



STATEMENT DT-082-2

THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE (Part Two): Alternative Explanations

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Summary

In the previous issue we examined common elements in the accounts of people who claim to have had near-death experiences. We focused primarily on the New Age interpretation of this phenomenon, surveying the work and writings of Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, and Melvin Morse. In this issue our discussion explores alternative explanations to those of the New Age movement for NDEs.

First, there are a number of medical explanations. These range from legitimate possibilities, such as the effects of endorphins and hypoxia, to more incredible propositions, such as the "memories of birth" interpretation. Second, some of the findings of both secular and Christian psychologists and medical professionals who have researched NDEs are found to conflict with New Age interpretations. An example of this is the occurrence in some cases of hellish experiences during near-death trauma. Finally, it is clear that New Agers often misuse Scripture to support their assertions. For instance, the citing of Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus glosses over the fact that this was *not* an NDE.

In conclusion, we may allow for the possibility that God works in the experience of *some* of these cases, but we must reject those experiences and interpretations that clearly deny the teachings of Scripture.

A recent issue of Life magazine featured a cover story by Verlyn Klinkenborg that focused on near-death experiences (NDEs). What is significant about this essay is not that it provides new insights into this subject, but that NDEs took center stage in a major national periodical. However disconnected Klinkenborg's journalistic treatment of NDEs was, her comments no doubt influenced the general public's understanding of this phenomenon. In fact, I discovered and perused this article in the waiting room of my daughter's dentist's office.

Klinkenborg begins her essay by saying, "As scientists study the meaning of near-death experiences, perhaps we can inch closer to an understanding of life."¹ Although the author quotes a number of professional experts in this field and several people who have experienced NDEs, what the reader inches closer to is more the debatable interpretations some have offered for NDEs than any reliable understanding of the nature of life.

Medical explanations of NDEs are quickly dismissed while mystical interpretations predominate. The following remark, for instance, is typical of Klinkenborg's perspective: "To many, NDEs provide some of what religion has always provided: a way to talk about death before it comes and a glimpse of death as passage rather than termination."² In addition, several religious illustrations capture the reader's eyes more than the written word. One includes a man in a yogic position with his fingers forming the cosmic symbol of the OM, a Hindu mystical concept.

Klinkenborg devotes much of her essay to the works and views of Raymond Moody, Melvin Morse, and others who regularly appear in feature articles on NDEs. Although she doesn't present their more obvious New Age ideas, she

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does introduce them as noted authorities on the subject, giving them further credibility in the minds of those readers who might want to learn more about this subject.

In Part One of this article, which appeared in the previous issue of the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL (Spring 1992), we concentrated on such New Age interpretations of near-death experiences. We reviewed the 15 common elements that Moody, the pioneer of the study of NDEs, compiled in his book *Life After Life*, which has sold over seven million copies. We considered the research of Morse, a pediatrician in Seattle, Washington, who is a leader in the exploration of the near-death experiences of children. We also examined the investigative work of Kenneth Ring, a professor of psychology at the University of Connecticut who founded the International Association for Near-Death Studies.

In Part Two of this article, we will continue our discussion of NDEs, focusing on other interpretations of this phenomenon. Like Klinkenborg, we want to discover whether a better understanding of NDEs will inch us closer to an understanding of life. Unlike Klinkenborg, however, we want to give serious attention to the observations and explanations of researchers other than those who advocate New Age ideas.

MEDICAL EXPLANATIONS: SCIENCE OR PREJUDICE?

The medical and scientific communities, by and large, discount the claims that near-death experiences indicate that there is life after death. Although their explanations of NDEs are quite diverse, most are skeptical of the out-of-body experiences and visions that have been associated with NDEs. Nevertheless, few would dispute that a dramatic psychological effect has occurred with those people who have reported a near-death experience. Thus, they have tried in various ways to make sense of this fascinating phenomenon.

Lysergic Acid (LSD). Many medical professionals believe NDEs are hallucinations caused by one of many psychoactive drugs. Because of its popularity in the sixties and the nature of its effects on the mind, lysergic acid is one drug that is often advanced in the cases of those who may have had prior experience with LSD. Their main argument for linking LSD with NDEs is that people frequently feel they have had both a religious and an out-of-body experience — two elements commonly associated with NDEs — while under the influence of LSD.

