

Pathwork Guide Lecture No. 26  
An Unedited Lecture  
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## FINDING ONE'S FAULTS

Greetings in the name of God and Jesus Christ! I bring you blessings, my dear friends. The last time I talked about the difficulty on this path and how dangerous it is to approach it, to decide for it with the illusion that with a few meditations and some miracle-formula, all your earthly troubles will disappear. On the other hand, it is equally far away from truth to overestimate the difficulties on this path. And I can see that some of my friends became a little afraid, and this unjustified fear serves as an excuse for the lower self, that always wants to avoid purification and improvement. Now, my dear friends, let us examine these fears you may have; certainly the path is difficult. But God is wise and just, and He will not give you more than you can bear, than you are able to accomplish. And that, of course, varies with each individual. The higher your development, the stronger you are, and therefore the more can be expected of you. But if you are still weak, perhaps the smallest effort will be sufficient for you. At any rate, no one can truly achieve happiness in this life if he does not accomplish, spiritually speaking, the maximum according to his destiny. And this path with my instruction and guidance should help you to this end. Therefore the proper attitude for you to take if you happen to fear that this path is too much for you is that you put it into the hands of God. Let Him decide for you; ask Him! But how very few people are doing this when the mood of doubt about this decision takes them over! Then you are all very quick to make your own decision -- even though it may be a temporary one in many cases -- that all this is too much for you, and the thought does not even occur to you to ask God for His will in this respect.

Another great misunderstanding in this respect is the mistaken idea that to follow the path I am leading you onto means that you neglect your life in other ways. You see, my dear friends, I can observe the forms of your thoughts and feelings. Your lower self that fights constantly against the right decisions delivers all sorts of excuses and pretexts, unbeknown to yourself why you have these thoughts, what is really in back of them. One may believe that devoting a certain amount of time and effort for his spiritual development will take too much time from his daily fights as far as his livelihood is concerned. He thinks he may not have enough strength left for his professional efforts and thus his duties in connection with the earnings of his daily bread may suffer. Another may believe that not enough time remains to enjoy life, and so on and so forth. But all this is so very wrong! For spiritual development in general and this path in particular are not an "extra activity" in your life that you simply add on to your other activities, thus making a mathematical deduction which diminishes your strength, time, effort, and zest that you would otherwise have available for all your other duties and pleasures. Actually it is quite the contrary, my friends. The truth is that this path of purification represents the foundation of your life. It is the ground you walk on, symbolically speaking! You simply shift the tracks of your life, if I may say so, into different channels. This has then the effect that -- at least after a while and even though your main problems may not disappear from one day to the other, as I have explained to you -- a new life spark awakens in you that furnishes you with a heretofore unfamiliar strength, acumen, vitality, and ability to enjoy life as you have never done before. Thus you will do better work in your profession; you will get

more rest from your times of leisure; you will get more pleasure out of life whatever you may do, while now all this is still more or less flat for most of you. This is the result I can promise you if you work spiritually in the way I am showing you -- if not at once, so after a certain time, after some inner victories. And then you will see that this path is well worth taking even from your selfish point of view and even though your main conflicts have not disappeared as yet at this point. This is so because on this path you eventually find out where in your deeper feelings, reactions, and thoughts, if not in deeds, you have broken many a spiritual law. By this realization you will be in a position to gradually change these inner currents and emotional reactions, and this automatically frees a strength and life force that was locked or blocked so far.

So I'm not promising you a miracle that will be given to you as a reward from heaven, but I am showing you plainly and logically that it cannot help but work out in this way because this is all based on the law of cause and effect that works quite naturally and impersonally. So you should not consider the decision for this path as some additional activity in your life, as you may consider to start taking lessons in some new accomplishment for example that may rob your time and effort for other necessary or desirable things. But it is the foundation of your life. It is supposed to make your life whole; it must make your life a well-integrated whole! For if you can solve your inner problems and errors -- and you can only do so on this path -- you must eventually solve your outer problems even though, as I have said last time, you should not expect this to happen from one day to the other. Because you have often wasted many lives and the wrong habits of thinking and feeling have impregnated themselves deeper and deeper from one incarnation to another, the knots have become tighter, more confused, so it must take time to dissolve the knots, to loosen it up, to understand the workings of all your inner currents in relationship to spiritual law and truth. But if and when you have accomplished this to some degree, your outer problems must cease. But this will certainly not happen when you merely put more effort and concentration on the outer problem alone instead of finding out the inner problem, which is always the cause of the outer one.

