

FROM DEATH TO REBIRTH

Teachings of the Finnish Sage Pekka Ervast



Literary Society of the Finnish Rosy Cross

Foreword by Richard Smoley

What happens to us when we die?

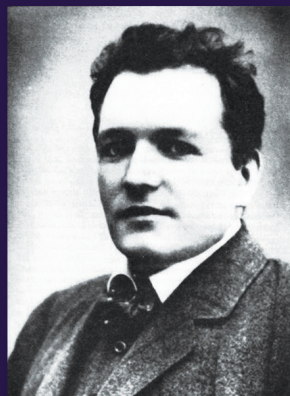
What is afterlife like?

Is it possible to know anything about it?

Through the ages there have been stories about people who have visited the abode of the death.

These people, seers, and sages of different cultures, have reported what they have seen there.

One of them was a Finnish spiritual teacher Pekka Ervast.



This book contains Ervast's teachings on the afterlife: He tells of the phases and states people will undergo after they pass through the door of death.

Pekka Ervast (1875–1934) had a profound spiritual awakening at the age of twenty. He then became a pioneer of the theosophical movement in Finland. Ervast wrote and lectured regularly for over 30 years on the multitude of spiritual topics. Previously four of his books have been published in English: *The Sermon on the Mount, or the Key to Christianity*; "H. P. B.": *Four Episodes from the Life of the Sphinx of the Nineteenth Century*; *The Key to the Kalevala*; and *The Divine Seed: The Esoteric Teachings of Jesus*.

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Foreword by Richard Smoley

For at least a century and a half, students of the Ancient Wisdom have been hoping for—and predicting—a point at which scientific discoveries will validate the truths of esoteric teaching.

Up to now this hope has been disappointed. Each time science seems to be on the verge of confirming esoteric truths, it seems to hold back or reverse course. It is true that some fields—such as quantum physics—hint at such notions, suggesting, for example, that ultimately it is consciousness that is the groundspring of the universe, but these findings are bizarre, paradoxical, and difficult to apply to everyday life, for which, we are told, the old, deterministic laws of what William Blake called “Newton’s sleep” still hold fast.

It is only in the last fifty years that scientific dogma is being forced—slowly and reluctantly—to break out of this shell. And this impulse has arisen not from the abstract and baffling discipline of theoretical physics, but from medical advances. This is because, at last, medicine has pushed back the boundaries of death. For a long time, death, from a clinical point of view, meant the stopping of the heart. But as cardiological progress made it possible to revive individuals even after their hearts had stopped, this definition has had to be revised, and death was defined as “flatlining”—having no discernible brain activity.

But that boundary has had to be pushed back as well, because there have been instances of individuals who had no discernible brain activity and yet still had conscious experience,

usually of an otherworldly, mystical kind. The most famous of these cases (in the United States at least) is Eben Alexander, a neurosurgeon who reported an intense and sublime journey to other dimensions while he was in a coma—that is, when his brain was, by the standards of neurology, not functioning. Alexander’s story, told in his best-selling book *Proof of Heaven*, struck the imagination of millions. In 2012, the American magazine *Newsweek* even featured his story on its cover, with the blurb “Heaven Is Real: A Doctor’s Experience of the After-life.”

Alexander’s story is among the most publicized and most impressive accounts of the near-death experience (NDE), but it is far from the only one. In 2007, Natalie Sudman, working as a military contractor for the U.S. in Iraq, was in a truck that was hit by a roadside bomb. She, too, had an NDE, but unlike Alexander’s, which stretched over seven weeks, hers took place in a few seconds, at which she found herself lecturing in what she later would call “the Blink Environment” to an assemblage of beings from other dimensions. They were evidently extremely curious to learn about this rare and exotic experience called “getting blown up.”

Most of the NDEs reported have been beatific—or at least experienced as more pleasant than life on earth—but there have been exceptions. In his book *My Descent into Death*, Howard Storm, a former atheist, recounts that during his NDE, he experienced an episode in which he was attacked by countless demonic entities, and was only freed when he heard a voice that told him, “Pray to God,” and he managed to remember a fragment from Sunday school, “Jesus loves me,” which he repeated over and over again until he was rescued by a luminous being that he identified with Christ. Eventually Storm was brought back to consciousness, recovered, and became a Christian missionary.

A more recent case was that of the American publisher Samuel Bercholz, who at age sixty had a heart attack requiring sextuple coronary bypass surgery. In his coma Bercholz, like Storm, had an experience of hell, but from a different viewpoint. Bercholz had long been a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, and he was not subjected to hell but was given a tour of it. (His memoir of this experience is called *A Guided Tour of Hell*.) Escorted by a being he calls “the Buddha of Hell,” he was shown various infernal realms that recapitulate the traditional Buddhist hells in almost textbook fashion. His conclusion is similarly in accord with Buddhist doctrine: “The sufferings of each and every one of these beings are due to their own mental conceptions. In fact, their suffering in hell is an unbroken continuation of their own states of mind during life, which persisted even after the death of the physical body.”

Gingerly, then, the Western world is groping, not only toward an admission of the existence of the afterlife, but toward some kind of mapping of it. Certainly this has long been known in traditional societies, as evidenced by *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, its Tibetan equivalent, the *Bardo Thödol*, and in simpler, more homely forms as well, such as the medieval English “Lyke-Wake Dirge,” which tells of the soul’s passage from earth to purgatory in an archaic Yorkshire dialect:

*From Brig o’ Dread when thou may’st pass,
To Purgatory fire thou com’st at last;
If ever thou gavest meat or drink,
The fire sall never make thee shrink.*

It would be unwise, I think, to try to compress and distill all these accounts wholesale. They do not all say the same thing. Many of the Western accounts—from the “Lyke-Wake Dirge” to the accounts of Alexander and Storm—suggest a preliminary passage through a dark realm, which sounds very much

like the traditional concept of hell, whereas *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* presents almost a mirror image: the “Clear Light” that bestows liberation dawns upon the deceased at the moment of death, while the wrathful deities appear only toward the end, when the individual is already well on the way to rebirth.

We can avoid rigidly reducing all accounts of the after-death state to one overarching schema while still delineating some common features. Pekka Ervast’s, as presented in this book, offers one possible approach. Ervast’s account is based on Theosophical teachings, along with his own clairvoyant insights. It recapitulates the inner structure of man as portrayed by Theosophy, which involves a number of nested bodies of increasing subtlety.

The lowest of these is the physical body, and the meaning of its death is obvious. Physical operations stop, all physical activity ceases, and from this point on, the body, having lost its organizing principle, immediately begins to decay. (One is reminded of Aristotle’s view that the soul or psyche is the “form” of the body.)

At this point, conventional knowledge stops. Few things are more obvious than the fact that a living body differs from a corpse, but mainstream thought—up to this day—is very vague about what makes it differ. In the Theosophical view, this principle is, at its lowest level, the *etheric body*, the subtle energy structure that organizes and motivates the flesh.

Like its material counterpart, the etheric body is mortal, but it does not die at the same time as the physical body. Traditional thought tends to agree with Ervast in saying that it lives on, usually for another three days or so. During this period, the deceased has some limited capacity for contact with the living.

Such was my own experience with my mother’s death. One or two days afterward, I was sitting in her house alone,

meditating. I heard a voice calling, “Richard, Richard!” I thought it was my aunt, who lived next door. But when I went to the door, there was no one.

My aunt, my mother’s sister, had a similar experience. She was on the street in front of her house, walking her dog. She too heard my mother’s voice; the dog seemed to hear it as well.

These encounters are relatively common. They take all kinds of forms. A friend of mine, a Kabbalist, tells me that his father appeared to him after his death to tell him to make sure to wear a suit to the funeral. And when I was editor of *Gnosis*, a journal of the esoteric traditions, I got endless numbers of articles written by people who had had similar encounters. We did not publish this kind of article, but people sent them in anyway—probably because they had no one else to describe their experiences to.

Conventional practice seems to reflect, however unconsciously, this view of the lifespan of the etheric body. In Western cultures, at any rate, it is a general practice to bury or cremate the remains around three days after death, so that the funeral marks, or coincides with, the death of the etheric body. Subjectively, the loved ones have a sense that the deceased is no longer around in the way he was immediately after death.

Those who die suddenly—and who thus have no chance to detach themselves from the physical body gradually—are, as Ervast says, disoriented. Soldiers killed in battle often stand above the scene, looking at their own bodies and wondering what has happened. In fact the early twentieth-century British periodical *The Occult Review* published many descriptions of this kind of event as witnessed by clairvoyants during World War I. There was also the curious episode of the angels at the battle of Mons. Soon after the battle, in September 1914, the occult writer Arthur Machen published a story called “The

Bowmen” describing invisible archers coming to the aid of British troops. It was fiction, and he did not pretend it was anything else, but soon soldiers who had been at the battle came forward and said they had seen something similar, often described as angels. When I was a boy, my father told me about this legend, although this version had St. George fighting on Britain’s behalf.

If there is any truth to this story, the witnesses may have been seeing the etheric bodies of the dead. Ervast (without mentioning the battle of Mons) describes the situation: “Some [of the deceased] are still eager to fight, and they continue fighting in the invisible world that is near the physical world, that is, in the etheric world. That is why another group is often seen fighting in the air above the physical troops. They are shadows, filled with vigor, attacking each other.” Ervast says that, like many of the dead, they need the aid of spirit helpers to reorient themselves.

Before proceeding to the next stage of the afterlife, it may be worthwhile to look at this entire process in light of the tripartite division of the human entity as conceived in esoteric Christianity, and mentioned by the editors here: as body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). These terms—particularly the latter two—are poorly understood today, and there are not many clerics, nor, I suspect, many theologians who can explain the difference between the two. Some may also find it puzzling that esoteric Christianity speaks of three levels, whereas Theosophy speaks of seven.

This discrepancy is easy to reconcile if we realize that, so to speak, the “bandwidths” of these teachings differ: there are fewer levels in esoteric Christianity, and they cover what Theosophy breaks down more precisely. Ervast’s view is by and large identical with that of Theosophy. We can break them down in this way (in descending order):

Ervast	Esoteric Christianity
Atmic	Spirit (<i>pneuma</i>)
Buddhic	} Soul (<i>psuché</i> , i.e., <i>psyche</i>)
Higher Mental	
Lower Mental	
Astral	
Etheric	} Body (<i>sōma</i>)
Physical	

It is also useful to know that the later esoteric Christian tradition—as seen, for example, in the *Philokalia*—refers to the spirit, *pneuma*, as *nous*—roughly, pure consciousness.

What the esoteric Christian view lacks in subtlety, it makes up for with simplicity and elegance. It makes perfect sense if we view the human entity internally—as perceived by the subject.

In the first place, there are the experiences of the outer, physical world through the five senses. We can categorize these as the *body*.

In the second place, there are the experiences of thoughts, images, and emotions in the mind: the sum total of these experiences, and the entity that organizes them, can be called the *psyche* or *soul*. (It is useful to remember that, in most English versions of the New Testament, whenever the word *soul* appears, it is being used to translate the word *psuché*.)

What is left? Only the pure, cognizing Self—what Ervast calls the *higher self*. This is the spirit or *pneuma* or *nous*. Hindu teachings call this Self the *Atman*.

Understanding this simple schema makes many esoteric Christian teachings much clearer. It also gives a key to understanding a great deal of what Ervast is saying in this book.

As for the Theosophical view,ⁱ the etheric body, from the subject's point of view, is not the flesh per se but physical sensations. These are how the subject perceives the etheric body. This perception can be greatly enhanced and refined by meditative practices that focus on conscious attention to physical sensation.

The astral body is made up of the compendium of feelings, emotions, and desires that the individual has accumulated during his lifetime.

The mental body is composed of thoughts and ideas. Theosophy, for intricate reasons that we will not pursue here, often divides this into higher and lower stages (higher and lower *manas*).

Buddhi, usually translated into English somewhat inaccurately as *intuition*, is cognitive experience of the highest and most abstract order.

The buddhic, mental, and astral levels can be associated with the psyche as understood in esoteric Christianity. Why? Because all of them involve cognizing of objects, whether mental, emotional, or physical. The *pneuma*, the cognizing higher self, is equated, again, with the Atman.

The progress of the spirit through the afterlife is a series of deaths: first of the etheric, then of the astral, then of the mental.

The dissolution of the astral body can be roughly divided into two stages. The first, which classical Theosophy calls *kamaloka*, is the realm of desires. The deceased person no longer has a physical body, but many desires and attachments remain

i It is important to note that the major Theosophical thinkers, notably H.P. Blavatsky on the one hand, and Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbeater on the other, give slightly different schemas. Moreover, Besant and Leadbeater modified their characterizations as time went on. On these issues, see the article "Human Constitution," in Philip S. Harris et al., eds., *Theosophical Encyclopedia* (Quezon City, Philippines: Theosophical Publishing House, 2006), 288–89.

that originated with life on earth. These desires cannot be fulfilled in the astral realm—precisely because it is not the physical realm—so the individual experiences them without hope of satisfaction.

The period of time spent in *kamaloka* varies from individual to individual (although we need to be cautious about applying earthly time frames to places that are decidedly not of the earth). From here it proceeds to what Ervast calls the *earthly paradise*, so called because it resembles the earth—but without any sorrow or suffering.

This phase too has an end, which Ervast calls the *second death* (cf. Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). Ervast writes:

If we imagine that we have traveled through all the sub-planes of Hades, it is as if everything has grown and become larger from class after class. At the end we feel that our very personality should fade away so that we should not exist at all. However, something else starts to come into view. At the same time, somewhere deep, something bright starts to come into view; we do not distinctly dare to believe in it, but we have to start believing in it. When we arrive at the gate of heaven, we come so bare that there is nothing left from our personality.

The last statement makes an extremely important point. It helps us understand why the ordinary view of the afterlife is so confused and confusing. Is the soul immortal? Not if we equate it with the psyche as defined above. It is easy to see why this should be so: will you still like your favorite foods when you are dead? Which political party will you support? Will you still want to go to the movies?

Only up to a point—the point where these desires are extinguished. If there is anything left after this—and it may be very little—the individual proceeds to heaven per se.

Hence the difficulty. Ervast underscores the point that the personality is not immortal; it can and must die (in stages). But how is the ordinary person to grasp this fact? Not only does he believe that he is his personality, he believes that he is nothing else. From his point of view, then, nothing survives or can survive. If you understand the situation only this far, you will naturally conclude that there is no such thing as an afterlife. If you have some contact with the higher self—enough to know, however dimly or unconsciously, that it exists—you are more likely to believe in the afterlife, or, we could even say, to know that it is real.

As I said earlier, it is not possible to squeeze all of the many views of the afterlife into one simplified picture. It is not even possible to do this with Ervast's picture and that of the classic Theosophists. The biggest difference is that Besant, for example, equates the astral level more or less completely with the after-death state known as *kamaloka*. Once the negative impulses have been exhausted, the individual ascends to the mental plane, associated more or less exclusively with *devachan* or heaven. Thus the state connected with the astral is more or less completely negative, while the one connected with the mental is positive.

Ervast, by contrast, divides the more beatific part of the afterlife into three: the *earthly paradise* (the highest astral level); the *lower heaven* (lower mental level); and the *higher heaven*, which the individual enters when all traces of the personality have been extinguished. Everyone goes through these phases. Additionally, there is the *heaven of the Christ*, which is accessible only to the purest and most refined spirits.

But Ervast more or less agrees with the other Theosophists in his portrayal of reincarnation. For them, reincarnation is a positive event. Certain possibilities in the human spirit cannot

be developed except during life on earth. Thus it is necessary to return to this stage, and, despite the sufferings that any human life will include, it is ultimately a positive development—one in an almost infinite link in the sequence of the development of the monad in each of us.

We can contrast this attitude to traditional Eastern thought, such as Buddhism, for which reincarnation is a misfortune. It is a sign that something has gone wrong, that the individual is still trapped on the wheel of conditioned existence.

Both Theosophy and Buddhism attribute reincarnation to *trishna*—the desire for conditioned existence. But whereas for Buddhism, *trishna* is a source of cosmic imprisonment, for Theosophists, it is a kind of *felix culpa*, a happy fault that leads the monad, and the universe, to perfection.

To think about these issues for any amount of time stretches and strains the mind. There is the initial difficulty of the concepts themselves, which are particularly hard to grasp in that no two Theosophical authors say exactly the same thing. But there is the further difficulty of relating the concepts, no matter how broad and elevated, to a scheme of things that is far beyond the realm of concepts. Although understanding here is beyond the limits of human possibilities, paradoxically, it behooves us nonetheless to strive toward these limits and even to hope to surpass them.

Richard Smoley is the author of ten books, including *Inner Christianity: A Guide to the Esoteric Tradition*; *Forbidden Faith: The Secret History of Gnosticism*; *Conscious Love: Insights from Mystical Christianity*; and *The Dice Game of Shiva: How Consciousness Creates the Universe*. He is also the editor of *Quest: Journal of the Theosophical Society in America*.

To the Reader

Pekka Ervast (1875–1934; P. E.) was a pioneer of the Finnish Theosophical movement, and he lectured, wrote books and journal articles on a multitude of Theosophical topics for almost forty years. In many of his lectures and writings, he discussed life after death from multiple points of view. Most of these teachings were delivered in the form of lectures; hence the style of the presentation is to some extent informal. We have put together this book on the afterlife, from death to rebirth, making use of P. E.'s teachings. Our aim has been to provide a coherent and, as far as possible, chronological presentation of the afterlife. However, we have had to make choices on what to include and what to leave out. These choices were based on our best judgment and thorough familiarity with P. E.'s teachings on the topic. Furthermore, we have added some clarifications to the text; these are indicated with brackets.

How did P. E. gain his knowledge of the afterlife? To at least partially answer this question, we have outlined P. E.'s path to spiritual knowledge. This might provide the reader with some insights on the underpinnings of supersensible knowledge, including the stages of the afterlife. In addition, it is interesting to note that P. E.'s description on the early phases of the dying process closely coincides with the contemporary scientific findings about the near-death experience (NDE; naturally, later phases of the afterlife are not amenable to modern empirical science). We have included a brief chapter on NDE research, with some references, to provide the reader with the means to evaluate to what extent P. E.'s teachings match with these results.

