



those left behind
understanding suicide from a spiritist view

Jussara Korngold



“Those Left Behind”

Understanding Suicide from a Spiritist View

Jussara Korngold



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The Spiritist Alliance for Books (SAB) is a non-profit organization, which has the sole aim to promote and disseminate the Spiritist Doctrine in English, as codified by Allan Kardec.

The group was officially established on April 12th, 2001. However, some of its participants have been earnestly fostering the dissemination of the Spiritist Doctrine in the United States and in the United Kingdom for about ten years.

The Spiritist Alliance for Books (SAB) is an organization that aims to unite people from all over the world who are willing to volunteer in the effort of translating spiritist books (which were originally written in other languages) into English.

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Foreword

Those Left Behind is the first Spiritist book on the topic of suicide in the English-written Spiritist literature to date. Jussara Korngold enlightens our lives with thorough explanations on the Spiritist view of suicide. Following Kardec's steps, Korngold writes this book as a result of an extensive research of the classic Spiritist literature.

The American Association of Suicidology and the National Center for Health Statistics surveyed that "suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the United States; however, it is the 3rd leading cause of death for youth (ages 15-24), exceeded only by accidents and homicides. Homicide is the 13th leading cause of death. More Americans kill themselves than are killed by others."¹

Therefore, we may ask, "Why do people kill themselves? What are their reasons for doing so? What happened to the souls who committed suicide? What is their destiny?" These and many other questions are addressed by Spiritism in a profound and uplifting manner.

In the words of Allan Kardec, the Codifier of Spiritism, "*Spiritism can contribute to progress by destroying materialism and thus make human beings understand where their true interest lies. It can eliminate doubts so that people will understand more clearly that they can insure the happiness of their future by their action in the present.*"²

Therefore, Spiritism saves lives because it shows us the way and reasons to live well in order to fulfill our destiny, perfection, and its consequent happiness. The Spiritist teachings invite us to live joyfully.

Talking about joy, Divaldo Franco, one of the greatest speakers of the Spiritist Movement, usually reminds us of the importance of feeling joy in life. To give an example of how unconditional that joy may be, he told the following true story in one of his seminars "Living joyfully."³

"Once there was a man who felt no joy in life. He decided to commit suicide. Thus, he placed himself under a tree. Once there, he started nagging about life, "Life is cruel. There is no meaning in life."

Suddenly, a child showed up running towards him and said, "A rose for you. I have just picked it up for you."

The rose was not pretty; it barely had leaves. But the man replied, "Very beautiful."

The child then said, "But I want to give it to you. I've picked it up for you!"

The man thought, "If I accept it, he will go away; otherwise, he will be seated here all day long."

So the man said, "Fine. Give it to me."

The child's arm did not move. When the man looked at the child, he was shocked. The child was blind. But she lived joyfully and he did not.

"See how it is beautiful?!," said the child, "Smell its perfume."

The child left to pick up another rose and give it to someone else.

The man was deeply moved and meditated,

"God is unsurpassed. He came to bring light to the eyes of one who could see in order to prevent that life would be transformed in darkness."

Thus, dear reader, consider this book a rose given by Jussara Korngold to you. May this book bring new life to you, a life full of joy.

November 10, 2005

Vanessa Anseloni, Psy.D., Ph.D.
President of the Spiritist Society of Baltimore, Inc.

¹ <http://www.infoline.org/Crisis/stats.asp>

¹ The Spirits' Book, question 799.

PREFACE

Our purpose in writing this book is to introduce and clarify to the reader the spiritual aspect of suicide in order to illuminate and guide people away from thoughts of suicide and of resorting to such a drastically offensive and irreparable course.

It is not our intention to present the medical reasons often associated with the act of suicide, such as depression or any other mental illnesses, since it is not our field of expertise. We leave that in the capable hands of doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists and to the extensive medical research that can be found on this matter.

Our ultimate aim is to offer a way of coping with the vicissitudes of life and to give comfort to those who have gone through the devastating experience of having lost a loved one to death through suicide.

Jussara Korngold
New York, May 2005

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This book couldn't have been written without the help of Ademir Monaro, whose idea it was in the first place.

Finally, heartfelt thanks to my husband João Korngold for his support, encouragement and advice, and to my nine year-old son, Gabriel Pretti Korngold, for being around with his happy face and sweet smile bringing me ineffable joy.

My Son

Once you departed my tears have never ceased,
My heart fell apart, my still eyes lost in the horizon.
It was your choice to leave us behind,
To depart without a kiss,
Not giving us a chance to make you change your mind,
thus leaving us in a desert without bliss.
Oh my dear one, my life will never be the same.
Where did I fail?
Why was I not able to support you and to give you strength to
withstand the struggles of life?
Oh, flesh of my flesh,
Rebellious spirit,
I wish you could have come to me more often,
to open up your heart and to find shelter in my love.
Now, my son, my thoughts are only for you
My life is your life,
My prayer a single cry of help
so that the merciful Creator may give us
the chance to trail the same path again.
I will look after you forever.
I will assist you like never before,
But this time I will not lose you
to the dark shadows of despair.
God is love
God is forgiving
My love accompanies you, now and forever.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have evidenced a vast upsurge in the number of suicides. Countless theories, religious doctrines, superstition, mystical teachings, and folklore have surrounded this ever increasing problem of suicide and what it means to the individual.

The first thing that comes to our mind upon hearing that someone has committed suicide is the inexplicable “why?” Hardly any experience in our lives could be more devastating than to learn of the suicide or the attempted suicide of a friend or relative. Any suicide that we hear about touches us deeply in a very disturbing way. Why is our response to death by suicide so much more intense than any other form of death? Is it because we have been taught to react in this manner, and that it is merely a matter of conditioning? Or is some deep buried memory arising from other levels in our consciousness reminding us of prior times and places when we ourselves destroyed our physical body?

What would lead one to desire to end one’s own life and leave loved ones behind? What incredible force is there that overcomes the will to live and the persistence to keep struggling?

It is our understanding that one of the greatest villain of suicides, in the majority of cases, is the false belief of annihilation, the total end of one’s living breath.

The materialist concept of life is the main culprit responsible and plays a significant role in the decision making process of suicides, whereas, faith and religious beliefs are the greatest restrainers of it.

Suicide can be defined as an intentional and uncoerced self-killing in which the conditions causing death are self-arranged. The applied ethical issue of suicide focuses on two problems: (a) whether suicide is permissible, and, if so, (b) whether suicide intervention is permissible. The latter problem involves a question of balancing the agent’s autonomy against paternalistic concerns of society.

Although many applied ethics issues emerged only recently, the issue of the moral permissibility of suicide has a long history of philosophical discussion. Plato opposed suicide since it “frustrates the decree of destiny” (Laws, Bk. 8, 873c); he also argued that “the gods are our guardians, and that we are a possession of theirs. Then there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take his own

life until God summons him, as he is now summoning me” (Phaedo, 62). Aristotle also opposed suicide since it is “contrary to the rule of life” (Nicomachean Ethics, Bk. 5, Ch. 11).

But how did the Bible’s neutral position on suicide become translated by the Christian Church into a dogmatic opposition to suicide? ¹

In the Fourth Century AD, the Empire and the Catholic Church sought to suppress the heretical Donatists² and the closely allied Circumcellions, partly because these heretics opposed the intermingling of church and state.

The Donatists' fanatic belief in an obligation to resist persecution in practice sometimes translated into goading magistrates and other authorities into killing them, acting upon the belief that this "martyrdom" ensured them a place in Heaven.

It was to "correct" this heresy that St. Augustine of Hippo³, in the early fifth century, wrote his arguments opposing suicide. In *The City of God*, Augustine (354-430) opposes suicide on the grounds that it violates the Sixth Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (though a more accurate translation from the original Hebrew is "You Shall Not Commit Murder").

Although Augustine notes some exceptions to this rule, such as divinely ordained wars or government sanctioned executions, self-killing is not an exception since it lacks any parallel justification. It is not justified

¹ Excerpts from: <http://www.ashbusstop.org/Biblesuicide.htm> and <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/s/suicide.htm#top>.

² Donatism originated and was strongest in North Africa, and persisted until the region was conquered by Islam; there has been some speculation that Donatist beliefs may have influenced that new religion.

³ St. Augustine of Hippo is considered to be one of the most outstanding theologians in the history of the Catholic Church, Augustine was born in North Africa in 354 A.D. and died there in 430.

by personal suffering, fear of possible punishment, or even on more lofty grounds such as high-mindedness. For Augustine, the more high-minded person is the one who faces life's ills, rather than one who escapes them.

Augustine's arguments did not immediately take hold in Western culture. The first comprehensive Christian-era legal code was the Justinian Code. This code, drafted about a century after St. Augustine, did not punish suicide if a person had a good reason for killing oneself; good reasons cited include, "impatience of pain or sickness, or by another cause, weariness of life, lunacy or fear of dishonor." In short, every reason except no reason at all, and that reason was punished only on the grounds that it was irrational: "whoever does not spare himself will not spare another." Suicide did not become a crime under English Common Law until the 10th Century, in the appropriately-named Dark Ages.

Medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas⁴, also condemned suicide, basing his arguments on suicide on reasoning principally from the works of three pagan Greek philosophers, Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas gives three arguments against the permissibility of suicide. The first argument is based on natural law, or the natural purpose of a thing: suicide is wrong since it is contrary to the natural life "purpose of humans." Aquinas's second argument against suicide is a utilitarian type argument: suicide is not justified because of the greater social harm that it causes. Aquinas's third argument is that suicide is

⁴ Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) lived at a critical juncture of western culture when the arrival of the Aristotelian corpus in Latin translation reopened the question of the relation between faith and reason, calling into question the *modus vivendi* that had obtained for centuries. Thomas's theological writings became regulative of the Catholic Church and his close textual commentaries on Aristotle represent a cultural resource, which is now receiving increased recognition. (<http://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/aquinas.html>)

wrong since it is like stealing from God. Our lives are property that is owned by God, and we are merely the trustees of that property.

In his essay *Suicide*, Immanuel Kant⁵ argues that suicide is wrong because it degrades our inner worth below that of animals. Kant considers two common justifications of suicide, and rejects them both. First, some may argue that suicide is permissible as a matter of freedom, as long as it does not violate the rights of others. In response Kant says self-preservation is our highest duty to ourselves and we may treat our body as we please, so long as our actions arise from motives of self-preservation. Some also might give examples from history that imply that suicide is sometimes virtuous. For example, in Roman history, Cato, who was a symbol of resistance against Caesar, found he could no longer resist Caesar; to continue living a compromised life would disillusion advocates of freedom. Kant argues that this is the only example of this sort and thus cannot be used as a general rule in defense of suicide. Kant's main argument against suicide is that people are entrusted with their lives, which have a uniquely inherent value. By killing oneself, a person dispenses one's humanity and makes oneself into

⁵ Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is one of the most influential philosophers in the history of Western philosophy. His contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics have had a profound impact on almost every philosophical movement that followed him. Kant's most original contribution to philosophy is his "Copernican Revolution," that, as he puts it, it is the representation that makes the object possible rather than the object that makes the representation possible. This introduced the human mind as an active originator of experience rather than just a passive recipient of perception. Something like this now seems obvious: the mind could be a *tabula rasa*, a "blank tablet," no more than a bathtub full of silicon chips could be a digital computer. Perceptual input must be processed, i.e. recognized, or it would just be noise -- "less even than a dream" or "nothing to us," as Kant alternatively puts it. (<http://www.friesian.com/kant.htm>)

a thing to be treated like a beast. Kant also argues on more consequentialist grounds that if a person is capable of suicide, then he is capable of any crime. For Kant, "he who does not respect his life even in principle cannot be restrained from the most dreadful vices."

1

FACTS ON SUICIDE

Although it is not our intent to overwhelm the reader with statistics, we do consider pivotal to have some figures in mind to understand the extent of the problem we are dealing with. For this reason we have gathered some data from reliable sources (see footnotes 7 to 10).

Suicide Deaths, U.S., 2001⁶

- Suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in the United States.
- It was the 8th leading cause of death for males, and the 9th leading cause of death for females.
- The total number of suicide deaths was 30,622.
- It is estimated that for every successful suicide there are 6 attempted suicides.
- Based on this estimate, it has been suggested that there are now at least 4.5 million American survivors of attempted suicide.⁷

⁶ 2001 U.S. mortality data are based on the International Classification of Disease, 10th revision (ICD-10), whereas ICD-9 has been used from 1979-1998. For this reason, comparisons between data from years 1999-2001 and earlier mortality data should be made carefully. For a full explanation of the implications of this change, see:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/fatal/help/datasources.htm#6.3>

⁷ <http://www.suicidology.org>

- 1.3% of total deaths were from suicide. By contrast, 29% were from diseases of the heart, 23% were from malignant neoplasms (cancer), and 6.8% were from cerebrovascular disease (stroke) - the three leading causes.
- Suicides outnumbered homicides (20,308) by 3 to 2.
- There were twice as many deaths due to suicide than deaths due to HIV/AIDS (14,175).
- Suicide by firearms was the most common method for both men and women, accounting for 55% of all suicides.

More men than women die by suicide

- The gender ratio is 4:1.
- 73% of all suicide deaths are white males.
- 80% of all firearm suicide deaths are white males.
- Among the highest rates (when categorized by gender and race) are suicide deaths for white men over 85, who had a rate of 54/100,000.
- Suicide was the 3rd leading cause of death among young people 15 to 24 years of age, following unintentional injuries and homicide. The rate was 9.9/100,000 or .01%.
- Married individuals have a lower rate of suicide than do divorced, separated, widowed and single people.
 - The suicide rate among children ages 10-14 was 1.3/100,000 or 272 deaths among 20,910,440 children in this age group. The

- gender ratio for this age group was 3:1 (males: females).
- The suicide rate among adolescents aged 15-19 was 7.9/100,000 or 1,611 deaths among 20,271,312 adolescents in this age group. The gender ratio for this age group was 5:1 (males:females).
- Among young people 20 to 24 years of age, the suicide rate was 12/100,000 or 2,360 deaths among 19,711,423 people in this age group. The gender ratio for this age group was 7:1 (males:females).

Attempted Suicides

- No annual national data on all attempted suicides are available.
- Other research indicates that:
 - there are an estimated 8-25 attempted suicides for each suicide death; the ratio is higher in women and youth and lower in men and the elderly.
 - more women than men report a history of attempted suicide, with a gender ratio of 3:1.

Inter-country comparisons:⁸

- Industrialized countries tend to have a higher suicide rate than poor, developing countries.
- The U.S. has a moderate suicide rate compared to other industrialized countries.

⁸ Excerpts from: <http://www.religioustolerance.org> and "Suicide Facts," National Institute of Mental Health, at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>

Suicide rates increase with age:

Age	Suicide rate per 100,000
10 to 14 years	1.3
15 to 19	7.9
20 to 24	12
Over 85	65

- About one in three American teenagers have contemplated suicide. An Internet poll by About.com indicated that 50% of teens visiting that web site had considered it.
- As mentioned, suicide has been reported as the third leading cause of death among teenagers. However, the suicide rate among teens is actually lower than that of older persons. Teens tend to have few life-threatening illnesses; teenage deaths from disease are quite low. Thus, the relatively few suicides among teens make suicide a leading cause of death.
- Among the most common faith groups in the U.S., Protestants have the highest suicide rate; Roman Catholics are next; Jews have the lowest rate.
- Followers of religions that strongly prohibit suicide, like Christianity and Islam, have a higher suicide rate than those religions, which have no strong prohibition (e.g. Buddhism and Hinduism.)
- A person has a higher risk of suicide if their parent, close relative or close friend has taken their own life.

2

TEEN SUICIDE

According to The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) in their article about suicide, teen suicide⁹ is becoming more common every year in the United States.

It's common for teens to think about death to some degree. Teens' thinking capabilities have matured in a way that allows them to think more deeply - about their existence in the world, the meaning of life, and other profound questions and ideas. Unlike kids, teens realize that death is permanent. They may begin to consider spiritual or philosophical questions such as what happens after people die. To some, death, and even suicide, may seem poetic (consider *Romeo and Juliet*, for example). To others, death may seem frightening or be a source of worry. For many, death is mysterious and beyond our human experience and understanding.

Thinking about suicide goes beyond normal ideas teens may have about death and life. Wishing to be dead, thinking about suicide, or feeling helpless and hopeless about how to solve life's problems are signs that a teen may be at risk - and in need of help and support. Beyond thoughts of suicide, actually making a plan or carrying out a suicide attempt is even more serious.

Teenagers experience strong feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt, pressure to succeed, financial uncertainty, and other fears while growing up.

⁹ Excerpts from: <http://www.aacap.org> and <http://kidshealth.org>

For some teenagers, divorce, the formation of a new family with step-parents and step-siblings, or moving to a new community can be very unsettling and can intensify self-doubts. In some cases, suicide appears to be a "solution."

Suicide attempts are usually made when a person is seriously depressed or upset. A teen who is feeling suicidal may see no other way out of problems, no other escape from emotional pain, or no other way to communicate their desperate unhappiness.

Depression and suicidal feelings are treatable mental disorders. The child or adolescent needs to have his or her illness recognized and diagnosed, and appropriate treatment plans developed. When parents are in doubt whether their child has a serious problem, a psychiatric examination can be very helpful.

Keep in mind that most of the time for most teen's depression is a passing mood. The sadness, loneliness, grief, and disappointment we all feel at times are normal reactions to some of life's struggles. With the right support, some resilience, an inner belief that there will be brighter days, and decent coping skills, most teens can get through the depressed mood that happens occasionally when life throws them a curve ball.

Though children can experience depression too, teens are much more vulnerable to major depression and bipolar illness. Depression also distorts a person's viewpoint, allowing them to focus only on their failures and disappointments and to magnify these negative things. Depressed thinking can convince someone there is nothing to live for. The loss of pleasure that is part of depression can seem like further evidence that there's nothing good about the present. Hopelessness can make it seem like there will be nothing good in the future; helplessness can make it seem like there's nothing you can do to change things for the better. And the low

energy that is part of depression can make every problem (even small ones) seem like too much to handle.

When major depression lifts due to the reception of proper therapy or treatment, this distorted thinking is cleared and they can find pleasure, energy, and hope again. But while someone is seriously depressed, suicidal thinking is a real concern. When teens are depressed, they often don't realize that the hopelessness they feel can be relieved and that hurt and despair can be healed.

In addition to depression, there are other emotional conditions that can put teens at greater risk of suicide - for example, girls and guys with conduct disorder are at higher risk. This may be partly because teens with conduct disorder have problems with aggression and may be more likely than other teens to act in aggressive or impulsive ways to hurt themselves when they are depressed or under great stress.

In addition to depressive effects, alcohol and drugs alter a person's judgment. They interfere with the ability to assess risk, make good choices, and think of solutions to problems. Many suicide attempts occur when a teen is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Teens with problems of substance abuse often also have serious depression or intense life stresses, too, further increasing their risk.

Let's face it - being a teen is not easy for everyone. There are many new social, academic, and personal pressures. For teens who have additional problems to deal with, life can feel even more burdensome. Some teens are struggling with concerns about sexuality and relationships, wondering if their feelings and attractions are normal, if they will be loved and accepted, or if their changing bodies are developing normally. Some teens have learning problems or attention deficit disorders that make it hard for them to succeed in school. They may feel

disappointed in themselves or feel like they are a disappointment to others.

All these things can affect mood and cause some people to feel depressed and/or to turn to alcohol or drugs for a false sense of soothing. Without the necessary coping skills and support, these social stresses can increase the risk of serious depression and, therefore, of suicidal ideas and behavior.

Having access to guns is extremely risky for any teen who has any of the other risk factors. Depression, anger, impulsiveness, stress, substance abuse, feelings of alienation or loneliness - all these factors can place a teen at major risk for suicidal thoughts and behavior. Availability of guns along with one or more of these risk factors is a deadly equation. Making sure those who are at risk don't have access to guns could save many teen lives.

Sometimes teens who feel or act suicidal mean to die and sometimes they don't. Sometimes a suicide attempt is a way to express the deep emotional pain they are feeling in hopes that someone will get the message they are trying to communicate.

Even though a teen who makes a suicide attempt may not actually want or intend to die, it is impossible to know whether an overdose or other harmful actions they may take will actually result in death or cause a serious and lasting illness that was never intended. Using a suicide attempt to get someone's attention or love or to punish someone for hurt they have caused is never a good idea. People usually do not really understand the message, and it often backfires on the teen. It is always better to learn other ways to get what you need and deserve from people. There are always people who will value, respect, and love you - sure, sometimes it takes time to find them - but it is important to value, respect, and love yourself, as well.

Warning Signs - What to Look For

Many times, there are warning signs that someone is seriously depressed and may be thinking about or planning a suicide attempt. Here are some of them:

- pulling away from friends or family and losing the desire to go out
- trouble concentrating or thinking clearly
- changes in eating or sleeping habits
- major changes in appearance (for example, if a normally neat person looks very sloppy - as if they're not taking the usual care of themselves)
- talk about feeling hopeless or feeling guilty
- talk about suicide
- talk about death
- talk about "going away"
- self-destructive behavior (drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or driving too fast, for example)
- no desire to take part in favorite things or activities
- giving away favorite possessions (like offering to give away a favorite piece of jewelry, for example)
- sudden happy and cheerful moods after being depressed or sad for a long time (this may mean that a person has decided to attempt suicide and feels relieved to have found a "solution")

Paying attention to and responding to these clues can sometimes save a life and prevent a tragedy. Most of the time, teens who are considering suicide are willing to discuss it if someone asks them out of concern and care. Some people (teens and adults) are reluctant to ask teens if they have been thinking about suicide or hurting

themselves for fear that, by asking, they may plant the idea of suicide. This is a myth. It is always a good thing to ask and to initiate the conversation with someone you think may be considering suicide.

First, it allows you to get help for the person. Second, just by talking about it may help the person to feel less alone, less isolated, more cared about and understood - the opposite of many feelings that may have led to suicidal thinking to begin with. Third, it may give the person an opportunity to consider that there may be another solution.

If a child or adolescent says, "I want to kill myself," or "I'm going to commit suicide," always take the statement seriously and seek evaluation from a child and adolescent psychiatrist or other physician. People often feel uncomfortable talking about death. However, asking the child or adolescent whether he or she is depressed or thinking about suicide can be helpful. Rather than "putting thoughts in the child's head," such a question will provide assurance that somebody cares and will give the young person the chance to talk about problems.

If one or more of these signs occurs, parents need to talk to their child about their concerns and seek professional help when the concerns persist. With support from the family and professional treatment, children and teenagers who are suicidal can heal and return to a healthier path of development.