By the same token, all the good things in life -- happiness, joy, pleasure -- you will get so much more out of them if your soul is becoming healthy again, if your inner reactions can conform to spiritual law. Only then will you be capable of happiness. For how many people are capable of happiness? Very few, my friends -- the majority is actually as scared of happiness as of unhappiness. You desire great happiness, all of you, but the farther it is out of reach, the more desirable it seems to you; while if there seems a chance once in a while to actually realize such happiness, you shrink away from it. Oh yes, my friends, this is so. Think back in your life, examine your feelings in these rare moments, analyze them from this angle, and you will see that I am right. This is, of course, a symptom of the soul that she is sick, that she has deviated from one or more spiritual laws. For only he who embraces life wholeheartedly, without fear, without self-pity, without being afraid of hurt, follows a very important spiritual law. And only he who can do so is capable of experiencing real happiness. So everything you do in life will have more flavor, will have more awareness and life spark if you follow the path of self-knowledge and perfection, if you do what God wants you to do. And it will not take more time than is reasonable according to your life circumstances. Everybody, without any exception, is capable with a little will power and determination and the proper organization in his everyday life to spend, let us say in the average, half an hour a day for his spiritual development. You spend your time on your physical body, to feed it, to rest it, to cleanse it, and you certainly do not feel that this takes something away from your other duties or pleasures. You naturally take it for granted that this is a necessary, self-understood part of your life. Yet when the question arises to do the same for your soul -- and less time is necessary for her than for your body

-- then your fears, your doubts, your questions bar your way. But it cannot do so if you take the trouble to think about it reasonably, my friends. But you are not thinking reasonably about it because you do not think these thoughts for their proper merits. You rather think them because you are inspired by your own lower self. As long as you do not recognize how this lower self works, how it manifests, in what devious ways it hides behind handy excuses, you will not be able to master it regardless how sincere your love for God may be. Love for God is wonderful if it manifests in beautiful prayer and meditation. But the works have to be done too. What are these works? These are the works, my friends. To master your lower self is the work that Jesus meant mainly. To do good to other people is also part of it. But can you do really good to other people as long as your impure currents force you into thinking things that are not according to truth? No. You may be able to commit a good act and consider this a good deed. Yet it is not really a good deed if it is not supported by purified feeling. And purified feelings are your goal on this path for which you do not need more than a certain amount of time every day and a certain amount of will power and, my friends, a certain amount of detached and reasonable, common sense thinking.

Some of you have really made this wholehearted decision. Some of you have not. But for both groups, it is important to understand how to deal with the lower self that works in the subconscious mind and sends only subterfuges to the surface. For even those of you who are really willing to walk this path of purification will have many fights with this lower self of yours on your way -- perhaps not any more as far as taking this path on the whole is concerned, but about individual currents and trends which the lower self does not want to part with. So it is important that you train yourself to understand what is underneath these doubts or fears that want to bring you off your path, or at least make it more difficult for you to gain the necessary self-understanding. So this is one factor, my dear friends, that you have to deal with in the first place and keep in mind at all times. Learn to see through your doubts and your hesitancy; learn to see through an occasional stubbornness not to want to understand something. And the more you realize your own entire person, what you really are, who you are, the easier it will become for you to overcome that in your lower self which constantly draws you away.

There are thoughts in some of my friends I could observe between the last lecture and tonight: "Isn't it enough if I am a decent person? God loves us all, and if I just try to be good and behave right, that should be sufficient. Why do I have to go through all this?" No, my dear ones, it may be sufficient for some people, but do not ever forget that for anyone who is guided to hear this, there is also an obligation involved. And this obligation means that more is expected of you than just being what is commonly considered a "decent person" who does not harm other people. It is not as simple as all that, my friends. That the fulfillment of this obligation works out for your own good -- because by overcoming your lower self, you free yourself of your own chains -- is something else again. That I have discussed before and also in many previous lectures. But let us remain for the moment with the argument that I have observed among some of you that it should suffice if you are good and do not harm others. What constitutes "harm to others?" To harm someone else is not only to steal from him or to say ugly things behind his back or to kill or anything like that. You may harm another person by not having enough love. And no outer and forceful kindness to make up for this lack will alleviate the fact that this love is still missing in your soul. Or you may harm another by not having enough understanding, by being blind. For if you are blind to yourself, you are perforce blind to your surroundings. And all your faults, every individual one, stands in the way to the unfoldment of pure love, insight, and understanding. By that, you harm others. Imagine the love of God, this marvelous light that lives in the soul of each individual. And the lower self stands

