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MORE ON IMAGE-FINDING: A SUMMARY

Greetings in the name of the Lord. I bring you blessings, my dear friends. Blessed is this hour.

This lecture continues a series that was started some time ago. For the benefit of those who missed the preceding lectures in this series, I would like to say a few words about the spiritual work at this stage on the path of purification.

What does purification mean in its true sense? It means the elimination of every current and attitude in the soul that is contrary to divine law. These currents can not merely be regarded as sinful but also as causes of suffering and personal disadvantage to whoever violates the laws, even when this violation happens unconsciously.

We are not concerned in this group with wrong actions, or even crimes. All of you, without exception, know what the proper action is, and most of the time you try your best to perform only proper actions. But none of you are as yet able to control your emotions, to understand their hidden meaning and to recognize how these emotions have influenced your life.

Many of you constantly doubt God's justice because you have to endure so much suffering while you are trying your best to be good and decent. You may think of others whose ethical standards are infinitely lower than your own and yet they seem to fare better. You do not understand the reason for this, nor the "justice." The reason is that in the unconscious the personality creates reactions and conclusions that assume a rigid form. We call this rigid form an "image." The image consists of certain impressions from which general conclusions have been drawn. These not only cause a chain reaction within your soul, but eventually they also control and direct your outer life. This happens even though -- and because -- the image is unconscious. On this path we are concerned with seeking out the wrong images that the human soul harbors. There are practically no exceptions to this rule unless we think of the very few purified beings who come to this earth in order to fulfill a mission.

In the two previous lectures I started to indicate how the images can be found. This cannot be an easy process, for what dwells in the unconscious is hidden from conscious awareness. I have given you methods to bring these unconscious images to the surface. This, my friends, is the only way to control your life to some extent.

Some people -- often those who are devoutly religious -- think that they must accept any difficulty as a sign of humility. This is true only to the extent that they have accepted the law that they violated. The willingness to accept a difficulty, recognizing one's own responsibility instead of vaguely blaming the "injustice of the law," constitutes true humility, my dear ones. True humility

cannot be a completely passive state, which has just as little to do with humility as outright rebellion. True humility is passive only inasmuch as it accepts the temporary state of suffering, understanding that it is self-inflicted; but it is also completely active in the willingness to work, to overcome, to fight, and to recognize self-responsibility for all suffering in the most direct way possible. This is a good example of harmonious interplay between the active and the passive currents.

So you cannot sit with your hands in your lap, waiting for things to change, instead of changing yourself from the inside out. You have the power to change whatever mishap occurs in your life. You have the power to alter your life completely, but not if you merely change superficially, by trying to alter only your actions. You can change your life only if you search first for the inner causes, the wrong conclusions; in short, your images.

Before you can change anything, you must understand what in you brings all the suffering. Only then will you gradually be able to reeducate your emotions, dissolve your images and create new, productive forms in your soul that correspond to divine law. But you must comprehend fully that this wonderful possibility cannot come to you cheaply. It is worth every effort, every conceivable sacrifice, for then you truly master yourself. If you are willing to do this, the help will be given to you. But do not expect that God will change your life for you. God has given you free will, and it is up to you to find out first what these wrong images are and then, with the methods, the help and the guidance I am giving you, it becomes possible to change them.

During the search and the ensuing change, you need the right kind of humility to accept the unhappiness you have produced without getting angry at yourself for still being imperfect, and you need to vigorously and actively direct yourself into the channel of self-knowledge. You have to learn to accept on all levels of your emotions that you are imperfect at this moment.

I have said this often, my friends, but I want to make it quite clear, that although you all know consciously that you are fallible, your emotions do not know it. In your emotions you want to be perfect, and when you discover an imperfection that seems new to you, everything in you revolts against the recognition. One of the many symptoms of this revolt is guilt. When you approach your own inner, hidden images -- the causes of your suffering, the causes of all the repetitive patterns running through your life -- you have to anticipate coming across inner misconceptions that will first give you an unpleasant sensation. To encounter them with a feeling of guilt will get you nowhere. Realize that guilt is really the rejection of the state in which you find yourself at this time, an unwillingness to accept yourself as you are.

When you feel uncomfortable doing this work, ask yourself, "What do I feel?" Often you are not even aware that your emotional reaction is guilt. And if you are, you do not realize what the feeling of guilt really means. In fact, it is often confused with humility and repentance. This knowledge of what to expect, this healthy attitude, this analysis of your feelings will lead you to a major recognition.

