

INTRODUCTION

MEET YOUR RESOURCES

AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the beginning of each chapter, I will provide a brief summary, or synopsis, of the topic or question at hand. The synopsis will be based upon the contributions of the resources introduced in this chapter.

Following the synopsis, I will quote from the resources in more detail.

SYNOPSIS

There have been more than twenty-eight books written by individuals who describe having had a near-death experience (NDE) or an out-of-body experience (OBE), where they left their bodies, visited a world of spirits, and then returned (usually reluctantly) to their bodies. I will draw primarily from the following six accounts, which I consider to be the most illuminating. Of course, I cannot guarantee the authenticity of any account but I do consider them to be highly credible. I will refer to these authors collectively as the Witnesses:

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE WITNESSES

Book	Based on the experience of
<i>Return from Tomorrow</i>	George G. Ritchie, MD
<i>Embraced by the Light: The Most Profound and Complete Near-Death Experience Ever</i>	Betty J. Eadie

Introduction

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE WITNESSES

Book	Based on the experience of
<i>The Burning Within</i>	RaNelle Wallace
<i>I Stand All Amazed: Love and Healing from Higher Realms</i>	Elane Durham
<i>Flight to Heaven: A Plane Crash . . . A Lone Survivor . . . A Journey to Heaven—and Back</i>	Captain Dale Black
<i>There Is No Death: The Extraordinary True Experience of Sarah LaNelle Menet</i>	Sarah LaNelle Menet

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

In addition, I will also draw from the work done by notable and respected researchers. These researchers have done extensive study on individuals who have had NDEs or OBEs. These researchers include:

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, MD

Raymond A. Moody Jr., MD

Kenneth Ring, PhD

Maurice S. Rawlings, MD

Michael Sabom, MD

Jeffrey Long, MD

Melvin L. Morse, MD

Karlis Osis, PhD and Erlendur Haraldsson, PhD

RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE

Belief in life after death is a fundamental doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, (commonly referred to as the Mormon church).

Mormon doctrine is based upon the Holy Bible and the following three books, which are also regarded as scripture:

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ

The Doctrine and Covenants

The Pearl of Great Price

Introduction

Since the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in 1830, various Mormon leaders have discoursed on elements of life after death. Therefore, the Mormon Perspective is included for members of that faith and other interested individuals.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON THE RESOURCES OF THE WITNESSES

What follows is a more detailed background of the Witnesses.

GEORGE G. RITCHIE JR.,

George G. Ritchie Jr. was born September 25, 1923. At the age of twenty, as an enlisted soldier in the army, he became acutely ill with pneumonia and was admitted to an army hospital. His condition deteriorated until his spirit finally left his body, and he embarked on an excursion into the world of spirits escorted by Jesus Christ.

After his excursion, he was escorted back to his body and reluctantly reentered it.

Dr. Ritchie went on to become a respected physician—practicing as a psychiatrist, and holding several positions of leadership in professional medical organizations.

His experience is recounted in the book *Return from Tomorrow*, and is probably the first notable book written by someone claiming to have had a near-death experience. He later published *My Life After Dying: How 9 Minutes in Heaven Taught Me How to Live on Earth*.

Dr. Ritchie passed away of cancer in 2007 (Wikipedia, s.v. “George G. Ritchie,” last modified 11 November 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_G._Ritchie).

BETTY J. EADIE

Betty Eadie was born in 1942 in Valentine, Nebraska.

During a 1973 hysterectomy, complications arose and led to Betty’s clinical death and her experience in the world of spirits. While there, she was informed that she must return to her body to fulfill her intended mission.

Introduction

Her book, *Embraced by the Light: The Most Profound and Complete Near-Death Experience Ever*, chronicles her experience. It was a No. 1 *New York Times* best seller.