Many clairvoyants, spiritists/spiritualists, and spiritual scientists have reported their insights and direct observations on life after death: for instance, the mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (*De caelo et ejus mirabilibus et de inferno*, 1758; English title *Heaven and Hell*), the spiritist Allan Kardec (*Le livre des esprits*, 1857; in English *The Spirits' Book*), clairvoyant Andrew Jackson Davis (*Death and the After-Life*, 1865), Theosophist Charles W. Leadbeater (*The Other Side of Death*, 1903; *The Life after Death and How Theosophy Unveils It*, 1912), and Anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (*Das Leben nach dem Tod: Themen aus dem Gesamtwerk Band 15*, selected lectures between 1912 and 1924, in English *Life Beyond Death*). We occasionally provide links to these and other sources of information regarding the afterlife in order to compare, and sometimes to contrast, P. E.'s teachings with them. It is our conviction that P. E.'s teachings on the afterlife both complement and deepen the views presented by other spiritual researchers.

In Vilppula, Kuopio and Tampere, Finland

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Pekka Ervast's Path to Spiritual Knowledge

Pekka Ervast (P. E.) was born on December 26, 1875, in Helsinki, Finland. He had extrasensory experiences already as a child, even though he didn't give them much weight. As a young man he was an ardent seeker of truth and set as his utmost goal to find out the meaning of life. Fulfilling ethical values has a central role in spiritual life, and there was an interesting episode in P. E.'s life connected to this theme.

As a child P. E. was quick to get angry when he saw some injustice done. Once when he was about fourteen years old, after such an episode he heard a voice telling him, "There's no need to get angry." P. E. became very glad about this advice, and he lost his anger after that incident.

In 1894 P. E. became acquainted with Theosophy through a Swedish translation of A. P. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*.

I read few sentences from the first chapter. There was talk about a brotherhood of adepts, how there has always been and still are human beings who have deeper knowledge about the secrets of nature and life than any scientist. I could read no more. I was overwhelmed by so great a shudder of joy that I was compelled to throw myself on the couch. My whole being sounded as in one voice: this is true, this is true. . . .

The aftermath was so immense I could not read anything on that day. I couldn't think anything else. As if from a revelation I had gained a certainty that adepts do exist and a human being can participate in divine knowledge.¹

In October 1895, P. E. joined the Scandinavian section of the Theosophical Society. In those times the Theosophical Society was splitting in two, and this incident had a negative effect on him.

I was really left all alone with just a few books, and as my embarrassment I must confess that my freshly acquired Theosophical conviction started to falter; in my soul I wound up in a painful contradiction.

I had been enthusiastic; I had believed; I had had inner confidence. I had felt my whole being living with the faith that there were sincere seekers of truth and wise sages who know that truth, but now I doubted it. Perhaps there were no sincere people in the world, no sincere seekers.²

The reason that I didn't remain in this stance lies with my good karma. And this good karma of mine first took the form of Leo Tolstoy. I became acquainted with his books and his worldview. I read about his struggles and doubts, and I found through my inner elation and wonder that he had passed through the same agony of soul which I was just now enduring. So there was another human being, even a great and famous human being, who understood me and thought the same way as I did. What a strange consolation, what a charming support and resort! He didn't give me any positive knowledge, and he didn't console me in such a way that my pain had dissipated. On the contrary, he gave me support in my secret faith that honest and undisputed seeking of truth was humanly justifiable and not hopeless. The truth could be found somewhere and it was attainable.³

The nucleus of Tolstoy's teaching were the six antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21–48), and by

combining them Tolstoy formed five commandments. P. E. adopted these as his maxims. In his book *The Sermon on the Mount* (1933) P. E. crystallized these commandments in a concise form: be not angry; be pure even in thy thoughts; swear not; resist not evil; and war not, but love all men.

The fourth commandment was quite mysterious. I felt even as a young man that it was something new and something was based on it because it could nowhere be seen. Do not resist evil. Our whole society is built on resisting evil. We took into possession those people who did evil things, locked them up in confinement and protected ourselves from them. Was it now possible that we should not resist evil? I pondered this question a long time, but finally this matter became clear to me and a silent voice spoke inside me: evil does not end in the world in any other way than that I—and every human being—stop doing evil. If we always retaliate, we in turn create evil, and we can't rid the world of evil. Only through good can the evil be conquered—and I remembered that Buddha had said the same—evil can be overcome only with love, only by ceasing from doing evil and carrying the cross for those who still do it.⁴

Before my eyes there was a great promise: by abiding with the commandments of Jesus I would be taking part of the heavenly kingdom and I would come to know “all truth.”

Therefore I started following Christ by obeying his commandments.⁵

Earnestly seeking for the meaning of life took P. E. eventually to point where he said: now comes clarity or death. And then in the year 1896 he went through a great experience of rebirth, which he also called a “Baptism in the Jordan.”

On October 13, 1896, in the middle of the day, the agony of my soul had reached an utmost point. The pain rose so high that in spirit I cried out for help in life, when I could not endure it anymore.

I fell on my back onto the couch. Then suddenly I was engulfed in a fog. There seemed to be a dark cloud before my eyes, and I felt as if my pain would transfer itself into the cloud. I then thought, such is life. At the same time the cloud tore apart as if struck by lightning, and the rays of the sun shone warmly on my face, bright but not dazzlingly. Gradually this lovely light surrounded me on every side, so I was as if in a sea of light, and eventually it filtered inside me, filled me, and lit me up totally, so I and my whole being became like a pure light. At the same time behind the sun and from every part of space there a voice echoed saying, "Be in good care, my son, because I love you." And then this light dispersed, went inside me, and was released as a flame. Living, blazing in a maple-leaf shape, it raised high above my head and surrounded me with its light. Astounded, I rose from the couch, and behold, I was another human being.

My old life was wiped away. I crossed my hands on my breast and said softly and earnestly: "A human being is a son of God. God the Father does exist, and He is behind all life. He loves, He loves, and I am his son, and there is no distress, ever; there has never been and there will never be. All pain and suffering is just due to being born into a new life. When a human being is born to this world, then there is pain and ailments, and when a human being is born into spiritual life, into that consciousness of being a son of God, this too must happen through pain and ailments, by great effort and

going through an immense hell. Then all will be peace, harmony, and clarity.

And from that moment peace could not be missing from my soul. This peculiar condition lasted continuously many months and caused different phenomena. For example, I suddenly understood the Gospels: there were talks about the light, in which I was just wandering. Jesus said: "Uplift the son of man in you. Wander as long as you have the light." ⁶

My experience was so versatile and so rich that it could be almost described from a limitless number of different angles. It is not possible to explain it fully with words, because physical language is muted by the depths of spirit. I saw that without Christ we can't live spiritually, and if we don't take the maxims of Jesus Christ as the compass of our conscience, we are in grave danger of getting lost on our life's path.

I saw then what the commandments [of Jesus] signified: they forbid violence, they forbid war. I saw that the requirement was undisputed. I also saw that the request was not arbitrary, not invented by some god, but depending on and stemming from the spiritual laws of life. The question was whether to live or die spiritually.

So since the year 1896 I have been an unconditional antimilitarist and pacifist.⁷

Nonresistance to evil and being unarmed form a central part of the ethics taught by P. E.

After his experience P. E. continued in Tolstoy's footsteps, but then he was puzzled by the question of cosmogony, so he started to read H. P. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*.

It was extremely interesting and wonderful to read her account of the creation of the world. Madame Blavatsky

spoke so deeply and in a mysteriously beautiful way about this great darkness, where the light of God, manifestation, and the light of reason shone, and I could not help thinking about my own experience.⁸

One day I sat at the piano and played a favorite song of my dad, even though my thoughts were lingering far away in the secret of the Logos. Suddenly then my eyes opened, and my gaze penetrated deep into the heartlands of our solar system.

Space, which was behind everything, was like a mother's womb containing deep secrets of birth. From this mother's womb, suddenly a light shone, as a light had also shone out of me, and it was the light of reason. One could not give it any form; one could not call it a personal being because, like the "light self" of human beings, it had won over its personality millions of years ago, but it was supremely high self-awareness, a light of reason that shone in the darkness and swarmed from itself a whole universe.⁹

Although after 1897 P. E. served as a Theosophical writer and lecturer, he did not bring forth his own deep experiences immediately. He obviously had no need to emphasize his personality. He described his great Christ experience from the year 1896 only three times in public. The first one was in the book *Suuret uskonnot* ("The Great Religions") in 1909, but there the event was described anonymously. Only in a series of articles called *Teosofisia muistelmia* ("Theosophical Memoirs") from 1915–1916 does P. E. speak personally about the great turning point of his life. The third description can be found described in *Ruusu-Ristin syntysanat Suomessa* ("The Origin of the Rosy Cross in Finland"), which was published in 1929. There is an old principle that important concepts must be related three times in this world of the lower trinity.

In spring 1897, P. E. joined the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society in America, led by Katherine Tingley.

I got into a secret spiritual contact with people who regularly practiced meditation, and many of them could have had many spiritual and also psychic experiences. As an esoterist I probably practiced more self-conscious and concentrated meditation than before, though I had always lived a contemplative life.¹⁰

Along with Theosophical literature, P. E. read such mystics as Meister Eckhart, Henry Suso, Johannes Tauler, Jakob Böhme, and Emanuel Swedenborg. Such study was easy for P. E. because he had an exceptional knowledge of languages. He learned to read French as a five- or six-year-old, and at the age of twelve he began writing a comparative grammatical study of nine different languages.

In his spiritual experience P. E. started straight from above, from God and the meaning of life. But between heaven and earth there were still a lot of things to be studied, which our scientists had hardly dreamed of. The next step was then the question about Masters and the mysteries of death.

One January evening in 1898 I pondered about the question of death and said to my inner god, “You have given my soul an everlasting peace, but you have not yet even nearly presented to me the whole truth. You have neither solved for me the secret of death nor the existence of the Masters, and anyway you understand that when a human being wants to be an honest seeker and a sage, he can never be content with what is given to him, for he must always ask for more. So I can’t be content with what you have divulged to me, but you must let me see more.”

When meditating, I suddenly lost my consciousness and awoke. I was standing outside my body. My physical frame was there on a couch where I was sitting, but I was in a different body and condition; the bliss of this situation cannot be described by words. I was euphoric, light, and I started to wander away from my physical body to another world, where I met a Master.¹¹

The Theosophical Society has publicly and in the inner circle talked about two Masters, and from an image I concluded that I had met the other one.¹²

I do not want to describe in detail either this incident or my experiences in the invisible world; I only repeat that now I had gained tangible knowledge about the astral world, the creatures of that world, and about the astral body of a human being.

I observed that when a human being is truly free from the physical body and transferred outside of his astral body, then he is another being; he has more extensive consciousness; he is much brighter and lovelier than the being that plays the role of his personality. He is clad in wedding garments, it is said, and if he is not clad in white clothes, it is impossible for him to step into the life of the Masters and their disciples. But when he is so clad, then he knows that physical life is small and negligible, confined and dark compared to the blissful life outside the physical body.

And it is as if he asks himself, as I did when I was outside for the first time, "How can this body in the physical world bear all this?" It is of course only by forgetting these things! In this astral state I knew that I had been free often and for a long time, even though I had always forgotten, but now occurred the miraculous thing that I

was allowed to remember. I didn't forget my experience; I remembered it. I was not willing to return to my body, but the Master said, "Now you must leave," and I felt from my distant body an attraction, which drew me like a vortex, so that I nearly lost my consciousness. But I got happily through. My consciousness remained pure. Suddenly I found myself sitting in my body and remembering everything. I could do no more than immerse myself in blessing and gratitude as I sank into bed. Now I knew. Now I had no need to doubt anymore. A great riddle was solved now. A human being is immortal.¹³

Now I want to mention another circumstance, which was apt to increase my occult knowledge. Namely, I was to study life after death. This allowed me to visit after-death states, in Hades, hell, purgatories, and heavens. It was possible to meet different kinds of deceased persons and study their conditions after death. This was as instructive as it was exciting—"interesting," as it was said—but seeing the different fates of people was not nearly as peculiar as the expanding awareness that I had also lived in states after death, yet I could still live. All the incidents I witnessed took place during the same time as I experienced them. This study and knowledge were not like watching from the side how another human being was tormented or how he acted in the after-life. It was not satisfying one's curiosity, which would actually be ignoble and inhuman; it was taking part in the lives of the deceased. If I could see a human being suffering in hell or Hades, I was with that person and I endured his pain.

Occult study is not ordinary scientific analysis, in which the human being can be totally outside the

object to be studied. For example if we mix chemical compounds together and watch the outcome, we are outside the whole process at the time. Our body and our perceptions separate us completely from the chemical process. But in an occult investigation, our scientific objectivity has a spiritual quality. One is not allowed to study the states of the afterlife if one is not paying a ransom, which means being willing to suffer the same agonies as those souls in hell. By the way, no hell is eternal, but to be able to endure those pains even for a moment, the truth seeker must be the master of his imagination; otherwise fear would overcome him. One must have pity and love towards suffering souls and a will to suffer with them. However, at the same time there must be a peaceful spirit, which enables impartial and scientific observation. Then it occurred to me what is told about many saviors: namely how after death they went down to the imprisoned souls and preached to them in the darkness. They went down to Hades. This is just what occult study is like. It is descending to Hades for the purpose of helping. The aim is not to satisfy curiosity, but to give loving help. It is to enlighten, encourage, and comfort the imprisoned souls, and it is often quite slow work. Even though the helper is taking part in the sufferings of others, he can't immediately open their eyes. He is allowed to go on comforting, talking, and clarifying again and again before the deceased even lends an ear to him. For a callous deceased person it is not easy to hear the voice of conscience.¹⁴

In 1898 P. E. resigned from the Theosophical Society in America led by Tingley, and he joined the Theosophical Society of Adyar. The Finnish section of that society was founded in 1907, and P. E. was elected the general secretary.

In the first years P. E. did not present himself as an experienced occultist. Only later he did understand that he must take this burden on his shoulders and be solely responsible for his own account.¹⁵ In his writings published after 1914, P. E. tells in a more straightforward way about the results of his own studies, and this book is compiled mainly from those texts. On November 14, 1920, he founded a new society, Rosy Cross, to be able to bring forth his own findings more freely.

P. E.'s relation to life after death is clearly depicted in the post-humous novel *Suuri seikkailu* ("The Great Adventure"). It includes the following conversation between the alter ego of P. E., Dr. Kotka, and Reverend Santala:¹⁶

"So you claim, dear Doctor, that a mortal man like me can go down into the kingdom of the deceased."

"I do," I answered smilingly.

"Why are you smiling? Are you poking fun at me?"

"On the contrary. I smile because these things are so obvious to me. Would you not also be smiling if someone asked you whether you had really seen and walked along the streets of Helsinki?"

On the Science of Near-Death Experiences

It is often said that there can be no knowledge, let alone scientific knowledge, about the afterlife. However, there is a large body of research on the near-death experience (NDE) that meets the criteria of science. Most of this research makes use of medical data and interviews gathered from those who have been resuscitated.ⁱⁱ Interviews have been conducted on people who had NDEs a long time previously, and with those who have had NDEs in the very recent past. The picture emerging from these studies is quite consistent, although not all people describe all the stages of the NDE. What follows is a brief outline of the reported main characteristics of the NDE.ⁱⁱⁱ

The first reported stage is usually a feeling of deep peace; all pain has ceased. This is followed by an out-of-body experience: NDErs can see and hear, often from the vantage point of a ceiling, what is going on around them. For instance, they are able to describe the resuscitation in quite a detail. They also report a lucid and heightened awareness despite the fact that their brain functioning is severely compromised, for example because of a heart attack.

ii For instance, Carter, 2010; Long & Perry, 2010; van Lommel et al., 2001; van Lommel, 2011.

iii The scientific evidence concerns the prevalence of certain features in the NDE; there are various interpretations of the experience. Mainstream science appears to assume that all NDEs are, in one way or another, produced by the brain. However, NDE researchers have presented quite strong arguments that the brain-based explanatory models are not plausible in explaining the NDE. —*Editors' note.*

About 30% of Western NDErs report transitions to another realm, sometimes described as passing through a long tunnel, which can be perceived as dark or multicolored. At any rate, the passage is very fast. The tunnel leads to a light that is exceptionally bright, but not blinding. The experience of the light is accompanied by an overwhelming feeling of bliss, unconditional love, and acceptance. Often people meet deceased relatives, friends, and other beings of light. (Sometimes this encounter can happen before entering the light.)

Some NDErs (13% in studies involving Western subjects) report a panoramic life review, which may contain the person's whole life in a momentary flash or just a few highlights. The life review takes place very quickly, but the NDErs can follow it intensively. Some report that they experience how their thoughts, words, and actions affected other people. There is a moral element in the life review that makes it possible for the person to evaluate his or her past life objectively. However, this is not described as judging in the sense of condemning. The life review is usually experienced in the light, but it can also happen before entering the light.

During the NDE people can gain access to universal knowledge, making it possible to understand everything, their own lives as well as why people do what they do. Life and existence have a deep meaning; everything is connected in unity. At the end of the NDE there is the perception of a border (about the third of the NDErs report this): they realize intuitively, or it is explained by the light being, that should they cross the border, they would not be able to resume their lives on earth. The NDE is such a blissful experience that it is hard to come back into the sick, damaged body. The decision becomes easier when the NDEr remembers or is reminded of children or other people who need him.

A very small fraction of the NDEs are frightening (typically 1–2%). People experiencing a frightening NDE may have attempted suicide, have taken an overdose of drugs, or they may have been ordinary people with strong fears of dying at the beginning of the NDE. After leaving their bodies, these people have entered into a dark, meaningless void filled with loneliness and despair. They may sense the presence of an evil force and hear horrific voices. Some describe a place very similar to images of the traditional hell. However, these very unpleasant experiences may have a positive effect: some people have taken the experience as a warning and a chance to change their lives for the better.

The NDE is a life-changing experience that can greatly affect the person's values and outlook on life. The Dutch cardiologist Pim van Lommel and his colleagues published a longitudinal, prospective study on the NDE in 2001.^{iv} They documented significant differences between the NDErs and the control group (people who had had a heart attack with no NDE). There were life changes in both groups, but the NDE group had undergone more profound changes. The NDE group showed more acceptance to others, and they were more loving and empathetic. Their interest in spirituality had increased, whereas it had decreased in the control group. In addition, van Lommel's study concurred with earlier research indicating a decline in religious affiliation among NDErs, whereas church attendance increased to some extent in the control group.

The NDE group had less interest in money, possessions, and social norms. Fear of death had decreased in both groups, but more strongly so in the NDE group. Belief in life after death was more prominent in the NDE group than in the control

iv van Lommel et. al., 2001. This study was published in *The Lancet* which is one of the most prestigious journals in medicine. —*Editors' note.*

group. Many of the NDErs said that they had a very acute sense of other people's emotions and that they had acquired paranormal abilities (although the validity of this claim was not investigated by van Lommel's research team).

