic. In trying to show that angels can read thoughts, *everyone* on the subway is shown thinking about the most important issues in their lives at the exact moment. In trying to show that children can sometimes see angels or departed spirits when adults cannot, the movie goes overboard by showing *all* children able to see spirits.

The “making of the movie” feature clearly reveals that the producer/director knows nothing of angels. He says he just wanted to show Berlin from a bird’s eye view, and thought “surely angels must be bored,” and made up this film. It has no script and he admits that he just asked a friend to write some words, which he superimposed anywhere on the movie as captions. This is why many of the subtitles seem irrelevant and pretentious.

The moviemaker has no idea about the abundant love in heaven, which is far greater than what we experience on earth, as we know from NDE reports. This is why he shows an angel wanting to come to earth to experience love. He also shows an angel falling in love with a person, showing ignorance of eternal soul mates. The film shows the angel materializing as an adult to live a life on earth, and becoming excited about drinking a cup of coffee and about tasting his own blood from a wound. The angel also ludicrously claims that in finding love on earth he now knows what no other angel knows. The movie has almost everything wrong, including its title. For someone who understands and appreciates the beautiful reality of heaven and angels, this is a dark and depressing film.

Chances Are, 1989

This is an engaging romantic comedy, where a man, who dies on his wedding anniversary, begs to have another life on earth right away. This not how reincarnation typically takes place, but some hasty instances of returning to earth are actually recorded in Professor Ian Stevenson’s research on reincarnation.

Some viewers did not like the man's falling in love with his daughter from his past life. But the NDE literature shows that soul mates plan on taking different roles in subsequent earth lives, and these types of changes in relationships are common.

Also, the man remembers witnessing the planning of a crime in his past life (which Professor Stevenson's research shows *has* happened in past life recall), and is able to reveal it so the perpetrator is brought to justice. This aspect becomes part of the film's happy ending, without being too far from what could happen.

Ghost, 1990

This is an intense film, with a murder and a love story. It has too much violence (and foul language) for me to recommend it, but it correctly portrays that deep love continues after death.

The main character is brutally murdered and remains on earth as a spirit for a while. He taunts and torments his killers in angry and vengeful ways, which audiences may see as justified retribution. But it is not what an angel would do. However, protecting his wife from the bad guys is in keeping with a guardian angel, and his spirit does go to heaven after this. In fact, the Light is shown coming for him a second time, and now he goes to it voluntarily.

Both murderers go to hell, which satisfies viewers. But the idea about people being eternally rewarded or eternally punished simply draws on traditional religious ideas of heaven and hell. The reality is that everyone has a chance to advance through the life review, which, of

course, would be "hellish" for the two men responsible for the protagonist's ruthless killing.

The film includes ADCs made through a medium rather than directly to his wife, which is true for some people. But at the end, the wife *is* able to sense him, and they connect for a moment before he leaves. Sadly, the movie incorrectly implies that departed spirits are only here briefly—to complete a task—and then they are gone.

Truly, Madly, Deeply, 1990

The film starts well, showing telepathic ADCs and the idea of a guardian angel. But from there, it goes downhill quickly. The dead boyfriend shows up and moves back in with the protagonist, which no guardian angel would do.

He says he does not know if God exists and he did not reach heaven. If so, he would be a ghost, unaware that he has died, and caught in obsessive behavior. Instead he behaves like a human. The moviemakers do not seem to understand the difference between angels (higher-level spirits), ghosts (lower-level spirits), and humans.

The premise of a spirit coming back as an annoying ghost, who so irritates his grieving girlfriend that she lets him go, is totally against how guardian angels actually work. The idea that he brings a crowd of other ghosts to annoy her is silly. His wanting her to find a new love is commendable; that is indeed what guardian angels want. But they do not need to make themselves obnoxious to help the bereaved "let go" and find a new love.

Defending Your Life, 1991

This movie is a comedy that does not claim that what it shows is the truth. Nevertheless, it is so off the mark that its many errors are worth noting.

The film sees the universe as a machine. It fails to realize that we have eternal soul mates and no one falls in love with someone new in heaven. It wrongly depicts sex in the spirit realm, not understanding that the deeper love experienced in heaven is spiritual. It says we are judged on how we handled fear on earth; but as NDErs tell us, it is all about love. The way in which the incidents are judged (focused on money and worldly matters) is the exact opposite of what a real life review would do. Moreover, the life review NDErs have experienced is not a courtroom scenario but a supportive, learning experience.

