

About the Author

In 1975, Raymond Moody MD, PhD coined the term near-death experience in his book *Life After Life*. For half a century, he has researched some of life's greatest mysteries. As both a PhD in philosophy and an MD, he has had a strong interest in how medical realities intersect with the ineffable realm of philosophy.

Throughout his five-decade career, he has explored themes related to the transpersonal aspects of death, dying and grief. In his book *Glimpses of Eternity*, he discusses the phenomena of shared-death experiences. He writes about his inquiry into past lives in his book *Coming Back* and shares methods for evoking the dead, from Ancient Greece to modern times, in his book *Reunions*.

For more information about Dr. Moody, his books, presentations, future releases and webinars, please visit:

www.lifeafterlife.com

God is Bigger

Than the Bible

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Raymond Moody MD, PhD

God is Bigger Than the Bible

We are God's Stories

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*Could we with ink the ocean fill;
were the whole earth of parchment made;
were every single stick a quill;
were every man a scribe by trade;
to write the love of God alone,
would drain the ocean dry;
nor would the scroll contain the whole,
though stretched from sky to sky.*

-- Anonymous, 1799

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2010, I was sitting on my back porch writing this book when my neighbor Brian came up the steps to get a Coke from the refrigerator. Brian was about 40 years old at the time, but I had known him since he was 17 years old. He worked for us from time to time and he was there that day mowing the grass. So he came up on the porch to sit down and cool off for a few minutes. He looked at what I was doing and asked, “What are you writing, Raymond?”

I said, “I am writing a book called, ‘God is Bigger than the Bible’.”

Brian’s head literally jerked and shock registered on his face. His head bobbed and bowed slightly. He cast his eyes downward and he said, “Huh! Sometimes I think His word is even greater than He is.”

Since then, many other fine people had the same strong, startled, surprised reaction to my title. Hearing and contemplating the title leaves them agitated and exasperated. Yet if you think it over for a minute, I believe you will agree with me. God is far, far greater than the Bible.

For God is the Supreme Being, a being greater than which none other can be conceived. To say that a book, the Bible, a written product of human beings is greater than the Supreme Being, Almighty God, makes no intelligible sense. If you will work it out in your own mind, you will see it for yourself.

However divinely inspired and guided the scribes and compilers of the Bible might have been, they are not on a par with God. We can count the exact number of words in the Bible. We can weigh the Bible or measure it with a ruler. No doubt some are able to recite the Bible word for word from beginning to end. Perhaps a few can even recite the Bible backwards, or in seven different languages. But in no way do any such impressive feats or skills enable us to comprehend

the greatness upon greatness upon greatness of God. For in reality, God is bigger than the Bible.

Still, it is strange how many people cannot keep God and the Bible clearly separate in their minds. Is fear part of their problem? Some people get scared sick if they have to say, “I don’t know.”

Rather than conceding that there are many things, including things about God, that they don’t know, they concretize God. They try to put God into a box, and they call that box the Bible.

Many people who bluster about the Bible don’t really know much about it. If you haven’t noticed this already, you will realize it yourself if you question them gently. These people are intrusively assertive about what the Bible supposedly says, but they don’t know what they are talking about. In effect, they have become bibliolatrers.

Bibliolatry is worshipping a book. And the Bible is the particular book that many bibliolaters worship. They spend lots of time reading the Bible, pontificating

on the Bible and trying to inflict their views about the Bible on other people. The physicality of the Bible often seems part of the mystique it holds for them. They like to wave it about, thump on it or use it like a prop. They don't seem to keep God clearly separate from the Bible in their minds.

Yet, it is perfectly possible to have a good, strong, growing, loving relationship with God without ever reading a single word of the Bible. In fact, plenty of people out there in the world have a good, strong relationship with God, but are largely ignorant of the Bible. I am one of them myself.

When I was a child, my family was not religious. My father was sarcastic about religion. Dad was a military officer and surgeon who served in the Pacific during World War II. His generation was not very talkative about their wartime experiences. Later, I surmised that what Dad experienced during the War must have soured him on religion.