It is always good to ask a friend who's going through a crisis how they're doing, if they're getting any support, how they're coping, and if they need some more support. There are plenty of adults and friends who can help to find the support needed. Everyone deserves that support.

Sometimes, teens who make suicide attempts - or who die as a result of suicide - seem to give no clue

beforehand. This can leave loved ones feeling not only grief stricken but guilty and wondering if they missed something. It is important for family members and friends of those who die by suicide to know that sometimes there is no warning and that they should not blame themselves.

If you have been thinking about suicide, get help right away, rather than simply hoping your mood might improve. When a person has been feeling down for so long, it's hard for him to understand that suicide *isn't* the only answer - it's a bad permanent solution to a temporary problem. Talk to anyone you know as soon as you can - a friend, a coach, a relative, a school counselor, a religious leader, a teacher, or any trusted adult. Call your local emergency number or check in the front pages of your phone book for the number of a local suicide crisis line.¹⁰ If you have a friend or classmate who you think is considering suicide, get help right away rather than waiting to see if he will feel better. Even if your friend or classmate swears you to secrecy, you must get help as soon as possible - your friend's life could depend on it. A person who is seriously thinking about suicide is depressed - and isn't able to see that suicide is never the answer to his/her problems.

After Suicide

Sometimes even if you get help and adults intervene, a friend or classmate may attempt or commit

¹⁰ These toll-free lines are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by trained professionals who can help you without ever knowing your name or seeing your face. All calls are confidential - nothing is written down and no one you know will ever find out that you've called. There is also a National Suicide Helpline in the U.S.A. - 1-800-SUICIDE.

suicide. When this happens, it's common to have many different emotions. Some teens say they feel guilty - especially if they felt that they could have interpreted their friend's actions and words better. Others say they feel angry with the person who committed or attempted suicide for doing something so selfish. Still others say they feel nothing at all - they are too filled with grief. When someone attempts suicide, the people around may feel afraid or uncomfortable about talking to the person who committed suicide. Try to resist this urge; this is a time when a person absolutely needs to feel connected to others.

When someone commits suicide, the people around may become very depressed and even think about suicide themselves. It's important to know that you should *never* blame yourself for someone's death - you could question yourself forever, which will only make you unhappy and won't bring your friend back. It's also good to know that any emotion you feel is appropriate; there is no right or wrong way to feel. Many schools will address the problem of a student's suicide head-on and call in special counselors to talk with students and help them deal with their feelings. If you are having difficulty dealing with a friend or classmate's suicide, it's best to make use of these resources or talk to an adult you trust. Feeling grief after a friend commits suicide is normal; it's when it begins to interfere with your everyday life that you may need to speak with someone about your feelings.

*A True Life Case*¹¹

Following is the account of a spiritist 20-year old business student, who has closely experienced suicide three times. The first when he was 13 and a school friend jumped from a building. One year later, another fellow student from the same school hung himself in his

¹¹ Written by Danny Claudio

basement. When he was 15, his best friend from childhood whom he had grown up with died of normal death, after having suffered from cancer for two years. He then began turning to Spiritism with a more serious eye, and studying it more thoroughly but never had joined a Spiritist Center. Three years later, a high school colleague consumed high doses of pills, and wrote his final letter as they took its effect. After having read this letter, he entered into a depressive process, accompanied by an obsessive process that was only cured after being perceived by a spiritist who, at the time, was doing handy work at his house. Spiritual help was sought at the Spiritist Center, and eventually he was helped. In this account, he gives his outlook at the topic given his spiritist understanding, acting on understanding of his own personal experience including thoughts that may enter the mind of a suicidal in a period of depression. He writes this excerpt hoping that it will give parents an insight into the minds of those fellow beings who actually consummated their idea of suicide and help parents ameliorate their attitude towards those who have departed.

Suicide is rarely an idea that enters your mind unless you experience it. This past year, at the university where I study, NYU, one of the students decided to jump from the top floor of the library into the atrium. In the few decades of existence of that Bobst Library, such an event had never happened. A few weeks later, the same event happened once again in the same manner. Ever since then, the University has taken steps towards building a wall that would not allow another student to do such a thing. Nevertheless, two other students have henceforth jumped from other buildings in Manhattan.

What has led them to do things is something that we all ask. Some blame selfishness, doctors many times look to depression, and spiritists understand "obsession processes" as sometimes being the cause. But one simple answer seems too easy for such a full-loaded and

confusing question. And in the very confusion or the question and the lack of one clear answer lies the true answer. After all, why not? If a person feels extremely confused, depressed, like he/she has no answers (he/she might even believe that some of these answers will be found in death itself), and that he or she has nothing more to live for, then why doesn't this person have the right to end life? Even thinking on a religious sense, we learn in many religions that two main rules of God are not to judge others' actions and free will to all. We could then deduce that if someone uses free will to end one's own life, then judgment from others on that particular decision should not occur.

Once we realize that yes, an individual has the complete control over his/her life and does not have to report to any other person, then we may start understanding why someone has committed suicide. The main issue is that the suicidal failed during his lifetime to realize two crucial things:

I. Life does not end.

II. The Divine Laws are unchangeable and we are always subject to them.

These seem like two significant ideas that could take a lifetime to learn and understand, but all we need is a notion or an idea of it to make it valid. The idea of how important Jesus was caused the writing of the Bible, the notion that a land outside Europe existed led Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama to proceed in traveling and discovering those lands. A notion of the existence of an eternal life makes you the actor of your life, the one who wants to change it instead of having the illusion of ending it.

Life does not end. Once suicide is thought to have been accomplished by those who stayed behind, the suicidal's soul lives on with the horrifying reality that it was not accomplished. The same problems persist, the

confusion is still present, but now, the body and the direct communication with people are no longer present so as to try to solve those problems. The suicidal regrets suicide almost instantly.

Families and friends of the suicidal have to do their best to accept this deed and pray for the suicidal. Most condemn the act and feel somewhat angry at the suicidal, others turn to guilt and culpability, and then, compassion and prayer for the person can be forgotten. The suicidal already feels enough guilt and condemns his own act; there is no need to be brought further down into misery by others. On the contrary, others have to help the case after the suicide in the same way they "wish they had when he/she was alive." Pray, converse, and comfort. These are three immensely important acts that are crucial to all once a suicide has happened. We cannot bring back the time, but it is often forgotten that we can always help the present given what has happened.

Connected to our needs of helping the present are the second matter that the suicidal had not in mind when committing the act: the Divine Laws are unchangeable and we are always subject to them. Suicidals have to face this shortly after their death: the moral pain of what they have done to themselves and the agony of self-destruction. When we come into this world as human beings, we have an implicit contract that life was fortunately given to us and therefore that it should be respected. That includes respecting others, not doing to others what we wouldn't want done to ourselves, but most importantly, respecting oneself, the Earth and the entire harmony of things that together make this world that we were put in. A suicidal soon realizes and suffers from the breaking of a contract. The suicidal was put into this carefully wrought world, many times given favorable living conditions, but still decided to voluntarily end his/her time on this plane. Although it may have seemed like a good idea when still on this plane, it is often soon

realized as a regret, a mistake. Many of the loved ones stay behind suffering, while the suicidal goes on with few hopes of comfort or of a physical hug in the form that he/she has always been used to. This is an extremely difficult situation underwent by all members surrounding the act. Then again, pray, converse, comfort.

Many resort to an understanding of the act while usually never achieving a plausible conclusion. Things are not as simple as an examination of the factors that lead the suicidal to commit such an act. Suicide hurts. The word is doomed with dark negativeness, the act hurts not only those surrounding the actor, but also the actor itself, who thought that peace would be found in this act. The inner pain of a suicide is harder to accept than that of normal death, it stays within oneself for a long time. It is an overshadowing thought that constantly comes back to our minds, and then, we think about those who have done it. We wonder if we could ever do it, but we resist the thought. A pull in our hearts is always felt when these thoughts take over us. This is the pull that makes us look around for comfort; sometimes we find no one. When this is the case, we should make sure that our definition of comfort is not skewed. Comfort is not obtained through others; comfort comes from oneself, from one's peace of mind, from the nature around us, from happy past experiences, from prayer and God. Nonetheless, the thought will haunt us, and we must confront it directly, with compassion and understanding.

Then again, it all may seem very easy on paper. It is very hard to make suicide something objective and something that can be coldly examined. For someone who has seen it around him three times at the age of twenty, I feel like there comes a time that you need to try to understand it, from a worldly perspective, a religious one, a family one, and most importantly from the perspective of those who have committed the act. When dealing with such sensitive topics that spark up such strong inner

feelings, I have found that it is easier to try to shut off those feelings a little, allow a colder more objective mind to take over in order to understand it. Understanding such a philosophic and desperate act in the midst of confusion, revolt and sadness is a feat that could be rarely accomplished. But on the contrary, if we are able to think clearly about it, then once it is better comprehended we instantaneously feel as if that understanding turns those feelings of sadness and revolt into ones of compassion, prayer, and loving. Once we come to more ease with it (since complete ease with such a horrifying topic can also be hard to achieve), then all we have to do is try to educate others on the topic, watch out for others' mental and physical health, love one another, and do our best so that our surroundings no longer experience such acts.

Book Excerpt

*"In the Domain of Mediumship"*¹²

It was almost 8 pm when we stopped in front of a somber looking building surrounded by parked vehicles. People entered and left, and a great number of disincarnates spirits congregated both inside and out.

Spirit guards spread out attentively, impeding the access to impenitent and mocking spirits. Various groups of people entered the Spiritist Center but once in the lobby they separated from certain spirits that were following them. These spirits were not simply curious or in pain, but rather blasphemers who are persistent in doing evil.

Nevertheless, those cases constituted the exception. The majority of the retinue of disincarnate brothers was integrated with people

¹² *In the Domain of Mediumship*, chapter 18 (Nos Domínios da Mediunidade - Francisco Xavier and André Luiz) - Translated by Jussara Korngold & Marie Levinson - SAB (Spiritist Alliance for Books) - Published by ISC, 2005.

afflicted and in as much need of fraternal assistance as the ill and anguished patients whom they were accompanying. We entered.

A large luminous cord that acted as a partition surrounded a big table in the center of an ample size living room. Around it, a great area was reserved where the incarnate and disincarnate needing assistance were seated. This area appeared to be equally protected by rays of magnetic defense under the care of the spirit guards.

(...) On the opposite side of the entrance, several spiritual benefactors conferred. Close by, a respectable lady listened tenderly to a diverse group of patients. She had an extensive aura of opal radiations. As she conversed with the suffering people, some tried to interfere with her by projecting dark substances. The sickly fluids, however, could not reach her energy field. Signaling her, the mentor informed us:

“She is our sister Ambrosia, who for over 20 years has offered what she best possesses in this existence. Through her Christian mediumship and her love of our ideals, she renounced the simplest happiness in the world. At this stage, not far from us, a woman was thinking:

“My son! My son! If you are not dead, visit me! Come! Come! I am dying of anguish. I miss you. Say a word so we can understand one another. If all is not over, come close to the medium and communicate. It is impossible that you could have no pity!” A cavernous voice spoke these bitter, inarticulate phrases.

A slight sound behind us attracted our attention. A young disincarnate male in a pathetic condition and dominated by a great attraction approached the sad woman. From his mouth came despair in the form of moving words:

“Mother! Mother!” He shouted and knelt by her lap as if he were a tormented child. “Do not abandon me. Here I am. Listen to me: I did not die! Forgive me! Forgive me! I am a renegade, a failure! I sought death when I should have lived for your affection! Now I clearly see your suffering. I could annihilate myself forever, so great is the shame in my heart.”

The woman could not perceive the perturbed image; however, she felt his presence through an indescribable anxiety that compressed her chest. Two collaborators approached and took the young man from his mother’s lap. We stood near the mentor who had hurried to rescue the lady, who was drenched in tears. She clamored mentally:

“Would it not be better to follow him? To die and rest! My dear son! I want my dear son!”

Aulus applied the magnetic passes¹³ after which the unfortunate lady felt a great relief. He later informed us:

“Let us review this poor battered mother’s case. Her son committed suicide a few months ago and is still in pain. In her affectionate devotion, she seeks his manifestation without realizing what she is asking for, since her son’s desperate situation constitutes a horrible martyrdom for her. For this reason she cannot receive his words directly. By undergoing this spiritual work, however, she will acquire energy that will gradually renew her.”

“Of course,” added Hector intelligently, “this will not resolve her anguish, but it will tone her strength in order to recover.”

“Yes, indeed.” agreed Aulus.

¹³ **PASSES:** (“pass,” laying on of hands). The donation of spiritual energies or vital fluids from a medium and/or spiritual source to a patient. Spiritists divide passes into three types: (1) magnetic, in which the energy source is the medium; (2) spiritual, in which the energy source is the spirit; and (3) mixed, in which the source is both. Spiritists believe that, in practice, most passes are of the third type. (David J. Hess – “Spirits and Scientists – Ideology, Spiritism and Brazilian Culture” 1991 The Pennsylvania State University) Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary - Pass: “A moving of the hands over or along something.” Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary - Pass: to serve as a medium of exchange

3

RELIGIOUS FAITH AND THE INCIDENCE OF SUICIDE¹⁴

Religion and Suicide:

Persons who attend religious services, on average, are generally believed to exhibit much lower rates of suicide. Those who attend church frequently are four times less likely to commit suicide than those who never attend. This effect is seen in various studies, which compare church attendance and suicide rates.

These observations have been confirmed among states in the U.S. and worldwide.

"In fact, the rate of church attendance predicts the suicide rate better than any other factor (including unemployment, traditionally regarded as the most powerful variable)."

What is not known is the degree to which the increased rate of religious attendance and lower rates of suicide are directly related as a cause and effect. Other influences may be present, that are unrelated to church attendance, such as:

- Persons who are depressed are among the most likely to commit suicide, and are less likely to attend church, synagogue, mosque, temple, and other religious groups.

¹⁴ Excerpts from: <http://www.religioustolerance.org>

- Homosexuals have one of the highest suicide rates of any group in society, and are often disinclined to attend church because of the degree of rejection and homophobia present there.
- Attendance at religious services potentially gives individuals access to a support network. Those without a support network are more likely to commit suicide.

Further complicating the matter is the unreliability of church attendance data. Such data is derived from public opinion polls. In recent years, about 40% of adult Americans say that they regularly attend religious services. Actual nose counting shows that half are lying; only about 20% actually attend regularly.

Even though we do not possess accurate numbers for the reasons above mentioned, it becomes quite clear that a religious guidance is a powerful instrument in avoiding an increase in the numbers of suicides.

Suicide of the elderly in various countries:

One might expect that suicide rates among the elderly would be lower in Catholic countries than in non-Catholic (including secular) societies because of:

- Very negative religious beliefs taught by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches about suicide.
- A tradition of extended families in these countries.

However, according to an article published in the International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, elderly people in Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian countries are more likely to commit suicide than those in

either secular or Protestant countries. The researchers found that, for example, elderly suicide rates are higher in Italy, Spain and Portugal than in the United Kingdom or Scandinavian countries. Ireland is an exception. However, the low suicide rate recorded in these countries may be due to a systematic under-reporting of actual suicides, motivated by a desire to spare relatives' shame.

The author Colin Pritchard argues that suicide among the elderly over the age of 75 is a sign of neglect and isolation. In Latin countries, the extended family does provide a support system. However, he said, "if you don't have children or you are unmarried then you are worse off than in Britain." He commented, "Our findings were completely unexpected. Suicide amongst elderly people is usually associated with ill health, social isolation and exclusion. With elderly people in Catholic and Orthodox countries tending to hold more traditional views on the family and religion, we might have assumed that this would be reflected in lower suicide rates, not higher...However, these results show that we need to rethink views on suicide, and continue to improve provision of services for elderly people and rid ourselves of ageist stereotypes. The majority of elderly suicides die because they are inadequately supported and/or have poor medical care."

In *The Spirits' Book*, written by Allan Kardec, chapter 28, he comments on some answers provided by the Spirits:

"Some people, through an imperfection of intellect, can see nothing in human beings but the action of matter. Hence, they attribute all the phenomena of existence to this action. They see the human body entirely as an electro-chemical machine and they study the mechanism of life only in terms of organ interactions. So when they see, as they often do, a life snuffed out by the rupture of a single vein, their whole focus becomes the vein. They

may look to see if any other evidence of life remains. But since the only thing they find is inert matter, and since they haven't seen the soul leave the body or been able to touch it, they conclude that everything can be reduced to mere matter and that death is the annihilation of all thought. A sad inference, if true. It would mean that good and bad are exactly alike – purposeless. In that case, everyone would be justified in thinking only of themselves and in only the gratification of their senses. All social ties would be broken; the holiest bonds of affection would be destroyed forever. Happily for us, these ideas are not widely accepted. Their scope is narrow, being limited to subjective opinion only, and they have never been erected into a doctrinal system. A society founded on such ideas would contain within itself the seeds of its own destruction, like a group of wild beasts of prey whose members tear each other to pieces.

Human beings intuitively believe that all does not end with the death of the body. We have a horror of annihilation. And no matter how strongly we oppose the idea of a future life, there are few of us who, faced with death, don't anxiously wonder what is going to happen to us. The idea of our saying goodbye to life forever will dismay the most courageous heart. After all, can anyone really feel detached at the prospect of being separated absolutely and eternally from everything he or she has loved? Or imagine, without feeling the terror of it, the mere nothingness in which every faculty and cherished aspiration is to be swallowed up? There aren't many who will calmly say: "After my death there will be nothing left but the void of annihilation. Everything will be over. After awhile, no memory of me will survive. Earth will retain no trace of my existence. The good I've done will be forgotten by the people I've helped. And nothing will compensate me for all this loss. Beyond all this ruin, the only future I can look forward to is the certainty that my body will be eaten by worms!"

Isn't there something horrible in that picture, something that sends a chill through the heart? Religion teaches us that this can't be our destiny. And our reason confirms this teaching. Yet vague, indefinite assurances of a life after death fail to satisfy our natural desire for some positive proof. It is the lack of this proof that causes us to doubt the afterlife's reality.

"Even if we admit that we have a soul," many naturally ask, "what are we actually talking about? Does the soul have a form? Does it have a particular appearance? Is it a well-defined being, or something undefined and impersonal? Some people call it 'a breath of God'; others insist it is a spark. Still others claim it is 'part of the Great Whole, the principle of life and intelligence.' But what do we learn from these statements? What's the good of having a soul if it's only going to be merged in immensity like a drop of water in the ocean? Isn't the loss of our individuality equal, as far as we're concerned, to annihilation? Again, some say the soul is immaterial. But the immaterial has no defined proportions, and therefore no reality for us. Religion also teaches us that our happiness or unhappiness depends on the good or bad we've done. But what about the happiness or unhappiness that we've been promised in the future life? What can it be like? Is happiness a state of blessedness in the bosom of God, an eternal contemplation that consists entirely of singing the praises of the Creator? And the flames of hell: are they real or simply a figure of speech? Traditional theology gives them a figurative meaning. But what kind of suffering does this figure suggest? And where do those 'sufferings' occur? In short, what shall we be, what shall we do, what shall we see, in that other world where all of us are said to be going?"

No one, it is claimed, has ever come back to give us an account of that world. But this statement is wrong. The mission of Spiritism is precisely to enlighten us regarding

our future state and to enable us, within limits, to see and touch it, not merely as a deduction of our reason, but through the evidence of facts. Thanks to communications made to us by the people of that other world, the future life is no longer a matter of mere presumption or probability. We no longer have to fantasize about the world of the afterlife or read poets who embellish it with fictions and allegorical images that mostly delude us. We now have brought before us that other world itself, in its reality. The beings of the life beyond the grave come to us. They describe the situations in which they find themselves; they tell us what they are doing; they allow us to become, so to speak, spectators of their new order of life. And they show us the inevitable fate that is reserved for each of us according to our merits or misdeeds. Is there anything anti-religious in such a demonstration? Not at all. Rather, it furnishes unbelievers with a ground of belief, and inspires lukewarm believers with renewed fervor and confidence.

Spiritism can be seen, then, as a most powerful auxiliary of true religion. As such, it must be acknowledged to exist by accordance of God, for the purpose of giving strength to our wavering convictions and leading us back onto the right road by showing us the prospect of our future happiness."

INCARNATION OF SPIRITS, DISENCHANTMENT WITH LIFE - SUICIDE

In order to better appreciate our life, it is important that we understand its meaning. We all have questions concerning where we come from, why we are here, and where we are going. Therefore, in order to better comprehend the purpose of incarnation, let us analyze some questions of *The Spirits' Book*, by Allan Kardec.

The Purpose of Incarnation¹⁵

Why do spirits incarnate?

“God has established incarnation as the means through which spirits eventually become perfect. Spirits themselves experience incarnation in different ways. For some, it is a process of purification; for others, an opportunity to fulfill a mission. But whatever the individual experience, reaching perfection requires that every spirit undergo the entire range of experiences particular to existence in a material form. The value of the purification process resides in accumulating these experiences.

“Besides purification, incarnation has a second and no less important function. It allows spirits to perform their proper share in the work of creation. To accomplish this work, the spirit takes on bodily form; a form that enables it to function in the environment in which it is called to live. Under these conditions, the spirit benefits

¹⁵ Excerpt from *The Spirits' Book*, Chapter 2 questions 132 and 133, Part Two – Allan Kardec –AKES Publication

doubly. It contributes to the universal good through performing its own special work, and at the same time, it furthers its own advancement through the process of purification.”

Discussion: The work of the universe is served by the actions of incarnated spirits. Wisely, God has also willed that this action should furnish spirits with the means of advancement through which they will eventually come into the Divine presence. As a result of this admirable law of Providence, all things are interconnected, and unity is established among nature's different realms.

Is incarnation necessary for spirits who have followed the right road from the beginning?

“When spirits are created, they are simple and in a state of unawareness. To attain knowledge they must pass through the trials and struggles that attend incarnate life. God, being just, would not grace them with bliss from the beginning. Without experiencing troubles, without exertion on their part spirits would lack real merit in their own eyes and in God's.”

Then if no spirit is spared these trials and struggles once it is incarnated, what do spirits have to gain by following the right road?

“They arrive sooner at the goal of perfection. A spirit's sufferings in life result, more often than not, from its own imperfections. Following the right road ensures that imperfections will be fewer and that the spirit's anguish will be less. Obviously, if a spirit isn't envious, jealous, greedy, or ambitious, it won't have to go through the anguish that inevitably arises from these faults.”