Thus, the movie has it all wrong, including the title. With its depictions of voracious meat-eating, its inclusion of amenities to pamper "little brains," the cold demeanor of supposedly higher souls, and the unrestrained shrieking in the past-lives pavilion, one wonders why such a distorted, low-level view of the spirit world is supposed to be appealing.

Hearts and Souls, 1993

This film has many funny parts although some of the humor is in poor taste. It does have heart, but it also has many misconceptions. It makes an outlandish suggestion that the souls of four people, who die in an automobile crash, get attached to a baby born during that crash. The

spirits cannot go where they wish. They are stuck to this baby, and act as babysitters to him in his childhood.

The spirits are visible and audible to the little boy for very long periods, which is unrealistic. Three of them seem loving, unlike ghosts. But one of them uses the boy to place racetrack bets, which fits addictive behavior by ghosts. They finally decide not to "appear" any more to the boy to avoid causing him psychological problems. Nevertheless, they are stuck to him as he grows up.

The fact that they are stuck to earth for 30 plus years, and never reach the Light, implies that they are ghosts. Indeed, they seem to have no knowledge or power as angels do. A mother's spirit cannot find her own children. Another spirit does not know that her lover has died, and even when she finds this out, there is no thought that they can be together now.

The bus driver who caused the crash is condemned to ferry souls for 500 years, which is incorrect for several reasons. First, time is irrelevant in the spirit world, so any plan cannot have a specified time period. Second, we know from NDE accounts that there is no punishment per se, but instead he would go through an extended life review from which he could advance. Third, no one ferries souls. Our departed loved ones come to meet us when we die, as we know from the DBV literature.

Heaven is wrongly portrayed as a confused place. The bus driver shows up decades later than planned to pick up the four souls. The angel, who was supposed to tell them to resolve their unfinished business through the boy, never shows up. The bus driver insists they have to

leave the moment their issues are resolved so they can be born again, which contradicts how reincarnation works.

The bus driver eventually tells the four that they are supposed to enter the body of the man (the boy, now grown up) to resolve their issues. The idea of spirits entering someone's body temporarily is correct, but this is usually done by guardian angels to protect someone. Also, the idea of resolving their unfinished business this way is wrong. They would do so by communicating with their own loved ones, as the ADC literature reveals. Nevertheless, Robert Downey Jr. humorously portrays the different characters as they take over his body. And everyone's issues are resolved for a feel-good ending.

Touched by an Angel, television series, 1994-2003

The three angels in the series are incorrectly shown as different from departed souls. They are also wrongly depicted as servants of God and assigned to cases. Despite being angels, they have no information about anything related to the people they are supposed to help.

Although correctly shown as being able to create illusions, they have cravings for food and cars, which is not at all true for higher-level spirits. One of them is an Angel of Death, as if there is such a being. This concept completely ignores the fact that there are thousands of documented cases where the dying saw their own departed loved ones come to help them transition.

Not only do the angels reveal that they are angels in *every* episode, but this is accompanied by unnecessary fanfare *every time* which makes it very tiresome. Even

when the issue in a particular episode is already resolved, the angels, somewhat pompously, reveal their identities. This violates the revelation in NDE and ADC accounts that ego and self-importance are not valued in the spirit world.

The message of love and hope is one redeeming factor, but even that is done in a patronizing way. A few episodes are indeed praiseworthy, but most are formulaic. The series did well by appealing to mass audiences, mostly oblivious of the NDE and ADC literatures, and unaware of who our guardian angels really are.

Phenomenon, 1996

This film has many aspects right. It acknowledges that our souls are who we really are, and that our essence is energy. In several segments, the protagonist is shown wisely using his newly acquired super intelligence, precognition, and telekinetic ability—to help people in meaningful and loving ways.

It is disappointing that the movie suggests that a UFO (rather than God or angels) or a brain tumor (as an alternate explanation) gave him his instant wisdom. Yet it is good that the protagonist says, near the end, that focusing on the human spirit is more important than worrying about a flash from an alien craft. This line greatly redeems the misguided focus on UFOs.

His trying to explain to his lover's kids that love never dies is good. However, the "bite out of an apple" analogy ties to how people typically think of departed loved ones ("they are in my heart," etc.) and lacks understanding that they are very much alive in the spirit world and are

connected to us on earth. The film completely misses the reality of the spirit realm and continued love connections that are real—not just part of someone's memories.

