

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

‘Walk While You Have the Light’



Izvor Collection

P R O S V E T A

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Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov



Chapter One

So you will never again have to say, ‘If only I had known’

Human beings are perfectly capable of understanding the difference between good and bad, in relation to themselves and others, and yet they keep making the same mistakes. It may be difficult to admit it, but it is so. You can explain things to them and they understand and agree, but then they do exactly the opposite of what they assure you they have understood. Why? Because it is not enough to address the intellect; you have to touch a person’s feelings. You cannot really rely on someone who says, ‘Yes, I understand,’ because if their feelings and desires urge them in a different direction, that is the way they will go.

So, I have no illusions. I know that the possibilities of a spiritual Master are limited. His task is to enlighten people, to help them understand how to get out of the morass they find themselves in and to describe to them the marvellous realms awaiting those who succeed, but he remains powerless to change their inclinations and needs. Only the disciples themselves have the power to do this, when they sense that by doing so they will find salvation.¹ In fact, even if they sense this, it’s still not enough. Yes, even if they wish with all their heart to commit to the path of light, a third difficulty arises, the most terrible of all: something in them, which we call habit, prevents them from changing direction.

Let me give you a very simple example. A programme about famine in Africa is shown on television. Everyone who sees it understands that something must be done about it, that it is inhuman to let people continue to suffer in that way. Many, in fact, will be so upset by the sight of all this suffering that they will be reduced to tears. But, suppose you tell them what they could do to make sure that these people have something to eat, how many will be willing to abandon their habits and their tranquil way of life? How many will be ready to forgo their own comfort and pleasure by using even part of their savings to ease the sufferings of these unfortunate people? Well, this is exactly what happens when it comes to changing our way of life: our thoughts and feelings may be in agreement, but there is a great distance between that and getting our will to overcome its bad habits of laziness and selfishness.

When they listen to my talks or read my books, I know that some people think, 'Poor man! How can he believe that it's easy to get people to follow the path of wisdom, justice and love?' No, I am not so naïve as to believe that it is easy. I talk in order to enlighten those who come to listen to me, because all inner change begins with understanding, but I am well aware that the rest does not depend on me. I cannot make anybody love truth if they prefer illusions.

In fact, it would be true to say that it is when you discover truth, when you love the truth, that your difficulties really begin. I discovered these difficulties in myself first. I realized that you can receive the light and love the light, but when it comes to getting your psychic self to surrender to that light and be suffused with it, my God, what a time it takes and how difficult it is! At times, it seems to be docile and willing to be moulded, and then it suddenly resists and rebels and gains the upper hand, and everything has to be done all over again. But it is important not to be discouraged, because, little by little, your psychic matter does eventually give in. As long as there is understanding and love, success is bound to follow one day. In any case, of one thing you can be sure: without understanding and love, it is useless to hope for even the tiniest of results.

Understanding and wanting what is good may not be easy, but it is still less difficult than the third phase, which is putting it into practice. People will readily admit that it is better to be sober, to remain faithful to their husband or wife, to control their outbursts of anger and to act honestly. They may sincerely want to achieve these things, but when temptation comes how can they resist? Resistance is possible only if the question is quite clear on the three levels of mind, heart and will, and the greatest difficulty lies in persuading the will to change its habits.

A bad habit is like a stereotype, imprinted on our subtle bodies.² Once the imprint exists, it reproduces itself indefinitely. Even if you regret the failing, it does not make much difference: you will repeat it and regret it all over again. It is an endless series of failings and remorse. More often than not, all your struggles, tears and contrition are ineffectual, because remorse, too, becomes imprinted: it follows every fault but it does not help to prevent it. It is as though the fault and the remorse are two separate entities with no connection between them. They follow each other, and that is all. Perhaps you will say that people are weak. Yes, they are weak. They are weak because they are ignorant. Once they have the light they will overcome their

bad habits.

And what should they do then? Replace the old stereotypes, the bad habits, little by little, by consciously cultivating different thoughts, different feelings and, above all, different gestures. These will be like new recordings, new imprints, which will neutralize the old ones. The old ones are not erased, for nothing ever disappears in nature, but they are overlaid by the new ones, which will function in their place.

A man once confided in me that he was irresistibly attracted to very young girls. He asked for my advice, because he realized how dangerous this attraction was but did not know how to fight the tendency. This is the advice I gave him: 'Try meeting a young girl who leaves you indifferent. With her you will find it easier to keep control of yourself, and you can begin consciously to practise keeping your distance. Then, you can meet another and then another, and continue to behave correctly. In this way you will gradually create a new attitude within yourself. This new attitude will gain the upper hand, so that when you find yourself in the company of young girls who would once have caused you to lose your head, your behaviour will be beyond reproach. But be on your guard! Continue to practise with those who are no temptation to you.'

But, what generally happens? Exactly the opposite: people make a beeline for the people and things that attract them and turn their back on the rest. If you want to overcome a temptation or weakness, you must replace the object that constitutes a danger to you with one that is innocuous. In this way, you will create new stereotypes, which will protect you.

But even if you are not exposed to temptations that would be ruinous to you if you succumbed, you should always remember to create new and better habits in order to progress.

And did you know that it is the devil – well, let's say the devil – that often encourages people to repent so that they will pursue their path of error with new energy and greater ardour? No, of course, you didn't know that. Feeling sorry and crying only reinforces the opposite desire. It is as though our tears and regrets are a source of energy our desires draw on to renew their attacks. Yes, that is human nature, and those who do not understand its twists and turns and its snares will keep repeating the same mistakes.

So many people think they behave in accordance with the good that they understand and love, when, in reality, their behaviour is in complete contradiction to it. But it is impossible to get them to admit this. Why?

Because they imagine that recognizing an ideal intellectually and wanting it to be true are enough for it to be so. Well, no, unfortunately that is not the case. In fact, this is where things begin to get really difficult. And this is why lucidity is one of the most important qualities for a disciple to have.

It is certainly better to behave well, but bad behaviour is not the worst thing. The worst thing is not being aware of it. Those who are incapable of recognizing that they have behaved badly end up becoming inextricably entangled in contradictions. Their endeavours fail; they are shunned by others, and they do not understand why. They thought they were faultless and that others would approve of them, even admire them. They are upset by what happens to them and imagine that the whole world is in league against them, and this has a very negative effect on their thoughts and feelings. They rebel and, in their rebellion, lose both their light and their love. And all this just because they refuse to admit that they have failed to work on the third level, the level of realization.

It is almost pointless anyone embarking on a spiritual life if they do not understand just how tough the lower nature is and the degree of vigilance, humility and abnegation³ required to work on it. Far too many people think that, just because they have discovered a spiritual teaching, they will be transformed in no time. Not at all! It is far more difficult than they imagine to achieve mastery of their psychic life. Every human being possesses the capacity for renewal, regeneration and becoming divine, but it is a very slow process, and the progress they can achieve in this life depends on the work already begun in previous incarnations.⁴

For those who embark on a spiritual life unaware of the difficulties they will inevitably encounter, it is impossible to make any progress and even more impossible to help others, and with so little to show for their efforts they are soon discouraged. Their instructor or spiritual guide may explain repeatedly and have the impression he has been understood, but then he sees that those who say they follow him do the exact opposite of what they seemed to have understood. In time, how would he not become tired, discouraged, even irritated? And yet the qualities required of an instructor are stability, patience and tolerance.

The sun is the example for this indispensable stability, patience and tolerance.⁵ Like the sun, therefore, a spiritual guide has to give light, and then those that are given it do what they can. I look at the sun every day, and I see that it doesn't get annoyed or become less bright or discouraged just because

human beings are unable to appreciate and make use of its light. So, I tell myself that I mustn't get annoyed or become discouraged or less bright either.

I do not need anyone to explain to me how difficult it is to help human beings to improve. Even those who call themselves disciples often believe that they know what is good for them better than their Master. They want to experience things for themselves, and that is what they do. It is only some time later, after they have been badly treated and betrayed by life, that they finally understand.

At this point they would like to give others the benefit of their newly acquired knowledge, but why would anyone listen to them? They too want to experience things for themselves. This is why the wisdom that some have gained at the cost of immense effort so rarely benefits others.

Human beings have to be well and truly stung and bitten by life before they will admit that what the wise say is true. And now it is their turn to be wise. But there are not very many people who will want to benefit from their wisdom. This is why each new generation repeats the errors of those that have gone before. This is true for individuals, and it is also true for collectivities. How many people really want to draw lessons from history?

You are given light to illuminate your path. Make the decision to walk. Jesus said, *'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you.'* The light Jesus was talking about is obviously not daylight as opposed to the darkness of night. It represents the good conditions, both inner and outer, that are given to us to help us progress.

So often, when people find themselves overwhelmed by difficulties and trials, they suddenly realize how weak and ignorant they are, and they say, 'If only I'd known!' They could have known, for at one time or another all the conditions they needed for learning, making an effort and becoming stronger were available to them, but they ignored the good conditions they were offered. Spiritual life requires effort, and other activities, other concerns seemed more important to them at the time. 'So, is it too late now?' you may ask. No, it is never too late. The path of life is long, infinite in fact, and you will be given other opportunities in this or some other life. Try not to let them slip by next time, so that you will never again have to say, 'If only I'd known!'

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‘The light is with you...’ – John 12:35

¹ See *What is a Spiritual Master?*, Izvor 207, chap. 7: ‘A Master is there only to give light’.

² See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 6: ‘Stereotypes’.

³ See *Man’s Two Natures, Human and Divine*, Izvor 213.

⁴ See *The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 11: ‘The regeneration of matter: the cross and the crucible’.

⁵ See *In Spirit and in Truth*, Izvor 235, chap. 16: ‘The truth of the sun is in giving’.

¹Chapter Two

‘Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing’

I

The symbolism of right and left

In three-dimensional space, which is where we spend our everyday lives, we have the freedom to move forward and backwards, up and down and to right and left. These six directions can be shown using three lines intersecting at right angles. Also, parallels can be drawn between these six directions and the three principles that go to make up a human being. The backwards-forward line represents the mind; the up-down line represents the heart; the right-left line represents the will. And as it is the will that engenders actions, we can say that our activity is deployed sideways.

Most traditions symbolically associate right with good and left with bad. When someone is said to be following the left path, it means they are behaving badly. The symbolism of right and left can be found in Jesus’ words: *‘When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.’* Our hands act under the influence of the will, and the two hands, left and right, are expressions of human activity.

In reality, all directions, whether backwards or forward, up or down, right or left, are good, so long as they are used discerningly. The opposition set up between them is purely symbolic. The language of symbolism is the mathematics of ideas; it encapsulates the most complex realities in a few very simple principles.

So, what did Jesus mean when he said that the left hand should be kept in ignorance of what the right hand is doing? If we took his words literally, it would mean that only the right hand acts justly. But we cannot do much with only one hand. When we are doing practical things, we are aware of how much our left and right hands complement each other and act together. There are a great many practical things we could not do if we had the use of only one hand, and we cannot say that the right hand is more important than the left, even though education usually gives preference to it. For a long time, people believed that left-handedness in children had to be corrected, so they were forced to write or draw with their right hand. But this was a mistake.

Most people are naturally right-handed, but that does not mean that left-handedness should be corrected.

In creating human beings God acted with great wisdom, and since he gave us two hands how could Jesus have advised us to separate them? Of course, you may say that people are not so stupid as to take his words literally. I agree. They don't take them literally, but then how do they take them?

Some people see the two hands as representing the mind and the heart and draw the conclusion that the mind should not meddle in the things of the heart, nor the heart in the things of the mind. No, this is not the correct interpretation. The heart, with its appetites, its passions and its waywardness, may sometimes oppose plans that are wise and sensible, and then the mind needs to intervene and enlighten it. As for the mind, it can be cold, dry and rigid, and the role of the heart is to make it warmer, gentler and more conciliatory.

The truth is that the right and left hands referred to by Jesus represent the human being's two natures: the higher and the lower.² When the right hand, our higher nature, wants to act, 'to give alms' (the expression should be taken in its broadest sense: to do something good), it has to take care that the left hand, our lower nature, does not come and put obstacles in the way. It is a question of strategy: generals never lay out their battle-plans for all to see while they are still in preparation. In the same way, not only must the right hand show intelligence in planning the best possible actions, but it must also be careful to defend them from the manoeuvring of the left hand.

