



Through The Light¹

Mellen-Thomas Benedict is an artist who survived a near-death experience in 1982. He was dead for over an hour and a half and during that time, he rose up out of his body and went into the Light. Curious about the universe, he was taken far into the remote depths of existence, and even beyond, into the energetic Void of Nothingness behind the Big Bang. Concerning his near-death experience, Dr. Kenneth Ring has said, "His story is one of the most remarkable I have encountered in my extensive research on near-death experiences."

THE ROAD TO DEATH

In 1982 I died from terminal cancer. The condition I had was inoperable, and any kind of chemotherapy they could give me would just have made me more of a vegetable. I was given six to eight months to live. I had been an information freak in the 1970's, and I had become increasingly despondent over the nuclear crisis, the ecology crisis, and so forth.

So, since I did not have a spiritual basis, I began to believe that nature had made a mistake, and that we were probably a cancerous organism on the planet. I saw no way that we could get out from all the problems we had created for the planet and ourselves. I perceived all humans as cancer, and that is what I got. That is what killed me. Be careful what your world-view is. It can feed back on you, especially if it is a negative world-view. I had a seriously negative one.

¹ Thanks, Larry, for a wonderful article. Thanks also to Mellen-Thomas Benedict, and to: <http://www.near-death.com/benedict.html>

That is what led me into my death. I tried all sorts of alternative healing methods, but nothing helped.

So I determined that this was really just between God and me. I had never really faced God before, or even dealt with God. I was not into any kind of spirituality at the time, but I began a journey into learning about spirituality and alternative healing. I set out to do all the reading I could and bone up on the subject, because I did not want to be surprised on the other side. So I started reading on various religions and philosophies. They were all very interesting, and gave hope that there was something on the other side.

On the other hand, as a self-employed stained-glass artist at the time, I had no medical insurance whatsoever. So my life savings went overnight in testing. Then I was facing the medical profession without any kind of insurance. I did not want to have my family dragged down financially, so I determined to handle this myself. There was not constant pain, but there were black-outs. I got so that I would not dare to drive, and eventually I ended up in hospice care.

I had my own personal hospice caretaker. I was very blessed by this angel who went through the last part of this with me. I lasted about eighteen months. I did not want to take a lot of drugs, since I wanted to be as conscious as possible. Then I experienced such pain that I had nothing but pain in my consciousness, luckily only for a few days at a time.

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THE LIGHT OF GOD

I remember waking up one morning at home about 4:30 am, and I just knew that this was it. This was the day I was going to die. So I called a few friends and said goodbye. I woke up my hospice caretaker and told her. I had a private agreement with her that she would leave my dead body alone for six hours, since I had read that all kinds of interesting things happen when you die. I went back to sleep.

The next thing I remember is the beginning of a typical near-death experience. Suddenly I was fully aware and I was standing up, but my body was in the bed. There was this darkness around me. Being out of my body was even more vivid than ordinary experience. It was so vivid that I could see every room in the house, I could see the top of the house, I could see around the house, I could see under the house.

There was this Light shining. I turned toward the Light.

The Light was very similar to what many other people have described in their near-death experiences. It was so magnificent. It is tangible; you can feel it. It is alluring; you want to go to it like you would want to go to your ideal mother or father's arms. As I began to move toward the Light, I knew intuitively that if I went to the Light, I would be dead. So as I was moving toward the Light I said, "Please wait a minute, just hold on a second here. I want to think about this; I would like to talk to you before I go."

To my surprise, the entire experience halted at that point.

You are indeed in control of your near-death experience. You are not on a roller coaster ride. So my request was honored and I had some conversations with the Light. The Light kept changing into different figures, like Jesus, Buddha,

Krishna, mandalas, archetypal images and signs. I asked the Light, "What is going on here? Please, Light, clarify yourself for me. I really want to know the reality of the situation." I cannot really say the exact words, because it was sort of telepathy.

The Light responded. The information transferred to me was that your beliefs shape the kind of feedback you are getting before the Light. If you were a Buddhist or Catholic or Fundamentalist, you get a feedback loop of your own stuff.

You have a chance to look at it and examine it, but most people do not. As the Light revealed itself to me, I became aware that what I was really seeing was our Higher Self matrix.

The only thing I can tell you is that it turned into a matrix, a mandala of human souls, and what I saw was that what we call our Higher Self in each of us is a matrix. It's also a conduit to the Source; each one of us comes directly, as a direct experience from the Source. We all have a Higher Self, or an oversoul part of our being. It revealed itself to me in its truest energy form. The only way I can really describe it is that the being of the Higher Self is more like a conduit. It did not look like that, but it is a direct connection to the Source that each and every one of us has. We are directly connected to the Source.

So the Light was showing me the Higher Self matrix. And it became very clear to me that all the Higher Selves are connected as one being, all humans are connected as one being, we are actually the same being, different aspects of the same being. It was not committed to one particular religion.

So that is what was being fed back to me. And I saw this mandala of human souls. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. I just went into it and, it

was just over-whelming. It was like all the love you've every wanted, and it was the kind of love that cures, heals, regenerates.

As I asked the Light to keep explaining, I understood what the Higher Self matrix is. We have a grid around the planet where all the Higher Selves are connected. This is like a great company, a next subtle level of energy around us, the spirit level, you might say. Then, after a couple of minutes, I asked for more clarification. I really wanted to know what the universe is about, and I was ready to go at that time. I said "I am ready, take me." Then the Light turned into the most beautiful thing that I have ever seen: a mandala of human souls on this planet.

Now I came to this with my negative view of what has happened on the planet. So as I asked the light to keep clarifying for me, I saw in this magnificent mandala how beautiful we all are in our essence, our core. We are the most beautiful creations. The human soul, the human matrix that we all make together is absolutely fantastic, elegant, exotic, everything. I just cannot say enough about how it changed my opinion of human beings in that instant.

I said, "Oh, God, I did not know how beautiful we are." At any level, high or low, in whatever shape you are in, you are the most beautiful creation, you are. I was astonished to find that there was no evil in any soul. I said, "How can this be?" The answer was that no soul was inherently evil. The terrible things that happened to people might make them do evil things, but their souls were not evil. What all people seek, what sustains them, is love, the Light told me. What distorts people is a lack of love.

The revelations coming from the Light seemed to go on and on, then I asked the Light, "Does this mean that humankind will be saved?" Then, like a trumpet blast

with a shower of spiraling lights, the Great Light spoke, saying, "Remember this and never forget; you save, redeem and heal yourself. You always have. You always will. You were created with the power to do so from before the beginning of the world."

In that instant I realized even more. I realized that WE HAVE ALREADY BEEN SAVED, and we saved ourselves because we were designed to self-correct like the rest of God's universe. This is what the second coming is about. I thanked the Light of God with all my heart. The best thing I could come up with was these simple words of total appreciation: "Oh dear God, dear Universe, dear Great Self, I love my Life."

The Light seemed to breathe me in even more deeply. It was as if the Light was completely absorbing me. The Love Light is, to this day, indescribable. I entered into another realm, more profound than the last, and became aware of something more, much more. It was an enormous stream of Light, vast and full, deep in the Heart of Life. I asked what this was.

The Light responded, "This is the RIVER OF LIFE. Drink of this manna water to your heart's content." So I did. I took one big drink and then another. To drink of Life Itself! I was in ecstasy.

Then the Light said, "You have a desire." The Light knew all about me, everything past, present and future.

"Yes!" I whispered.

I asked to see the rest of the Universe, beyond our solar system, beyond all human illusion. The Light then told me that I could go with the Stream. I did, and was carried through the Light at the end of the tunnel. I felt and heard a series of very soft sonic booms. What a rush!

THE VOID OF NOTHINGNESS

Suddenly I seemed to be rocketing away from the planet on this stream of Life. I saw the earth fly away. The solar system, in all its splendor, whizzed by and disappeared. At faster than light speed, I flew through the center of the galaxy, absorbing more knowledge as I went. I learned that this galaxy, and all of the Universe, is bursting with many different varieties of LIFE. I saw many worlds. The good news is that we are not alone in this Universe!

As I rode this stream of consciousness through the center of the galaxy, the stream was expanding in awesome fractal waves of energy. The super clusters of galaxies with all their ancient wisdom flew by. At first I thought I was going somewhere; actually traveling. But then I realized that, as the stream was expanding, my own consciousness was also expanding to take in everything in the Universe! All creation passed by me. It was an unimaginable wonder! I truly was a Wonder Child, a babe in Wonderland!

It seemed as if all the creations in the Universe soared by me and vanished in a speck of Light. Almost immediately, a second Light appeared. It came from all sides, and was so different; a Light made up of more than every frequency in the Universe. I felt and heard several velvety sonic booms again. My consciousness, or being, was expanding to interface with the entire Holographic Universe and more.

As I passed into the second Light, the awareness came to me that I had just transcended the Truth. Those are the best words I have for it, but I will try to explain. As I passed into the second Light, I expanded beyond the First Light. I found myself in a profound stillness, beyond all silence. I could see or perceive FOREVER, beyond Infinity.

I was in the Void.

I was in pre-creation, before the Big Bang. I had crossed over the beginning of time — the First Word — the First vibration.

I was in the Eye of Creation. I felt as if I was touching the Face of God. It was not a religious feeling. Simply I was at one with Absolute Life and Consciousness.