Formulate the feelings. Be aware that the unpleasant reaction often occurs before you are aware of what the recognition actually is. The formulation of your feelings into concise thought is a major part of the work on this path, my friends. I cannot stress this enough. When you do this, you will find that you feel guilty at having erred. And then ask yourself again, "Why do I feel guilty of being fallible, of making mistakes, of having faults?" The answer must invariably be, "Because I

wish to be more than I am, more perfect, more highly evolved. Something in me does not accept my own ignorance or selfishness or my desire to find the easy way out." If you analyze your reactions this way, you will facilitate matters greatly.

And now some further advice about finding your images. The task is hard. I am not trying to make it easier for you. You could rightly be suspicious if you were to hear that the greatest and most perfect treasure can come easily. But your efforts, as many of my friends have already found out and can confirm, will be well rewarded. Nothing will give you as great a power, as great a feeling of security as surging ahead on this road, at least after the beginning stages.

First you will gather a vast amount of isolated information about your inner reactions. By letting your emotions come to the surface and putting them into concise words, instead of pushing them aside and covering them up, you will find things you have never been aware of. They will often surprise you. These isolated bits of information may not connect for quite a while. You will not know what to do with them. You will be inclined to say, "What next? How does it help me to have found out that I actually feel this way when I thought that my motives were different?"

You must not be dismayed. On the contrary, finding the pieces of information will be extremely useful, even if at the beginning they do not add up. Continue on searching, and you will receive the necessary help. Again I emphasize, no one is capable of doing this work alone. That is impossible. But whoever is willing, will receive help and ways will be found to bring such a willing person to another member of this group so a team can be formed.

If you continue the work, you will see that all the isolated pieces of information will connect. You will find a chain reaction, a vicious circle in yourself. One reaction leads to another until the circle closes. When you have found several such vicious circles, you will have made a major step forward. Slowly but surely you will begin to understand certain things about yourself and your life. But even this is not sufficient. You have merely found the barest structure, the overall plan that will make it a lot easier for you to continue. The work of filling in has yet to start. At this point, you will still be unable really to grasp, on all levels of your being, what your life and your conflicts mean and how you have caused them. You may grasp some perhaps, but not all.

Some of you, my friends, have already arrived at this stage, so I would like to discuss how to proceed from here. Those for whom this material is new may not be able to understand what I am saying, but something might still reach them as an echo in their souls. My words may open the door a little wider, so that the new friends, too, may cross the threshold from dependency on their unconscious motives to their independence as free children of God.

My first advice, my dear friends, is, once you have found some of these vicious circles: Put into words concisely the wrong conclusions they contain. Write them down, so that they cannot dissolve. Then you can start meditating on how these wrong conclusions have influenced your life. For you know that nothing is so powerful as the images. You know that if desires are contained in the images that contradict your most cherished conscious desires, the image-desires overrule the outer ones, no matter how strong the latter may be. Your images draw you into circumstances that correspond to them; they draw the people and the circumstances to you. Therefore, it should not be too difficult for you to understand, when you formulate the wrong conclusions, what was and is responsible for your problems in life.

It goes without saying that you should keep your lists of problems and conflicts in front of you in black and white. First, find a common denominator in all these conflicts. You will not yet know what caused them, how they came about. But once you have found these vicious circles, further search will uncover a single common denominator.

Once you have made this list, you will probably be puzzled to find that certain problems have recurred. They may have taken various forms, but there is always a repetitive pattern. This is the first indication that an image is involved. If a problem occurs just once, it does not necessarily have anything to do with an image. But be careful in judging that. You should be able to understand clearly how the wrong conclusions that have become conscious have affected and caused your various conflicts. This process should be painstakingly undertaken by all my friends who work together. This will indicate where the breaking point of the image lies.

Once the wrong conclusion is clear in your mind and you have recognized how it has influenced your life, start to reverse the circle and the conclusion into its opposite -- at this point in theory only. For, of course, emotionally you are not yet capable of living according to the right reactions. But if you face your wrong conclusions by feeling them, by reexperiencing all the emotions consciously, you can then see what the right conclusion would be. If you will meditate on this daily, eventually your reactions will change.

It is not sufficient that your thinking changes; your thinking might have been absolutely correct long before you ever found out anything about an image. The important thing is that your emotions change. The wrong conclusions always contain several of your faults, some of which you may be aware of, but you have not been aware of how they played into your images. Your images may contain a whole nucleus of faults. But although you should not look for your faults when you search for the images -- for the unconscious does not like a moralizing attitude -- at this point, once the bare structure of the image has become conscious, you should see which of your faults also play a role in it.