NDE advocates, however, see two weaknesses in this explanation. First and foremost, the visual hallucinations from an LSD experience are not consistent from one person to another. In fact, images and emotions are usually distorted and individually bizarre. NDEs, on the other hand, are quite vivid and distinct and — most importantly — are remarkably parallel to one another. In addition, NDE advocates distinguish between the perceptions of people having these two experiences. While most people on LSD know their sense of reality is being distorted, people during an NDE perceive their experience as intensely real.

Narcotics and Recreational Drugs. Some skeptics of NDEs suggest other drugs as the sources for this psychological phenomenon, particularly such narcotics as morphine and heroin, since both can cause strange hallucinations. Although both drugs can induce heavenly and blissful experiences, NDE advocates reject them because of their side effects. While morphine and heroin users have described nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, inability to concentrate, and even decreased vision, these side effects are not present with NDEs.

Such recreational drugs as marijuana, cocaine, PCP, amphetamines, and barbiturates have also been linked to NDEs. NDE advocates, however, point out that people often experience varying levels of paranoia after taking high doses of these drugs while people who have had near-death experiences have demonstrated no signs of this psychological problem. Another disparity between the two is the presence of severe depression in many who take recreational drugs and its absence in those who have had NDEs.

Anesthetic Agents. Some medical professionals attribute the NDE phenomenon to anesthetic agents that are given to victims or patients. Halothane, surital, nitrous oxide, and Nembutal are the most commonly used and mentioned. This claim is based on reports by nondying patients who are able to recall bits of conversations or other details concerning their treatment while under anesthesia. The problem with this explanation, however, is that these anesthetic agents are not known to trigger hallucinations.

The anesthetic agent Ketamine deserves further discussion because a couple of its extreme psychological effects on

some people are noted to be similar to NDEs. First, this agent frequently causes people to imagine that they have had an out-of-body experience (OBE). Second, Ketamine tends to produce a sensation in many that they have seen their doubles, or a mirror image of themselves. NDE advocates, however, argue that the OBE associated with Ketamine is normally of a frightful nature and not pleasurable, as is the case (they maintain) with NDEs. In fact, since Ketamine has had such severe adverse effects on patients, it has been withdrawn from further use.

Autoscopic Hallucinations. The psychological event of seeing one's double is known as autoscopia. It is usually associated with brain tumors, strokes, and migraine headaches, and it occurs when a person superimposes his or her double on reality. Since this double appears as a mirror image of the person, and since many people have described seeing themselves during a near-death experience, some skeptics of NDEs say this element of an NDE is nothing more than an autoscopic hallucination.

Advocates of NDEs, however, claim a clear distinction between these two experiences. On the one hand, they say autoscopic hallucinations involve people projecting their doubles outside of themselves. On the other hand, people view their bodies *from* outside of themselves during near-death experiences. The difference can be illustrated in this way: a man is lying on his bed and sees his double hovering above himself — he is having an autoscopic hallucination; a woman who has been critically ill sees herself lying on her bed from above — she is having a near-death experience. The man is still in his body while the woman, NDE advocates say, is not.

The Endorphin Model. When a person suffers great pain or extreme stress, the brain sometimes releases natural chemicals to relieve the pain or stress. These substances are known as endorphins, and they affect people in the same way morphine or heroin does. Some critics of NDEs argue that the sudden stress and/or pain of dying produces a large amount of these endorphins, which then create a pleasurable and mystical high that some people interpret as a near-death experience.

A problem with this theory is that there is no medical proof that the brain creates a greater quantity of endorphins because of the stress of dying. Even Dr. Daniel Carr of Massachusetts General Hospital, who proposed this theory, qualified it by saying that endorphins are just a possible explanation for NDEs.³ In other words, there is no evidence for the theory, only one assumption leading to other assumptions. Thus, while the endorphin model is plausible, further research is needed.

Transient Depersonalization. Dr. Russell Noyes of the University of Iowa offers a psychological explanation of NDEs that is similar to the endorphin theory. In this case, instead of natural chemicals reacting to the stress of dying, a psychological mechanism is triggered in response to this stress to create a sense of separation from the prospect of physical annihilation. The illusion of a transcendental state is experienced in which a person feels detached from his or her body. In addition, time, emotions, and thoughts seem surreal.