Disenchantment with Life – Suicide¹⁶

Some people feel a deep weariness of life without any apparent reason. Where does this feeling come from?

“Idleness, lack of conviction, sometimes boredom. Generally speaking, when you use your talents in the pursuit of something worthwhile, you will find pleasure in your work. Then the time passes quickly. You are able to bear the obstacles of life with patience and resignation, and to look at life with optimism.

Do we have the right to terminate our own lives?

“No. The right to put an end to life belongs to God alone. The person who deliberately commits suicide repudiates the providential ordering that granted him or her a life in the earthly realm.”

—Isn’t all suicide deliberate?

“No. If you kill yourself while insane, you really have no idea of what you are doing.”

What should we think of people who commit suicide because they are disenchanting with life?

“They are unfortunate but foolish. If they had used their time doing some useful work, life would not have been such a trial for them.”

And should we view in the same light people who resort to suicide in order to escape their troubles and failings?

“Poor spirits. They lacked the courage to bear the challenges of life. It is true that God helps those who face their trials with determination. But those who lack the will

power to cope with their problems distance themselves from God. The tribulations of life are learning experiences. Face them with faith and resolution and the rewards for bearing them with the right attitude will be great. Pity those however who lacking faith leave the solution of their problems entirely to their luck and to the circumstances. To use their own premise they may ride their good luck for a while but sooner or later they will have to face the emptiness of their stance.”

—Will someone who has driven another person to suicide be held accountable for that act?

“Yes. They will have to answer for it as for a murder.”

Some people become disheartened by their struggles, give up on themselves, and die in despair. Is this suicide?

It is self abandonment and indeed a form of suicide. But the people who contributed to it or were in a position to prevent it are often at greater fault. Such mitigating circumstances are taken into account. Don’t suppose, though, that this is a blanket excuse. If this person had been firm and persevering, had made the best use of a good mind to pull him or herself out of those struggles, this outcome could have been prevented. The responsibility will be even greater for the person whose mind has been paralyzed by pride who refuses, for instance, to earn a living through manual labor and would rather die of starvation than take a few steps down on the social ladder. It is infinitely more noble and dignified to bear up under hardship, to put up with the mockery of the vain and snobbish who reserve their good will for the well-off and turn a cold shoulder to anyone who really needs help. To throw away one’s life on account of such people is doubly absurd, since they will be perfectly indifferent to the sacrifice.”

¹⁶ Excerpt from *The Spirits’ Book*, Chapter 28, Questions 943 to 957, Part Four – Allan Kardec – AKES Publication

Is suicide wrong when it is committed out of shame for the harm the suicidal person has inflicted on others? Is this more justifiable than an act prompted by despair?

“Suicide doesn’t cancel out responsibility in these cases. On the contrary, it adds a second wrong to the first. If you had the courage to do the wrong in the first place, you should have the courage to bear the consequences. Nonetheless, Divine justice weighs each case on its merits, taking into account all determining factors.”

Can suicide be excused when the person wants to avoid bringing disgrace on his or her children or family?

“An individual who commits suicide in the belief that it is for the best is wrong. Fortunately, Providence will take note of the motive and see the suicide as a self-imposed correction. In this case, motive lessens the fault; but it always remains a fault. Ultimately, when you get rid of your social misconceptions and abuses, you will have no more suicides.”

Discussion: People who take their own lives in order to escape shame and disgrace prove that they place more value on the esteem of human beings than on the esteem of God. Consequently, having abandoned the means of personal purification, they return to the spirit-world in the same state in which they left it. Fortunately, God—always more merciful than we are—forgives those of us who sincerely regret our faults, and takes into account all our efforts to repair what we have done. But nothing is ever repaired by suicide.

Occasionally we hear of people who kill themselves in hopes of entering a happier existence more quickly. What should we make of them?

“Their acts are not very intelligent. If they were to do good instead, they would be far surer of reaching that state. Suicide only delays their entrance into it. Once back

in the spirit-world, they will understand this and ask to return to Earth to complete the kind of life they have cut short. The truth is that the sanctuary of the good cannot be opened by a fault, no matter what the motive behind the fault.”

But there is nobility, isn’t there, when we sacrifice our lives in order to save the lives of others or to be useful to them?

“Done with this end in mind, it is not a suicide, but a sublime act. What is deplorable is the self-sacrifice that benefits no one, especially when it is motivated by pride. Sacrifice of one’s own life is admirable when one’s motives are disinterested. Where the end is selfish, its value is diminished.”

Discussion: Sacrifice at great personal cost is an expression of selfless love and supremely worthy in the sight of God. Life is the earthly possession to which we attach the greatest value and losing it for the sake of others would hardly be a crime. Nonetheless, before deciding on this course, we should consider carefully whether our life might not be more useful than our death.

Is there any guilt when negligence accidentally leads to a loss of life?

“Where there is no conscious intent to do harm, there is no guilt.”

In some countries, women used to voluntarily burn themselves to death on the funeral pyres of their husbands.¹⁷ Were they considered suicides and did they have to undergo correction for that crime?

¹⁷ AKES’ Note. A reference to the Hindu practice of suttee, a former Indian custom wherein a widow burned herself to death on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. The custom possibly had links with ancient beliefs that a man needed his companions in the afterlife as well as in this world. The British abolished it in India in 1829, but instances of it continued to occur in Indian states for more than 30 years.

“They were acting according to age-old beliefs and customs. And of course they were victims of social circumstances and often had no say in the matter. Usually, they believed they were performing a duty, so their actions did not really fall under the category of suicide. Their unawareness excused them for their act. As civilization develops and spreads, this kind of practice disappears.”

Some people kill themselves because they cannot bear the loss of loved ones and want to be with them in the next life. Do they succeed in their intent?

“Just the opposite. Instead of reuniting with their loved ones, they find themselves separated from them, sometimes for a very long time. God cannot reward an act of ethical cowardice or grant a favor to someone who challenges Divine providence. Their moment of foolishness will, sad to say, bring them more intense grief than the moments of sorrow they hoped to shorten. They will not have the satisfaction they hoped for.”¹⁸

What is the state of the spirit after suicide?

“The consequences vary according to circumstances, but the one penalty that no suicide escapes is disappointment. Some suicides, it is true, face the expiation for their fault at once; others do so in a new earthly life harder to bear than the one they cut off”

Discussion: Observation confirms the statement that the consequences of suicide are not the same in all cases. It also shows us that some consequences are identical in all cases of violent death. Foremost among these is the greater persistence along with all its unfortunate effects, of the link that unite the spirit and

¹⁸ AKES' Note: See questions 934-936 of *The Spirits' Book*, by Allan Kardec, for additional perspectives on the issue of loss of loved ones.

body. In nearly all these cases, this link is in its full strength when it is suddenly snapped, whereas it weakens gradually when death results from natural causes and often breaks before life is completely extinct. The consequences of a violent death are, first, the prolongation of the mental confusion that usually follows death, and, second, the illusion that causes a spirit to believe that it is still living its earthly life.¹⁹

The affinity that continues to exist between the spirit and the body produces various repercussions. Thus, the spirit may be forced to watch the process of bodily decay, a sight it may be bound to witness for a long time—in certain cases, for the length of time it had left to live on Earth. This is not a general rule; but the suicide sooner or later will have to account for its actions. Many spirits who led miserable lives in their last incarnation have said that they volunteered for those trials in order to acquire resignation, the lack of which had led to suicide in a previous life.

In other cases the repercussion takes the form of an attachment to the physical body from which the suicide struggles in vain to free itself. In still other instances, it takes the form of acute regret at having done something so utterly useless and disappointing.

Religion, ethics and philosophy all condemn suicide as contrary to the laws of nature. All assert the principle that we have no right to shorten our lives voluntarily. But why don't we have that right? Why aren't we free to put an end to our sufferings? The Spiritist Doctrine explains, through the example of spirits who surrendered to the temptation, that suicide is not only a sign of weakness and an offense against the moral law

¹⁹ AKES' Note: See question 155 on the separation between body and question 165 on the spirit's temporary state of confusion immediately after death of *The Spirits' Book*, by Allan Kardec.

(though some people will not give this aspect much importance) but that it is also an act at once witless and irresponsible, since no benefit can possibly come from it. The arguments of the Spiritist Doctrine on this subject are not merely theoretical: they place the facts of the case before our eyes.

A MESSAGE FROM ANDRÉ LUIZ²⁰

“Life never ends. It is an ever flowing source, and death is only the artful effect of an illusion.

A great river follows its own course before emptying into the vast sea. Likewise, the soul follows equally varied courses and passes through different banks -- receiving here and there tributaries of knowledge, strengthening its identity and perfecting its qualities -- before reaching the Ocean of Eternal Wisdom.

The closing of our earthly eyes is such a simple event.

The shedding of the physical body doesn't solve the fundamental questions of awareness, just as changing one's clothes has nothing to do with the deep questions of life and destiny.

Paths of the soul ... mysterious ways of the heart ... we must walk their full length before we face the supreme equation of Eternal Life. It is indispensable for us to live all of our challenges, to fully know ourselves in the long process of spiritual ascent.

How childish it is to imagine that the mere 'ringing down of the curtain' could settle transcendental questions about the Infinite.

One life is but a single act.

One body - a garment.

One century - a day.

One task - an experience.

One triumph - an acquisition.

One death - a breath of renewal.

How many lives, bodies, centuries, tasks, triumphs, and deaths are still allotted to us? And yet religious philosophers continue to talk about final decisions and definitive situations. Unfortunately, everywhere we find religious scholars who are spiritual illiterates.

It takes a great effort for one to enter the School of the Gospel, and admission to it usually comes to pass through uncommon means. The seeker finds him or herself alone with the Master, toiling through a difficult curriculum, learning lessons in an invisible classroom, and attending long, silent lectures.”

²⁰ ANDRÉ LUIZ – A spiritual guide that communicated through the mediumship of Francisco Cândido Xavier. This message is an excerpt of the first book he has dictated to the medium, “Nosso Lar – A Spiritual Home.” AKES Publication

5

FREE WILL

The decision of committing suicide is a result of one's own free-will. However, the question of free-will has proved to be a serious stumbling block to both philosopher and theologian. It has seemed all the more difficult to reconcile man's will and freedom with the demands of a natural law and of a divine will, since, to most people, the intervention of blind chance seems to further complicate the problem. The revelations of the spirits have elucidated this point for us. The seeming fatality, which is forever placing obstructions in the path of our endeavor is in reality but the inevitable outcome of our past sins. It is the effect that reverts to its cause; it is the fulfillment of the program in which we acquiesced before we were reincarnated, following the admonition of our spiritual monitors and or our own welfare and improvement.

By making use of its free-will, the soul settles its own destiny and prepares its sorrow or happiness. But never – be it in the full tide of progress, in the bitter hour of trial or in the midst of a passionate struggle against evil – will the help that descends from on high be refused. When the soul remain true to itself, no matter how unworthy it may appear, as soon as it manifests an intention to regain the straight and blessed road, then Providence will send assistance and support to it.

Providence is the superior spirit; it is the angel that watches over the unhappy; it is the unseen comforter whose inspiration warms the heart upon which despair had laid an icy finger; it is the bright beacon whose rays guide the mariner adrift upon turbulent seas. Above all, Providence is a divine love, the sublime overflow which neglects none of its offspring. What solicitude and foresight does this love not encompass? Was it not for the soul to frame its struggles and to crown its achievements, that these worlds have been hung in space, that these suns were lighted, that rolling sea and fruitful land were created? For the soul alone is this great work carried on, natural forces combined, and universes hatch within nebulas.

The soul was created to achieve happiness; but that it should prize and appreciate this happiness it must first deserve it; to this end it must zealously develop the powers that have been given to it. The soul's liberty of action and responsibility increase with its

elevation; the more enlightened it becomes, the more it should and must subordinate personal force to the laws that govern the universe.

The freedom of the individual is, therefore, restricted to narrow limits; firstly, by the requirements of natural law, which allows of no infringement and no disturbance in the order of the world; secondly, by its own past, the consequences of which he must recur until complete expiation. In no case can the exercise of human liberty be allowed to interfere with the fulfillment of the divine plans, else the harmony of the universe would be continually interrupted. Far transcending our circumscribed and fickle views, the immutable order of the universe is maintained, and serenely progresses. We are almost invariably poor judges as to what constitutes our ultimate good: if the majestic order of things were to hearken to our wishes, what a terrible upheaval would not ensue!

The first use to which the individual would put his absolute freedom would certainly be the elimination of all pain from this life, and to contrive that it should be one all of pleasure. Unquestionably there are evils which it is our duty to extirpate and destroy – those, for instance, which proceed from material causes – but there are others, inherent to our moral constitution, that pain and repression alone can master and subdue; of this order are our vices. In this case suffering is the school, or rather the one indispensable remedy, and the trials decreed are but those equitably discerned by an infallible justice. The outcry we raise against the laws and justice of the world arises, therefore, from our ignorance of the ways of God. If we criticize, it is because we perceive not the hidden motives.

Destiny is a consequence of our successive lives, of our deeds and free resolutions. More enlightened as to our imperfections, when disincarnated, and seeking the means of improvement, we accept material life in the form and under the conditions that appear best fitted to attain this goal. The law of justice is the fulfillment of the universal moral law, and its punishments and penalties are the reaction of nature, acting upon its eternal principles. The forces of the universe are interdependent, acting and vibrating in unison. Every moral force reacts upon its violator, proportionately to the violation. God chastises no one. He has simply ordained that in the course of time every cause shall produce its inevitable effect.

The human being is therefore his own executioner, since, according to the good or bad use he makes of his freedom, he will be happy or unhappy. The consequences of his acts are sometimes slow in coming. In this world we may witness many things; we may see the guilty stifle their consciences, scoff at the law and finally sink into

honored graves; and again we may behold a just man a perpetual strike to calumny and all types of adversity. Such are examples of things that necessitate other lives to come – that the principle of justice may find its application and the being's moral status its equilibrium. Without this necessary complement, this present life would be devoid of meaning and most of our acts would be senseless.

Free, but Accountable for One's Actions.²⁴

Emmanuel

To those who ask if the human being is free, we will answer affirmatively.

However, let us add that the individual is free, but accountable, and can fulfill whatever one desires, but will inevitably be connected to the fruit of one's own actions.

In order to clarify the subject as much as possible, let us briefly examine some areas of planting and harvesting, or better yet, of free-will and destiny, in which the incarnate spirit acts in the world.

OWNERSHIP - *the individual is free to retain any possessions that terrestrial legislation allows, in accordance with one's diligence in the action or one's provisional right, and will be considered a respectable caretaker by the superior forces of life if one employs them for the benefit of all; but, if one abuses them, causing a lack of resources for one's fellow beings, in order to favor one's own excesses, the individual will face, as a consequence of this, the series of trials with which one will learn to light in oneself the light of abnegation.*

BUSINESS - *the individual is free to perform whatever transactions that one values, and will receive the title of benefactor if one takes care to deal in the best interests of one's clientele; but, if the individual destroys the economy of others with the aim of obtaining unnecessary profits, causing evident damage to others, the person will face, as a consequence of this, the series of trials with which one will learn to light in oneself the light of righteousness.*

STUDY - *the individual is free to read and write, to teach or study, everything one desires, and will achieve the position of scholar if the individual mobilizes one's cultural resources to assist those who share one's terrestrial existence; but, if the individual employs the values of intelligence to support evil, deteriorating the existence*

of fellow members of humanity with the objective of accentuating one's own pride, the individual will face, as a consequence of this, the series of trials with which one will learn to light in oneself the light of discernment.

WORK - *the individual is free to embrace the tasks which one affects, and will be deemed a laborer of progress if one contributes in the construction of general happiness; but, if the individual misuses the gift of undertaking and acting, espousing disturbing and depressing activities to gratify one's less worthy interests, the individual will face, as a consequence of this, the series of trials with which one will learn to light in oneself the light of service to one's fellow beings.*

SEX - *the individual is free to give one's energies and sexual impulses the direction that one prefers, and will be deemed a vehicle of blessings when one uses them for the healthy protection of the home, the formation of the family, either as father or mother fulfilling one's duty, or, also, in support of works of art and culture, beneficence and elevation of the spirit; but, if to satisfy one's own senses the individual transforms the genesic resources into pain and disequilibrium, anguish or desperation for one's fellow beings, hurting other people's feelings or being disloyal and disrespectful to commitments and bonds of affection, after having proposed or accepted them, the individual will face, as a consequence of this, the series of trials with which one will learn to light in oneself the light of pure love.*

The individual is free even to receive or refuse life, but one will invariably collect the goods or evils that stem from one's own attitudes, before the concessions of the Divine Goodness.

We are all free to desire, to choose, to do and to get, but we are also obliged to face the results of our own actions.

It falls upon the Spiritist Doctrine to explain that the principles of Eternal Justice, in all the Universe, do not function simply on the basis of paradises and hells, punishments and privileges of exterior order, but, above all, through the institution of reincarnation, in us, with us, next to us and for us.

It was because of this that Jesus, understanding that there is no right without obligation, nor balance without a clear conscience, clearly stated: "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

6

***SUICIDE, LIFE AFTER DEATH AND
REINCARNATION***

The knowledge we acquire about the existence of a life after death is extraordinarily beneficial for the preservation of our mental health.

Only when we understand that we are today incarnate spirits in process of evolution, will we be able to deal successfully with the misfortunes encountered throughout the physical existence.

The calm and resignation that can be achieved according to the way in which we view life on Earth, in addition to our confidence in the future provides us with serenity, which is the best preventive measure to counteract suicide and insanity.

If the occurrences of this world are looked upon in the manner which Spiritism regards them, all the problems and deceptions, which under other circumstances could instigate desperation, could be accepted with more tranquility, and at times even with happiness.

It is obvious then, that this inner strength provides us with a shield against these incidents, thereby, protecting us from shocks of the mind, which could otherwise cause us serious disturbances.

For those who believe with certainty that they will only be unhappy for a day, and that the days following would be much improved, it is easier to accept life's trials with patience.

We only feel desperation when we cannot see an immediate solution to our sufferings. But, mull this question over in your mind, what is a lifetime when compared to eternity? Is it not less than a day?

But to those who do not believe in eternity or who judge that everything ends with the termination of the physical existence, or for the unfortunate and the afflicted, death appears to be the only simple solution to eliminate their sorrow.

Expecting to feel nothing, it seems only natural and even logical for them to shorten their misery through suicide. However, those who turn away or disregard the commitments they had previously made are victims of self-deception.

What truly occurs at the moment of death? How does the spirit free itself from its prison of the flesh? What impressions and what sensations await it at this dread time? This is what we should all like to know since we must, each one of us, undergo this ordeal.

Happily, spirits in great numbers have come to enlighten us, where religion and philosophy had left us in ignorance. They teach us that the entrance into the new life evokes a great variety of sensations, which will vary according to the degree of excellence of the spirit. The knowledge of the spiritual future and the study of the laws that govern disincarnation are of much benefit in preparing us for death. They may render our last hours easier, facilitate our liberation and enable us to place ourselves more readily in that new world which opens to us.

The separation is almost invariably slow and the extrication of the soul takes place very gradually. Sometimes it begins a long while before death sets in, and is only complete when the last fluidic ties that unites the

body to the perispirit²¹ are sundered. The impression experienced by the soul is more painful and prolonged since these ties are stronger and more numerous. The soul, permanent cause of life and sensation, experiences all the commotion and all the rending of the material body.

Painful to some and full of anguish to others, death comes like a sweet slumber followed by an enchanting awakening. The extrication is rapid and the crossing is easy to him who is already detached from the things of this world, who has fulfilled his duties and aspires to spiritual life. On the other hand, a prolonged agony and struggle await the spirit attached to the things of the Earth that has courted only material pleasure, neglecting to prepare for life's irrevocable journey.

In any event, however, the separation of soul and body is followed by a period of trouble, brief for the righteous and good spirit, who soon awakens to all the beauties of the heavenly life, but which is very long - sometimes spanning years - for the liable souls, impregnated with gross fluids.

In a general way, the liberation of the soul is less painful after a long illness, which has the effect of gradually loosening the carnal bonds. Sudden and violent death, occurring when the organic life is in full flow, causes a painful rending of the soul and casts it into a state of prolonged commotion. Suicides falls prey to horrible sensations. For years they endure the anguish of the last hour, and discover with terror that they have exchanged their earthly sufferings for others that are worse.

²¹ **Perispirit:** From the Greek, Peri means surrounding. It is the subtle body of the spirit. It serves as interface between the spirit and the physical body. Also known as spiritual body, astral body or double.

To borrow the expression of a spirit, *he who commits suicide evades suffering but to encounter torture*. Each of us has duties and a mission to fulfill on Earth; trials to endure for our own good and improvement. To seek to evade these and to liberate ourselves before our time from human suffering is to violate natural law; and every violation of this law brings down a terrible reaction upon the violator.

Suicide is not a way out of physical suffering. The spirit remains bound to the carnal body, which it thought to destroy; slowly it suffers from every phase of decomposition, and its painful sensations are multiplied rather than diminished. Far from shortening its trial, it indefinitely prolongs it; the disturbance and the uneasiness is endured long after the destruction of the material envelope itself. And more than this, the spirit will be obliged to again undergo the same trials from which by death it thought to escape, and which its past had occasioned. It will have to endure these under worse conditions, to retrace step by step the rocky path, and for that, to still undergo a more painful incarnation than that from which it sought to flee.

Of course there are aggravating and attenuating circumstances in suicides. But no matter what the original cause may be, there is no other solution for the victim, but to face life, and its vicissitudes once again, with aggravating factors they had not anticipated.

We must bear in mind that no one can escape from this life without having to face it over again in a future incarnation.

Total incredulity, simply doubting the future, or having materialistic ideas are, in fact, the greatest of all incitements towards suicide because they cause *moral cowardice*. When scientists, upheld by the authority of their knowledge do their best to prove to those who will listen or read, that we have nothing to expect after death,

they are in fact leading us to deduce that if we are wretched, then the best thing to do is to kill ourselves? What can they offer as a reason to rebuke this consequence? What compensation do they have to offer? What hope can they promise? None at all, except nothingness! From this we could conclude that if nothingness is the only heroic remedy, the only avenue, then it would be better to seek it immediately than to delay further, in order to suffer less.

So then, the dissemination of a materialistic doctrine is a poison, which inoculates the idea of suicide into the majority of those who actually commit this act, and those who become disciples of such doctrines assume a tremendous responsibility. With Spiritism, however, this doubt of nothingness is impossible and the outlook on life changes completely. For the believer, the existence is prolonged after the so-called death, although in varied conditions. From this belief stems greater patience and resignation naturally leading all thought away from the idea of suicide. This then is the process, which enables us to acquire *moral courage*.

