



From Karma
to
Grace







From Karma to Grace

The Power of the Fruits of the Spirit

John Van Auken



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by John Van Auken

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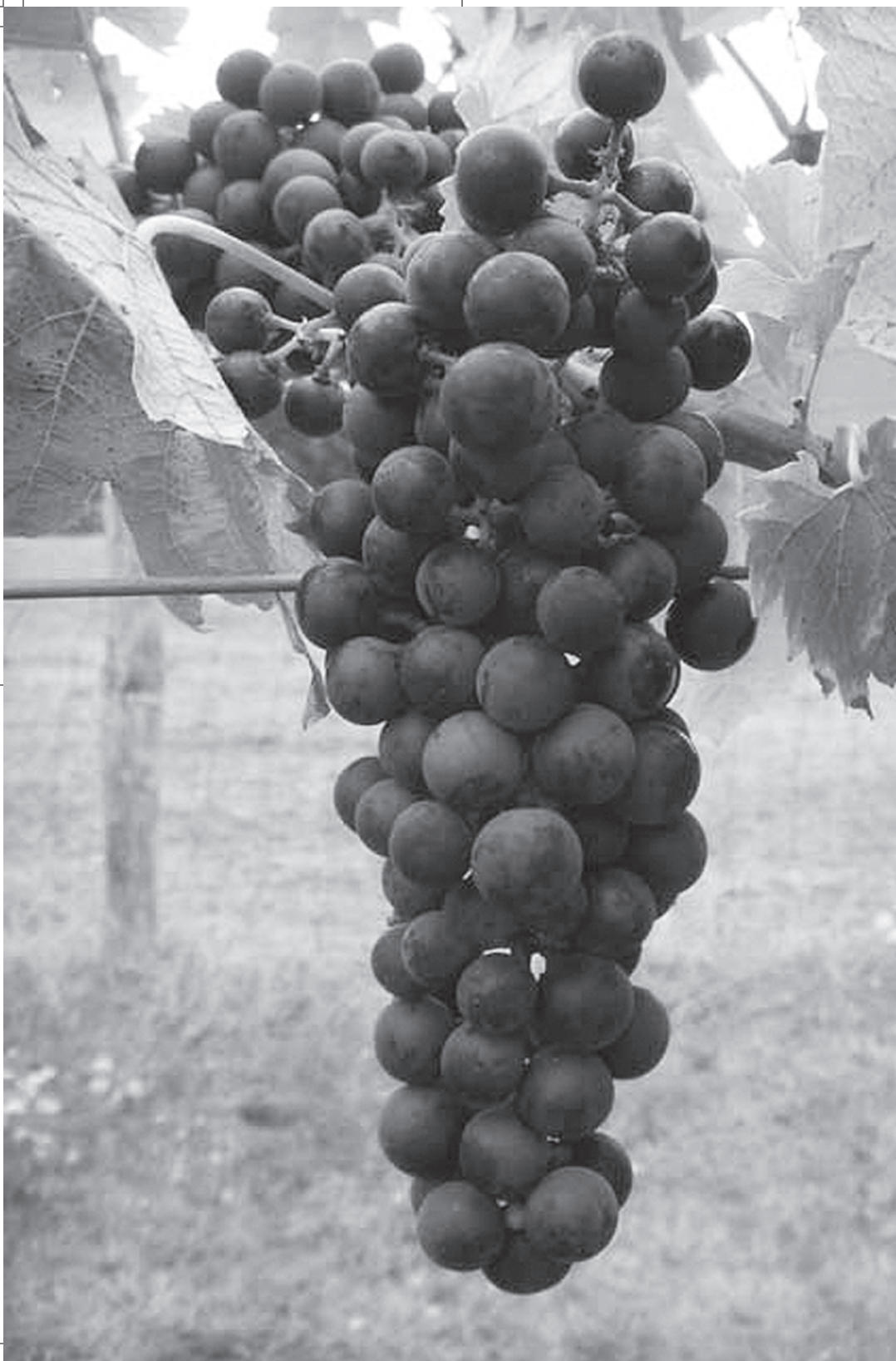
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1

Karma



*The word karma originated in the ancient Indo-Aryan language of Sanskrit, which is the religious language of Hinduism and Buddhism. It comes from a root word that means “to do, to make.” The broader meaning of this term is that thoughts, spoken words, and physical actions create a response in both the macrocosm of the outer life and the microcosm of the inner life of an individual soul. Even the most private thoughts, words, and actions generate a reaction as well as make an impression on an ethereal film of the collective consciousness, what is referred to as the *akasha* in Hinduism, which is comparable to the Western concept of the “Book of Life” for each soul and, in metaphysical circles, often called the akashic record.*

Interestingly, when Edgar Cayce would enter a deep, meditative trance to read the akashic record, he explained that thoughts were as real as actions, so much so that he had to strain to determine whether the soul seeking the reading actually *did* something or just *thought* about



doing it. In the greater scheme of life, especially soul life, thoughts are as real as actions. Here are two of Cayce's readings on this matter:

The Mind—which is of the earth earthy but of heaven heavenly, and divine—is the *builder*, and so the thoughts may become crimes or miracles depending upon how they are applied in the experience of each soul in its sojourn through any period of activity in the earth. But, as has been intimated, know that the thought of a soul influences the sun, the moon, and all the heavenly hosts; for as you do unto the least of your brethren you do it unto the Creator. O that men would learn, would become conscious, that as you think of those—even though they beguile you, though they deride you, though they tamper with your own purpose—as you do unto them, you do it unto God. EC 315-4

For mind is the builder and that which we think upon may become crimes or miracles. For thoughts are things and as their currents run through the environs of an entity's experience these become barriers or steppingstones. EC 906-3