The movie also has a very negative sequence typical of films such as E. T. (1982) where an evil doctor is determined to operate invasively on the protagonist's brain, just to discover how it works, even though the surgery will kill him. But it is brief, fortunately, as our hero escapes ingeniously and dies peacefully at home.

The end shows the townspeople happy, and interacting positively in commemorating his birthday. It is a nice ending to show that he made a difference. At the same time, it is a little unbelievable because throughout the film most of them were suspicious of his wisdom and powers, and not at all supportive of him. The movie could have shown them changing gradually, or just focused on the people close to him, who we saw changing over time due to his loving influence. Overall, the film has many accurate thoughts about soul purpose, and is worth seeing.

Michael, 1996

A few months after his uplifting role in *Phenomenon*, John Travolta appeared in *Michael*. The film introduces Michael as a pot-bellied angel, bare-chested and in shorts, with huge wings attached to his back. He smokes, drinks beer, and talks, eats, and behaves crudely. This negative view of an angel, even in a comedy, is a turn-off for many viewers. Later, he looks a bit cleaned up, but his huge wings are now on the outside of his shirt, which defies logic. Also, he is suddenly a "chick magnet" and the film

makes it clear that he has sex frequently. So he continues to be unangelic in other ways.

The moviemakers failed to understand that angels in books and pictures are depicted with wings, simply to represent their ability to "fly," meaning, to go anywhere instantly. Instead, in a juvenile, literal translation, this angel has huge wings, and yet, ironically, he cannot go anywhere he wishes, but has to be driven there.

His wanting to see "the world's biggest ball of twine" and other such oddities, and being unable to see these unless he is driven there, severely underestimates the abilities and hopes of angels. We know from NDEs and ADCs that angels can go anywhere they wish, and their hopes are far from mundane, as shown here.

The movie tries to balance the negative depictions by playing the Beatles' song "All You Need Is Love," which fits NDE reports, but it does not match how this angel typically behaves. His fights with a bull, and with men in a bar, show his low level of spirituality. Describing him as a battling archangel, who "threw Lucifer out of Heaven," shows how mired the movie is in religious myths.

His excitement about being on earth and his moaning about it being his last time is sadly reminiscent of the confused film *Wings of Desire*, showing no understanding about the beauty and wonder of heaven. Moreover, the idea of angels having a limited number of times to visit earth (26, according to the movie) is laughable.

A correct assertion the film makes is that angels do not change the world, but instead they make little miracles. This fits the phenomena of ongoing ADCs and guardian

angel help. But when he brings a dead dog back to life, he seems to lose all his power and "dies" shortly after. Real angels do not have such limits on their power.

The filmmakers obviously knew very little about angels. They claimed that his original purpose in coming to earth was to "wipe out" a bank, which is not something angels do. He then stayed on for six months in an old lady's house, smoking, drinking, and eating, which better fits the behavior of a low-level spirit.

His next objective was to get two people together, far better than his original purpose. But angels do not need to manifest themselves in a physical form on earth to do this. In fact, he eventually gets the two together *after* he leaves earth. This follows a contrived third-act crisis, where the couple who had fallen in love separate. Their separation is hard to believe; it is created simply so that Michael can bring them back together, and push the audience's buttons emotionally, in typical Hollywood fashion.

What Dreams May Come, 1998

The title of this movie appropriately comes from a line in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, "For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come," which refers to experiences and illusions in the spirit world. It is an intriguing and well-made film, despite some wrong conceptions. Many ideas —soul mates are extremely rare, suicides go to an eternal hell, everyone is equal in heaven, and reincarnation just for the thrill of finding each other again—are all wrong. The movie also uses foul language most unnecessarily, bringing it down a couple of notches.

But the film does get many concepts right. It depicts children's spirits as grown up; indeed, we are all eternal souls, created long before a particular earth existence, as NDErs tell us. It hints at departed loved ones being guardian angels, by having one come to fetch a loved one at his death, as borne out in the DBV literature. We can also infer the idea of guardian angels, because the children's spirits knew precisely what their parents had been through after the children died.

It correctly shows that telepathic communication from departed spirits may not get through to the bereaved, which is mentioned in the ADC literature. It creatively depicts how people create their own hell as well as their own heaven. The idea of creating your own hell is supported by a small number of negative NDEs, as well as "hellish" life reviews for some. The idea of creating your own heaven fits with NDE accounts, where people saw different images of heaven that appealed to them personally. In addition to many correct concepts, it is a visually stunning and emotionally moving film, with excellent performances by Robin Williams and others.