So, the left hand (our lower nature) must be kept in ignorance of what the right hand (our higher nature) is doing. It is not the same for the right hand, which should always know what the left hand is up to so that it can thwart its traps. Our lower nature never stops hatching its nefarious schemes, forcing our higher nature to be constantly on the alert to see what is going on and, when necessary, intervene to bring order. The higher level must know what is going on below. Those in charge should know what their subordinates are doing. Similarly, parents should keep an eye on their children, for if they stop paying attention, the children can get up to all kinds of mischief, have accidents, and so on.

Keep a close eye on how your higher and lower natures relate together. You might make a good resolution, for instance: you tell yourself it's time to change some of your habits, or you plan to help someone. Be aware that your

lower nature is watching, and it will suggest something to tempt you and distract you from your plan. Or perhaps it is waiting patiently for the right moment before retaliating. Yes! What did you think? The lower nature is a whole population living inside you, and – like every other society in the world – it is not composed exclusively of honest, noble, generous individuals. Some of them are malevolent beings trying to use your heart and mind to express themselves through.

So, that's clear: the right and left hands represent not the mind and the heart but rather the higher and lower natures manifesting through them. When your higher nature plans something, your lower nature must not be told of it. Try to put it to sleep or take advantage of times when it is dozing off and cannot hear. Otherwise it will oppose your good intentions and try every means to prevent you from carrying them out. It will whisper, 'There's no hurry. You have plenty of time. Take it easy! Why do you want to go to all that trouble?' And in this way, when the time comes to act, you will no longer have as much enthusiasm and conviction, and you will give up your plan.

It is possible to be strongly Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox and to read the Gospels without understanding a thing, because in order to understand them you need a special kind of knowledge.³ If you have never studied the science of symbols you will not recognize some essential truths, so then what is the good of Jesus having taught these truths? If you want to understand the Gospels, try to bear in mind the interpretations I give you, for they are not my personal interpretations. All I do is refer to the eternal language of symbols. And in this eternal language of symbols, right and left have significance far beyond the two hands.

So many of these symbols are also found in folk tales! In these tales, the lower nature is often portrayed as a dragon that lives beneath a castle, watching over coffers filled with gold and precious stones. The king of the country has promised his daughter's hand in marriage to whichever knight succeeds in taking possession of this treasure. All those who are bold enough to confront the dragon are killed by the deadly fumes of its breath, until, finally, there comes a knight who is exceptionally noble and pure and who has learned from a sage how to protect himself and take the dragon by surprise. He succeeds in bringing down the dragon. Then he explores the subterranean chambers, where he finds the bodies of the other knights, who

suddenly return to life. Then, he takes possession of the treasure and brings it to the king, who, faithful to his promise, gives him his daughter's hand in marriage.

Many different versions of this story have been told, but in reality it is the story of each one of us, each one of you. You live in a physical body (the castle), in which a dragon (your lower nature, your primitive instincts) deprives you of the use of your treasure (your qualities and virtues). Every day, in order to snatch the treasure from its claws, you have to call up your forces, your knights. For a long time the dragon is always the winner, and you have the impression that your struggles have been in vain. But you are wrong! Since you have been instructed in the truths of spiritual science and are putting them into practice, it is you who will be victorious in the end. And all the forces you committed to the struggle, which you thought were wasted and squandered, will be restored to you. On the day of your victory they will be yours again, and you will celebrate your marriage with the princess, your soul.

But the dragon is found not only in folk tales: it is also mentioned in the book of *Revelation*.⁴ It is the dragon that the archangel Michael fights, and it is the dragon that pours a flood of water after the woman. And the beast that rises out of the earth and the beast that rises out of the sea are also aspects of the dragon. But in whatever forms it appears, the dragon always represents our lower nature, which we have to learn to master. In order to do this, listen to the advice of sages and initiates. As long as you have not mastered the dragon, it will continue to feed on your strength. This is why you often feel weak, discouraged, with no energy. And I am not talking only about physical fatigue or lack of energy: I am talking about the incapacity to face up to the difficulties of life both mentally and spiritually.

You can do nothing great in life all the while the dragon, without you realizing it, is devouring your energies. But as soon as you defeat it, your forces are immediately restored to you, and you are also given the power to transform and exploit all the resources of your lower nature.⁵

The Creator wants all human beings to find fulfilment with both of their natures, the higher and the lower, for they complement each other, just as spirit and matter are complementary. That is what the Christ taught: how to use our lower nature to ascend to God. But what has the Church done? Instead of teaching people this truth and giving them methods for putting it

into practice, it has been more concerned to propagate a philosophy and a morality based on disgust for and condemnation of our instincts. This is why Christians still have a lot to learn and understand.⁶

When athletes win a tournament they gain honour, fame and fortune, advantages that are denied to them if they are beaten. A single victory can have a decisive effect on all that follows. And each one of you is called upon to win a victory over yourself, and then you will regain possession of all your treasure, that is, all the gifts and virtues hidden deep within your being.

Conquering the dragon is a very difficult undertaking. This inner enemy constantly spies on us to find out what we plan to do. It tries always to be one step ahead of us, and we must prevent it at all costs from discovering our intentions. If we walk too close to it, it will never stop getting in our way. This is why we must rise to such heights that it will not be able to reach us. It is able to detect our intentions, but it is possible to hoodwink it by concluding a secret pact with heaven.

So, begin by working secretly and in silence. Of course, the dragon will eventually sense that there are changes afoot, and that will make it nervous and anxious. It will become restless, wondering what you are plotting against it and will find all kinds of arguments to get you to descend to its level. Don't listen. Intensify your efforts and continue to rise in spite of everything. Victory depends on it.

Through prayer and meditation, not only do you conclude a pact with heaven against the dragon, but as you progress through the different regions you will receive the weapons you need to overpower it. You organize an entire resistance in secret, receiving munitions and even parachutes for the day when you will have to come back down to take possession of the territory!

And now let me give you another way of applying the Gospel precept. When you are planning something, if you want to be ready and well-armed, do not announce it in advance. Carry out your plan, and there will be plenty of time to talk about it and explain it later. Why all these precautions once again? Because there are invisible entities – not only within you but all around you – just waiting to put obstacles in your way. They will use your family, your friends, your work colleagues, your neighbours, and you will run into great difficulties and even fail altogether. And that's not to mention those

who, seemingly with the best intentions, will try to discourage you by saying, 'But do you think it's really worth the effort? Why go to so much trouble? Wouldn't it be better to...?'

When ministers or government officials have to make decisions for the good of the country, it would be better if they did not reveal them in advance. Why? Because there will always be people – well-intentioned or not – who will try to put a spoke in their wheels. Of course, they have to make known their programme and present laws to parliament to be debated and voted on. That is normal, but there are disadvantages to that too.

But as far as you are concerned, it is best to wait if you can until you have started carrying out your plans before talking about them. Once they have begun to take shape they will be like a tree with firm roots, which cannot be knocked down by the wind. And your tree will bear fruit, which you can share with those around you.

When it comes to doing something bad, people sense instinctively that they must hide so as not to be caught and punished. But when it comes to doing good, they imagine they can show themselves! In fact, vanity makes some people flaunt their good deeds, and this triggers opposition, exciting ill will and jealousy. Do you want to do someone a favour? Be careful. It might be better if there were no witnesses. Sometimes, in fact, it would be better if even the person you were helping did not know where the help was coming from, because your gesture could spark an unexpected reaction. In their relations with others, people never take sufficient account of the complicated connections between our higher and lower natures.

Similarly, try to be careful and discreet about your spiritual life. You need to work for a long time to strengthen your convictions and aspirations. If you announce to all and sundry that you have at last found the path of light, that you have decided to follow that path, and so on, you will place yourself in the situation where you create obstacles for yourself and provoke reactions. Some will try with this or that argument to show you that you are going in the wrong direction, that you are idealistic and naive, or some such thing. And if your convictions are not yet firm enough, not only will you fail to convince them that they are mistaken, but you will be won over by them. As long as you have not given concrete expression to your aspirations, it is important not to reveal them. Keep them safe inside you, watch over them and nurture them with your best thoughts and feelings. Doors and windows exist because it is

useful not only to open them but also to close them. When we close them it is usually to protect ourselves from the cold or from noise, dust or intruders. In our spiritual life too, we have to know how to close certain doors and windows for our own protection. This, too, is what Jesus means when he advises, '*Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.*'

Each one of you has a wellspring deep within your soul. When you discover it, do not reveal it to others. Keep it hidden from view, in case careless, crude or malicious people come and defile it. If you know how to protect the water springing from its source, not only will you never again suffer from thirst, but you will be able to quench the thirst of all those around you.

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'When you give alms,...' – *Matt. 6:3*

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The beast that rises out of the sea – *Rev. 13:1-10*

'Do not let your left hand know...' – *Matt. 6:3*

II

The two hands of God

Right and left – as I have said, traditionally these have been seen as being in opposition to one another at a moral level, but that is only symbolic. However, for certain actions in everyday life it is as well to take this notion into account. Why? Because each time it is an opportunity to do some work on the psychic level. When you greet someone with a handshake you extend your right hand. Similarly, when you wave to someone at a distance, it is also better to use the right hand – and in both cases, remember to infuse the gesture with something good. And when you have to give someone something, give it with your right hand, and accompany the gesture consciously with a positive thought.⁷

A hand is not only a physical reality. It extends onto subtler planes, where it can receive as well as transmit currents and forces. You will begin to sense this if you get into the habit of doing certain exercises. Here is a very simple

one, which should be done when you are alone and, if possible, before noon. Hold out your right hand and, in your mind, extend its reach as far as possible, remembering that your fingers are like antennae and can pick up energies. If you then place your hand on your solar plexus, you will feel your solar plexus filling up with a beneficial warmth.

The truth is, though, that however many exercises you do with your hand, they will have no effect if you have never learned how to bring your hand to life. A hand becomes alive when you dedicate it to selfless actions, when you learn how to touch people and things in such a way as to communicate purity, love and light to them. When this is the case, it does not matter whether your hands are maimed or crippled: they will emit something so warm and radiant that everyone will feel it and will regard your hands as a source of blessings.

I have often observed the hands of people I meet, and I have noticed that delicate, pretty, perfumed hands can sometimes emanate something lascivious and repugnant, whereas other hands, even if they are misshapen or neglected, seem to be infused with all the good qualities of the person's mind and heart – so much so that it would be nice to shake or even kiss them.

It is still the custom to kiss the right hand of ecclesiastical dignitaries such as bishops, cardinals and popes. This is thought to be a mark of respect. Yes, but that mark of respect is based on a knowledge of the hand's powers. People who have dedicated themselves to a spiritual life are seen as transmitters of heaven's blessings. I know, you are going to say that many of them have quite other concerns, but that is not my focus at the moment. My focus is on getting you to see that the hands of those who have worked for many years with love and wisdom really are in touch with the powers of the cosmos.

Some statues of the Buddha show him looking at his right hand. But is he only looking at it? The truth is that when the Buddha is concentrating on his right hand he is in communion with the great hand of the Creator, that is, with the whole universe – the suns, the stars, the nebulae. In the hand of the Creator, the Milky Way represents the line of Saturn.

If the Buddha is concentrating on his right hand, it is because our hand is not simply a physical organ we use as a tool or instrument. It is suffused with a fluidic matter that enables it to communicate with the subtle bodies of nature. Like the Buddha, anyone who concentrates on their hand is communicating with the universe. They feel they are in the Creator's hand, being nourished by the energies they receive from its centre.

But let us get back to the question of the two hands, right and left. Even if we respect the symbolic dimension of the right hand in our daily life, we cannot ignore the fact that all cultures and civilizations are the work of both hands. The right and left hands go together, harmonize and complement each other, with each being only one of the two aspects of unity. It is impossible to think of one hand independently of the other, for they are polarized. The right hand has the masculine polarity, the left the feminine polarity. This is why they have often been seen in relation to the sun (the right hand) and the moon (the left hand), both of which have an influence on us. The two principles, masculine and feminine, project currents through the two hands so that, together, they can heal, succour, protect, restore and enlighten.