in between you and this light and its effect it could have on your surroundings. So you do not only harm by actual bad deeds and not only by bad thoughts and not even only by impure feelings, but also by the omission of love and understanding that you could be capable of having if you fulfill the maximum in this present incarnation. And that means this manner of self-development. Not only that which is commonly called a fault is a hindrance for you and thus directly or indirectly harms others, but also, for instance, your fears -- they are not supposed to be a fault. You do not realize that they cause great harm not only in your own life but also in others. Your fears also hide your light of love, understanding, and truth. So it is not only a matter of overcoming your character weaknesses. To overcome your own fears is of equal importance. And as long as there is fear in your heart, you harm other people. For you send out certain rays that have a very unsavory effect. Do you know that, in the spirit, fear has a very ugly smell? And do you know that your spirit, your subconscious mind, smells the fear of others all the time and is affected by it constantly. You can only guard yourself against this fear-emanation of others and your own negative reactions as a result if you oust your own fear, for then you will consciously understand the fear of others, and it will not harm you any more. You will make your instinctive awareness of it into an intuition that reaches your entire consciousness. But as long as you live instinctively, unknowingly, unaware of all these things, you are gravely affected, and thus you cause in turn bad effects on others. There is a vicious cycle in motion that can only be broken if self-awareness and understanding about these facts is gained in sufficient degree. If this is not done, the fears of others reaching you increase your own fears. This sets up a hard wall between you and your fellow creatures that eliminates all divine aspects to be spread from your own soul as well as from those of others. For there is nothing as "contagious" as inner currents, positive or negative ones. So do not believe that it is sufficient to be merely a "decent person." This term varies greatly according to a person's overall spiritual development and what he or she is capable of delivering in fulfillment and purification; I mean God evaluates differently with each individual. And furthermore, do not imagine that you do not harm anyone by simply refraining from the more obvious evil deeds. For as long as there is fear in your heart, you do harm! In subtle ways, in ways that are not obvious but, nevertheless, just as effective.

Now, my dear friends, I want you to think about all this, what I have said to you. And as I have already indicated last time, with this course I have started now, it is not sufficient, if you really want to follow this path, that you read this lecture just once after you have heard it. There should be sentences that you meditate on and read several times so that you gain enlightenment and deeper understanding about certain meanings. Do not just read it and forget it. Some of these sentences have deep meaning for you personally, and therefore it is important that you work with these lectures. And you should not only take the respective last lecture to work with in this manner; it may often be important and very necessary for you to turn back a few lectures if there is one particular point to deliberate on that you still have not quite digested a few lectures henceforth. You yourself will have to be the judge of that.

I have promised to show you how you should go about starting in actual fact on this path. Now, there are many ways. Each individual reacts differently. Of course, I cannot give individualized or personal guidance for the manner in which to work on this path in these general lectures. But I will give you certain basic facts by which you can go and sort of make your own plan. You do not have to work according to my words to the letter; certain details in the how or in the element of timing may vary here or there. This may be all right as long as you keep the basic structure in mind.

