You Decide

7.4 Robert Strong, age fifty-seven, emigrated from "Arabia" to China and then to Rochester, New York, three years later. The defendant articulated the three central beliefs of his religion as "cosmetic consciousness, mind over matter and psysiomatic psychomatic consciousness." He contended that "mind over matter" empowered a "master" or leader to lie on a bed of nails without bleeding, walk through fire, and perform surgical operations without anesthesia. He also claimed that on countless occasions he had stopped a follower's heartbeat and breathing and had plunged knives into the individual's chest without injuring the person. The defendant performed this ceremony on Kenneth Goings, a recent recruit to the religion, and the wounds from the hatchet and three knives that Strong inserted proved fatal. One of Strong's followers testified that the defendant had previously performed this ritual without causing injury. Was Strong "guilty only of the crime of criminally negligent homicide?" See *People v. Strong*, 37 N.Y.2d 568 (1975).

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