Afterlife, 1998

This unusual Japanese movie, well-made cinematically, bears very little resemblance to what really happens after death. As NDErs explain, there is a meaningful life review and most souls experience heaven in all its glory. They also continue to advance spiritually.

Instead, souls in this movie simply pick their favorite memory (from their earth life) to endlessly re-live it in

the spirit world. Not only would this be unbearably monotonous, but it would involve no growth. Also, there are many other incorrect ideas, such as not meeting departed loved ones on dying, falling in love with someone you meet on the other side, and forgetting everything other than the selected memory.

The writer/director explains that his grandfather's becoming senile made him very aware of the importance of memory, and this seems to have guided the story. Ironically, in reality, nothing is forgotten, which is a far better scenario than choosing only one memory. One redeeming aspect of the film is that case workers encourage people to pick meaningful memories, where they connected with love to people, instead of self-indulgent memories. But the reality, where eternal soul mates are together in heaven, is far better than being alone with a single memory.

The Love Letter*,* 1998

This is mostly a time-travel romance. The past is set in the Civil War era and many aspects of the war are misrepresented. Examples are hand-to-hand combat being prominent (when it was actually rare), a carriage going right past a battle, and the idea that an officer (or even a soldier) could refuse to go to battle, merely based on someone's premonition about his dying in that battle.

With reference to the concepts in this book, the film supports reincarnation. It also implicitly acknowledges that eternal soul mates seek each other in every lifetime.

But it erroneously depicts each soul as having the same face (literally) in every earth life, as discussed previously.

The Sixth Sense, 1999

This film is not about angels or heaven, but about ghosts, who are correctly depicted as being unaware that they have died. It has too much violence, but it is a clever movie with a surprise twist at the very end.

A Rumor of Angels, 2001

This movie is loosely based on the true story of an American soldier, who communicated his death in World War I to his mother through Morse code, before she had official notification. He then stayed in touch with her through telepathic ADCs and automatic writing.

The film substitutes the Vietnam War and makes several mistakes in depicting the war. It says the war was still on in September 1974; actually it ended in January 1973. It mentions that the son was killed in the Battle of Haiphong, when all aboard the U.S.S. Pershing were lost. The actual battle of Haiphong was a small naval action, in which the American Navy suffered no ship losses, nor any casualties. And there was no U.S.S. Pershing.

Aside from these issues, it does not work well to change the setting of the war, because the World War I era was a time of great openness to spiritualism and spirit contact. Also, superimposing an unrelated story dilutes the powerful impact of ADCs between eternal soul mates.

The mother in the book is depicted as an old lady in the movie. Sadly, she is shown as a harsh woman, who carries

a shotgun, shoots at the boy (the protagonist) when he is on her property, and carelessly hammers his finger, when he is trying to help her mend the fence he broke. There is also much crude language in the film by the boy's family and even the boy. Mentioning Mozart and Thoreau does not make up for this constant negativity.

On the plus side, the old lady tries to teach the boy, who has lost his mother, about ongoing ADCs. She teaches him Morse code and correctly tells him that grief gets in the way of receiving ADCs. The title of the movie uses the word "rumor" to indicate that most people are unaware that our departed loved ones are our guardian angels.

But then, the movie takes a wrong turn. Negative reactions from the boy's family lead the old lady to tell the boy that she lied about everything. This undermines the film's strong message. The boy does not fully believe she lied. He reads communications from the woman's son (that she has recorded) about the spirit realm. But even so, the woman keeps pretending she made everything up.

After she dies, the boy waits for a message from her for two weeks, and is disappointed it does not come. At the end of the movie, as he watches with his family, the lighthouse flashes an ADC in Morse code which tells him not to grieve, that she is with him, and will always be. She tells him to keep talking to her, because she will hear him. All of this matches real, ongoing ADCs.

Although this is a positive ending—showing the boy elated and his family finally understanding about ADCs—it would have been far better if the boy had received an ADC from his own mother with a similar message. The

boy had even whispered “say hello to my mom,” when the old lady died, and tried to send messages to his mother earlier. The film inexplicably portrays the boy’s eternal connection with this lady instead of his mother. Despite the many problems, the movie has a helpful message, especially for bereaved people.