You all know it is of imperative importance to gain self-knowledge. Now, how can this be done? The first step, of course, will be to think as objectively as you are capable about your own person -- all your good qualities and all your faults. Write down a list, as I have often advised, because this writing down helps to a compact condensation and concentration of what you have found out so far and will prevent you from losing your grip over this knowledge. It will, black on white, shed perhaps a new light of understanding, and already a tiny little bit of detachment in your consideration of yourself will result. And later on when you have gained further knowledge about yourself, about your subconscious trends, you will be able to combine certain factors of this first-found knowledge if it is clearly and concisely expressed. After you have done this conscientiously, the next step would be to ask someone else who knows you very well to tell you what he or she really and honestly thinks about you. I know that it takes a little courage to do that. Consider this your first effort to overcome a little of your pride. By doing so, you will have attained some victory that will already free you of one little inner chain. I would suggest, my friends, that all of you who are here and all of you who read these words and cannot be present at these sessions personally but are also willing to walk this path, to get together with one or two other friends who have the same endeavor, who are interested in the same goal. If some of you who read these words and cannot belong to this group here and are all alone in this spiritual interest and thus wonder how to find the proper person to work with, I advise you: pray for guidance in this respect and you will see what happens. For he who knocks -- and knows how to knock properly and for the proper goods -- will be answered. And I can promise you, if your wish is sincere, you will be guided. As far as you, my friends who are here, are concerned, there should be no problem there because even those of you who come here singly can always arrange to get together with one or the other of the friends here and perhaps meet once a week and discuss things pertaining to your work on this path. For it is very important not to work quite alone, in many ways. In the first place, there is a spiritual law, my friends: to be able to open up, to really open your heart to another person brings a spiritual help that you could not receive by yourself. You see, it is the law of brotherhood. For he who is always alone, no matter how hard he works, no matter how intelligently he reads or studies, no matter how much self-honesty he tries to have, becomes locked in a certain vacuum that bars a complete understanding and evaluation which automatically flows into him if it is aired out to another soul. By remaining all alone, you violate the law of brotherhood in some subtle way. It also needs a certain amount of humility which does not come easy at the very beginning but that does become second nature after some time of fruitful cooperation with another person -- to be able to talk openly about your difficulties, your weaknesses, your problems, as well as to receive criticism. That, of course, is equally healthy for the soul. And each one of you who has tried already this opening-up will confirm that by the mere fact of discussing a problem that you have kept to yourself for a long time, even without hearing good advice, it all of a sudden loses some of its sometimes overmagnified proportions, some of its fearful aspects, or whatever it may be. By being yourself as you really are, at least with one person, with as few masks and defenses as possible at this time, you imbibe a very healthy medicine for yourself, and at the same time, you commit an act of love to the other person, whom you help more by showing your own human weaknesses than by trying to appear superior. And your partner or coworker will do the same for you. So try to organize this, each one of you who have not done so already. You will see after a while how helpful and fruitful this will be. It will give you food for thought. You will help each other, and you will learn a lot in brotherhood, in humility, and in detached understanding.

As far as asking for your faults is concerned, that of course may not always be possible to combine with the person you have chosen as your spiritual coworker because not all people who

come here know each other very well, while your own friends or family may not have the same interest, but they still know you very well and can tell you more about yourself than your new found friends here. So my advice is to ask those who know you really well, because even though they may not have the understanding for a spirit, trance sessions, mediums, etc., no matter what they believe, they will respect you for your sincere endeavor to improve, to learn about your faults, to be able to listen to them if you ask in the right way, merely explaining to them that four eyes often see more than two and that you want to get to know yourself in order to improve and that you will not be hurt or angry with them even if they say something that may seem unjust to you. And you know, my friends, it is possible that by doing just that you may open a door to the very people you have hoped to convince and that you were unable to convince by merely lecturing them, by trying to prove a truth that they cannot see as yet. And when they do tell you your faults, think about it calmly. And I may tell you it may often be the case that someone says something to you that at the first moment seems entirely unjust -- and you may be hurt. You may also, for that matter, be even more hurt if a truth is told to you. But even if you have the sincere conviction that something told to you is an injustice, try to think about it nevertheless. There may be only one per cent of truth in it. The other person may just see it a little differently or see just the superficial effect. He may not have the understanding to combine or understand what lies underneath, why you react in this way, and all the complicated mechanism of the soul and her workings, and he may not choose the right words to express what he really means. But the one per cent of truth in what is said to you may open a new door of understanding for you. It may not even be something entirely new for you, but it is often necessary to consider one and the same fault or trait in different lights, from new angles, so as to understand the various effects one and the same fault may have. When you make your daily prayer and meditations, this is where you should concentrate upon. Perhaps it is better for you presently to devote less time and concentration on general deliberations, but ask God for help to recognize yourself in truth without the distorted view the self generally reserves for the self. Ask God for inspiration for the right reaction and enlightenment about yourself; ask for help to receive unpleasant truth from others in the right and productive way. If you start in this way, you have made a very good beginning. And if you take all the faults you are beginning to realize more and more clearly in this manner into your daily meditation and if your wish is truly sincere, you have made the best beginning imaginable.