In the same manner, Spiritism produces yet another equally positive result, one which is perhaps even more decisive. It introduces us to the actual suicides, who inform us of their unhappiness, thereby proving that no one can violate God's laws with impunity.²² God prohibits the individual to cut short one's own life. Amongst these suicides there are those whose suffering, although temporary and not eternal, is nonetheless terrible and of such a nature as to make those who might be considering this option to truly reflect, before departing this world sooner than God ordains. The spiritist, however, has various reasons to be against the idea of suicide: the certainty of a future life in which one knows that one's

²² See chapter 7 on communications from spirits of suicides.

happiness will be proportionate to one's misfortunes and to the degree of resignation shown while on Earth; the certainty that if the abbreviation of one's life will in fact reap the exact opposite of the one desired goal. By liberating oneself from a trial in this manner, one would consequently encounter another far worse trial in its place, longer and more difficult. The spiritist knows that one is mistaken in imagining that by killing oneself one will reach Heaven more rapidly; one knows that suicide is an obstacle which will interfere with one's joining those one loves and has hopes of meeting on the other side of life. The consequences of suicide, which bring only deceptions, are against one's own interest. For these reasons alone, the number of people already saved from suicide is quite considerable. From this we may hopefully conclude that when men and women are Spiritists, or have the knowledge of the spiritist principles, suicide will cease to exist.

When comparing the results of materialist doctrines with those of Spiritism, on this one point alone we are forced to recognize that whereas the logic of the first leads towards suicide, the second prevents suicide.

The customary practice of prayer, constructive thoughts, noble acts and work will strengthen and enhance good positive energies. They will protect us from both physical and spiritual aggression, which is the basic cause of multiple imbalances, and a cause for our misery.

Hence, if your day appears to bring gloom and is frightening to you, wait for tomorrow. Wait a little longer even when everything seems to drive you to despair.

Remember, Divine Providence has avenues and ways of clarifying situations and removing difficulties or destruction from our path that are unknown to us.

Love life and enjoy the experience of living even when you are misunderstood and undergoing tremendous and inexplicable sacrifices.

The Immortality of the Soul

Let us reflect on the sad fate of those unfortunate souls who have resorted to the act of suicide. Not being aware of the immortality of the soul, they had assumed that they would be able to evade or bypass their physical sufferings by putting an end to their lives. They lacked the faith and the illuminating enlightenment. They were only prompted and guided by their individual selfish intent of evading the confrontation with their present trials.

If only they could have known about the true condition of their immortal spirits, they would certainly have gathered more strength and courage and would have tried to withstand the vicissitudes of life.

But no, their lives on Earth had been exclusively consecrated to material matters. They lacked the knowledge that the present state of our world seems to deny to the majority of its inhabitants.

Notwithstanding, the teachings of Jesus had been so clear and precise about it. He repeatedly stated that there are many mansions in the Father's house, demonstrating the plurality of inhabited worlds. In addition, you will remember that he said to Nicodemus that it is necessary to be born from water and spirit, thereby bringing to light the presentation of the principle of reincarnation.

The humble advice we can offer to those who are suffering, is to resort to the sacred and miraculous resources of prayer in order to gather the much needed strength and beseech assistance and spiritual aid, when in need. This step is imperative in order to avoid enlisting in the darkened rows of suicides.

It is crucial to bear in mind that we do not go through life's experiences in vain. All events or occurrences that we confront serve toward aiding us in our spiritual growth and progress.

Life goes on and exists forever and ever. It is important to keep this imprinted in our minds in order to strive for a better future, maintaining the teachings of Jesus as the basis for your transformation.

Do not become instruments of suffering to yourselves as well as to those whom you love and who love you.

Do not inflict upon them the agonizing daily pain of your chosen absence and your apparent disregard for their love and their understanding of you.

Everything in life passes, the good times, as well as the excruciating moments.

No obstacle should be considered too difficult to be represented as an insurmountable barrier, justifying the desire to put an end to life.

Nothing could justify the absence of a father in the bosom of the family who logically requires his care, his love and guidance.

Nothing could justify a son or a daughter imposing on his/her parents the excruciating pain of no further enjoyment of his/her physical presence, thus missing the marvelous experience of a continued existence.

In fact, once we return to the spiritual world, we are, as a rule, quite eager to reincarnate and to return in order to fulfill the unfinished tasks that we left behind.

Life is the most exquisite present one can receive and experience. It is truly a gift from God, our Father, to us.

Think about it and gather all your stamina so as to endure whatever unbearable moments you face, because just as the clouded skies threaten the daylight, our noble sun shuts out the darkness to provide us with light.



Now, just a few words to those who have lost their loved ones through suicide.

We can understand how your hearts must feel broken, but you have to draw upon your inner strength in order to withstand the suffering of those who have recently departed through your prayers.

We have previously stated that their forthcoming destiny in the spiritual world will be exceedingly sad. They will, necessarily, have to face the consequences of their actions. However, we must never forget that above all, our Father is love. He does not leave us abandoned and we will always have the opportunity of another fresh start, in the future. God also loves the unfortunate ones, who are now suffering the consequences of their ill-advised acts. They are like the lost son of the parable that upon returning home is received by his father with much joy (Luke 15:11-32). Once they become cognizant and attain the true realization of their prior incorrect decisions and genuinely regret having revolted against life, they will once again feel the love of God and will be guided to a new beginning, a new incarnation. They will be supported not only by God's love but also by yours, who are at present shedding tears due to the agonizing pain of their sudden departure. They will once again require your devotion and dedication so that they can receive the necessary strength to pursue the path that will ultimately lead them to redemption.

Love and forgiveness has to flow from our hearts to all.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM SPIRITS OF SUICIDES²³

In this chapter, we felt it was important to present some communications from suicidal spirits received through mediums and compiled by Allan Kardec in the book *Heaven and Hell*. These may help readers to better familiarize themselves with processes undergone by suicidals in the spiritual plane.

The Suicide at the Samaritaine

On April 7th 1858, about seven o'clock in the evening, a man of some fifty years of age, respectably dressed, entered the great bathing establishment of the Samaritaine, in Paris, and ordered a bath. The waiter on duty, after an interval of a couple of hours, finding that the individual in question did not ring for him, determined to enter his bathroom, to see if he were ill. On doing this, he beheld a hideous spectacle; the unhappy stranger had cut his throat with a razor, and his blood had mingled with the water of his bath. The identity of the stranger not having been established, the corpse was conveyed to the Morgue. The spirit of this man, evoked six days afterwards at a meeting of the Paris Society, replied as follows:

1. Evocation – (The Medium's Guide) Wait a moment; he is here.

2. Where are you now?

²³ Excerpts from the book *Heaven and Hell* – by Allan Kardec, published by SAB – Spiritist Alliance for Books - 2003

A. I don't know. Tell me where I am.

3. You are in an assembly of persons who take part in investigations about spirits, and who feel kindly towards you.

A. Tell me if I am alive...I am stifled in this coffin!

His soul, though separated from the body, is still entirely plunged in what may be termed the vortex of corporeal matter; his terrestrial ideas are still strong; he does not suppose himself to be dead.

4. Who advised you to come to us?

A. I felt that I should be relieved by coming.

5. What motive led you to commit suicide?

A. Am I dead?...Not at all!...I inhabit my body...You cannot imagine how much I suffer!...I am stifling...Oh, that some compassionate hand would finish killing me!

6. Why did you not leave some indication to show whom you were?

A. I was abandon by everybody; *I fled from suffering to find torture!*

7. Have you still the same motives for remaining unknown?

A. Yes, do not force the red-hot iron into a bleeding wound!

8. Will you tell us your name, your age, your profession, your residence?

A. No, *nothing*.

9. Had you a family, a wife, children?

A. I was abandon by all; no one loved me.

10. What had you done, that no one loved you?

A. How many are like me! A man may be abandoned in the midst of his family, if no one cares for him.

11. At the moment when you committed suicide, did you feel no hesitation?

A. I thirsted for death...I expected to find myself at rest.

12. How could the thought of the future have failed to turn you from your project?

A. I had ceased to believe in a future; I was without hope. Belief in a future means *hope!*

13. What reflections passed through your mind at the moment when you found your life becoming extinct?

A. I did not reflect; I only felt...But my life is not extinct...My soul is linked to my body...*I feel the worms that are devouring me.*

14. What feeling did you experience at the moment when your death had taken place?

A. *Has it done so?*

15. Did you suffer pain at the moment when your life became extinct?

A. Less than I suffered afterwards. It was the body only that suffered at that moment.

(Question addressed to the spirit of Saint Louis.)

16. What does he mean by saying that the moment of his death was less painful than afterwards?

A. The spirit was throwing off a load of which he was weary; the pain he suffered in doing so was therefore a source of satisfaction to him.

17. Does suicide always lead to such a state as that in which he is?

A. Yes, he who commits suicide is linked to his body to the end of the period appointed for his earthly life. Natural death is the freeing of the soul from the bonds of the earthly life; suicide leaves the links between the soul and body intact.

18. Is this state the same in cases of accidental death, from causes independent of the will that shorten the natural duration of a life?

A. No. Such deaths are very different from suicide. The spirit is only responsible for his voluntary actions.

This doubt concerning the fact of their death is very common among those whose decease is recent, especially if, during life, they have not raised their affections above material things. This phenomenon appears strange at first sight, but is easily explained. When a person is thrown, for the first time, into the somnambulistic state, he almost always, on being asked whether he is asleep, replies "No," and his reply is perfectly natural; the seeming error is with the questioner, who has employed the wrong term in putting his question. The term *sleep*, in ordinary parlance, implies the suspension of all the sensitive faculties; consequently, the somnambulist, who thinks, sees, feels, and has the consciousness of his moral freedom, does not suppose himself to be asleep, and, in fact, he is not *asleep* in the usual acceptance of that term. He therefore replies by a negative until he has become familiarized with the special use of the term in question. It is the same with one who has recently died. For him, *death* means the annihilation of his being; but, like the somnambulist, he sees, feels, speaks; to himself, therefore, he does not seem to be dead, and he denies being dead, until he has acquired the comprehension of his new state of being. This state of illusion is always more or less painful, because it is not a true, complete state of existence, but a hybrid one, causing the spirit to feel more or less uncertain and anxious about himself and his position. In the example just cited, it is a terrible torture, through the spirit's sensation of the worms that are devouring his body, and through its persistence, which will continue until the end of the time to which the man would have lived if he had not cut short the normal union of his soul and body. This state is frequent among those

who have committed suicide, but it does not present the same conditions in all cases; it varies in duration and in intensity according to the circumstances that aggravate or attenuate the crime. The sensation of worms and of bodily decomposition, moreover, is not confined exclusively to those who have committed suicide; it is frequent among those who have lived with the bodily life rather than with the life of the soul. It may be laid down, as a principle, *that no fault goes unpunished*; but there is no uniform and absolute rule in the *methods* of providential punishment.

François Simon Louvet (of Le Havre)

The following communication was given spontaneously at a spiritist meeting, at Le Havre, on February 12th, 1863:

“Have pity on a poor wretch who has so long been suffering such terrible tortures! Oh! Emptiness...space...I am falling! I am falling! Help me!... My God, my life was so miserable! I was very poor; I was so often hungry in my old age; it was for that, that I took to drinking, and so grew ashamed and sick of my life... I wanted to die, and I threw myself...Oh, my God! what a moment! Why could I not have waited a little longer, since I was so near the end of my days? Pray for me, that I may not always have *this dreadful void underneath me!* I shall be dashed to pieces on the stones!...I beseech you, help me, you who know the horrors that are suffered by those who are no longer on the Earth; I address myself to you although you do not know me, because I suffer so much...Why ask me for proofs? I am wretched, is not that enough? If I were hungry, instead of having to bear this horrible misery, so much more terrible, though invisible for you, you would not hesitate to relieve me by giving me a morsel of bread. I ask you to pray for me...I cannot stay

any longer...Ask the happy ones who are here, and you will know whom I was. Pray for me.”

FRANÇOIS SIMON LOUVET

(The Medium's Guide) – He, who has just communicated to you, my child, is a poor wretch who had to undergo the trial of poverty upon the Earth; but he took disgust to life; his courage failed him, and the unfortunate creature, instead of looking upwards as he should have done, gave himself up to drunkenness. Having reached the lowest depth of despair, he put an end to his ill-borne trial by throwing himself from the Tower of Francis the First, on July 22nd, 1857. Take pity on his miserable soul, that has advanced but little, but that has acquired, nevertheless, sufficient knowledge of the future life to suffer and to desire a new trial. Pray to God that this favor may be granted him, and you will do a good deed.

Researches having been made, there was found, in the *Journal du Havre* of July 23rd, 1857, an article of which the substance was as follows:

“Yesterday, at 4 p.m., the people on the pier were painfully affected by a frightful incident; an individual threw himself from the Tower and was dashed to pieces on the stones. It was an old hauler, whose habits of drunkenness had led him to commit suicide. His name is Francois Simon Louvet. His body was carried to the house of one of his daughters, in the Rue de la Corderie; he was sixty-seven years of age.”

This man, who had been dead for six years, still saw himself falling from the Tower and being dashed to pieces on the stones. He was terrified at the void beneath him; he shuddered at the shock that was awaiting him...and, all this, for six weary years! How much longer will his agony continue? He knows not; and this uncertainty increases his anguish. Is not this state as horrible as Hell and its flames? Who has revealed these punishments? Have they

been invented by human imagination? No; it is they who are enduring them who come and describe them, as others come and describe their joys. And they often do this spontaneously, without anyone having thought of them, which exclude all idea of their narratives being due to the fancy of the medium.

A Mother and Her Son

In March 1865, the son of Mr. C—, in business in a little town near Paris, had come home to his parents, dangerously ill. This young man, in his twenty-first year, feeling that his last moment had come, called his mother to him, and found the strength to kiss her once more. The mother, bathed in tears, replied to his kiss by saying, “Go before me, my son; I shall not be long in following you!” As she said this, she rushed out of the room, her face hidden in her hands.

Those who witnessed this painful scene supposed the mother’s exclamation to have been only the outburst of a grief that would be softened by time and reason; and, the young man having expired immediately afterwards, they tried to find her, to inform her of the event. She was found dead in the garret, where she had hanged herself on quitting her son. The funeral of the two took place together.

(Evocation of the Son, several days after the event)

Q. Are you aware of the death of your mother, who killed herself in despair at losing you?

A. Yes, and but for the grief which has been caused me by her fatal act, I should be perfectly happy. My poor dear mother! She could not bear the trial of this momentary separation, and she has taken, in the hope of being reunited with the son she loved so dearly, the road which must necessarily keep her far from him, and, alas! for a long, long time! She has thus delayed, indefinitely,

the reunion that *would have so soon taken place* if her soul had been filled with submission to the designs of the Almighty, and if she had resigned herself, with humility and repentance to the trial that she had to undergo, and the expiation that would have purified her!

Pray, oh pray for her! And you, mothers, who are touched by the sad recital of her death, take care not to imitate her fault! Do not imagine that her love, for the son who was her joy and her pride, was greater than that of other mothers; no, it was not that she loved more than others, but she lacked courage and resignation. Mothers, who hear me, when you behold the eyes of your children closed in death, remember that, like Christ, they have climbed to the top of the Calvary from which they will rise into the glory of the higher life!

Benjamin C—.

(Evocation of the Mother) – I must see my son! Have you the power to give him back to me?...How cruel they are!...they have taken him from me, to carry him away into the light, and they have left me in darkness!...I must and will have him...he belongs to me!...is a mother’s love nothing?...What! To have carried him nine months in my bosom, to have nourished him with my milk, building up his flesh, his blood with my blood...to have guided his first steps...to have taught him to lisp the holy name of God and the sweet name of *mother*...to have made of him a man, full of activity, intelligence, honesty, uprightness, and filial affection...and to lose him just when he was beginning to fulfill the hopes we had cherished in regard to him, and when a brilliant career was opening before him! No; God is not just; He is not the God of mothers; He understands nothing of their despair and their sorrow...and when I killed myself, that I may not quit my child, they take him from me a second time!...My son! My son! *Where are you?*

The Evoker - Poor mother! We feel for your sorrow; but you have taken the worst of all means for rejoining your son. Suicide is a crime in the sight of God, and you ought to have foreseen that He punishes every infraction of His laws. Your punishment is to be deprived of the sight of your child.

The Mother - I thought that God was more merciful than men! I did not believe in His Hell, but in the eternal reunion of souls who have loved as we loved. I was mistaken...He is not a just and good God, for He has not understood the immensity of my grief and of my love! Ah! Who will give me back my son? Have I lost him forever? Take pity on me, O God!"

The Evoker - You must try to be calmer. Remember, if there is any way of obtaining a sight of your child, it is not through blaspheming God, as you are doing. Instead of attracting to yourself the Divine pity, you are preparing still severer punishment for yourself.

The Mother - They told me I should never see him again; I understood that they were taking him away to Paradise. Am I, then, in Hell?...the Hell of mothers?...It exists; I see it but too plainly!

The Evoker - Your son is not lost to you forever. Believe me, you will certainly see him again; but you must deserve this favor by your submission to the Divine will, whereas, by your rebellion, you must delay that moment indefinitely. Listen to me; God is indefinitely good, but He is infinitely just. He never punishes without a cause; and, if He visited you with a great sorrow in your earthly life, it must have been because you had deserved it. Your son's death was a trial of your resignation; unhappily you succumbed to it during your life, and now you are succumbing to it again, after your death! How can you suppose that God will favor His children while they rebel against Him? But He is not inexorable; He always welcomes the repentance of the guilty. If you had

accepted, without murmuring and with humility, the trial imposed on you by a momentary separation, and if you had patiently awaited the time appointed for you to quit the Earth, you would at once have seen your son, on entering the world in which you are. He would have come to meet you with open arms, and you would have had the delight of seeing him radiant with joy at meeting you again after a period of absence. What you did, and what you are still doing, puts a barrier between you and him. Don't imagine that he is far off, in the depths of space - no - he is nearer to you than you suppose; but he is hidden from you by an impenetrable veil. He sees you; he loves you still; he is grieved for the painful position in which you are placed by your lack of confidence in God; he longs, with all the force of his affection for you, for the happy moment when he will be permitted to show himself to you; it depends entirely on yourself to hasten or to delay that moment. Raise your heart to God, now, repeating the prayer I am going to say for you: "Forgive me, O my God! for having doubted Your justice and Your goodness! I acknowledge that, if You have punished me, I must have deserved the punishment. Deign, O my God! to accept my repentance and my submission to Your holy will!"

The Mother - What a blessed gleam of hope you have made to shine into my soul! It has lighted up the night in which I was plunged! Thanks; *I will continue to pray.* Farewell.

C—

In the case of this spirit, suicide did not produce the illusion that leads one who is dead to think himself still living. On the contrary, the mother's soul is perfectly aware of its situation. In some cases, the punishment of suicide consists on that illusion, in the persistence of the links that attach the spirit to the body. The woman in question voluntarily quitted the Earth to follow her son

into the other life; it was, therefore, necessary that she would know herself to be in that other life, in order that she might be punished by her inability to find him. Her punishment was, precisely, to know that she was no longer living the life of the flesh, and to have the consciousness of her real position. We see, therefore, that each fault is punished by the special circumstances which accompany its punishment, and that there is no uniform and unvarying chastisement for faults of the same kind.

An Atheist

Mr. J. B. D— was a man of considerable learning, but imbued with materialistic ideas, and believing neither in God nor the soul. He was evoked, a couple of years after his death, by the Paris Society, at the request of one of his relatives.

1. Evocation. – A. I suffer! I am damned.

2. We have been asked to call you by relatives of yours, who wish to know your state; please tell us whether our evocation is agreeable to you or painful?

A. Painful.

3. Your death was voluntary?

A. Yes.

The spirit wrote with great difficulty; his writing was large, irregular, convulsive, and almost illegible. At first, he betrayed anger, breaking the pencil, and tearing the paper.

4. Calm yourself. We will pray to God for you.

A. I am forced to believe that God exists.

5. What motive led you to destroy yourself?

A. The utter weariness of *a life without hope*.

We can understand that one who is *without hope* should be tempted to commit suicide, which appears to offer to him, who is unhappy, an escape from misfortunes that he has no motive for continuing to bear; but Spiritism, which *reveals to us a future and gives us a firm foundation of hope*, not only destroys all temptation to self-destruction, but shows us that, through suicide, we only escape a minor ill to fall into trouble a hundred times more severe. For this reason, Spiritism has removed numbers of people from the road of self-destruction. Great is the guilt of those who endeavor, by scientific sophistries and shallow reasoning, to give credence to the profoundly discouraging idea, source of so much evil and of so many crimes, that everything is ended with our present life! They will be held responsible, not only for their own errors, but for all the evils of which they will have been the cause.

6. Have you desired to be liberated from the vicissitudes of life? Have you gained something from it? Are you happier now?

A. Why is it that a state of nothingness does not exist?

7. Would you be kind enough to describe your present situation to the best of your ability?

A. I suffer when I feel obliged to believe in everything that I used to deny. My soul is in pain, horribly tormented.

8. How have you arrived at the materialistic ideas that you had during your life time?

A. In another existence I had been evil and my spirit was condemned to suffer the torments of doubt, during my life, under these impulses I committed suicide.

Here you have a series of ideas. Many times, we ask ourselves, how can there be materialists, since having lived in the spiritual world, they should have the intuition of this. Well, it is precisely that intuition that is denied to certain spirits who still maintain pride within and have not repented from their errors. The trials of those spirits consist in acquiring during their corporeal existence, and from their personal reasoning, proof of the existence of God and of a future life, and who incessantly have before their eyes; more frequently, the insolence of not admitting to anything that contradicts their personal ideas and their knowledge still predominates, and they suffer this sorrow until their pride is overcome and finally surrender under the evidence.

9. When you had drowned yourself, what did you suppose was going to become of you? What reflections passed through your mind at the moment?

A. None at all; I seemed to be in the midst of nothingness. Afterwards, I saw that, not having undergone the whole of my punishment; I should still have to suffer severely.

10. Are you now convinced of the existence of God, of the soul, of the future life?

A. Alas! The torments I suffer have convinced me of all that, only too surely!

11. Have you seen your brother?

A. No.

12. Why not?

A. Why should we bring our torments together? Happiness unites, but unhappiness separates, alas!

13. Should you be glad to see your brother, whom we could call to your side?

A. No, no! I am too low for that.

14. Why do you refuse to let us call him?

A. Because he is not happy, any more than I am.

15. You dread the sight of him; yet it could only do you good.

A. No, at some future time, not now.

16. Is there anything you would wish to have said to your relatives?

A. Tell them to pray for me.

17. It appears that, in the circle in which you lived during your life, there are many who share the opinions you then held; have you anything to say to them on that subject?