This intriguing theory can easily be adapted to fit the NDE model because most of the elements of an NDE do appear surreal to other people. There is one NDE factor, however, that this theory (along with several other models) cannot explain — why are the NDE elements consistent among so many people with such diverse backgrounds? Detachment from time, feelings, and thoughts would seem to argue against this theory. Moreover, although depersonalization does occur in many life-threatening cases, depersonalization has yet to be documented scientifically in any cases concerning NDEs.

Hypoxia. Hypoxia is an abnormal physical condition in which a deficiency of oxygen reaches the tissues of the body. In the case of NDEs, some critics attribute the hallucinations involved in NDEs to hypoxia. They say that since the brain is deprived of oxygen, a person who is near death experiences pleasurable feelings and a natural high in which NDE episodes are imagined.

According to NDE advocates, however, there is a problem with this explanation. In medical studies that have examined two groups of patients who were thought to be dead but recovered, it was found that those who reported a near-death experience did not have any less oxygen in their blood gases than those who did not have an NDE.⁴

Memories of Birth. Dr. Carl Sagan, the famous astronomer at Cornell University, offers one of the most fascinating explanations for NDEs. He suggests that the NDE is a psychological replay of the experience of birth. Sagan and others who profess this theory hold that the birth canal, the operating room, and the doctor during birth are remembered as a tunnel, a lighted environment, and a being in white during a near-death experience.⁵ Their strongest argument is that everyone has experienced birth, which explains the common elements in NDEs.

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NDE advocates nevertheless challenge this theory on a number of points. First, they contend that a baby has neither the mental capacity nor the visual ability at birth to retain such details of his or her birth experience. Second, if any memory is recalled of the birth experience, it would be traumatic and not pleasant. Third, the baby's face is normally pressed against the walls of the birth canal, which conflicts with the rapid travel through the tunnel toward a light in an NDE. As interesting as this theory is, it has too many serious weaknesses to be commended.

"I think," says NDE researcher Kenneth Ring, "that we don't yet have a satisfactory explanation for the near-death experience."⁶ In fact, Ring and his associates have been extremely critical of all the explanations that have been offered outside of the New Age interpretation. Although each theory fails to illuminate decisively the NDE phenomenon, some (e.g., the endorphin and transient depersonalization models) deserve further exploration under scientific conditions. The bottom line, however, is that science still has a long way to go before it can explain this phenomenon adequately (if it ever can). Thus, we must concur with Melvin Morse that from a medical perspective, "the near-death experience remains a mystery."⁷

EXPLODING A NEW AGE MYTH

The more one accepts the New Age interpretation of the near-death experience, the less acceptable are the medical explanations. However, if elements of the NDE as defined and described by Moody and other New Agers are shown to be less credible, then perhaps some of the medical explanations might be more plausible.

One of the major difficulties in assessing the New Age interpretation of NDEs is that most of the serious work in this field has been conducted by professionals who profess or are open to New Age ideas. Some research, however, has been done that paints a different picture of NDEs, and more information is increasingly emerging in support of that other picture.

The research of Michael Sabom deserves special attention. Although his book *Recollections of Death* (published in 1982) is presently out of print, it probably presents the most objective observations on the near-death experience.⁸ Sabom is a cardiologist who recorded the accounts of a number of people who apparently died and experienced NDEs. He discovered that the elements in NDEs can be divided into two segments: the first segment comprises those elements that have to do with out-of-body experiences; the second segment comprises those elements that have to do with transcendence. In other words, leaving the body and seeing one's self are parts of the first segment, while feeling deep joy and seeing a being of light are parts of the second segment. What is significant about his research is that he discovered that only a small percentage of his patients experienced *both* segments. In fact, OBEs were recollected in only a few cases.

What Sabom found is supported by Elizabeth Hillstrom, a professor of psychology at Wheaton College who has studied a number of NDE cases since 1977. She also says only a few of her interviewees recalled an out-of-body experience during their NDEs.⁹ If OBEs occur in NDEs far less than what has been claimed by New Agers, it not only brings into question their definition of an NDE, but their interpretation of NDEs as well. Thus, Moody's 15 elements can no longer be seen as a consistent model of an NDE. Moreover, by reducing the importance of OBEs, some of the medical explanations gain more credibility in a majority of cases (e.g., the endorphin model and drug influence).

