

## IMAGES

Greetings in the name of the Lord. Blessed is this hour. Blessings for all of you, my dear friends. Most of you have made serious efforts on your path of development, and the spirit world has decided that you are ready for stronger medicine. So I shall take this work a step further.

There comes a point when your struggle on the path becomes a bit discouraging. You have begun to recognize your faults; you are full of good intentions to overcome them; and you may even have succeeded in a small measure. You recognize some of your wrong attitudes, and you wish to change them with all the willpower at your disposal. Yet you must face the fact that the outer willpower is insufficient to do so. No matter how hard you try, you seem unable to make changes, and you ask yourself why. Ignorant of the causes behind this inability, you are often inclined to give up altogether, and you tell yourself that it is useless to try. And that is where your gravest mistake lies.

My dear friends, it is important to realize that over the course of a lifetime, usually even in earliest childhood or infancy, every personality forms certain impressions due to environmental influences or to sudden, unexpected experiences. These impressions or attitudes usually take the form of conclusions in the mind of the person. Most of the time these conclusions are wrong. You see and experience something unfortunate, one of the unavoidable hardships of life, and you then make generalizations from them. These generalizations later establish themselves as preconceived ideas.

The conclusions are not thought out; rather they are emotional reactions, general attitudes toward life. They are not completely devoid of a certain logic, albeit limited and erroneous. As the years go by, these conclusions and attitudes sink more and more into the unconscious. From there, they mold the life of every person to some extent. We call each such conclusion an "image," since we spirits see the whole thought process as a spiritual form -- or image.

You might contend that people can also have positive, healthy images engraved on their soul. That is seldom true because in the absence of a wrong image, all thoughts and feelings are fluctuating, dynamic and relaxed: They are flexible. The whole universe is suffused with a number of divine forces. Thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that are unconnected with an image flow harmoniously with the divine currents, adapting themselves spontaneously to your immediate needs. But the forms of the thought/feelings emanating from wrong images are static and congested. They do not "give" in accordance with changing circumstances. Thus, they create disorder. The pure currents flowing through a human soul become disturbed and distorted. A short circuit is established.

This is the way we in the spirit world see images. The way you see and feel them is through unhappiness, anxiety, and puzzlement over many apparently inexplicable things in your life. For instance, your inability to change what you wish to change or certain kinds of events that seem to reoccur regularly without an obvious reason are just two examples. There are many more.

The wrong conclusions that form an image are drawn from ignorance and half-knowledge and thus they cannot remain in the conscious mind. As the personality grows up, your intellectual knowledge contradicts your emotional "knowledge." You therefore push down the emotional knowledge until it disappears from consciousness. The more emotional knowledge is hidden, the more potent the image becomes.

How can you be sure that such images exist in you? In the first place, your inability to overcome certain faults, no matter how much you want to, indicates that an image exists. I have sometimes mentioned that people love some of their faults. How and why would they love them? For the simple reason that according to the image, certain faults seem necessary as a defense, a protective measure. This, of course, is unconscious reasoning. The conscious effort to overcome the fault remains fruitless because the roots of the image are unconscious and the whole inner reasoning process is hidden from the intellect. And it will remain so until the image is recognized.

Another indication of an image is the repetition of certain incidents in one's life. An image always forms some sort of pattern, whether it is a behavior pattern in response to certain occasions, or events that seem to happen to you without your doing anything to invite them. In fact, consciously you may fervently wish for the very opposite of your image. But the conscious desire is the weaker of two impulses, since the unconscious is always stronger.

The unconscious does not realize that its attitude prohibits the very wish you consciously express but cannot fulfill. The price for your unconscious pseudo-protection is the frustration of the legitimate desire. This is very important to understand, my friends; it is equally important to understand that people and events can be drawn to a person as if to a magnet on account of such inner images. This may be difficult for you to see, but it is so. The only remedy is to find out what your image is, on what basis it was formed, and what your wrong conclusions were.

Often you do not notice the repetitive pattern in your life, my friends. You pass over the obvious. You still keep assuming that certain occurrences are due to coincidence or that some arbitrary fate is testing you, or that other people are responsible for your repeated mishaps. You therefore pay much more attention to the slight variations of each incident than to the common denominator underlying them.

Most psychologists have verified this process. But what they have often failed to realize is that images seldom form in this life, no matter how early they began. Most of the time an image is carried over from one lifetime to another. That is why certain incidents do not form an image in people who are free of a particular conflict. Yet they will form one in a person's soul who has brought that conflict into this life. Although it is essential to find the image and its origin in the present life to adequately dissolve it, there are still cases where the knowledge of all the pertinent facts would be very useful to the therapist. In other words, an image can often be successfully treated without the knowledge of its origin in a previous life. But there are cases where the knowledge of the carry-over principle would be invaluable.