Why, then, has the right been associated with good and the left with evil? When I talked to you about the question of good and evil, I explained that they manifest as two forces at work in the universe.⁸ Both forces are under the authority of God, the supreme Being. They are his two hands. This idea can be seen in the sephirothic Tree: on the right is the pillar of mercy, and on the left is the pillar of severity, and between the two rises the pillar of balance, at the top of which is placed the first sephirah, *Kether*, the crown.⁹

Those who are only interested in achieving their ambitions and in satisfying their sensuality and all their base instincts align themselves with the left hand path, laying themselves open to punishment by the powers of severity. It is not some terrifying, vengeful God that punishes them: they lay themselves open to the severity of the cosmic laws. Those, on the other hand, who choose to walk the path of light will naturally align themselves with the right-hand path, the side of mercy, and attract to themselves nothing but blessings.

Since evil exists, it must have a role to play in the great body of the cosmos. As human beings, we cannot know the purpose of its existence. We only see that it is used by a higher intelligence, that it has a part to play in its designs and thus contributes to our evolution.

In nature, opposites are only seemingly in opposition to one another: the one never excludes the other. Of course, to begin with, we have to see the two hands as two distinct entities that are opposed and sometimes even hostile to each other. But then we also have to see that, when they are working, they are inextricably connected. It is the same with our physical body: there are centres in the brain and along the spinal column that

coordinate activities and processes that are apparently contradictory.

From a philosophical, metaphysical point of view, questions raised by duality find their answer in unity, the unity which is the very essence of God. But in the moral sphere we have to advance towards unity slowly and cautiously so as to avoid confusing everything. Many so-called spiritual people make this mistake. Having read or heard someone say that there is no such thing as good or evil, pure or impure, beauty or ugliness, they embrace all kinds of wild and dangerous notions and claim to be acting in all innocence while, at the same time, committing crimes.

In the sphere of manifestation, good and evil will always be seen to be in conflict. But is this the reality? The only way to understand this is by analogy. Suppose you are at the theatre watching a play. On the stage, a jealous, ambitious character cannot bear the fact that someone else, through his own merits, has acquired the post he himself wanted or the woman he had hoped to seduce. One day he manages to provoke his rival and kills him. Of course, you would have every reason to be indignant and disgusted by this. But when you leave the theatre after the play, you find you are thirsty, so you stop in at a nearby bar for a drink, and what do you see? To your astonishment, there are the assassin and his victim, those two implacable enemies, sitting at the same table, talking and laughing while they eat and drink together. If you want always to see them as enemies, you have to stay in the theatre, but if you venture into the wings or leave the building, you will find a totally different reality.

In the same way, good and evil appear to be implacable adversaries, but if you were able to enter the wings of the theatre of cosmic life, you would see that they are both servants of the same higher power. And this power directs them, using them in pursuit of long-term goals of which we have no knowledge.

At the highest peak of creation, therefore, there exists a Being who makes use of these two conflicting currents of nature while maintaining the balance between them.¹⁰ And in the far more limited field of our own action, we must try to act in the same way, by constantly adjusting and restoring the balance between the two sides. Look at how a driver holds the steering wheel: right hand down a bit, left hand down a bit. The two hands are constantly active, complementing each other. In this way, both car and driver arrive safe and sound. Just as the right and left hands are two instruments of a single brain,

good and evil are two currents that flow from a single Source. This is why they can be said to be the two hands of God. One day, when we have completed our evolution, we will discover this unique Source. At present we live in duality, and we need to bear in mind the advice Jesus gave, '*Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*' so that we avoid anything that would make us deviate from the right path.

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Chapter Three

The programme for the day and the programme for eternity

Very small children will sometimes talk about what they want to do when they are grown up, and then, when the time comes, they often do something entirely different. But, as the work they choose does not necessarily match their temperament or what they were meant to do, they struggle for years to fulfil the programme they have given themselves, only to fail in the end. It is not difficult to give oneself a plan of action. It's sticking to it that is difficult. And sometimes, even when people succeed, the effort and the sacrifices they have to make are out of all proportion to the success obtained.

It is also possible to have no specific programme, but then there is the danger of being at the mercy of circumstances. It is always better to have a goal in order to give direction to our activities. Really, though, the important thing is to avoid the two extremes: the absence of any programme and too rigid a programme are equally dangerous. The solution to this problem can be found in Jesus' words: *'Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.'* *'Do not worry about tomorrow...'* So, Jesus is speaking here about a programme for a single day. Why?

A life is divided into years of twelve months each, and each month has from twenty-eight to thirty-one days, each day has twenty-four hours, each hour sixty minutes, and each minute sixty seconds. All these durations of time are overlapping and link together in one unbroken sequence. And this means that it is enough to organize the activities of a single day well for the whole chain to unfold in harmony, link by link.

So many men and women invest the capital of their heart, of their vitality, not to mention their fortune, in projects with long-term commitments, and then, when the results are not what they had hoped for, how disappointed they are! Perhaps you will say that it is always tempting to look to the future. That is true, but there is a better way of going about it. Concentrate all your attention, all your energy, on today. In that way, you will be preparing tomorrow and all the days to come. Day after day, slowly but surely and without fully realizing it, you will be carrying out the programme the lords of destiny have written into your nature. For the moment, you cannot have a

very clear idea of what it is, but after many years, when you look back over all that has occurred in your life, the route and the programme you have followed will become clear to you.

If you plant the seed from a lemon, apple or melon, do you tell it, 'Now listen to me. I'll tell you your programme: you've got to become a lemon tree – or apple tree or melon plant – otherwise you'll be punished'? No. The seed already has a programme written inside it. Once it is in the ground, it only needs to be watered and protected from heat, cold and insects, and it will carry out its programme and become what God intended it to be. First of all, it starts by developing roots. It is not concerned about the trunk, branches or leaves, nor about flowers or fruit: it will take care of those later.

A tree knows its own programme. It is not always thinking about tomorrow. It works today, it roots itself in the earth, and day by day it builds up its structure. Once one element is firmly in place, it moves on to the next phase, accomplishing each day's programme according to the degree of development it has reached, without wondering what it will have to do next year or in a hundred years.

Why am I talking about trees? Because human beings are also seeds and they too have their programme. If they are not yet able to know what that programme is, it is because they are continually inventing programmes for themselves that only obscure their view and make them deviate from their true path. In order to discover the plan written deep down in their soul, they need to keep themselves inwardly free and available.

What else can we learn from nature about this question of programmes? The earth completes its circuit round the sun in twenty-four hours, giving approximately twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness. The moon waxes and wanes in a cycle of twenty-eight days. As for the sun, it takes a year to 'travel' through the twelve signs of the zodiac. It is these three cycles of the earth, the moon and the sun that have the most direct influence on our life, but there are many others. It was by studying these cosmic cycles that the initiates discovered the various programmes: programmes for a single day, for a month, for a year, for a century... and, where human beings are concerned, for eternity.

The programme of a tiny acorn is to attain the height, the beauty, the solidity, the majesty of its father, the oak. In the same way, human beings are destined, one day, to become like their heavenly Father. That is their

programme. They do not have to prepare it: it has been written into their nature from the beginning. This is their programme for eternity, and it determines the general trend and orientation of their lives. But in order to see it through successfully they must first carry out the programme for the day.

A watch is our most familiar symbol of time. It has three hands: the hour hand, which moves very slowly; the minute hand, which moves a bit faster, and the second hand, which moves faster still. It could be said that we, too, function with several different hands. The slowest is the one that indicates the great programme of eternity, which is to achieve divine perfection. The other, faster-moving hands correspond to what we have to do over shorter periods of time. But the most important one for us while we are here on earth is the one that marks the days. Only if this hand functions correctly will the others do so too.

Now, imagine that you mark out a furrow in the ground and get water to flow along it. This furrow is the wisdom that points you in the right direction, showing you which path to take, and the water is the love that sustains you on your way.¹ Each day lived in wisdom and love prepares the following day, so that you will advance more easily. Today follows on from yesterday, and tomorrow follows on from that, and then months, years, a lifetime. And each lifetime marks out the way ahead for future incarnations. In this way, from one life to the next, you will fulfil the programme of the slowest hand, that of achieving divine perfection.

To begin with, of course, you will feel you have no control over a whole day, nor even over one hour, only over the present moment. Well, try, for at least one minute, to create a state of clarity, peace and love within yourself. This minute will influence the one that follows it, and in this way, minute by minute, you will live your whole day in harmony.

Master Peter Deunov used to say, 'Work according to the laws of wisdom and the methods of love. That is your programme.' Wisdom shows us the ideal for which we must strive, and this magnificent programme will keep us busy for eternity. In order to accomplish it, we must use the methods of love by being very attentive to each minute. In this way, we will be able to harmonize the two programmes: the one for the day and the one for eternity.

Let me illustrate this in another way. Imagine that within each human being there is a mill for grinding grain. Grinding the grain is the programme, and there are sacks full of grain. But before the mill-wheel can start to turn

and the grain be ground into flour, running water is needed. That water is the continuous stream of love flowing from the heart, while the direction, the goal, is indicated by the mind. Love must be in constant flow, so as to give the mind the energy it needs to carry on grinding.

There are laws and there are methods. The laws represent the fixed points we use for direction, and the methods are the tools with which we work. Every activity requires certain methods or tools, and the laws point us in the right direction and show us our destination. This is why Master Peter Deunov said that we have to learn to work with the laws of wisdom and the methods of love. The methods of love make it possible for us to fulfil the great goals of wisdom. Those who think they can arrive at wisdom while ignoring love are mistaken. They will wither and crumble to dust.

There are numerous methods of love: firstly, those that allow us to make exchanges with the whole of nature: deep breathing,² nutrition,³ contemplating the rising sun,⁴ and so on. Then there are those that allow us to exchange with human beings, by showing kindness, generosity and patience.⁵ And there are methods that create exchanges with the divine world, through meditation⁶ and prayer.⁷

The reason why human beings fail to live each day well is that all their attention is focused on vague programmes for a distant future. Once they learn to give all their attention to the programme for each day, all their needs and obligations will become clear to them. At the moment, they are still unable to see or understand what they have to do. Their eyes and ears are occupied with so many other things!

So, try to live today well, and everything will fall harmoniously into place for tomorrow. Are you afraid that if you give all your attention to today you will lose sight of your long-term goals? Be fearless. When you are walking along a path, you do not keep your eyes on your feet all the time, in the belief that if you don't you will lose your way. But neither do you focus on the distance all the time, because you could easily trip over an obstacle or fall in a hole. Well, you must apply this method in your spiritual life too: just as you know how to walk on the physical plane, you must learn how to walk on the spiritual plane. It is vital that you watch your feet – that is, that you pay attention to what you are doing during the day – but you must also look towards your ideal, towards divine perfection, to make sure that you have not strayed from the right path.

Those who do only one of these things – watching their feet or looking into the distance – are always in danger. You should have the laws in your head and the methods in your feet. In other words, you should use wisdom to keep checking the direction you are taking towards your ideal, and keep moving forward by means of love. Love and wisdom are the heart and the mind, the wife and the husband. Would you rather remain single? That is permitted only on the physical plane. On the spiritual plane each individual must be both man and woman. The mind without the heart, the laws without the methods, are like a divorced couple.

The Gospels tell of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman by a well. He said to her: *“...those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”* The woman said to him, *“Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”* Jesus said to her, *“Go, call your husband, and come back.”* The woman answered him, *“I have no husband.”* Jesus said to her, *“You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’, for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”*

What is the meaning of this episode? Jesus has just told the woman that those who drink the water he will give them will never be thirsty, and when she asks him to give her some of this water, he tells her to go and fetch her husband. What is the connection between the two? It's that the water Jesus is talking about is not ordinary water but the symbol of eternal life, and in order to have eternal life the masculine and feminine principles, mind and heart, spirit and soul, have to work together. Neither principle can live eternal life without the other. Inwardly the two must always be present.⁸ If you are single, make sure that the two principles within you get on well together. We are not told how much the Samaritan woman understood of Jesus' words. Not much, probably, but have many people understood them any better since then?

Let's suppose there's a young man who wants to become an engineer. To achieve this he will necessarily have to follow a course of study, and if he is cut out for the profession his studies will contribute towards fulfilling his inner programme. Unfortunately, many men and women are constrained, by all kinds of external pressures or by their own ambition, to choose a profession that is not helpful for their spiritual development.

It is impossible to free yourself from the constraints imposed by your family or society at large, but as far as you possibly can, try to live by the laws inscribed in your soul. The work I am talking about is spiritual work, and the programme I am setting out before you is the programme Jesus gave two thousand years ago: *'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.'* ⁹⁹ There is only one programme that is valid for the whole of humanity: to move closer every day to the perfection of our heavenly Father. How can we accomplish this programme? By giving ourselves a programme for the day when we wake up each morning.

