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First prepared in October 2006 by the Survival Research Institute of Canada (Debra Barr and Walter Meyer zu Erpen). Capitalization of any name or subject in the text below indicates that you will find an entry on that topic in the forthcoming third edition of Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* (October 2007).

Harpur, Tom (1929-)

Theologian, professor, journalist and author. Born in Scarborough, Ontario, Tom Harpur earned a classics degree at Wycliffe College (University of Toronto), then from 1951-54 studied theology and philosophy at Oriel College, Oxford, on a Rhodes Scholarship. Moving back to Wycliffe College, he continued in the field of theology, graduated in 1956 and was ordained as an Anglican priest the same year. After serving in two metropolitan Toronto parishes from 1957 to 1964, he returned to the University of Toronto (Toronto School of Theology), this time as a professor of religion.

Three years later, a radio open-line show titled *Harpur's Heaven and Hell* was launched. Focussing on a wide gamut of religions and a range of related topics, it was popular, unorthodox and controversial. Enjoying his new role as a journalist, Harpur added opinion columns for the *Toronto Star* and commentary for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to his portfolio. In 1971 he ended his relationship with Wycliffe College, which now struck him as too narrow in its approach. Entering the position of Religion Editor at the *Star*, he continued at that paper for the next twelve years. During this period, in 1979, he also resigned from the priesthood.

In 1983 he left the newspaper for a year to promote *Harpur's Heaven and Hell*, a book of opinion pieces sparked by the radio show of the same name. In its pages he indicated that he could no longer believe in the tenets of any given Christian denomination.

Harpur's third book, *For Christ's Sake*, was published in 1985. Since then he has published many highly readable books on religious subjects, including some Canadian bestsellers. One of them, *Life after Death*, hit a particularly popular chord. The author addresses SURVIVAL AFTER DEATH, combing such fields of enquiry as REINCARNATION, NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES, DREAMS, brain-mind functionality, the principles of world religions and other sources of relevant information. He concludes that a belief in the continued existence of consciousness, while not irrefutably proven, is supported by empirical evidence and sound rational thought.

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His television series *Life After Death*, covering the same sweep of topics as the book, was carried on the Vision TV channel. In addition he hosted a twelve-part series, also on Vision TV, titled *The Uncommon Touch*.

Tom Harpur continues to contribute to newspapers and to appear on radio and TV shows.

Further Reading:

Harpur, Tom. *Life After Death*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.

Tom Harpur. Available on-line: www.tomharpur.com