Love for oneself, others, and nature are important for people who have had NDEs. These changes are clearly evident in the following extract:

"I'm no longer afraid of death, because I'll never forget what happened to me there. Now I'm certain that life goes on. Over the years I've undergone a number of changes. I feel a strong connection with nature. I've acquired a great sense of justice. I've become more patient and peaceful. My anger is a thing of the past. I feel a strong urge to never lie again. I'd rather keep silent than tell a little white lie. I do struggle with deadlines: things must get done within a certain time. I enjoy life immensely. I believe that people have stopped living from the heart."^v

Van Lommel observes that usually people with the NDE become more forgiving, tolerant, and compassionate: to put it concisely, they seek to express unconditional love. In addition, van Lommel notes that life reviews speak of a cosmic law: whatever we do to another person will ultimately have an effect on us as well; everything is interconnected.

The reader is invited to compare the descriptions documented by the scientific studies on the NDE with P. E.'s teachings about the dying process presented in this book. It is worth noting that P. E. published his first book on death and afterlife as early as in 1904. The first book about NDEs was published in 1975 (Raymond Moody's *Life after Life*).

v van Lommel, 2010, 47–48.

Prologue

I was once at a funeral. The black coffin, decorated with garlands of fir and containing the remains of the deceased, was lowered into the open grave. Around the grave the attending mourners stood dressed in black, and several of them had garlands in their arms. There was deep silence when a male choir sang the *Integer vitae*. All those present seemed to look serious and sorrowful. Participants standing near looked down at the grave, and some of them threw a bouquet of flowers as a last token of their love and respect. The relatives of the deceased were crying.

The sun was just sinking and a longing chirp of a robin could be heard from a distance. The air was filled with summery fragrance. Attendants farther away forgot the coldness of death; they looked at nature surrounding them, and then fell into thinking about their own daily activities and missions.

Once the last note of the *Integer vitae* had echoed, the priest stepped forward. He took off his hat and started to talk. His speech was not long, but it was succinct. After clarifying something about the worldly life and the good characteristics of the deceased—his candor, honesty, human heart and Christian mind—he shortly introduced the gospel of grace and salvation for the fallen human race. As a compensation for their sins and deeds, human beings would truly deserve eternal death and eternal damnation, but in His unmeasurable grace God had prepared, for those willing to receive it, a possibility of salvation and everlasting joy through the death of His only and

beloved Son. “Here you see,” he finally pronounced, and his voice gained a victorious tone, “here you see a man, who as an earnest Christian humbled himself in front of God and received His grace. Here you see a man who died with an unswerving faith in his Redeemer, who died blessed, and for this man we can hope that the Lord will resurrect him in the last days and call him to His immutable peace and glory.”

Then he read the blessing and everything was quiet again. Even the bird was silent.

I looked downwards and was confronted by the gaping grave, containing the black coffin on the bottom. “So this will be your forthcoming abode, you poor deceased, this black, earthy pit. Will you be connected there till thousands of years—well, who knows for how long a period?—you who got the chance to live with your loved ones only forty short years! . . . But you died blessed: in the last day of judgment you will rise again and . . .”

What was it—a sudden sob? I raised my head and saw that the mourning wife of the departed had lifted a handkerchief to her eyes, and, seemingly with an utmost effort, tried to control her enormous grief. My gaze became fixed on her. There seemed to be more than just sorrow for herself and her children in her agony. I watched her closely, inspecting . . . And . . . and suddenly I saw straight into her heart. Then my blood curdled.

The dead spouse of this lady had *not* believed. He had not died blessed. It was all a lie. It was the blindness of the priest. The whole life of her husband had been a lie in this respect. He had betrayed the church and the priesthood. He had visited churches with his family, he had attended the Lord’s Supper, he had sent his children to confirmation school, but he had not believed. He had done all of this with a feeling of obligation, for external peace, to live in harmony with everyone, but in

his soul he had not believed. In some quiet moments he had confessed to his wife his own disbelief, his inner anguish. He had said, "I can't help it, my intellect, my heart is callous. I don't know anything. I don't know if there are grounds to believe that a human being can live after death," and he had repeated these same words just before his death. "If you could help me," he had whispered to his wife. But his death was a calm one. He had taken a farewell from everyone, and when his sight dimmed, a supernal peace came over his face.

But I saw the wife standing on the other side of the grave tormented by doubts. I saw how her soul struggled. It struggled, it tried to break through the surrounding darkness, it moaned and lamented. Yet even though the anguish of the soul was silent, I heard it screaming to God: "You heavenly Lord, have you prepared an eternal damnation for my husband because he didn't have faith? But if you are merciful and compassionate, please forgive him his unbelief, for you cannot forsake him, you who know how good he was, how gentle, how he loved us and how he did the right thing for everyone . . . You can't be so cruel, you who are the essence of love and tolerance . . ."

But the priest had grabbed a small shovel and after throwing earth three times into the gloomy rumbling grave he pronounced solemnly: "From ashes to ashes, from dust to dust"—but did my ears fail me? I heard that he recited the words that Dante saw written above the gates of hell:

Per me si via nella città dolente

Per me si va nell' eterno dolore . . .^{vi}

And when on the third time he was supposed to say, "The Lord thy God will resurrect you on the last day," I heard quite clearly the final words:

vi "Through me one goes into the town of woe, through me one goes into eternal pain . . ."

Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.^{vii}

Then I nearly lost my composure. I had an urge to rush forward, wave my arms and shout—cry out so loud that everyone could hear:

“This is all a lie. Can’t you see that this is a lie? Such God as you serve does not exist! Such an insane tyrant who could plunge human children into eternal perdition does not exist. He is a scary invention made by crazy and sick minds! With these tenets you murder the souls of human beings!”

But I restrained myself. And when I lifted up my glance, I saw something that totally calmed me and restored my domination over my feelings.

Near me stood a finely dressed young man, who was proud, somewhat defiant, and I would like to say a mocking gaze was fixed on the priest. His face depicted so clearly what he felt that I had no problem at all reading the thoughts of his heart. “What a game of fools,” they said, “for how long will humanity be tolerating this comedy! There this male scoundrel is pouring out his lies so earnestly that one could think he believes in them! Supposedly then he has visited those heavens and hells, since he is so surely blabbering about them. One should be ashamed to sustain old children’s tales, when scientific investigation has proved all of them lies . . . ”

His heart spoke so, but it didn’t occur to him to step forward and confess plainly that he didn’t believe in those chatterings. On the contrary, he would have regarded such an occurrence as utter madness—it would have been shameful! He had his scientific career; it was not his business to get involved with such things.

From all this I completely won back my composure. It was not my business either to step forward at this moment. This

vii “All hope abandon, ye that enter here.”

young man could even have thought that I supported his empty faith— even though he also would have regarded me as insane. From my side such a behavior would only have created disturbance, not the good which was intended.

I remained standing still and mute.

Meanwhile the funeral ceremonies had nearly ended. The priest, now wearing his hat, had left, and the gravedigger with his helpers had done their duty. Hastily with their big shovels they had filled the grave with earth and stones, so instead of a gaping pit there was now a mound covered by branches of fir. One after another those present began decorating it with flowers and garlands. After that duty, most of them departed, leaving a farewell to the mourning spouse and her two sons.

The male choir sang again, and I too decided to go home. Unnoticed, I approached the wife and when she didn't see me at once, I gently touched her arm. She flinched a bit and turned her tearful and desperate face toward me. I grabbed her arm firmly and looking into her eyes I said under my breath with a tone of condolence, but emphatically:

“Do not grieve and doubt, because your husband lives and is in good care. This is my deep and honest conviction—it is more than conviction, it is knowledge.”

She stared at me dumbfounded, and there was a question in her lips, but in a flash I saw a sparkle of hope and consolation in her look. I was contented with this small victory, then bowed and gave room to the grieving relatives, who quickly surrounded her.

When I left the graveyard I became introspective and found my mind was sorrowful: first because my own sphere of influence was so limited, my circle of authority so insignificant, and secondly because the ignorance and blindness of human beings was so unrelentingly vast.¹⁷

I. The Moment of Death

Leaving the Body and the Life Review

The death struggle can appear to be very strenuous from the point of view of onlookers. However, this is not an accurate description from the viewpoint of spirit.

The death struggle itself signifies that the invisible part or the etheric body leaves the physical body. A kind of a ghostlike body diverges and with it the soul diverges, the whole astral body of a person [emotions and thoughts]. The death struggle is due to the difficulty the etheric body has when it is being drawn out of this physical body. However, it is not that hard for some people. An old person might almost have learned to leave the physical body in his etheric vehicle. A person with a serious illness dies easily and peacefully, since his etheric body has many times already left the physical body to some extent. Only those with high vitality appear to suffer much, and when the etheric body leaves the physical body, consciousness still remains in the physical body as long as the glowing silver bridge exists between the visible and the invisible body. . . . [The etheric body] rises above, as if from feet through the head, and is above the physical body. As long as the bridge, that is the silver cord (it is also called the golden cord), remains intact, the person is not dead and could be resuscitated.¹⁸

As a human being requires help in birth, he needs help in death as well. At the moment of death the person must leave the physical body, and the cord connecting the physical and

the ethereal must be cut. The cord is usually cut by a deva [an angel]. A Master can also do it. If the dying person is the disciple of a Master, the Master or the Christ—whatever name one wants to use—comes and cuts the cord, but in other cases it is usually a deva.¹⁹ Then the physical body has died and remains there helplessly.²⁰

The life review is an essential aspect of the early phases in the death process. Interestingly, P. E.'s description coincides very well with the life reviews of the NDE.

When a person is dying, the life force rises from the legs upwards; first the legs and the lower body will become numb, then so will the rest of the body, gradually, as the consciousness escapes upwards. A peculiar process takes place in the head. A finer part of the physical brain, the etheric part, is untied a little from the physical brain and is withdrawn inside and is concentrated so that it is not attached to the physical brain, as it is in waking consciousness. The same process happens during sleep: consciousness is withdrawn from the cerebrum as well as from the cerebellum and creeps into the etheric brain. However, a dying person does not immediately move to an astral consciousness in the way a sleeping person does. Instead, he stays in the etheric brain and, as consciousness is only surrounded by etheric matter, it is especially enlivened. We say that our memory resides in the subconscious, so this means that all reminiscences by our brain cells about what happens during physical existence fall into the subconscious. Memories remain at rest without bothering us until we invoke them. When consciousness moves to the etheric brain during death, all memories are alive in front of us. Therefore a person reviews the past life in all its details, although this happens very fast. What has happened in life through the decades is seen within half an hour as films in memory, yet everything happens in

detail, while the person is outside the whole play.²¹ It is as if he were throwing all those images out to the world so that great forces will consume them,^{viii} and he will be liberated from his old personality. It is a rule that a person will throw away his etheric body and his reminiscences for consumption by earthly forces, and those reminiscences deal with the waking life as the etheric body has collected these reminiscences during earthly life.²² This all takes place quite quickly, although it may take hours. And if it has not taken place during the death struggle, it will happen when the person's consciousness is in his etheric body.²³

He does not live in his reminiscences as he did while being physically alive. He just watches the great play and judges it objectively, calling each thing—depending on its own quality—as good or bad, crime or merit, and so on. He remains in a great light, so to speak. If we are allowed to experience this in our waking consciousness, it is always accompanied by a light phenomenon. In fact, the viewer is the personalized higher self. In death the solemn experience of memories is not due to the ordinary physical personality; instead, it is due to the higher self, the “I,” which is behind the physical personality. He is in the light of the higher self and watches the past life. He reads the book of life. Some religions call it a book of judgment because it is in the light of the higher self in which the person judges himself.²⁴

The moment of death is special and sacred. Similarly, Tibetan Buddhism teaches that the moment of death is an opportunity to attain enlightenment.^{ix} P. E. notes that it is very important to let the dying person concentrate on the panoramic life review.

viii Rudolf Steiner provides a very similar description using the same kind of phrases (Steiner, 2003). —Editors' note

ix Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 264–265.

Furthermore, P. E.'s description is not the first to introduce the notion of life review. There is a similar presentation in the *Mahatma Letters*, which date to the early days of the Theosophical Society.^x

They (people around the deathbed) stand quietly and devoutly. Indeed, they are wise if they keep quiet and devout. They should not cry or mourn. They should not be thinking about themselves when they are in the presence of a dying person, as this moment is great and solemn, when the dying person's consciousness concentrates on the brain and reviews the past life. They must not call him out from his inner meditation. When the meditation is over, his eyes fade.²⁵

x "At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression entrusted to it during the period of the brain's activity. That impression and thought which was the strongest naturally becomes the most vivid and survives so to say all the rest which now vanish and disappear for ever, to reappear but in Devachan. No man dies insane or unconscious—as some physiologists assert. Even a *madman*, or one in a fit of *delirium tremens* will have his instant of perfect lucidity at the moment of death, though unable to say so to those present. The man may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body—the *brain thinks* and the *Ego* lives over in those few brief seconds his whole life over again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death-bed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting its reflection upon the Veil of the Future" (*The Mahatma Letters*, Letter XXIIIb, 170–71). This letter was written in 1882, and this passage has been cited in H. P. Blavatsky's writing *Memory in the Dying* (1889) and Annie Besant's booklet *Death and After* (1893). —Editors' note

Only after the life review is over does he leave his physical body and stay in his etheric veil. After spending some time in an intermediate state, he loses his consciousness and wakes up in the astral body.²⁶

Division of the Soul

Spiritualist texts usually claim that the nature of the afterlife is very much like life before death, just without the physical body. P. E.'s position differs significantly from this belief: death usually brings forth a division between the higher and lower selves. The lower self refers to all in a human being that belongs to our mortal personality. In the apostle Paul's threefold classification (body, soul, spirit; 1 Thessalonians 5:23), soul corresponds with the lower self, and spirit to the higher self,^{xi} which lives on from one incarnation to another.^{xii} The division between the higher and lower self means that the person cannot start anything genuinely new in the various states of the afterlife.

This personal life in our souls is not our true self. We might say, "I am this or that," and "I have these feelings," and "I think these thoughts. My psyche contains all that I have experienced during life." We believe that this defines what we really are. However, there has been a great source of inspiration behind us, from which has poured strength, inner knowledge, and faith into this personal self. We do not always understand or

xi P. E. chiefly uses the expression the *higher ego* in his original texts and lectures. In Theosophical usage, there is a distinction between the higher ego and the higher self. *Higher ego* refers to the reincarnating individuality behind the everyday personality, whereas *higher self* is the innermost divine principle, the immortal spirit. However, we have chosen to use the term *higher self* in the translation, as ego is often synonymous with the lower self in contemporary spiritual literature. —*Editors' note.*

xii Of course, the classical interpretation of Christianity does not include the notion of reincarnation. —*Editors' note.*

notice it, and we believe that our personality is our true self. But this is an illusion and a mistake. It is true that our personal self is very real, but in the final analysis it is only a projection from a higher reality.

When the moment of death comes, a division takes place between the two who have been companions during the physical life. Then they had to be together, and they could have taken this opportunity to move forward together, for they had the light. When death arrived, the light receded; the real self remained in its own world. This true self, which is a spiritual reality, always lives the eternal life in its own heavenly state. It lives in immortality, but after physical death it is confined within itself.²⁷

A person is in direct contact with the higher self in this present life. He can seek for, thrive, and be united with it. He may call it by different names: God, truth, Christ, Savior, Buddha, Master. He can call it by whatever name, and it is possible to aspire to a contact with it in this physical life. It is impossible after death.

It is not possible to take a new initiative in the afterlife, to seek for God unless one has done it here on earth.

It is so that after death the person is in a position where he no longer is in direct contact with his innermost self. It is as if a veil were lifted between the person and his higher self.

From the inner perspective, the person is forced to carry on the life he has led here. He may continue those activities he has started here, but he cannot acquire new ones. Of course, the person will experience many things he has not experienced here on earth. Of course he arrives at a different world and is allowed to experience and see a lot. If some people can gain access to the world of the dead and have a peek, they can believe that life of the deceased is so free and wonderful that they, better than anyone else, are developing further.

That is how we may feel, because from an external point of view, the afterlife does appear to be quite wonderful, free, beautiful, but in the inner point of view it is after all morally unfree, since the person is not in a direct contact with his inner God.²⁸

However, there is an exception to the aforementioned rule: a person who is in connection with his higher self during life does not experience the division in death.

These people, who are good on earth and have tried to be real human beings, go through Hades and all the intermediate states after death without losing anything from themselves, and they have no division. For a while it is like dreamless sleep for them. When they do wake up after death, they realize that they are in heaven with the God they had always believed in. They realize that they are in the life that has always been the real life for them. And that life comes with all the virtues and special characteristics which have occupied their thoughts and imagination during their earthly lives. What they have experienced of goodness and justice, they will experience a thousandfold in the heavenly state. In effect, their afterlife takes them directly to heaven.

We notice that they do not suffer that curious division right after death, no division whatsoever before the second death. Their past life is transferred virtually intact into the book of life, which resides in their own spirit, soul, and aura.²⁹

A Finnish professor of philosophy, Sven Krohn, was P. E.'s friend and esoteric student. In 1998, a year before his death, Krohn gave a talk in which, among other things, he conveyed P. E.'s personal teachings on the afterlife. The following excerpt from his speech provides a complementary point of view to the viewpoints presented above.

Now I see that I have an important task, from the point of view of P. E.'s teachings, to talk about P. E.'s experiences on life after death. P. E. told me—my brother Eino [Eino Krohn, who later became a professor of aesthetics] was present as well—that he had made an observation that people usually lose contact with what we call the higher self and what I have called in my philosophy the core essence of a human being. This touch, this connection with the higher self, is always present as a potential in this physical life: always when I want to do the right thing; when we ask ourselves, what course of action is consistent with our conscience in this situation. We are under the influence of our higher self when we acknowledge the prominence of demands set by our conscience and wish to follow its voice. However, P. E. said that he observed that those people who as Theosophists have attempted to meditate, based on his lectures and books among other things, on what this afterlife really is like, maintain their connection with the higher self, this core essence. In my opinion, this is a remarkable point to be made in this context, which we can notice together. It is not in vain from the point of view of earthly life to ponder the afterlife, since in it there is hidden an important aspect of the future of our spirits.³⁰

II. In the Vicinity of the Earth Sphere

The process of death can be viewed as a gradual liberation from our personality; this process is related to our different invisible bodies. Immediately after death, a person remains in his etheric body, which is an invisible counterpart of the physical body. Usually life in the etheric body is just a transitory, intermediate state leading to the actual afterlife. While in the etheric vehicle, it is possible for the person to provide some kind of signs about his continued existence for close friends and relatives. Actually, there are many people who have experience with this phenomenon.^{xiii} P. E. describes events in the etheric body from the point of view of normal death as well as of premature death.