New Agers continually stress how wonderful the near-death experience is — one allegedly feels inexplicable love, joy, and peace. Such sensations, they say, are a key element of an NDE. That some people have experienced these feelings is not in question, but that they alone describe NDEs is disputed by other research that indicates that some people have had *hellish* experiences during their NDEs. For instance, Carol Zaleski, a professor of religion at Smith College, records not only the heavenly but the hellish descriptions of NDEs in her historical treatment of this phenomenon.¹⁰ Her book *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experiences in Medieval and Modern Times* is at the same time widely respected for its academic excellence *and* is troubling to some New Agers who have assumed that NDEs confirm their belief in a nonjudgmental God and a punishment-free afterlife for all people.

Maurice Rawlings, a Christian cardiologist, has observed that these hellish experiences include encounters with demons or Satan himself and sensations of being in a lake of fire. In *Beyond Death's Door*, Rawlings further notes that there are probably just as many hellish as there are heavenly episodes of NDEs, but that the hellish experiences

are so terrifying that most people who have had these kinds of experiences psychologically suppress them.¹¹

By revealing a very dark side to NDEs, Zaleski, Rawlings, and others have rendered suspect the standard New Age portrayal of the near-death experience as containing an aspect of transcendence — that is, NDEs are not always so beautiful and sublime, but can be quite frightening. And even if some of the experiences *do* sound New Age, the fact that others *do not* means that NDEs do not offer clear and uniform support to the New Age world view. *Each must thus be evaluated on its own merits.*

Another important element in the New Age interpretation of the near-death experience is their claim that NDEs change people's lives in a very positive manner — that is, they become more loving; they become seekers of truth; they value life itself more highly; they lose their fear of death. What one rarely hears from New Agers is that not only can an NDE be a life-changing experience in a so-called positive way, it can be quite a *negative* life-changing experience as well.

In *Coming Back to Life*, P. M. H. Atwater describes many of the unpleasant effects that NDEs have had on her and other people.¹² Although Atwater is deeply involved in the occult and mediumship, she is nevertheless candid about NDEs' severe psychological disturbances on people. For instance, she found that many people — following an NDE — seem to drift, finding it difficult to be committed to relationships and a vocation. Thus, many people experience family problems, divorce, and the inability to hold a job. One could say that NDEs are partly responsible for many wrecked lives — a startlingly different picture of the near-death experience from that portrayed by Moody, Ring, Morse, and others of their view.

In the field of psychology, very little attention has been focused on this phenomenon from a Christian perspective. Indeed, Elizabeth Hillstrom is the only Christian scholar I am aware of who has devoted years of intense research to the study of near-death experiences.¹³ I asked her which elements of the New Age interpretation of NDEs were most disturbing to her as a Christian. She immediately spoke of "the being of light" and the message conveyed by this being.

Although many NDEers identify the being of light as Jesus Christ, Hillstrom points out that this being never really tells people who he is. The NDEer assumes from the message and the radiant glow that he is Jesus. In Part One of this article, we discovered that this being usually preaches a message of unconditional love and universal acceptance of all people — a message that sounds wonderful, but actually is quite deceptive because it denies any divine judgment or responsibility for sin. In fact, this message smacks of New Age ideas. Hillstrom examines this message one step further by looking at what this being of light does *not* say, by asking the question: "Where is the Great Commission?" If, indeed, this being of light is Jesus Christ, certainly he would tell people that he is Christ and to go back and tell others that he is the only way to God. Since he doesn't, his identity becomes not only problematic, but also alarming.

A TURN TO THE BIBLE

There are two important reasons why we should turn to the Bible as we try to understand the NDE phenomenon. First (and quite obviously for Christians), the Bible is the supreme authority in guiding the lives of believers. It conveys what God declares essential for humans to know about truth and how to please Him. Therefore, whatever the Bible has to say bearing on near-death experiences must be thoroughly and objectively examined.

In addition, we must turn to the Bible because NDE advocates *also* turn to the Bible to support their interpretations of this phenomenon. Since many of these advocates believe in the universality of all religions, they naturally seek passages from as many religious texts as they can find that seem to parallel the near-death experience, including one particular biblical account that they assert describes some NDE elements. What NDE advocates claim to find in this biblical account must not be taken at face value, however, but must be studied also in contrast to the total NDE model that they have established.