Many people will say that they know their daily programme and have done for a long time: get out of bed, wash, get dressed, take care of the children or the parents, go to work, prepare the meals, keep the house clean, make appointments, meet so-and-so... No, that is not the programme I am talking about. In any case, there is no need for me to talk to you about these things. They are imposed on you, just as, in a way, they are imposed on animals, for animals too have to go to sleep and get up; they too have to clean themselves, build their lairs, find food and raise their young. They too meet together and even have certain forms of social life. The programme I am talking about is solely concerned with your inner life, and it is prepared while you are sleeping.

Many people still think of sleep as a purely physiological function. They are tired so they sleep – just as they eat when they are hungry – unaware that sleep, like nutrition and all the other physiological functions, can be experienced on a higher level than the purely physical. You will experience this for yourself if you get into the habit, just before you fall asleep, of saying, 'Lord, while I am asleep, I want to learn. Allow me to attend your school of love, wisdom and truth so that I may learn to give richer and richer meaning to my life.'

When you wake up the next morning, open your eyes consciously, and spend a few minutes analysing your inner frame of mind, the thoughts and feelings that come to you. You will find that you have been given the solution to a problem or clarity concerning a question that has been worrying you. Do not hurry to get out of bed before doing this analysis. We receive instruction in the invisible world at night, while we are asleep. Even if you don't remember exactly what you have learned, you will sense that some new elements have been added to your understanding of things. Every day is a new life. Every morning we are born to the world, and every evening we

leave the world, and it is important to live the latter moment well for it prepares the conditions for the next day. Whatever kind of day you have had, before going to sleep try to let go of anything that may darken your consciousness. Summon to mind the highest thoughts and feelings to accompany you on the sacred journey you are about to make into the next world.¹⁰ In the morning you will come into the new day with a sense of light, peace and joy.

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Chapter Four

‘Do not worry about tomorrow’

Your most important concern, every day, must be to introduce peace and harmony into all your activities so that you are ready for tomorrow’s programme, for you never really know what that programme will be. ‘Oh, but we do!’ you will say. ‘We know only too well the work that is waiting for us, the commitments we have made.’ Yes, of course, but that is only the framework, so to speak, of your activities. Within that framework you can be faced with all kinds of different situations. Even if you simply have to carry on with what you were doing yesterday, the conditions will never be identical. So many things can change from one day to the next! We continually need to adapt ourselves with regard to our work, our family, and society as a whole.

Life is in perpetual motion. If we are not prepared, there will always be surprises! And we all know how unexpected situations can affect us: the uncertainty, anxiety and upset. Each day brings new problems to be resolved, and how can you do that if you have not sorted out yesterday’s problems? You can be sure of tomorrow only if you have strengthened the foundations of your psychic life today. How you are affected by external events depends entirely on you, on your ability to organize your own inner world. This organization will be reflected in how you perceive things, so that when tomorrow comes events will find you ready and resolute.

Jesus said, *‘Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.’* And he offers the example of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. *‘Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.’*

There are people who, claiming to follow Jesus’ advice, end up penniless and a burden to others. Yes, the lilies of the field and the birds of the air... In the Gospels Jesus often uses images drawn from nature, but they are still images, and we have to interpret them. No human being can live like a plant or an animal. When Jesus says that the birds of the air *‘gather nothing into barns’* and that lilies *‘neither toil nor spin’*, he is warning us about our materialistic tendencies (the accumulation of wealth and an exaggerated

concern for outward appearances), for in order to satisfy those tendencies we are forced to do things that devour all our time and energy.

It would have been better if certain Churches had been inspired by Jesus' words instead of amassing so much wealth and bringing so much splendour to their religious ceremonies. When Jesus sent the apostles to preach the kingdom of God, he told them, '*Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money – not even an extra tunic.*' It is, of course, impossible to follow these instructions to the letter, but even so, was it not up to those who undertook to spread the Gospel message to show an example?

When Jesus advises us not to worry about tomorrow, he is not telling us to be unconcerned. On the contrary, he is emphasizing the awareness and attention that help us to live well today. '*Today's trouble is enough for today.*' We have to 'take trouble', therefore, for tomorrow will not sort itself out; it is unwise to let it come without preparing for it. The success of tomorrow depends on how we behave today. Not worrying about tomorrow implies being concerned today. It is today that demands all our attention, all our care. Many people are so concerned with the future that they forget the present! They think that since they are already experiencing the present there is not much they need to know about it. Well, that is where they are wrong!

If we are not to worry about tomorrow, we must take care of today. Tomorrow does not exist yet, so worrying about it is like launching out into the void: we lose our way. It is today that we have to work on, because today doesn't die; it only grows longer, and in growing longer it becomes tomorrow. When you reach the end of what you call today, you say that it is tomorrow. Tomorrow began by being today. Today will become tomorrow. But no one has ever seen, or tasted or touched tomorrow. It exists only in theory, as an abstraction. As soon as you reach it you no longer call it tomorrow. You call it today.

The future is a projection, and the past is a memory; only the present is the real time we live in. Those who worry about tomorrow forget to live in the present, and they will never know how this present can become eternal. When they project themselves into the future, which does not exist, they die to the eternal present.

So many men and women escape into the future because they cannot bear the present! But in doing so they are no better off. Sooner or later, they will have to face the truth: the future they have imagined has no solid foundation,

and so they have found only emptiness and anguish. If only they would decide to live in the present, where there is so much to experience, to see, to appreciate, and to think about! But in order to live the present moment they have to learn to stop, to pause, to refuse to be swept along by the succession of events and the inner states that these events create in them.

It is true, of course: life is an uninterrupted flow, but we have to find a way to stop and introduce some order into our inner life, to tune in to more harmonious rhythms. And that is where meditation is so necessary. Meditation slows down the hurried pace of time and establishes an inner rhythm, peace and light, which will leave their mark for a long time.¹

Picture a man waking up in the morning: he jumps out of bed and then rushes to wash, get dressed, eat – or rather, gulp down – his breakfast, all the while thinking of all the things he has to do during the day. He does not listen to what his wife and children say to him. It is only when he is in his car or on the train or metro that he thinks about the family he has just left at home. And his whole day passes in the same way: he is never present with whatever he is doing. When he is at home he thinks about his work, and when he is at work he thinks about home. And in his hurry, he forgets things that are important, makes mistakes and says unfortunate things, which he will have to put right. By projecting himself into the future in this way, he is actually a captive of the past, and when tomorrow's programme arrives, he is not free to carry it out. He is still busy correcting the mistakes he made yesterday... or the day before.²

Many people feel constantly driven to get on in life, without really knowing where they are going. They have no control over anything. They allow themselves to be led, to be carried along – they cannot see any order or clear direction. Only their desires are clear to them, desires which keep thrusting them into the future. Their whole being is striving to gratify their desires, and as they never question the merits of the methods they use to achieve this, countless mistakes and faults inevitably follow. The trouble is that when we do wrong, the present, which stretches into the future, even destroys the good we built in another present, which we now call the past.

As for the past, it never dies. We continue to carry it within us, with all the seeds of destruction also contained in it. In the soul of those who are now trying to build something good, there is a perpetual struggle between the past and present, which coexist within them. Sometimes the one gains the upper hand, sometimes the other, and this explains the contradictions we see in

human behaviour. Many people are deeply troubled when they realize that good and evil coexist within them.

‘Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.’ Jesus’ words require us to meditate on the idea of continuity. If you make a chain, you have to be sure that each link is strong, for if just one link is weak and breaks, it makes no difference that the others hold well: the chain is broken. So, we have to live every day according to the divine laws, so that every day is a solid link and the chain does not break. Today is a new link that will be joined to all the others, and it is this link that we must focus on.

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Chapter Five

Only the present belongs to us

Every morning, when you wake up, remind yourself that nothing is more important than living this day well. In a way, the past is still alive and still influences the present, but you do not have to let it take control. On the contrary, you must hand control to the present and allow it to dominate the past, to overpower it in order to transform it. When the past was the present it was all-powerful, but now that it is the past it is subordinate to the present, and the present has a say in the matter. The past is gone and the future is still to come. It is up to the present to impose its will so as to transform the past and give direction to the future. When the future becomes the present, it will be its turn to be all-powerful, but for the time being it is subject to the present, and if the present is flawed, then the future will be flawed.

The present is the privilege of God. God lives in the eternal present. It is to the present that he has given all powers. Knowing this, you should tell yourself, ‘Today, we too have control over the present. The past has gone and the future does not yet exist. Only the present belongs to us, so let’s set to work!’ But what do most people do? They mull over the past and dream about the future: they are not in the present. They don’t know how to live in the present, so they let it slip by. And the poor present manages as best it can, but its best is not very good.

More often than not, the past is cause for regrets and remorse. We miss ‘the good old days’. We regret our mistakes, the choices we made, the decisions we took. If we don’t know how to act in the present, what kind of future can we expect? We hope that it will be happy, better than today, but we worry about what might happen. And this will always be so all the while we fail to build tomorrow on the solid foundation of today.

The future will always hold a strong element of uncertainty, that is true. Anything can happen. And to provide for possible accidents in life, we have created what we call ‘insurance policies’. There is nothing wrong with insurance, but it encourages people to believe that all the things they care about can be made safe. So, even if they are careless or foolhardy, it doesn’t matter: the insurance will pay! So they insure their house, their car, their jewellery – some even insure their legs or their hands – but they forget to cultivate their most precious qualities: attentiveness, vigilance, a sense of responsibility, and everything that contributes to the wealth of their soul and

spirit. But they are not aware of this, so they have to be taught a lesson, for nothing on this earth is safe. No insurance policy will compensate for what they lose by remaining feeble, neglectful and lazy.

Anything can happen in life, the bad as well as the good. It is pointless wasting time and energy imagining all the accidents that could happen and all the ways we could protect ourselves from them. Whatever form events take, the only way to find solutions for the future is to do today's work as well as possible.

The best way to really appreciate the importance of the present day is to behave as if it were our last. Perhaps you will say, 'But that's terrible, to think about death all the time.' No, not at all! Living each day as though it were our last does not lead to death; on the contrary, it leads to life. It is those who lead their life in a superficial, careless way while continuing to hope for a better future who are on the way to death. Yes, because they are wasting their life. When the wise tell us to live each day as though it were our last, they are wanting us to try to make the present more useful, more beautiful, more valuable, something unique. You don't really believe that it will be your last day; you are simply using a teaching method.

The past has escaped you and the future is not yet in your grasp. So only the present belongs to you. You hold it in your hands as raw material ready to be modelled. You have a minute, an hour, a day – and that minute, that hour, that day belongs to you.

Even if you did have only twenty-four hours to live, in those twenty-four hours you could achieve a revolution. What kind of revolution? The same as the earth makes around the sun in the course of a year. You can achieve a revolution that puts everything to rights, particularly your relationships with family and friends and with God himself. You can admit your mistakes, try to make amends for them, and ask those you have wronged or injured to forgive you. When there is no more darkness, when you have cleared the space between you and your Creator, and when you sense that you are ready to come into his presence, only then will you be able to say that the future belongs to you too.

Of course, even if you live today impeccably, your past mistakes will still have repercussions in the future. This is why, when you meet with difficulties and obstacles, it is important to know where they come from and not to deceive yourself. Don't say as some do, 'I have always behaved unselfishly, always been patient and kind, and that's what I get!' Yes, it is extraordinary

how people are ready to see their trials as the consequence of their good deeds rather than of the mistakes they have made!

Your future is one of joy and light. Don't be influenced by those who predict only difficulty and misfortune. They don't know what the future really is or how to create it. Misfortunes are the past, not the future. Before the future can happen – that is to say, your true future as sons and daughters of God – it must wait for the past to be erased, but that does not mean that it is not already on its way. In reality it is alive and already there – you are creating it.

So, what is the present? It is the means by which we transform the past and create the future. Only now, in the present moment, is it possible to remedy our past mistakes and create a luminous future. Those who make no attempt to use the present, who leave it to be just like the past, can never make good their past shortcomings. They will continue to live in darkness and suffering.