A. Ah! The unfortunate fellows! May they learn to believe in another life! It is the very best thing I can possibly wish them! If they could see my sad position, it would set them thinking!

(Evocation of the brother, who had professed the same atheistic principles during his life, but who did not commit suicide. Although unhappy, he was calm; his writing was clear and legible.)

18. Evocation. – May the picture of our sufferings be a useful lesson for you, convincing you that there is another life, in which we expiate our faults and our incredulity.

19. Do you and your brother see one another?

A. No, he hides himself from me.

It may be asked how it can be possible for spirits to hide themselves from one another, as there are, in the spirit-world, no physical obstacles, no hiding-places, in which they can shut themselves off from each other's sight. It must be remembered that everything, in the spirit-world, is in keeping with the fluidic nature of the beings by whom it is inhabited. It is only the higher spirits whose perceptions are unlimited; among spirits of lower degree,

they are restricted, and fluidic obstacles produce, upon them, the same effect, as do material obstacles upon men. Spirits remove themselves from one another's sight by an action of their will upon their perispiritual envelope and the fluids around them. But Providence, which watches over individuals, leaves, or takes from them this faculty, according to the moral qualities of each. It is for them a punishment or a reward, as the case may be.

20. You are calmer than your brother; can you give us a more precise idea of your sufferings?

A. Upon the Earth, do you not suffer in your self-love, in your pride, when you are compelled to acknowledge your mistakes? Does not your mind revolt against the idea of humiliating yourself before him who proves to you that you are in error? What, then, must be the suffering of the spirit who, having believed through an entire existence that nothing exists for us after death, finds himself brought face to face with the reality of the other life? He is overwhelmed with shame, with anxiety, and with remorse, for having so long lost sight of the existence of a Being so good, so indulgent! His state of mind is unbearable; he finds neither calm nor repose; and he only regains a little peace when the love of God has begun to touch him. For pride takes such hold of our unhappy spirit that it covers us as with a winding sheet; and it is only after a long time, and with the help of the prayers of our brothers, that we can throw off this fatal covering.

21. Do you mean your brothers of the Earth or of the spirit-world?

A. Both.

22. While we were talking with your brother, one of the persons present prayed for him; has this prayer been of use to him?

A. It will not be thrown away. If he rejects its help at present, he will have recourse to it by and by, when he

is ready to profit by the mercy of the Almighty, that divine *panacea*.

We see, here, another kind of punishment, but which is not the same in the case of all skeptics; viz., besides the suffering he endures, the mortification of admitting truths that he denied while alive. The spirit's present ideas show a certain amount of progress, in comparison with other spirits who persist in denying the existence of God. It is something, and a beginning of humility, to admit that one was mistaken; and it is highly probable that, in his next incarnation, the incredulity of this spirit will have given place to an *innate* belief in God and immortality.

The result of these two evocations having been transmitted to the person who had asked us to make them, we received from him the following reply:

“You cannot imagine how much good has been done by the evocation of my father-in-law and my uncle. We fully recognize their identity; the writing of the former is strikingly like what it was in life, especially during the last few months he spent with us, when it was jerky and illegible; the long strokes, many of the letters, and the signature, are exactly like his. The similarity of words, expressions, and style, is even more striking; for us, the authenticity of the communication is absolutely certain; the only change is his belief in God, the soul, and eternity, which he formerly denied. His brother's identity is equally evident; there is the immense difference between the atheist and the believer, but we recognize his character, his style, and the turn of his sentences. One word, especially, has struck us most forcibly, viz., ‘*panacea*’; he constantly employed it, to everybody, and about everything. We are, therefore, fully convinced of the authenticity of these communications; our faith in spiritist truths will thus be strengthened, and many of our

friends will be benefited by them, for I have shown them to several persons, all of whom have been greatly struck with their evident veracity. But some of our skeptical friends, who share the former opinions of my two relatives, would like to have some more categorical replies; they would like Mr. D—— for instance, to say where he drowned himself, where he is buried, etc. To satisfy and convince them, could you not evoke him again, and, if so, would you have the goodness to ask him the following question? – Where and how did you commit suicide? How long did his body remain in the water? At what place was it found? Where was it buried? And what were the circumstances of his funeral?

“I beg you to get him to reply, categorically, to these questions, essential for those who still hesitate to believe; such replies will do an immense deal of good. I write in haste, that my letter may reach you on Friday, so that you may make this evocation at the *séance* of the Society which will take place on that day.”

We have given this letter on account of the affirmation of identity contained in it. We add our reply, for the information of those who are not familiar with the subject of spirit-communication:

“The questions you request us to ask of the spirit of your father-in-law are dictated by a laudable desire to convince unbelievers; since we cannot see in you any manifestation of doubt or curiosity; but a fuller acquaintance with the subject of evocation would have shown you that it is not possible to obtain, from a spirit, the categorical replies you desire, unless he, himself, is willing to give them. We have no power over spirits; they reply to us if they will, as they will, and, as often as they can. Their freedom of action being greater than it was in life, they are still better able, than they then were, to elude the moral pressure we may attempt to bring to bear upon them. The best proofs of the identity of a spirit are those

that he gives spontaneously, of his own accord, or which are furnished by circumstances; and it is, in general, useless to try to obtain otherwise. Your relative has proved his identity to your satisfaction; it is therefore probable that he would refuse to reply to questions which he might well regard as superfluous, and as being intended to satisfy the curiosity of people about whom he cares but little. Just as other spirits on such occasions he could respond: “Why ask me about things you already know?” The state of suffering and confusion in which he still is would naturally render him unwilling to make such an effort; it would be like trying to make a sick man think and speak, and recount the details of his life, which would certainly show a want of consideration for his position.

“As for the results you hope for, they would most likely not be obtained. The proofs of identity already furnished are of much greater value, because they were spontaneous, and because there was nothing that could have suggested them to the medium’s mind; if the skeptics you allude to are not convinced by them, they would be still less so by answers to questions decided on beforehand, and which they might regard as due to connivance. There are people whom nothing can convince; if they saw your relative, in person, with their own eyes, they would think themselves the sport of hallucination.

“As to your wish to have this evocation made the day your letter has come to hand, I must remind you that spirits do not always answer to our call. They only come when they will and can, when the medium suits them, when the place, the surroundings, and the persons present, are agreeable to them; and we can never be sure beforehand of all these conditions, which, nevertheless, are indispensable to the success of an evocation.”

Anthony Bell

A bank clerk in Canada, committed suicide on February 28th, 1865

One of our correspondents, a physician (who was also an apothecary) in the same town, gave us the following information concerning him:

“I knew Bell for over twenty years. He was a man of blameless life, and the father of a numerous family. Some time back, he took it into his head that he had bought poison in my shop and had killed someone with it. He repeatedly entreated me to tell him the date of this imaginary purchase, and, never failed, on these occasions, to go off into a terrible fit of excitement. He lost his sleep, accused himself of murder, and gave himself up to despair. His family was in a continual state of anxiety from 4 p.m. when he returned home, to 9 a.m. when he went back to the Bank, where he kept his books with perfect correctness, never making the slightest error in his accounts. He frequently said that *a being that he felt inside him* made him keep his books with order and regularity. My assurances that he had never bought any poison in my shop would stagger him for a moment; but, when he seemed to be convinced of his error, he was sure to cry, again, ‘No, no! You want to deceive me...*but I remember...*and what I say is true!’”

He was evoked, in Paris, on April 17th, 1865, at the request of his friend.

1. Evocation – A. What do you want with me? To cross-question me? It is unnecessary; I am ready to confess everything.

2. We have no wish to trouble you with indiscreet questions. We only wish to know what your position in the spirit-world is, and whether we can be of use to you.

A. Ah! If you could, how thankful I should be! I have my crime in horror, and I am dreadfully unhappy!

3. Our prayers, I trust, will soften your suffering. You appear to us to be on the right road, for you repent; and repentance is the beginning of rehabilitation. God, whose mercy is infinite, always takes pity on the wrongdoer who repents. Pray with us. (Here, we say the prayer for those who have committed suicide, in *The Gospel According to Spiritism*.²⁴) Will you, now, tell us what the crime you alluded to is? That avowal, made with humility, will be counted in your favor.

A. Let me thank you, first of all, for the hope you have given me! Long ago, alas! I lived in a town whose walls are washed by the Mediterranean. I loved a beautiful girl who responded to my affection; but I was poor, and her family rejected my suit. She announced to me her approaching marriage with the son of a merchant whose trade exceeded beyond the two seas, and I was dismissed. Maddened with grief, I determined to kill myself after having glutted my vengeance by assassinating my abhorred rival. Violence, however, was repugnant to me; I shuddered at the thought of my intended crime, but my jealousy carried the day. On the evening before the marriage that was to give him my beloved, he died of poison administered by me, as an easier vengeance. Thus are explained the reminiscences that haunted me on my last life. Yes, I had lived already, and I must live again...O my God! take pity on my weakness and my tears!

4. We deplore the mistake that has delayed your advancement, and we heartily pity you; but you may be sure that, since you repent, God will have mercy on you. Please, tell us, did you carry out your intended suicide?

A. No, I confess, to my shame, hope awoke in my heart. I wished to enjoy the fruit of my crime, but my

²⁴ See prayer at the end of this book

remorse betrayed me. I expiated a moment of bewilderment by the most terrible punishment, for I was hung.

5. Had you any consciousness of that wicked deed in your last existence?

A. In the last years of that life, only, as I will explain. I was well-intentioned by nature; and, after having been subjected, in the spirit-world, like all homicides, to the torture of the incessant sight of my victim, which pursued me like an embodied remorse, I was delivered from it, after many long years, by my prayers and repentance. I then began a new earthly life (my last one), and lived it peacefully and timidly. I had a vague intuition of my native weakness and of my former fault, of which I had retained a latent remembrance. But an obsessing and vindictive spirit, the father of my victim, had little difficulty in getting me under his control, and in reviving in my mind, as in a magic mirror, the remembrance of the past. Influenced, alternately, by him and by the guide who watched over me, I was now the poisoner or the father of a family earning by his labor his children's bread. The occult action of this obsessing demon pushed me on to suicide. My guilt is great; but less than it would have been had I acted entirely of my own will. Self-killers of my class, who are too weak to resist obsessing spirits, are less guilty and less punished than those who take their own life from the sole prompting of their own will. Pray with me for the spirit who has influenced me so disastrously, that he may renounce his thirst of vengeance; and pray also for me, that I may acquire the strength and energy which will enable me to vanquish the temptation to voluntary suicide *to which, I am told, I shall be subjected in my next incarnation.*

6. (To the Medium's Guide) Can an obsessing spirit really drive a man to suicide?

A. Assuredly he can; *for obsession, which is, itself, a mode of trial*, may assume all forms; but this is no excuse for the deed. Man has always his free-will, and he is consequently free to yield to, or to resist, the suggestions to which he is exposed; when he succumbs, he does so of his own will. The spirit, however, is right in saying that he who does wrong at the instigation of another is less reprehensible and less punished than he who does wrong of his own movement; but he is not therefore acquitted of all blame, because, if he can be turned aside from the right road, it shows that he is not yet thoroughly grounded in rectitude.

7. How is it that, notwithstanding the prayers and repentance that had delivered this spirit from the torturing sight of his victim, he was subsequently pursued by the vengeance of the obsessing spirit in his last incarnation?

A. *Repentance*, as you know, *is only the indisputable preliminary to rehabilitation*; it does not suffice to deliver the guilty from the punishment of his wrongdoing. Providence does not content itself with promises; he who repents must prove, by his acts, the thoroughness of his return to goodness; it is for this reason that the spirit is subjected to new earthly trials that fortify its good resolutions while increasing his merits if he comes out of them victorious. He is exposed to the attacks of evil spirits *until the latter feel that he is strong enough to resist them*; when this is the case, they let him alone, because they know that their attempts would be useless.

The two last examples show us the renewing of the same trial, in successive incarnations, as long as the spirit fails to bear up against a given temptation. Anthony Bell shows us, moreover, a fact not less instructive, viz. that of a man pursued by the remembrance of a crime committed

in a former existence, as remorse and a warning. We thus see that our successive lives are part and parcel of each other; the justice and goodness of God are visibly manifested in the possibility of gradual amendment accorded to the wrongdoer, against whom the door of self-redemption is never shut. *The guilty one is punished by his fault itself*; and his punishment, far from being a vengeance on the part of the Almighty, is the means employed for ensuring his progress.

PAIN, LOSS, AND GUILTY²⁵

The second largest chapter in the book "*The Gospel According to Spiritism*" is Chapter V - Blessed are the Afflicted. It gives us a true course and explanation for pain. Jesus has been comforting us for long time, and the spirits who transmitted the Codification, via Kardec's sensibility, have interpreted this difficult and constant feature of our daily lives.

We often hear that Earth is a planet of expiation and trials. Without a doubt! However, it also is a wonderful planet of liberation, of opportunities for renewal, for restarting, and for growth.

No doubt, there is pain, and it is manifested in many forms: the pain of disease, love, separation, and so many others, especially, the pain from loss. We must try to understand it, and not look for easy formulas, escapist solutions, which only serve as pacifiers.

Loss is the greatest instrument of pain in this planet. We suffer the loss of loved ones, of power, love, health, money, or fame; we suffer the loss of things we no longer want... could it be that we are on Earth only to win, conquer, and acquire?!

²⁵ Excerpt form the booklet Know Thyself - Raising Individual Consciousness, prepared by the Spiritist Group Boa Nova.

The emotional mechanisms we use to deal with loss are extremely complex. As humans, we seek to always have; our ideal is to possess everything: good financial standing; constant and eternal affection of our loved ones; emotional stability, etc. Ah! How easy it is to deal with the haves, how difficult it is to deal with losses!

For instance, the loss of a loved one through the death is very delicate. The despair felt is related to a lack of Spiritual knowledge, lack of faith, and unreadiness for spiritual situations. Our true homeland is the spiritual world; we are here to learn, grow, redeem, and develop. When we arrive here, we know we have a round-trip ticket. It is necessary to demystify death; only matter dies and even then, it is a source of life.

When dealing with loss whatever the nature, we need to be aware that: nothing happens by chance, we never receive loads that we cannot carry. In the reincarnation process, the law of action and reaction is the great propelling spring in every occurrence during our lives.

Free will is the ignition key. When in pain, do not despair. In loss, think of the predicament as a victory.

The Gospel is a safe map in this highway, faith is a mandatory stop for replenishment, hope is a safe trail, and prayer is the energy we need to overcome obstacles.

There is a maturing behavior that goes parallel with pain - fault. Guilt generates maladies and scars in the spirit; it becomes a true prison of suffering, a complex that atrophies the character, and disfigures the behavior. Guilty feelings bring unbalance, sadness, depression, and illness.

Spiritism under a banner of compassion and the gentle yoke of the Great Shepherd alleviates and consoles. It liberates with its renovating morals. It supports without suffocating because it teaches, explains, and sustains with love.

Let us not be poor creatures, but responsible people, who at the appropriate time understand the need to endure difficult situations. May we learn how to live with dignity, so that we may benefit by the value of the lesson!

8

EUTHANASIA

When writing this book, we could not have overlooked the serious problem that euthanasia represents. As you will see, this grave act can also be considered a form of suicide.

The word Euthanasia originated from the Greek language: *eu* means "good" and *thanatos* means "death." One meaning given to the word is "the intentional termination of life by another at the explicit request of the person who dies." The term euthanasia normally implies that the act must be initiated by the person who wishes to commit suicide. However, some people define euthanasia to include both voluntary and involuntary termination of life. Like so many moral/ethical/religious terms, "euthanasia" has many meanings. The result is mass confusion.

There are four types of Euthanasia²⁶:

Passive Euthanasia: Hastening the death of a person by altering some form of support and letting nature take its course. For example:

- Removing life support equipment (e.g. turning off a respirator) or
- Stopping medical procedures, medications etc., or
- Stopping food and water and allowing the person to dehydrate or starve to death.
- Not delivering CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) and allowing a person, whose heart has stopped, to die.

²⁶ Excerpts from : <http://www.religioustolerance.org>

Perhaps the most common form of passive euthanasia is to give to the patient large doses of morphine to control pain, in spite of the likelihood that the painkiller will suppress respiration and cause death earlier than it would otherwise have happened. Such doses of painkillers have a dual effect of relieving pain and hastening death. Administering such medication is regarded as ethical in most political jurisdictions and by most medical societies.

These procedures are performed on terminally ill, suffering persons so that natural death will occur sooner. It is also done on persons in a Persistent Vegetative State - individuals with massive brain damage who are in a coma from which they cannot possibly regain consciousness.

Active Euthanasia: This involves causing the death of a person through a direct action, in response to a request from that person. A well-known example was the mercy killing in 1998 of a patient with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) by Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a Michigan physician. His patient was frightened that the advancing disease would cause him to die a horrible death in the near future; he wanted a quick, painless exit from life. Dr. Kevorkian injected controlled substances into the patient, thus causing his death. Charged with 1st degree murder, the jury found him guilty of 2nd degree murder in 1999-MAR.

Involuntary Euthanasia: This term is used by some to describe the killing of a person who has not explicitly requested aid in dying. This is most often done to patients who are in a Persistent Vegetative State and will probably never recover consciousness.

Physician Assisted Suicide: A physician supplies information and/or the means of committing suicide (e.g. a prescription for lethal dose of sleeping pills, or a supply

of carbon monoxide gas) to a person, so that they can easily terminate their own life. The term "voluntary passive euthanasia" (VPE) is becoming commonly used. One writer suggests the use of the verb "to kevork." This is derived from the name of Dr. Kevorkian, who has promoted VPE and assisted at the deaths of hundreds of patients. Originally he hooked his patients up to a machine that delivered measured doses of medications, but only after the patient pushed a button to initiate the sequence. More recently, he provided carbon monoxide and a face mask so that his patient could initiate the flow of gas.

Support for allowing "rational suicide" has now entered the mental health professions, the one group who we should be able to count on to protect, without exception, the lives of all suicidal patients.

To see how far and how fast suicide advocacy can take a society down the slippery slope, consider the experience of the Netherlands, which has permitted euthanasia for more than 30 years, a practice that has now spread to people who are not physically ill. The Dutch Supreme Court has given its approval to a psychiatrist assisting the suicide of a physically healthy woman who had long wanted to kill herself because her two children had died. In another case reported in a Dutch government-funded documentary, a young woman in remission from anorexia asked her doctor to euthanize her because she was terrified of returning to food abuse. The doctor helped her to die and suffered no legal or professional sanctions of any kind. Last year, the minister of health opined that elderly people who do not qualify for euthanasia under the law but who are "tired of life" should have access to suicide pills.

In spite of being a very controversial issue, as mentioned above, the question 953 of *The Spirits' Book*,

by Allan Kardec²⁷, is very enlightening as to the subject of euthanasia:

Are we wrong to take our own lives in order to shorten sufferings that are going to lead to our death anyway?

“It is always wrong not to wait for the appointed moment of death. Besides, how can you tell whether the end of your life has arrived? Some help may come unexpectedly at the very moment you supposed would be your last.”

—We admit that under ordinary circumstances suicide is highly objectionable. But how would you approach the case in which death is inevitable, in which life would only be shortened by a short while?

“Even in these instances, suicide denotes a certain lack of respect and submission to the Divine Will.”

—In such a case, what are the consequences of suicide?

“The same as in all the others. It will entail a correction corresponding to the seriousness of the fault and the circumstances under which it was committed.”

Book Excerpt

*The Spiritist View of Euthanasia*²⁸

A subject frequently debated, defended by some and condemned by others, euthanasia (the principle which seeks to painlessly end the life of the terminally ill) is back in the news. This is due to its repeated practice by respectable medical authorities. They have used euthanasia

²⁷ Excerpt from *The Spirits' Book*, Chapter 28, Part Four – Allan Kardec – AKES Publication

²⁸ Excerpt from the book *After the Storm*, (Após a Tempestade) by Joanna de Ângelis /Divaldo Franco, translated into English by S.J. Haddad

on physically or mentally disabled children at the moment of their birth, in pediatric hospitals. Their claim is that there is no scientific hope for their recovery or survival.

Such atrocious practice attests to a materialistic view of life, which can see only matter and its immediate implications. By disregarding spiritual realities, it also shows the predominance of primitive, animalistic influences in man's emotional make-up.

In old Greece, Spartan hegemony – always ready for war and destruction – legalized eugenic euthanasia. It meant the extermination of the sick, the mutilated and those with mental disorders considered a burden to the economy of the State. Led by egotism and tyranny, despite the capricious drives of an exaggerated national pride, they became the victims of their own belligerent impulsiveness.

Other peoples, from very remote ages, have also practiced this “compassionately motivated homicide.”

People do not have the right, by any reason, to determine and deliberate on the life or death of their fellow being.

Even the most criminal, or the worst homicidal or genocidal individual, should not have his life destroyed. Rather, he should be isolated from society, doing constructive work. By this means, and with the help of time, he would be able to expiate and erase his faults. Even when dealing with derelicts suffering from mental derangement, there are judicial institutions designed to provide them the necessary help without releasing them from their culpability. If their health is recovered, which is rare but not impossible, although handicapped by the possibility of a psychotic relapse, they may contribute in some form to society, paying back the damage they had caused.

As to the so-called incurable diseases, it is well to note that they are no longer a problem today, thanks to the success of Medical Science and the dedication of its exponents. There is, therefore, the possibility of success in

controlling a disease which was previously irreversible. Every day entities descend from the spirit realm with the mission of furthering the march toward progress. They contribute to life by way of important discoveries, bringing, in the name of the Father, abundant hope and comfort to those who suffer.

In dealing with such human aberrations, instead of false pity to rid them of suffering, we must consider the process of divine therapy. The body-prison and mental shackles are tools which the heavenly therapy uses as a means of justice to those who on Earth had escaped notice and eluded punishment. As they could not avoid the condemnation of their guilty consciences, nor that of the Higher Legislation, they begged the opportunity to make amends and acquire the spiritual recovery so as to achieve their inner peace.

Who then has the right to interrupt their precious existence?

No one should exert destructive or “liberating” interference through euthanasia, interrupting such a redemptive process. When touched by the suffering of family members, people say they want to relieve them of their agony. Most often, however, the real reason is selfishness, a hurry to rid themselves of their duty and responsibility of helping and loving them more.