Dragonfly, 2002

This is an intriguing film that is correct about many concepts. In addition to meeting her husband’s spirit in his NDE, which fits the literature, the wife’s spirit contacts children (cancer patients) in their NDEs and gives them messages to pass on to her doctor husband. There is evidence in ADC narrations that departed relatives of nurses have actually passed on messages to them through patients who had NDEs. The wife’s spirit is also depicted as contacting her husband through dreams and meaningful symbols, which match ADCs that bereaved people have received. He goes from believing that death is the end to understanding that his wife lives on.

Although some reviewers have written about the dragonfly being a symbol of the crucifix in the movie, they are mistaken. The director very plainly says (in his commentary on the DVD) that he specifically avoided religious connotations and made a purely spiritual film inspired by ADCs he received after the passing of his own mother. He mentions that the dragonfly, with its larva and adult stages, represents earth and heaven life. He also says he made sure that the other symbol depicted was not a crucifix, but the actual symbol for a waterfall on maps.

He talks of making the camera hover to suggest a spirit presence. But this was done too subtly to be noticeable. He mentions that he included the negative neighbor to show skepticism about spirits, and how the husband has to go beyond this to advance in his learning.

One error the film makes (as most movies on the subject do) is that it fails to recognize the blessings of ongoing ADCs. Also, unfortunately, there is too much of a thriller touch, which is unlike the peace that real ADCs bring to the bereaved. Nevertheless, it is a unique film, worth seeing for its many correct ideas and the love story.

Just like Heaven, 2005

This is an enjoyable romantic comedy where the woman is actually in a coma, and it is her spirit that interacts with the man for most of the film. This plotline fits with the fact that spirits of comatose people have been able to leave the body, and have either hovered around or experienced the spirit realm. Also, it is right that the man tells her (when he first encounters her) to "go to the Light," in an attempt to help her find her way to heaven.

Even though it is not really about heaven or angels, the movie has many other correct ideas about the abilities of spirits. It shows the spirit going through objects but unable to grasp them, which is true especially in spontaneous OBEs. It shows that spirits can enter someone's body temporarily. The movie also correctly shows a child seeing spirits when adults cannot.

One flaw is that the protagonist behaves exactly like a ghost, not realizing she is out of her body, and goes back

to her apartment. But this is excusable as a plot device because that is where she meets the man currently living there. Their lengthy interactions, also a key element of the story, would not be possible in reality.

Another mistake is that the man, a widower, has to "let go of his past." Like most movies, this one does not understand ongoing connections with departed loved ones. It even thinks in an archaic way that the man has to let go, in order to allow his wife's spirit to cross over!

Yet another error is that on reviving from her coma, the protagonist does not remember anything, including meeting and falling in love with the man. This contradicts all the literature that discusses how perfectly people who emerge from comas recall all their experiences (on earth as well as in the spirit world) while they were comatose. This lapse is eventually set right in Hollywood fashion for a happy ending.

The Sea of Trees, 2014

This is an unusual movie that correctly shows the wife's departed spirit as a guardian angel to the husband. It was panned at Cannes by critics completely unaware of this reality, and lacking understanding of the spirit realm.

Actually, the film has a very clever plot, in which the wife's spirit prevents the husband's suicide. It is almost too clever for some viewers as well as critics, as revealed in reviews of the movie.

The wife's spirit creates illusions and appears as someone else, who the man feels compelled to save, instead of committing suicide. All this becomes apparent

through clues given later. Interestingly, the story has some similarities to an excellent and deeply touching *Highway to Heaven* double episode, where the wife's spirit gets her husband back on track through a similar ploy.

There are also several ADCs in the film which are all realized later by the husband as messages from his wife. The movie conveys that the wife's spirit is right near the husband, as she answers his questions through others. Unfortunately, there is violent physical trauma, as well as foul language, which makes it difficult to recommend the film whole-heartedly, but its clever plot and many correct ideas about guardian angels and ADCs are noteworthy.

Glossary

An **after-death communication** (ADC) is a message, a sign, a vision, or a felt presence, whereby a departed loved one communicates with loved ones on earth. It may be a single occurrence or ongoing, and is almost always perceived as positive and uplifting.

A **near-death experience** (NDE) is a situation where a person, who is near death due to trauma, illness, or injury, experiences the spirit dimension. A typical NDE starts with an out-of-body experience, then rushing through a tunnel toward brilliant light, and then reaching the Light, where there is a sense of merging with God, boundless love, and perfect knowledge. Most souls also meet departed loved ones (or unknown beings of light) and go through a life review.

