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## HOPE AND FAITH AND OTHER KEY CONCEPTS DISCUSSED IN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Greetings, my dearest friends. God bless every one of you. Blessed is this evening. Blessed are your efforts. Since you have many questions prepared, the short lecture I had planned will be incorporated in the answers. Use them as an extension and amplification of the last two lectures, so that you gain a deeper understanding of them and have the material to overcome certain stumbling blocks. Now, let us begin with your questions.

QUESTION: How do faith in God and hope tie in with this path of self-purification?

ANSWER: Do you see any contradiction between our path and faith in God and hope?

QUESTION: Well, I am referring particularly to the last lecture, when you talked about the different phases in our pathwork. There was a time when there was very little talk about God.

ANSWER: As I have repeatedly said, the reason for that is that people invariably use God to get away from themselves. In reality you can find God only if you come back home to your real self. As I have said so many times, so many true concepts, principles, or attitudes can be distorted and become untrue, although they parade under the flag of their true version. This may be very, very subtle, but it is nevertheless what happens in a self-deception. You can have true faith in God only to the extent that you have faith in yourself. If your lack of faith in yourself is substituted by a faith in God, God becomes a parody, an opiate, a falsity. And faith in yourself is possible only if your real self is liberated; if you have removed inner conflict as well as the illusory crutches that the psyche has built up as a substitute for true self-confidence; if you have freed yourself from real as well as false guilts. If faith in God hinges on all these unrecognized attitudes and beliefs, it is without foundation and not genuine.

The ungentle faith may, on the surface, appear very much like its genuine counterpart. Yet the former is based on escape from unpleasant truth about the self, while the latter is not. True faith comes out of genuine conviction and inner experience; false faith covers fear, insecurity, childish needs. In order to establish true faith all falsity has to be removed. Even things that seem desirable have to be questioned, whether it be faith in God, unselfishness, or love for others. Each of these can be genuine or an evasion, an illusion, under which fear, uncertainty and many other negative attitudes slumber. All this you know, at least in theory. Is it so difficult to understand that to find oneself it is necessary to question everything? If your faith in God is genuine, it will not suffer. If it is utterly healthy, it will not crumble. If it is partly so, only the part that obstructs your real God-experience will crumble.

Is it so difficult to understand that only the real self is capable of productive true experience? And hasn't this work so far shown clearly that finding the real self calls for all of one's efforts, concentration, and will power? How then, is it possible to suspect, even if only vaguely, that our pathwork is opposed to faith in God and hope? Does talking about God determine the inner attitude? Is that a yardstick for one's nearness to God?

In the course of the individual work, every one of you has times when you encounter a streak of hopelessness. I have often said that this has to be treated as a problem in itself. It indicates something important about your unconscious attitudes. It often reflects, in reality, a fear of relinquishing one's false solutions, destructive attitudes, defensive walls -- all of which are supposed to protect you. To give up this "protection" induces fear. To be called upon to do so induces hopelessness because you cannot yet see how to operate without these crutches and cope with life without them. The same attitude is responsible for an inner unwillingness to change. All this exists within the soul, even before it is brought out into daylight. Your superimposed hope masks an inner hopelessness that says, "If I let go of my illusions and false crutches, I have no way of living, therefore my whole life is an illusion." This is what it amounts to. Is that superimposed hope a reality? Is it not much better to face the underlying hopelessness until hope -- as well as faith, or any other productive attitude or feeling -- can grow on firm foundations, without any falsity? To talk about artificial faith and hope as if they were genuine, while in reality they cover up their opposites, would serve only to strengthen rather than destroy the false beliefs. Faith in God and hope, like any other divine aspect, can be well rooted in the personality only if hidden opposites are faced, understood, come to terms with, and thereby dissolved.

If all this is still not understood, if it is assumed that by not talking about the reality of God this path is leading you away from divinity, then there still exists a fundamental confusion -- not so much about this path as such, but rather about the inner self, a confusion about one's own motivations, about the significance of one's reactions. In other words, self-knowledge is still lacking to a vast degree. The confusion arises out of the very problem I am discussing: covering up doubt and hopelessness with a strained faith and hopefulness, rather than having faith and hope in the now and the self -- which is always a byproduct of the genuine article. I do not say that the covering layer does not also consist of genuine faith and hope, but it is strongly mixed with an attempt to squelch doubt, fear, evasion, illusion, hopelessness, unwillingness to change, and many other destructive attitudes.