When I say that I could see or perceive forever, I mean that I could experience all of creation generating itself. It was without beginning and without end. That's a mind-expanding thought, isn't it? Scientists perceive the Big Bang as a single event that created the Universe. I saw that the Big Bang is only one of an infinite number of Big Bangs creating Universes endlessly and simultaneously. The only images that even come close in human terms would be those created by supercomputers using fractal geometry equations.

The ancients knew of this. They said Godhead periodically created new Universes by breathing out, and de-creating other Universes by breathing in. These epochs were called Yugas.

Modern science called this the Big Bang. I was in absolute, pure consciousness. I could see or perceive all the Big Bangs or Yugas creating and de-creating themselves. Instantly I entered into them all simultaneously. I saw that each and every little piece of creation has the power to create. It is very difficult to try to explain this. I am still speechless about this.

It took me years after I returned to assimilate any words at all for the Void experience. I can tell you this now; the Void is less than nothing, yet more than everything that is! The Void is absolute zero; chaos forming all possibilities. It is Absolute Consciousness — much more than even Universal Intelligence.

Where is the Void? I know. The Void is inside and outside everything. You, right now even while you live, are always inside and outside the Void simultaneously. You don't have to go anywhere or die to get there. The Void is the vacuum or nothingness between all physical manifestations; the SPACE between atoms and their components.

Modern science has begun to study this space between everything. They call it Zero-point. Whenever they try to measure it, their instruments go off the scale, or to infinity, so to speak. They have no way, as of yet, to measure infinity accurately. There is more of the zero space in your own body and the Universe than anything else!

What mystics call the Void is not a void. It is so full of energy, a different kind of energy that has created everything that we are. Everything since the Big Bang is vibration, from the first Word, which is the first vibration. The biblical "I am" really has a question mark after it. "I am — What am I?"

So creation is God exploring God's Self through every way imaginable, in an ongoing, infinite exploration through every one of us. Through every piece of hair on your head, through every leaf on every tree, through every atom, God is exploring God's Self, the great "I am". I began to see that everything that is, is the Self, literally, your Self, my Self—everything is the great Self. That is why God knows even when a leaf falls. That is possible because wherever you are is the center of the universe. Wherever any atom is, that is the center of the universe. There is God in that, and God in the Void.

As I was exploring the Void and all the Yugas or creations, I was completely out of time and space as we know it. In this expanded state, I discovered that creation is about Absolute Pure

Consciousness, or God, coming into the Experience of Life as we know it. The Void itself is devoid of experience.

It is pre-life, before the first vibration. Godhead is about more than Life and Death. Therefore there is even more than Life and Death to experience in the Universe!

I was in the Void and I was aware of everything that had ever been created. It was like I was looking out of God's eyes. I had become God. Suddenly I wasn't me anymore.

The only thing I can say, I was looking out of God's eyes.

And suddenly I knew why every atom was, and I could see everything. The interesting point was that I went into the Void, I came back with this understanding that God is not there. God is here. That's what it is all about.

So this constant search of the human race to go out and find God ... God gave everything to us, everything is here — this is where it's at. And what we are into now is God's exploration of God through us. People are so busy trying to become God that they ought to realize that we are already God and God is becoming us. That's what it is really about.

When I realized this, I was finished with the Void, and wanted to return to this creation, or Yuga. It just seemed like the natural thing to do. Then I suddenly came back through the second Light, or the Big Bang, hearing several more velvet booms. I rode the stream of consciousness back through all of creation, and what a ride it was! The super clusters of galaxies came through me with even more insights.

I passed through the center of our galaxy, which is a black hole. Black holes are the great processors or recyclers of the Universe. Do you know what is on the

other side of a Black Hole? We are; our galaxy; which has been reprocessed from another Universe. In its total energy configuration, the galaxy looked like a fantastic city of lights. All energy this side of the Big Bang is light. Every sub-atom, atom, star, planet, even consciousness itself is made of light and has a frequency and/or particle. Light is living stuff. Everything is made of light, even stones. So everything is alive. Everything is made from the Light of God; everything is very intelligent.

THE LIGHT OF LOVE

As I rode the stream on and on, I could eventually see a huge Light coming. I knew it was the First Light, the Higher Self-Light Matrix of our solar system. Then the entire solar system appeared in the Light, accompanied by one of those velvet booms.

I saw that the solar system we live in is our larger, local body. This is our local body and we are much bigger than we imagine. I saw that the solar system is our body. I am a part of this, and the earth is this great created being that we are, and we are the part of it that knows that it is. But we are only that part of it. We are not everything, but we are that part of it that knows that it is.

I could see all the energy that this solar system generates, and it is an incredible light show! I could hear the Music of the Spheres. Our solar system, as do all celestial bodies, generates a unique matrix of light, sound and vibratory energies. Advanced civilizations from other star systems can spot life as we know it in the universe by the vibratory or energy matrix imprint. It is child's play. The earth's Wonder Child (human beings) make an abundance of sound right now, like children playing in the backyard of the universe.

I rode the stream directly into the center of the Light. I felt embraced by the Light as it took me in with its breath again, followed by another soft sonic boom.

I was in this great Light of Love with the stream of life flowing through me. I have to say again, it is the most loving, non-judgmental Light. It is the ideal parent for this Wonder Child.

“What now?” I wondered.

The Light explained to me that there is no death; we are immortal beings. We have already been alive forever! I realized that we are part of a natural living system that recycles itself endlessly. I was never told that I had to come back. I just knew that I would. It was only natural, from what I had seen.

I don't know how long I was with the Light, in human time.

But there came a moment when I realized that all my questions had been answered and my return was near. When I say that all my questions were answered on the other side, I mean to say just that. All my questions have been answered. Every human has a different life and set of questions to explore.

Some of our questions are Universal, but each of us is exploring this thing we call Life in our own unique way. So is every other form of life, from mountains to every leaf on every tree.

And that is very important to the rest of us in this Universe.

Because it all contributes to the Big Picture, the fullness of Life. We are literally God exploring God's Self in an infinite Dance of Life. Your uniqueness enhances all of Life.

HIS RETURN TO EARTH

As I began my return to the life cycle, it never crossed my mind, nor was I told, that I would return to the same body. It just did not matter. I had complete trust in the Light and the Life process. As the stream merged with the great Light, I asked never to forget the revelations and the feelings of what I had learned on the other side.

There was a “Yes”. It felt like a kiss to my soul.

Then I was taken back through the Light into the vibratory realm again. The whole process reversed, with even more information being given to me. I came back home, and I was given lessons on the mechanics of reincarnation. I was given answers to all those little questions I had: “How does this work? How does that work?” I knew that I would be reincarnated. The earth is a great processor of energy, and individual consciousness evolves out of that into each one of us.

I thought of myself as a human for the first time, and I was happy to be that. From what I have seen, I would be happy to be an atom in this universe. An atom. So to be the human part of God ... this is the most fantastic blessing. It is a blessing beyond our wildest estimation of what blessing can be. For each and every one of us to be the human part of this experience is awesome, and magnificent. Each and every one of us, no matter where we are, screwed up or not, is a blessing to the planet, right where we are.

So I went through the reincarnation process expecting to be a baby somewhere. But I was given a lesson on how individual identity and consciousness evolve. So I reincarnated back into this body. I was so surprised when I opened my eyes.

I do not know why, because I understood it, but it was still such a

surprise to be back in this body, back in my room with someone looking over me crying her eyes out. It was my hospice caretaker. She had given up an hour and a half after finding me dead. She was sure I was dead; all the signs of death were there—I was getting stiff.

We do not know how long I was dead, but we do know that it was an hour and a half since I was found. She honored my wish to have my newly dead body left alone for a few hours as much as she could. We had an amplified stethoscope and many ways of checking out the vital functions of the body to see what was happening. She can verify that I really was dead. It was not a near-death experience. I experienced death itself for at least an hour and a half. She found me dead and checked the stethoscope, blood pressure and heart rate monitor for an hour and a half. Then I awakened and saw the light outside. I tried to get up to go to it, but I fell out of the bed. She heard a loud “clunk”, ran in and found me on the floor.

When I recovered, I was very surprised and yet very awed about what had happened to me. At first all the memory of the trip that I have now was not there. I kept slipping out of this world and kept asking, “Am I alive?” This world seemed more like a dream than that one. Within three days, I was feeling normal again, clearer, yet different than I had ever felt in my life. My memory of the journey came back later.

I could see nothing wrong with any human being I had ever seen. Before that I was really judgmental. I thought a lot of people were really screwed up, in fact I thought that everybody was screwed up but me. But I got clear on all that.

About three months later a friend said I should get tested, so I went and got the scans and so forth. I really felt good, so I was afraid of getting bad news. I

remember the doctor at the clinic looking at the before and after scans, saying, "Well, there is nothing here now." I said, "Really, it must be a miracle?"

He said "No, these things happen, they are called *spontaneous remission*." He acted very unimpressed. But here was a miracle, and I was impressed, even if no one else was.

LESSONS HE LEARNED

The mystery of life has very little to do with intelligence. The universe is not an intellectual process at all. The intellect is helpful; it is brilliant, but right now that is all we process with, instead of our hearts and the wiser part of ourselves.

