

## Edgar Cayce

By Marilyn Stewart

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**Date of Birth:** March 18, 1877, Hopkinsville, Kentucky

**Date of Death:** January 3, 1945, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

**Organizations:** The Association for Research and Enlightenment, Virginia Beach, Virginia; The Edgar Cayce Foundation, legal guardians of the readings; The Atlantic University (1927-1931) reopened in 1985 and offers a Masters degree in Transpersonal Studies; The Edgar Cayce Hospital, 1928-1931; Association of National Investigators, 1927-1931.

**Unique Terms:** The Sleeping Prophet; Christ Pattern, Soul Mates (two souls who have experienced many incarnations together and complement each other spiritually, mentally and physically<sup>1</sup>); Akashic Records (a cosmic database of all thoughts and deeds of every soul which Cayce cited as a source for his readings).

### HISTORY

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Called the “Sleeping Prophet” because of his unusual psychic ability while in a hypnotic, self-induced “sleep,” Edgar Cayce is said to have astounded skeptics with his accurate medical diagnoses and world prophecies. Though Cayce lacked clairvoyance while awake, his revelations or “readings” while asleep number in the thousands.<sup>2</sup>

For twenty years Cayce’s readings were devoted strictly to the physical needs of others. His later readings took a dramatic turn to the metaphysical, incorporating the ideas of the Eastern mystical religions, Universal Consciousness, and reincarnation into his once fundamental Christian belief.<sup>3</sup>

Born on a small Kentucky farm, Cayce came from a family with a penchant for the supernatural. Cayce’s grandfather was known as a skillful water witch whom some say was able to make brooms “dance.” Following his grandfather’s death, family members comforted Cayce saying his “second sight” would allow him to see his grandfather again, and that “death was just going back to heaven.”<sup>4</sup> His father, a reluctant snake charmer of sorts, so loathed the snakes that followed him home that he gave up farming and moved to the city. He was a stern man who, when substituting at school, was quick to strike the day-dreaming Cayce. But the father became “proud of his son at last” when Cayce asked for his own Bible.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter Cayce became a voracious reader, reading the Bible through once for every year of his life.

Around age 12, Cayce had a vision in the woods of a bright and beautiful lady with wings. The Lady told him his prayers had been answered and offered him whatever he wanted most in life. His request was “to be helpful to others, especially to children when they are sick.”<sup>6</sup>

The following day, Cayce ran into trouble at school for not knowing his spelling lesson. That evening, Cayce studied alone, and his father would quiz him every thirty minutes. Each time the boy failed to know the answers. Exasperated, the father struck the boy, knocking him to the floor. Late into the evening, the Lady from the vision told the exhausted Cayce, “If you can sleep a little, we can help you.”<sup>7</sup> Cayce laid his head on his spelling book and fell asleep. When his father returned, Cayce knew not only his spelling lesson, but every spelling word in the book. His father was furious, believing the boy was playing tricks. Cayce’s mother, however, reassured her son that this new gift was from the Lady. Cayce’s ability to learn by “sleeping on a book” moved him from last place to first in the class.<sup>8</sup> The incidence profoundly effected Cayce, moving him to pray to the Lady on occasion, and to wonder about its significance in the years following.

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Cayce's first "healing" experience occurred after a hit on the head at school made his behavior strange and erratic. While resting, Cayce called for an unusual poultice to be applied to the injured area. By morning, Cayce was cured and had no memory of the incident. Cayce's father was ecstatic and boasted that the boy had cured himself.<sup>9</sup>

Becoming a preacher was Cayce's lifelong dream. The Sunday School class he taught was quite popular in the community. He once commented to his sweetheart, Gertrude, that "someday, all the churches will get together and be one again, the way Jesus intended."<sup>10</sup>