I repeat: You do not have to talk about God in order to be in God. To face the truth within is being in God -- because God is truth, and without truth there can be no love, no faith, no hope. Truth does not mean the learning of principles, philosophies, theories. You have to begin with yourself. If your own truth remains hidden from your awareness, you have nothing to build on. Every idea you harbor, true as the idea in itself may be, remains shallow. It lacks the dynamic force of experience. And such experience can come into being only when the true self has been liberated. As long as you are not fully aware of your lower self, a real closeness to God is unthinkable because it stands between you and divinity. All the discussions, talks and sermons about God will not bring you one iota closer. Only facing that within yourself that you shy away from will do it. Therefore, faith and hope are not contradictory, nor incompatible, nor just something remotely connected with this path of self-search. They are as integral a part, or rather as inevitable an outcome of this work, as are love or truth.

QUESTION: You have told us about certain activities that cause justified guilt feelings. How can we atone for these real guilts? Could you tell us something about the guilt of omission, when we, through lack of sympathy, commit a sin. I would also like to know about healthy giving up for the sake of others. Is there such a thing as healthy sacrifice?

ANSWER: Of course there is. I have to repeat, once again: hardly any aspect is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy as such. Every aspect exists in a healthy and genuine, as well as in an unhealthy and false way. But let us first go to the first part of your question.

The guilt of omission is not intrinsically different from the guilt of commission. Therefore it is neither easier, nor more difficult to atone. In either case the very same attitudes may prevail: blindness, laziness of thinking and feeling, selfishness, egocentricity, cruelty, vindictiveness, and so on. The first step is always full recognition. That is not as easy as it sounds. You know how it is with recognition: One may be aware of something, but the awareness may be more or less vague; one may be unaware of its full consequence on self and others, of its force, its reason for existence. You may be aware of overambition, for instance, but unaware of the extent. You may not realize that this ambitiousness is actually a vital "solution" by which you try to re-establish your impaired self-respect. If you ignore the fuller impact of and reason for this tendency, you cannot be aware of how this ambitiousness affects others. You are ignorant of how you may have hurt others with it, belittling them, shoving them aside, disregarding their needs, impairing their self-respect and dignity.

All this may be very subtle. It may be more a question of attitude and feeling, rather than of actions, because you may be too inhibited to allow yourself to act out what you feel. It may contradict your idealized self-image. All this has to be found and deeply understood. You have to become fully aware of the scope of such tendencies. What takes place when this happens is what I had intended to speak about tonight, and I will do so now.

As you know, there always is a lot of resistance to facing guilts. Whether they be guilts of commission or omission makes no difference; the same tendencies operate in both. Do not overlook cowardice. One may omit a constructive deed out of cowardice, but one may just as well commit a destructive deed for the same reason. When the consequences are fully understood in that process, one's awareness grows into wide areas. As long as you are unaware of a guilt, or only partly aware of it, you cannot experience the other person's feelings, or even intellectually consider them. The other person is a lifeless unreality for you. When this is the case, how can you repent? If you experience other people as you experience things your heart cannot feel for them. Therefore any effort at atonement is dutiful, something you do because you wish to be good, you wish to obey the law, to be blameless. Restitution becomes as false as the idealized self and therefore as useless and unconvincing.

So do not rush into atonement. It can be meaningful only if you feel you have to do it, not for your sake but for the sake of the other; not merely to free your conscience, but because you actually experience the other's hurt, bewilderment, unfulfillment, belittling. And this increased awareness comes as a result of the fuller and wider understanding of yourself. When this point has been reached, you will know how to atone. Your innermost self will inspire you. Guidance will operate. Again, there are no rules that prescribe the mode of restitution, since no two cases are alike.

It is one of the destructive aims of the psyche to deliberately dull itself not only to one's own pains, but also to those of others. You often speak of people who seem to have no conscience. Compare them with people who are overloaded with conscience. The latter's conscience is bothered by the least and the most unjustified reasons. Both manifestations come from the very same root. The too-troubled conscience substitutes for the inner lack of awareness, the deliberate numbing of feelings, just as the superimposed faith and hope cover their hidden opposites.

In order to fully understand your guilts, you have to learn to pay attention to and register your various reactions, which are symptoms of resistance. There are a few major blocks against recognizing resistance. One is dullness of mind, laziness of thinking and feeling. Going through life blindly, as though wearing blindfolds is a typical symptom of self-alienation. Another is looking for and finding blame in others to cover up your own guilts. What one sees in the other may be true or not, or true in part but exaggerated in importance. Still another is the overconscience, an oversensitivity. It is a reaction of being hurt due to the hurt one has unconsciously inflicted upon others. Ruthless indifference to inflicted hurts is not as different from deep suffering about the discovery of one's lower self as it may appear. This may, at first sight, seem paradoxical, but when you look more closely, you are bound to find a warding-off process in such a suffering reaction. The psyche says, "I cannot take it. I may be all that, I have committed these sins, but it hurts me too much to face it." Such an attitude discloses an attempt to preserve the false picture of saintliness by extreme distress and sorrow, while in reality the psyche did commit sin. This discrepancy has to be evaluated. Once the full impact of the contradictory attitudes is on the surface, it will be apparent that under this exaggerated vulnerability still lies a certain hypocrisy, as well as a warding off against further insight.