The biblical event that New Age writers frequently try to link with NDEs is taken from Acts 9:3-6 and 26:12-23, which respectively relate Paul's encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and Paul's own account of his experience. In this story Paul, who was still named Saul at the time, was broadening his zealous persecution of Christians when a blazing light halted his journey to Damascus. After being blinded by the light, Paul heard a voice

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say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (9:4). Presently the voice identified Himself as Jesus. From this experience Paul became a dedicated disciple of Christ.

According to Raymond Moody, "This episode obviously bears some resemblance to the encounter with the being of light in near death experiences."¹⁴ Moody supports his claim by drawing parallels between the radiant light, the presence of a spiritual being, the conveying of a message, and the life-changing effect of this experience with elements he attributes to NDEs. Furthermore, Moody says, although Paul was labeled as insane because of his story, he went on to preach love as a way of life to others. The correlations are quite clear.

There are, however, glaring distinctions between the two. First and most importantly, *Paul did not have a near-death experience*. Some people have asked how we know that he didn't. The best answer comes from Paul himself when he later elaborates on the incident, offering further details to King Agrippa without once mentioning that he had died (Acts 26:2-29). Another difference is that the light blinded Paul, while in NDEs the light does not visually impair people's eyes. Moody admits to these two variances, but does not mention one other critical difference. While most NDEers prefer to keep their experience private, Paul felt compelled to proclaim his conversion experience to everyone around him, even including those who would be extremely hostile to his words. In fact, Paul demonstrated the best example of fulfilling Jesus' Great Commission — he not only preached love, but declared Jesus Christ as the only way to God.

Beyond Paul's conversion story, New Agers are hard pressed to enlist other biblical accounts with which to draw similarities to NDEs. They have alluded to Paul's discussion of spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-52); Paul's reference to a man (apparently himself) who saw the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4), which they assert was an NDE; and Jesus' self-declaration as "the light of the world" (John 8:12). None of these biblical passages, however, were intended to illuminate the mysteries of the near-death experience.

In context, the "spiritual bodies" Paul writes of in 1 Corinthians 15 are the bodies believers will possess after they have been resurrected at the time of Christ's second coming. Jesus' declaration that He is the light of the world pertains to the spiritual illumination He brings to the world — it has no necessary relevance for the near-death experience. While the experience Paul discusses in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 could be called a near-death experience — he himself did not know whether he had died ("out of the body") or seen a vision ("in the body") — it is not described in terms similar to Moody's profile of an NDE. Rather, it was a *unique* revelatory experience in keeping with Paul's *unique* calling as the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:7-9). It thus cannot be taken as representative of a near-death experience common to humanity.

There are several cases in the Bible in which people have returned from the dead: Elisha restored the Shunammite boy back to life (2 Kings 4:8-37); Jesus healed a ruler's dead daughter (Matt. 9:18-26); and Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-44). What happened to them while they were dead is never described, however, and thus they need no discussion. One biblical account that *does* deserve comment is the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:54-60). In this story Stephen looks up to heaven and sees the glory of God and Jesus. But what must be noted is that Stephen had this vision *before he was stoned* — that is, he was not dying when he saw Jesus.

The point is that the Bible says little, if anything, about what occurs during a near-death experience. Nevertheless, the Bible is very clear about God's displeasure with those who invite spirit beings into their lives. "Do not practice divination or sorcery....Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:26, 31). And, if the being of light is an actual spirit entity who is actually conveying a universalist message, then biblically we must conclude that he is an evil spirit, not Jesus Christ (John 14:6; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3-4). Now, many NDEers never sought a near-death experience, nor did they seek the being of light. Thus they cannot be charged with violating God's prohibition of spiritism. But many others, especially those who espouse New Age ideas, actively seek further encounters with this being. These are guilty of spiritism and stand in desperate need of repentance and restoration before the true God.

But how can we conclude that this being of light is an evil spirit when he exudes love and joy and peace, and when he encourages people to love others? It is tough to speak against such an argument. It is much easier to speak against a horned demon with a pitchfork who commands people to hate, hurt, and rebel. Spiritual warfare, however, is a battleground where it is often difficult to identify the enemy. Frequently he disguises himself as a beloved friend. Deception has always been his way, and it has been a deadly weapon in his arsenal evident since he used it in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, Paul warned Timothy that "in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Of course, the most evil deception is when the Devil appears to be

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God. Again, Paul's words ring true: "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

One question relevant to Christians still remains unanswered: How should we view the near-death experiences of those people who have become faithful followers of Christ because of their near-death experience? In Part One of this article, I recounted the story of Dan, who experienced many of the classic elements of an NDE, which led to his Christian conversion. To this day he strongly believes he met Jesus during that experience. Did he, however, actually encounter the Devil?