Cayce held several bookstore jobs and especially impressed his employer at a Louisville bookstore with his knowledge of their books. For a time, Cayce sold insurance with his father until persistent laryngitis forced him to take a job as a photographer. Though doctors found no physical reason for the problem, the hoarseness continued. Cayce's father encouraged him to see a traveling hypnotist who was able to cure Cayce's laryngitis while in a trance, only to have the hoarseness return when he "awoke." The hypnosis of a New York physician also failed, though the doctor thought the procedure would work if Cayce were allowed to talk about his condition while in the trance. Cayce's parents rejected the idea of more hypnosis, but Cayce wanted to give Al Layne, a local correspondence school-trained osteopath and amateur hypnotist, a chance to try. Cayce stipulated that he be able to put himself to sleep. During the hypnosis, Cayce prescribed a treatment which Layne repeated back or "suggested" to him. Upon waking, Cayce's voice was completely normal, although only temporarily so.<sup>11</sup>

The success motivated Layne to open an osteopathic practice, using Cayce's clairvoyant gifts to prescribe treatments. Cayce was able to use "remote viewing" by which patients could be treated who were not physically present and often spoke as "we" when in a self-induced trance.<sup>12</sup> The "readings," as Layne called them, were successful, but Cayce was uncomfortable with the working relationship with Layne. Every few weeks Cayce's voice would diminish again making him reluctantly dependent on Layne for a time.<sup>13</sup>

Cayce moved to Bowling Green, Kentucky, where he married and worked in a bookstore until opening his own photography studio. The professional atmosphere and his friendships with medical doctors pleased Cayce, but misfortune forced Cayce, Gertrude and son Hugh Lynn, back to Hopkinsville. A second son became quite ill shortly after birth. For some reason, it "had not occurred to him to take a reading in an emergency" for one of his own family until it was too late.<sup>14</sup> Gertrude contracted tuberculosis shortly after the baby's death and was seriously ill when Cayce began readings for her. But Gertrude's subsequent recovery and, later, the healing of an eye injury to Hugh Lynn significantly boosted Cayce's confidence in himself and in the readings.<sup>15</sup>

Photography was Cayce's main means of livelihood, though he was once enticed away from his studio in Selma, Alabama to search for oil in Texas. Cayce attributed the failure of the venture to the poor motives of his business partners. Cayce believed he had achieved victory over the devil and that the Texas ordeal had proved that "no one could make of him, consciously or unconsciously, a tool for evil."<sup>16</sup> Anxious to use his gift, Cayce converted his studio into an office for readings.

Arthur Lammers, an amateur metaphysicist of substantial wealth, came to Cayce in 1923 and was the catalyst in turning Cayce's attention to a new direction. All of Lammers' studies on psychic phenomena, esoteric astrology and philosophy left him confused, he told Cayce, and "If there is any way of finding out, it's through you."<sup>17</sup>

Cayce was intrigued by the request, thinking it might consolidate the readings with biblical teachings. Lammers acted as "conductor," asking questions concerning mystical philosophy and religion. Upon waking, Cayce was astounded to learn that the reading spoke of reincarnation of the soul and the unity of all religions. According to the reading, Lammers said, a person's spirit is a "portion of God," of the same substance as God. Jesus, through his numerous incarnations, reached perfection and provided an example for man to follow.<sup>18</sup>

Astrology, tarot cards, Egyptian and Greek deities were all diametrically opposed to Cayce's Christian beliefs. Lammers convinced Cayce that the subconscious mind is the storehouse of one's experiences and that Cayce had tapped into a wealth of knowledge obtained through past lives. Although Cayce checked the stenographer's notes of the reading and "could not find all the things Lammers had mentioned" he believed he found enough "to indicate the broad outlines of a theory" as Lammers had suggested.<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing that the readings were contrary to biblical teaching, Cayce remarked, "If ever the devil was going to play a trick on me, this would be it."<sup>20</sup> Cayce struggled briefly while considering

Lammers' proposal to fund a business venture together. He soon agreed, and whole-heartedly embraced the new mysticism, tempering it with Christian overtones.

Lammers' financial and legal problems prevented the business plans from materializing. New York stockbroker, Morton Blumenthal, stepped in and provided the funds and financial skill needed for the business ventures. The Association of National Investigators was established in 1927, for the purpose of psychic research. In November 1928, the Edgar Cayce hospital opened at Virginia Beach, Virginia, offering treatments through diet, osteopathy, herbal packs, and electrical therapy. Blumenthal's particular interest was the Atlantic University which was established in 1930 to research parapsychology and the occult.<sup>21</sup> By 1931, however, each institution had fallen victim to the Depression. The Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) was established in 1931 to continue what had begun with the Association of National Investigators.