In an earlier lecture I explained how an entity is prepared for life on earth; how plans for what should be accomplished and overcome in the next incarnation are made according to previous existences; how the subtle bodies surrounding the physical vehicle of the incarnate being are prepared so that the conflicts should bring the inner problems of the particular person to the surface. This is the basis on which families and other life circumstances are chosen. When an image carries over from previous lives, the incarnation takes place in an environment where provocations to that image are bound to occur, perhaps in response to similar images in the parents or others around the growing child. That is how the image brings out a problem; and only if something becomes a problem will the person pay attention to it instead of looking away. If the image is ignored, circumstances will be much more difficult in the following life on earth until the conflicts become so overwhelming that outside factors can no longer be blamed for the pain inflicted by the wrong conclusions and misconceptions of the image. This is when the person begins to turn upward and inward.

The only solution to your life's problems is to make your images conscious. I can give you advice on how to begin, but you will not be able to accomplish it completely by yourself. You will need help. If you are serious in your desire to find and dissolve the images in your soul -- for your life is not without problems -- then pray to God. He will give you further guidance and lead you to the proper person with whom you can cooperate in your quest to find your images.

This work requires, among other things, humility, which as we all know is a very important asset for your spiritual development. Those who are constantly reluctant to work with another person lack humility, even if only in this one respect. Perhaps you also fear to face your images. But how shortsighted this is, my friends! It is this very image that causes you so much trouble, although unconsciously you do not think so. Unconsciously you are convinced that your images protect you.

Let me give you a very primitive example: A child has taken a bath; the water was boiling hot and therefore has injured the child. This child may come to the conclusion that taking baths is dangerous. The child will never take another bath if it can avoid it. Out of this misconception conflicts will arise. In youth the parents force the child to take a bath, and every time this happens the child will go through untold and quite unnecessary misery. In later life other conflicts will come up. Either the person will actually follow the inner conclusion, which is no longer conscious, or perhaps may find more rational explanations. But the uncleanness will create new conflicts: rejection from others will set in motion a new chain reaction. Or the person represses knowledge about the childhood incident but realizes intellectually that resistance to bathing is unreasonable. He will force himself to bathe in spite of his strong emotional revulsion. Thus, he will develop certain symptoms in connection with bathing that he cannot explain. The mystery of such "unreasonable" reactions and the anxiety connected with them will present difficulties that cannot be overcome unless the image is found.

Now, this is a very primitive example. Most of the time the emotional reactions are much more subtle and complicated. I cannot stress enough that you are no longer aware of the original reasoning behind your conclusions. If you were confronted with the contents of your soul, you would laugh. You would say that they are entirely untrue, a wild fantasy. It is also important to understand that the chain reaction of consequences resulting from the original impression creates

mishaps and hardships. These will be even harder for you to understand because your unconscious is so convinced that avoiding certain actions and reactions will protect you against the hurts of life.

Now how can you find your personal images? Not by trying to change the symptoms, whatever they may be, but rather by working with them. These symptoms include your inability to overcome certain faults and attitudes; your lack of control over certain patterns in your life; and fears and resistances on specific occasions. The harder you try to eliminate the symptoms without having understood their roots, the more you will exhaust yourself in useless efforts. The symptoms are merely one part of the price you pay for your ignorant inner conclusions.

Start searching for the image by thinking back on your life and finding all the problems. Write them down. Include problems of all sorts. You cannot do this unless you take the trouble to put them down concisely in black and white. If you merely think about them, you will not have the overview necessary for comparison.

The written work is essential. It is certainly not too much to ask. You do not have to do it in one day. Take your time, even if it takes a few months. Then, when you have all the big and small troubles in front of your eyes, even the most nonsensical and insignificant ones, start to look for the common denominator. You will find one common denominator in most instances, and sometimes even more than one.

I do not say that a difficulty cannot occur only once in your life, independent of any inner image. That is possible. This, too, is based on cause and effect as everything in the universe is, but it may not be connected with your image. But be careful, my friends. Do not put an occurrence aside superficially, assuming it is unconnected with your personal image merely because it appears that way at first sight. It is very possible, and even probable, that there are no unconnected happenings in your life. All unpleasant experiences are probably connected with your image at least in some way.

The common denominator may not be easy to find. Only after you have thoughtfully grasped your image will you be in a position to judge which of your experiences, if any, have something to do with it. Until then you must refrain from final judgments about the events in your life. In meditation, in serious self-probing, in checking your emotional reactions about the past and present, and through prayer, you will find, after a long and arduous search, the common denominator. It is pride. Your self-will says: "I do not want the risk of life; I do not want the pain of life; therefore, I draw this conclusion which seems to safeguard me against it." In fact, it is not a safeguard, for it will bring you the very trouble you are trying to escape from, since life cannot be cheated. This is the merciful law of God. Otherwise you could never emerge from the misery of the lower, darker planes of consciousness.