Five years after her NDE, Betty visited the doctor who performed her hysterectomy. She told the doctor

I wasn't interested in seeking a lawsuit; I just wanted to know what went wrong—that it meant a lot to me to know. . . . Yes, he said, there were complications that night; they had lost me for a while but had felt that it was best not to mention anything to me. Then he went on to explain what had happened. I had hemorrhaged during the operation, and it appeared that the hemorrhage occurred again later night. At the time of my death, I had been left alone during the nurses' shift change, and because I was unattended, they didn't know exactly how long I had been dead (Eadie, pp. 133–34).

Since her near-death experience, Betty has spent more than thirty-seven years speaking to groups regarding the afterlife. She has also published *The Awakening Heart* (also a best seller), *The Ripple Effect*, and *Embraced by the Light: Prayers and Devotions for Daily Living*.

Betty also sponsors a website: www.embracedbythelight.com.

Betty's husband, Joe, died in 2011. She is the mother of eight children, and as of 2011, fifteen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren (Wikipedia, s.v. "Betty Eadie," last modified 15 January 2018, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betty_Eadie).

RANELLE WALLACE

RaNelle Wallace and her husband crashed in a single-engine airplane on October 9, 1985, in the mountains of central Utah. She was badly burned, but she and her husband managed to hike to the freeway where they were able to get help. An ambulance transported them to a hospital. While in route to the hospital, RaNelle's heart stopped. In her account, RaNelle's spirit left her body, and she was met by her deceased grandmother who escorted her on a visit to the world of spirits.

After her excursion, her grandmother told her that she needed to return to her body. "Your children need you, RaNelle," and "It's not just your children, RaNelle. You have things to do—things that aren't finished yet . . . your mission isn't complete" (Wallace, p. 115). RaNelle was resistant until she met a spirit who she learned was intended to

Introduction

be her future son. (See chapter 62: “Were Families Planned Before We Came to Earth?”)

I have had several conversations with RaNelle. Two things stand out in my memory. After meeting me for the first time, rather than doing the customary thing and simply shaking my hand as she was leaving, she gave me a hug—an act consistent with the primary theme of her book: “We need to learn how to love one another.”

The second thing I remember is that, during our conversation, she longingly said something to the effect, “I’m just anxiously waiting for the day I can go home again!”

RaNelle’s book, *The Burning Within*, is a fascinating glimpse of the spirit world, and the story of her recovery from the plane crash is inspiring.

Since her recovery, RaNelle has been actively giving community service and has been a professional speaker. After helping a family escape from a burning home, RaNelle was named Woman of the Year by the state of California and received a letter of commendation from President Ronald Reagan.

RaNelle is the mother of four children and lives in Utah (Wallace, *The Burning Within*, inside flap).

ELANE DURHAM

Elane Durham died at the Mercy Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, on October 20, 1976, of a cardiac arrest, which was attendant to a rupture of an arteriovenous malformation—a brain tumor. She was pronounced dead by the emergency-room physician. A Catholic deacon came to administer “last rites” and also witnessed that Elane was dead. Elane spent approximately one hour in the world of spirits. She refers to her experience not as a “near-death experience,” but as a “death vision” because she knows she was dead, not near-death.

Sometime after her death vision, Elane’s family physician obtained her records from Mercy Hospital regarding her treatment there. After reviewing the records, he confirmed that for a brief period of time Elane “had not made it” (Durham, p. 94).

Two weeks after her near-death experience, while still in her hospital room, Elane recognized the voice of the deacon who had administered her last rites. As she tells it:

Introduction

“Pardon me,” I said as he looked at the foot of my bed for the red cross that would denote that I was Catholic. “Could you have been in the emergency room two weeks ago?”

“Well, I might have been,” he answered, still not looking at me. “Why, were you there?” It was then that he finally looked up, and as he focused on me, his eyes grew wide with surprise.

“Yes,” I responded while he stared, “they brought me in on what they thought was a drug overdose.”

By this time he had hold of my foot. “You died!” he exclaimed. “You died!”