In the Etheric Body

There exists an afterlife state in where a person is clothed in the same type of body as his physical body. This is related to the dual nature of our physical body. There is a visible body, and then there is an invisible etheric body consisting of matter belonging to the physical world that is imperceptible to our eyes. We cannot see air, gas, or ether, yet all these are part of our physical body. Usually these are so closely united that we are aware of only one body. Death is a reaper, which cuts our physical body into two halves, separating the invisible part that we call the etheric body. A person remains in this etheric body about three days after death, sometimes taking less time and sometimes a longer time.³¹

xiii Carter, 2012.

The first experience after death is that the person has been released from the sick body and has a light feeling. He can make observations. Usually he is in his own home watching his relatives and his own body.^{xiv} At first he cannot believe he is dead, but gradually he realizes it. When he sees that his relatives cry and mourn, it has a sad effect on him, and he tries to console them and say that everything is fine with him. That is why it is wise that we who continue living here do not despair; instead, we should be quiet, calm, and give in to the will of destiny. Death comes to all of us; this cannot be changed; thus we give in. Perhaps that beloved deceased person can tell us something if our mind is calm, or he can appear to us. It has happened for many that their dear father or some other relative has appeared, smiled, and assured them that all is well with him. And if a person has a calm mind and is a bit sensitive, he may have a conversation with the deceased.

The first period after death is very wondrous, but it does not last long.³²

[This period ends when] the person falls into unconsciousness and numbness for a while, not for a long but for a day or two.³³ The person moves away, falls asleep and wakes up in Hades. But if he has something on his conscience, if he has neglected to do something or if he has hidden a testament or left something unannounced to relatives, he will attempt to haunt.³⁴

Premature Death

Premature death can take place for various reasons. It is possible to discern three different cases: deaths due to accidents, suicides, and casualties of war. P. E. discusses each case separately in his lectures.

xiv In P. E.'s day, people usually died at home. —*Editors' note.*

Deaths Due to Accidents

Sometimes [a person] continues his life consciously in the etheric form. The ancient Finns called this state of being the realm of *kalma* or the realm of the grave. This is the realm into which the person goes before entering Hades,^{xv} and, as already stated before, he can sometimes live a conscious life in it. This happens when the person experiences a premature death. In this case it is a rule that the person remains in the realm of the grave in his etheric body. This body is formed by etheric matter and is intimately connected with the physical body [during life] and gradually disintegrates [after death]. In the case of a sudden death he remains between earth and heaven. He stays in the ethereal life which is invisible to the ordinary eye. This is a peculiar state of being.

For instance, a premature death occurs to us when we drown, fall from heights, or die from some other incident. This kind of death is premature from the point of view of the physical body, although karma can predetermine it.³⁵

All those thoughts and feelings which have been the strongest in life continue to affect the individual in the realm of the grave. They have been engraved upon his etheric body. What the person feels just before death is a determining factor in his immediate afterlife. He is himself, just the same as before, but with no physical body. Past images and memories haunt those who have died prematurely. This kind of person does not know where he is. He does not realize that he is dead. He relives all the past incidents. For instance, if a house was on fire and a person was inside that house with no chance of rescue and died there, he repeats the horrific incident in the realm of the grave, reliving it again and suffering immensely from it.³⁶

xv In the original text, P.E. uses the Finnish word *Tuonela*, which is the Hades of Finnish mythology. Furthermore, *Tuonela* is used in the Finnish Bible to translate *Hades*. —*Editors' note*

[The same applies to] a person who dies with some difficult matter on his conscience and has no peace after death. The reason the person stays in the realm of the grave is because of his last thought. And he tries to redeem it. For instance, he tries to tell people the place where he hid something or what the crime was that he had committed. However, this is not possible, and he finds no peace. There is a lot of pain there. Hence, we must keep in mind that it is the final state of mind which affects this particular afterlife state. The person can, for instance, suffer greatly if his body is not buried in sacred ground. These kinds of images may bother the person.³⁷

We could list a lot of examples of these incidents, but we can notice from the ones presented how important those final feelings and experiences are. Although the situation is as described, we must not think that the person who died prematurely would be left on his own devices with no help whatsoever. On the contrary, there is help for people suffering in the spiritual world. There are always beings, other deceased individuals, or others who come and try to calm the suffering. However, the suffering soul is like pure desire and has difficulties with calming down, but eventually this is successful and he will be helped.³⁸

Deaths Due to Suicides

When we investigate the phenomena following suicide in the afterlife, we are more capable of evaluating suicide as an act. We can make the neutral observation that suicide is an insane deed. And why is this so? Because when we investigate the destiny of those who committed suicide, what is most striking in most cases is that death offered them a great surprise: they had no way of knowing what death would be like, as they had believed that death is followed with rest, or everything has ended,

or life is easier then. This is what they believed, and they were sorely disappointed: (1) death was not the end; instead, they still existed; (2) death was not rest, but became a great trouble for them; (3) death did not offer an easier life, but a more painful life than life on earth. What is the dominant feeling after death among those who committed suicide? What is so different than what they had anticipated? The answer is that they are all alone.³⁹

Many who have committed suicide have had a small fear of death at the moment of death, which means, in a way, that it was a bold deed. In order to be able to kill themselves, many of them have had to steel themselves. What has that moment of hesitation and fear generated in the afterlife? It is a strange psychological force. It causes the one who has committed suicide to relive again, in the realm of the grave, all the reasons and moments that tempted him to commit suicide, then to live through the deed again and wake up on the other side. This panorama of images, which is conjured by the unnaturally irritated memory, repeats itself again and again. The unhappy deceased is like a rat in a treadmill that cannot be stopped. This is a difficult and painful experience for many who have committed suicide.

Not all who have committed suicide can be lumped together. They differ from each other in terms of motives and states of mind. That is why we must divide them into three categories.

The first category consists of those who for unselfish reasons killed themselves by putting themselves at risk to save someone else. They are good people, and nature takes special care of them: nature lets them sleep with no dreams. And for how long? As long as they have physical vitality left.⁴⁰ Every person has a certain life span or amount of vitality, which is predetermined by karma.

All common suicides who are neither good nor bad belong to the second category according to our distinction. They remain lonely in the vicinity of the earth sphere, and either they live through their horrible deed again and again, or they wander in the lonely wilderness and have an unspeakable longing. These deceased like to get in touch with mediums or persons who harbor suicidal thoughts. When in contact with a suicidal person, they become drawn to him, and there is a melancholic feeling ringing in their souls: "Oh, how lonely I am, couldn't you become my companion?" And their unspeakable loneliness reflects on the person who is on earth, supporting and amplifying his thoughts and moods. That is how those who have committed suicide, almost with no intention, become tormentors of the living.

The third category includes those who had cold and proud hearts, who self-consciously and clear-headedly killed themselves and whose motive was ignoble. When we observe their afterlife destiny, we must say that it is austere and hard. They know in their hearts that they will face a special punishment on life's behalf. They have killed themselves from bad motives, and they feel after death that life demands from them a compensation or atonement. This atonement or revenge is that they lose their contact with their own higher self; in other words, they continue to move in the direction of true death.⁴¹

Suicide has its consequences in the next earthly incarnation as well. A human being is a reincarnating being, and he is sent to the school of life again and again in order to gradually learn his lesson. If a person commits suicide for some reason, he will encounter the same difficulties again, which ask him: can you now conquer yourself?⁴²

And there is something we must keep in mind. It is related to the afterlife in general. A peculiar change has taken place

in afterlife conditions after Buddha and Christ, especially after Christ. The Cosmic Christ was unified with life on earth through Jesus, as we know, and the immediate presence of Christ in the spiritual world has changed the afterlife from a passive state to an active field of work. An ever-expanding missionary work has been arranged in the dwellings of Hades. This work calls for both the living and the dead. Matters are not like in the old times, when human souls were left to their own devices. Instead, they are now offered help. That is why there is systematic help and guidance also for those who have committed suicide, although it is not easy to reach them in that atmosphere, especially those who live on the treadmill described earlier. But as soon as they can become awake, they too are susceptible to influence. It is explained to them what life is about and where they have gone wrong. One of the most beautiful sights on the other side can be seen when someone who has committed suicide, realizes his mistake, with the aid of a helper, and is filled with regret. Led by his helper, he arrives at the feet of the Lord of life and death, the Christ, raises his lachrymose eyes towards the shining being, and confesses: "Oh, how I have been so mistaken about the great purpose of life. What is going to happen to me? How can I ever atone for what I have done? Is there any mercy for me?" And then eternal love, infinite grace, and mercy radiate from the eyes of that bright and shining being: "I do understand you, my child, and I forgive you. Rise and start the work, and do not sin anymore."⁴³

And why would't we say something to ourselves as well? We who live in this visible world, we certainly can help many ill souls. We can even prevent suicides if we wholeheartedly want to participate in the task of alleviating sorrows of the world, if we in our private lives each extend our helping hand, say an encouraging word, grant an understanding look, and always

remember what the Master advised us to do: “Do to others what you would have them do to you.”⁴⁴

Deaths Due to War

All those who go to war with great enthusiasm are noble beings at the time. Many bad and mean souls, who are plagued by lots of vices, have become ennobled; they felt that they received some kind of moral energy. Before this, their lives were spent with vices and selfish thoughts, but now they have had a chance to make something out of their lives, to do something noble, to sacrifice themselves for a cause, to leave and die for their country. And when they die there, and when we follow their destinies in afterlife, we see that some are still eager to fight, and they continue fighting in the invisible world that is near the physical world, that is, in the etheric world. That is why another group is often seen fighting in the air above the physical troops. They are shadows, filled with vigor, attacking each other.⁴⁵ [They] fight with each other until they gradually realize that they have died. There are helpers who point this out to the dead.⁴⁶

We also have soldiers who are fighting just out of an obligation; they have not accepted the war in their hearts. When they come to the other side and notice that they are dead, they are filled with the same feeling they had on earth: All is cruel and bestial; how can people be so senseless, brutal? We have lived for such a long time on this earth, and still humanity is so blinded and dark that it deliberately wants to murder and kill. These kinds of deceased can get work [as helpers in the invisible world] and they can go and calm down other deceased soldiers, can preach the gospel of peace during the time they spend in the vicinity of the earth sphere. Then they sleep to wake up in Hades.⁴⁷ Another possibility is that the person has

gone to war with no real enthusiasm but because of some moral obligation. In this case he is protected and can sleep, have beautiful dreams, and then wake up in another world, in Hades.

Moreover, we can see that with every case the soldiers must liberate themselves from lust for battle, thoughts of fighting, and all enthusiasm for war before they can enter even their personal heaven.⁴⁸

Actually, [life in the vicinity of the earth sphere] is an exceptional state. Most people do not have this kind of ghostlike afterlife. Although the majority of people do stay in this ghostlike state for a while, they are, as already stated, unconscious and in a sleeplike state. At any rate, stories about the deceased showing up are due to the ghosts remaining in the dwellings of the grave.⁴⁹

In the Astral Body

According to P. E., the normal course of things is undressing the semicorporeal etheric body relatively soon after the life review, and then falling asleep. Next, the person wakes up on an astral plane that is still close to the earth sphere. This makes it possible for him to follow his own funeral.

After the person has finished the life review, he will leave his etheric body in the same way he did when he fell asleep in life: he leaves in his glowing and colorful aura. It is relatively easy, but it has the same effect as in life: he falls asleep, so to speak. He remains in the sleeping state for some time—sometimes several hours, at most three days, but usually a day and a half—and he knows nothing. Then he wakes up, and we can make an observation that is somewhat different from the observation about a sleeping person. We notice that while sleeping, he took a little bit from his etheric brain into the astral state, but after death he takes all the etheric matter, so to speak, into his soul,

which has been the basis of his waking life. He really takes into his soul all that etheric matter, all the light—to use this metaphor—that has made him the personality he was. He is now his own personal self.⁵⁰

The more culture has advanced, the more humanity has grown in self consciousness, and the more an individual draws the fine ether into his astral body, which makes it possible for him to maintain his old personality. We can notice that in modern culture the dead are relatively awake in the invisible world. At first they spend some time in their earthly surroundings. They walk in their own home. They do not realize that they have died. They instinctively avoid looking at their dead bodies. They go to greet their relatives and wonder why they are sad. When seeing the relatives crying, they can be frightened and think: “What has happened to me?” They can sense that the relatives are crying for them. Then it dawns on them that they have died: “Oh, my relatives believe that I am no more.” And they try to explain to their relatives: “Do not cry. I am here and I am healthy and cheerful. Why do you cry in the first place?” However, the relatives can hear nothing.

Sometimes the deceased follows his own funeral. He notices what is going on, whether there are lots of speeches, flowers, and garlands. Perhaps he smiles at all this in the same way he would have done while alive. Perhaps surprisingly, many of the deceased are often pleased with the solemnity. When the funeral is over and his closest relatives do not see him, the deceased is attached more and more to his old personality; its aspirations, desires, and interests start to live in him, and he will look to satisfy these. He does already live in the astral or spiritual world, but he can step down to the earth sphere any time he wishes. This state of being can last for quite some time.⁵¹

III. Hades, the Astral Plane

Transition to Astral Life

According to P. E. and many other sources, the actual afterlife begins in the astral world or on the astral plane, in which emotions have objective reality. In that world the person lives in the conditions that correspond to his astral body. The astral plane, its beings and life, has been described in Theosophical and Anthroposophical books, as well as in spiritualistic literature and contemporary books written by astral travelers (an astral traveler is a person who, while being alive, has attained waking consciousness on the astral plane).^{xvi} Also it seems likely that many reported near-death experiences are located in the bright areas of the astral world. According to P. E., not all the dead who wake up in the astral life realize that they are indeed dead.

Every human being is at first the same person he was while alive. Ordinary people continue living this normal life and so do not always know that they have died. They meet their relatives and friends who have died earlier, and it is very nice in their opinion. It is like what has been said: "If this is hell, it is very nice, and if I have ended up in heaven for some inscrutable coincidence, I can understand this much better than if I had to stand on a cloud and blow a horn. It is very pleasant to socialize here with others." And it is not strange at all; these are the thoughts and feelings that many of the deceased have. For instance let us think about a husband and wife. The wife

^{xvi} E.g. Leadbeater, 1896; Steiner, 1904; Sherwood, 1964; Ziewe, 2015.

has died earlier and then the husband dies. “Well, hello!” he is wondering, “There is my wife and all my friends.” And he notices that he can start having a nice life with his wife. If the marriage has been more or less mundane with no great difficulties, yet with no great emotions or bliss, this association continues harmoniously in the afterlife for a while. However, at some point these two notice that they have different interests, just like on earth. The wife was somewhat religious, had attended church or some sect, whereas the husband was not interested; instead, he was more into work and socializing. After death the same things will make them drift apart as they did on earth. They see each other more and more rarely, and eventually they stop seeing each other completely, since both of them will have their own tasks of self-knowledge waiting for them.⁵²

It is often reported by the NDErs that they have encounters with their loved ones who have already moved on to the other side. These reunions are characterized as filled with an overwhelming joy and love. Often the NDErs report having met a divine being of light, which may be interpreted in the light of their own religion, e.g. the being of light is perceived to be the Christ. Also P. E. tells about these kind of encounters in his lectures on death.

Usually when a person dies someone will come to fetch him. If he has recently deceased, one of the relatives will come. If it so happened that there are no relatives, there will be other helpers so that the dying person always sees a loved one or beings, which he calls angels or the Christ. Those who die often talk about the Christ: “Now comes Jesus” or “Now comes the Christ,” he may say. And then, of course, there are others who will meet him: friends and relatives. Often a master or his disciple is present. Jesus often acts as an acceptor in the Christendom and Muhammad is seen among Muslims.⁵³

What follows is P. E.'s description of what a true Christian^{xvii} experiences when he meets the Christ in the afterlife. It is worth noting that according to P. E., Christ's influence is not restricted to those people living in the domain of Christianity.

When the believer lives through his last moments, he rises to his higher consciousness and experiences the life review. After he pays attention to what happens outside him, he sees Christ, the Saviour himself, or dead relatives as angels sent by Him, which come to greet him as a citizen of the new world. The dying person is overpowered with surprise and joy. Although he has believed in the existence of the afterlife, as well as in Christ, as true Christians in Christendom have believed, he has not had a clear understanding of the nature of afterlife because it has not been discussed in detail in the church. He may have imagined, based on the teaching in the Protestant church, that the afterlife is some kind of sleep, which ends when the Christ wakes everyone up on the last day. Now he is indescribably surprised when he suddenly realizes that death really is a wonderful and beautiful matter! He does not go to a strange and lonely place; he does not leave all the people. On the contrary, he meets those loved ones who have passed the river Styx before him. With great enchantment he leaves his body and ascends to meet his loved ones.

When a person has died in Christ, his life in the astral world (also known as the spiritual world) is personally rich before purgatory. In the ancient times, everyone's life was happy and rich in the heavens, but for those who have died in Christ, it is already that in the astral world. However, they are not transformed into different beings; they go on living in their own

xvii According to P. E. "There is no other Christianity except following Jesus." From this perspective, a true Christian is a person who follows Jesus's commands in his life. —*Editors' note.*

personalities—and the higher self leaves them. The astral body is light and young, but life is made rich in the spiritual world because it has been organized as a cultural life. This was not so before: since Jesus Christ life has been cultivated also in Hades. It has not only been left for the natural order of things; there is also humane order there. People attempt to teach and help each other. Institutions for education, schools, and colleges have been founded in Hades. A person is received like a child at a school. However, he cannot learn anything that is alien to his personal thought capacity. Moreover, he cannot learn anything new that requires a direct contact with the higher self. However, his personal consciousness is educated and developed so that he learns to understand the afterlife, and the physical life as well, better than before.

When the moment comes to step into so-called purgatory, he has been prepared to receive it with a peaceful and thankful mind, knowing that suffering is temporary—it passes all the more quickly if he is willing to conquer the animal selfishness he possesses.⁵⁴

In the following passage P. E. talks about a Theosophical truth seeker, by which he means a person who has no prejudices and is free from dogmatism and religious zeal.