There are several medical and surgical means to ease pain, which are perfectly in line with Christian charity and compassion. No one has the right to determine whether the life of a patient should be terminated or extended. Human prognostications are as questionable in this matter as in any other! How often patients who were deemed incurable regain their health without any apparent explanation or logic? And how many others, who enjoy excellent health and are in perfect shape, suddenly fall victims of an organic disorder and die unexpectedly?!

Reincarnation sheds light over the most intricate problems of life. It clarifies misconceptions and doubts

with regard to health and sickness, unhappiness and happiness. It helps the assimilation of those regenerative principles, so well exemplified by Jesus Christ and by the Spiritist Doctrine, the Consoler, responsible for revealing them in these stormy and distressing times.

Utilitarian minds argue, however, that the fortunes spent with incurable patients could be used for valuable medical research to protect healthy people from becoming sick, or to help those patients who are curable. Such is the reasoning of utopian and dreamers. However, they forget that great fortunes are being squandered on noisy, sensuous entertainments, exaggerated luxuries and dissipation. It does not occur to them to invest such resources in good methods of prevention, or assistance to the hungry people, who abound everywhere and die in want of nourishment, or a ray of light or a little compassion.

Every single minute in someone’s life is, therefore, of great redemptive value to the Spirit. How many noble resolutions, constructive decisions, or negative attitudes can take place in one instant of life?

He who is aware of his responsibility, who is charitable and enlightened by religious faith, a faith based on the facts of immortality, of spirit communication and reincarnation will totally abhor euthanasia. He will help his brother work out his just restitution, a right given by Divine Justice to achieve inner peace and advancement.

Book Excerpt

INHERITANCE AND EUTHANASIA

The Spirit André Luiz in the book channeled by Francisco Cândido Xavier, “*Nosso Lar – A Spiritual*

Home,²⁹ chapter 31 describes a situation in the after-life of Euthanasia:

I hadn't yet gotten over my amazement at the Francis's case when Sal entered the ward and said to Narcissa, "Our friend Pauline would like to see her father, who's in Wing Five. I thought I'd better check with you before letting her in because his condition is still so serious."

In her usual quiet and compassionate way, Narcissa said, "Bring her to me, will you please, Sal."

"Pauline's giving up all her free time so she can bring the different members of her family together," she said. "It's quite a tricky job, if you knew that family. Anyway, she's got Minister Veneranda's permission to see her father whenever she needs to."

Sal hurried off, and Narcissa added, "Pauline's a devoted, dedicated daughter. You'll see."

In a minute or so, a young woman came toward us. She was a slender, lovely being, dressed in a light silk dress that shimmered as she walked. She reflected an angelic beauty I'd seldom seen in anyone. Her eyes, however, showed deep concern.

Narcissa politely introduced us, and apparently feeling I could be trusted, Pauline asked anxiously, "How's Father, Narcissa?"

"A little better," the nurse answered. "Still, he remains pretty upset -- unbalanced."

"It's such a shame," Pauline continued, clutching her hands in frustration. "He just won't change his mental attitude, even a little, and neither will any of the others. They're all so stubborn, Narcissa. Always the same hate, always the same lack of understanding."

To this comment, Narcissa said nothing. Instead she asked us to follow her, and shortly we found ourselves

standing beside the bed of what looked to be a highly disagreeable old man. A scowl of bitterness seemed to be permanently etched on the old fellow's features. Physically, he was a wreck. A mop of disheveled hair hung loosely from his head, set off by thin drawn lips and a road map of deep wrinkles. He inspired more pity than sympathy, I thought. But, as best as I could, I tried to control such insensitive ideas and see in him a spiritual brother. (...)

Once beside her father, Pauline greeted him affectionately; but the old man didn't have a single loving word for her. Instead, he glowered -- his eyes harsh and filled with a fierce anger. He looked into her face as if he was a caged animal.

"Are you feeling better today, Father?" asked Pauline. She spoke with loving respect.

"Better! No, I'm not better!" he spat out. "I can't get that rascal out of my mind. I don't have any peace here -- not for a moment. I can still see him leaning over me, pouring deadly poison into me!"

"Please, Father, try to forget all that. Remember that Albert came into your home as a son, sent to us by God..."

Earnest as it was, this plea went nowhere.

"My son? Never!" bellowed the old man, "He's a common, lowdown criminal. He doesn't deserve my forgiveness -- and he won't get it, ever. My son? He's the son of the devil, that's what he is." Tears welled up in Pauline's eyes at this outburst.

"Father, let's learn from Jesus," she said, speaking to him in a tone of quiet persuasion. "He told us to love one another, didn't He? Oh, I wish so much that you could understand: our family experiences on Earth are ways of teaching us about real spiritual love. Actually there's only one true Father, and that's God, Who's eternal; and He gives us the chance to be fathers and mothers so we can learn to love each other. Our families are really testing grounds where our feelings and thoughts are purified.

²⁹ Translated and published by AKES

They exist so we can learn to come together; they're our preparation for a future of universal solidarity and comprehension. Father, we have to struggle -- yes, and suffer a great deal sometimes -- before we can call each other brother and sister and have those words mean anything. The whole Creation is one big family, and it all moves and is held together through the loving care of the one Heavenly Father."

The old man, listening to this sweetness coming through his daughter's voice, broke now into convulsive sobs.

"Please forgive Albert!" she continued, 'Don't just look at him as a wild son. Try to see him as a child who needs to be enlightened. Father, listen. I've just come from our home on Earth, and I can tell you that I saw serious problems there. Let me tell you something that may surprise you. As you lie here in your bed you're constantly projecting thought-waves of bitterness and anger to our family, even though they're on Earth; and they're doing the same thing to you. You're both working together to poison each other. Did you know that thoughts can do that, Father? Any thought is a wave: when its directed outward, it never misses its target, no matter how far away it is. That's why you're suffering. You and our family are exchanging hate and suspicion, causing both emotional ruin and pain.

"It's a sad situation, Father -- the saddest one I can think of. But it would improve considerably if you did one thing -- stop using your mind (and we all know what a strong mind you have) to plan your revenge. Look at what's happened to us all. Here you are in the spiritual world in a condition of absolute collapse. On Earth, Mother is so disturbed she can't even function, and your children hate each other. And what's in the middle of it all? The money you left. What's the use of all that money, if it can't buy even a moment of happiness?"

"But I left enough money to keep them all comfortable for the rest of their lives," the old man protested. "I was always looking out for their welfare...."

"When it came to money -- yes, you did," Pauline interrupted. "But, when it comes to finances, one doesn't always know if what one is doing is for the best. There's another kind of wealth you could have left, though, but didn't -- a sense of moral tranquility and some standard of right and wrong. That would have been the best inheritance we could have had. If you'd prepared all of us to earn an honest living, you'd have given us real wealth.

"Most times, Father, we're out to make lots of money because we're proud and ambitious. We want to be above everybody else. So we start focusing all our attention on external things, and forget more important and longer lasting ones: worthwhile knowledge, tolerance, humbleness of heart, understanding. No, we'd rather try to bend other people to our will. We become interested in having power and forget about the work God gave us to do, as well as about cultivating our spirits. But none of us is born on Earth simply to make a fortune. That doesn't mean that we can't manage what God gives us intelligently and take our fair share from what we earn. We're expected to be good stewards. But being greedy and domineering isn't a definition of good stewardship, Father. It isn't honoring God."

"Stewardship requires thoughtful responsibility," Pauline continued, "and it was this unrealistic idea of it that ruined our family. (...)"

"Albert became a doctor but wasn't really interested in practicing medicine, except for the odd cases that excited his curiosity. That's what money did to them, Father; it came easily and spoiled them, and it's not surprising that all they've ever thought about is their inheritance. All their spiritual possibilities have been ruined. That's the tragedy!"

The old man, suddenly became highly agitated again. Terror came over him.

"Curse you, Albert!" he yelled out wildly. "Nothing but a criminal! Nothing but an ingrate! You murdered me! I was just going to change the provisions in my will, and you poisoned me!"

"Please, don't say these things... show your son some mercy. Forgive and forget all that."

He went on cursing and swearing at Albert. When Pauline tried to speak to him again, Narcissa gave her a warning glance and called over Sal to help the old man, since he was now in a crisis. Pauline, saying nothing, tried hard to keep from crying; she stood by her father, gently stroking his forehead.

After a few minutes the three of us -- Pauline, Narcissa, and I -- left the ward. I was shocked and troubled by what I had just seen. Pauline talked in private with Narcissa for awhile and then took her leave, thanking us both for our patience and kindness. She departed as she had come, but with a worried and saddened expression.

"These inheritance cases are usually pretty tricky," said Narcissa, once we were alone. "It doesn't always happen, but nine times out of ten big inheritances cause big trouble for both the givers and the getters. But this case is even more serious than usual, because of the euthanasia. They were all so anxious to get their hands on the old man's money that when he got sick and lingered on, it was more temptation than, at least, one of them could handle. That money has stirred up all kinds of conflicts and misunderstandings in that family. But this is the way it usually happens: greedy parents raise big spending children. I visited Pauline's home with her the very day her brother Albert -- who's a physician -- decided to put his father out of his misery. He used what they call the 'easy death' on him. We tried our best to stop him, but didn't succeed. Albert was deep into some financial trouble, and it bothered him so much that he

didn't hesitate to move his father's death a little closer. Now you see the result: they all hate one another, and are driving each other crazy. Well, God created spirits and blissful regions. But some of us aren't satisfied until we change ourselves into devils. We insist on creating our own private hells."

9

UNCONSCIOUS SUICIDE

There is yet another form of suicide, which is the one that is the consequence of our negligence towards life itself. The question 952 of *The Spirits' Book*, by Allan Kardec³⁰, is very enlightening as to the subject of unconscious suicide:

Q. There are some people whose excessive indulgence, as they well know, will bring on an early death. Their habits become addictions that they cannot control. Is this considered suicide?

A. “It is a suicide of sorts. Their lack of will and complete surrender to their appetites only distance them from Providence. You should realize that in these cases they are doubly responsible.”

Q. -- Are they as guilty as people who kill themselves out of despair?

A. “Guiltier, because they have had time to consider the suicidal nature of their pursuits. When suicide is committed on the spur of the moment, the person sometimes experiences a degree of bewilderment that borders on madness. As a result, this type of suicide will carry less personal responsibility than the ones we are talking about now. The correction a crime entails always depends on the awareness of wrong-doing that accompanies the act.”

Book Excerpt

The Spirit André Luiz in the book channeled by Francisco Cândido Xavier, “*Nosso Lar – A Spiritual*

³⁰ Excerpt from *The Spirits' Book*, Chapter 28, Part Four – Allan Kardec – AKES Publication

Home,³¹ narrates his experience when returning to the spiritual world as an unconscious suicide:

I had lost all sense of space and time.

I was still breathing-swallowing great gulps of air -- but it didn't matter. Because if there was one thing I was sure of with absolute certainty, it was this: I wasn't alive anymore. Not in the usual sense of the word, anyway.

I couldn't tell where I was, but it seemed to me that, somewhere along the line, I had been overtaken by irresistible forces, and that I was their pawn.

I felt as trapped as a prisoner does in his cell -- and a dark cell at that, filled with horrors. Sometimes, as I moved around, the fear was intense that my heart raced wildly, almost bursting.

Often I would scream like a madman -- begging for mercy and crying out in protest at the despair gripping my spirit. But those cries fell on deaf ears, or would be answered by even more pitiful cries, coming from the darkness around me. At times evil-sounding laughter would shatter the silence, making me believe that an unknown companion was also a prisoner of this madness, caught in the same horrific nightmare.

From time to time, scary forms and faces passed before me. (...)

“Suicidal idiot!”

“Criminal!”

“You scoundrel!”

The insults came from all directions. But who were these mean-hearted beings? At times I would catch glimpses of hazy faces slipping in and out of the darkness. Then, in despair and with all the strength I could muster, I

³¹ Translated and published by AKES

would rush at them. Frenzied, my blows hit nothing but air. In the end, my anger always came to nothing. Afterwards, I was aware only of their sarcastic laughter as they vanished again into the shadows.

Who could I turn to for help? By then, I was tormented by hunger and thirst. The physical demands of my body, I discovered, continued here as they were on Earth: my beard kept growing; my clothes were beginning to fray and fall apart as the result of my struggles.

The worst part of the trial, though, wasn't being abandoned in this place. It was being surrounded by the sickening forces that poured in from the surrounding darkness. These attacks had unnerved me to the point where I literally couldn't connect one idea to another. I desperately needed to do something -- examine the situation carefully, try to understand what was happening, and if I could, reorganize my ideas.

Still, beyond anything I could have imagined, the accusing voices bewildered me:

"What are you looking for, you loser?"

"Where are you going, suicidal fool?"

These accusations, repeated over and over again, utterly dumbfounded me. Well, I might be a fool -- but I certainly hadn't committed suicide. I had put up a tenacious struggle for life. I could almost hear the doctor at the hospital announcing his last diagnosis, and see the nurses tending to me and changing my dressings during the days that followed my intestinal operation. Indeed, those days were so impressed on my memory that I could still feel the touch of the thermometer and the prick of the hypodermic needle. Then, there was the last memory of all: my wife and three children looking at me, shaken by the fear of eternal separation. Then, later, my waking up in that damp and depressing place, where my nightmarish, never-ending flight began.

Why was I being accused of having committed suicide when I had been forced to give up my dreams, my family, and everything I loved? What was going on?

I couldn't figure it out, and I was losing the will to try.

Even the strongest person sooner or later loses their power of resistance. So it was with me. Gradually, long bouts of depression replaced my initial firmness and resolution. Despair at the thought of not knowing what could happen to me sapped my former strength. More and more my eyes were full of tears.

But who or what was there to appeal to? The sophisticated intellectuality I had brought with me from Earth was of no use to me now. Before the Infinite my knowledge was meaningless -- a soap bubble tossed every which way by the winds of transformation. I was a speck carried far in the winds of truth. Yet my essential self continued intact. It occurred to me at one point that I might actually have gone insane and wasn't dead at all. Yet, I didn't feel any different. My conscience was alert and I was, emotionally and intellectually, the same as before. My physical needs continued. I was aware especially of the hunger gnawing at my body's every fiber. Yet, despite the growing weakness, I'd never come close to the point of absolute exhaustion. (...)

When I was nearly at my wit's end, it began to dawn on me that somewhere a Creator of Life must exist. The thought comforted me. On Earth I had hated anything that had to do with religion; I had been a medical doctor and had prided myself on my faddish scientific skepticism. Now I was proof of the failure of that role; I badly needed spiritual consolation. My old sense of self-importance, once so real to me, was gone. I realized that if I was going to find my way in this new world, I would have to change my mental outlook.

When I felt that my energy had vanished completely and my self-esteem was as low as the mud of the Earth;

when I no longer had strength to even lift up my head... I implored God to have pity on me, to help me in my desperate situation. For hours I prayed like a helpless child. The tears ran down my cheeks; my whole being seemed to become one great, anguished cry.

Had God really abandoned me? Wasn't I also a child of God, even if -- caught up in my foolishness on Earth-- I'd never given a thought to divine things? Why wouldn't God, who watched over the birds of the air and the lilies in the field, forgive me? I soon came to see that understanding the mysterious beauty of prayer sometimes requires a good deal of suffering. Before one can fully appreciate the sweetness of hope, one must often know regret, rejection, humiliation.

The moment I recognized that reality, the thick fog that had surrounded me since my arrival broke up and cleared away.

Then I saw someone -- in my mind, a messenger from Heaven -- a sweet-looking old man who smiled at me paternally. His skin was remarkably free of wrinkles; the glow of health came from him as it might from a much younger man. Gazing intently into my face with large, clear eyes, he said:

“Courage, my child; God hasn't deserted you.”

At these words, tears flooded up from the innermost depths of my being. I tried to thank the old man for his kindness, for the relief he had brought, but I was too weak to manage anything but a question:

“Who -- who are you, an angel?”

Once again he smiled and answered cheerily:

“My name is Clarence. An angel? No, there you mistake me; I'm only a friend.” Seeing how exhausted I was, he added, “Better keep quiet now and try to rest. You need to build up your strength.”

He then signaled to two people I hadn't noticed before. “Let's have some emergency care for our friend here,” Clarence instructed as the young men approached.

These two, who seemed to be Clarence's assistants, opened a large white sheet and folded it into a small, improvised stretcher, and onto this they gently lifted me up. For his part, satisfied that everything was ready, Clarence nodded and said, once again in a lighthearted voice, “Very well, let's push on and not waste any time. We have to reach Nosso Lar as quickly as possible.”

I awoke the next morning having slept a deep and refreshing sleep. Light poured in through my window. It bathed everything in the room in its radiance, and filled my heart with expectation. I felt like a new man, revived in energy and the joy of life. Only one thing was lacking: my home and family. They were painfully far away now. (...)

I was eager to get up and enjoy the beauty of my surroundings. To my disappointment, this would have to be postponed. Without the magnetic cooperation of my attendant, I realized, I wouldn't even be able to get out of bed.

I had barely finished mulling over these thoughts when the door opened and Clarence entered. With him was a stranger -- a friendly-looking man, I thought. The two men greeted me cordially, and wished me peace.

Clarence asked about my general health and the attendant, who had stepped in right behind him, quickly filled him in. Clarence nodded in understanding. “This is Dr. Henry de Luna of Nosso Lar's medical staff,” he said, introducing his companion.

Dr. de Luna, dressed in the ubiquitous white, radiated good will. He proceeded to examine me in detail. Finally, he stood erect and said, smiling, “Well, it's a pity you've come here by way of suicide.”

At these words, Clarence remained unmoved. I, on the other hand, felt a surge of revolt at the idea. Suicide? This was the very same accusation leveled against me by

those ghastly beings in that dark place. I was grateful to my rescuers, but this was an accusation I couldn't let pass.

"You are mistaken in that," I said -- and my voice betrayed just how aghast I was with the charge. "I fought death for forty days. I suffered through two serious operations because of an intestinal blockage. It was this blockage that caused my death."

"Quite right," the doctor replied in a perfectly composed manner. "But the blockage resulted from very deep causes. Maybe you haven't thought it over enough. The spiritual body³² carries a detailed history of an individual's habits on Earth."

Very attentively, he pointed out specific parts of my body.

"Now, let's analyze this intestinal area of yours," he said. "The blockage you speak of was actually caused by a malignant tumor -- a cancer, in other words. The tumor was partially derived from some early indiscretions of yours, in which you contracted syphilis. By itself, the malignancy might not have been so serious if your mental

³² AKES' Note: Spiritual body. The spirit is enveloped by a vaporous substance, fine as a mist, which sustains the union between the physical body and the spirit (soul). At death, the spirit sheds the physical body, but preserves the spiritual body. The spiritual body allows the spirit (soul) to operate in the denser energy spheres of the physical world. As the spirit advances to more advanced realms the spiritual body will conform to the characteristics of the new environment. Different words have been used to refer to it: spiritual double, etheric double, astral body, bioplastic body. The Spiritist concept flows from the notion found in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians: 'So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. '1 Cor. IS:42-44. A more detailed discussion is found in A. Kardec's *The Spirits' Book*, AKES - Allan Kardec Educational Society, 1996.

attitudes had been based on principles of tolerance and affability.

"Instead," he went on, "you chose to lead an angry and gloomy life, which attracted destructive vibrations from people around you. Did you ever stop to think that anger attracts negative forces? Your lack of self-control and thoughtlessness in dealing with others, whom you often offended without hesitation, exposed you to the influence of tormented spirits of a lower order. Taken as a whole, these circumstances seriously affected your physical condition.

"My friend," he continued, after a silent and meticulous examination, "are you aware that both your liver and kidneys were damaged as a result of attitudes that violated the divine gift of life?"

By this time, I was feeling quite uncomfortable. The doctor continued, however, apparently unaware of my distress.

"The body's organs possess superb recuperative powers if employed according to God's purposes. You, my friend, have lost excellent opportunities. The rich task which was entrusted to you by the Higher Spirituality was reduced to a few attempts at a job that was only half done. The intestinal tract was destroyed due to excessive ingestion of food and alcoholic beverages, seemingly unimportant events. In addition, your energies were devoured by the consequences of syphilis. Essential energies were devoured by venereal disease. As you can see yourself, the signs of self-destruction are evident."

It was a conclusion that, after some thought, I couldn't disagree with. I started to reflect on the opportunities I had missed. During my life on Earth I had worn many masks, tailoring each one to fit to a particular situation. I had never dreamed that one day I would have to account for my behavior during common episodes I once considered meaningless. I had thought that human errors would be taken care of by human law, and that any

event not included in those laws would be considered natural and acceptable. I was now faced with a different system designed to verify faults committed: not one in which I was confronted by harsh judges and even harsher verdicts, torture, or the abyss of hell, but in which kind benefactors commented on my weaknesses as one advises an unruly boy, away from parental sight. That spontaneous interest, however, was a blow to my human pride. It would have been easier to face my failure, I think, if I had been tormented by demons. Clarence's kindness and sympathy, the doctor's warm tone, the attendant's good-natured patience, all affected me deeply. They turned my pride to shame. I covered my face with my hands in deep sorrow.

Yes, Henry de Luna's conclusions were undeniable. Finally, controlling my impulses of pride, I recognized the extent of my past recklessness -- the false notion of personal dignity didn't hold up in the face of justice. Before my spiritual vision there was now a unique, torturing reality: I had in fact committed some form of suicide; I was someone who had squandered the precious gift of the human experience, and was now, an outcast rescued by charity.

Clarence, in his fatherly way, tapped me on the shoulder. "Don't torture yourself, my son," he said gently. "I went searching for you, attending the pleadings of your loved ones, now in higher spheres. Tears now will just cause them grief. Isn't it better to show your gratitude by remaining calm during the examination of your own faults? And let me tell you something: your diagnosis points to unconscious suicide, it's true; but believe me when I say that thousands leave Earth daily in exactly the same way. Now, consider your present state. You've just discovered the treasure of knowledge of your own mistakes: use it well. Regret is a blessing, no matter how late it arrives, but remember that despair won't solve your problems. Put your trust in God and in our brotherly

devotion. Your soul is troubled now, so rest it. And consider this: many of us have come here following the same roads you have."

These were generous words -- so much so that, like a child, I put my head on his shoulder and my tears escaped freely.

*Near Death Experience and Suicide*³³

A replay of significant events from your life may pass before your eyes -- the process only takes a few seconds, but time seems to slow for you during this progression. Next, you may have an out-of-body experience and see emergency workers or medical personnel working on your body. Then you may see a brilliant, warm, white light and find yourself moving through a dark tunnel toward that light. You may even be greeted by friends and family members who have passed on before you. But in a second, the whole transcendental event can end, and you wake up in a strange place, such as a hospital bed. Your near-death experience is over -- your physical body survived.