In Hinduism (originating approximately 7000 years ago, or millions of years ago, according to the *Ramayana*), the word *karma* first appears in the Rig Veda, the oldest portion of the Vedas, which are the religious texts of Hinduism. Veda means "knowledge." Rig Veda means "knowledge in verse" and is a collection of poetic hymns written some 3700 to 3300 years ago. In the Rig Veda, karma means "religious sacrifice." Curiously, there is no suggestion in the Rig Veda of its later meaning as a reactive force affecting a soul's character and circumstances. There is some indication of this in the Upanishads (another portion of the Vedas, written roughly 2800 to 2400 years ago). Here it is taught that action creates tendencies in a soul, which then produce further action, and as a result, further reaction, or karma. According to these teachings, the soul's subtle body (the "vehicle of consciousness"; *sukshma sarira* in Hinduism) carries the seeds of karma, and the physical body and world are the fields in which the reaction is experienced. Hence more karma is also created, which generates a recurring cycle of birth, death, and re-



birth for the soul. The soul becomes caught up in a cycle of action and reaction.

Vedanta (another part of the Vedas) and Yoga (six distinct Hindu philosophies) speak of three kinds of karma: (1) karma to be experienced during the present lifetime, (2) the karma sown in the present life and reaped in a future life, and (3) latent karma, or the carry-over of karma to be experienced at some point when the stimulation is just right to bring it to the surface again. Liberation (*moksha*) is freedom from karma. When liberation is attained, the great storehouse of latent karma is burned up and present-life karma is resolved. The liberated soul creates no new karma and, at death, having no more karma, is no longer caught in the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth.

The idea that latent karma can be dissipated in the fire of enlightenment is fundamental to this book's intention. The fire we are speaking of is that which cleanses consciousness, purges negative habits, and purifies intentions. This is not only an Eastern but a Western teaching, also found in Western Scripture and teachings, as exemplified in these quotations:

Our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:29

I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me . . . he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Matthew 3:10

Fire is often a metaphor for the Spirit, especially the cleansing Spirit that burns up karma and its reappearing influences, leaving one renewed and strong. In this book we will study the "Fruits of the Spirit," which are those practices and dispositions that contain the seeds of the Spirit and, when enlivened through application in our daily lives and nurtured in our innermost being, ignite the cleansing Spirit. We will also learn about the magical power of Grace and its role in our soul growth and mental enlightenment.

Fundamental to the teaching of karma is the responsive nature of



thought, word, and action. The motivating influence generating thoughts, words, and actions creates a corresponding response. If the intention is in harmony with the Creative Forces, then so-called good karma results. If the intention is destructive or out of harmony with the universal life force and the ideal pattern for all life, then bad karma results.

It is important to understand that the response is neutral; in other words, it is without passion. A simple universal law governs it: Whatever we do with our free will—in thought, word, or action—comes back upon us. The response is not motivated by retribution or punishment but by the Grace of the Divine to educate and enlighten. The law is intended to help the doer better grasp his or her effect upon self, others, and the whole of creation.

We express our knowledge of this law when we say “what goes around comes around” and “be careful what you wish for.” In our sacred Scriptures we find: “An eye for an eye”; “As you sow, so shall you reap”; and “With what measure you measure, so shall it be measured to you.” These sayings articulate the law of karma. Even scientists observe that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

The law is unavoidable and immutable. Jesus taught that not one jot will be erased from the law and warned that those who teach otherwise are deceiving themselves and others. (Matthew 5:18)

There is an old saying whose origin is lost in antiquity, but Tryon Edwards, a theologian in the 1800s, republished it. It reveals the creative process of karma:

Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.
Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

We are what we have thought, spoken, and done. Our destiny is the karma of our previous thoughts, words, and actions; but more than that, it is a habit pattern that we are building. And, as with most habits, it will be difficult to stop. Our motivations, expectations, and concerns



(even fears) shape our inner and outer reality. Fortunately, the law is ever in effect, and therefore we can change our tomorrows and our character by engaging better thoughts, words, and actions today.

Karma does not always result as an immediate response. It may lie dormant within the heart and mind and on an etheric fabric of the collective consciousness until some stimulant awakens it. Often this response comes in a future experience and new setting, possibly even with different souls from those with whom it originated, although it is more likely that they are the same souls but with new personalities in different settings. The outer self often feels unfairly put upon, having no memory of the origins of these responses, habits, and character traits. And although they are innate, the outer self rarely comprehends their presence, because karma belongs to the deeper self, the soul self. In one respect, karma is deep memory, within both the individual and the collective memory. Since the outer mind is often focused on current situations, it does not see the whole of soul life and soul karma—it lives on this side of a veil that separates inner consciousness from physical consciousness. In some ways this is a blessing because it removes the weight of guilt, fear, and self-condemnation. In other ways it is painful and confusing because the outer self cannot understand why these things are happening and where its poor habits come from. But the lesson to be learned is not so much for the outer, earthly self but for the inner, eternal soul, and the soul learns through the senses of the outer self. Of course, if the outer and inner selves have made progress toward cooperation and reunion, then both may know and understand what is going on—and the veil that separates them becomes less opaque.

When thinking of karma, it is important to realize that its influence is not only in the deeper consciousness but also inside the physical body, in the “mind” of the body’s cells, tissues, and organs, or what is often called “body memory.” The incarnating soul brings its karma with it and distributes its influence throughout the body as it enters at birth into the nervous systems (cerebrospinal and sympathetic-parasympathetic, which correspond to the Yogic sushumna and ida-pingala) and the endocrine glands (which correlate with the chakras and lotuses). The incarnating soul influences the genes of the physical body, turning on certain genes while leaving others off, and this may change throughout