Meanwhile, my maternal grandmother often poked

gentle fun at her religious friends and their foibles. I think that the intolerant side of religious people made my grandmother pretty uncomfortable. When I was 8 years old we had a galvanized tub with two handles. One hot summer day, I filled the tub with water to splash and soak for a little while. I wore my Uncle Fairley's fuzzy navy blue swimming trunks with a white stripe on each side.

When I finished splashing, I left the dripping wet swimming trunks in the tub and dashed into the house a few feet away. My grandmother was genuinely irritated with me. She pointed to the people sitting on the front porch of the house next door. And she snapped, "Raymond, those people are Christians!" From her words and tone of voice, I gathered two things. First, we were not Christians. And, secondly, Christians must be pretty severe, stuffy people.

At that time, astronomy was my favorite pastime. I built my own telescope and loved gazing into the night sky and wondering what other planets might be like. I don't remember thinking or talking or asking about

God. I wouldn't call myself an atheist at that age because I did not have a positive opinion that there is no God. I suppose I was an agnostic, or thought that it is impossible to know that there is or is not a God. I focused on astronomy, not on God, and at age 18 I went to the University of Virginia to study the subject.

I took a course on Plato my first semester and immediately decided to major in philosophy, instead. Reading Plato's *Republic* was the first time I realized that some people take the idea of life after death seriously. Up to then, my sole exposure to the idea was in cartoons in magazines. I thought the drawings of clouds, pearly gates and angels were entirely a joke. But I saw that Plato was serious when he emphasized the importance of the question of an afterlife.

At the end of the *Republic*, Plato recounted a story of a warrior who was apparently killed in battle. However, the warrior revived spontaneously during his funeral. The warrior told the startled spectators that he had left his body and visited another realm during his presumed death. I asked Professor Hammond about the

story, and he said that such experiences were well known to early Greek philosophers. The philosophers studied cases of people who reported profound visions when they almost died.

Plato was inclined to accept that the experiences were real. However, some other philosophers discounted them. For instance, the philosopher Democritus had figured out that things in the world are made of minute, invisible bits he called atoms. Democritus explained the experiences of people who survived apparent death in terms of residual biological activity in the body. For there is no such thing as an exact moment of death, Democritus insisted.

That was the first I ever heard of what we now know as near-death experiences. I had no idea then that these experiences are also common in the modern world. However, in 1965, three years later, I met a living person who reported a near-death experience. Dr. George Ritchie was then a professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia. The experience George had while he was clinically dead changed his life and

the lives of many other people, including mine.

In December 1943, George was a recruit in the Army at Camp Barkeley, Texas. George contracted double lobar pneumonia and was pronounced dead for nine minutes. A doctor resuscitated him by injecting adrenaline directly into his heart. George said that when his heart stopped beating he left his body. He found himself in the presence of a being of bright light and complete, loving compassion whom George identified as Christ. Christ guided George through a vivid panoramic review of everything he had ever done in his life.

Dr. Ritchie was very generous and often lectured to student groups. I went to one of his lectures, and it was a turning point in my life. Hearing George that night was the first time I ever consciously felt and experienced the spirit of the divine.

After that night I continued studying philosophy and received my Ph.D. in the subject in 1969. I became a philosophy professor and soon I was hearing

accounts of near-death experiences from students and colleagues. In 1972 I went to medical school and received my M.D. in 1976. Afterwards, I served as a resident in psychiatry and eventually worked as a forensic psychiatrist. Throughout my career, I continued to interview people about their near-death experiences. The thousands of people I interviewed shared with me the encounters they had with God as they were out of their bodies, hovering on the edge of death.

God shines through these people's stories as a powerfully loving, compassionate, insightful, humorous, utterly delightful and still deeply mysterious presence. I did not have a religious background and I have read very little of the Bible. This book concerns what I learned about God from people's accounts of their near-death experiences and from my own personal encounters with God.

I am not interested in persuading anyone else of my own views and understanding of God. I offer these thoughts only because I know there are many people