Much has been written about Cayce's abilities to prophesy world events. Cayce purportedly outlined in April 1929 the stock market crash of October and predicted that the depression would ease in 1933.<sup>22</sup> Thomas Sugrue's biography, a bestseller published by the A.R.E. two years before Cayce's death, does not mention these prophecies and does not give evidence that Cayce acted in accordance with this knowledge. The hospital was founded and maintained by Blumenthal's stock earnings, rather than endowments, making it dependent on the market.<sup>23</sup> When the hospital closed in 1931, Cayce told his wife, "I should never have allowed it to open without being sure it would be kept open."<sup>24</sup> In October 1931, members of the newly founded Association for Research and Enlightenment expressed concern to Cayce that the depression might continue another ten years. Sugrue records that this disturbed Cayce, who wondered if he would outlive the depression.<sup>25</sup> As for Cayce's prediction of the war, Sugrue said it "was not an extraordinary forecast; men with no psychic powers whatever made the same prediction and were accurate even about the year in which the conflict would begin."<sup>26</sup>

Cayce loyalists do not claim he was infallible, but do claim that many of his prophecies have been fulfilled, including the collapse of communism in Russia, the deaths of two U.S. Presidents in office, and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Cataclysmic earth changes prophesied to begin between 1958 and 1998, such as the falling of Japan into the sea, the rising of the land of Atlantis, and heavy destruction along California's coastline, are seen now as still-future events, or are accepted as mankind's good fortune that they have not taken place.<sup>27</sup>

## DOCTRINE

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**God:** God is an impersonal force that is essentially good. He is limited in knowledge, being unaware of what man will choose to do.<sup>28</sup>

**Jesus:** The "soul" Jesus was incarnated as Adam, Enoch, Melchizedek, Joseph, Joshua, and Jesus, as well as non-biblical characters such as Amilius of the lost continent of Atlantis. Sometimes called our "elder brother," Jesus realized he would become the savior of the world when he "fell" in Eden. Like all of mankind, Jesus was both God and man until he overcame death and became God alone.<sup>29</sup>

**The Christ:** The Christ soul had reached perfection through completing its cycle of incarnations but had compassion on its struggling brother souls on earth. Man needed a "pattern" to follow. The Christ soul provided an example for man by choosing a cycle of earthly reincarnations, coming finally as Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

**Reincarnation/Salvation:** Jesus is the example for man to follow in order to attain perfection. Since perfection cannot be obtained in one lifetime, reincarnation becomes the vehicle by which man can attain perfection and achieve oneness with God. Reincarnation is not considered punishment but an act of a loving God to allow man to choose love as a way of life.<sup>31</sup>

**Christ Consciousness:** The example of Jesus' life and teachings are a "pattern" of wholeness for each and every soul.... This Christ pattern exists in potential upon the very fiber of [mankind's] being.<sup>32</sup> The Christ pattern exists in every human and will be "awakened" when an individual follows the pattern and example set by Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

**Sin:** Man has made wrong choices but is capable of making the right choices by awakening the Christ Consciousness within, and maintaining a sense of his spiritual side.<sup>34</sup>

**Source of Knowledge:** The highest level of consciousness, the superconsciousness, (or universal consciousness) is man's access to the Divine. Cayce's "readings" are said to have tapped this resource.<sup>35</sup>

**Man:** In the beginning, God took portions of himself and created perfect souls. Intrigued by the evolutionary process taking place on earth, the souls “hovered” above apes, directing their development further. “Man” was created when the souls then descended into the apes. Each incarnation into a new body diminished the soul’s knowledge of his divine nature until it was completely forgotten, and only what could be ascertained through the five senses was accepted.<sup>36</sup>

## CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

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**Scripture/Authority:** The philosophy of Edgar Cayce stands or falls on the question of authority. Though Cayce did not claim to be infallible, effectively his teachings rely on the premise that the mysterious readings of the “sleeping prophet” are more authoritative than the written word of God. This system denigrates the reliability of scripture and requires that the Bible be interpreted in light of the readings. Rather, it is the words of Cayce that must be measured against a true and certain standard of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The blending of all religious systems, as Cayce did, into a single truth makes for a muddled, illogical and confusing dilemma. Two belief systems at opposite poles on matters such as the nature of God, authority and man’s condition cannot both be true. Christianity makes unique claims that cannot simply be glossed over or assimilated into a generic system.