One of the universal elements of images is fear. If you analyze how a particular fear is connected with your personal faults, if you also understand where your ignorance lies and the resulting wrong conclusion, you will have again advanced a major step toward the dissolution of your images.

There are several generalizations that apply to images. One is that human beings are afraid of being hurt, afraid of things going against their will. Because of this fear -- which, of course, can exist only because of self-will and pride -- the personality builds defenses. People think that by adopting a certain attitude they will avoid what they fear in life: pain, suffering, disappointment. The error, the wrong conclusion lies in failing to realize that by building these defenses you not only do not avoid the suffering, but it actually becomes worse. To the ignorant lower self the childish and immature side of the personality, the protective measure seems very good and logical. Still, you cannot help but realize how faulty your defense mechanism was when you built your image, if you will think it through consciously, viewing the whole problem from this angle. Not only were you unable to avoid pain, but in the long run it brought you infinitely greater pain than you would have had if you had not built the defenses of this image.

It is very important, my friends, when you reach this stage that you consider your images from this viewpoint. Ask yourself, "Why did I build it? What was the occasion? What did I want to protect myself from? How did it work out in reality? And how would my life work if I did not have this false, protective measure -- this image?"

The answer will always be: There is no iron-clad insurance for warding off pain. You cannot go through life without it. You all know this. Since no ordinary human being is pure, pain is, to some degree, unavoidable. But if you accept life with its pain, always trying to understand what in you called it forth, and you meet it voluntarily, you will not only encounter much less pain, but the pain that is unavoidable will not hurt half as much. Remember that, my friends, and look at your own conclusions, defense mechanisms, and images from this angle: "What did I try to avoid? How well did I succeed?"

Then think about pain a little differently. Try to think about it with a maximum degree of detachment, or with a fresh new outlook. You will all realize that pain is also relative. Fear of pain is always infinitely worse than the pain itself. It is the same with physical pain. If you push against it, if your muscles tense up, an incision will be much more painful than if you relax. There are certain people who have such control over their minds and bodies that they can endure dreadful injuries without feeling any pain. They have learned to accept the oncoming pain without any revolt, giving themselves up to it. Thus they are in such a high state of relaxation that what would ordinarily hurt badly does not hurt anymore. It is exactly the same with pain in the soul. Apart from this, many of your problems and worries would not exist if you understood yourselves and your images.

My dear friends, finding out that you yourself are responsible is a major point of this work. Many misunderstandings of this concept are possible. In the first place, many people think that the concept of self-responsibility eliminates God. They either think that there is a God who directs their lives, and if they suffer, they have to take it on the chin -- or they turn to atheism.

This is not necessary, my dear ones. Self-responsibility represents a burden to you as long as you feel guilt at finding your inner errors. But once you have overcome this error by accepting yourself as you are now, without revolt and anger, without the wrong kind of shame or guilt, as having the courage to be yourself in every respect, then self-responsibility will liberate you. Understanding what in you has caused your problems, your worries, your discontent and unhappiness, will make you stronger than any false security ever could. Whether you have looked for this false security in your relationships with others, in ideas, or in a distorted concept of God does not make any difference. Strength and freedom will come to you long before you are able to change your emotions, your images, or your habitual inner reactions. It will come to you the moment you have fully understood your own causes and effects.

Self-responsibility is crucial in this connection, my dear ones. There is hardly a human being who does not want to avoid it in some way, despite your revolt against your self-inflicted lack of freedom. This conflict can be resolved only by finding out why and how you have curtailed your own freedom, given up self-responsibility in order to choose what seemed like an easier way of life.

The reactions to taking responsibility for one's life vary with each individual. Everyone is made up of different currents, faults, and qualities that interplay differently in different relationships.

So one person may, for the same basic reason, have a completely different reaction than another, although they are both motivated by the desire to escape self-responsibility. And the more you escape this in your inner life, the more chained you become. Straining in these chains, you kick against the world, feeling it unjust, and often even wallow in self-pity while you prevent yourself from breaking the chains.

The first step to freedom is to recognize how, where, and why you have inflicted this dependency on yourself. If you understand your inner motivations and how they have actually brought you more suffering than what you had hoped to avoid, you will become free. So, for the time being, approach image-finding from the angle I have just shown you:

(1) Self responsibility: find out (a) where you have caused your suffering and (b) how it is in your power to change it.

