

Evidence of the Soul

For several years the American Society for Psychical Research has been carefully conducting the research called for in the will of an obscure seventy-year-old Arizona miner named James Kidd, who died in 1946. The old miner left a will that read:

Phoenix Arizona

Jan 2nd 1946

this is my first and only will and is dated the second day in January 1946. I have no heir's, have not been married in my life, an after all my funeral expenses have been paid and \$100. one hundred dollars to some preacher of the gospital to say farewell at my grave sell all my property which is all in cash and stocks with E. F. Hutton Co. Phoenix some in safety box, and have this balance money to go in a research or some scientific proof of a soul of the human body which leaves at death I think in time their can be a Photograph of soul leaving the human at death,

James Kidd

The E. F. Hutton stocks were worth more than \$200,000. Several groups came forward to claim the money, asserting that they would carry out the research stipulated in Kidd's will. Superior Court Judge Robert Myers, before whom the will was read, was faced with the task of trying to determine which group should get the money. After ten years of deliberations, the estate was awarded to the American Society for Psychical Research. A few years later the ASPR announced early results of its search for the soul:

Six out-of-body (OBE) projects have been conducted. An OBE "fly-in" and an attempt to correlate OBEs and apparitions both supported the OBE hypothesis, but other interpretations (e.g. ESP) are possible. Perceptual experiments with OBEs and psychophysiological studies of subjects gave similar results: evidence in harmony with OBE hypothesis but other explanations possible. Instrumental recordings (i.e. photos) and a test of mediums gave negative results.

Deathbed studies of apparitions, visions, hallucinations, etc. (reported by attending doctors and nurses) supported the conclusion that "some of the dying patients indeed appeared to be already experiencing glimpses of ecsomatic existence." But again, other interpretations can't be ruled out; so these results "should not be taken as a final balance of evidence for or against survival." Masses of data are still being processed.

QUESTIONS

1. What kind of evidence could disprove the existence of a nonmaterial soul? What kind could prove the existence of a soul?
2. How would you have decided who was to receive the money if you were in the position of Judge Robert Myers?

Source: *ASPR Newsletter*, July 1976.