**Jesus Christ:** Jesus is not just an idyllic example for man to follow; He is the One who transforms human hearts, generating new life when all vital signs have ceased (Eph. 2:1-5). Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, not simply a fellow struggler through the cycle of life (Col. 1:15-20).

**Reincarnation/Salvation:** Reincarnation is not consistent with biblical teaching nor was it ever a doctrine of the early church, as Cayce claimed. Using Scripture to claim that the Bible teaches reincarnation is invalid. To do so one must employ poor or superficial tools of interpretation. Man is appointed to die once before judgment (Heb. 9: 24-28), and Christians can know that, at death, they will be in the presence of Christ (Phil 1:21-23). It is the death and resurrection of Jesus that settles the question of our sin, once and for all (1Pet 3:18-22). There is no “karmic debt” to pay.

Relying on one’s own inner strength or power to achieve inner peace or goodness sets one up for frustration. Purpose in life comes from knowing a personal God who loves and forgives. The resurrection of Jesus tells us that the past is forgiven, present problems can be managed, and the future is secure.

### Notes

- 1 “Soul Mates,” EdgarCayce.org, [http://edgarcayce.org/about\\_ec/cayce\\_on/soulmates/index.html](http://edgarcayce.org/about_ec/cayce_on/soulmates/index.html) (A.R.E Inc., 2003), (accessed March 15, 2005).
- 2 Jess Stearn, *Edgar Cayce- The Sleeping Prophet*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1967), 6-7.
- 3 Jeffrey Furst, *Edgar Cayce’s Story of Jesus* (New York: Berkley Books, 1976), 24.
- 4 Thomas Sugrue, *The Story of Edgar Cayce: There is a River* (Virginia Beach: A.R.E. Press 1997, revised ed.), 36.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 14, 42.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 45.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 47.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 51.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 104-107.
- 12 Gina Cerminara, *Many Mansions*, (New York: New American Library, 1967), 23.
- 13 Sugrue, 111.
- 14 Kevin J. Todeschi, *Edgar Cayce’s ESP: Who He Was, What He Said, and How it Came True* (Virginia Beach: A.R.E. Press, 2001), as quoted in “About Edgar Cayce,” EdgarCayce.org, <http://www.edgarcayce.org/edgar-cayce2.html>, (accessed March 23, 2005).
- 15 Stearn, 26.
- 16 Sugrue, 199.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 200.

- 18 *Ibid.*, 202-204.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 209, 207.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 210.
- 21 Stearn, 23.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 80.
- 23 Sugrue, 267.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 269.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 274.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 302.
- 27 “Edgar Cayce on the Future,” Near-Death Experiences and the Afterlife, <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/cayce11.htm>, (accessed 25 March 2005).
- 28 Herbert B. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 13, 99-101.
- 29 Kevin J. Todeschi, *Twelve Lessons in Personal Spirituality* (Virginia Beach: A.R.E. Press, 1996) as quoted in “Edgar Cayce On The Christ Consciousness,” EdgarCasey.org, [http://edgarcayce.org/about\\_ec/cayce\\_on/christ/index.html](http://edgarcayce.org/about_ec/cayce_on/christ/index.html), (accessed March 15, 2005). See also, Furst, 23-24.
- 30 Sugrue, 315-16.
- 31 Puryear, 18-22.
- 32 “Edgar Cayce On The Christ Consciousness.”
- 33 *Ibid.*, see also, Puryear, 20-21.
- 34 *Ibid.*, see also, Puryear, 109, 163.
- 35 Puryear, 5.
- 36 Sugrue, 311-312.



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