I did my best to smile. “I know. But I’m here, and I’d like to talk to you. Something happened to me, and I’d like to talk to you about it. Do you have time to visit?”

... “But you died,” he repeated with amazement. “I can’t believe this. . . . They were prepping you for the morgue when I got here! You couldn’t have seen me! You had already died!” (pp. 94–96).

Elane struck up a friendship with the Catholic deacon, Stanley Cembrzynski, that has continued for more than twenty years. His own account of administering last rites to her is included in her book on pages 96–98).

She recounts her story in her book *I Stand All Amazed: Love and Healing from Higher Realms*, which was published in August 1998.

CAPTAIN DALE BLACK

On July 18, 1969, Dale Black, then nineteen years old, boarded a twin-engine Piper Navajo. Problems developed moments after takeoff and the plane lost power and crashed into a concrete building at the speed of 135 miles per hour, then fell 70 feet to the ground. The pilot, Gene Bain, died at the scene. The other passenger, Chuck Burns, died later at the hospital.

For three days, Dale was in a coma. When he came out of the coma, in addition to the physical trauma, he had amnesia regarding the crash and the events leading up to the crash. But he immediately realized that he was a changed person. He felt great compassion and concern for everyone, including total strangers.

The story of his physical rehabilitation is amazing, and it includes events that would seem to be obvious miracles—resultant from his fer-

Introduction

vent faith that God would heal him and enable him to pursue his life-long dream of becoming a professional aviator.

Several months into his recovery, his amnesia began to resolve and he began to remember the details of the crash. He also remembered an out-of-body experience he had during the three days his body was in a coma, during which time he visited a world of spirits.

Although he was never clinically dead, his account is very similar to other NDE accounts.

It was almost forty years before Captain Black decided to go public with his story, feeling that the time had finally come and that there was good purpose for doing so.

It could be argued by skeptics and cynics that because a clinical death was never documented, that his story could be a creative fabrication, coinciding with other NDE accounts. The greatest evidence of its veracity is the type of life Dale Black lived for the almost forty years *prior to* the publication of his account.

He has taken the opportunity to talk to many people, including complete strangers, about Jesus Christ, and has urged them to make Jesus the focus of their lives.

He is the founder of Eagle International Ministries, where he “led scores of teams on short-term Christian missionary projects to over fifty counties since 1981” (Black, p. 186). He notes that he has “volunteered on almost a thousand flights to more than fifty countries, building churches, orphanages, and medical clinics . . . and [he has] trained lay ministers and medical personnel to help the needy worldwide, usually at [his] own expense” (pp. 11–12).

His fervor is at least partially motivated by what he learned during his out-of-body experience.

Dale also has a PhD in business with an emphasis in airline management and marketing. As of 2010, he and his wife were owners of a real estate company and lived in Southern California.

His book *Flight to Heaven: A Plane Crash . . . A Lone Survivor . . . A Journey to Heaven—and Back*, published in 2010, is a remarkable story of faith—particularly with respect to the events that transpired after his accident.

Introduction

SARAH LANELLE MENET

Sarah endured a horrific childhood with an abusive father. Her first marriage ended in divorce, and she was beset with a number of medical problems. Her second husband was much like her abusive father and the marriage ended in a bitter divorce. In 1979, she took an entire bottle of Tylenol with codeine in an attempt to take her own life.

Prior to taking the pills, Sarah called her sister, who then called the police. Because of this, Sarah received medical care in time. Although the paramedics initially pronounced her dead, she was eventually resuscitated.

Sarah's book, *There Is No Death: The Extraordinary True Experience of Sarah LaNelle Menet*, was published in 2002.

AUTHOR'S NOTE AND RECOMMENDATION

I should note that all six of the Witnesses are Christians, and four of them write about meeting or seeing Christ during their experience. I cannot be sure that non-Christians would have similar experiences. For one thing, they may see a being of light, but not recognize that it is Christ because they don't believe in Christ.