The center of the earth is this great transmuter of energy, just as you see in pictures of our earth's magnetic field. That's our cycle, pulling reincarnated souls back in and through it again. A sign that you are reaching human level is that you are beginning to evolve an individual consciousness.

The animals have a group soul, and they reincarnate in group souls. A deer is pretty much going to be a deer forever. But just being born a human, whether deformed or genius, shows that you are on the path to developing an individual consciousness. That is in itself part of the group consciousness called humanity.

I saw that races are personality clusters. Nations like France, Germany and China each have their own personality. Cities have personalities, their local group souls that attract certain people. Families have group souls. Individual identity is evolving like branches of a fractal; the group soul explores in our individuality. The different questions that each of us has are very, very important. This is how Godhead is exploring God's Self — through you. So ask your questions, do your searching. You will find your Self

and you will find God in that Self, because it is only the Self.

More than that, I began to see that each one of us humans are soul mates. We are part of the same soul fractaling out in many creative directions, but still the same. Now I look at every human being that I ever see, and I see a soul mate, my soul mate, the one I have always been looking for. Beyond that, the greatest soul mate that you will ever have is yourself.

We are each both male and female. We experience this in the womb and we experience this in reincarnation states. If you are looking for that ultimate soul mate outside of yourself, you may never find it; it is not there. Just as God is not "there".

God is here. Don't look "out there" for God. Look here for God. Look through your Self. Start having the greatest love affair you ever had ... with your Self. You will love everything out of that.

I had a descent into what you might call Hell, and it was very surprising. I did not see Satan or evil. My descent into Hell was a descent into each person's customized human misery, ignorance, and darkness of not knowing. It seemed like a miserable eternity. But each of the millions of souls around me had a little star of light always available. But no one seemed to pay attention to it. They were so consumed with their own grief, trauma and misery. But, after what seemed an eternity, I started calling out to that Light, like a child calling to a parent for help.

Then the Light opened up and formed a tunnel that came right to me and insulated me from all that fear and pain. That is what Hell really is. So what we are doing is learning to hold hands, to come together. The doors of Hell are open now. We are going to link up, hold hands, and walk out of Hell together.

The Light came to me and turned into a huge golden angel. I said, "Are you the angel of death?" It expressed to me that it was my oversoul, my Higher Self-matrix, a super-ancient part of ourselves. Then I was taken to the Light.

Soon our science will quantify spirit. Isn't that going to be wonderful? We are coming up with devices now that are sensitive to subtle energy or spirit energy. Physicists use these atomic colliders to smash atoms to see what they are made of. They have got it down to quarks and charm, and all that. Well, one day they are going to come down to the little thing that holds it all together, and they are going to have to call that ... God.

With atomic colliders they are not only seeing what is in here, but they are creating particles. Thank God most of them are short-lived milliseconds and nanoseconds. We are just beginning to understand that we are creating too, as we go along. As I saw forever, I came to a realm in which there is a point where we pass all knowledge and begin creating the next fractal, the next level. We have that power to create as we explore. And that is God expanding itself through us.

Since my return I have experienced the Light spontaneously, and I have learned how to get to that space almost any time in my meditation. Each one of you can do this. You do not have to die to do this. It is within your equipment; you are wired for it already. The body is the most magnificent Light being there is. The body is a universe of incredible Light.

Spirit is not pushing us to dissolve this body. That is not what is happening. Stop trying to become God; God is becoming you. Here.

The mind is like a child running around the universe, demanding this and thinking it created the world. But I ask the

mind: "What did your mother have to do with this?"

That is the next level of spiritual awareness. Oh! My mother!



LUCIFER TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, GREETING!

Lucifer, Vol. I, No. 4, December 1887, pp. 242-251

MY LORD PRIMATE OF ALL ENGLAND,

We make use of an open letter to your Grace as a vehicle to convey to you, and through you, to the clergy, to their flocks, and to Christians generally — who regard us as the enemies of Christ — a brief statement of the position which Theosophy occupies in regard to Christianity, as we believe that the time for making that statement has arrived.

Your Grace is no doubt aware that Theosophy is not a religion, but a philosophy at once religious and scientific; and that the chief work, so far, of the Theosophical Society has been to revive in each religion its own animating spirit, by encouraging and helping enquiry into the true significance of its doctrines and observances. Theosophists know that the deeper one penetrates into the meaning of the dogmas and ceremonies of all religions, the greater becomes their apparent underlying similarity, until finally a perception of their fundamental unity is reached. This common ground is no other than Theosophy — the Secret Doctrine of the ages; which, diluted and disguised to suit the capacity of the multitude, and the

requirements of the time, has formed the living kernel of all religions. The Theosophical Society has branches respectively composed of Buddhists, Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsees, Christians and Freethinkers, who work together as brethren on the common ground of Theosophy; and it is precisely because Theosophy is not a religion, nor can for the multitude supply the place of a religion, that the success of the Society has been so great, not merely as regards its growing membership and extending influence, but also in respect to the performance of the work it has undertaken — the revival of spirituality in religion, and the cultivation of the sentiment of BROTHERHOOD among men.

We Theosophists believe that a religion is a natural incident in the life of man in his present stage of development; and that although, in rare cases, individuals may be born without the religious sentiment, a community must have a religion, that is to say, *a uniting bond* — under penalty of social decay and material annihilation. We believe that no religious doctrine can be more than an attempt to picture to our present limited understandings, in the terms of our terrestrial experiences, great cosmical and spiritual truths, which in our normal state of consciousness we vaguely sense, rather than actually perceive and comprehend; and a revelation, if it is to reveal anything, must necessarily conform to the same earthbound requirements of the human intellect. In our estimation, therefore, no religion can be absolutely true, and none can be absolutely false. A religion is true in proportion as it supplies the spiritual, moral and intellectual needs of the time, and helps the development of mankind in these respects. It is false in proportion as it hinders that development, and offends

the spiritual, moral and intellectual portion of man's nature. And the transcendently spiritual ideas of the ruling powers of the Universe entertained by an Oriental sage would be as false a religion for the African savage as the grovelling fetishism of the latter would be for the sage, although both views must necessarily be true in degree, for both represent the highest ideas attainable by the respective individuals of the same cosmico-spiritual facts, which can never be known in their reality by man while he remains but man.

Theosophists, therefore, are respecters of all the religions, and for the religious ethics of Jesus they have profound admiration. It could not be otherwise, for these teachings which have come down to us are the same as those of Theosophy. So far, therefore, as modern Christianity makes good its claim to be the *practical* religion taught by Jesus, Theosophists are with it heart and hand. So far as it goes contrary to those ethics, pure and simple, Theosophists are its opponents. Any Christian can, if he will, compare the Sermon on the Mount with the dogmas of his church, and the spirit that breathes in it, with the principles that animate this Christian civilization and govern his own life; and then he will be able to judge for himself how far the religion of Jesus enters into his Christianity, and how far, therefore, he and Theosophists are agreed. But professing Christians, especially the clergy, shrink from making this comparison. Like merchants who fear to find themselves bankrupt, they seem to dread the discovery of a discrepancy in their accounts which could not be made good by placing material assets as a set-off to spiritual liabilities. The comparison between the teachings of Jesus and the doctrines of the churches

has, however, frequently been made — and often with great learning and critical acumen — both by those who would abolish Christianity and those who would reform it; and the aggregate result of these comparisons, as your Grace must be well aware, goes to prove that in almost every point the doctrines of the churches and the practices of Christians are *in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus*.

We are accustomed to say to the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, the Hindu, or the Parsee: “The road to Theosophy lies, for you, through your own religion.” We say this because those creeds possess a deeply philosophical and esoteric meaning, explanatory of the allegories under which they are presented to the people; but we cannot say the same thing to Christians. The successors of the Apostles never recorded the *secret doctrine* of Jesus — the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” — which it was given to them (his apostles) alone to know.¹ These have been suppressed, made away with, destroyed. What have come down upon the stream of time are the maxims, the parables, the allegories and the fables which Jesus expressly intended for the spiritually deaf and blind to be revealed later to the world, and which modern Christianity either takes all literally, or interprets according to the fancies of the Fathers of the secular church. In both cases they are like cut flowers: they are severed from the plant on which they grew, and from the root whence that plant drew its life. Were we, therefore, to encourage Christians, as we do the votaries of other creeds, to study their own religion for themselves, the consequence would be, not a knowledge of the meaning of its mysteries, but either

the revival of mediaeval superstition and intolerance, accompanied by a formidable outbreak of mere lip-prayer and preaching — such as resulted in the formation of the 239 Protestant sects of England alone — or else a great increase of skepticism, for Christianity has no esoteric foundation known to those who profess it. For even you, my Lord Primate of England, must be painfully aware that you know absolutely no more of those “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” which Jesus taught his disciples, than does the humblest and most illiterate member of your church.