If this advice is followed, the hurt will diminish, while a genuine regret will remain, and a healthy desire to gain deeper understanding will not be obstructed by an inner weeping, which is really a kind of self-pity. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to be on the lookout for these reactions and face them. This always has to be done before you can eventually come to the guilts themselves.

We have discussed before that people often build a defense against being hurt. But now we go a step further and learn to observe that hurt as such can be a defense. You artificially overproduce sensitivity in order to evade something. You may evade insight and self-facing, or you may overcome the risk of loving and giving of yourself. This lack of a healthy robustness and resiliency is always an artificial and unconsciously deliberate process. Once you understand this you have won another battle, my friends, for then you will see how you guard yourself against insight and change by being so hurt. Only after such discoveries can you learn why you thought you needed the very attitudes that called the guilts into existence.

All this is necessary if you want to atone. The most fundamental atonement and restitution is change, because repetition of the guilts is then impossible. I do not have to repeat that guilt exists also in emotional reactions, not just in behavior, which one may well have under control. All other atonement is mere detail in comparison to the atonement of inner change, which might also be called rebirth. These details will not present a difficulty. They mean little if the attitudes that have involuntarily inflicted hurts are not changed. And don't forget that what you withhold from others can also cause hurt!

And now to the part of your question about sacrifice. It is so easy to confuse real, healthy, free sacrifice with its unhealthy, compulsive, ungentle counterpart. If sacrifice occurs out of a free spirit of giving, and not in order to appease, whether someone else or your own offended conscience, then it is healthy. But it might be hard for you to tell when it is, and when it is not. Only when you look very deeply into yourself will you know whether or not your sacrificial acts are truly free.

**QUESTION:** Will you tell us something about role-playing? People are forced to take on multiple roles in their lives. One can be a parent and a child, an employee and employer. On top of that, a person has an evolutionary role to play in this life. Does role-playing exist, or is it just one way of viewing humanity?

**ANSWER:** Let us first determine what is meant by the expression "role-playing." Unfortunately, it is true enough that most people do play roles. In this work, our whole discovery of the idealized self-image is that, after all, it is simply the assumption of a role. The tragedy of self-alienation that people unconsciously and so arduously bring about, induces a sense of unreality about everything, even about one's own identity. Hence every function of life seems unreal, like a role you play.

You may actually be a father, yet your self-estrangement makes it appear as though you merely play the role of a father. You may truly be an employer, yet you cannot experience yourself, so you merely play the role of an employer.

Role-playing does not necessarily apply only to a pretense. It goes further than that. One's loss of identity, due to self-alienation, makes a pretense out of a truth, because you are not truly yourself. This may also extend into the areas of human relationships. In your self-alienated states, you may have as genuine a friendship as you are capable of, yet feel yourself playing the role of a friend. You may love a mate as much as possible under the present circumstances and inner conditions, yet experience yourself playing the role of a lover.

If you discover such a reaction in yourself, it represents a valuable clue to further insight and self-understanding, provided it is understood as a symptom. The terms you consistently use have always significance, just as your dreams are an expression of your soul. People who are truly at home within themselves, and therefore within life, would never think in such terms. They will be it, not act it, whatever it is. Since life is so manifold, each person is many things at the same time. Each is genuine, although in each function displays another facet of being. Yet none will be experienced as a role. Observing this feeling may give you a very good clue to how unreal you feel yourself to be, how alienated within and toward others, how in some way you are unconvinced of who you are. In other words, you have not found your true identity. You have not come home. Now, I do not wish to imply that this is the only symptom of self-alienation. There may be many who never consciously feel they are playing a role and yet they are self-alienated. For them, other clues exist.