When a Theosophical truth seeker who has acquired a Theosophical understanding of life dies, his death is blissful to the extent that he has gained control over his lower self, as he does not have to lose his self-consciousness. This control remains in his consciousness, and the aspects of his lower self that he has not conquered can't get in his way and pull him to purgatory. He remains clear, and he knows that there are aspects of his nature that he has not conquered, and [these unconquered aspects] lie ahead of him, but they cannot randomly take him

anywhere, and he wants to fight it. This way he retains his consciousness, so that when the helping angels, acquaintances, and friends come to him, he immediately enters that sphere in the land of the dead that has the task of helping both the dead and living people. In a similar manner Theosophists who enter directly into those spheres receive a little instruction and are allowed to participate in the work of helping. Since Theosophists have thought a lot about afterlife conditions and have read and investigated a lot, their minds are more enlightened than is the case with the ordinary deceased. That is why we can notice that they can often receive a small leadership status among the helping circles, depending on their character and inclinations. Therefore, when the time comes to enter the purification of purgatory that possibly remains, they fearlessly enter it, quickly live through it and then ascend to heaven.⁵⁵

Purgatory

The past life is lived from the end to the beginning in the astral life. This purification process contains suffering, since the person has to face the consequences of his actions in the way other people experienced them. In this context, P. E. talks about a purgatory that is taught in the Catholic Church as well. However, according to the Catholic dogma purgatory has to do only with Christians—perhaps only Catholics—whereas in P. E.'s view it concerns all people.

When the person has left both his physical and etheric bodies and is only a soul being, there is a command: “You must become conscious of yourself. You must become conscious that you are a spiritual being, a divine being originating from God.” [If] there has been evil in ourselves while we were alive, all those feelings and thoughts will surround us and we are in

a hell, so to speak, in purgatory. That person may feel despair and he may think that he has ended up in an eternal hell. Of course, there are wiser deceased ones and other beings who try to explain to the tormented souls that there is no reason to have fear: "You must overcome these animalistic desires." At first when we see these animals attacking us, they appear to be very familiar. They first appear as very tempting images, which please us because they pleased us while alive, and we still would like to satisfy those urges. For instance, if a person has had an addiction to drink, he does not see this desire as a monster in the beginning. Instead, he perceives it as a beautiful and tempting image and runs after this image. He meets other deceased. Then he makes contact with living people who share the same desires, and those deceased are like tempters to the living people if they have similar desires. But the deceased get very little satisfaction from all this, and they feel very bleak. Eventually they recognize that there are beasts behind the images. Finally they can hear the voice of an angel saying: "Understand that you must give up these desires!"⁵⁶

In the first phase of [this life in purgatory] he makes judgments about all the evil within himself. He sees his mistakes and grows away from that evil. When he settles in Hades, he starts to meditate on purifying himself. He relives his life; he sees his life backwards and lives it again. He concentrates his attention on his weaknesses. This is not meditation. No, it is real life, but he experiences a lot at the same time. When he goes through his life in this manner, he encounters a time when he hurt somebody. He did not realize it at the time, but he now sees how it affected that person and is aware of all the feelings it aroused in the person he had insulted. Now he must suffer because of it. Those feelings ravage him. Now he notices that one must be careful. Now he is held accountable for his words.

For instance, he remembers that he has helped people and done something good. Now he sees how the other person felt. Perhaps that other person cursed. Now he sees it and learns. Sometimes he has neglected to do good. Now he sees the effects of this. He may notice that it was not that serious, since the other person was not in need of help. He notices that he has believed that he did wrong, but in fact he did the right thing. He has been blind for he knows so little.

This is the condition of suffering and pain. Why is this so? He has been accustomed to using the physical body. Now he must be without food and drink. The suffering is in not having the vehicle that could be used to satisfy desires. If we have enjoyed good food in life, we no longer have the means to enjoy it. The desires do not reside in the physical body; instead, they reside in the astral body. Because of this, the desires bother him, and he realizes that he should not have succumbed to them; he should have controlled himself. He learns the lesson that a person must give up excess demands for food and drink.⁵⁷

Matters belonging to sex life have caused the greatest suffering in mankind. This is clearly visible in the afterlife, where the darkest aspects are the suffering followed by the misuse and misunderstanding of sex life. It is quite rare to encounter human souls who are in a gloomy imprisonment because of greed. It is something special. It is rare to see people who have become attached to gold and greed with all the strength in their souls. On the other hand, when we follow the afterlife and the consequences due to indiscretion in sex life, we see a large group of people sharing the same chains. Of course this does not include all people, but it does include the greatest number, if we compare them with those with other sins and indiscretions. This is because sex life, love life, is so close to all people and comes from nature itself.⁵⁸

There may be a woman who has first made many men, young or grown, cry out of sorrow, then curse the woman as she has aroused their passion with no intention to satisfy their desires. Her satisfaction has been in seeing the men suffer. However, in the afterlife she is allowed to get to know herself in purgatory. There in Hades she is attacked by a large male being—it can also be an ape—who wants to embrace her in sexual heat, and there is no one to help her. This is a horrendous hell for her. Actually, this beast is formed from the thoughts of those men she had teased.^{xviii} Then she learns to think: "What have I done to all those men? I was a terrible being when I evoked all this in them; now it comes my way." And she will have great compunction and her soul mourns: "Am I lost forever; who will save me?"

Then we can see also a large group of beings that may look from the distance as if a large room were full of hissing snakes, but when we look closer, we notice that they are all men. And when they look at themselves, they perceive themselves and each other as men. They have found their happiness and satisfaction in life by deceiving women; they have seduced one woman after another. Although they may have been married, this has not meant much to them. Their life has demanded constant change and satisfaction, so they have seduced both young girls and married women. They have gained satisfaction from using different ways: sometimes they have appeared to be innocent and inexperienced and sometimes great heroes. But all this is in front of them in the afterlife, and they feel inside, without necessarily seeing, as if something were burning and horrendous snakes were residing within and coming out

xviii C. W. Leadbeater presents a similar story in his book *The Other Side of Death*, which was familiar to P.E., as he translated the book into Swedish in 1904. —*Editors' note.*

of their ears and mouths. Finally they realize: "I have been this kind of snake on earth."

Those pains are indescribable, because there is nothing to prevent them. When we suffer in our bodies, some part of our body must vibrate. With no physical vibration, we cannot feel anything. Each pain must initiate these vibrations, and this dilutes the pain. But the astral world is the home of pain, for in that plane its materiality is so close to thought and emotion that it is itself a thought and emotion. It vibrates and changes with thoughts and emotions and is experienced directly and strongly in the consciousness.⁵⁹

The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount have a central role in P. E.'s spiritual teachings. Life after death reveals that the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount (such as maintaining peace of mind and inner truthfulness) are not external moral codes invented by Jesus; instead, they reflect the laws of life itself. In addition, reported NDEs support this interpretation.

He reminisces about his past life in that afterlife state. He goes through only its shadowy aspects; he lives through them. Therefore in that state he will encounter all the bouts of anger he had in life. And his experience is that he suffers great compunction, feels great pain in his soul. He learns to understand that all his bouts of anger were futile and wrong. How will he learn to understand? He will feel what that other person he was angry with felt, and that is how he learns. He reminisces about situations when he was angry with his own son, the person he truly loved. Now he will feel horrible pain when he realizes how he hurt that loving heart. He will find out how his own children felt formidable anger and fury towards their own father, and felt humiliation and a great rebellious will to resist. He suffers unspeakable pains and at the same time understands the ones

he hurt, and he feels regrets. His remorse will take such a form that he suffers through his anger in the apology that his soul whispers in that difficult afterlife state. His soul apologizes to those he unknowingly harmed. “How could I be such a bad and inferior person that I hurt those whom I loved?” Then, when he feels this and understands he must repent, he loses the memory of each incident, and finally he becomes tired and falls asleep.⁶⁰

A human being works with all his oaths, promises, and words in the afterlife. He must become free from all these. If he has promised something to another person, however small, it can be accurately read from the books of life, whether he has fulfilled what he promised. If he hasn't, he must go through all that the other person felt, waited for, and suffered because of him. He will deeply feel that it will come with karma, and he wants to enter into a state in which he can ask forgiveness.⁶¹

P. E. discloses that the person will come into contact with his life that was spent while sleeping. This perspective supplements the descriptions provided above.

We can say that the purgatory phase lasts as long as the person has slept when alive on earth. It is usually a third part of one's life. When sleeping, the person prepares for his life after death: he is honest in sleep. Although he may appear to be very moral and covers and suppresses his desires and feelings during the daytime, he cannot do that in sleep; instead he is honestly what he is as a soul. Sleep life is life in a psychic soul world, and that is why it can be said as a rule that the person lives in a purgatory state in the afterlife for the same amount of time as he has slept during his lifetime.⁶²

[The person] watches and comes in contact with such a world which closely corresponds to his sleep life in this visible

world. He becomes enchanted by his dreams, so to speak, but now it is not the same as in sleep, when he doesn't remember after waking up or is half-conscious; now he is fully conscious. This is difficult to explain. He knows that he is himself and does not at all think that he is in contact with his dreams. He comes into contact with all unpleasant things: for instance, he is in contact with his lust to drink and his drinking buddies. We can say that he is captured by them; he is imprisoned by his lower self. These souls imprisoned in the afterlife will get help from other beings. I will later talk about what kind of help they receive. They receive help from other beings who try to explain to them: "You are in a difficult state; do not think that this is eternal hell." They have a reflected memory from the physical life that tells them that there is a hell and it is eternal; this is very difficult for these imprisoned souls. It is painful to think: "I am in an eternal hell and nothing can save me!" The helpers have a challenging task in explaining that this state does not last forever and what the imprisoned can do to be set free. This ends in a kind of exhaustion, leading to falling asleep so the soul will wake up in a better world. He has different feelings, which make it possible for him to end up in another world, where he will meet friends and other people he knows.⁶³

The Subplanes of Hades

There are different planes in the astral life from hellish to paradiselike states. The following P. E.'s teachings describe the afterlife in different subplanes or classes of the astral world.

There are classes in Hades, and we move from one class to another depending on what each person is like in his soul. What is animal in his soul will come out. Not all people come to all classes; it depends on their internal state of development. There

may be good people who first spend time in a very low class; their life has been like that. They have had a special vice that must be erased first. On the other hand, there are people who spend a long time in a lower class and very little time in a higher class.⁶⁴

The Underworld

If the person has serious crimes on his conscience or there is actual evil in him, his afterlife resembles the description of hell offered by various religions. P. E. uses the term underworld to denote hell (underworld literally refers to a place underground). P. E. calls the state following the underworld the dwellings of Hades.

This first afterlife state can be called the underworld (*manala in Finnish*), as the ancient Finns did—although the term can mean more than that. It is a world that the person enters after dying; it is really under the earth. It is dark and black. It is black soil in which he wanders. It is like great dirt and mud, which smells very bad, and the deceased falls into that dirt and mud. And the air he breathes feels heavy and is hard to breathe. It is suffocating; it is as if one's chest is cracking when one breathes that air.

And when he has spent some time in that state, he starts to see a bit more clearly, but he cannot get into the light. This vision is not like seeing in the dawn; instead it is dusky. When compared to earthly life, it is like continuous night.

When he starts looking around, he sees peculiar things. He sees a large group of beings. But what kind of strange beings are they? There is not a single human being among them, so where is he now? He has truly ended up in the midst of devils and evil spirits. What is this? All the beings he encounters are strange beings. They are like monsters or animals. There are frogs, reptiles, lizards, and snakes, but there is something

human in each of them when he looks at them more closely. When he has become accustomed to the dusk, he sees, and his gaze hits upon pain and suffering, and he realizes that there is something human that is suffering. They all appear to be animals and look horrible, but he knows that they are people after all.

When he follows their lives, he notices that they reside in large groups. There is a group that is like a mouth, a big, voracious mouth—but the eyes are burning. Another group is a slimy blob. When he looks carefully at even more, he notices that not all eyes are human. Then he finds out the difference: there are beings in which a human soul is imprisoned and beings that are not human, but, from a closer look, are soulless. Yet these soulless beings act and present themselves as if they were people, and an even more careful inspection reveals that these soulless beings are created by the thoughts, feelings, and lust of real people. This is the difference he will learn. He realizes that these beings are clearly discernible from one feature: they are full of evil, they are devils, and they are filled with sinister will. When he wishes to understand these, he understands that these beings while alive loved bloodshed and murder and were cruel to animals and cruel to people. There are people with bestial lust.⁶⁵

There are also people in these hellish states who feel that they have committed evil deeds and that they are lost forever. This kind of deceased does not curse at all but he feels unspeakable fear and terror because he has so badly violated [the laws of life], and for that he is eternally damned. Actually, he is in a better position. The deceased can be divided into two categories: those who are full of curses, and those who are full of dread because of their own evil. When one investigates the dwellers in the underworld, one realizes that there are no

other living beings besides human beings. We make this peculiar observation that all those devils, those satans and evil spirits, are nothing else but human beings. If we travel in that world, a laughing devil can appear in front of us. A loud laughter can be heard that permeates everything. It is a human being who has so deeply surrendered himself for the service of evil that we call him a black person.⁶⁶

They will charge against living people with desires. If there is a corresponding desire in a living person, they charge inside that person and try to have momentarily satisfaction. They go through unspeakable pains, for they attempt to satisfy these desires, but they are left unsatisfied, as they have no bodies. The suffering, which is in the soul itself, the urge and desire which may be within us during life, burns them for a while.⁶⁷

The strength of this pain is will determine how long it will last—until those who are deceased realize that it is impossible to satisfy the desire. They feel then that all the organs which they could use to satisfy their desires are nonexistent. The bestial mouth becomes ill and falls away in pieces, and they become miserable. At the same time, they say to themselves: this is awful, I am in hell; there is no other help than to get rid of these urges and desires. There are, of course, helpers who explain that they are not in eternal damnation. At first they do not listen, but only laugh the laughter that always echoes in hell. However, gradually they come to understand that it is impossible to satisfy any desires, so it is best to relinquish them.⁶⁸

The Dwellings of Hades

When we move from the underworld forward or upward in the afterlife, we will arrive into a state that is also quite remarkable and peculiar, because it resembles the realm of the grave to a large extent.

When we look at that state of the afterlife through a veil for some time, we notice that its life, while being [in some sense] above the earth, greatly resembles the realm of the grave in its difficulty, greyness, and tediousness. That is the state we call *the dwellings of Hades*. According to the old sages, the life in the dwellings of Hades is grey and monotonous. When we attempt to describe the state of this realm of the grave, we think at the same time of the life in the dwellings of Hades. We could also compare these two states, because one must endure difficulties in the dwellings of Hades. The difficulty lies in that one must give up the body and one does not want to die.⁶⁹

All the little activities and desires that one had during earthly life continue to linger. “Now I have to eat, drink, smoke a cigarette or pay a visit to an acquaintance. Now I’ll have a meeting; now I’ll have to see this or that person.” All his past memories are in front of him, and he will go with them. He will eat, sleep, pay a visit to an old acquaintance, attend a meeting. But then he will come to a strange awakening: he realizes that when he eats, drinks, smokes a cigarette, sleeps or talks, he just pretends to be doing all these things. When he consumes food, it is all but an illusion; he will get no satisfaction. There is an old acquaintance. He runs to him, greets him, but he does not take notice of him. He attends a feast, laughs, and thinks. He notices what he is talking about; his mouth is moving, and he says his own thoughts, but nobody listens to him. Life truly and utterly becomes more and more hopeless and tedious. Life in the dwellings of Hades becomes ever so difficult.⁷⁰

Large groups living in the dwellings of Hades try to reach mediums in order to express themselves to living people. It is a pleasure for them to make an appearance, as it was a pleasure on earth. The individual is still as civilized, rich, and honorable as he was on earth, in his own opinion. The deceased person

who tries to express himself through spiritistic means likes to make things seem greater than they are, attempting to pose as a better and more brilliant deceased person. They call themselves such and such and become convinced of it. They do not mean to downright deceive, but we can see and understand that above all life in the dwellings of Hades is plainly grey; the deceased cannot do anything. They come into a contact with the living, and it is natural that they have no proper judgment.

There are people whose will to live is tied entirely to little aspects of life and small objects. All these people, who have tried to make the visible life pleasant using small material things, live in an oddly empty and gloomy state. All that is in the souls of these people is in the dwellings of Hades as well, but there is a difference: all activities seem dull; everything is grey, and naturally it is like hell.⁷¹

The Earthly Paradise

*The underworld and the dwellings of Hades form the first two classes in the astral life. Eventually the person is freed from the dwellings of Hades and enters into the earthly paradise, which P. E. also divides into subplanes or classes. "The finest forms, highest divisions of purgatory are like paradise, which has no other suffering than the feeling of longing and yearning."*⁷² During the middle of the nineteenth century, the American clairvoyant Andrew Jackson Davis called it the "summerland." *Life in the earthly paradise ends when the person arrives at the gate of heaven.*

We can move on to the next state in the afterlife, and we can call this state the *earthly paradise*. There are also other names we could use. The spiritualists use the word *summerland*. However, a better term is the *earthly paradise*, for the state of the afterlife described here is indeed like a paradise. It is an earthly

paradise because human souls do have their requirements for sensual enjoyment, but they are more spiritual than in the dwellings of Hades.

There are religious people who have believed in God and belonged to a religious sect or church. They are religious in a sense that their religiosity is their happiness and pleasure. They derive pleasure from attending church and pious meetings. They enjoy the fact that there are holidays in which one puts one's best suit on and is clean and tidy. They go to church, sit down, and with great piety listen to the organ playing and sing hymns. A priest steps into the pulpit and delivers a sublime sermon uplifting the soul. Then there is praying, partaking of the Eucharist, kneeling down, and consuming the Lord's holy flesh and blood. Then they return home and have a good feeling that they have been to church and served God.

Let us then think of a person who is a friend of nature. What does it mean? He enjoys nature in a way that the pleasure takes him away from other tasks. He enjoys a beautiful forest, birds singing, the sunshine, good friends with whom he can read, play, and enjoy poetry together. He too is filled with artistic pleasure. Nature exists for pleasure.

Let us then take a person who enjoys art. He goes to concerts, perhaps plays some instrument himself. The sounds are divine to him: when someone sings with a beautiful voice, those sounds are divine.

Let us then think of a person who loves science. He reads on and on, thinks, and enjoys his reading. He wants to investigate everything. He travels to meet famous people. He writes about this and that person who says such and such. He writes books himself. He hears about a curious book in the Vatican. He travels to Rome to investigate it. It is such an excellent pleasure to read it.