(2) Find out about your fear of being hurt. Realize that this causes all your misery. This excessive fear makes you behave like a person so afraid of death that he commits suicide. That is what you all are doing with your images, my friends. You are so afraid of hurt that you create forms in your soul that bring you more needless hurts than would befall you without your imagined defenses.

My friends, hurt has to be accepted not because God gives it to you but because you have given it to yourself. This, however, should not lead you to revolt against yourself or against the wise law that created the situation. You need to accept that you are imperfect and that you suffer according to the measure of your imperfection. The more you work toward your purification, the more you will alleviate the suffering. Among other requirements, that means not expecting a miracle overnight. Understand that you learn also by meeting the pain, by accepting it as long as you are in this stage. The more relaxed you can be in viewing yourself and your suffering, finding out the causes and eliminating them, the faster you will get over it. And then you will have the proper attitude toward pain. Only by accepting pain -- and this is the only healthy way, avoiding both masochism and cringing revolt -- will pain finally cease. When you completely accept pain, you go through it; and only by going through something can you reach beyond it. All the great philosophers of this world teach you that pain and pleasure become one in the absolute; I am showing you the way to reach that state.

You cannot attain pleasure by avoiding pain, but you certainly can by going through it in full understanding of how you yourself produced it. So as to avoid misunderstanding, I emphasize once more that acceptance of pain does not deny your power to avoid it on this path of purification. Quite the contrary. But pain cannot be dealt with superficially; it calls for hard and patient work, going into the depth of your soul. This work demands your best, my friends, for that is the only way you can receive the best of life.

And now to your questions, my dear friends.

QUESTION: You said several times that the cause of sickness is in ourselves. I am meditating on this subject and I can't figure it out. Let's say a disfiguration of a bone....

ANSWER: You must differentiate between karmic sickness and non karmic sickness. This does not apply only to physical sickness but to every other hardship in life -- and hardship is always disease, spiritually speaking. The technicalities of cause and effect work the same way in karma as within a single lifetime. In both cases it is up to you to eliminate the negative causes.

There are, however, certain difficulties you cannot overcome in this life; you just have to bear them. That does not mean that you cannot eliminate the causes -- that has to be done at one time or another anyway -- but the effects have to be borne.

Other, nonkarmic effects can be eliminated. A karmic debt manifests as a single event. An effect that can be dissolved usually recurs constantly, in a pattern. This does not mean that the causes were not started in former lives and are thus karmic too, technically speaking. But you can find a starting point in this life, and by following through this work, you often can change your life and eliminate your conflicts. Besides, it is not even necessary for you to know. Since it is actually quite the same, and any ill-effect must be dissolved by you in any event, you should approach your purification in the same spirit, whether it concerns a karmic debt or whether it applies to causes started in this life, perhaps with a seed you have brought over from former incarnations.

The definite knowledge that a certain state is karmic would only make you lazy instead of doing the necessary work, no matter what the cause.

I can safely say that very few of my friends have karmic circumstances that cannot be changed. Here is a room full of people, and not one person is completely happy. There is not one person who would not want some kind of change -- perhaps not even a pronounced change, a conscious "I want this instead of that." You may feel an unhappiness, unrest, disharmony, fear, insecurity, loneliness, yearning. All of you, my friends, including those who will read these words, have the power to change this if you want to. And if your unconscious immature nature were not so unreasonable that it wished for effortless change, you would be much further advanced.

It is my advice for all those who are still struggling on this threshold to ask themselves, "What do I really want? What does my uncertainty, my indecision actually mean? Doesn't it mean that I revolt against unhappiness and I wish for change but I am unwilling to bring it about myself?" Anyone who has this resistance should pose that question.

If you can answer, you have attained the first victory because you will then see what an unreasonable and childish streak lives within you. For that is what you actually desire. Yes my friends, that is what all of you would want, that the work be done for you, that the dear God in Heaven give it to you.

QUESTION: One of my students asked: What is more important, knowledge in the form of general knowledge, science, knowledge of the universe, the manifested world, or emotional self-knowledge? Clearly, emotional self-knowledge is more important. But what do you have to say to those spiritual aspirants who in some way disregard science? They claim that spiritual development alone would bring the highest good without it being integrated with the knowledge of the manifested world.