Only when you begin to face your own wrong conclusions and fears and are ready to accept life for what it is will you be able to cure your soul. It is a necessary step in your development to give up some of the self-will that wishes to deny life in its present form. Only then will you have acquired the humility not to wish for protection from the risks and hardships of life. Your difficulties will cease to be necessary once you can fearlessly accept and shoulder them.

It is a good beginning to review your life, concisely enumerating all your troubles. And then go on to search for the common denominator. Do not turn away from anything hastily, even if it appears to be unconnected to your problems. Probe and you may experience a surprise. The most apparently unconnected happenings often turn out to have a single common denominator. When you have found that, you have made a major step forward in your search, for then you possess a clue to the image. But the common denominator by itself is not yet the key to the image. It is a strong directive, but by no means does it open the door that will make you fully understand your whole life. In order to get to the image itself, to all the devious ways in which it was formed, and to understanding the processes of your reactions when you formed it, you will have to explore your unconscious more thoroughly.

There are various ways to do this. It is impossible to do it by yourself. But if you begin the way I have suggested here and then pray for guidance, being ready to overcome your pride so you can be open with another person whom the spirit world will choose to help you, then God will lead you to further victory.

Do not let yourself be dissuaded by your inner resistance. For that resistance is just as erroneous and shortsighted as the image itself. In fact, the very same quality that makes you resist is the one that created the image in the first place without your knowing it and will continue to create untold misery for you, counteracting your conscious wishes. Indeed, your resistance causes you to lose what could be rightfully yours. So have enough wisdom to see through your resistance and to evaluate it for what it is worth. Do not let yourself be governed by it. How can you be a spiritual person, who is developed and detached in the right sense, if you remain governed by your unconscious forces and by the erroneous and ignorant conclusions that have formed such a painful image within you? This image is the one factor in your life responsible for every unhappiness. No one but you is responsible for your images. True, you did not know any better when you formed them, but you do now. Therefore you are now equipped to eliminate the source of your unhappiness.

And please do not say, "How can I be responsible for other people repeatedly acting in certain ways toward me?" As I said before, your image draws these happenings to you, as inevitably as night must follow day. It is like a magnet, a physical law, like the law of gravity. Your images influence the universal current entering your personal life sphere so that certain effects must follow.

If you do not have the courage to delve into your unconscious, face your image, dissolve it, and thus make a new person out of yourself, you will never be free in this life. You will always be chained and bound. The price for freedom is the courage and humility to face up to things. When you have taken all the necessary steps, the victory of freedom brings such joy that nothing can mar your happiness. Furthermore, you can be quite sure that the image you do not dissolve in this life will have to be dissolved in a future one.

This should not be taken as a threat, my friends. It is just a logical consequence. Besides, how can anything be a threat that liberates you from your own chains? You must not take it that way. You must merely see realistically that the sooner you find your images of your own accord -- and not because your images keep acquiring new twists so that life is becoming too much for you -- the easier your life will become. That you may safely believe.

You may say in certain moments, "All this about being born again with the same problems may be speculation. There may not be another life after all. Why should I go through all the trouble now? But I say to you that you should undertake this work for the sake of this life, for it is never too late and always well worth the effort! Your remaining years will mean a different kind of life: you will be free instead of chained.

Even those who have no more doubts about the reality of reincarnation should consider this as an additional incentive. Actually, it would be a very good exercise in meditation to think about what your next karma may be. You are always extremely concerned with your previous incarnations. It might be even more beneficial to be concerned with your next one. With some spiritual knowledge and some intuition about yourself, you shall be able to reap more benefits.

In addition, by finding your image, even to some degree, you may form a pretty accurate idea of what you have yet to fulfill and what your next life may be. Consider what conditions you require to resolve your conflicts in order to fulfill your life task. Of course, the actual next existence will depend on your development during the rest of this life, too.

Do not forget that the law of cause and effect or the law of karma specifies that people are always given the chance to solve their problems in the easiest circumstances possible. When not enough courage and willpower are mustered in easy circumstances, the life that follows must necessarily be a little more difficult. And if again the courage, humility, and willpower are not mustered, the life afterward will be more difficult still. Ultimately, when the going gets really hard, you will be forced to face your troubles instead of fleeing them. So by law your lives become increasingly difficult. You violate divine law when you escape from yourself instead of facing yourself.

This should also bring into clearer focus a controversial subject among people interested in the spiritual life. People are uncertain and confused about how to react to tests, trials, and hardships. One school of thought claims God does not send tests. God is love; how could He want us to be unhappy? This is true, my friends. The other school of thought says that it is necessary that we experience tests and therefore they are God's will. As tests come, we should accept them in humility and thus prove our worthiness of God's mercy and bliss. This is equally correct, my friends.