And, my dear friends, if you do that, learn, train yourself to observe your own inner reactions when you deal with the unpleasant in you. This is of utmost importance. I have begun this lecture by saying the lower self constantly resists your endeavors. Here, for instance, you have a wonderful opportunity to observe your lower self clearly and undisguised as it works and reacts. Try to watch it as you would a third person. Try to be a little less involved in it. Try to put a little distance between your powers of self-observation and the reaction of your lower self, your ego, your hurt, your vanity that is involved when you are dealing with the unpleasant side of your personality. And by recognizing thus your own reactions and understanding them, knowing where they come from, and perhaps humoring them a little, not taking yourself so deadly serious in this respect, thus you will gain another step on the ladder. But again I must admonish you, do not expect this from one day to the other. It means constant work, and after some time of regular work, each day let us say only half an hour of this type of work, you will make progress. You will come to the point when you feel quite clearly this distance between you and your hurt little ego, when you can humor it a little bit and not be so very much in it. And when you have accomplished this, then the door will be open for further self-understanding.

So this might be a very good way to begin, my dear friends. Those of you who have not found as yet the proper coworker, as we might call it, pray for this guidance, and you will be helped. And then get together once a week and tell each other what you have accomplished so far, where you still have difficulties, what your inner reactions are, and perhaps plan together what pertinent questions you may ask in the next general session here. This will also mean a great deal of joy to you. And also begin by making your own "inventory." After you have done your best in this respect, then ask someone who knows you really well, and compare this with your own findings. Complement this list, elaborate on this. Take all this to God in your daily prayer to help you further. This is a wonderful beginning for everyone, and these efforts will not be in vain, this I can promise you.

If you do every day some of this work, plus meditating on some of the pertinent words I am giving here, each day a little bit, then you will certainly be successful. And long before actual results can happen in your life, you will often have a feeling of deep contentment and peace, the peace that only a person can have who does what God expects him to do! When you have a very good day, a day when you feel strong and alive and full of enthusiasm, then it is much easier to find contact with God and of His truth in yourself. Consider these days as a source of strength that you gather for the more difficult times that may follow again alternately. But what is most important are the days when you feel low and discouraged and doubtful. Then it becomes important that you know how to fight and not to give in to these moods. Choose particularly these days to read what I am saying here and consider it and take it to God. It is the most difficult for human beings to form the right thoughts at the right moment. This is a training in itself. It does not take a lot of time and effort to have the proper thoughts at the proper time. It is really nothing else but a habit that has to be formed. So if you are low and discouraged, do not give into it so easily. If you feel like giving up, then take these words on this very subject and study them. Ask God for proper understanding and light in this moment. Perhaps make a mark on your copy of the lecture, and put it in a certain place where it is easily available. And then if you still doubt, ask God for His truth and will for you. Ask Christ to help you to be receptive for it. Pray: "Father, is this Thy truth, is this Thy will for me? I am open to receive Thy answer." Nothing more is demanded when you are in doubt, my friends. But if you do this sincerely and with your whole heart and disregard the resistance of your lower self that always lurks nearby in these moments, then you have gained a major victory. This I want to impress upon you. Take it with you tonight as the first actual and concrete beginning on this path.

Before turning to your questions now, I just want to mention once more, everything you suffer from in your life, my friends, results directly or indirectly from your shortcomings and from your fears. If you would not have any shortcomings, there could not be any fear in you, the fear that makes you so miserable, the fear that must make you blind to the joys of life. Remember that! It is in your own power to break the chains of fear by following this path. It is only in your power, in your hands. And if you wish it, you will receive the necessary strength. No matter how busy you are in your life, you will have time, not only to fulfill your duties as you have done before, but infinitely better. And you will have time to enjoy life, but infinitely better too when you lose the fear and insecurity that constantly lives in your soul and spoils everything for you so much, my dear ones. And do not think you will not have the strength to do the necessary work on this path. This strength will be given to you drop by drop for all your needs, spiritual and material, if you first make the decision for it and trust God that He will give you what you need for it. And now, my friends, I am ready for your questions.

QUESTION: Would you please tell us what Jesus meant by "The meek shall inherit the earth?"