**QUESTION:** How can one differentiate between hunches and psychic phenomena? What is the borderline?

ANSWER: I do not believe that it is possible, even desirable, to establish a borderline. It is not necessary to put everything into a pigeonhole, a compartment, to label human experience. This only rigidifies life and the experience of life. The dynamic process that life is cannot be defined by borderlines indicating where one manifestation of life begins and another ends. In many instances, what may appear to the human eye as two different life manifestations may, in reality, be the same one, expressing itself in different degrees and forms. There are, of course, crass differences, as, for example, between physical psychic phenomena and trance mediumship, or automatic writing. There one can clearly define the difference. But when it comes to intuitive perception, there is no necessity to define whether it is the one or the other. Just perceive and experience, just try to live the experience. Beware of labeling, it does not help. Be happy to widen your scope of experience and trust in your own faculties that develop through your growth. Your previous insistence on psychic phenomena was also a form of self-alienation, a lack of trust in your own faculties, as well as a means to seek self-importance. Now be content with your intuitive faculties.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask about restitution to the loved ones in the spirit world. Apart from what you told us we can do, can we dedicate certain actions to them, or how can we help them to understand that we have understood, that we want to make restitution?

ANSWER: Whenever thoughts of truth, coming from such insight, prevail, there is no difficulty of communication. Even with people in the body, you will no longer find it difficult to make yourself understood. Why, then, should this present a difficulty, merely because someone has shed the earthly covering, the earth-dress, so to speak? There is even less hindrance, because a condensed mass of matter is removed, and so access to your thought material is more easily available. Thoughts of truth have the power of light, the clarity of crystal-clear water, and therefore penetrate all hindrances. Physical matter is much less of an obstruction -- whether between two people in earth matter or between one in it and one without it -- than are psychological obstructions.

Once you have thoroughly understood your guilts because of your inner renewal and change, your understanding and increased scope of awareness will make you realize, without the shadow of a doubt, if a special action might be indicated, or if restitution should merely be in expressing your thoughts and changed feelings. What counts is your inner understanding and your willingness to change, doing the hard work of overcoming the resistance; constantly being on the lookout for signs that your psyche resists such change; the recognition of your fright of such change, and the cause of it -- where you believe that the destructive attitude is a necessary protection for you in order to cope with life. If you really see all that, go through all the stages that lead you to such deep insight, the change has already begun to take place. And in this change, restitution has already begun, even before you undertake any action of restitution, such as expressing your regret, such as making up in one way or another. In one instance, definite restitutive acts, that perhaps cause you some hardship, will appear as the solution -- and you will do so freely and happily. In another instance, talking to the person, also in spirit, will suffice, provided the sincere will to change has been established and begun to take form by the process of discovering your fear of change.

If you truly want to make good for the wrong that you have inflicted, you definitely will find ways. Sometimes restitution will be made toward a person other than the one you have wronged. But the wronged one will benefit from that as much as if you would have done it toward him or her. For, in truth and in divine reality, there is no difference between person and person. What good you do to one, you do to another. What bad you do to one, you do to another. Jesus Christ has said

these words, and other great spiritual teachers have said it in different words. It is the human being's blindness and error to believe that if you love another and are good to that person, that this loved person will not be affected by the selfishness, or cruelty, or indifference you commit toward an unloved one. What you do to one, you do to another. The loved one is as much affected as you yourself are. By the same token, your good deeds, your productive attitudes, your genuine feelings affect all those who are open, who do not obstruct.

QUESTION: I read a story in a current magazine about miracles. This story said that a child broke a wooden madonna and in kissing the upper half, tears started coming out of the eyes of the madonna. This was repeated in the presence of different witnesses. Do you wish to comment on this?

ANSWER: It is what I have so often said: The power of the spirit. The power of the cosmic laws is at all times available, but it depends on certain combinations and sets of circumstances coming together that make it possible for such power to manifest. On earth it manifests in isolated instances, because the combination of circumstances that are necessary rarely exists. But when it does happen, man calls it a miracle, merely because he does not understand the laws in operation. If you imagine the complicated mechanism necessary, the variety of conditions that have to be fulfilled in order to make any of your everyday appliances work -- radio, television, an airplane, a computer machine, and what have you -- you will perhaps understand a little of how these so-called miracles work. The power currents of the spirit are infinitely more forceful, their energy much stronger than the power and energy necessary to operate your technical equipment. The manifold and complicated combination of conditions and prerequisites in order to function is more intricately involved than anything you can imagine. The same cosmic power-currents operate, only they are converted into non-spiritual, automatic manifestations for your practical use. The ingenuity of the mind has created the conditions so that these powers can operate.