I highly recommend that you read the entirety of these authors' accounts. Their accounts are not only fascinating because they recount the Witnesses' experiences in the spirit world, but they are also inspirational because you read of the challenges the Witnesses endured after their return to their bodies.

The following table gives some comparative information on the six Witnesses.

PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE SIX NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE WITNESSES						
	George G. Ritchie Jr.	Betty J. Eadie	RaNelle Wallace	Elane Durham	Dale Black	Sarah Lanelle Menet
Date of NDE	12/20/1943	11/18/1973	10/9/1985	10/22/1996	7/18/1969	1979

Introduction

PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THE SIX NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE WITNESSES						
	George G. Ritchie Jr.	Betty J. Eadie	RaNelle Wallace	Elane Durham	Dale Black	Sarah Lanelle Menet
Cause of NDE	Double lobar pneumonia	Hysterectomy complications	Small plane crash	Cardiac arrest	Small plane crash	Suicide attempt
Year account was published	1978	1992	1994	1998	2010	2002
Did they meet Jesus?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

I will also reference from the following books, whose authors wrote of their own near-death experiences.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon's Journey into the Afterlife</i> | Eben Alexander, MD |
| <i>To Heaven and Back: A Doctor's Extraordinary Account of Her Death, Angels, and Life Again</i> | Mary C. Neal, MD |
| <i>The Message</i> | Lance Richardson |

The following is a list of additional books written by or about individuals who describe near-death experiences.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>I Saw Heaven: A Remarkable Visit to the Spirit World</i> | Lawrence E. Tooley |
| <i>Heaven Is for Real: A Little Boy's Astounding Story of His Trip to Heaven and Back</i> | Todd Burpo |
| <i>Saved by the Light: The True Story of a Man Who Died Twice and the Profound Revelations He Received</i> | Dannion Brinkley |

Introduction

<i>Caught Up Into Paradise</i>	Richard E. Eby, DO
<i>Full Circle: The Near-Death Experience and Beyond</i>	Barbara Harris and Lionel C. Bascom
<i>God's Heavenly Answers: Near-Death Experience Revealed</i>	Joyce H. Brown, PhD, ND, EFT
<i>A Place Called Heaven</i>	Dr. Gary L. Wood
<i>Visions of Glory: One Man's Astonishing Account of the Last Days</i>	John Pontius
<i>My Descent into Death: A Second Chance at Life</i>	Howard Storm
<i>A Glimpse of Eternity: One Man's Story of Life Beyond Death</i>	Ian MacCormack
<i>90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life</i>	Don Piper
<i>My Journey to Heaven: What I Saw and How It Changed My Life</i>	Marvin J. Besteman
<i>Fast Lane to Heaven: A Life-After-Death Journey</i>	Ned Dougherty
<i>My Glimpse of Eternity</i>	Betty Malz
<i>Afterlife: What Really Happens on the Other Side</i>	Barry R. Strohm
<i>40 Days in Heaven: The True Testimony of Seneca Sodi's Visitation to Paradise, the Holy City, the Glory of God's Throne</i>	Reverend Elwood Scott
<i>Face to Face with Jesus: A Former Muslim's Extraordinary Journey to Heaven and Encounter with the God of Love</i>	Samaa Habib
<i>I Knew Their Hearts</i>	Jeff Olsen

RESEARCHERS OF NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCES

In addition to the NDEs of the above-mentioned individuals, I will also cite the works of the following prominent NDE researchers.

DR. ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS

Until her death in 2004, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist, was widely regarded as the world's leading authority on the issue of death and dying. Dr. Kübler-Ross worked with an estimated twenty thousand terminally ill patients over the course of twenty years. She authored many publications. Her most renowned book, *On Death and Dying: What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and Their Own Families*, first published in 1970, discusses her theory on the five stages of psychological reaction experienced by individuals facing death. During her life, she was awarded twenty honorary doctorate degrees from various universities.