So, there you have the present. Pounce on it – have done with the outworn past and create your own future! If you make up your mind now to work on it, the magnificent future you long for will become your present. But if you keep putting off the effort to some future date, your future will never begin, and you will continue to live in the eternal past. As long as your present is identical to the past, your future will simply extend and expand the past. For those who are short-sighted and lazy, the past goes on forever: their future will always be the past. Whereas if the present is lived consciously it works on the past, becoming the future.¹

But for the present to be conscious, it means that you yourself must be 'present' at what you are doing, especially when you are praying, or meditating or contemplating the rising sun. Take the example of a man and woman who are deeply in love. When they are together they are capable of forgetting everything else: work, family, friends, country, even any danger they may be in. They gaze deep into each other's eyes, and if they try to describe what they see, they talk only of suns, of stars, of immensity.

When you are getting ready to pray or meditate or watch the sunrise, say to yourself, 'I am with purity, I am with light, I am with my beloved Lord, I am with my beloved divine Mother. All that matters is this moment, when I can commune with them.' There will be plenty of time later to go back to your work and your worries. Just for a moment let go of your baggage and

burdens, and stand before the Divine and the splendours of nature, free and unladen. In this way, you will find the solution to many of your inner problems, to situations that up to now have seemed inextricable.² In order to see and understand you have to be present. And in order to be present you have to be free. This freedom is what the initiates teach.

All your experiences in the present are preparing the future. By paying attention to the way you live in the present, you are preparing yourself for the best encounters. So many splendid opportunities come your way, and you fail to benefit from them simply because you have not prepared yourself. This is the meaning of the parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins. Only the wise virgins, who had prepared oil for their lamps, were admitted by the bridegroom to the wedding banquet.³

The oil prepared by the wise virgins is a symbol of all the inner conditions we must fulfil if we are to be present, free, alert and active when we have an encounter that could transform our life: an encounter with a person, with beauty, with something true. Those who have indulged in base actions and inner states that have robbed them of all their energy will be like the foolish virgins, who were not admitted to the wedding banquet: they will find an inner door closed to them.

Sometimes, when you think back on the events of your life, you tell yourself that you have often let an opportunity slip by, and you regret it. This is especially true where your inner life is concerned. But you must not dwell on regrets. Once you have drawn lessons from the past, do your best to free yourself from it and live in the present, in full awareness and in the light, in order to create the future.

¹ See *The Laughter of a Sage*, Izvor 243, chap. 2: 'Like a shepherd watching over his sheep' and chap. 3: 'Protecting the frontiers of our soul'.

² See above, chap. 4: 'Waiting and staying alert'.

³ See *New Light on the Gospels*, Izvor 217, chap. 9: 'The parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins'.

Chapter Six

Before the sun goes down

What could be more terrible for a human being than to see their life drawing to a close and to sense that they have wasted it? They look back over the past, and it is as though everything has been reduced to dust in their hands. Even those who could be said to have had a very full life, all things considered, will sometimes feel this at the end. They may have directed companies or even ruled a country; they may have travelled the world and met lots of people, whose life they may have totally changed, and at the time they had the impression that what they were doing was important and meaningful. But now, all they feel is a sense of uselessness and emptiness.

The god Osiris, in the religion of ancient Egypt, and the archangel Michael, in the Christian tradition, use scales to weigh human souls, in order to decide their fate in the afterlife. But these scales exist, first of all, in us. Yes, this weighing takes place within us first. This is why so many people, when they approach the end of a life that has been bursting with activity, come to the same conclusion as Solomon in the book of *Ecclesiastes*: ‘*Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*’ Actually, the Hebrew word *havel*, which has been translated as ‘vanity’, really means ‘smoke’. ‘Smoke of smokes. All is smoke’. So, this king, whose reputation was said to have reached to the very ends of the earth, finally declared that all was smoke.

At the end of *Ecclesiastes*, however, Solomon says: ‘*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come, and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no pleasure in them.”*’ Yes, we must place the idea of our Creator at the centre of our life when we are still very young.

Many people, when they no longer have so much energy for the pursuit of glory, power or pleasure, decide that it’s time they became wiser and thought less about earth and more about heaven. But what do they imagine? When you have no energy for earth, you will have none for heaven either. Sitting quietly in a corner because you no longer have the strength for business, intrigue or love affairs is not wisdom, still less spirituality.

‘*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...*’ Why? So that he will orientate your life by filling you with his light and his love.¹ Those who espouse the devil in their youth will be repudiated by him in old age, because there will be nothing more he can take from them. They think they are

divorcing of their own free will, but that is not so: it is the devil that gets rid of them. He sends back to God all the old wrecks he no longer has any use for. And what a sorry sight they are for the Lord! And what a help they must be to him in his work!

A man once confided in me that he was afraid of dying in an accident, without having a chance to prepare himself. He wanted to end his life in bed, because then he would have time to get closer to God. He was very surprised when I told him that it would be a bit late to turn to God when he was already on his deathbed. But that is how people think: as long as they are well, it always seems too soon to think about what is most important, about the meaning of their life and the Creator who has given it to them – it will be enough to think about that at the last minute. Well, they are wrong!

You'll say, 'But then, if we're already old, and we've wasted our time on trivial activities, does that mean that it's too late?' No. It is a bit late, of course, but it's not too late – it's never too late. It would be the greatest mistake to spend the time left to you in regrets. It is always possible to rectify the situation inwardly. If you sense that you have been wasting your time, then this is the opportunity to do some soul-searching, to go back over all the events of your life, the things you have done and the people you have met, to draw lessons from it all. Once you have understood a lesson, make use of all your faculties, of all the love, intelligence and willpower remaining to you, to give your life the meaning it has never had.

The meaning of life – of the life of each one of us – is to live on this earth knowing that our true roots are on high, in the divine world, and that our job is to express that divine world by means of our thoughts, feelings and actions.² Even if it is too late now to begin a new life, we can all do our best to leave the world in a spirit of peace, harmony and reconciliation with all our fellow creatures and, especially, with God. This is the meaning of the last rites practised in the Christian religion.

The sacrament of extreme unction, which the priest administers to the dying, is based on the knowledge that the final state of consciousness determines a person's path in the next world, and it also plays an important role for his or her next incarnation and, consequently, long-term future. This sacrament simply offers human beings the opportunity to leave this world in the best possible conditions, but like all the sacraments it is not indispensable as a rite or ceremony. It is meant to help those who receive it, but every individual can live his or her last moments in the light without receiving the

sacrament.

To live is to love. And even if, as death draws near, you are no longer able to do anything, it is still possible to feel love and kindness for creation as a whole and for those around you. It is important to know that when you love you master death.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said: *‘So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.’* In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul expresses the same idea: *‘...do not let the sun go down on your anger.’* Before offering your gift, while you are still on your way, before the sun goes down: these are just three different ways of saying ‘before it is too late’.

Sunset represents the end of the day’s cycle. But in the language of symbolism, a day can represent more than twenty-four hours: it can also mean a month, a year or even a lifetime. The time before sunset represents the period of physical life; after sunset, the period of astral life. In Hebrew, the word *iam* means both the sea and the west, in other words the area in the sky where the sun sets. When the soul leaves a person’s body it ‘goes down’ in the west and is forced to cross the great sea, the astral plane. Then it proceeds towards the east, where the sun rises, and incarnates again.

When we are on the point of leaving this earth, we must make our peace and be in harmony with all beings. And if there are still some with whom we are in conflict, we must not allow this situation to continue: we must also make our peace with them. Otherwise, it will be recorded within us as a debt that still has to be paid. You may say, ‘But some of those people we may never have the chance to see again, and there are others who would never be willing to patch things up with us.’ That is true. But you can always seek out these people in your thoughts and make peace with them in your heart and soul.³

The rising sun marks the beginning of the day, and if you have plans at the beginning of the day, you are free to carry them out or not, or to change them. But when the sun goes down – in other words, at the end of the day – what is

done is done, no more and no less.

A day can also be compared to the time during which a woman carries a child in her womb. As long as it is still in the womb she can use her thoughts, feelings and wishes to influence it to walk the path of light. And its birth – which everyone thinks of as a beginning – is in reality the end of a condensing, crystallizing process, comparable, in a way, to the sun setting.

Beings and things start by existing on a subtle level. When they appear on the material level, it is simply the end result of a process. And this is true in every area. In the area of health, for instance, before an illness appears in the body it already exists at an invisible level as some kind of disorder or irregularity. If you become aware of it before it is too late – before the sun goes down – you may be able to check it. Otherwise, you will have to endure it, and a possible cure often involves a lot of time and difficulty.

Before the sun goes down: we are all given a long enough period of time, a certain number of years, but once that time is up, once the sun has set, those who have never bothered to make good their mistakes or pay their debts – or have not known how to – will come under the law of karma. Everything we do is written down, because everything leaves an imprint, and one day we have to pay up. There is no way of settling things ‘out of court’, as it were. If we have not settled the matter by sunset, we will have to pay to the last penny.

Human beings do not know that the disorder they create goes far beyond those actions that are inspired by their base instincts. A war, for instance, is terrible enough as it is, but its consequences are not confined to the ruined buildings or the number of dead bodies left on the ground. The thoughts and feelings of hatred that gave rise to the massacre continue to feed destructive currents in space. And these currents poison the psychic atmosphere and fan other pockets of conflict.

Try to remember that the things you think, feel and do have consequences that go beyond an immediate time and place; that on the invisible plane they trigger forces, whether beneficial or harmful, and that you cannot know how far or how long these forces will have an effect.

There is a story of something that apparently happened in New York. One day, two cars were in a collision. Both drivers admitted responsibility, as they had both been driving too fast. After a friendly handshake, they went on their way. Time went by, and then one day, to their surprise, they were both

summoned to court. What had happened? A teacher who had witnessed the accident had pressed charges against them. She had been so traumatized by the collision between the two vehicles that she had become incapable of working. In her mind, she kept hearing the sound of tearing metal. The judge ordered the drivers to pay the woman several thousand dollars each.

What lesson can we draw from this story? Two people may clash, create a disturbance, cause damage and then, after discussion, reach an agreement. They think the matter is settled, but there may have been a third person who, by chance or force of circumstances, witnessed their conflict and is now the true victim. The two people responsible for the event have calmed down, but the victim has not. This is why divine Justice intervenes one day to tell the two people that they are guilty. They will protest their innocence, of course, but divine Justice will remain deaf to their protests and will sentence them to pay in one way or another.

This is how fate can take us by surprise, even though we have not harmed anyone directly. Our actions have disturbed other people, and we are found guilty. You have often had this experience but not known how to interpret what was happening. Every time you are made to take on a task, an obligation that you feel is unjust and not your responsibility, it is proof that you owe reparation for a past fault. Never think that what happens to you is unjust or senseless.⁴

So many men and women who have been celebrities during their lifetime have hoped to leave their mark on history. But to be known and appreciated on earth by human beings is one thing; to be approved of in heaven by God and his angels, quite another. Earthly values and heavenly values are not the same.

When those we call great die, their country gives them a state funeral, monuments are built to their memory, books are devoted to them and, later on, the anniversaries of their birth or death are celebrated. Some of them deserve this, of course. But while they are being celebrated on earth, many of them arrive in the next world to be subjected to the severe judgment of heavenly entities, who tell them, 'You used your talents in pursuit of pleasure, wealth, power and glory, and often to the detriment of your fellow beings. That was not why you went into the world. You were meant to use your talents in the service of the Lord and for the good of humankind. You may have done some good, but very little compared to all you could have

done. Now, go and sit in the corner over there, and meditate on the hollowness of human glory, so that the next time you have to incarnate, you will know how to put your intelligence and all your faculties to better use, as well as how to rectify your mistakes.'

As for you, even if you have no ambition to be a national or international celebrity, I have some advice for you. Every day, instead of worrying about whether your family, friends and work colleagues have a good or bad opinion of you, instead of trying to shine in their eyes, think of the heavenly beings before whom you will have to present yourself one day, and ask yourself what they think of you.

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'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' – *Eccl. 1:2*

'Remember your Creator...' – *Eccl. 12:1*

'So when you are offering your gift...' – *Matt. 5:23-27*

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¹ See *Youth: Creators of the Future*, Izvor 233.

² See *The Philosopher's Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 3: "'You are the salt of the earth' – I, Marking matter with the seal of the spirit, - II, The source of energy'.

³ See *The True Meaning of Christ's Teaching*, Izvor 215, chap. 7: "'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing"' and chap. 8: "'If anyone strikes you on the right cheek..."'