It is a sensual desire for pleasure for these people. There are many such people in the earthly paradise, in the summerland.

When we investigate this state of the afterlife, it is as the person would be on earth, but he does not stay here in reality. He is somewhere higher. It is like earth, but fabulous and wonderful. It is never too cold, nor are there strong storms. There all dreams that a person can imagine come true. There are waters, lovely trees, birds; life is good and beautiful and much more diverse than on earth. People wander in their own groups there. If there is a group of people belonging together, they come to a beautiful building, church, or a meeting room. Everything there is just what they have dreamed of on earth: churches and temples in which they hear music and singing, places where priests preach. They think that a large and beautiful angel is speaking through the preacher. If there are friends nearby, nothing is more enjoyable.

This will satisfy the person until he gradually starts to realize his error. He notices that the buildings he himself has built are lacking. A visitor whose eyes have opened might immediately notice what was wrong: the deceased could never finish the floor. It was being repaired, but still water was pouring in. He tried to add more lumber, but he didn't have enough. He was embarrassed for not finishing the apartment, for not being able to place the boards properly. He began gradually to realize that there was an error in his apartment because it was built by him. This is only a small step towards realizing that all is but an illusion. In addition to noticing the fault in the floor, he noticed that it is a reflection of his soul. And he starts to realize that what is weak and lacking in his soul has manifested itself in the floor. He also sees that the pleasures he has enjoyed are an illusion. It is extremely sad when all the best dreams people have, the happiest forms and greatest beauties, this most sublime and

pleasureful life is shattered in this way. The world cannot satisfy the soul anymore. It does not resonate with him. When he looks at it, it seems as if he looked at it through beauty.

There is a class of people whose awakening and longing starts to manifest quite late and slowly. These people are very intelligent but materialistic. They are skeptics, very wise on this earth, and learned people. They think that there is nothing behind the illusion; there is no other reality than physical reality and how a person becomes enchanted with it. They can laugh at everything. In the earthly paradise they may look through everything. There is no other reality than being and the accompanied feeling when one reads wise books and knows how to exist and preserve all of this outside of oneself and how to judge it all; how everything is foolish; and how all of existence is an illusion. They get on well in the earthly paradise, and their longing will emerge slowly. H. P. Blavatsky mentions that sometimes there have been intelligent people in the afterlife who have spent hundreds of years in that state.⁷³

[In the next subplane or class] we find only good people who have been busy only with the common good and what is good for people in general. They are great philanthropists, inventors, and scientists, different benefactors who have tried to do something for humanity. We notice that if they have had some personal daydreams and if so-called sacrifice and helping others have been a form of enjoyment and a means of achieving honor, to that extent this has bound them with these experiences in this afterlife. Their experience is to see what they are building: it is as if they are building a castle in the air. They look at humanity and notice that all that they help and sacrifice is idle until they come to see that only that which does not cause any pleasure or honor stands. It is such an excellent psychological observation!

[In the last] class of Hades, we notice that if we have valued our personal psyche, and if our feelings and thoughts have felt important and real to us, our attention is drawn into our psyche in Hades as well. Many religious people think that one must educate oneself, and so thinks every person who is striving forward. It feels natural, but it is an illusion after all. In Hades one can see that all this emphasis on one's own psyche is like a fleeting mist. We must give up that as well.

If we imagine that we have traveled through all the sub-planes of Hades, it is as if everything has grown and become larger from class after class. At the end we feel that our very personality should fade away so that we should not exist at all. However, something else starts to come into a view. At the same time, somewhere deep, something bright starts to come into view; we do not distinctly dare to believe in it, but we have to start believing in it. When we arrive at the gate of heaven, we come so bare that there is nothing left from our personality. It is a tragedy from this point of view, but therein lies a great promise: "Human being, you come closer and closer to God, the truth of life. Do not fear that you must give yourself away; whoever does so will gain the great truth of his life." This all will start to dawn on us in the afterlife, and we'll end up as if in space, like nothingness— and yet we are knocking at heaven's door.⁷⁴

Helpers of the Dead

It has already been mentioned that people are helped in their afterlife states. P. E. describes how this work of helping has been arranged.

To a large extent, school work started in earnest only after Christ. The deceased have received teachings after Christ, and we can notice that this teaching and helping has increased in

our time of Theosophy.⁷⁵ [Those] people whose intelligence has awakened on earth so that they have attempted to investigate these matters [relating to afterlife] have arrived in Hades with that awakened intelligence and the will to investigate. And they have formed a certain brotherhood in that afterlife state with those who have the same instincts, feelings, and aspirations. The person who keeps his eyes open when entering into the afterlife state, who tries to maintain his consciousness after death, ends up in a special position: he can be helped more than the ordinary deceased; he can certainly be taught and educated, not only in a way that is useful for his own psyche but also is much more important to those who educate him—he could be useful in general in the invisible world.

Such people as Theosophists, occultists, or whatever term we wish to use, who have more or less the right conception of the afterlife, will be received with special care on the other side. This kind of person will be asked: “Now that you have entered here, would you like to spend your time with your own soul experiences, or would you like to start working in this world?” And then these people, at least most of them, will answer with elation: “There is nothing more wonderful than working and serving here; it is the greatest joy to me.” “Well, since you have such a good and sincere will to help, come to the school; when you have finished it, you can join a certain group of helpers, as we have many kinds of them here.”⁷⁶

[In the old times] there were three kinds of help offered to the deceased, dying, and those who live in the afterlife, if we wish to describe it in broad terms.

First, their help concerned those of the deceased who were in a frightened state of mind after death. It can be said that the helpers’ work was to a very large extent focused at saving the dead from fear. A violent death is as a rule followed by a state of

continuous excitement, and nothing else has been able to help such an individual other than another person who came to him and was able to draw his attention. It is still difficult today, because the person who is in an excited state does not see or hear anything, and he cannot understand anything before he listens. The person who has learned to help the deceased is usually allowed to help those who have died suddenly, for instance war casualties who still seem to continue the fight on the other side.

Also another field of work was opened—and still is open—for the helpers in this world. This is associated with different religions.⁷⁷

These helpers were given the task of receiving the deceased and taking them to those teachers who were the main teachers in each individual's religion and to those afterlife states which waited for them and which they had prepared for themselves while alive. Everything is symbolic in the afterlife, and reality is the psychic force that acts in it. The fire is a cleansing force in the spiritual world, but I can take in that fire and let it purify me [from defects] only to the extent I have regarded defects as bad during life. I will enter the cleansing fire that is within me, but my imagination symbolizes it in a realistic way. The helpers are like angels who carry the deceased and try to explain what the afterlife is all about, how the most intense pain is a passing suffering, a cleansing that has the purpose of opening the doors of heaven. Then the helper is standing in front of a problem when he has to address a person who believes that he is in an everlasting hell from which it is impossible to escape. This is the question mark of Christendom. The deceased believes that he is condemned to eternal hell; he has committed a lot of crimes and his conscience scolds him for these, and he has died fearing eternal damnation. Although it is explained that pain is not eternal, the deceased stubbornly sticks to this delusion

before he eventually wakes up and becomes clear. Christianity has caused needless suffering in this regard; selfishness and ignorance have invented these wrong and cruel conceptions of the afterlife.

The third field of work is that the deceased have to be taken to the heaven of peace and happiness.⁷⁸

Under certain conditions, living people can help the dead both during sleep and also in the waking state of consciousness. P. E. provides some practical advice on the various forms of the work of helping.

For helpers, visiting the deceased and guiding them is nothing supernatural, for there are many living people who do it, although they are not especially advanced occultists. People with good hearts and whose minds are not chained by bigoted doctrines, who are full of a will to help and who help and serve living people on this earth, console and do good to others, can learn to help the dead while they are asleep. When in sleep, with no memory or knowledge of it, they leave the physical body in their astral bodies, and because they are humans who want to serve and help, they are accepted into a school. They are taught what they should do and in what way to help. This is an unspeakably great achievement that has taken place mainly in our own time. After the Theosophical message came in the world, these astral schools were organized in different countries in the invisible world, and living people are taught to serve during sleep. That is why there is a saying among the sages: all people, no matter how poor they are, can always serve and help one another as long as they search for truth, liberating their minds from the chains of dogmas and keeping their hearts compassionate and loving. Then they can learn to do good during the night. But let us keep in mind that no person is qualified to

help during the night if he doesn't help during the day when he has an opportunity to do so. We must be helpful during the daytime in order to have clean hands in the night. It is as if a person would take a burden into the nightlife, it would be as if he had chains on his hands and legs that prevent him from helping during the night if he is not helpful during the day. But whoever fulfils this condition does not have to let his sleep count for nothing.⁷⁹

Many Theosophical truth seekers might wish to help the deceased while alive, but they have no way of being aware of if they can help in their sleep, as they have no recollection of it. However, there is a way. Everyone can help their acquaintances and beloved deceased by sending them good and peaceful thoughts. If he knows that someone has died believing in eternal hell, he sends him thoughts of heaven, and these thoughts will reach the soul, as the soul, with no physical body, is more accessible than the physical person. That is why it is easy to reach the deceased with beautiful, brotherly, divine thoughts. Furthermore, it is good to remember that there is some kind of anxiety among the dead when they reside near the earth sphere or in Hades, the astral world. This anxiety is due to not knowing or understanding anything about the conditions they find themselves in; they cannot fathom what is bothering them. What bothers them is that they have so little knowledge about the world they have moved into, and if someone reads aloud a good presentation on death and afterlife, it comes into their soul as if they heard it. They can gather around the person who is alone in a room reading a good book aloud, not by shouting but in a clear and deliberate voice. Especially if he does it regularly, the deceased will gather and form a kind of a Theosophical lodge. Any person who is serious and wants to help the deceased can get some listeners by reading a good presentation aloud.⁸⁰

The following presentation addresses a person who lives according to Jesus's teachings (P. E. uses the term disciple).

[The disciple] leaves his physical body with full consciousness and becomes aware that he can learn to work. What kind of work can he learn to do while outside his body? He can learn—so to speak—to preach to those deceased souls in imprisonment. We have already discussed the nature of this imprisonment. This preaching is not similar to what a priest does when he steps up to his pulpit. No, it means that he must visit the dead in private. His master tells him to help that soul. And then one disciple helps one soul, and another disciple helps another soul. In the beginning they are baffled and do not know what to do, but to the extent that they have love, they learn to know what to do. A loving heart finds ways, and knows how to talk to the soul who needs help. At first the imprisoned souls do not listen at all; instead, they live with their horrible images and do not know how to listen. It may take many nights and plenty of time before they can make the deceased pay a little attention. However, when the disciple has managed to draw the attention of the deceased, the process of gradual help and liberation starts. It is entirely mental in nature.

When this kind of disciple dies, his afterlife is different from others, for he has lived eternal life while being alive. In his death he—figuratively speaking—enters, as Jesus said, into a great banquet prepared by a king. Everyone in this banquet is clothed in wedding clothes, and no one can enter without these wedding clothes. Truly, the people who die as disciples are immediately clothed in wedding clothes, a human dress. (It has to be said that that this dress is not a Western tailcoat; rather it is like an Eastern robe or cloak). It has different colors in different degrees, but it is like a valuable robe. In this way, the dead who are clothed in these wedding clothes in the afterlife

are—how would I put it—like helping angels in the kingdom of the dead. They work there as helpers and teach both the dead and the living.⁸¹

The Locality of Hades

Although the afterlife is lived in an invisible world, it has its own locality.

Some Theosophical and old mystical books may say that the afterlife is *sublunar*, subordinate to the moon or belonging to the moon. This saying is not only symbolic but literally true, because the earth's astral body is under the influence of the moon. And when the person enters Hades in the afterlife—*purgatory*, as the Catholics say, or *kamaloka*,^{xix} as Asians say, which means the state of purification—the person enters as a soul into the influence of the moon. The end phase of the astral life that we often call a lower heaven is under the influence of the moon and is indeed in the sphere of the moon. Then the human soul has traveled to the point in the earth's astral body where the moon's astral body is also present.⁸²

When it comes to the moon body, the moon state in which we enter in Hades, there is no sun, but there is no moon either in the sense that it would be visibly glowing in the sky. Instead we live in the middle of the moon, so that everything glows. That is why the notion of the “astral” was invented—from the world *aster*, which means a star. It is a star world, and this means that everything in that world is like a star: everything glows in the same way as stars and the moon at night, with a weak but clear light. However, this light is totally different from sunlight. In Hades, the moon state of the earth, the light

xix In Buddhist cosmology, *kamaloka* is the lowest of the three worlds of *samsara*, and the physical world is also a part of *kamaloka*. In Theosophy, *kamaloka* means Hades only. —Editors' note

is completely clear and bright, but it has a shade of silver and it does not appear to be coming from anywhere; rather all the places glow by themselves, as if with a borrowed light, and this light is moonlight.

This is a very interesting observation when one can do it objectively. I have been talking about these matters, as one can say, objectively. but a person who dies and enters these worlds cannot make these kind of observations unless he is an occultist or a sage, since he has not developed his moon or sun body so that he could make objective observations. When the observations are presented this way, they are not presented from the point of view of an ordinary deceased person; they are presented from the point of view of a person who can make objective observations.⁸³

P. E. notes that the states in the afterlife are just a part of a much larger invisible world.

The dwellings [of the dead] are guarded and protected. That is why some talk about the “island of the dead.” The invisible world is much, much larger than the visible earth; it has life in many forms, and large groups of various spiritual beings in addition to humans. When a person enters the spiritual world consciously, he comes into contact with a much richer state of being than the physical state of being. He does not enter the realm of the dead without a valid reason.⁸⁴

Spiritualistic Séances

Theosophy has been critical of spiritistic or spiritualistic séances from the beginning.^{xx} The founder of the Theosophical movement, H. P. Blavatsky, collided with the followers of spiritualism in her own time. P. E. is also of the opinion that the the séances are harmful.

xx Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 27–35, 144–154.

However, if we here on earth try to get in contact with [a deceased person], e.g. through a medium, we actually cause damage to him, we disturb him.

Indeed, the following has been expressed in all religions: one must not disturb the rest of the deceased, even in Hades, as they are fully occupied there. However, if there is a medium who has mysterious etheric forces that have magnetic effects, for the deceased it is a kind of a vortex or stream that comes and touches him and attempts to take him with it. And the deceased very willingly goes along with the stream and arrives at the medium, and this arouses earthly feelings and thoughts in him. Only the deceased living in Hades can appear in séances, and these will receive artificial life, that is a physical life through the medium, and are then able to tell about themselves and their conditions. They tell things which are easy to understand for us who are alive; they tell about afterlife conditions in quite a reasonable way. Then we feel that there we have really valid statements, since the deceased themselves are telling us.

In a way this is true, but if we judge them and their statements with the eye of a sage, we will see that they are not their true selves. They are not self-conscious persons in Hades. They are working and struggling with their own selfishness and trying to be liberated from their faults; they are in the purifying fire, and their point of view is limited. When they come to a séance and start talking, they tell what they remember from Hades, but also what they read from thoughts of those who participate in the séance. Their lives are not real life; they are not real human beings with a higher self: instead, they are just echoes from their earthly lives. They are recreated again in the séance, and they talk like parrots about what they remember from their past lives and from some experiences in Hades.

At any rate, this is unfavorable for them, as they have become distracted from their work in Hades. It is better that we leave them alone. It is better not to attend a spiritualistic séance and not to try to ask the deceased to visit us, for if they visited us it would be pernicious to them.⁸⁵ Many frivolous features such as vanity and ambition can awaken in them [if they] try to appear in the séances.⁸⁶ They have nothing to do with this world anymore. They have started becoming used to their new life, and they become drawn here as half beings with no higher self, and they have no means to develop these experiences and reflect on them.⁸⁷

If a sage looks at this, it is repellent to him, as it is only a shell that is talking there. Those who know Theosophical literature remember that Blavatsky always talked about these shells in the beginning, and this offended the spiritualists tremendously. Now the spiritualists have advanced so much that they can understand what Blavatsky meant. She did not mean that there would be no deceased present in the séance; she meant to say that those deceased who are present are from the point of view of a sage like empty shells, as the higher self is in its own state, far away.⁸⁸

The End of Life in Hades

Afterlife in the astral world is purification, and at the same time it is going through the past life. This phase will end in time at the second death, which is also called the final judgment. This signifies the end of the astral life and a birth into a heavenly realm. Essentially, this is a transition from one state of being to another, which is what happened when the person moved away from the physical world via the death process.

After the person has lived in the state of Hades for some time, a new remarkable point is at hand. He will face a new death,

the second death,^{xxi} and it can be called, as one Master in the Theosophical movement called it, a final judgment. When the person has lived out his time in Hades, he is drawn into a great current of force, a vortex, a fire. He will be sifted, shaken, and tested in this marvelous current. This vortex has also been called the great “astral serpent” or “dragon.” The person will be in its jaws, and it is like a final judgment in which all that is gold and good in him will be sifted from him. And who would not have something good in him! We can say that there is nowadays some goodness in almost everyone; during life there has been something good in their personal being. The person has wished something good, worked for a cause, or sacrificed himself for someone. He may have loved unselfishly, served art or science, only for the love of beauty and truth.

In the final judgment it is asked, what trait is in our person that can be set on the right hand and what can be set on the left hand [cf. Matthew 25:33]. At this point the human soul is sifted in a peculiar way so that only the pure gold remains. Even if the good in him is very small, it remains and the person will fall asleep, so to speak, and almost dies.⁸⁹

P. E. provides an interesting perspective to the life review: in addition to reviewing the past life, we review the life we lived before we were born.

All this remembrance [of the past life] is so real that it cannot be sorted out in any other way than by unspeakable pain and suffering. Then we will go back to our earliest childhood—and our journey is about going towards greater purity—and then to the gate of birth, and through that to the world and the life we lived before we were born on earth. Life in Hades also consists of reviewing the life we lived before birth, and it makes the

xxi Revelation 20:14.

afterlife quite amazing. There is this rather peculiar period in which we will be in contact with beings we had met before we were born. What kind of beings were they? They were those great teachers whom we had known in our previous life and who had influenced us. They were those old wise men whose teachings we had heard and who had blessed us when we had to come back to earth from heaven. Naturally, we had a new personality then, which does not mean that we would remember our previous life when we encounter these teachers at end of the life in Hades. Not at all; we just come into contact with them because they supervise—based on the law of life—our birth to this world.⁹⁰

We will meet our previous teachers, the Buddha and Confucius, and they talk to us about the Christ and remind us what we have heard about Him in this visible life.⁹¹

IV. Heaven

Life in Heaven

A human being lives his life again as a pure and transfigured personality in heaven.