Since NDEs are of a subjective nature, determining their source is largely a speculative venture. With divine, demonic, and several natural factors all meriting consideration, a single, universal explanation for NDEs becomes quite risky. So, while the Devil apparently has been involved with some NDEs, who can say with certainty that Dan encountered the Devil instead of Christ? If the message and experience of an NDE does not distort or conflict with biblical teachings, then we should be careful not to speak against that which resulted in salvation and may have been a genuine work of God.

Nevertheless, a potential problem emerges when near-death experiences are exalted as a means of bringing people to Christ. Such endorsement could lead many to trust NDEs more than they should, accepting them as generally authentic rather than examining the merits of each case individually. Indeed, if the message of the being of light, the interpretation of the near-death experience, or the lifestyle that results from the experience contradicts the teachings of the Bible, then that particular NDE should not be accepted as valid.

In addition, there are some NDE accounts that provide elaborate and fantastic details concerning heaven and hell that go far beyond Scripture. When unreservedly accepted, these reports function as extrabiblical revelation about the nature of the world beyond. This can easily weaken Scriptural authority while diluting the divinely revealed content of Christian faith with the feeble projections of human imagination. The best protection against such error, if we are to hold that some NDEs may in fact be genuine, is to maintain that *only the Bible can be trusted absolutely as a revelation of heavenly realities*.

We must also remember that medical research is still at an early stage of exploring this phenomenon and may yet provide vital understanding on this subject. It is quite possible that physical/psychological and spiritual explanations can complement each other. For instance, just as many Christians have understood satanic powers to operate through the effects of mind-altering chemicals such as LSD, so these powers might also intrude on someone's consciousness affected by bodily chemicals, such as endorphins, or the psychological stress of near-death trauma. In fact, such a possibility is likely if the person has previously engaged in extreme forms of occult activity.

It is possible, therefore, for an NDE to be partly explained *medically* and partly explained *spiritually*. When, for example, the message of the being of light is obviously intended to deceive the NDEer, that experience can be explained in terms of satanic influence without denying medical or psychological causes.

It is also possible that demonic influence enters in some time *after* the NDE occurred. In such cases an experience that is authentic, or at least not occultic, is later remembered or interpreted as conveying a universalist message. The research of Maurice Rawlings would seem to support this.

In conclusion, we should avoid overgeneralizing either the implications of NDEs or the experiences themselves. In many cases, something decidedly wrong has occurred at some point on a spiritual level; in other cases the experience may have just been a natural phenomenon; and in still other cases, the Lord Himself may have been involved in an authentic near-death experience. We cannot draw any conclusions about individual cases, however, without first taking what has been reported about the experience and the message and examining this report under the light of God's Word. According to this test, any doctrine that denies the judgment of God is condemned. But any testimony that glorifies Jesus Christ as the only Lord and Savior is worthy of our serious consideration (1 Cor. 12:3).

NOTES

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¹ Verlyn Klinkenborg, "At the Edge of Eternity," *Life*, March 1992, 65.

² *Ibid.*, 73.

³ Melvin Morse, *Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children* (New York: IVY Books, 1990), 224.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 224-25.

⁵ John White, "Beyond the Body: An Interview with Kenneth Ring," *Science of Mind*, November 1982, 12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷ Morse, 226.

⁸ Michael Sabom, *Recollections of Death: A Medical Investigation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

⁹ This writer interviewed Dr. Hillstrom on 27 April 1992.

¹⁰ Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experiences in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University, 1988).

¹¹ Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door* (New York: Bantam, 1991).

¹² P. M. H. Atwater, *Coming Back to Life: The Aftereffects of the Near-Death Experience* (New York: Ballantine, 1988).

¹³ Dr. Hillstrom is currently writing a book for InterVarsity Press that is slated to be published next year. In this book she critiques some of the proofs that New Agers use to support their positions on altered states of consciousness, paranormal powers, meditation, and, of course, near-death experiences. She has taught courses on this issue for several years at Wheaton College. At this time her book has yet to be titled.

¹⁴ Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1976), 80.