⁴ See *Man, Master of his Destiny*, Izvor 202, chap. 4: 'Two justices: human and divine' and chap. 8: 'Reincarnation'.

Chapter Seven

Passing over to the next world

Even if humans know that one day they will die – and it is one of the very few certainties they have – they act as if they are meant to live on earth forever. And so they do their utmost to institute a political, social, moral and intellectual order that suits them. And while they are busy fighting tooth and nail to impose their way of seeing things, the idea that soon they will have to depart for the next world doesn't even cross their mind. Or if it does occur to them from time to time, they tell themselves they are working for posterity, for their children and their descendants, who will inherit this order of things. And since this order is beyond reproach, their children will keep it as it is and leave it to future generations unchanged. Well, no, that way of seeing things directly contradicts the plans of Cosmic Intelligence.

Each time humans come to earth, it is for a short time only, as visitors and explorers. They must learn and work here for a few years, and then they leave again. So, you can only have a complete and correct view of life if you learn to include what is called 'death'. Your life is not limited to the length of time you come to spend on earth. Your life is very long, infinite, a succession of comings and goings between earth and the world beyond.

But even while you are living on the physical plane, you are living not only in your physical body but in your psychic bodies too: in the astral and mental bodies and in the spiritual bodies – the causal, buddhic and atmic bodies.¹ If you do not nourish these bodies, something very precious will be missing in this life, but, more than that, when you arrive in the other world, you will feel so feeble and destitute! When you reduce your earthly life to the life of your physical body, what can your experience be like the day you have to leave it behind and go elsewhere? You are lost. And, already, that raises the question of whether it is better to bury or cremate the dead.

Years ago, one of our sisters lost her husband in a gliding accident, and she came to me to ask my advice. She remembered that one day, in conversation, he had told her that he preferred cremation to burial, but his mother was now insisting on burial, because she wanted to be able to go and meditate at the graveside. So, whose wish should she obey? How could she reconcile the wishes of a mother with those of her son? And she also asked me what I thought of cremation.

It is not up to me to say whether someone should be buried or cremated –

both rituals are good – but all the same it is important to know one thing. When a person is pronounced dead, there are still links connecting their soul to their physical body. If they are buried, these links dissolve slowly; if they are cremated, the separation is much more rapid. What's more, if this person has never been aware that their true life is not limited to the life of their physical body, they can experience this separation violently, as if they were being torn from their body. What can their soul feel when they have never believed in their survival after death? It will take a long time for the soul to understand where it is and to detach in peace. In this case, burial is preferable.

The human body is like a text being printed in a workshop. In a printer's workshop where they still use characters made of lead, the letters are arranged in compartments. They are taken out and put together in words and phrases... and then you have a novel or a poem. Once the text has been put together in this way, it is then reproduced in as many copies as required. In a similar way, a human body is a book composed of 'characters', in other words, of particles from the four elements and from all the kingdoms of nature. The soul that inhabits this body turns the body into a magnificent book, or a mediocre one or, frankly, an awful one, which leaves imprints and traces wherever it goes, just like copies. Then, one day, the letters in this book disintegrate and return to the four elements from which they came. There is nothing left of the body, but the soul that inhabited the body is still alive and passes into other regions in space to write other texts.

When a text that was previously put together disintegrates, we call this 'death'. When we speak of death, it is merely a convention. Each one of us has already experienced this passing over so many times! But many people have forgotten this, because they have allowed themselves to become bogged down in matter. If they are buried, the elements that make up their body gradually return to their places of origin – to earth, water, air and fire – and the soul detaches slowly. In cremation, these processes speed up, and the soul can really suffer.

So, what answer did I give the sister? 'Your husband, who has just died accidentally, wished to be cremated, and we must respect the wishes of the departed. If we don't, we may distress them. But we must also take account of a mother's wishes. If she needs her son's body not to be reduced to ashes so that she can bear the brutal nature of his disappearance, why refuse that to her love? So, that is what I suggest. Because beings are still alive in the other

world, we can speak to them, and they hear us and understand. When he told you he wanted to be cremated, your husband did not foresee a premature death and the suffering that would cause his mother, because children do not think they could die before their parents. So, talk to your husband. When he sees his mother's grief, I know he will understand that it is her wishes that must be fulfilled. I will talk to him too.' My answer set her mind at rest.

Of course, just because the soul's ties with the body have dissolved, it does not mean that the soul is immediately allowed to contemplate divine splendour; it is the same in the world beyond as it is on earth. If you want to enter certain places where the public are not generally admitted, you must ask an official to give you a piece of paper that's been stamped and signed. You go through one door, then another and another. You wait. Eventually, someone receives you, listens to your request and says, 'We'll see; come back in a week', as first they have to consult a minister or someone in authority. You come back, and if everything goes well you get a pass, which you keep a tight hold of.

If there are places and countries on the physical plane where you cannot go unless you present a pass, a passport or a visa, this is even more so in the divine world. It is not enough for you just to turn up at the gates of heaven and expect them to open for you. There are entities there that tell you, 'Wait; we'll see if we can let you in.' And who is it that makes that judgment? The virtues. Yes, each time your actions have conformed to divine virtues, these virtues have marked you with their seal, each one leaving its traces and imprints on you – that is your pass. Furnished with this pass, you appear at the borders of the divine world; some kind of mechanism is released, and you enter. You may not have been allowed into the holy of holies, but you are in.

You may be wondering whether these imprints I am talking about are real. Yes, they are, and they appear in the aura in the form of colours.² Each colour corresponds to a virtue: violet corresponds to sacrifice, indigo to strength, blue to truth, green to hope, yellow to wisdom, orange to holiness and red to love. These seven colours represent the seven spirits that stand before the throne of God, as mentioned by St John in the book of *Revelation*. The Cabbalah calls them 'the spirits of the seven lights'.³

Like these seven spirits, you will one day stand, with the pure colours of your aura, before the throne of God. But in the meantime... Yes, in the meantime, you are mistaken if you think that once you have arrived in the

world beyond you will have nothing more to do. First you will be sent to school, where instructors will make you do a detailed review of your life so that you become aware of the mistakes you made. You will not have to look for notebooks and pencils to take notes, as these instructors will print their lessons on you. Then, after a while, they will send you back to earth with the instruction to improve your behaviour.

What will you do when you reincarnate? That's another question, because in spite of the good lessons you had and the resolutions you made on high, once you are back on earth you may well forget them and repeat the same mistakes. That is, until the day you succeed in registering deeply in your soul the memory of your past experiences and the desire to take a better direction.

When the decision to follow a certain path is etched deeply enough in your being, it becomes like an instinct that prevents you from deviating and shows you how to avoid or overcome obstacles. If you forget your good resolutions, it is because you have still not registered them strongly enough in your subconscious, right down to the nuclei in your cells. A spiritual Master's role is precisely to awaken the memory of past experiences and decisions in the soul of his disciples. Otherwise, when the time comes again for them to cross the border into the world beyond, they will once again have to acknowledge the mediocrity and inanity of the life they have just left, and they will be condemned to wander in the dark, barren regions of the other world.

Jesus said, *'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.'* This advice represents the whole science of life in a nutshell.⁴ People who have spent their time seeking physical and material satisfaction will not have stored up treasures in their soul and spirit. When they leave for the other world, the ties that attach them to earth will be so strong that they will continue to hang around the places where they lived. And, often, what will they see when they do? They will see their heirs squandering their possessions and family members or friends betraying them. They try to speak to their children who are losing their way, but no one can see them or hear them. They go to the places where they used to eat and drink and have a good time, and they suffer enormously at no longer being able to join in the parties or satisfy their sensual desires, because they no longer have a physical body.

Many, many artists and poets have depicted, in paintings and poems, the suffering of souls after death who have had to leave behind everything that made life interesting to them. You know these works. But all those devils

armed with forks, furnaces, cauldrons and instruments of torture, each one more awful than the last, are obviously only images. It is in our soul that we are cooked and tortured. It is in our soul that we experience hell. And, in reality, humans already know hell here on earth whenever greed, ambition, hate and sensuality hurl them into the lower regions of the astral plane. And they carry this hell into the other world, because it is inside them.

And what about those who have been able to give priority to the life of the soul and spirit during their life? Where do they go when they leave their physical body? Since they have created ties with the divine world, that is where they are drawn. They rediscover the treasures they have amassed within themselves, and they meet beings who, like them, have learned to nourish themselves on the light and love of God. After a stay in paradise (which can last any length of time), if they have not totally cleared their karma or if they themselves choose to reincarnate, they come back to earth. Their heavenly friends come with them, offering them flowers and singing and playing instruments, and they promise to watch over them and to support them during the hardships they will have to go through. Because, even for initiates, descending into matter is like being cast into the abyss, and in the depths of this darkness, surrounded by dangers, they must begin again their ascent towards freedom and the light.

I was principal of a college in Bulgaria, and one day when I had given a public talk, a man came to find me to tell me this story: ‘During the war, I was seriously wounded’, he said. ‘I had to be operated on, and during the operation I was completely conscious. At one point, I felt I was leaving my body. I rose up above the operating table, I helped the surgeon in his work, and I saw how anxious he and his assistants were. But an irresistible strength carried me through: I felt light and completely detached from my body and its suffering. Suddenly, I realized I wasn’t alone; there were many other beings with me, and we went together into space to a wonderful place. But then I heard a voice saying to me, “What are you doing here? Your life on earth is not over; you must go back.” And I found myself once more in the operating room, where they were getting ready to carry my corpse away, because they thought I was dead. I came back into my body, which came to life again, to the great astonishment of everyone there.’

There you have it; it’s a true story, and many other people have had similar experiences. So, let’s leave materialists to their incredulity. They are

so obsessed with life on the physical plane that they have forgotten they have already crossed over into what is called 'death' several times and carried on living! If they loved life as much as they say they do, they would sense that their death will simply be a continuation of their life – not the life of the physical body, but of the soul and spirit.⁵ In reality, death serves life.

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¹ See *Man's Psychic Life: Elements and Structures*, Izvor 222, chap. 3: 'Several souls and several bodies'.

² See *Notre peau spirituelle*, l'aura, Brochure 309.

³ See *Toward a Solar Civilization*, Izvor 201, chap. 7: 'The spirits of the seven lights'.

⁴ See *New Light on the Gospels*, Izvor 217, chap. 4: 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth'.

⁵ See *Sons and Daughters of God*, Izvor 240, chap. 1: "I came that they may have life".

Chapter Eight

Unlimited life

The fear of death is a form of self-preservation, and it is nature that gave humans this instinct. They come to earth like apprentices entering a workshop to do a training course. They are taught and they gain experience, and so they make progress. What would happen if they had no fear of death and exposed themselves to every danger? The course would be prematurely stopped. Once the course is over, the apprentices leave the workshop. They may feel some regret when they leave, but they do not view their departure as a tragedy. On the contrary, if they have learned well, they will feel there are magnificent prospects open to them.

But the instinct to preserve life is so strong in humans that, even if they are blind, deaf or impotent, so long as they do not suffer too much, some will hope to prolong their life as much as possible – even if they might say the opposite. And that reminds me of a good trick a student tried to play on an old woman who was his neighbour.

This was in Bulgaria, in Sofia or Varna – I don't remember which. Each time the student went by his neighbour's front door, he would hear her begging the Lord to take her from this world of tears, to be with him in paradise. The student persuaded two or three friends to come with him, and they disguised themselves as angels and knocked on her door. 'Who's there?' asked the old woman. They answered in chorus, 'We are the messengers of the archangel Michael. He has sent us to tell you that your prayers have finally been answered. He is going to come and fetch your soul.' (According to tradition, an angel comes to fetch the soul of the dead person to take it to God). 'Open the door.' There was silence for a few seconds, and then a firm voice replied, 'Tell the archangel Michael that the old woman doesn't live here', and she wouldn't open the door for anything. So, she didn't see the 'angels' who had come to her.

It is this instinct for self-preservation that makes humans fear death. But when you see the highly unreasonable way that some live, ruining their health and throwing themselves headlong into risky adventures 'just for the experience', you get the impression they are doing everything they can to hasten the moment. So, in this case, how can we say there is a real fear of death? They provoke death as if, deep down, they know they are immortal. You may say, 'But you can't really blame them for their behaviour, then!'