In principle, it is the same with so-called miracles, only it happens haphazardly, and by coincidence, as it were, because humans have not studied and found the laws governing these manifestations. Your electrical and technical equipment that is now so familiar would have been called the greatest of miracles only a hundred years ago, and even at a much lesser time than that, simply because their mode of operation was not understood. Nowadays you do not call them miracles. An individual steeped in this earth-world, blind to the power of the spirit and the cosmic laws, never seeing or sensing their manifestation and existence, will either deny their existence, or will call it a "miracle." In that very expression, the intrinsic nature of the universe is misunderstood. As the consciousness increases and rises and widens and deepens, even though one may not understand the exact operation of the laws necessary to produce such phenomena, the knowledge already exists that an infinite variety of complicated conditions must be combined and fused to make such manifestations possible.

QUESTION: Has it to do with the spirit of the child in question?

ANSWER: This would only be one of the factors. It never could be one thing, nor even two or three or four. Even a much less complicated phenomenon in your earth world can possibly be dependent on a number of circumstances. It needs a conglomeration of many conditions. That is why it is so difficult and rare. The purer the spiritual force, the more are all these various conditions combined. The less pure, the more do these conditions have to be supplied by added factors that

convene. Whenever such a "miracle" occurs, it might be called a coincidence, due to the rarity of the combination of all these prerequisites meeting together. Of course, there is more to it than just coincidence, but it would seem that way to you.

QUESTION: How then was it possible that Jesus could perform many miracles many times?

ANSWER: Just because of His purity of spirit, so much more pure, undiluted power was available. Exactly that is the reason.

QUESTION: In the psychic readings given by Edgar Cayce it was said that the spirit of Christ manifested in several incarnations on earth, before he was born as Jesus the Christ. Do you confirm that?

ANSWER: Not quite in that sense. But there is so much misunderstanding due to terminology and interpretation. As you know, in many religious concepts, the divine spark, or the higher self, is also called "the Christ within." The purer a being is, the more does this Christ spirit manifest in each created being. It is the aim of evolution to liberate the higher self -- or the so-called Christ within -- from all the encrustations. There have been some great spirits on earth of whom one can say that the Christ within was free to govern them. Some who came were pure spirits to begin with. They came to fulfill a mission. Others, through past development, were already very much freed. Whether you call this liberation of the higher self, the divine self, or the Christ within, is a question of terminology. It all amounts to the same, the words do not matter. But I cannot confirm that the spirit of Jesus was incarnated before or after. And Jesus was not the only one of the pure spirits who came only once.

QUESTION: Can you give us some information about the power of habit in a person, again in relation to role-playing? Could a person assume a habit and then have difficulty shedding it because it has become a habit, even though he recognizes the harm?

ANSWER: Whenever an inner habit, a habit of attitude is difficult to shed, it would be an oversimplification, a lack of depth-understanding, to simply explain this away by saying "it is a habit." A habit is easily shed if the attitude in question does not serve a purpose. It is difficult, or even impossible, to get rid of it if one believes it fulfills a vital function. Such a conviction may be entirely unconscious, while consciously the person may recognize its harm and wish to free himself of it. If one has difficulty in spite of it, the road to take is to investigate the way in which one unconsciously holds onto it because one feels the habit is a protection, a solution, a necessity. Once this is brought out into the open and considered with the power of reasoning and truth that is unavailable in the deeper regions of the confused part of the unconscious mind, one will then be able to shed the habit.

The first step in such a case is to detect the reaction of fright, or anxiety, or feelings of loss, or merely the unwillingness to look further in this respect. Once you begin to acknowledge these reactions, you will have a stronghold on the unconscious belief that you need this habit. Thereupon you can go further and find out why you believe that. Subsequently you will recognize how unreasonable such a belief is. It then becomes easy to shed it.



This even applies to physical habits that are destructive and difficult to get rid of. And always keep in mind that as long as you do feel anxiety or unwillingness at the thought of shedding the habit, in spite of also desiring to do so, you are not forced to give it up simply because you understand what is behind it and why you wish to preserve it. You have a right to maintain it. But, at least, understand it. Then make your decision freely. This thought may help greatly in overcoming any resistance. I said this before, but it needs repetition because you forget these things.

My dearest friends, may the answers to your questions be again a helping hand, a stepping stone, a directive to gain further insight and to widen your vision and awareness. May you thus come a step closer to unearthing your present hopelessness, doubts, guilts, confusions, illusions. May you thus free yourself of constriction and restriction so as to free your best inherent faculties. May these answers provide encouragement and strength, additional understanding, so that you do not fall behind and get entangled in confusion and become paralyzed; so that your pathwork remains dynamic and alive in a beautiful forward surge, in the meaningful endeavor of growing. These words can be that for you, if you make it so, if you use the words as material for thinking, feeling, and experiencing. Be blessed again, my dearest friends, receive and feel the love that is given unto you. Open yourself for it. Be in peace, be in God!

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