The real life of a human being is life that is lived in heaven; heaven is the innermost mystery in the afterlife.⁹² Heaven is considered to be the actual afterlife state. When occult investigators look at this, they say that the heavenly state is the longest state in the afterlife.⁹³ That last period in the afterlife is the sun life. It is pure brightness, and nothing other than the highest, holiest, and best can flourish or remain there.⁹⁴

The key to heaven is love; love opens the gates of heaven: nothing else [can do this besides] love of human beings, ideas, God, and all beings. Love of heart is the key that opens the heavens. That is why it has been said that when a person is entering heaven, he or she carries a vase—one person has a small vase, another person has a large vase—and everyone's vase is full of heavenly flowers. It is a vase of bliss; as much as a human being is able to be blissful in a spiritual way, that much he receives in heaven. The one who is more capable of loving carries a larger vase, and the one who is less capable of loving carries a smaller vase, but in heaven every love reaches such a high point that he cannot hope for anything else, even if that love were limited only to two or three people or to some cause. He is allowed to give away that love from himself in heaven.⁹⁵

[Heaven] is about living in connection with all the good in us. Let us think about the moments of happiness on earth.

When we are truly happy for some brief period of time, we then want everyone to be happy. If we feel real happiness for a moment, that happiness makes us good at the same time. Heaven is happiness and bliss; it is only about goodness, beauty, and love. There are no contradictions, sorrows, or worries [in heaven].⁹⁶

In heaven, a human being relives his earthly life, but with no sorrows, disappointments, contradictions or dissonance. He relives that earthly life again in such a form that all the good that he has wished for, longed for, thought about, felt, and strived for comes true a thousandfold. The best personal self of a human being takes part in heaven. He is what he was at his best moments on earth, when he loved, willed good, and did good.⁹⁷

What he could not fulfil in his earthly life is fulfilled now. If he is a marvelous musician or if he is a great composer, he sees how the heavens are opened. There are a lot of people around him, and he plays so that the walls of heaven form anew, large and beautiful. An artist creates paintings that are incredibly beautiful. Then what is amazing if he has not experienced it before is that he can love everyone, and all who love him will come to him.⁹⁸

The human personality is [in the heavenly state] vastly wiser, although he does not start anything new, for everything old he had during his earthly life develops as far as it can.⁹⁹

Heaven would not be bliss if one could not be together with many others. Being together does not mean that one is in contact with people one does not know—this happens only to the select few. Instead, the person comes into contact with the people he knew and loved, with the people to whom he wanted to show goodness, and with those he wanted to love. He comes into contact with all these souls, and there is wonderful harmony, as they love him.¹⁰⁰

[For instance, when a married couple] is born in heaven, their lives are new images of the physical earthly life, but now it is a thousandfold richer, with all that was best in it. In fact, their heaven is quite subjective. However, we cannot say that their souls would not have contact with each other. As much as they had common good in their souls on earth, they have also with their contact in heaven. We could describe the contact as a string between them; in other respects, both are living in their own heavens. However, life in heaven is much more real than any life on earth. That is why if we asked a soul in heaven, "Is your life a dream now?" he would say, "No, this is a much greater reality than on earth." It is subjective, and it is utterly that person's own happiness. If there are others who partake in it or increase his happiness, there are common strings between the souls. Nothing can disturb happiness there.¹⁰¹

The School in Heaven

Although heaven is a state of perfect happiness, it is a school and at the same time work for humanity.

All people will go to the school of Mars in heaven, and human souls will see clearly that one must not quarrel, go to war, use violence, or be evil. All of this, which seems to belong to the ordinary state of affairs in our earthly lives, will appear in a blatant light in a peculiar way in heaven under the influence of Mars, but not in a way that would create any difficult feelings or suffering in us. We do not see any earthly conditions, we only understand that we cannot quarrel, fight wars, use a sword or any weapon, or use violence in any way. We feel this, for we live in such a consciousness that we cannot do any evil deeds. We live in heaven with such a clear consciousness, and that is why our souls chime together in harmony.

Human souls are divided in groups in the Martian heaven. They form their own circles according to the number of souls they love and know. Each group has its own tone or harmonic music, and they will in turn together form a tone as a larger whole, or a song they sing. One choir can have a song, "Oh, how happy is a family in which harmony exists between a husband and a wife," and another choir sings, "Oh, how happy is a religious parish which wants to do good for mankind and to love everyone." The third choir might sing, "Oh, how happy is the society that wants to serve people and wants what is best for everyone." However, large groups also feel this together: "The only contentment in life is in singing praise to the Lord in heaven."

Where are these human souls? They reside in space, in our sun—and the sun [in an occult sense] consists of the whole solar system. The souls of the earth are not locally restricted. People living in heaven do travel to planets, and at the same time they are in our consciousness and in our hearts. This is their working field. They sing harmony, peace, and love to all. That is why we notice how the deceased are thought of with respect and devotion, how people on earth may turn to their ancestors and say, "You in heaven, look at me so that I would find peace in my heart." And people who have quarrels with others might think: "What does my relative, the beloved deceased, think if he looks at me?" People have an instinctive knowledge that the deceased in heaven constantly sing peace and praise to God. This is done not only by the deceased, but by many other beings as well: there are millions and millions of angels who are not humans. An angel can lead a heavenly choir, and it is work. As a reflection, we have tunes and music here on earth. We may feel that it is entertainment when we hear music, playing, or singing. No, it is work for educating people; playing and

singing make human souls vibrate. It is work, and it comes from heaven.¹⁰²

Declining the Heavenly State

Life in heaven is not compulsory, and it is possible to decline it. However, this act requires great unselfishness and will to sacrifice one's own personal happiness for the sake of happiness of mankind.

Those of the deceased who are clothed in wedding garments are—how would I put it—like helping angels in the kingdom of death. They work there, act as helpers and teach both the living and the dead. And then—if they have not gone so far in their self-education that they do not have to be born again on earth—they too merge completely with their higher selves, but often with no heavenly state. They do not want to spend their time in their own heavenly state. Their heaven is to be allowed to do work. They give up the great happiness that would come to them, and all the energy that would have been drained into their own happiness comes into their self when they are born again on earth. They are born again because they have not perfected their self-education, and they will continue their endeavors and self-education. They are those people who solve the problem of eternal life in practice. They are the people who meet shining beings, gods, masters—ininitely exalted beings—in the world of eternity. I do not know how to name the beings living in those exalted worlds, who lead the life and the mission of our humanity as well as of other human races and solar systems.¹⁰³

The Relationship between the Living and the Dead

According to P. E., thoughts of blessing can reach the deceased who live in the heavenly state. Praying for deceased loved ones is

practiced in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. This practice is supported by P. E.'s teachings, although with some reservations.

[The Catholic Church] has retained praying for the deceased, which is quite right, although it took the form of the mass, which does not mean so much anymore. However, as a tradition it is correct and is aimed at helping the deceased in Hades. This is achieved by beloved relatives and friends who think of the deceased, pray for him, and send him blessing thoughts, which reach him like glowing, rosy clouds, like birds that call him to carry on upwards.

This is the original tradition, which later on was formed into an official ceremony—a mass, which may do good if it is performed with full devotion by a person who can concentrate his thoughts and knows the deceased well. But this is harder and more mechanical for a priest, whereas friends and relatives can easily concentrate on thoughts wishing him well. In order for the mass to work even a little, an especially developed priest should be carrying it out.¹⁰⁴

The living can be in contact with the people living in the heavenly state. However, this is not a mediumistic way of communication.

An individual cannot provide any information about himself while in heaven. He cannot haunt on earth, cannot show up in spiritualistic séances, cannot tell anything about the heavenly state that is sacred and guarded.

Does the individual know about earthly life while being in heaven?

No, he does not know anything about this visible physical world, but he knows about those he loves. We ask then, “How is it possible to know about the loved ones since, for instance, a mother cannot see her children?”

Well, the mother has their souls in front of her, so to speak. It is quite peculiar what the individual in heaven experiences: although all her relatives surrounding her are completely alive, it sometimes happens that the deceased notices how one of her loved ones would suddenly radiate something with unexpected brightness. This unexpected love is coming from the loved one in such a way that the heavenly bliss of the deceased is increased a thousandfold.

When does this happen? It happens when the loved ones on earth remember the deceased, think about her in a beautiful and unselfish way. Not so that they cry and want her to come back; this rarely happens anymore. So many years have passed since she died and went to heaven that the relatives have gotten over their sorrow. But when they reminisce about her, it is as if a ray emanates from their souls or hearts to the image, so to speak, that is with the deceased, and this image is enlivened.

This is a wonderful fact. That is why it is right to lovingly reminisce about the deceased. However, if that love takes the form of visiting and taking care of graves, this does not bring the deceased any joy. When we decorate their graves, bring flowers, and place gravestones, all this is for us; it is our vanity, as we wish to show others how we respect our deceased. The deceased have no joy from it. They know nothing about the stones or flowers; however, our loving thoughts are roses which do reach them.

So the individual cannot provide any information to earth from heaven out of the individual's own initiative, but is there any information that we ordinary people could gain from the deceased residing in heaven? Yes, there is. We can ascend to them. An ordinary person cannot do it when he sleeps. He has to do it during the daytime, and the way leading to the late relative goes through his heart. He can do it if he has purified his

mind, soul, and body so that his consciousness can stand the heavenly joy. If he can ascend to the freedom of heaven, the joy and elation in heaven, if he can be filled with heavenly bliss on earth, he can then ascend to his loved ones at the moment of inspiration, and he can then make marvelous observations. It is only with relatives and loved ones that he can be in contact. For instance, there would be something untrue if a deceased were to say through a medium that he is in heaven when the deceased is unknown to the medium.¹⁰⁵

Communication among the Dead

Communication among the dead is initially limited by language barriers, just like on earth. However, these barriers will dissolve when the process of death continues further.

We cannot communicate with the deceased in Hades after we die if we do not know their language. Everyone speaks the language they know in the lower levels of the astral plane. The Finns speak Finnish, the Swedes speak Swedish, and so forth. The one who speaks many languages will communicate with more people. However, the chances of coming in contact with a foreigner are relatively small. Of course, it is an advantage if one knows many languages. However, there are many people in need of help that speak one's own language, so there is no worry about a lack of [spiritual] work.

Things are different when the deceased rises to a higher plane, when he moves "from the moon to the sun." Then he loses all ordinary speech—instead, thoughts and feelings will speak their own direct language in images, colors, and tunes.

This is a positive aspect of "speaking." However, there is a negative aspect, and this is listening. We must learn to listen in order to perceive directly thoughts and feelings others have.

There is no special teaching of this heavenly way of communicating. Everyone learns it as well as one can. It is in a way losing the ability to speak. The deceased becomes a little child who cannot speak at all. When he wakes up in heaven, he can just think and listen. Then no language whatsoever poses difficulties anymore.¹⁰⁶

V. Higher Heaven

The End of the Lower Heaven

The heavenly state is divided into a lower heaven, in which a transfigured personality lives, and a higher heaven, which is the home of the higher self. When the individual enters the higher heaven he will give up his personality.

Heaven is not eternal, however, although the individual is happy for centuries, as measured in our time. We have to remember that this visible life is so very important; this visible life is our school. Heaven will be exhausted, and we will not be able to be happy forever. As the basic tone of heaven is happiness, there is something personal involved. It is not quite divine; it is the happiness of a human self, and that is why it will be exhausted.¹⁰⁷

[The individual] is very happy, and eventually he will rise to such a great happiness that he cannot bear it. It has a dissolving effect; the individual almost disappears. His personal consciousness will disappear while it rises to the radiance of spirit, and the individual no longer knows the earthly personality he left.¹⁰⁸

Then the gates are opened into an actual heaven where only our higher selves reside. We die out of our personality, and it feels as if we must throw ourselves into an abyss or fly over the abyss, although we cannot do it. We feel that there is immense pain and loneliness in that abyss, and that this is something we must do. Then the individual as a soul throws himself into the abyss, in indescribable pain, and he waits and fears it with

shivering. However, he realizes, feels, and knows that the pain opens the greatest elation.¹⁰⁹

Then the personal self is merged with the higher self. The personal life has again become a new page in the book of life; the memory of the higher self has expanded with one life. That memory cannot retain anything ugly, selfish, or lowly; everything that has been small, weak, and poor has faded away and died—just what a materialistic person believes will happen.¹¹⁰

The divine self cannot remember any contradictions, lowly sin, or evil; the divine self only remembers what was bright, holy, and right in life. That is why the heavenly state ends with a final judgment^{xxii} when the individual's divine self incorporates in itself what is holy and worthy in the personality.¹¹¹

The Locality of the Higher Heaven

It was already stated that the astral phase in the afterlife has its locality under the influence of moon. In a similar manner, according to P. E. the higher heaven also has its corresponding locality in our solar system.

The heavenly state resides in the “I” organism of earth; this can also be called as the sun body of earth. This sun body is in turn peculiar in that it is as large as the solar system; it is the sun itself. In this physical life, we perceive the sun being up in the sky, and it appears to be a distant sphere that illuminates us. When we enter this heaven, the “I” body of earth, the sun body of earth, we enter inside of the sun. However, we will notice that the sun is not a small sphere in the middle of the solar system; it is the whole solar system itself. Inside the “I” sphere of earth, in the sun itself, we cannot see the sun, which is just a

xxii There are two slightly different meanings in P. E.'s presentation regarding a final judgment. See the chapter “The End of Life in Hades.”
—*Editors' note.*

physical phenomenon, but we are in the middle of the light that is so bright that it penetrates into the earth. In that heavenly state, that is, in the sun itself, light is everywhere, but it is as if it flooded from within.¹¹²

An individual cannot bear the pure, bright light at all unless he is so pure and purified that what is the finest in him has merged with the higher self; this makes it possible for him to withstand this light. Most people cannot bear it for a long time, although there is no time at all in an earthly sense, for a thousand years is like one day.

The locality in that heavenly body of earth is such that it includes the whole solar system, while it encloses in itself all the planets in this solar system. Of course, the situation is similar in other planets: in each planet the “I” organism encloses the sun and all other planets. It is a very wonderful state of being, but even this is bounded or formal, as it does not extend outside the solar system.¹¹³

The Heaven of the Christ

The previous discussion on life in heaven concerned chiefly the ordinary human being. However, there are people who have lived an eternal life while on earth; they can also consciously enter eternal life or the kingdom of God in an afterlife. P. E. calls this Jesus Christ’s heaven, which resides above the heavens formed by religions, including traditional Christianity.

When we examine the afterlife destiny even more closely, we notice that there have always been some people who do not fade away when they come in contact with eternal life, and the number of these people has increased over time. What are these people like who do not die, when usually everyone else dies? When we look at their afterlife or earthly life, we observe that they have been the people who have followed the

footsteps of a wise man or a master, and who really have followed some ideal and put it into practice, have educated themselves to become true humans. To our great surprise and joy, when we investigate these matters, we notice that there have always been some people who do not die. What does it mean that they do not die? It means that when they rise to their spirit at the end of the heavenly state, their personal “I” consciousness does not fade away, but it stays alive in it. And we notice how it shines and that they are immortal beings. When we look at their lives, we notice that they have experienced this while being on earth. They could not rise with such a consciousness to their spirit at the end of the heavenly state if they had not experienced it to some extent while being on earth, and then we will see the secret of eternal life. It is not an absolutely continuous life, but it is a dynamic reality, a force reality that always exists and can descend into us while we are alive. It can again leave us and rise to its superheavenly state. But it awaits us in an afterlife. Hence, we find a clear solution: the human being who lives eternal life in the afterlife has also lived eternal life while being on earth. Eternal life exists beyond time, but it can descend into time. We also notice that the eternal life that exists in the human being also changes his afterlife.¹¹⁴

Christ’s heaven is above other heavens, but it is at the same time within, around, and outside them. Its locality does not make it small or restricted in any way. It is an infinite space, the whole universe, and there live and reside many great teachers—more than we know. This is their heaven, and they have always been in it. However, it is Jesus Christ’s heaven, because other teachers were unable to build it into such an all-inclusive and all-embracing kingdom of heaven before the time when Jesus Christ had concluded His work.

The kingdom of God as a dynamic or forceful reality, as eternal life or nirvana, is achievable only on earth. But after Jesus Christ opened a new path to the kingdom of God with His teachings and example, He has also offered a new experience of bliss in the afterlife for those who hear His call, although they are not even nearly free from the wheel of reincarnation. The afterlife heaven of Christ is the heaven of love, which embraces all beings. The kingdom of God exists in the invisible world, and it can be properly entered here on earth. However, a deceased can experience it for a while in the afterlife if he is able to enter it.

What kind of deceased enter this gate of heaven? As states of soul, thoughts and emotions are readily reflected in the human aura, the atmosphere surrounding the individual, so we can clearly discern three types of deceased that approach this Christ's heaven and for whom the gate is opened.

First, we see the deceased who wander in a golden light, and because this light is especially prominent around their heads as a glowing glory, our own thoughts tell us immediately, "Well, they have a crown of life."

Second, we see the deceased who come as simple and humble, but who have, so to speak, a great rose blooming in their heart. Their aura glows as pink and beautiful so strongly in the area of the chest that at the upper part of the chest, at the level of the head, it glows almost as a dark violet background in which there are constantly glinting and twinkling golden rays and stars. We instinctly know what this is and we say, "Well, a rose of love has blossomed in their heart, and they love all sentient beings with a divine, holy love."

Third, we recognize a different group of deceased. They look ahead childishly and joyfully, and their auras have a lot of white glow. It appears to us as if they came from very far away and

that they were very little. They look at us gently, cheerfully, and with purity. We immediately feel this inside: “Well, they are like children,” since “unless you are like children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” Our attention is drawn to them, as they appear mysterious to us. Clearly, they are child souls, but they are not undeveloped souls. They are children in the sense that they know nothing about evil; they do not believe in violence or low calculations, or in means without heart. They are children who only believe in what is pure and beautiful. They are children who are like lambs with no protection: they can be persecuted and harmed, but they do not resist or defend themselves or do anything evil. They are especially interesting souls in our eyes, and we immediately think that they are highly developed souls.

For all these people the gates of the kingdom are opened.

Where do these deceased come from? They are not exclusively Christians. Not all of them have ever heard about Jesus Christ. There are also people who have denied all that is supernatural and have been pessimistic and viewed religion as mostly malarkey. They have only believed in duty and have taken pity on people.