It is easily understood, therefore, that Theosophists have nothing to say against the policy of the Roman Catholic Church in forbidding, or of the Protestant churches in discouraging, any such private enquiry into the meaning of the “Christian” dogmas as would correspond to the esoteric study of other religions. With their present ideas and knowledge, professing Christians are not prepared to undertake a critical examination of their faith, with a promise of good results. Its inevitable effect would be to paralyze rather than stimulate their dormant religious sentiments; for biblical criticism and comparative mythology have proved conclusively — to those, at least, who have no vested interests, spiritual or temporal, in the maintenance of orthodoxy — that the Christian religion, as it now exists, is composed of the husks of Judaism, the shreds of paganism, and the ill-digested remains of gnosticism and neo-Platonism. This curious conglomerate which gradually formed itself round the recorded sayings (λόγια) of Jesus, has, after the lapse of ages, now begun to disintegrate, and to crumble away from the pure and precious gems of Theosophic truth which it has so long overlain and hidden, but could

¹ Mark, iv, 11, Matthew, xiii, 11; Luke, viii, 10.

neither disfigure nor destroy. Theosophy not only rescues these precious gems from the fate that threatens the rubbish in which they have been so long embedded, but saves that rubbish itself from utter condemnation; for it shows that the result of biblical criticism is far from being the ultimate analysis of Christianity, as each of the pieces which compose the curious mosaics of the Churches once belonged to a religion which had an esoteric meaning. It is only when these pieces are restored to the places they originally occupied that their hidden significance can be perceived, and the real meaning of the dogmas of Christianity understood. To do all this, however, requires a knowledge of the Secret Doctrine as it exists in the esoteric foundation of other religions; and this knowledge is not in the hands of the Clergy, for the Church has hidden, and since lost, the keys.

Your Grace will now understand why it is that the Theosophical Society has taken for one of its three "objects" the study of those Eastern religions and philosophies, which shed such a flood of light upon the inner meaning of Christianity; and you will, we hope, also perceive that in so doing, we are acting not as the enemies, but as the friends of the religion taught by Jesus — of true Christianity, in fact. For it is only through the study of those religions and philosophies that Christians can ever arrive at an understanding of their own beliefs, or see the hidden meaning of the parables and allegories which the Nazarene told to the spiritual cripples of Judea, and by taking which, either as matters of fact or as matters of fancy, the Churches have brought the teachings themselves into ridicule and contempt, and Christianity into serious danger of complete collapse, undermined as it is by historical criticism and mythological

research, besides being broken by the sledge-hammer of modern science.

Ought Theosophists themselves, then, to be regarded by Christians as their enemies, because they believe that orthodox Christianity is, on the whole, opposed to the religion of Jesus; and because they have the courage to tell the Churches that they are traitors to the MASTER they profess to revere and serve? Far from it, indeed. Theosophists know that the same spirit that animated the words of Jesus lies latent in the hearts of Christians, as it does naturally in all men's hearts. Their fundamental tenet is the Brotherhood of Man, the ultimate realization of which is alone made possible by that which was known long before the days of Jesus as "the Christ spirit." This spirit is even now potentially present in all men, and it will be developed into activity when human beings are no longer prevented from understanding, appreciating and sympathizing with one another by the barriers of strife and hatred erected by priests and princes. We know that Christians in their lives frequently rise above the level of their Christianity.

All Churches contain many noble, self-sacrificing, and virtuous men and women, eager to do good in their generation according to their lights and opportunities, and full of aspirations to higher things than those of earth — followers of Jesus in spite of their Christianity. For such as these Theosophists feel the deepest sympathy; for only a Theosophist, or else a person of your Grace's delicate sensibility and great theological learning, can justly appreciate the tremendous difficulties with which the tender plant of natural piety has to contend, as it forces its root into the uncongenial soil of our Christian civilization, and tries to blossom in the

cold and arid atmosphere of theology. How hard, for instance, must it not be to “love” such a God as that depicted in a well-known passage by Herbert Spencer:

The cruelty of a Fijian god who, represented as devouring the souls of the dead, may be supposed to inflict torture during the process, is small compared with the cruelty of a god who condemns men to tortures which are eternal. . . .
 . The visiting on Adam’s descendants through hundreds of generations dreadful penalties for a small transgression which they did not commit; the damning of all men who do not avail themselves of an alleged mode of obtaining forgiveness, which most men have never heard of; and the effecting a reconciliation by sacrificing a son who was perfectly innocent, to satisfy the assumed necessity for a propitiatory victim; are modes of action which, ascribed to a human ruler, would call forth expressions of abhorrence. . .¹

Your Grace will say, no doubt, that Jesus never taught the worship of such a god as that. Even so say we Theosophists. Yet that is the very god whose worship is officially conducted in Canterbury Cathedral, by you, my Lord Primate of England; and your Grace will surely agree with us that there must indeed be a divine spark of religious intuition in the hearts of men, that enables them to resist so well as they do, the deadly action of such poisonous theology.

If your Grace, from your high pinnacle, will cast your eyes around, you will behold a Christian civilization in which a frantic and merciless battle of man against man is not only the distinguishing feature, but the acknowledged principle. It is an accepted

scientific and economic axiom to-day, that all progress is achieved through the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; and the fittest to survive in this Christian civilization are not those who are possessed of the qualities that are recognized by the morality of every age to be the best — not the generous, the pious, the noble-hearted, the forgiving, the humble, the truthful, the honest, and the kind — but those who are strongest in selfishness, in craft, in hypocrisy, in brute force, in false pretence, in unscrupulousness, in cruelty, and in avarice. The spiritual and the altruistic are “the weak,” whom the “laws” that govern the universe give as food to the egoistic and material — “the strong.” That “might is right” is the only legitimate conclusion, the last word of the 19th century ethics, for the world has become one huge battlefield, on which “the fittest” descend like vultures to tear out the eyes and the hearts of those who have fallen in the fight. Does religion put a stop to the battle? Do the churches drive away the vultures, or comfort the wounded and the dying? Religion does not weigh a feather in the *world* at large to-day, when worldly advantage and selfish pleasures are put in the other scale; and the churches are powerless to revivify the religious sentiment among men, because their ideas, their knowledge, their methods, and their arguments are those of the Dark Ages. My Lord Primate, your Christianity is five hundred years behind the times.

So long as men disputed whether this god or that god was the true one, or whether the soul went to this place or that one after death, you, the clergy, understood the question, and had arguments at hand to influence opinion — by syllogism or torture, as the case might require; but now it is the existence

¹ Religion: A Retrospect and Prospect,” in the *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XV, No. 83, January 1884.

of any such being as God, at all, or of any kind of immortal spirit, that is questioned or denied. Science invents new theories of the Universe which contemptuously ignore the existence of any god; moralists establish theories of ethics and social life in which the non-existence of a future life is taken for granted; in physics, in psychology, in law, in medicine, the one thing needful in order to entitle any teacher to a hearing is that no reference whatever should be contained in his ideas either to a Providence, or to a soul. The world is being rapidly brought to the conviction that god is a mythical conception, which has no foundation in fact, or place in Nature; and that the immortal part 'of man is the silly dream of ignorant savages, perpetuated by the lies and tricks of priests, who reap a harvest by cultivating the fears of men that their mythical God will torture their imaginary souls to all eternity, in a fabulous Hell. In the face of all these things the clergy stand in this age dumb and powerless. The only answer which the Church knew how to make to such "objections" as these, were *the rack and the faggot*; and she cannot use that system of logic *now*.

It is plain that if the God and the soul taught by the churches be imaginary entities, then the Christian salvation and damnation are mere delusions of the mind, produced by the hypnotic process of assertion and suggestion on a magnificent scale, acting cumulatively on generations of mild "hysteriacs." What answer have you to such a theory of the Christian religion, except a repetition of assertions and suggestions? What ways have you of bringing men back to their old beliefs but by reviving their old habits? "Build more churches, say more prayers, establish more missions, and your faith in damnation and salvation

will be revived, and a renewed belief in God and the soul will be the necessary result." That is the policy of the churches, and their only answer to agnosticism and materialism. But your Grace must know that to meet the attacks of modern science and criticism with such weapons as assertion and habit, is like going forth against magazine guns, armed with boomerangs and leather shields. While, however, the progress of ideas and the increase of knowledge are undermining the popular theology, every discovery of science, every new conception of European advanced thought, brings the 19th century mind nearer to the ideas of the Divine and the Spiritual, known to all esoteric religions and to Theosophy.

The Church claims that Christianity is the only true religion, and this claim involves two distinct propositions, namely, that Christianity is true religion, and that there is no true religion except Christianity. It never seems to strike Christians that God and Spirit could possibly exist in any other form than that under which they are presented in the doctrines of their church. The savage calls the missionary an Atheist, because he does not carry an idol in his trunk; and the missionary, in his turn, calls everyone an Atheist who does not carry about a fetish in his mind; and neither savage nor Christian ever seem to suspect that there may be a higher idea than their own of the great hidden power that governs the Universe, to which the name of "God" is much more applicable. It is doubtful whether the churches take more pains to prove Christianity "true," or to prove that any other kind of religion is necessarily "false;" and the evil consequences of this, their teaching, are terrible. When people discard dogma they fancy that they have discarded the religious

sentiment also, and they conclude that religion is a superfluity in human life — a rendering to the clouds of things that belong to earth, a waste of energy which could be more profitably expended in the struggle for existence. The materialism of this age is, therefore, the direct consequence of the Christian doctrine that there is no ruling power in the Universe, and no immortal Spirit in man except those made known in Christian dogmas. The Atheist, my Lord Primate, is the bastard son of the Church.