She is regarded as a pioneer of the hospice movement. Her work inspired others to pursue near-death studies.

Although she described herself as a “skeptical semi-believer” early in her career, she became convinced, as a result of her research, that life continues after death.

DR. RAYMOND A. MOODY JR.

Dr. Moody outlines his research of NDEs in *Life After Life: The Best-selling Original Investigation that Revealed “Near-Death Experiences.”* First published in November 1975, it has since sold more than thirteen million copies worldwide. Over the course of his career, extending for more than twenty years, Dr. Moody has interviewed more than three hundred individuals who describe out-of-body experiences that have elements consistent with each other and with those of the Witnesses previously introduced.

I will also refer to Dr. Moody's later publications *Reflections on Life After Life* and *The Light Beyond*.

Introduction

DR. KENNETH RING

Dr. Ring is a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Connecticut. He did extensive research in the field of near-death studies. He published a number of books regarding his studies including, *Life at Death: A Scientific Investigation of the Near-Death Experience* and *Heading Toward Omega: In Search of the Meaning of the Near-Death Experience*. Raymond A. Moody has been quoted saying that Dr. Ring's research validated his own book, *Life After Life*.

DR. MICHAEL B. SABOM

Dr. Sabom, a cardiologist, started investigating near-death experiences after reading Dr. Moody's book *Life After Life*. His initial skepticism turned into a five-year study in which he considered the ten separate elements of a near-death experience as outlined in Dr. Moody's book.

DR. MAURICE RAWLINGS

Dr. Rawlings, also a cardiologist, resuscitated a patient who died while taking a stress test. In the process of the resuscitation, the patient regained consciousness and told Dr. Rawlings that he was in hell, asked him to not stop trying to bring him back. He also asked Dr. Rawlings to pray for him. As a result of this experience, Dr. Rawlings became interested in studying bad NDE accounts. The majority of NDE accounts are very pleasant. Dr. Rawlings's opinion is that bad NDE accounts may be as frequent as good accounts, but the conscious minds of people who have had such experiences repress them because of their horror. The bad NDE is usually only remembered if the information is gained immediately after the experience.

His book *Beyond Death's Door* was published in 1978.

DR. JEFFREY LONG

Dr. Long is a radiation oncologist practicing in Houma, Louisiana. He encountered the phrase *near-death experience* (NDE) in 1984. A few years later, the wife of one of his friends told him of her own NDE and his interest grew. In 1998, he founded the Near-Death Experience Research Foundation and its associated website, NDERF.org.

Introduction

The purpose of the website was to invite people who had had near-death experiences to respond to more than a hundred questions regarding their experience. During the first ten years of the website's operation, more than 1,300 people visited the site and responded to the questions. After studying their responses, Dr. Long identified “nine lines of evidence . . . [that] converge on one central point: *There is life after death*” (Long, p. 4).

His book *Evidence of the Afterlife: The Science of Near-Death Experiences* was published in 2010 and became a *New York Times* best seller.

DR. MELVIN MORSE

With the underlying confidence that “children don't lie”—as expressed by one of Dr. Morse's university professors—Dr. Morse, a renowned pediatrician, undertook a study of young children who had had near-death experiences (Morse, p. 14).

His study spanned more than eight years and produced many fascinating case histories. Ten years after their NDEs, some of these children were revisited to see what effect their experience had had on their subsequent lives.

His book, *Closer to the Light: Learning from the Near-Death Experiences of Children* was on the *New York Times* best seller list.

DR KARLIS OSIS and DR. ERLENDUR HARALDSSON

In their book *At the Hour of Death: A New Look at Evidence for Life After Death*, Dr. Osis and Dr. Haraldsson detail an extensive scientific study of the experiences of individuals just prior to their deaths. They surveyed more than a thousand doctors and nurses who had interaction with patients just prior to their deaths.