There are, in fact, literally thousands of documented cases of people who have had a near-death experience. Well-established medical doctors, psychologists, theologians, cardiologists, and social scientists of various kinds have done extensive research and detailed study of the phenomenon. Researchers such as Cobb, Crookall, Savage, Hyslop, Richet and many others, have accumulated data from subjects over the last hundred years. More recently, books by Doctors Moody, Kubler-Ross, Sabom, Lundahl, Gabbard, Twenlow, and others have been added to an extensive and varied library of professional journal articles and previous research papers.

If there were any questions about the pervasiveness of the near-death experience, George

³³ Excerpts from: <http://www.ghostvillage.com>
<http://www.near-death.com>
<http://www.halexandria.org>

Gallup, Jr., of Gallup Poll fame, has laid them to rest. In his book, *Adventures in Immortality*, Mr. Gallup reports that five percent of the U. S. adult population has had a near-death experience. This percentage equals about 8,000,000 people who have had such an experience. If nothing else, Gallup's statistics speak well for the medical emergency technology's ability to resuscitate clinically dead or near-dead patients.

But the pervasiveness of the phenomena has not always been convincing in itself. In 1975, when Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr., Ph.D. published his best-selling book, *Life After Life*, his descriptions and conclusions were often viewed with considerable skepticism or simply dismissed out of hand by members of the medical and scientific community.

In this book, Dr. Moody describes accounts of many different people who have had near-death experiences. He was the first to coin the term "near-death experience."

Dr. Moody's research has shown him that evidence of near-death experiences go back thousands of years. In an interview to Jeff Belanger, Dr. Moody said, "The ancient Greeks knew all about these, and Plato wrote about them -- he writes about how the guy reviews his life and so on." The experience also crosses many different cultures and geographic locations.

For many, a near-death experience, or NDE, is a life-altering event. This incredibly personal and profound experience proves to the person who went through it that there is in fact life after death.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of near-death experiences is the consistency of their descriptions. The consistency occurs in spite of the fact the persons involved uniformly characterize their NDE as inexpressible or ineffable. The difficulty people have in describing their near-death experience appears to be due to the fact that our language is symbolic—words are only

names for our experiences. Inasmuch as NDEs fall outside our common experience, adjectives and superlatives may be inadequate to describe the events that occur during an NDE.

Suicides

People who are thinking of killing themselves can learn a great deal from NDEs. Some NDEs suggest that committing suicide may be the worse thing anyone can do because it is rejecting God's gift of life, which destroys an opportunity for spiritual advancement. Not only that, some experiences have observed the souls of those who committed suicide existing in an earthbound condition while temporarily being slaves to every consequence of their act of suicide. Such souls have been observed hounding and hovering around living family members and friends trying in vain to seek forgiveness. Some of them have been observed existing in a grayish fog and shuffling around slowly with their heads down. However, this condition is only temporary. Some experiencers have also observed such souls being helped in the afterlife.

NDEs reveal there is no condemnation from God for our actions. The problem many suicides face after death is difficulty in forgiving themselves for the horror they have put family and friends through by taking their own life. One remedy for helping a suicide cope with this predicament comes from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, an ancient Buddhist book of the afterlife.

The Book of the Dead mentions people who succeeded in committing suicide and who became imprisoned in the experience of their suicide. Accordingly, they can be freed from this condition through the prayers of the living and by them imagining streams of light pouring on them. Such actions free the person from the pain and confusion of their suicide. The Book of the Dead also mentions that people have no choice but to follow any negative karma resulting from

their suicide.

Probably less than three percent of Near Death Experiences are caused by attempted suicides. These can be divided into positive and negative, with about half in each category. In the negative NDEs are scenes of darkness, loneliness and emptiness. Occasionally there will be a monster or two, similar to nightmares, but rarely will there be mention of hell or fire.

In the initial studies of suicide-induced NDEs, no evidence was found to suggest any distinction between this form of near-death experience and those caused by illness or accident.

However, Dr. Margot Grey, author of the book *Return from Death*, has encountered results in her research that indicates that for the suicides the near-death experience tended to end up as a confused drifting in some sort of "twilight zone." Dr. Grey emphasized that suicide-related, near-death experiences did not include any transcendent experiences, but rather tended to fade out prior to such occurrences.

In addition, Dr. Raymond Moody in his sequel volume, *Reflections on Life After Life*, reports that he had only a few cases of suicide-induced NDEs, but in each case the NDE was characterized as being unpleasant. Dr. Moody went on to note subjects experiencing NDEs that were caused by illness or accident returned to report suicide was a very undesirable act, which might incur a penalty. This "penalty" for an act of suicide might include witnessing the suffering on the part of others this act would cause. In addition those subjects whose NDE was caused by a suicide attempt agreed their suicidal attempts solved nothing, and strongly disavowed suicide as a means of returning to the after life state. All noted after their experiences they would not consider suicide again.

From the view of reincarnation and karma, one would simply have to return and get it right on the next

try.

Clearly the near-death experiences provide a strong argument for life after death. Deathbed experiences add additional fuel to the fire. Together, both forms of “data collection” agree with each other and provide us with a better understanding of what might be occurring on the other side.

Near-death experiences are giving society answers to such questions. In general, near-death experiences reveal that the quality of our lives after death isn't determined by HOW we die, but by how we LIVE. Unfortunately, many suicides cause devastating emotional damage to families that can last a lifetime. This is the real tragedy. NDEs report people choosing their own destiny in life before they are born. However, nobody is predestined to commit suicide. NDEs reveal a perfect universal plan being worked out by God, and if a person cuts short their destined time for life because they have problems coping with life's demands, their problems will not go away. In fact, they may be complicated by the added burden of their knowing the full horrible consequences of their action on others.

In summary, suicide presents no advantages and, potentially, some rather severe disadvantages.

Book Excerpt

The Valley of the Suicidals

This community is described in the book *Memoirs of a Suicidal*, channeled by the medium Yvonne Pereira, edition FEB: 2000 - 22nd Edition - (not yet translated into English).

(...) I was taken by surprised with my imprisonment in a region of the Invisible World whose desolating panorama was composed of deep valleys, surrounded by shadows: sinuous abyss and sinister caves, within which one could hear the howling of an

infuriated group of demons, Spirits who were once human beings, maddened by the intensity and weirdness, truly inconceivable, of the sufferings they were experiencing.

In this distress stopping the tortured sight of the convict could not even distinguish the sweet presence of the trees that were testifying their hours of despair (...).

The ground was covered with blackish stench substances, similar to soot; it was dirty, viscous, slippery, disgusting! The air was heavy, suffocating, frozen nights enveloped by a menacing thick-fog as if perpetual storms roared within it. Upon breathing the air, the Spirits therein imprisoned, suffocated as if they had been sprayed by harmful substances. Ash and whitewash, invaded their lungs, torturing them with inconceivable punishment to the human brain accustomed to the glorious luminosity of the Sun – a celestial gift that blesses the Earth daily - and the vivifying blasts of the healthy winds that invigorate the physical organization of its inhabitants.

There, it would be impossible to find peace, or consolation, or hope: everything in its scope was marked by disaster, misery, amazement, desperation and horror (...).

The valley of the lepers, a repulsive place of old Jerusalem (...) that in the terrestrial planet evokes the worst of the last degree of debasement and human suffering, would be a comforting rest area when compared with the place I am trying to describe. (16)

Here, one finds the inconsolable pain, the disaster that no favor could lighten, the tragedy that no tranquilizing idea could come to raise with hope! There is no sky, no light, no sun, no perfume, and no truces!

What is encountered here is the convulsive and inconsolable cry of the convict who never achieves harmony! The dreadful 'gnashing of teeth' of the former wise warning of the Master of Nazareth! The spiteful blasphemy of the outcast accusing himself at each new reflection of the mind afflicted by painful memories! The unalterable madness of consciences beaten by the infamous whip of remorse! What is present is the poisoned anger of those who can no longer cry, because they find themselves exhausted due to the excessive tears!

What exists is the disappointment, the terrifying surprise of those who still feel themselves to be alive in spite of having thrown themselves on the path of death! It is the rebellion, the plague, the insults, and screams of the hearts that monstrous injury of the atonement transformed into wild beasts! What exists is the conflagration of the conscience, the hurt of the soul due to the imprudent acts previously committed, the revolutionized mind, the spiritual faculties apparently involved in the darkness of its own self! (...)

Those who stay in there, even temporarily, as it was my case, are great representatives of the crime! They are the scumbags of the spirit world - phalanxes of suicidal that periodically flow to its canals (...).

Extreme Sports versus Suicide

One question that might come to our minds when analyzing suicide is whether those who practice extreme sports are in some way exposing their lives to the point of being considered suicidal.

“Extreme sports” a term used loosely to describe any kind of physical activity which has a higher risk of danger attached to it - from skateboarding and white water rafting to freefall parachuting and steep-skiing.

Extreme sports enthusiasts do not mean to be on a suicide mission. All of such activities demand a high level of skill and control to bring out the best performance.

However, while involvement in activities such as baseball, touch football and aerobics is on the decline, people are participating in extreme sports and injuring themselves at an unprecedented rate. As a consequence of these thrill-seeking pursuits, in the United States, emergency-room visits have increased 33 percent for skateboarders, 31 percent for snowboarders and 20 percent for mountain climbers.

In an article written by Marcelo Cabral,³⁴ “extreme sports versus suicide,” he says that one of the most visited pages on his Website is the one that contains a small article on “Suicide” that he wrote a few years ago. Due to it, ever so often, he receives e-mails from people asking questions on the subject. Once he was asked a question and due to its generic content he decided to publish the reply. It is worth mentioning that the reply reflects his own personal interpretation on the subject based on his previous studies and experiences.

³⁴ Excerpts from: <http://wblogger.com>

The particular question was, *whether those who practice extreme sports, for example, such as the parachute jumping, are attempting suicide?*

His reply was: "Suicide, as we understand it, presupposes the wish to die, that is to say, a suicide is one who dies due to his own personal conscious act, or from another when he requests it. In the case of extreme sports, we know that there are great risks involved, but the practitioner does not intend to take his life, he is only searching and reaching out to experience fun and pleasure. However, one point that has to be considered is when the death is a result of negligence regarding the safety measures that should have been taken to prevent an accident. Under these circumstances, only by analyzing the individual's *psiqué* could we respond if this irresponsibility was intentional aiming toward his self-destruction or if it was simply fruit or consequence of his immaturity. Therefore, it is essential to analyze carefully the intentions and the context involved. Even when considering a true case of suicide, there may always be several attenuating factors involved, regarding the postmortem suffering. This, because this extreme act is always a tragic end of a difficult life process in which quite often the suicidal individual was being dragged into this act by circumstances and or by people (incarnate or disincarnate)."

We agree that it is the intention that counts for the individual to be considered a suicide, but why should we expose ourselves when life itself at times can be so threatening? Dr Graceffo,³⁵ says that, "Humans are the only creatures, foolish enough to deliberately take risks and expose themselves to mortal danger. The excessive and life-threatening risks taken in many extreme sports

³⁵ Dr. Graceffo is a retired psychiatrist and nationally ranked distance runner. His column appears weekly in *The New Times*.

seem remarkably similar to Russian roulette. As one cliff jumper sees it, his sport is 'suicide with a kick.' For most of us, ordinary life presents an abundance of challenges without manufacturing additional ones."

He goes on further saying: "Risk-taking is not all bad. By taking risks, we challenge and push ourselves to our limits, both physically and intellectually. Growing and achieving greatness usually requires some risk-taking behavior. Yet there is a vast difference between taking a calculated risk in order to achieve a specific goal without unduly threatening life and limb, and taking a 'consequences be damned' risk to get a thrill from escaping death."

The taste for extreme sports can be sometimes related to psychological problems. However, not all of those who practice extreme sports have psychological problems. What pushes someone toward danger quite often is the simple fact that the father or the mother, or the oldest brother already previously practiced a modality less dangerous of the activity. But the practice of intense risk taking, with the possibility of a fatal outcome, has complex roots, and in many cases is connected to an allure for death that the person possesses without realizing it. "The one who takes such risks may be hiding behind an attempt of unconscious suicide," alerts the psychiatrist and psychotherapist Eduardo Ferreira Santos, of the Institute of Psychiatry of the Hospital das Clinicas in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. "It can be a person who defies death as if he were a hero, omnipotent, so powerful that he can win over death itself." Dr. Ferreira Santos still places among the ones who like to take risks, "the apparent-courageous, the introvert, the one who has a depressive potential and wants to end his life, and the psychotic one, that does not have the least notion of risk and climbs a mountain in a delirious process."

Extreme sports are a modern day lust of the flesh like no other and it is rampant in our ungodly societies,

because of the wealth and time many of us have on our hands. Throwing our lives away and wasting our lives for nothing is a tragedy, just as is suicide. And yet as a wise caring person said to someone who was thinking about committing suicide, "Instead of wasting and destroying your life, why not give it to others." In other words, instead of risking our lives on a mountain cliff or a raging waterfall for pleasure, why not risk our lives and sacrifice our lives for others?

MESSAGE³⁶

Look at the horizon and breathe in the gentle breezes that are coming toward you, to calm you.

The colors of the sunset, artwork of the Creator, could not be reproduced in all its majesty, up to this day, by the most skilled or famous painters.

The deep blue that represents the water of the oceans presents a nuance that cannot even be accomplished by the most advanced technique or brushes, because in reality they could only capture their illusory shades.

Brothers and sisters, it is a solemn act to witness the chanting of the wild life and birds, and the birth of so many animals of every species. However, nothing compares to the freedom and expression that pertains solely to human beings. We are created in the likeness of the Father, and we are destined to join Him, at some distant future in eternity, and offer Him our service to the Universe.

Breathe and breathe again and again. Admire the beauties that surround you, and in the silence of your

hearts, offer a simple prayer of praise to god. Eternity is yours!

³⁶ Psychography received during the mediumship meeting at the SGNY – New York – Dec/6/2004

Suicide as a Psychotic Behavior

The author Ron Rolheiser has written several articles regarding suicides. In his article written August 6, 1999, he describes a situation of suicide that had happened to a couple: "A few years ago some friends of mine lost a daughter to suicide. She was in her early twenties and had a history of clinical depression. An initial attempt at suicide failed. The family then rushed round her, brought her to the best doctors and psychiatrists, and generally tried in every way to love and coax her out of her depression. Nothing worked. Eventually she committed suicide. Looking at their efforts and the incapacity of their love to break through and save her life, we see how helpless human love can be at a point. Sometimes all our best efforts, patience, and affection can't break through to a frightened and depressed person. In spite of everything, that person remains locked inside of herself, huddled in fear, inaccessible, bent upon self-destruction."

We know that the spirit brings along with it into its present incarnation all that it had previously faced in the past. If in a previous incarnation the spirit was a suicide, it is quite possible that the thought of suicide may once again cross one's mind in succeeding reincarnations. This occurs because this mental state is deeply impregnated in his psyche. The tendency to carry out the suicide re-appears once again, because the consequences that the original act is deeply rooted, leading the person facing life's struggles to relate and be more conducive to yield to occurrences and actually consummate the act. This is going to reflect in the compulsion toward suicide, therein denoting its psychotic influence. However, this does not mean that the spirit comes intent or destined

toward suicide. Divine Law always makes it possible for human beings to alter, perfect themselves and achieve spiritual progress. Thus, the tendency for suicide occurs because the individual has not yet been able to overcome the moral weaknesses that prevail in his/her intimate world.

It is not difficult to deduce the spiritual aspects that are embedded in this painful process. Let us analyze the words of Joanna de Angelis³⁷ who stated:

"It is said that the self-destructive behaviors that result from unhealthy impulses are a consequence of a mental origin."

"Without actually disregarding this hypothesis, its roots, although embedded in previous experiences of the spirit is the original culprit responsible for the structure of the body that he inhabits, thereby creating the conflicts and the fracture of the personality."

"The spirit that had previously disregarded the opportunity for moral growth through such ominous actions, winds up entangled in vibratory forces of a serious destructive nature, is now re-born in a difficult environment so that he can achieve the indispensable re-adjustment. This will occur in a challenging environment of various types to concur with the behavioral learning, thereby conducting the required amount of energy to balance the personality that he must manage."

"The hostile factor that now faces him is the self-inheritance that he now receives, in order to apply them in the achievement of edification values. (...)

"The re-awakening of the conscience slowly widens the area of the identification of the guilt, thereby acting as an instrument of self-punishment with a maniacal tendency toward self-destruction."

³⁷ Joanna de Angelis/Divaldo Franco in the book "Amor Imbatível Amor – Leal - 1st edition 1998

In addition, let us review what Manoel Philomeno de Miranda³⁸ stated regarding some explanations provided by specialists that analyze the possible causes of suicide: "the materialistic behaviors, in the modern schools of psychology, tend to relate suicide with the low levels of serotonin present in the brain, thereby allowing the understanding of the self-destructive episode due to a neurotransmitter of a chemical nature. Without a doubt, in these tenths of chemical substances that act as neurotransmitters controlling the cerebral activity, in charge of the emotional area, we see the cause of many psychic, emotional and physical occurrences. However, they are in turn, the effect of other more profound factors, the ones that originate from the spirit that commands the cerebral chamber, exteriorized in the mind and in the physiology of these micro-instruments that constitute the physical headquarters of thought and of others equally important functions of the human life (...)"A more profound analysis of the self-destructive phenomenon also explains the subtle or violent obsessions that the mad love and the devastating hatred foment, beyond the corporeal curtain."

MESSAGE³⁹

Life in this planet is sometimes overwhelming; cloudy days will happen to everyone, tears will be shed; despair will invade the hearts, and hope will fade away. However, you have all experienced happiness and blessings in your lives, as well as, days of enlightenment, days of dedication to others, and days of pure love exchanged between two souls.

³⁸ Manoel Philomeno de Miranda/Divaldo Franco – *Temas da Vida e da Morte* – FEB - 1st edition 1989

³⁹ Psychography received during the mediumship meeting at the SGNY – New York – Feb/07/2005

My friends do not despair when these cloudy days come into your lives. Take advantage of them by displaying your inner faith and exercising your intelligence. Struggles, obstacles, are put in our way so that we can find ways to overcome them. You will not be alone. A group of benefactors, of sympathetic spirits will be guarding and guiding you.

Feel their presence around you and lift up your spirit. Remember that once the storm is over, a brighter and clearer day will be your recompense.

Camellia

Suicide by way of the Internet

I was about to finish writing this book when I realized that there was still another topic to be included – Suicide by way of the Internet. As sad as it may seem, although information from the Internet may be useful in research, we have to be aware of its potential hazard if utilized inappropriately.

In an article written for the National Review, Mr. Wesley J. Smith,⁴⁰ states: “It was bound to happen. First, proponents of the culture of death brought us physician-assisted suicide (PAS), suicide promotion and facilitation has entered cyberspace, demonstrating how indifferent to the value of human life in certain segments of our society have grown, and how callous they are when faced with a despairing person wishing to commit suicide. First, they bestow moral permission. Then, they teach the self-destructive person how to do it. Finally, they keep the suicidal person company until the deed is done. It is the modern version of the howling crowd yelling, “Jump! Jump!” at the suicidal person standing on the skyscraper window ledge.”

In recent months, Internet suicide pact cases have been frequently reported in Japan. On June 10, 2004 the bodies of four young Japanese men were discovered in a car at a vista point near Mount Fuji thus presenting more evidence of a grim new trend in the prosperous country -- “group suicides of strangers who meet over the Internet.”

⁴⁰ Wesley J. Smith is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute and an attorney and consultant for the International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. A revised and updated edition of his *Forced Exit: “The Slippery Slope From Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder”* can be found from Spence Publishing.

The suicide pacts, which resulted in 34 deaths last year, are shocking to experts, even in a nation plagued by an astronomical suicide rate (34,427 last year). There are a series of suicide pacts in which people fill a room or a car with carbon monoxide from charcoal in portable stoves.

In a macabre sign of the times, a task force considered ways of redesigning buildings to prevent people from jumping off to their deaths. Train stations began installing “suicide mirrors” and barriers to prevent people from leaping onto the tracks.

However, the problem is not solely restricted to Japan. There have been reports of suicides that have been facilitated through the Internet all over the world.

Here, in the United States, also during the month of June 2004, the suicide of a 19-year-old girl, who logged onto an obscure Internet site to confide her darkest thoughts to strangers, caused great stir.

There, she found people who told her that suicide was an acceptable way to end her despair, and who gave her instructions on how to obtain a lethal dose of poison and mix it into a deadly cocktail.

She checked into a motel, where she stirred the poison into a glass of tap water, checked its acidity with a pH meter, and drank it.

Her family, best friend, and the local police were notified of her death by time-delayed e-mails that she had previously prepared with the help of another member of the online community.

Her death was the 14th confirmed suicide associated with the online discussion group, but the number of deaths may be higher. Evidence suggests that at least one person who has never actually communicated with the group killed herself after downloading instructions on how to commit suicide by inhaling carbon monoxide.

It is extremely easy to access information regarding suicide from the Internet. One Internet site described using guns, overdosing, slashing one's wrists, and hanging as the "best methods of committing suicide." Other site titles suggested additional methods of suicide. One site illustrated various methods—lethal doses of poison, their availability, the estimated time of death, and the degrees of certainty.

One of these websites was founded in 1990. The discussion group defines its philosophy as being a "pro-choice" suicide. Participants view suicide as a civil right that anyone should be able to exercise, for whatever reason.

On any given day, the Internet site is filled with hopeless ranting about life's miseries, advertisements for suicide partners, and requests for feedback on self-murder plans. Among the hottest items is a "methods file," a step-by-step guide on how to commit suicide -- from asphyxiation to rat poison.

One such site even tells people to "do a good job" when they commit suicide.

It reads: "Suicide is hard work. It's easy to do it badly, or make rookie mistakes. As with many things, the best results are achieved by thorough research and careful preparation."

The site goes on to discuss the pros and cons of death by shooting, hanging, crashing a car, jumping, slitting your wrists, drowning, freezing, overdosing or gassing yourself with nitrous oxide, exhaust fumes and even oven gas.

Another section evaluates 10 methods of committing suicide, rating them for "pain," "probability of success" and "annoyance to other people." Unlike the excruciating pain of the disemboweling rite of the ancient samurai, hara-kiri, today's suicidal youth seem to prefer drifting off.