But this is not all. The churches have never taught men any other or higher reason why they should be just and kind and true than the hope of reward and the fear of punishment, and when they let go their belief in Divine caprice and Divine injustice the foundations of their morality are sapped. They have not even natural morality to consciously fall back upon, for Christianity has taught them to regard it as worthless on account of the natural depravity of man. Therefore self-interest becomes the only motive for conduct, and the fear of being found out, the only deterrent from vice. And so, with regard to morality as well as to God and the soul, Christianity pushes men off the path that leads to knowledge, and precipitates them into the abyss of incredulity, pessimism and vice. The last place where men would now look for help from the evils and miseries of life is the Church because they know that the building of churches and the repeating of litanies influence neither the powers of Nature nor the councils of nations; because they instinctively feel that when the churches accepted the principle of expediency they lost their power to move the hearts of men, and can now only act on the external plane, as the supporters of the policeman and the politician.

The function of religion is to comfort and encourage humanity in its life-long struggle with sin and sorrow. This it can do only by presenting mankind with noble ideals of a happier existence after death, and of a worthier life on earth, to be won in both cases by conscious effort. What the world now wants is a Church that will tell it of Deity, or the immortal principle in man, which will be at least on a level with the ideas and knowledge of the times. Dogmatic Christianity is not suited for a world that reasons and thinks, and only those who can throw themselves into a mediaeval state of mind, can appreciate a Church whose religious (as distinguished from its social and political) function is to keep God in good humor while the laity are doing what they believe he does not approve; to pray for changes of weather; and occasionally, to thank the Almighty for helping to slaughter the enemy. It is not “medicine men,” but spiritual guides that the world looks for today — a “clergy” that will give it ideals as suited to the intellect of this century, as the Christian Heaven and Hell, God and the Devil, were to the ages of dark ignorance and superstition. Do, or can, the Christian clergy fulfill this requirement? The misery, the crime, the vice, the selfishness, the brutality, the lack of self-respect and self-control, that mark our modern civilization, unite their voices in one tremendous cry, and answer — NO!

What is the meaning of the reaction against materialism, the signs of which fill the air today? It means that the world has become mortally sick of the dogmatism, the arrogance, the self-sufficiency, and the spiritual blindness of modern science — of that same Modern Science which men but yesterday hailed as their deliverer from religious bigotry

and Christian superstition, but which, like the Devil of the monkish legends, requires, as the price of its services, the sacrifice of man's immortal soul. And meanwhile, what are the Churches doing? The Churches are sleeping the sweet sleep of endowments, of social and political influence, while the world, the flesh, and the devil, are appropriating their watchwords, their miracles, their arguments, and their blind faith. The Spiritualists — oh! Churches of Christ — have stolen the fire from your altars to illumine their séance rooms; the Salvationists have taken your sacramental wine, and make themselves spiritually drunk in the streets; the Infidel has stolen the weapons with which you vanquished him once, and triumphantly tells you that "What you advance, has been frequently said before." Had ever clergy so splendid an opportunity? The grapes in the vineyard are ripe, needing only the right laborers to gather them. Were you to give to the world some proof, on the level of the present intellectual standard of probability, that Deity — the immortal Spirit in man — have a real existence as facts in Nature, would not men hail you as their savior from pessimism and despair, from the maddening and brutalizing thought that there is no other destiny for man but an eternal blank, after a few short years of bitter toil and sorrow? — aye; as their saviors from the panic-stricken fight for material enjoyment and worldly advancement, which is the direct consequence of believing this mortal life to be the be-all and end-all of existence?

But the Churches have neither the knowledge nor the faith needed to save the world, and perhaps your Church, my Lord Primate, least of all, with the millstone of £8,000,000 a year hung round its neck. In vain you try to lighten the ship

by casting overboard the ballast of doctrines which your forefathers deemed vital to Christianity. What more can your Church do now, than run before the gale with bare poles, while the clergy feebly endeavor to putty up the gaping leaks with the "revised version," and by their social and political deadweight try to prevent the ship from capsizing, and its cargo of dogmas and endowments from going to the bottom?

Who built Canterbury Cathedral, my Lord Primate? Who invented and gave life to the great ecclesiastical organization that makes an Archbishop of Canterbury possible? Who laid the foundation of the vast system of religious taxation that gives you £15,000 a year and a palace? Who instituted the forms and ceremonies, the prayers and litanies, which, slightly altered and stripped of art and ornament, make the liturgy of the Church of England? Who wrested from the people the proud titles of "reverend divine" and "Man of God" which the clergy of your Church so confidently assume? Who, indeed, but the Church of Rome! We speak in no spirit of enmity. Theosophy has seen the rise and fall of many faiths, and will be present at the birth and death of many more. We know that the lives of religions are subject to law. Whether you inherited legitimately from the Church of Rome, or obtained by violence, we leave you to settle with your enemies and with your conscience, for our mental attitude towards your Church is determined by its intrinsic worthiness. We know that if it be unable to fulfill the true spiritual function of a religion, it will surely be swept away, even though the fault lie rather in its hereditary tendencies, or in its environments, than in itself.

The Church of England, to use a homely simile, is like a train running by

the momentum it acquired before steam was shut off. When it left the main track, it got upon a siding that leads nowhere. The train has nearly come to a standstill, and many of the passengers have left it for other conveyances. Those that remain are for the most part aware that they have been depending all along upon what little steam was left in the boiler when the fires of Rome were withdrawn from under it. They suspect that they may be only playing at train now; but the engineer keeps blowing his whistle and the guard goes round to examine the tickets, and the breaksmen rattle their breaks; and it is not such bad fun after all. For the carriages are warm and comfortable and the day is cold, and so long as they are tipped all the company's servants are very obliging. But those who know where they want to go, are not so contented.

For several centuries the Church of England has performed the difficult feat of blowing hot and cold in two directions at once — saying to the Roman Catholics “Reason!” and to the Skeptics “Believe!” It was by adjusting the force of its two-faced blowing, that it has managed to keep itself so long from falling off the fence. But now the fence itself is giving way. Disendowment and disestablishment are in the air. And what does your Church urge in its own behalf? Its usefulness. It is *useful* to have a number of educated, moral, unworldly men, scattered all over the country, who prevent the world from utterly forgetting the name of religion, and who act as centers of benevolent work. But the question now is no longer one of repeating prayers, and giving alms to the poor, as it was five hundred years ago. The people have come of age, and have taken their thinking and the direction of their social, private and even spiritual

affairs into their own hands, for they have found out that their clergy know no more about “things of Heaven” than they do themselves.

But the Church of England, it is said, has become so liberal that all ought to support it. Truly, one can go to an excellent imitation of the mass, or sit under a virtual Unitarian, and still be within its fold. This beautiful tolerance, however, only means that the Church has found it necessary to make itself an open common, where every one can put up his own booth, and give his special performance if he will only join in the defense of the endowments. Tolerance and liberality are contrary to the laws of the existence of any church that believes in divine damnation, and their appearance in the Church of England is not a sign of renewed life, but of approaching disintegration. No less deceptive is the energy evinced by the Church in the building of churches. If this were a measure of religion what a pious age this would be! Never was dogma so well housed before, though human beings may have to sleep by thousands in the streets, and to literally starve in the shadow of our majestic cathedrals, built in the name of Him who had not where to lay His head. But did Jesus tell you, your Grace, that religion lay not in the hearts of men, but in temples made with hands? You cannot convert your piety into stone and use it in your lives; and history shows that petrification of the religious sentiment is as deadly a disease as ossification of the heart. Were churches, however, multiplied a hundred fold, and were every clergyman to become a center of philanthropy, it would only be substituting the work that the poor require from their fellow men but not from their spiritual teachers, for that

which they ask and cannot obtain. It would but bring into greater relief the spiritual barrenness of the doctrines of the Church.

The time is approaching when the clergy will be called upon to render an account of their stewardship. Are you prepared, my Lord Primate, to explain to YOUR MASTER why you have given His children stones, when they cried to you for bread? You smile in your fancied security. The servants have kept high carnival so long in the inner chambers of the Lord's house, that they think He will surely never return. But He told you He would come as a thief in the night; and lo! He is coming already in the hearts of men. He is coming to take possession of His Father's kingdom there, where alone His kingdom is. But you know Him not! Were the Churches themselves not carried away in the flood of negation and materialism which has engulfed Society, they would recognize the quickly growing germ of the Christ-spirit in the hearts of thousands, whom they now brand as infidels and madmen. They would recognize there the same spirit of love, of self-sacrifice, of immense pity for the ignorance, the folly, and the sufferings of the world, which appeared in its purity in the heart of Jesus, as it had appeared in the hearts of other Holy Reformers in other ages; and which is the light of all true religion, and the lamp by which the Theosophists of all times have endeavored to guide their steps along the narrow path that leads to salvation — the path which is trodden by every incarnation of CHRISTOS or the SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

And now, my Lord Primate, we have very respectfully laid before you the principal points of difference and disagreement between Theosophy and the Christian Churches, and told you of

the oneness of Theosophy and the teachings of Jesus. You have heard our profession of faith, and learned the grievances and complaints which we lay at the door of dogmatic Christianity. We, a handful of humble individuals, possessed of neither riches nor worldly influence, but strong in our knowledge, have united in the hope of doing the work which you say that your MASTER has allotted to you, but which is so sadly neglected by that wealthy and domineering colossus — the Christian Church. Will you call this presumption, we wonder? Will you, in this land of free opinion, free speech, and free effort, venture to accord us no other recognition than the usual *anathema*, which the Church keeps in store for the reformer? Or may we hope that the bitter lessons of experience, which that policy has afforded the Churches in the past, will have altered the hearts and cleared the understandings of her rulers; and that the coming year, 1888, will witness the stretching out to us of the hand of Christians in fellowship and goodwill? This would only be a just recognition that the comparatively small body called the Theosophical Society is no pioneer of the Anti-Christ, no brood of the Evil one, but the practical helper, perchance the savior, of Christianity, and that it is only endeavoring to do the work that Jesus, like Buddha, and the other "sons of God" who preceded him, has commanded all his followers to undertake, but which the Churches, having become dogmatic, are entirely unable to accomplish.