Then a new question arises in front of us.

What is the reason that not all the deceased enter the Christ’s heaven? We clearly see that not all people enter there. Other heavens are full of people, but Christ’s heaven is the emptiest of all heavens. Why is it that only a few souls enter and most do not? The entering depends on the following: the person has come in contact in his soul with the Christ. This has often happened—perhaps most often—without him knowing it. There is the requirement that the person in one way or another forgets his personal little self and, at least for a moment, is filled with humane feelings, such as heartfelt love for someone else or something higher.¹¹⁵

Let us consider the deceased whose heart glows like a rose. This means the following: the person can belong to any religion or can be outside religion. If he does not deny his humane heart but lets it blossom and makes it his highest norm in life, if he lets compassion, love, and helpfulness be a striving force in all his deeds, then he can come into contact with the Son of God [the cosmic Christ consciousness] through his heart. The cosmic consciousness of the Son of God is so close to everyone's heart in the New Covenant. It is metaphorically expressed that Christ knocks on the heart's door and whispers quietly: "My beloved, please forget yourself and open the door to me." There is no question about the person's philosophy, religion, his conceptions of God or of the afterlife. He may consider himself an atheist, a pessimist, or a person who believes in nothing. But if he—even without knowing it—listens to his heart's tone and obeys its command to be merciful, helpful, and gentle, he comes in contact with Christ, and he is taken to the gate of the kingdom in the afterlife.

If we take a look at another group of deceased, the so-called child soul, we also say that, regardless of denominations or even if he does not belong to any religion at all, he can be admitted as a resident of the kingdom if he has felt that no good can be created using evil. He has not wished to command, lead, or guide in this world, but rather he has chosen suffering. He is too humble and simple in his soul to have any dominance. He just knows that it is safest and surest to suffer. Not to yell, hit, or take actions of violence, but rather to walk through life like a shadow. Not to shine among other people, not to disturb or bother anyone, or cause any suffering. Instead, he was ready to suffer anything himself. His soul is like an innocent child. He just feels that there is so much sorrow and tragedy in the world that he would not like to increase the suffering in

any way. On the contrary, he would like to carry other people's crosses, lighten their burden, do anything for them, and never cause anything bad in the world. He always tries to be cheerful and to make others feel good, to arouse gentle feelings in others, to foster forgiving goodness. By living this way on earth, he is already a resident of the kingdom of heaven, and it will open for him soon after death. (By the way, many of these kind of deceased will come to the Christ from the East).

Finally, if we think of the first group, those deceased who come with the shining crown of life, they are in turn people who have developed quickly because of their special karma, or they have found the Son of God by being tireless and strong truth seekers. They are the people whose reason has been opened in spirit. The reason in them has grown brighter, so that they have had a splendid spiritual experience. They have experienced the same thing that St. Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. They have seen the Son of God. This means in practice the following: for instance, if a Buddhist has meditated a lot, searched for truth, and suddenly become enlightened, he feels as if the Buddha has come to him, and not just *to* him but *in* him. Something inside him has opened. He has seen the vast space, and in that space he has felt the presence of the Buddha. The Buddha is in space, and the Buddha is in him. He might have even seen the Buddha. He has been awakened; he has become a Buddha (in my opinion, being "born again" is the best name for this). After he has gone through this secret, personal experience, he probably does not dare to talk about it to many, perhaps to nobody, but the glory has been formed around his head; he has achieved a crown of life. He has come in contact with the Son of God in his spirit.¹¹⁶

VI. At the Gates of Rebirth

The person sees his past lives^{xxiii} and the ideal of the perfect human being at the end of the heavenly state. At the same time he perceives with clarity that the ideal of the Christ Being can only be achieved on earth.

It is in the heavenly state that the individual lives within his self, remembers his past incarnations, and looks forward to the future. When we investigate an individual by occult means, we notice that when he reminisces in this afterlife state, he gathers incidents from his past life; this takes place unconsciously, as if by itself. His self is quite unconscious, although it reconstructs itself, inspects its past lives, and corrects them. It all takes place unconsciously. Only after the self has been born for many times on earth and noticed that it has existed before does it become more conscious, analytical, and thoughtful in the course of [spiritual] development. The individual himself develops his self. Initially there is no reincarnation memory in the afterlife; instead, it gradually appears and grows. Finally, it will fill the whole afterlife. When the individual is in the state that is called heaven or *devachan*, he molds his past life, his own personality. He looks for and finds instances that are aligned with the ideal. At the same time he thinks of his past incarnations, compares them with one another, and learns as much as he can.¹¹⁷

xxiii Interestingly, there is scientific research on children who seem to remember past lives. These cases form a large database which lends support for the reality of reincarnation (for an overview, see Stevenson, 2000; Tucker, 2005 & 2013). —*Editors' note.*

The new earthly life presents itself to us. We see what is waiting for us. We see that we must step down to earth and clothe ourselves in a new personality. We see the lesson we have to learn in this new life, and we kneel down in our spirit and are immensely grateful to life for the opportunity to go to the school [of life].¹¹⁸

And his soul feels, “Now I want to try better than before to be pure, honest, and peaceful within myself. I want to be loving towards all beings,”¹¹⁹ and out of joy he makes a promise to God: “I will give my all, all!”¹²⁰

This is how an individual starts the new process of incarnation. He will forget his promise to life, but the promise will manifest itself in the voice of conscience. P. E. briefly describes the journey back to an earthly life.^{xxiv}

Then we descend to the soul world, and experience around us the forces we have had in our soul before. However, now we have new forces, new spiritual energy, so to speak.¹²¹ And the teacher, let us say, Moses—and Jesus to some extent—who was important to us in the past life comes and prepares us for the new incarnation.¹²²

Destiny will lead us to our new parents, and we will be born as small children on earth. We will get a physical body as a present from nature and bring the good and bad tendencies determined by our karma in order to work with their help and create better outcomes. This is how the history of a human spirit passes through the ages. The human spirit is clothed in a new body time after time and goes towards the perfection that has been set for him as a spiritual being.¹²³

xxiv Rudolf Steiner provides a complementary perspective to this: the individual gathers the forces needed to build up his physical body when coming back to earth from heaven through the planetary world (Steiner, 1978, 265–80). —*Editors’ note.*

VII. Eternal Life

Life after death offers a heavenly bliss for a human being, but this is merely transitory. The purpose of life is not a heaven in afterlife; instead, it is eternal life. According to the great religions, this goal can be achieved in earthly life. P. E. describes a way to eternal life from the point of view of esoteric Christianity.

We usually view eternal life as continuous life after death. Christianity talks about eternal bliss, and we are told that a person can have that in the afterlife. In most cases this is thought to take place after the final judgment. Hence, the notion of eternal life has characteristics of continuity and permanence.¹²⁴

However, eternal life is not the same as the afterlife, although it is usually understood that eternal life has to do with things following death. Here in Christendom it is believed that after this brief earthly existence a person will be awakened in the final judgment and then eternal life begins.¹²⁵

If we think that eternal life is the same as eternally continuing duration and eternal existence, then it is impossible that it would have a beginning in time. How could something eternally continuing have a beginning in time in any way? Then there would be many eternities instead of one eternity, which is outside of all time. That an eternity begins for a being is illogical. There cannot be many eternities, only one eternity. Hence, the being who is eternal must participate in eternity and cannot begin his eternity in time. It is impossible that we would be temporal while alive and eternal after we die. Either we are temporal beings in life and in the afterlife, or we are eternal already while alive and in the afterlife as well.

In fact, when we looked at the afterlife, we noticed that we are both temporal and eternal beings. We have a temporal part, which first lives in this visible world, then dies and moves to the invisible world, lives there for its time, and then fades away and dies. The personality that we recognize as our self in the visible life cannot be eternal. It has its beginning in time, when we become self-aware. This does not start immediately, but later on when we start calling ourself "I." At first we call ourselves by a name and have only partial awareness. Only when we have an awakened consciousness during childhood can we say that a human life has started in us; it has started in time and it will finish in time by the necessity of nature. It does not end when the visible body dies; instead it lives on for a long time after our death. It will live until it ends in an indescribable happiness. Our temporal life always ends in the greatest bliss and happiness. It ends our temporal life, and our personality fades away because it receives a foretaste by eternity. It does not last, as it knows that there can be only one eternity that is eternal; this is something our personal consciousness cannot withstand. It is said in a religion that God is like a living fire, and a human being cannot look at God in the eyes, or look at God's living fire without fading away and dying. When the person sees God, that divine fire, he must burn and fade away. This happens to every human being in the afterlife. When his life in heaven comes to an end, he enters such a great state of happiness that he knows God, God's presence, God's fire, and that he cannot bear. Then he really dies, fades away. However, there is something in him that does not fade away. It is his eternal spirit, which he has not known during his life. If he has not known it, he definitely dies. As a personal being, he is not immortal; we should not think that as the personal beings we are right now [on earth], we would be immortal. It is too egoistic and

individualistic a thought. On the other hand, people think this way in Christendom.¹²⁶

In fact, this is the first great teaching that we receive when we really investigate the afterlife. We are mortals, but eternal life exists. Although eternal life and divine life exist, we cannot participate in them. Do we then have any opportunity to partake in divine life? However, we are specifically promised eternal life by our Christian doctrine. How can we understand that we cannot partake of it? It is an illustrative fact that, regardless of our beliefs, when we watch a person as a dying being in the afterlife state, he fades away. He does not withstand living forever. However, we ask, if all religions promise eternal life, can't he then live forever? All religions say that a human being has to reach eternal life and that a human being is an immortal being and that there is indeed an undying spirit in a human being that is his innermost self. How can we explain that he is not immortal as this personal, conscious being? The explanation, naturally, is that he does not know the eternal spirit in himself. He has not been able to unite with it. Is this union possible? When we think more closely about what all religions—at least their wise founders—have taught, we notice that this is exactly what they have wanted to teach: how to reach eternal life and how to be united with God, the eternal spirit, the perfect human being, the image of God—however we wish to call it—which resides within us. All religions have shown the way leading to eternal life, so we ask, does that path exist in reality?¹²⁷ How can we live eternal life while being here on earth?¹²⁸

We have to create a personality that elevates this “I” consciousness to Christ, to spirit. Then that personality is saved and the individual moves on in eternal life, in perfection. Saving the personality begins with the pursuit for perfection. And Jesus has shown us the way and the method in his five

commandments in the Sermon on the Mount:¹²⁹ 1. Do not be angry in your heart. 2. Do not be impure even in your thoughts. 3. Do not take oaths. 4. Do not resist evil. 5. Do not wage war, but love all men.¹³⁰

When we meditate on these commandments, and above all when we start following them, we notice that they are not merely negative, although this is what they are in their outer appearance. We do not understand their internal life before we start following them. The beginning of following these commandments is by starting to observe these negatives: do not be angry, do not be impure in your thoughts etc. This is the beginning of the endeavor. When a person has put his soul into these commandments in this negative way, so that he really starts to keep an eye on himself during day and night, even in his sleep, he will not lose his temper, not in his deeds, words, or thoughts. He then enters, we could say, some kind of forecourt of holiness and purity. The more he is strengthened in not getting angry within himself, the more a great force of goodness toward all beings is strengthened within him. This is the positive side of this commandment, and then he realizes that the positive side of this commandment is infinite, since when could a person ever become completely good? Even Jesus said, "Only God is good. There is no other good than God." God is infinite in His goodness. We cannot think of ourselves as being good; we are just growing to become the channels of God's goodness.

The negative side of the second commandment is that we cannot be impure in our thoughts. At first we start to follow this formally. We must make sure that we do not commit crimes in our thoughts, let alone in words or deeds. A thought is the father of the deed, so if we do not commit crimes in our thoughts, we do not commit in crimes in our deeds. That is why Jesus's commandments go into the heart of the matter

when they stress one's thoughts. We cannot help the fact that thoughts can enter our consciousness, but we can ignore them and not welcome them as friends, and we must turn them away immediately.¹³¹

When we have followed the third commandment, "Do not take an oath," we have first followed it in a negative way. We begin to view what an honest and truthful life really is like, what it is like within ourselves, in our words and thoughts. Then an amazing insight opens for us as we advance in truth and honesty. And we can experience that only by advancing in truth and honesty can we advance in knowledge and wisdom. The inner eye of a person cannot open unless his external eye has become honest and truthful so that it sees the truth. When we see the truth with our external eye, then the internal eye or eyes can start to open, and nature will show us complete different worlds. Then we desire only truth for no other reason than out of love towards all, love for everything. It is the positive side of that commandment.

The fourth commandment is "Do not resist evil, never commit violent acts; do not use violence to prevent others from being evil!" When we attempt to follow this commandment at first, in its negative form, it too will open its positive aspects: a miraculous peace will grow within us; we will become invincible, one could say. We will become so peaceful that another person cannot be restless or violent, or can rage in our presence.¹³²

The fourth commandment also concerns our self-education, the internal aspiration. P. E.'s interpretation of not resisting evil means, among other things, that we do not consider hardship, insults, and humiliation as evil, but veiled blessings that provide us with an opportunity to be freed from our old karma and teach us to love.^{xxv}

xxv Ervast, *The Divine Seed*, 69.

The life of a human being has to become such that he overcomes evil without resisting it. What is its secret? The secret is that when we say “evil” something within us says, “Resist it!” But as long as we say, “Oh, you, old friend, are trying to help me”—then we will win. Let us not say that what is animal in us is evil. It is a remnant from our past and at the same time a friend who gives us energy. It is a lot wiser to say, “Well, there is power; I am a human being and I will make use of that energy, not to ruin myself or others, of course.” I do not want to claim that it will be easy and will be accomplished over a short period of time. It will take years, decades, and centuries. The point in not resisting evil is that all evil is good: evil is a veiled blessing when we conquer it.¹³³

At first, the fifth commandment is negative as well: “Do not hate your enemies, or other nations!” or as we could practically say, “Do not wage war, but love everybody.” Jesus himself has proclaimed the positive side of the commandment: “Love thine enemy!” for when a person refuses even to think about killing or hating another nation, the positive side—love, and understanding towards all—will grow in him.¹³⁴

Jesus Christ says, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so also you must love one another.” His whole life doctrine is included in that great commandment of love, as we all concede. And the more we try to follow Jesus and to evolve in knowing the Heavenly Father, the more clearly we see that the Father is love, God is love, and eternal life is in love. That is why eternal life does not begin after death: eternal life is everlasting, independent of time. It is life in divine love that forgets itself and asks nothing for itself; it thinks of no evil but loves with all the strength of its heart. Eternal life is in love, be it love in this or in another world. Where there is love, there is eternal life.¹³⁵

When we look at all these commandments together and think about how they differ from the old commandments and advice, we conclude that they do not appeal to our human, personal understanding; instead, they appeal to something inside and beyond us; they appeal to that which we are used to calling the higher self. These commandments appeal to pure humanness in us and make us at once human beings. We are no longer selfish personalities, but we are and we must be human beings. If we fulfill these commandments and learn how to understand them, we have at the same time understood what a human being is all about, as they appeal to our innermost self. They are not the kind of commandments that teach us to educate ourselves externally, for they come from heaven and eternal life and tell us this is how things are in eternal life. If a person in this Christendom—after seeking for truth and after finding Jesus's commandments—starts living according to them as a disciple of Jesus Christ, this person surely proceeds on this path and is surely allowed to experience eternal life. Eternal life descends within him again and again. The more intensively he adheres to Jesus's commandments, the more often he is allowed to experience eternal life and becomes lifted to heaven in his spirit.¹³⁶

Epilogue

In Honor of Death

If I were a poet, I would sing a hymn of praise to you, Death. Singers have not thanked you. You have been called the last enemy of man, the wages of sin, and the destroyer of joy. People are afraid of you, have a dread of you, and try to avoid you. But I would like to tune the harp in praise of you, O Hades.

For I believe that you are the best and most faithful friend of mine and of all my human brothers. You are true, straight, and honest. You are a high-minded and wise friend. Like a father, you know what is good for us and benefits us; you don't flatter us, but you want to help us, and you tell frankly when we have been mistaken. With a strong hand you show us the way and say, "Well, through this you must go."

I would like to sing the praises of you, O Death, for you are to us human children a kind friend with a gentle eye. You will tell us beautiful fairy stories, and you take us to walk all around the Eden of our dreams. You are like the mother who takes us into her arms with gladness and pride when we have followed the teachings of the father with care. You are the delight of our hearts and the smile after all sorrows. In you all the tones will merge into imposing harmony.

In honor of you I would like to tune my tongue, O Hades, for when you come, you don't come like the skeletonlike Grim Reaper, but you will come like the noble herald of the God, like "one of these little ones" who beg us not to forget the eternal law of life, which has mercy on us all.

For greater than you, Death, is the secret of eternal life. Deeper than hell, higher than heaven is the kingdom of God, which is purity of heart, forgiveness, and love. This is the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is eternal peace and joy, which dwells in the hearts of those who profess its merciful compassion. It is higher and wider than the heavens of the brilliant ones and the wise men of the world, and it comes to the little ones, who are longing for it to draw closer.

I thank and praise you, Hades, because you remind us of all this, and by your coming every time, you teach us to conquer you. For finally we too shall inherit the kingdom, about which is written, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."¹³⁷

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- 2 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 35.
- 3 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 36.
- 4 *Ruusu-Ristin syntysanat Suomessa*, 56–57.
- 5 *Ruusu-Ristin syntysanat Suomessa*, 60.
- 6 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 39–40.
- 7 *Toimittajalta, II*, 126, 127.
- 8 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 46.
- 9 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 47.
- 10 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 60.
- 11 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 63.
- 12 *Ruusu-Ristin syntysanat Suomessa*, 76.
- 13 *Teosofisia muistelmia*, 63–64.
- 14 *Ruusu-Ristin syntysanat Suomessa*, 79–81.
- 15 Sven Krohn, ”Henkilökohtaisia muistojani Pekka Ervastista,”
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- 16 *Suuri seikkailu*, 43–44.
- 17 *Mitä on kuolema?* 123–128.
- 18 *Uni ja kuolema*, 57–58.
- 19 *Pekka Ervast vastaa kysymyksiin*, 326.
- 20 *Uni ja kuolema*, 58.
- 21 *Kuka auttaa meitä kuolemassa*, 80–81.
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- 24 *Kuka auttaa meitä kuolemassa*, 81–82.
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- 27 *Elämää kuoleman jälkeen*, 16–17.
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- 37 *Kalma ja tuoni*. Lecture 17.3.1918.
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