A spontaneous **out-of-body experience** (OBE) is where the spirit leaves the body temporarily, and can observe the body from an external vantage, as well as observe other people, objects, and activities.

A **death-bed vision** (DBV) is where the dying person sees spirits (usually close relatives), and consequently is happy about the prospect of dying.

[For a more detailed glossary, statistics on these phenomena, and verification of spirit experiences, see my book *Heaven is Not a Distant Place*.]

A Brief Annotated Bibliography

Berman, Phillip. L. *The Journey Home: What Near-Death Experiences and Mysticism Teach Us About the Gift of Life*. New York: Pocket Books, 1996.

Berman had an NDE at age 16 when he nearly drowned. Later, after his infant daughter's death, Berman, as a scholar, began to study other people's NDEs. His book details actual NDEs and mystic experiences from a large number of people, and draws insights about the lessons we can learn from these.

Boylan, Grace Duffie. *Thy Son Liveth: Messages from a Soldier to His Mother*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1920.

A mother has written about her soldier son's spirit communications to her through Morse code, telepathy, and automatic writing, after he was killed in World War I.

Browning, Sinclair, Editor. *Feathers Brush My Heart: True Stories of Mothers Touching Their Daughters' Lives After Death*. New York: Warner Books, 2002.

This is a collection of ADCs received by women from their mothers' spirits. The ADCs were collected by the editor at a camp for women, and include messages of love, continuing contact, and warnings against impending danger, from the departed mothers to their daughters.

Dabholkar, Pratibha A., *Heaven is Not a Distant Place*, 2019.

This book draws on extensive literature about ADCs and NDEs to conclude that heaven is close to us, and that our departed loved ones are our guardian angels. It also describes aspects of the spirit dimension, and shares what NDEs teach us about living wisely on earth.

Delacour, Jean-Baptiste. *Glimpses of the Beyond*.Translated by E. B. Garside. New York: Delacorte Press, 1973.

This book documents a large number of death-bed visions, where the spirits of close relatives appeared to the dying and helped them make the transition.

Lodge, Oliver J. *Raymond, On Life and Death with Examples of the Evidence for Survival of Memory and Affection after Death*. London: Methuen, 1926. (1st edition, 1916)

A father has written about his soldier son, killed in World War I, who first communicated to the family (as a spirit) through mediums, but later gave them direct ADCs. The family was able to heal through these ADCs, and also learned much about the spirit dimension.

Martin, Joel and Patricia Romanowski. *Love Beyond Life: The Healing Power of After-Death Communications.* New York: Dell Publishing, 1997.

This is a collection of ADCs from many bereaved people whom the authors interviewed. The authors focus on the healing that can come from such ADCs, and they encourage the bereaved to accept communications from departed loved ones.

Morse, Melvin, with Paul Perry. *Closer to the Light: Learning from Children's Near-Death Experiences*. New York: Villard Books, 1990.

Morse, a pediatrician, discusses several NDEs related to him by his young patients, and explains how they opened his mind to spirit encounters.

Ring, Kenneth. *Lessons From the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience.* New York: Plenum Press Insight Books, 1998.

Ring, a professor, discusses how NDEs change lives and perspectives. He points out that readers who apply these insights and lessons to their own lives will embark on a better path, more attuned to the Light beyond.

Stevenson, Ian. *Children Who Remember Previous Lives: A Question of Reincarnation*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1987.

Stevenson, a professor, supports reincarnation based on children's testimonies about past lives. He tested the reports for accuracy with a comprehensive list of facts the narrators could not have known from their present lives.

Valarino, Evelyn Elsaesser. *On The Other Side of Life: Exploring the Phenomenon of Near-Death Experience.* New York: Insight Books, 1997.

Valarino, a researcher and author, conducted thoughtful interviews on NDEs with an impressive list of philosophers, scientists, and doctors. These interviews add greatly to our understanding of the spirit dimension. One of these interviews (with Monsignor Jean Vernette) is used in this book.

About the Author

Dr. Pratibha A. Dabholkar, university professor, was inspired by personal circumstances to make a deep study of uplifting supernatural phenomena (such as NDEs, ADCs, and DBVs). She writes books and teaches classes on these subjects to inform and enlighten. See www.love-and-learning.info for more information on the author, her inspiration, and her work.

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