And now, if your Grace can prove that we do injustice to the Church of which you are the Head, or to popular Theology, we promise to acknowledge our error publicly. But — "SILENCE GIVES CONSENT."





KEY NOTEBOOK

XI

(Continued from August Supplement)

Section XI

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XI. ON THE MYSTERIES OF RE-INCARNATION

Periodical Re-Births.

The life-cycle, or rather the cycle of conscious life, begins with the separation of the mortal animal-man into sexes, and will end with the close of the last generation of men, in the seventh round and seventh race of mankind. Considering we are only in the fourth round and fifth race, its duration is more easily imagined than expressed.

We keep on incarnating in new personalities during this great cycle that may be compared to a single human life. As each such life is composed of days of activity separated by nights of sleep or of inaction, so, in the incarnation-cycle, a Devachanic rest follows an active life.

It is only through these births that the perpetual progress of the countless millions of Egos toward final perfection and final rest (as long as was the period of activity) can be achieved.

That which regulates the duration, or special qualities of these incarnations is Karma, the universal law of retributive justice.

For the Materialist, who calls the law of periodicity which regulates the marshalling of the several bodies, and all the other laws in nature, blind forces and mechanical laws, no doubt Karma would be a law of chance and no more. For us, no adjective or qualification could describe that which is impersonal and no entity, but a universal operative law. If you question me about the causative intelligence in it, I must answer you I do not know. But if you ask me to define its

effects and tell you what these are in our belief, I may say that the experience of thousands of ages has shown us that they are absolute and unerring equity, wisdom, and intelligence, For Karma in its effects is an unfailing redresser of human injustice, and of all the failures of nature; a stern adjuster of wrongs; a retributive law which rewards and punishes with equal impartiality. It is, in the strictest sense, "no respecter of persons," though, on the other hand, it can neither be propitiated, nor turned aside by prayer. This is a belief common to Hindus and Buddhists, who both believe in Karma.

We believe neither in vicarious atonement, nor in the possibility of the remission of the smallest sin by any god, not even by a "personal Absolute" or "Infinite," if such a thing could have any existence. What we believe in, is strict and impartial justice. Our idea of the unknown Universal Deity, represented by Karma, is that it is a Power which cannot fail, and can, therefore, have neither wrath nor mercy, only absolute Equity, which leaves every cause, great or small, to work out its inevitable effects.

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The saying of Jesus: "With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again," neither by expression nor implication points to any hope of future mercy or salvation by proxy. This is why, recognizing as we do in our philosophy the justice of this statement, we cannot recommend too strongly mercy, charity, and forgiveness of mutual offences. Resist not evil, and render good for evil, are Buddhist precepts, and were first preached in view of the implacability of Karmic law. For man to take the law into his own hands is anyhow a sacrilegious presumption. Human Law may use restrictive not punitive measures; but a man who, believing in Karma, still revenges himself and refuses to forgive every injury, thereby rendering good for evil, is a criminal and only hurts himself. As Karma is sure to punish the man who wronged him, by seeking to inflict an additional punishment on his enemy, he, who instead of leaving that punishment to the great Law adds to it his own mite, only begets thereby a cause for the future

reward of his own enemy and a future punishment for himself. The unflinching Regulator affects in each incarnation the quality of its successor; and the sum of the merit or demerit in preceding ones determines it.

We may, however, infer a man's past from his present only so far as to believe that his present life is what it justly should be, to atone for the sins of the past life. With the exception of great seers and adepts, we cannot, as average mortals know what those sins were. From our paucity of data, it is impossible for us even to determine what an old man's youth must have been, neither can we, for like reasons, draw final conclusions merely from what we see in the life of some man, as to what his past life may have been.

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What Is Karma?

Karma, we consider as the **Ultimate law** of the Universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws that exist throughout Nature. It is the unerring law that adjusts effect to cause, on the **physical, mental and spiritual** planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, **Karma** is that unseen and unknown law **which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably** each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself **unknowable**, its action is perceivable. Though we do not know what Karma is *per se*, and in its essence, we **do** know **how** it works, and can define and describe its mode of action with accuracy.

According to our teaching all the great social evils, the distinction of classes in Society, and of the sexes in the affairs of life, the unequal distribution of capital and of labor — all are due to what we tersely but truly denominate **KARMA**.

The fact that the many evils, which seem to fall upon the masses somewhat indiscriminately, are not actual merited and **INDIVIDUAL** Karma points to another aspect of the Law. True it is that

those many **general effects** that fall upon great masses of people equally cannot be so strictly defined in their effects as to show that each individual environment, and the particular conditions of life in which each person finds himself, are nothing more than the retributive Karma which the individual generated in a previous life. We must not lose sight of the fact that every atom is subject to the general law governing the whole body to which it belongs, and here we come upon the wider track of the Karmic law. Do you not perceive that the aggregate of individual Karma becomes that of the nation to which those individuals belong, and further, that the sum total of National Karma is that of the World? The evils that you speak of are not peculiar to the individual or even to the Nation, they are more or less universal; and it is upon this broad line of Human interdependence that the law of Karma finds its legitimate and equitable issue.

Key, p. 203

Thus Karma is not an individual law. It is impossible that Karma could readjust the balance of power in the world's life and progress, unless it had a broad and general line of action. It is held as a truth among Theosophists that the interdependence of Humanity is the cause of what is called Distributive Karma, and it is this law which affords the solution to the great question of collective suffering and its relief. It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no one can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as "Separateness;" and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive.

One might wonder if there are means by which the distributive or national Karma could be concentrated and collected, so to speak, thus bringing it to a natural and legitimate fulfillment without all the protracted suffering that the great mass of mankind daily face?

As a general rule, and within certain limits that define the age to which we belong, the law of Karma cannot be hastened or retarded in its fulfillment. But of this I am certain, the point of possibility in either of these directions has never yet been touched. How could it possibly be so while one-half of humanity is in a position to effect an immediate relief of the privations which are suffered by their fellows? When every individual has contributed to the general good what he can of money, of labor, and of ennobling thought, then, and only then will the balance of National Karma be struck, and until then we have no right nor any reasons for saying that there is more life on the earth than Nature can support. It is reserved for the heroic souls, the Saviors of our Race and Nation, to find out the cause of this unequal pressure of retributive Karma, and by a supreme effort to re-adjust the balance of power, and save the people from a moral engulfment a thousand times more permanently evil than any physical catastrophe.

The law of Karma we describe as that Law of re-adjustment which ever tends to restore disturbed equilibrium in the physical, and broken harmony in the moral world. We say that Karma does not act in this or that particular way always, but that it always does act so as to restore Harmony and preserve the balance of equilibrium in virtue of which the Universe exists.

Key, p.206

As an illustration, think of a pond. A stone falls into the water and creates disturbing waves. These waves oscillate backwards and forwards till at last, owing to the operation of what physicists call the law of the dissipation of energy, they are brought to rest, and the water returns to its condition of calm tranquility. Similarly all action, on every plane, produces disturbance in the balanced harmony of the Universe, and the vibrations so produced will continue to roll backwards and forwards, if its area is limited, till equilibrium is restored. But since each such disturbance starts from some particular point, it is clear that equilibrium and harmony can only be restored by the reconverging to that

same point of all the forces that were set in motion from it. And here you have proof that the consequences of a man's deeds, thoughts, etc., must all react upon himself with the same force with which they were set in motion.

We Theosophists say that "Good" and "Harmony," and "Evil" and "Dis-harmony," are synonymous. Further we maintain that all pain and suffering are results of want of Harmony, and that the one terrible and only cause of the disturbance of Harmony is *selfishness* in some form or another. Hence Karma gives back to every man the *actual consequences* of his own actions, without any regard to their moral character, but since he receives his due for all, it is obvious that he will be made to atone for all sufferings which he has caused, just as he will reap in joy and gladness the fruits of all the happiness and harmony he had helped to produce.

Thus the doctrine of "vicarious atonement" as taught in popular religions, is a **soul-killing** rather than a soul-saving doctrine, or as Mr. J. H. Conelly says:

"The condition in which a man shall have been 'awakened and converted by a certain extent from evil or wickedness,' is that which a man shall have realized that his deeds are evil and deserving of punishment. In that realization a sense of personal responsibility is inevitable, and just in proportion to the extent of his awakening or 'converting' must be the sense of that awful responsibility. While it is strong upon him is the time when he is urged to accept the doctrine of vicarious atonement.