ANSWER: There are many whose call it is to concentrate mainly on their spiritual development and they fulfill their task by doing so. There can be no doubt about it. Certainly this is the most important thing for all human beings. But it is a mistake to transfer their own task on all others, or to make a general rule of it.

The unfoldment of the universal forces is manifold and varied. Nothing must be curtailed. Many have different tasks: one in the arts, others in science, and so on. Oneness must eventually result from such diversity throughout Creation. The ideal case would be that scientists, artists, or whoever else is contributing to the final oneness, follow their own spiritual development while they simultaneously worked on their particular talent and task. This certainly can be done. In fact, their work would increase many times in quality and creativity if it were combined with purification and self-development. There are many talented human beings who have not yet progressed that far, however. They may have a great talent in one direction and eventually they contribute with it to the unfoldment of the spiritual forces, even though the connection cannot always be discovered right away. In a roundabout way scientific improvement must lead to the same spiritual reality as self-knowledge, no matter how much science may be abused temporarily. Therefore it is a mistake to advocate one's own inclination for all.

So some human beings may combine their spiritual development with science, others with an art, still others perhaps in the kitchen, in nature, and so on. In much later stages all these will become one, but this oneness can never be accomplished if you are not first one with yourself.

You have often heard the expression "to be one." How can you follow this through in practice? By this work of image-finding. It will be much easier to understand how you are not "one" at this time when you find your images. You will then see how your intellect, your conscious layers, are convinced of your good motives because of the rationalizations you have concocted for yourself. But when you dig deeper you will find out that your reactions and desires take an entirely different direction. So you are split in several respects.

If you cannot become one within yourself -- and that can be done only in this work -- then how can you become one in all the divine manifestations much later? First things must come first.

There are now several thoughts in this room: "Why should it be possible to purify only in this way? There are many people who do not know anything about images, yet they also develop." True, my friends, but in the last analysis it always comes back to this: No matter what period of history, what part of the earth you live in, no matter what names are chosen, the idea always remains the same: to find how you deviate in your unconscious from your conscious mind.

Those who do not take this wonderful opportunity now cannot escape this work at a later time. Granted, the same purification is possible in the spirit world and by coming back incarnation after incarnation with the same images until life teaches the entity and thus gradually dissolves them. But think how much you can save yourself, if you are willing to do this work. Only those who have understood some of their images will have an inkling of how much they would have had to go through until they learned what they have to learn and what they could learn in this search.

You are always so concerned with finding out about your previous incarnations. It would be more useful if you would meditate and think about your future. By knowing your images and

finding and understanding them truly, you can very well figure out what your future incarnations might be if you were not to take this great opportunity.

QUESTION: Could there be a person almost without manifested knowledge who could still reach into the highest sphere?

ANSWER: But of course! Erudition has nothing to do with self-knowledge, unless it serves and helps development. If erudition is an end in itself, it does not enhance spiritual development. Of course, a natural intelligence is necessary for this path but that is something completely different. Erudition is sometimes even more a hindrance than an asset. It may serve as a subterfuge and rationalization, even as an escape.

QUESTION: Also, erudition does not stay with the monad. In other words, it can be discontinued. Is that so?

ANSWER: Certainly. Anything that is superficial is discontinued. Only what reaches the deeper layers of your being remains. That is why it is so important that you integrate your emotions with your superficial outer knowledge, if the latter follows a higher ethical line as is often the case.

That is the whole point on this path. You know that when you die, not only your physical body disintegrates but the outer subtle body as well at some later time. None of it constitutes your real personality. These outer layers are necessary to fulfill your work on this earth plane, therefore they should bring out the inner person. The inner subtle bodies remain. These are the very layers you reach by digging into your emotions.

An entity may be incarnated with a certain amount of knowledge. Your present environment may offer you additional knowledge. It is up to you what you do with it. Do you use it on a superficial level? Then this knowledge will be gone after the outer subtle body disintegrates. But if you use it to integrate your real self with this new outer knowledge for the purpose of development, then the knowledge you are privileged to absorb in this environment will have served its only valuable use.

Every one of my dear human brothers and sisters gathered here: Receive and absorb this divine blessing streaming to you. Let it strengthen you in the one way you need it best, namely to go out and break your prison walls. Be willing to do it and then go to God. But do not expect God to do it for you. God will show you the light of love and help. Courageous and noble is the person who has said yes to this search. And may many more of my dear friends enter this threshold and leave the dark tunnel behind. Joyful blessings of love envelop and penetrate you. Be in peace, my dear ones, be in God.

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