Yes, you can, because you shouldn't confuse everything: you do not gain an awareness of immortality by stupidly exposing yourself to dangers. To believe in immortality means to believe in the power of spirit. What's more, it's not spirit that drives so many people to hasten their end, but their lack of awareness, their idleness and lack of control.

The universe is the sphere of activity for the two principles, matter and spirit. The principle of matter compresses, condenses, preserves and maintains forms; the Cabbalah explains it as a dark principle assimilated by the Cabbalah at night. The principle of spirit, in contrast, dissolves forms, causing them to return to their subtle state, and the Cabbalah assimilates it in radiance, in light and, therefore, in the daytime.

When a child is born (and even before, when it is in its mother's womb), these two principles begin to work in it. For a while, the principle of matter stores and condenses elements, and the child grows. This increasingly solid form works against the principle of spirit, which seeks to dissolve forms and return them to the original Source. The principle that works to preserve forms, and which is particularly developed in minerals, drives humans to cling to the physical plane, beginning with their body.

The two principles of spirit and matter appear to be in conflict, but in reality they work together to serve life. And while the principle of matter is developing and extending its territory, that of spirit does not remain inactive. It tries to show humans that there are other regions to visit and other work to carry out. Some refuse and stubbornly concentrate their efforts on the physical plane. I am not saying you should neglect your physical body and material conditions, no, but there are limits that need to be set, because we are only on earth for a while. And it is not enough just to know that theoretically. Being aware of the ephemeral nature of all material forms and, therefore, of our physical body should spur us to seek spirit, which continually abolishes forms and creates new ones. That is one of the first conditions on which our evolution depends.¹

The fear of death is proof of a lack of light, a limited understanding of what life really is. In a way, death does not exist; it is part of life, simply a change of level and of clothing, with the aim of advancing our understanding of life. Each time actors take on a new role, they change costume, but also their partner changes, and this new role teaches them something more about themselves and others. Well, we cannot remain forever in one role either, and

after a while we must leave the world stage. We call this 'death', but really there is only continuous life. We have to get used to seeing life as a continuity. Humans have the very unfortunate habit of creating divisions everywhere: divisions between the spiritual and the material, between being awake and being asleep, between life and death... No, life is all one.

Life – each person defines this word according to their level of understanding. So, for most people, life represents only a very limited reality. And yet, life is a limitless ocean. In the midst of this ocean, it is said that creatures are born and die, when in reality there is only ever life. The ocean is one of the images that best express the whole of life and its eternal nature. The other images used are those of a flowing spring, the shining sun and the tree.

When the principle of matter has completed its work, the principle of spirit truly goes into action. It lets us know that the time for freedom is coming and that we must not regret the gradual wearing out of our body. If we are afraid of death, we offend the principle of life, which wants to reveal to us the beauty of the spiritual regions. For there is no separation between what is visible and what is invisible. If we do not feel this, it is because we lack certain faculties of perception as we have not yet put them into practice.

We came to earth to do work similar to the work done by alchemists. We are given a substance – matter – from which we must extract the quintessence. This quintessence is the only wealth we will take with us when we die, and we will continue to work with it in the other worlds.² You may be wondering how this word 'matter' should be understood. It's simple: everything in our daily life – our activities, our encounters with others – is a kind of matter for us to transform through the power of the spirit. So, that also implies working on ourselves, because we too are matter: even our thoughts, our feelings, our desires and our states of consciousness are matter that we must transform. So, alchemical work is done both externally and internally at the same time. While we work on matter, we also work on ourselves. This is why we must not run away from matter but consciously take on our earthly activities, just as any materialist would do. What distinguishes us from materialists is our perspective, and this should be our guiding principle. Spirit does not deny matter, and matter must not deny spirit but instead submits to it.

Nutrition provides the best example of the nature of our work. When we eat, we transform matter. By assimilating it into our own substance, we make

it subtler and we communicate to it something of what we are. And the quality of what we communicate to it depends on the efforts we have first made on ourselves, that is, on our instincts, our desires, our feelings and our thoughts.³

Those who understand the meaning of their life on earth will depart this life with the sense that they have fulfilled the task for which they came, knowing that they will carry on this work in the other world. This is why death does not frighten them; they know, they feel, that they are going to continue to live and work elsewhere. The light of knowledge puts an end to fear. People are afraid of death because they do not know it. So, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the idea of this passing we call death, which in reality is only the continuation of life in another form.

One day, the angel of death comes to tell each one of us that it is now time to set out to discover other regions... And rather than holding on desperately, we should leave gently and joyfully. I have seen one of our sisters go in this way. She said with a smile, 'I'm going', and she left. It is wonderful to die like that, fully conscious and joyful.

Everywhere in the universe, there is only life, unlimited life. This is why you must pray to live, not to be saved from death. Say that you are going to live, not that you are going to die. Instil in your mind the idea of entering a new life rather than of prolonging this one.

Obviously, what many people dread about death is being separated from their family and friends. In reality, when they are in the other world, they will be much freer to see them, to be with them, and they will see them better. On earth, what we know of others is limited: their physical appearance hides what they really are.

And I will never deny that the disappearance of a loved one is very painful. I too have experienced it, especially the kind of disappearance that occurs very suddenly. But love allows us to overcome it. You may think that the more you love, the more you suffer at such a separation. At the time, yes, without a doubt. But if you have truly loved someone, in time another kind of bond is created between you, and you feel the person as a constant presence. And at night during sleep you are also with them. In the morning, you may not remember the encounter, because the soul's travels during sleep only rarely surface to consciousness, but in time you will feel the strength of this bond more and more.

God has not set limits to love. Those who have loved one another with

true love never part: their soul overcomes all material obstacles.

¹ See *Cosmic Balance – The Secret of Polarity*, Izvor 237, chap. 10: ‘Iona, principle of life; Horeb, principle of death’.

² See *The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 11: ‘The regeneration of matter: the cross and the crucible’, chap. 13: ‘The growth of the divine seed’ and chap. 14: ‘The gold of true knowledge: the alchemist and the gold prospector’.

³ See *The Yoga of Nutrition*, Izvor 204, chap. 10: ‘The spirit transforms matter’.

Chapter Nine

The meaning of funeral rites

In the distant past, it was the custom to bury the dead with food and particular household objects. Sometimes, the food and objects were merely represented: they were painted on the tomb walls. This custom may still survive today; it is based on knowledge about the relationship between the world below and the world above.

Hermes Trismegistus's *Emerald Tablet* tells us: 'What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below.' There is no contradiction between the visible and invisible worlds, the physical and spiritual worlds; the universe is all one thing. Every object here exists above as quintessence. When it materializes in this world it still bears this quintessence, which humans must bring to life and make active.¹ As long as people do not know this truth, they will of course find the ancient burial custom ridiculous and stupid. Why place so many precious objects in the tombs and paint so many extraordinary frescoes, when they were meant to remain hidden forever from sight? Sometimes, you will also find geometric symbols, since these symbols were considered to be sensors for picking up energies for the dead to feed on.

You might say, 'But why do most people not have a stronger sense of the relationship between the visible and the invisible?' They do still possess faculties that once allowed them to perceive subtle realities and gave a spiritual dimension to what they did, but they have allowed these faculties to grow blunt.² They are only sensitive to what they can see or touch; these are the only things that are real to them.

So, each physical object has a corresponding reality on the subtle planes, and the people who placed food, weapons or tools in the tombs knew how to prepare these things. They infused them with energy vibrations, with which the soul of the dead person became imbued so that it could continue to live in the other worlds. In certain traditions, a coin was placed in the dead person's mouth to pay for the crossing to the world beyond. Even this custom, which may still exist today, played a role. Obviously, the coin remained in the tomb, but the vibrations it contained were intended to sustain the soul on its journey.

In fact, Greek mythology mentions Charon, called the 'ferryman' of the underworld, who, in return for a small contribution, carried souls in his boat

across the river Acheron. This should not be seen simply as a story. Each ritual object gives off energies, which the soul needs if it is to arrive safe and sound. This is also how we should interpret certain accounts and descriptions given in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* or, much earlier, in *The Book of the Dead* of the Egyptians.

The priests of ancient Egypt not only knew that certain fluids emanate naturally from objects but also knew methods for making these fluids more powerful using magic rituals. The radiation from these objects helped the souls of the dead and protected them. The pharaohs and high-placed dignitaries rarely led an exemplary life and needed this help. The priests who fulfilled this function did all they could for them, but their power was limited. For pharaohs and the ordinary people alike, divine Justice had to be exercised, whatever the circumstances, and this is why the effects of the rites performed by the priests did not last long. In Christianity too, certain traditions bear traces of this knowledge concerning the life of the dead. I do not know the Catholic and Protestant traditions, but I saw the Orthodox traditions practised in Bulgaria. At certain times of the year, families eat sweetened cooked wheat with raisins added and drink wine. The people eating and drinking are obviously alive, but they do this so that the dead can eat and drink through them. The custom of placing flowers on a grave can also be seen as a relic of these traditions. But these days people place flowers on graves mainly to make the grave look pretty. Are they thinking when they do this that the flowers contain a living quintessence that will nourish the souls of the dead?³ And it is the same with nightlights, candles and incense: all matter that is sacrificed releases forces and energies that help and support souls.⁴

And where do you think the custom of giving funeral orations comes from, or at least of saying a few affectionate words or giving a eulogy for the deceased before parting from them? Here again, the origins of this custom contain initiatic knowledge: the dead are extremely sensitive to what the living say, think and feel about them. Spoken words, as well as feelings and thoughts, produce vibrations; they emit waves that affect the souls of discarnate beings.

It is always interesting to know about ancient practices concerning the dead, as well as those practices that still exist today, and to understand their meaning. But the most important thing is the life that people have led on

earth. Burying someone with objects, performing ceremonies and saying prayers for them are good things to do, certainly, but the power of these rituals is limited. What really help people in the other world are the virtues they themselves have practised during their lifetime. Whatever is done with their body after death, if they have lived in harmony with cosmic Spirit, with the laws of the whole of living nature, they will be accompanied by light as they go into the shadows of the world beyond.

I will not try to convince those who deny the reality of life after death. But those who do not doubt the truth of it must realize that, since death is a continuation in another form of their present life, it is being prepared for right now. Everything we do, every day, leaves traces on us, which go with us to the next world, and these imprints continue to have an effect.

A few days after the soul has left the body, it is separated from it for good. But everything the body has experienced is registered within it as imprints. These are indestructible and continue to exert an influence over the soul. One day, the body decomposes, but the soul remains impregnated with everything the body has been through. This is why it is so important that you always look for the best way to use your energies.⁵ You will be able to carry on building something in the next world with everything good and beautiful you have done on earth. Otherwise, you will do nothing. Just because your soul is free of your body does not mean that you know peace, joy and light in the world beyond. Peace, joy and light will be there only as a consequence of what you have been able to achieve during your life on earth.

This is also why the way we live our last moments is so important, and you should not underestimate what the Church calls the 'last sacraments'. Of course, feeling remorse for past mistakes will not erase them, but if the remorse is sincere and if it is the result of greater understanding, something good is registered at the time of departure.

So many people get caught up in the whirlwind of their daily activities, never thinking that they could lose their life at any moment! Or, even if they do think about it, death remains just an empty word. And then, when the hour of death arrives, they experience a terrible realization, remorse takes a hold of them, and they feel they have done nothing with their life. It is all very well regretting our mistakes and the time we have wasted, but these regrets should not remain empty ones. So, at the same time, it is important to connect to the light, as that is our only salvation. Wherever we go, it is the light that guides us and nourishes us.⁶

- ¹ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor 226, chap. 3: 'The magic wand'.
- ² See *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres – the Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Izvor 219.
- ³ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor 226, chap. 9: 'Flowers and perfumes'.
- ⁴ See *The Mysteries of Fire and Water*, Izvor 232, chap. 2: 'The secret of combustion', chap. 10: 'The essential role of fire' and chap. 13: 'A candle flame'.
- ⁵ See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 8: 'The use of energy'.
- ⁶ See *Light is a Living Spirit*, Izvor 212.

Chapter Ten

Our relationship to our family spirits

You can all feel enthusiastic when you discover a spiritual truth and be sincere when you say that from then on you want to live in harmony with it. But then this enthusiasm subsides very quickly. Why? Because not all the inhabitants in the billions of cells in your body are convinced. The light you have just received and the good decision you have just made have only managed to affect a few of them. The others turn a deaf ear and refuse to allow their habits to be disturbed. They resist, and as there are more of them, they gain the upper hand. The difficulty lies in knowing how to influence your entire inner population.