"He is told that he must also repent, but nothing is easier than that. It is an amiable weakness of human nature that we are quite prone to regret the evil we have done when our attention is called, and we have either suffered from it ourselves or enjoyed its fruits. Possibly, close analysis of the feeling would show us that that which we regret is rather the necessity that seemed to require the evil as a means of attainment of our selfish ends than the evil itself."

“Attractive as this prospect of casting our burden of sins ‘at the foot of the cross’ may be to the ordinary mind, it does not commend itself to the Theosophic student. He does not apprehend why the sinner by attaining knowledge of his evil can thereby merit any pardon for or the blotting out of his past wickedness; or why repentance and future right living entitle him to a suspension in his favor of the universal law of relation between cause and effect. The results of his evil deeds continue to exist; the suffering caused to others by his wickedness is not blotted out. The Theosophical student takes the result of wickedness upon the innocent into his problem. He considers not only the guilty person, but also his victims.

Key, p. 208

“Evil is an infraction of the laws of harmony governing the universe, and the penalty thereof must fall upon the violator of that law himself. ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ This is the principle of the law of Karma which is taught by Theosophy.

It is the power which

Just though mysterious, leads us on unerring
Through ways unmarked from guilt to
punishment.

“But it is more. It rewards merit as unerringly and amply as it punishes demerit. It is the outcome of every act, of thought, word and deed, and by it men mould themselves, their lives and happenings. Eastern philosophy rejects the idea of a newly created soul for every baby born. It believes in a limited number of monads, evolving and growing more and more perfect through their assimilation of many successive personalities. Those personalities are the product of Karma and it is by Karma and re-incarnation that the human monad in time returns to its source — absolute deity.”

(J. H. CONELLY)

E. D. Walker, in his *Re-incarnation* offers the following explanation: —

“Briefly, the doctrine of Karma is that we have made ourselves what we are by former actions, and are building our

future eternity by present actions. There is no destiny but what we ourselves determine. There is no salvation or condemnation except what we ourselves bring about.... Because it offers no shelter for culpable actions and necessitates a sterling manliness, it is less welcome to weak natures than the easy religious tenets of vicarious atonement, intercession, forgiveness and death-bed conversions.... In the domain of eternal justice the offence and the punishment are inseparably connected as the same event, because there is no real distinction between the action and its outcome.... It is Karma, or our old acts, that draws us back into earthly life. The spirit’s abode changes according to its Karma, and this Karma forbids any long continuance in one condition, because It is always changing. So long as action is governed by material and selfish motives, just so long must the effect of that action be manifested in physical re-births. Only the perfectly selfless man can elude the gravitation of material life. Few have attained this, but it is the goal of mankind.”

Key, p. 210

And then the writer quotes from the *Secret Doctrine*:

“Those who believe in Karma have to believe in destiny, which, from birth to death, every man is weaving, thread by thread, around himself, as a spider does his cobweb, and this destiny is guided either by the heavenly voice of the invisible prototype outside of us, or by our more intimate astral or inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man. Both these lead on the outward man, but one of them must prevail; and from the very beginning of the invisible affray the stern and implacable law of compensation steps in and takes its course, faithfully following the fluctuations. When the last strand is woven, and man is seemingly enwrapped in the network of his own doing, then he finds himself completely under the empire of this self-made destiny... An Occultist or a philosopher will not speak of the goodness or cruelty of Providence; but, identifying it with Karma-Nemesis, he will teach that, nevertheless, it guards the good and

watches over them in this as in future lives, and that it punishes the evil-doer — aye, even to his seventh re-birth — so long, in short, as the effect of his having thrown into perturbation even the smallest atom in the infinite world of harmony has not been finally re-adjusted. For the only decree of Karma — an eternal and immutable decree — is absolute harmony in the world of matter as it is in the world of spirit. It is not, therefore, Karma that rewards or punishes, but it is we who reward or punish ourselves according to whether we work with, through and along with nature, abiding by the laws on which that harmony depends, or — break them. Nor would the ways of Karma be inscrutable were men to work in union and harmony, instead of disunion and strife. For our ignorance of those ways — which one portion of mankind calls the ways of Providence, dark and intricate; while another sees in them the action of blind fatalism; and a third simple chance, with neither gods nor devils to guide them — would surely disappear if we would but attribute all these to their correct cause.... We stand bewildered before the mystery of our own making and the riddles of life that we will not solve, and then accuse the great Sphinx of devouring us. But verily there is not an accident of our lives, not a misshapen day, or a misfortune, that could not be traced back to our own doings in this or another life.

“The law of Karma is inextricably interwoven with that of reincarnation. It is only this doctrine that can explain to us the mysterious problem of good and evil, and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life. Nothing but such certainty can quiet our revolted sense of justice. For, when one unacquainted with the noble doctrine looks around him and observes the inequalities of birth and fortune, of intellect and capacities; when one sees honor paid to fools and profligates, on whom fortune has heaped her favors by mere privilege of birth, and their nearest neighbor, with all his intellect and noble virtues — far more deserving in every way — perishing for want and for lack of sympathy — when one sees all this and has to turn away, helpless to relieve the

undeserved suffering, one’s ears ringing and heart aching with the cries of pain around him — that blessed knowledge of Karma alone prevents him from cursing life and men as well as their supposed Creator... This law, whether conscious or unconscious, predestines nothing and no one. It exists from and in eternity truly, for it is eternity itself; and as such, since no act can be coequal with eternity, it cannot be said to act, for it is action itself. It is not the wave which drowns the man, but the personal action of the wretch who goes deliberately and places himself under the impersonal action of the laws that govern the ocean’s motion. Karma creates nothing, nor does it design. It is man who plants and creates causes, and Karmic law adjusts the effects, which adjustment is not an act but universal harmony, tending ever to resume its original position, like a bough, which, bent down too forcibly, rebounds with corresponding vigour. If it happen to dislocate the arm that tried to bend it out of its natural position, shall we say it is the bough which broke our arm or that our own folly has brought us to grief? Karma has never sought to destroy intellectual and individual liberty, like the god invented by the Monotheists. It has not involved its decrees in darkness purposely to perplex man, nor shall it punish him who dares to scrutinize its mysteries. On the contrary, he who unveils through study and meditation its intricate paths, and throws light on those dark ways, in the windings of which so many men perish owing to their ignorance of the labyrinth of life, is working for the good of his fellow-men. Karma is an absolute and eternal law in the world of manifestation; and as there can only be one Absolute, as one Eternal, ever-present Cause, believers in Karma cannot be regarded as atheists or materialists, still less as fatalists, for Karma is one with the Unknowable, of which it is an aspect, in its effects in the phenomenal world.”

Key, p. 212

Another able Theosophic writer says (“Purpose of Theosophy,” by Mrs. P. Sinnett):-

“Every individual is making Karma either good or bad in each action and

thought of his daily round, and is at the same time working out in this life the Karma brought about by the acts and desires of the last. When we see people afflicted by congenital ailments it may be safely assumed that these ailments are the inevitable results of causes started by themselves in a previous birth. It may be argued that, as these afflictions are hereditary, they can have nothing to do with a past incarnation; but it must be remembered that the Ego, the real man, the individuality, has no spiritual origin in the parentage by which it is re-embodied, but it is drawn by the affinities which its previous mode of life attracted round it into the current that carries it, when the time comes for re-birth, to the home best fitted for the development of those tendencies... This doctrine of Karma, when properly understood, is well calculated to guide and assist those who realize its truth to a higher and better mode of life, for it must not be forgotten that not only our actions but our thoughts also are most assuredly followed by a crowd of circumstances that will influence for good or for evil our own future, and, what is still more important, the future of many of our fellow-creatures. If sins of omission and commission could in any case be only self-regarding, the fact on the sinner's Karma would be a matter of minor consequence. The effect that every thought and act through life carries with it for good or evil a corresponding influence on other members of the human family renders a strict sense of justice, morality, and unselfishness so necessary to future happiness or progress. A crime once committed, an evil thought sent out from the mind, are past recall — no amount of repentance can wipe out their results in the future. Repentance, if sincere, will deter a man from repeating errors; it cannot save him or others from the effects of those already produced, which will most unerringly overtake him either in this life or in the next re-birth."

Key, 214

In exquisite verse, Sir Edwin Arnold outlines the crux of Karma thus:

Karma — all that total of a soul
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,
The 'self' it wove with woof of viewless time
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts.

* * * * *

Before beginning and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.

It will not be contemned of anyone;
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all;
Do right — it recompenseth! Do one wrong —
The equal retribution must be made,
Though Dharma tarry long.

It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true,
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;
Times are as naught, to-morrow it will judge
Or after many days.

* * * * *

Such is the law which moves to righteousness,
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;
The heart of it is love, the end of it
Is peace and consummation sweet. Obey."

To give some concrete example of the action of Karma in its details is not possible to we who are not Seers or Initiates. The latter, however, can follow out this Karmic process of re-adjustment in detail by the exercise of powers which are latent even in all men.

Who are Those Who Know?

The same limited vision exists for all, save those who have reached in the present incarnation the acme of spiritual vision and clairvoyance. We can only perceive that, if things with us ought to have been different, they would have been different; that we are what we have made ourselves, and have only what we have earned for ourselves.

