

He was making a study on how people cope with the reality of death. Moody's first book on the subject was *Life after Life*,⁴ and it became a huge best-seller shortly after its release in 1975.

Moody's book chronicled more than a hundred cases of people who were clinically dead but then revived. In his recounting of their stories, virtually all of Moody's subjects described some kind of positive, enlightening, comforting, or simply peaceful experience on the other side of death.

Suddenly, it seemed, much of the world was obsessed with back-from-the-dead testimonies. What might these near-death experiences in the hands of scientific researchers tell us about the afterlife? More and more people claiming to have experienced heavenly phenomena came forward to tell their stories. Raymond Moody followed the success of his first volume with a series of sequels over the next decade and a half: *Reflections on Life after Life*; *The Light Beyond*; *Coming Back*; and *Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones*.⁵

Sentimentalizing Human Mortality and Toying with Gnosticism

Such a sudden keen interest in life after death might sound like an encouraging trend. It started, after all, with two scholars who claimed impeccable academic and medical credentials, working independently of one another, ostensibly using scientific research methods. Kübler-Ross had studied psychiatry under some of Europe's most prestigious practitioners at the University of Zurich. She was teaching in the University of Chicago's medical school when she published her landmark work. The year after her first book was published, she lectured on human immortality at Harvard. Raymond Moody had earned one PhD in psychology from the University of Virginia and another from the University of West Georgia. He also earned his MD; he had worked as a forensic psychiatrist; and he taught medical students at major universities in Georgia and Nevada.

Had these esteemed doctors finally discovered the nexus of spirituality and science?

⁴Raymond A. Moody, *Life after Life* (New York: Mockingbird, 1975; and Bantam, 1976).

⁵Raymond A. Moody, *Reflections on Life after Life* (New York: Mockingbird, 1977); *The Light Beyond* (New York: Bantam, 1989); *Coming Back: A Psychiatrist Explores Past-Life Journeys* (New York: Bantam, 1990); *Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones* (New York: Villard, 1993).