ANSWER: By the "meek" is meant he who has no hatred, no resentment, no self-will, who has no fear because he lacks all these attributes. Then he will be able to be understanding, to be loving, and to be humble enough not to have to prove to be right all the time -- even though many people may lack the courage to put this in practice, but rather inside they feel frustrated by not being able to do it. To be this way means to have a very healthy soul. And this means strength, power, independence. It means living with divine law that will work for this person instead of swimming against the stream of the law which then sets up very disharmonious currents. On the other hand, it should be clearly understood that meekness in the way Jesus meant it does not mean that you should let the lower self of your brother triumph. Oh, no, Jesus Christ Himself has not done so. Jesus Christ has fought, and often quite strongly, many a time. To fight evil -- in the other fellow, as well as in yourself -- also includes to be able to accept a hurt and perhaps to learn from it. But it must not allow the lower nature of others to take advantage of your meekness. How to find the right course in these apparent contradictory courses is not as difficult as it may appear at first. If you test yourself where your own ego is involved, your pride perhaps or your self-will, then and there you should first learn to accept humbly. The fighting spirit that then arises in a person should be curbed and only allowed to function if the ego can be excluded. With proper self-development, this objectivity and judgment is attained after a while. If you can feel clearly how this ego disappears gradually, how you are not in the center of your own universe any more, if you do not apply anything that happens to your own person in some way, then you will be able to stand up for a right principle and know how to fight in the right way. As long as your small ego stands in the center, your judgment will always be colored. And until you can clearly distinguish here if and how far your ego is still involved, you will have to accomplish some work on this path. For quite a time, it will represent one of its most important aspects to learn to recognize how much of your opinions, your reactions, your feelings, your views, even on sometimes quite general subjects, are colored by your own personal ego. Not to have this ego any more in the foreground means the humility we are always talking about. And it is the meekness Jesus mentioned. This alone will make you really strong and give you the power to distinguish when to hold still to a personal hurt or injustice and quietly forgive -- and when to stand up and fight against something evil, whether it touches your life or not. In order to come that far, you have to be a keen "detective" to your most hidden feelings and their true nature. You have to train yourself to acquire the strictest possible self-observation. So, actually, this word of Jesus applies to your own ego, my friends!

QUESTION: How do the different main religions continue their activities in the spiritual world? Do they fight each other, and how far can they influence human beings?

ANSWER: In all the spheres, in every gradation there from the highest to the lowest, these different religions are represented. It is self-explanatory that they work differently in each sphere, in each height of development. Let us begin with the highest sphere. There these different religious denominations also have their own organization but in a very different way than is often imagined among human beings. There they know the real truth, the unity, the falsities and the truths of their own religious groups as well as of the others. But they continue to work in the plan of salvation in this group because they have their task to fulfill. If spirits of the highest spheres would not come to earth also within the different religious organizations through certain people of their church, the plan of salvation could not function properly or efficiently. By the same token, very high spirits also