RELIGIOUS RESOURCES CITED

HOLY BIBLE

The Holy Bible contains remarkably few references to the conditions of life after death. The most notable is in Luke 16, where the story of

Introduction

Lazarus and the rich man is told. Lazarus went to “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22)—obviously a paradisiacal realm—while the rich man went to “a place of torment” (Luke 16:28).

While Jesus was on the cross, He spoke of His imminent departure into paradise (See Luke 23:43).

MORMON SCRIPTURES

In addition to the Holy Bible, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly called “Mormons” or “LDS”), regard three additional books as scripture.

The Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ contains the accounts of three peoples who came over from the Old World to the American continent.

The Jaredites came over at the time of the Tower of Babel. This civilization annihilated itself through civil war several hundred years before Christ was born, with the exception of two survivors: one of which found a people called the Mulekites and lived with them for nine months before dying.

This second group, the Mulekites, came over from Jerusalem during the reign of King Zedekiah, and eventually combined with descendants of the third group: the Nephites.

The Nephites came over from Jerusalem about 600 BC. This group divided into two nations—the Nephites and the Lamanites—that had many periods of wars. About the year AD 421, the Lamanites entirely annihilated the Nephites, with the exception of a prophet named Moroni. The descendants of the Lamanites are the American Indians.

The Book of Mormon is made up of the writings of various prophets who lived among these peoples. Some of these prophets include: Nephi, Mosiah, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni.

Doctrine and Covenants

The Doctrine and Covenants, as stated in the introduction to the book, is “a collection of divine revelations and inspired declarations.”

Introduction

While most of the revelations were received through the prophet Joseph Smith Jr., the final section of the book records a vision given to Joseph F. Smith—the prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1918 and a nephew of Joseph Smith Jr. This vision offers notable information regarding activities in the world of spirits.

The Pearl of Great Price

The subtitle of the Pearl of Great Price reads, “a selection from the revelations, translations, and narrations of Joseph Smith—first prophet, seer, and revelator to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Two of the books within this volume, the book of Moses and the book of Abraham contain information related to the world of spirits and the afterlife.

Also included in this volume is a document written by Joseph Smith Jr. called the “Articles of Faith,” which outlines thirteen fundamental beliefs of the Mormon Church.

MORMON CHURCH LEADERS

Since the martyrdom of Joseph Smith Jr. in 1844, the presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have always been regarded as prophets, seers, and revelators. Consequently, I will refer to the teachings of some of these men in the course of inserting religious perspective. The Mormon leaders to be quoted are:

Name	Position	Born and Died
Joseph Smith Jr.	First prophet and president	1805–1844
Brigham Young	Second prophet and president	1801–1877
Wilford Woodruff	Fourth prophet and president	1807–1898
Joseph F. Smith	Sixth prophet and president	1838–1918
Heber J. Grant	Seventh prophet and president	1856–1945
David O. McKay	Ninth prophet and president	1873–1970

Introduction

Name	Position	Born and Died
Spencer W. Kimball	Twelfth prophet and president	1895–1985
Ezra Taft Benson	Thirteenth prophet and president	1899–1994
Thomas S. Monson	Sixteenth prophet and president	1927–2018
Russell M. Nelson	Seventeenth prophet and president	1924–
Parley P. Pratt	Apostle	1807–1857
Orson Pratt	Apostle	1811–1881
Dieter F. Uchtdorf	Apostle	1940–
Jeffrey R. Holland	Apostle	1940–
Stirling W. Sill	Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles	1903–1994

MISCELLANEOUS REFERENCES

LDS CHILDREN'S SONGBOOK

Mormon children ages three to eleven attend what is called “Primary” on Sundays, where they learn the gospel, in part, through the songs they sing. Some of these songs will be referenced.

ANONYMOUS RESOURCES

On occasion, I will cite anonymous resources. Some of these resources are members of my own family, but I will not identify them in order to protect their privacy.