Cases of Suicide Pacts through the Internet

Below, there are some examples of cases reported of suicides or suicide attempts in which information about the methods employed were obtained from the Internet. All the cases illustrate the danger of having access to information by means of the Internet. Such information may prove even to be more detrimental to vulnerable psychiatric patients.

- A 20-year-old Norwegian man who placed an ad for a suicide partner -- which was answered by a 17-year-old Austrian girl. The pair flung themselves off Norway's 1,900-foot Pulpit Rock in February 2000.
- A year later, a German man and a Californian woman, both in their 40s, made a similar pact and shot themselves to death in a Monterey hotel.
- In yet another case, a 30-year-old unemployed salesman drove to a campsite overlooking a scenic Colorado River, lit the two charcoal grills he'd stowed in his car, and rolled up the windows.
- Then there's the 17-year-old English boy who hung himself. Just before doing so, he created a Web site that opened with the message: "Hi, and welcome to the homepage of my death."
- A grieving father has attacked websites offering advice on suicide after his teenage son trawled the internet for information on the best way to kill himself. The 17-year-old boy, a bright A-Level student, was found hanged in a wardrobe in his bedroom by his horrified mother. He had left a handwritten suicide note which read: "I love you Mom and Dad. I always will." But his parents only discovered later that he had been logging on to Internet sites filled with information on the easiest way to commit suicide.

- Mr. A, a 16-year-old African American adolescent, appeared at the emergency room after attempting suicide. He has no psychiatric history but had borderline mental retardation. His suicidal ideas followed a worsening of his academic performance, which also led to his being subjected to ridicule by his peers (suicide attempt).
- Ms. B, a 34-year-old woman with borderline personality disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder, had a history of several suicide attempts by wrist laceration and overdosing resulting in multiple hospitalizations. On this occasion, she attempted suicide by drinking several liters of water. She got the idea from the Internet, as a less painful and more convenient method of committing suicide (suicide attempt).

In the United States, assisted suicide laws were passed to prevent people from deliberately helping others end their lives by supplying them with a method, such as enough drugs for a fatal overdose, or physically assisting them.

The Internet is already having a significant influence in medicine and psychiatry. Although, it has a great potential in psychiatric education, clinical care, and research, its impact on social issues should not be underestimated. It has not escaped the attention of vulnerable individuals who have been sharing information about suicide. There are many examples of interactive notes followed by a suicide fatality. Mental health care providers should counsel patients about alternatives to surfing the Web during times of crisis. Help may be available by calling crisis lines, clinicians, friends, or family members.

MESSAGE⁴¹

Life affords us a precious opportunity that we receive from the Almighty. It is our most valuable treasure. However, there are many who do not value their own lives? Their excuse is that they do not understand its purpose, the reason for so much suffering, the challenges, the diverse types of physical and moral pain they experience. But they forget that they are only seeking answers from the material concepts that they possess. They are, as a rule, merely concerned with the acquisition of material wealth on this Earth. With their material and illusory happiness, however, they will never find those answers, because the answers lie in their spiritual nature. Only when they look for them in it, will they be able to evaluate and fully comprehend the purpose for being on Earth.

We are all here to progress through our individual efforts, through the experiences we live, and it is only through helping one another that we will succeed in achieving the so much sought after peace and happiness.

With progress people are getting closer and closer to each other everyday. The barriers of time and space, no longer exist due to the technological advancements achieved by Science. But what a great distance still exists between the hearts of human beings!

We have to strive to shorten the distance that separates one from another, and most importantly that separates us from God.

Be courageous and do whatever it is within your power to assist all of those who are at this moment

⁴¹ Psychography received during the mediumship meeting at the SGNY – New York – Nov/29/2004

seeking enlightenment and understanding. Be their guide and let the Divine light of the Creator shine through you.

Appendix

List of Websites consulted for this topic

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14

UNDERSTANDING ADVERSITY

Suffering is a law of our world. In all social conditions, at all times, in all climates, the individual has suffered and sorrowed. In spite of social progress, millions of human beings are still bowed beneath the burden of suffering. The higher classes are not beyond its jurisdiction. Sensitiveness, which among the cultivated spirits is quicker and more acute, engenders keener impressions. The rich individual, as well as the poor, suffers both in flesh and spirit. From all parts of the Earth the human complaints ascends into space.

Even in the midst of abundance, a sense of depression, a vague sadness overcomes the sensitive soul. It realizes that happiness on this Earth is not to be, that at best but some evanescent shreds of it can be grasped. The spirit aspires to a purer life and a better world, some intuition whispering that this world is not the end of all things. For the one who is imbued with the philosophy of the spirits this intuition becomes a certainty. He knows where he goes, he comprehends the reason for his afflictions and the cause of his suffering. Beyond the shadows and sorrows of the Earth, he perceives the dawn of another life.

In order to weigh the blessings and the ills of this life, in order to ascertain what is truly happiness and what is unhappiness, one must rise above the narrow circle of terrestrial existence. The knowledge of the future life, and of the destiny that awaits us, enables us to measure the consequences of our acts and their influence upon our future.

Seen in this light the unhappiness of a human being will no longer consist of suffering, of the loss of friends, in privation or distress; contrarily it will be all that degrades or lowers him, all that checks his progress.

To the individual who merely considers the present moment, unhappiness may indeed consist in poverty, infirmity, and sickness. To the transcendent spirit who can impartially view passing events from its lofty standpoint, unhappiness will arise from a love of pleasure, from pride and all other concomitants of a useless and possibly guilty life. One cannot judge of a thing unless one can foresee its every ultimate consequence; therefore none can comprehend life if neither its object nor its laws are known. Trial, by purifying the soul, prepares it for its elevation and happiness, whereas the pleasures, riches and passions of this world weaken the spirit and expose it to bitter disappointment in the future life. Hence, he who suffers in spirit and flesh, he who is crushed by adversity, is entitled to hope and may lift a confident gaze to heaven, for he is paying his debt to destiny and is conquering freedom; but he who rejoices in sensuality forges his own fetters and accumulates fresh responsibilities which will lay a heavy burden on his future days.

Pain, in its multiple aspects, is the supreme remedy for the infirmities and imperfections of the soul. Without pain there is no possible salvation. As organic disease is frequently the result of our excesses, so do the moral trials that we endure arise from our past misdemeanors. Sooner or later these faults fall down on us, accompanied by their logical consequence. Such is the decree of justice, and it is in keeping with ethical harmony. Let us learn to accept its ordinances as we swallow bitter medicine, or submit to the painful operations that are to restore our bodily vigor and health. Even if we are visited by sorrow, humiliation and total ruin, we must undergo them patiently. The worker ploughs the ground that it may yield a golden crop; in similar manner shall our torn hearts give forth an abundant spiritual harvest.

The action of pain has the effect of separating from us that which is evil and impure; the gross appetites,

vices and desires, all which proceeds from the Earth and must return to the Earth. Adversity is the great school, the laboratory of the golden transmutation. Through its teachings, evil passions are gradually changed into generous deeds and pure intentions. Nothing is ever lost; but the transformation is tedious and difficult. Suffering, the constant warring against evil tendencies, and self-sacrifice, can alone accomplish it, and thanks to these, the soul acquires both wisdom and experience. From a green and acid fruit, through the regenerating dews of trial and the warm rays of divine love, it has changed at last into a ripe and perfect fruit, ready for the hand of the Divine Gatherer.

Our ignorance of the universal laws is alone responsible for the impatience we manifest towards suffering. If we could but know how necessary is this suffering to our own advancement, if we could learn to love its very bitterness – then we would cease to consider it a burden in our existence. Nevertheless we all dread pain; its necessity only becomes evident when we have left the world, its domain. It fulfils, notwithstanding, and inestimable function, bringing to light seeds of love, pity and tenderness, which, without it, might have lain forever dormant within us. Those who have never experienced suffering, lack their highest attribute; barely has the surface of their soul been touched. In them there can be no depth, either of mind or heart. Never having suffered, they perforce remain cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others.

In our blindness, we dare to complain that our life is obscure, monotonous or sad; but were we to lift our eyes above the Earth's low-lying horizons and should we thus distinguish this life's real motive, we should discover that such existences are precious and indispensable to curb the proud spirit. If we are noble in spirit we must bow down to this discipline, without which there is no possible progress.

Free to act as we list, without trammels or suffering, we are prone to follow to where our pleasure bids and natural inclination beckons; finally we discover, to our dismay, that far from improving, we have but added fresh error to the pre-acquired stock. Under the stress of suffering, when leading low and humble lives, we acquire the patience and meditation, the peace of mind that enables us to hear the voice of reason— that voice which is whispering to us from above.

In the crucible of pain great souls are fashioned. We have seen individuals who smilingly drain their cup of bitterness – a noble example for weak mortals to follow. Trial is a necessary expiation, and knowing it to be such many among us have chosen it of their own free will. Let us think upon this when hesitating, may the example of great suffering cheerfully borne impart to us also the strength to remain true to ourselves and to those virile resolutions, which we made before returning into the flesh.

The new faith has resolved the problem of purification through suffering. Spirit voices have whispered brave counsel in times of trouble. Some, who have endured every possible earthly anguish, come and tell us:

*I have suffered and have been happy but through my suffering. Pain has expiated many years of luxury and indolence. Suffering has taught me to meditate and to pray. When I lived in the whirl of pleasure never once did a salutary thought enter my soul; never did a prayer rise to my lips! Blessed be my trials, since they have finally shown me the path that leads to wisdom and truth.*⁴²

Such is the work assigned to suffering! Is it not the greatest that can be accomplished for humankind? It is carried on in silence and secrecy, but its results are

⁴² A mediumistic communication, received by Leon Denis.

incomparable. It detaches the soul from all that is low, material and transitory, and uplifts and directs it towards the future, to those realms that are its patrimony. It is doubtless a fine thing to come to a glorious end, to die young and like a hero. History will record your name, and the generations will honor your memory. But a long life of pain, of ills patiently endured, is far more fruitful to the progress of the spirit. History will not say anything of it, undoubtedly. These obscure and silent lives – lives of quiet struggle and meditation – are entered only in the annals of human oblivion, but those that have led them find their reward in the spiritual light. Pain softens the heart and kindles the embers of the spirit. Pain is the chisel that shapes the marble, rendering it harmonious and delicate in contour and finally bestowing upon it a perfect and imperishable beauty. A long and continuous labor of sacrifice accomplishes greater results than any single sublime deed.

Of all the cruel trials which fall to our lot here below, there is none greater than the loss of our loved ones, when they disappear, carried away one after the other by the great ravisher. Little by little our solitude is rendered greater and more complete becomes the isolation and silence that enshrouds us.

The successive departures of all those we love are as many solemn warnings, they show us the puerility of our material cares, of our earthly ambitions, while inviting us to make ready for the great journey.

The death of our children is likewise a source of bitter sorrow. What father or mother could be indifferent to the loss of their child? It is in these dark hours that spiritual philosophy comes to our assistance. And herein lies the beauty of the doctrine of the spirits, which shows us that these beings are not lost to us forever. For a while they leave us, but we are destined to rejoin them.

“They leave us!” Not so – our separation is but

apparent. These beloved spirits – father, mother, and children – are ever near us. Their fluid, their thought, surround us, their love watches over us. Their affection for us has never disappeared; death has but made it deeper and clearer.

It is our duty to battle against adversity. To give in, to silently succumb, to resign oneself without effort to the onslaughts of life, is to play the coward's part. The difficulties we have to overcome should stimulate and develop our intelligence. However, when every effort has proved vain, when we are at last brought face to face with the inevitable, then is the time that we must summon resignation to our side. There is no power that can avert from us the consequences of our past. To rebel against the moral laws would be as senseless as to pit ourselves against the law of attraction or gravitation. The insane individual might struggle against the immutable laws of nature, whereas the judicious individual discovers in his trials a means of self-improvement and of strengthening his virile faculties. An intrepid spirit accepts the evils of fate, but by his intellect he rises superior to them, and makes of them a stepping-stone to virtue.

The deepest and most harrowing affliction, when accepted with that humility in which both heart and reason consent, usually indicates the end of our evils, the repayment of the last fraction of our debt. This is the decisive moment when it behooves us not to abate our firmness, but to summon all our resolution and moral energy, so that we may emerge victorious from our trial and reap the benefits of our victory.

In the early days of our planet, suffering was the being's sole stimulator and only school. Little by little, suffering is growing less and those dreaded ills of plague, leprosy and famine are decreasing. Our times are already less harsh than those of the past. The individual has subdued the elements, lessened distances and conquered the Earth. Everything evolves and progresses. Slowly but

surely, the world, and even nature itself, are improving. Let us then place our faith in the power that directs the universe. Our limited intellect could hardly comprehend the totality of its intentions. God alone has an exact notion of that rhythmic cadence, that necessary alternation of life and death, of night and day, of joy and sorrow, out of which the happiness and the elevation of His creatures are finally achieved. Let us leave it to Him to appoint the hour of our departure, and let us learn to await it with neither fear nor desire.

MESSAGE⁴³

Coming through the desert,
in slow but steady steps,
a light stronger than the sun spreads a blaze of hope.

Hair that would reflect the specs of sun's rays,
smile of peace and fraternity
a true completion of beatitude.

His eyes would satiate every thirsty soul,
His sweet and gentle touch
would transform us in a blink of an eye.

Master, you are still walking in the desert,
At times carrying the world's cross in your shoulders,
But always loving and guiding us.

⁴³ Psychography received during the mediumship meeting at the SGNY - New York - Mar/2005

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PRAYERS FOR SUICIDES

Prayer should be an intimate overflowing from the soul to God. It is the supreme resource of the afflicted and of those that are faint at heart. In the hours of depression, of dark despair, who has not found in prayer some measure of calmness, of comfort, some balm for one's wounds? A mystic communion is established between the suffering spirit and the power it invokes. The soul lays here its anguish, its weaknesses; it begs for strength, help and pity. Then, in the sanctuary of conscience a mystic voice replies; the voice of Him, from whom proceeds the strength that prepares us for the battles of this world, the balm that soothes our wounds, the light that dispels the night of our dismay. And this voice comforts, persuades, uplifts; it fills us with courage, submission and stoical resignation. Then we arise, feeling less sad and less depressed; a celestial beam has shone upon our soul, causing a tiny seed of hope to germinate therein.

When a stone strikes the water, its surface is made to vibrate in concentric undulations. So, likewise is the universal fluid set to vibrate by our thoughts and prayers; but with this difference, the vibrations of the water are limited, whereas those of the universal fluid follow one another ad infinitum. All beings and all worlds are steeped in this element, just as we are in the Earth's atmosphere. It results from it that our thought, when impelled by a sufficient impulse and speeded by a sufficient will-force, has the power to impress other, perhaps incalculably distant, souls. A fluidic current is thus established which enables the advanced spirits to influence us and to answer our summons, even from the far depths of space.

We may exert a similar action upon unhappy spirits; prayer exercises an influence such as that of magnetism. It penetrates the dense, dark fluids that surround the troubled spirits, and lessens their sadness and dismay. It is the luminous golden shaft that darts through the ambient gloom; it is the melodious vibration, which expands and rejoices the oppressed spirit. What comfort it must convey to such spirits make them feel not utterly forsaken – to know that some human being still cares for them! Sounds, at once mighty and gentle, arise like a chant through space, and resound more intensely as the lips from which they proceed are more loving. They reach them and touch them greatly. That distant, friendly voice is bringing them peace, hope and courage. Could we but estimate the effect produced upon these unhappy spirits by an ardent prayer projected by a generous and energetic effort of our will, our voices would be unceasingly raised on behalf of the dispossessed and forsaken creatures of space – those whom no one remembers and who are, for the time being, steeped in the gloomiest despondency.

Suffering Spirits ask for prayers and these are useful to them, because on recognizing that someone thinks of them they feel comforted and less unhappy. Prayer has a more direct action on them by reanimating them and instilling them with a desire to elevate themselves through repentance, by making amendments, and turning them away from bad thoughts. It is in this sense that prayer cannot only alleviate, but can also shorten their suffering.

The spirits have always said: "The form means nothing but the thought is everything. Say your prayers in accordance with your convictions and in the manner which is most agreeable to you since a good thought is worth more than numerous words which do not touch the heart."

The Spirits do not prescribe an absolute formula for prayers. When they do give us one (presented in this chapter), it is merely to help us form our ideas and above all to call our attention to certain principles of the Spiritist Doctrine. Or perhaps to offer guidance to those who find it difficult to express their ideas, because there are those who believe that they have not prayed properly if they have not been able to formulate their thoughts well.

However, God is far too great to consider repelling a voice which implores Him or which sings His praises, just because it is not done in this or that manner. *Anyone who wants to launch anathema against any prayers which are not within their own formulas will prove they know nothing of the greatness of God.*

With this in mind let us see the examples of prayers given by the Spirits in the book *“The Gospel According to Spiritism.”*

Prayer for the Afflictions of Life

We can ask God for earthly favours and He will concede them to us when they have a serious purpose. But seeing that we judge their utility from our own point of view and as immediate necessities, we do not always recognise the bad side of what we ask. God, Who can see things in a better perspective than we can and only desires the best for us, may refuse what we ask for, just as a father would refuse his child what he knew would be prejudicial for him. If what we request is refused we should not be disappointed; on the contrary, we should think that to be deprived of our wish is a test or an expiation, and that our recompense will be in proportion to the degree of resignation shown towards what we have to put up with (See chapter 27, item 6 & chapter 2, items 5-7).

PRAYER:

God Omnipotent, who sees all our miseries, please deign to hear the supplication we direct to You at this moment.

If my request is inconsiderate, forgive me. If it is just and convenient, according to the way You see things, may the good Spirits who execute Your wishes, come to my aid and help me to realise my request. However it may be, Lord, let Your will be done! If my request is not answered, it will be because it is Your wish that I be tested, and I submit without complaint. Help me not to become disanimated and that neither my faith nor my resignation be shaken. (Then formulate your request).

Prayer for a Suicide

Man never has the right to dispose of his life, since it is only given to God to retrieve him from captivity on Earth, when He judges opportune. Nevertheless, Divine justice may soften the rigors in accordance with the circumstances, reserving however all severity towards he who wished to evade the trials of life. The suicide is like a prisoner who escapes from a prison before he has served his sentence, and who when recaptured is treated with greater severity. The same happens with a suicide who imagines he is escaping from the miseries of the moment, only to plunge into even greater misfortunes.

PRAYER:

We know, Lord, the destiny that awaits those who violate Your law, by voluntarily abbreviating their days. But we also know that Your mercy is infinite. So please condescend to extend this mercy to the soul of X... May our prayers and Your commiseration lessen the harshness of the sufferings they are experiencing for not having had the courage to await the end of their trials

Good Spirits whose mission is to help those who are wretched, take this Spirit under your protection; inspire him to regret the error committed. May your assistance give him strength to support with greater resignation the new trials through which he will have to pass in order to make reparation. Turn aside from him the

evil Spirits who are capable of once again impelling him towards that same act and so prolonging his suffering by making him lose the fruits of future expiations.

We also direct ourselves to you, whose unhappiness is the motive for our prayers, to offer a wish that our commiseration may diminish the bitterness and help to create within you the hope for a better future. This future lies in your hands; believe in the goodness of God, whose bosom opens to accept all repentance and only remains closed to hardened hearts.

FINAL WORDS

*“God grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.”*
Anonymous

Life offers us an outstanding opportunity to achieve progress. Considering that we are immortal souls, that we had a beginning but that there will never be an ending and that the successive incarnations assist us in our evolvment.

However, in the course of one’s existence, one will face many circumstances that on first analysis may seem impossible to overcome. We have to trust the infinite goodness of our Creator. He would never allow an occurrence beyond our capacity to withstand, or to crush us. What actually occurs is that quite often we succumb to the weight of developments, thereby believing that we do lack the sufficient strength and conviction to overcome them. That is an absolutely incorrect mistake. We do have the stamina and fortitude but oftentimes the price seems too high, because it involves our pride and our vanity. We fear facing the world and being exposed to our failures. But, if we recall, one of the most precious lessons of Jesus, “Those who are without sin cast the first stone,” he was left alone with the so-called sinner. And what did he say to her? “Woman, no one has condemned you? I also do not condemn you, but go and sin no more.” We, as well, always have precious opportunities to learn and to profit from our mistakes and from those of others, thus “sinning no more.” To err is a human part of life, a part of our present level of evolvment.

Therefore, whenever we feel overwhelmed, we should seek assistance. First, let us look for the assistance

from those who love us. Also, if you have any religious belief, seek this strength in your faith. If you feel insecure, go to the doctor. Do not let depressive thoughts instill themselves within you, thus assuming unstoppable proportions. They can easily be controlled with the proper care and attention. But, above all, lift your eyes to the Almighty, offer your soul, open your heart to the merciful Father, and with sincerity, ask for assistance. Pray and be humble. We are never alone, you can be certain that the Father will not abandon us. In fact, we are the ones who constantly shun proceeding along the road that leads us toward Him.

Be strong and remember that no matter what the extent of the problem you may now be facing, time will be in charge of putting it behind you. Give life a chance; give yourself a chance to love those who love you. Remember that you are loved and you will be missed. Use the opportunity to amass more strength and you will see that once the light shines again, dissipating the dense clouds that were previously hovered over you, you will perceive the satisfaction within you, because you will have survived and you will have graduated and will now be able to follow to higher realms.

The Caritas' Prayer

God, our Father, who is all-powerful and goodness, please provide strength to he who is experiencing pain and anguish.

Give Light to he who seeks the truth, and fill the human heart with love and compassion.

God, please give the traveler the star that guides, solace to those in pain, and rest to the sick and weary.

Father! Give the guilty repentance, the spirit the truth, give the child guidance, the orphan a father.

Lord! Let Your goodness encompass everything that You have created.

Clemency, my God, to he who does not know You. Hope to he who is in pain. Let Your Will allow the consoling spirits to spread peace, hope and faith everywhere.

God! May a single ray of light, a spark of Your divine love blaze the Earth.

Let us drink from the fountain of that infinite and fruitful goodness and all tears will be dried and all pain lessened.

A single heart, a single thought will rise to You, like a cry of gratitude and love.

Like Moses on the mountain, we await You with open arms,

Oh Almighty! Oh Greatness!

All Powerful, All Beauty! All perfection!

And we wish in some way to receive your mercy.

God, give us the power to help progress that we may rise up to You;

Give us pure charity, give us faith and reason, give us simplicity that will make our souls the mirror in which Your image should reflect.

CARITAS

(In *The Gospel According to Spiritism* by Allan Kardec, chapter 13, item 13 there is a message received in Lyon, 1861, from the spirit Carita – martyred in Rome. The above message was also from her)

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