work and inspire groups, nations, individuals who are not bound to any religion. There is so much to be fulfilled in this great plan, and it often has to be done through and around existing conditions and blindnesses; it would be impossible to tear down falsities. Truth has to grow slowly. Any religion on earth, therefore, will have emissaries from all spheres of this particular religion according to development and desire of the individual in question, also according to openness for truth. Thus the inspiration always depends on the person. You are always inspired according to your aims and attitude. In the highest spheres, the spirits plan with a long view, knowing that their inspiration has an ultimate purpose that can rarely be understood by people. They cannot overcome the dogmas. The people would not be open otherwise for any inspiration because their mind is too strongly set. Whenever this is the case, there are doors closed. Nevertheless, enough sincere good will may be present to enable the spirit world to do good. God's spirit world needs workers in all groups, in all religions, to attain the one great aim of final unity. We know that this unity cannot be accomplished as yet, but we work best for this goal by not trying to destroy, but by building upon that which counts. In God's world, therefore, the different religions certainly do not fight. They all have the same goal. They know the limitations of spirits of lower development and try to slowly eliminate these limitations by building upon that which is constructive. In the spheres that do not belong to the world of God as yet, however, conditions are different. There the various religions do not fight either, because they do not have an opportunity to do so for the most part. There may be an exception in an individual case that is too complicated to explain here, but as groups, they have their own spheres and remain there. I have often told you that in the spirit world, you live among spirits of your own kind. That diminishes friction, but also the possibility to advance. Let us take the case, for instance, of a human being who has fervently believed in one particular religion. But in many ways he is still imperfect and therefore cannot reach higher spheres after he has shed his body. When he enters the spirit world, he will always be surrounded by spirits who are compatible with him, thus belonging to this group, higher ones and lower ones. The higher ones may be trying to give certain advice or hints about his personal errors as well as the errors of his conviction. But if this happens to be a stubborn person, very much indoctrinated with his own belief, he will not be open for such words. He will reject all that as untrue. And since the free will is never violated, he is free to go with those who have not changed their own beliefs. They would do so even less in the spirit world as on earth. In the latter, they had at least knowledge and opportunity to see other means of reaching God, of learning something from that. But in the beyond, they live in their own world, and it may take a very, very long time to change their views, particularly if they are, due to their conviction, incarnated again into the same surroundings. Some spirits in these spheres may be a little disappointed that it is not more beautiful, but then they may also realize, and rightly at that, that this is due to their own imperfection and has nothing to do with their religious belief. It only occurs to them at a later state of purification that a stubbornness and narrow mindedness is at the core of their lower self, which, among other things, was responsible for their one-sidedness. As long as this stubbornness exists, none can receive inspiration for something that may be contradictory to one's own stubborn conviction unless it is an act of grace of God that may only come in rare instances. Such grace has to be earned in other ways. As I have often said, it is possible to develop in every religion, and if a certain point of development is reached, then the realization will dawn that truth meets finally in one form. And when you have reached this, you will see there is no division; there is no "only this is right and all the others are wrong." You will see the many errors, and you can still work with the truth.

QUESTION: What happens to a person who was an atheist, for instance?

ANSWER: There are spheres for every possibility. You know very well it is not so much a matter of what religion you believe in, if you fulfill in your incarnation the best that can be expected of you. If someone is an atheist, he will be judged according to his accomplishments. The same applies to everyone, of course. These accomplishments are measured individually -- previous incarnations, his merits, his omissions, etc. He may be an atheist and still have accomplished something. Perhaps he has overcome a particular weakness or a hatred against someone whom he is incarnated with, and this counts in his favor. So he will be in the sphere that belongs to him, that he has built with his feelings, with his thoughts, with his general and particular attitudes. You see, you always forget, my friends, that the spheres are not there and you are not put into them. The spheres are your own product. You build them. And whatever you have built, that is your sphere. That is your temporary home.

QUESTION: I always thought that an atheist remains in darkness because he is separated from divine light?

ANSWER: Yes, this is so in most cases, but here too, it cannot be generalized for each case. There may be an instance where an atheist is not in darkness. He will certainly not be able to live in a sphere of bliss, beauty, and divine harmony, but he does not have to live in dire misery either. It depends so very much on so many considerations, my friends. You see, judgment or the estimation of a case is entirely relative. If a being is still very undeveloped, much less is expected of him. Let us take the case, for example, of a soul that is still very young, one that has only a few incarnations behind him. His instincts are still so low, so coarse. Now such a person may be tempted to give in to these instincts, perhaps to kill someone. Now if he overcomes this temptation even though he does not believe in God, but merely by some sense of decency, such a soul has earned great merit. This may be more in his favor, it may be an infinitely greater merit than people of higher development acquire. It is the effort that counts in order to overcome the lower self. Whether the lower self still contains such dark trends in a younger spirit or whether the lower self simply contains the faults, weaknesses, and sick currents that any of you possess is immaterial. The effort counts. Therefore a soul such as the one I quoted here will have some light in his sphere, some bright spot that signifies hope, encouragement, or a certain strength that will flow into the soul in his next incarnation. In the spirit world, evaluation is never general. It is always strictly personal, and judgment is passed on all personal considerations. Everything is taken into account; therefore judgment is always completely fair. For humans, this is hard to imagine, for you tend so very much to oversimplification and generalization.

I will answer the other questions next time, my friends. And so I will retire into my world, and I will leave you with God's warm blessings for each one of you. Next week you celebrate the Easter holy days. It is the time that the greatest sacrifice has been done, my dear ones. Think of this in these days with particular gratefulness. It was done for each and every one of you, without an exception. Take the strength with you that is given unto you this evening. May it fortify you, may it fill you with love and courage. Go your way in peace, be in God!

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