Such conception, contrary to a superficial analysis, breeds fortitude and contentment rather than bitterness. It is precisely disbelief in the just law of retribution that is more likely to awaken every combative feeling in man. A child, as much as a man, resents a punishment, or even a reproof he believe to be unmerited, far more than he does a severer punishment, if he feels that it is merited. Belief in Karma is the highest reason for reconciliation to one's lot in this life, and the very strongest incentive towards effort to better the succeeding

re-birth. Both of these, indeed, would be destroyed if we supposed that our lot was the result of anything but strict Law, or that destiny was in any other hands than our own.

No man can receive more or less than his deserts without a corresponding injustice or partiality to others; and a law which could be averted through compassion would bring about more misery than it saved, more irritation and curses than thanks. Remember also, that we do not administer the law, if we do create causes for its effects; it administers itself; and again, that the most copious provision for the manifestation of just compassion and mercy is shown in the state of Devachan.

Key, p. 217

Adepts, by the training of faculties we all possess, but which they alone have developed to perfection, can enter in spirit, these various planes and states we have been discussing. For long ages, one generation of Adepts after another has studied the mysteries of being, of life, death, and re-birth, and all have taught in their turn some of the facts so learned.

One might ask, then, "Are Adepts the aim of Theosophy?" to which we declare that Theosophy considers humanity as an emanation from divinity on its return path thereto. At an advanced point upon the path, Adeptship is reached by those who have devoted several incarnations to its achievement. For, remember well, no man has ever reached Adeptship in the Secret Sciences in one life; but many incarnations are necessary for it after the formation of a conscious purpose and the beginning of the needful training. Many may be the men and women in the very midst of our Society who have begun this uphill work toward illumination several incarnations ago, and who yet, owing to the personal illusions of the present life, are either ignorant of the fact, or on the road to losing every chance in this existence of progressing any farther. They feel an irresistible attraction toward occultism and the Higher Life, and yet are too personal and self-opinionated, too much in love with the deceptive allurements of mundane life and the world's ephemeral

pleasures, to give them up; and so lose their chance in their present birth. But, for ordinary men, for the practical duties of daily life, such a far-off result is inappropriate as an aim and quite ineffective as a motive.

Many are interested in our doctrines and feel instinctively that they are truer than those of any dogmatic religion. Others have formed a fixed resolve to attain the highest ideal of man's duty.

The Difference Between Faith and Knowledge; or, Blind and Reasoned Faith

Theosophy holds that man, being an emanation from the Unknown, yet ever present and infinite Divine Essence, his body and everything else is impermanent, hence an illusion, Spirit alone in him being the one enduring substance, and even that losing its separated individuality at the moment of its complete re-union with the Universal Spirit.

This in no way implies annihilation, for we speak of separate, not of universal individuality. The latter becomes as a part transformed into the whole; the dewdrop is not evaporated, but becomes the sea. Is physical man annihilated, when from a foetus he becomes an old man? What kind of Satanic pride must be ours if we place our infinitesimally small consciousness and individuality higher than the universal and infinite consciousness!

— It follows, then, that there is, *de facto*, no man, but all is Spirit? — No, not at all. It follows that the union of Spirit with matter is but temporary; or, to put it more clearly, since Spirit and matter are one — being the two opposite poles of the universal manifested substance — Spirit loses its right to the name so long as the smallest particle and atom of its manifesting substance still clings to any form, the result of differentiation.

One could say that the permanent principle, the Spirit, simply makes a transit through matter, but it would be more correct to say that the appearance

of the permanent and one principle, Spirit, as matter is transient, and, therefore, no better than an illusion.

The above is not given out on blind faith, which is a mental disease, but rather the real faith, i.e., the *pistis* of the Greeks, as "belief based on knowledge," whether supplied by the evidence of physical or spiritual senses.

Between faith on authority and faith on one's spiritual intuition, there is a very great difference. One is human credulity and superstition, the other human belief and intuition. As Professor Alexander Wilder says in his "Introduction to the Eleusinian Mysteries," "It is ignorance which leads to profanation.... The undercurrent of this world is set towards one goal; and inside of human credulity is a power almost infinite, a holy faith capable of apprehending the supernal truths of all existence." Those who limit that "credulity" to human authoritative dogmas alone, will never fathom that power nor even perceive it in their natures. It is stuck fast to the external plane and is unable to bring forth into play the essence that rules it; for to do this they have to claim their right of private judgment, and this they never dare to do.

We believe in an ever unknowable Principle, because blind aberration alone can make one maintain that the Universe, thinking man, and all the marvels contained even in the world of matter, could have grown without some intelligent powers to bring about the extraordinarily wise arrangement of all its parts. Nature may err, and often does, in its details and the external manifestations of its materials, never in its inner causes and results.

Key, p. 223

Has God the Right to Forgive?

One might balance this philosophical view of nature against, say, the Doctrine of Atonement. This most dangerous dogma teaches us that no matter how enormous our crimes against the laws of God and of man, we have but

to believe in the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of mankind, and his blood will wash out every stain. This dogma teaches that:

"God's mercy is boundless and unfathomable. It is impossible to conceive of a human sin so damnable that the price paid in advance for the redemption of the sinner would not wipe it out if a thousandfold worse. And furthermore, it is never too late to repent. Though the offender wait until the last minute of the last hour of the last day of his mortal life, before his blanched lips utter the confession of faith, he may go to Paradise; the dying thief did it, and so may all others as vile. These are the assumptions of the Church, and of the Clergy; assumptions banged at the heads of the faithful."

"If we step outside the little circle of creed and consider the universe as a whole balanced by the exquisite adjustment of parts, how all sound logic, how the faintest glimmering sense of Justice, revolts against this Vicarious Atonement! If the criminal sinned only against himself, and wronged no one but himself, if by sincere repentance he could cause the obliteration of past events, not only from the memory of man, but also from that imperishable record, which no deity — not even the Supremes of the Supreme — can cause to disappear, then this dogma might not be incomprehensible. But to maintain that one may wrong his fellow-man, kill, disturb the equilibrium of society and the natural order of things, and then — through cowardice, hope, or compulsion, it matters not — be forgiven by believing that the spilling of one blood washes out the other blood spilt — this is preposterous! Can the results of a crime be obliterated even though the crime itself should be pardoned? The effects of a cause are never limited to the boundaries of the cause, nor can the results of crime be confined to the offender and his victim. Every good as well as evil action has its effects, as palpably as the stone flung into calm water. The simile is trite, but it is the best ever conceived, so let us use it. The eddying circles are greater and swifter as the disturbing object is greater or

smaller, but the smallest pebble, nay, the tiniest speck, makes its ripples. And this disturbance is not alone visible and on the surface. Below, unseen, in every direction — outward and downward — drop pushes drop until the force touches the sides and bottom. More, the air above the water is agitated, and this disturbance passes, as the physicists tell us, from stratum to stratum out into space forever and ever, an impulse has been given to matter, and that is never lost, can never be recalled! ...

“So with crime, and so with its opposite. The action may be instantaneous, the effects are eternal. When, after the stone is once flung into the pond, we can recall it to the hand, roll back the ripples, obliterate the force expended, restore the etheric waves to their previous state of non-being, and wipe out every trace of the act of throwing the missile, so that Time’s record shall not show that it ever happened, then, then we may patiently hear Christians argue for the efficacy of this Atonement,” and — cease to believe in Karmic Law. As it now stands, we call upon the whole world to decide, which of our two doctrines is the most appreciative of deific justice, and which is more reasonable, even on simple human evidence and logic.

Behold, then, in this nightmare of the human intellect, pure sentimentalism overpowering man’s thinking faculties.

The ultimate destiny of man, then, is not a Heaven presided over by God, but the gradual transformation of matter into its primordial element, Spirit. Many of us regard this association or “fall of spirit into matter” as evil, and re-birth as a sorrow. Therefore, we strive to shorten our period of probation on earth. It is not an unmixed evil, however, since it ensures the experience upon which we mount to knowledge and wisdom. I mean that experience which teaches that the needs of our spiritual nature can never be met by other than spiritual happiness. As long as we are in the body, we are subjected to pain, suffering and all the disappointing incidents occurring during life. Therefore, and to palliate this, we finally acquire knowledge which alone

can afford us relief and hope of a better future.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

In The Mentality Kitchen

1. There is a very fine line between "hobby" and "mental illness."
2. People who want to share their religious views with you almost never want you to share yours with them.
3. No matter what happens, somebody will find a way to take it too seriously.
4. All that is alive tends toward color, individuality, specificity, effectiveness, and opacity: all that is done with life inclines toward knowledge, abstraction, generality, transfiguration, and transparency. [GOETHE]
5. The language of excitement is at best picturesque merely. You must be calm before you can utter oracles. [THOREAU]
6. You should not confuse your career with your life.
7. Men govern nothing with more difficulty than their tongues, and can moderate their desires more than their words. [SPINOZA]
8. Take out the fortune before you eat the cookie.
9. You will never find anybody who can give you a clear and compelling reason why we observe daylight savings time.
10. You should never say anything to a woman that even remotely suggests that you think she's pregnant unless you can see an actual baby emerging from her at that moment.
11. If you want to be witty, work on your character and say what you think on every occasion. Stendahl
12. The main accomplishment of almost all organized protests is to annoy people who are not in them.
13. A person who is nice to you, but rude to the waiter, is not a nice person. (This is very important. Pay attention. It never fails.)