But the full truth lies in the middle, or rather in an extension of these two concepts. God has made perfect laws and given His children free will. If the laws could not be violated, then free will would not exist. The perfection of the law is that the long-term remedy is an effect of these very violations. For the more you twist these laws, consciously or unconsciously, the more they work against your interests, until you finally reach a point where you cannot twist them further and must eventually change the direction of your will. In God alone lies infinity, and if you choose any other direction you must eventually turn around and seek union with the divine, because only strict adherence to the divine can be infinite. Violation of anything divine must therefore perforce be finite. You cannot infinitely twist the law. Your violation of divine law finally reaches a point where you automatically again begin to work for the good.

It is very true that to take a test in a spirit of humility with the attitude of "Father, Thy will be done" is the right thing. But this is not enough if you want to attain a higher level. The highest and the best you can do is not only to take the test but also to search for your images.

Your unconscious wrong conclusions are directly responsible for the tests you are experiencing at any given time. And in order to find your images, you cannot be impatient with yourself, for it is utterly impossible to find, comprehend, and dissolve an image in a short time. It is a long drawn-out process. And even after you have understood your images, the reeducation of your emotions, long-conditioned to follow a distortion, takes time, effort, and patience. So, as one school of thought says, patience and humility are absolutely necessary. You may revolt against unhappiness, yet when you realize that you, not God and the fates, are to blame, your revolt may turn against yourself and you thus will also become impatient with yourself. With such currents, you will never succeed in finding and dissolving your image. You must be in a relaxed state of mind. Such a state of mind can be yours if you understand and accept the length of the search. Once you accept your inability to become perfect quickly, you humbly accept temporary unhappiness.

There is a vast difference between resigning yourself to unhappiness without understanding why, and the course I have shown you here: acceptance. To accept the tests without understanding their underlying roots, but nevertheless in a spirit of devotion, is already a great deal for some people. This attitude also conditions you for the patience and humility that are so necessary to do the work whenever you are ready to do it. It is certainly healthier for the soul not to revolt against God and creation. However, the last, best, and highest stage of this earth plane is the approach I have outlined here, my friends. Purification cannot come cheaply and it would, indeed, be cheap if a mere list of faults and attempts to overcome them were all that comprised it.

Purification is more than that. You cannot become purified unless you understand and control your own unconscious. And that is a long journey. You will receive help if you are willing to embark on this journey, however. And you should understand that you are doing this work for God and for yourself. What God wants for you must be your own best interest, so you are not really making a sacrifice to God, since God and the true you are one! Think about that, my friends!

Some people are so selfish that they do not want to do anything for God that inconveniences them. At the same time, they are blind enough to believe that what God wants for them is contrary to their own happiness. Others are willing to sacrifice anything for God -- although without understanding their images they will never truly succeed. The more happiness results from their sacrifices, the worse their guilt becomes until true inner happiness is conceived. Such guilt is always a twist of the emotions and is connected with the image. Actually, true happiness cannot come before the image and the guilt are understood and dissolved. But in their present state of mind, such people feel very heroic if their guilt mingles with their devotion.

**QUESTION:** You mentioned willpower and courage twice tonight. Are the batteries of both recharged by prayer?

**ANSWER:** Of course! If you pray specifically for willpower and courage for a good purpose, as outlined in this lecture, the prayer will certainly be answered. If you pray for something else, you will get something else, provided it is good and according to law. It is so very important to know what to pray for at any given stage of your development. People seldom realize that they must pray

to get ahead. Often it is not clear to you what you need most at specific phases of your development. You may put emphasis on something that is less important now than it was two months ago. Your needs may have changed.

As Jesus Christ said, "Knock and it will be opened unto you." The knocking symbolizes being alert and interested enough to figure out what you need most at various stages of your path. The path changes constantly. And you surely cannot pray with equal concentration on everything at once.

QUESTION: Are all our limitations a result of the image?

ANSWER: Most of them are, but not entirely. You will always have limitations, as long as you are still in the cycle of incarnations and as long as you have not reached the state of divinity. You cannot be a universal genius. Limitations on a broader scale have nothing to do with your images. But if you encounter limitations placed on your talents and cannot make sufficient use of them, then that certainly has something to do with your images.

I will retire now with blessings of a special kind that are coming to each one of you, my dear ones. It is the blessing of courage that you all so badly need. And I beg of you to use it in the right way. For if you open your heart and soul to the strength flowing to each one of you, you will feel courage. And if you keep that strength, you can make it last for a while. But use it where it does the most real good for you. Do not use it for nonessentials! It is up to you how you use this force. You receive it and you have free will to open yourself to it. You should know what to do with it. It will be a test of how you use the strength if you accept it now willingly.

The love of God touches all of you, my dear ones. Be in peace; be in God.

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