Only a true initiate is able to go deeply enough within to have an ongoing relationship with the cells of all his organs and be able to control them. Most people are only able to control a few cells in their brain, arms and legs; all the others are beyond their control. Some people have confided in me that when they wake up in the morning they sometimes feel they cannot come back into their body, as if while they were asleep someone had moved into it and was preventing them from entering it again. This isn't a serious matter, unless the phenomenon lasts or happens often.¹ So, I have had to explain to these people that we have a multitude of creatures living in us – for each cell is a living entity – and that we must do all we can to keep control of them.

Studying human anatomy is a bit like listing and describing the different areas of a building. What's more, the building is not empty, and the inhabitants are of various kinds. Of course, there are spiritual beings living in us, but also animals: reptiles, big cats, birds, livestock, etc. – a whole menagerie! They are not there physically, obviously, but they are there in our psyche in the form of instinctual impulses.²

But let's leave the animals for now. The building representing each human being is also packed with all our ancestors, all the generations that preceded us. They are called by the abstract term 'heredity', but in reality they are creatures that are definitely alive, living in us and pulling us in all directions, good and bad.

Yes, indeed, this is something you should know: the members of your family who have left earth, particularly your parents and grandparents, come and visit you, because they are interested to know what has become of you and what you have been doing while they have not been there. When they see

you are committed to following the path of good and light, they are happy, but if all they find is decline and ruin, they feel their children have betrayed them. In observing you, they are led to question not only their own actions during their life on earth, but also the upbringing and example they gave you. They understand what they neglected, what mistakes they made, and they try to enter within you to advise you. This is why, when you meet with difficulties and pass through testing times, you can turn to them and ask for their help. Unfortunately, we also have to acknowledge, not all parents give good advice. Why not? Because often, when they enter their descendants, they are trying to continue experiencing the pleasures they were so attached to on earth. Each one of us carries inside us all these ancestors, what Initiatic Science calls ‘family spirits’, with their outmoded notions and their old habits, which explains some of the strange ways people behave. So, you come across people who have achieved exceptional things, stopping at nothing, but are unable to let go of a bad habit that would be very easy for others to conquer.

I remember a bishop, who came one day to confide in Master Peter Deunov. He said to the Master, ‘I have overcome many weaknesses, and I can’t understand why I am unable to give up eating pork. Every time I eat it I am ill, and I promise myself I won’t eat it anymore, but it’s stronger than me, and I start all over again.’ And the Master replied, ‘In your family, you must have had a relative, close or distant, who particularly loved pork. This relative is so connected to you that you cannot free yourself from their grip, and they are continuing to feast on this meat through you.’

There is a whole literature about family spirits and the different ways they manifest. I do not want to elaborate on this subject but simply give you a few important ideas.

I understand it is difficult for you to believe this, but it is the truth anyway. Certain qualities and abilities you may have – but also weaknesses – are often the manifestations of a relative who, for the moment at least, has chosen to live in you. You have thoughts, feelings, wishes, and so on; you are attracted to certain people or things and repelled by others, and you think you are expressing yourself or acting with free will. Not at all! Often it is the others living through you who are reacting or demanding. Why do psychologists and all those whose job it is to study human psychology so often fail to capture the true reality of what makes a human being? Because they have

never learned that humans are the sum of the multitude of beings they carry with them, and that usually they do not know who these beings are or what they want to achieve by coming through them.

Whatever it is that makes a human being think, feel or act in any particular way remains an extraordinary mystery. Which is why I will give you this advice. You may have relatives or people close to you who do not agree with the spiritual path you have decided to follow. They think you are wasting your time, going in the wrong direction. Do not stop speaking to them; try to make them understand why you chose this path. Even if they do not believe you or accept it, speak to them.

I am not saying you should lecture or talk endlessly, but from time to time, in conversation or relating to an event, drop in a few words. Even if they protest or pretend not to hear, they will register what you are trying to say and it will be of benefit to them. Otherwise, do you know what can happen? When they have left the earth, they will continue to want to divert you from your ideal, so they will come and worm their way into you and offer you their arguments. And then, when they have managed to create doubts in your mind, you will think these doubts come from you and you will crumble.

This is all new to you, isn't it? But it is the truth. I can tell you, there is not a lot known about the human psyche. And I can also tell you this: when you all come to hear me speak, you think you are the only ones in the room. Well, no, there are also beings from the invisible world listening to me. Some are discarnate souls, and some of those are members of your family who have left the earth. They come because of you, and those of you who are sensitive may sometimes feel their presence.

So, now, what conclusion can you draw from what I have just said? Since we all carry within us generations of human beings who were our ancestors, when we conquer our weaknesses we manage to take our whole inner family with us onto the path of light and freedom. In this way, we do immense good for our whole ancestry and, of course, for our descendants, to whom we pass on the wealth we have acquired. It makes it all the more important that we work on ourselves, because in doing so we are improving entire generations, since we are bequeathing them the fruits of our efforts. We live and act not only for ourselves but for a great number of other creatures for whom we are also responsible.

These were just a few words about family spirits. When you decide to

walk the path of light, not only do you free yourself from their pernicious influence, you also educate them, enlighten them and take them along with you. So, persevere, and if they refuse to follow you, leave them alone and continue your climb to the heights. At a certain altitude, these recalcitrant spirits are forced to leave you: they cannot tolerate the rarefied air up high and they give up the fight. Then, soar towards the regions of light. There are spirits living there too – very powerful spirits. Ask for their help, and they will hand you a rope; you will take hold of it, and they will hoist you up to where they are.

Are you now able to understand something of what I am saying?

¹ See *Looking into the Invisible – Intuition, Clairvoyance, Dreams*, Izvor 228, chap. 15: ‘Protect yourself while you are asleep’.

² See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 4: ‘Our heritage from the animal kingdom’.

Chapter Eleven

What is God's will?

In numerous passages in the Old Testament, God speaks to the patriarchs and the prophets to tell them what he wants them to do. He orders Noah to build an ark to shelter his family and a pair of each species of animal, because he is about to drown the earth in a flood. He asks Abraham to leave his homeland and Moses to bring his people out of Egypt. He instructs Joshua to take the city of Jericho, and so on.

And the prophet Jonah was commanded by God to go to Nineveh to tell its inhabitants that their city would be destroyed unless they repented. But instead of obeying, Jonah sailed for Tarsis (on the west coast of Spain), as far away as possible from the place where he was meant to go. During the crossing, a violent storm arose, and the sailors, recognizing that Jonah was guilty of having provoked God's anger through disobedience, threw him overboard, where he was swallowed up by an enormous fish – a whale, according to tradition. And the storm abated. After three days and nights, during which Jonah, who was still in the belly of the whale, had all the time to meditate on his disobedience and repent, *'the Lord spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.'*

For a long time, and still today, there have been numerous believers who have read these and many others stories recorded in the sacred books of most religions and concluded that God speaks to humans to dictate his wishes – go there, do that, and so on – and that if they disobey they will provoke his anger and be punished. Well, no, this is not how God speaks.¹

You may say, 'So, God never speaks to us, then?' On the contrary, he speaks to you every day and at every moment. He says to you, 'Stand firm in wisdom, love and truth.' And then it is up to you to find how and where you can best manifest these three virtues. Otherwise, like Jonah, you too are thrown into the sea and swallowed up by a whale. Why, yes, for there are all kinds of whales: illnesses, for example, and any situation that limits you, imprisons you and makes you suffer – these are all whales. They have swallowed you because you have not listened to God's voice inside you showing you the path of light, where you could live in good health, free and at peace. And bitterness and jealousy – these also are whales.

So, do not imagine that Jonah is the only one that has been swallowed by a whale for disobedience. You have too. And for three days and nights – this

number is obviously symbolic – you, like him, could do some soul-searching and acknowledge your mistakes. Then God, that is to say your higher self, will speak, and you will get your freedom back.

So many believers ask themselves really naïve questions about the will of God! They imagine he has a particular wish concerning them – where they ought to live and what job they ought to do. Does he want them to get married, have children or remain single and devote themselves to him? Is he asking them to support or do battle with such and such a person? In reality, God's will does not relate to any individual's particular question. All that God wants is for humans to study and understand his laws, which are the laws of life, and then make the effort to put them into practice.

Of course, God's will is the personal concern of each one of us, but no one will know what God expects of them until they have studied the principle of divine will. Only those who start by aligning themselves with the principle of divine will can truly know what God is expecting of them. If they do not fulfil this condition, what they take to be divine will will only be the product of their imagination, wishes and whims.

To know God's will implies first getting to know God himself, as wisdom, love and power. The fact that he has created us in his image means that we are able to come closer to his perfection. By holding this idea of perfection within us at all times, we will feel directed and guided to fulfil God's will in our personal life.

But, above all, I do wish that religions, whichever they are, would stop preaching that the sufferings and misfortunes of humanity are God's will. No, God's will is for humans to surpass even the archangels in beauty and in light. If they remain wretched and suffer, it is because they have chosen instead not to walk according to heaven's ways. They have taken the twisted paths that pleased them more, and they have no one else to blame for this but themselves: not other people, not those around them, not society or external conditions, and certainly not the Lord.² This is why, when you find yourself in a difficult, painful situation, you have only yourself to blame.

As soon as you decide sincerely to fulfil God's will, you move closer to him. And when you do, what will he say to you? 'I am present in all creatures, and each time you bring them life, warmth and light you will be serving me. Take the sun as your example.'³ So, being able to serve God's will requires long preparation, because it is not so easy to bring life, warmth

and light like the sun. Otherwise, how do people think they can serve him? By going and converting by force and massacring all those they consider to be nonbelievers, infidels and heretics?

You do God's will when you seek to serve him in others, with the result that you broaden your sphere of concerns and activities, you learn and you are enriched.

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'...the Lord spoke to the fish...' – *Jonah 2:11*

¹ See *The Philosopher's Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 1: 'On the interpretation of the scriptures: II The will of God'.

² See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 3: 'Suffering is a stimulus'.

³ See above, chap. 13: 'And all beings will follow you on this path of joy.'

Chapter Twelve

Serving the divine Principle

As you go through life, you become aware of different tendencies you have – some better than others. But becoming aware of them is not enough: you must understand how vital it is to sort through all these tendencies and concentrate on the ones you feel are the noblest and most constructive. In that way, you will gradually discover something luminous and powerful in you that you were not aware of before. This is the presence of the divine Principle living within you, waiting for you to place yourself in its service.¹ Serving the divine Principle is about finding, each day, moral and spiritual values that are worth prioritizing.

In his parables, Jesus used the image of the servant on several occasions. But people do not like the word servant very much, because they do not know how to interpret it properly. For them, serving means being a slave, losing their freedom to someone else. They do not understand that, for the whole of eternity, there has existed within them a Being worthy of being served and that the way to freedom is to place themselves in the service of this Being.²

‘I want to live my life,’ young people say when they demand independence. But God has not given them life in order to satisfy their selfish desires and pleasures. Life is not in service to us – quite the opposite. We must become servants to life, to divine life. Otherwise, we become servants to death.

Of course, there is nothing against wanting to escape the control, enlightened or otherwise, of one’s family or social circle. But people will only truly live the life they want to live if they serve the divine Principle within them. Otherwise, the freedom and independence they think they have gained by escaping the authority of other people will lead them to true slavery. The only true freedom is to be found in the bosom of the Eternal, that is, when humans bind themselves to God and to all the visible and invisible creatures that are bearers of pure life, in order to participate in their work.

The word servant usually describes the position of a subordinate person who has to obey a master. The master is rich and often does very little, whereas the servant is weighed down by work and receives a poor salary. But that is what happens in human societies where masters are often selfish and vain. God, on the other hand, is already served by legions of angels, so what more can poor humans bring him? It is in their interest to serve him, not his,

because by working for the Lord they get to participate in his very life, and divine life is light, peace, strength, love, joy and freedom. We are told in the Psalms, '*O Lord, I am your servant... You have loosed my bonds.*' So, it is by placing ourselves in the service of God, that is to say, in the service of what is greatest and noblest within us, that we become free.

Yes, unlike those who serve other people, the servants of God become freer and freer, and richer too. But only if they really do serve God. If they do not place themselves in the service of people who would exploit them, that is good, but they cannot say, based just on that, that they are servants of God. So many people serve a master, even several, without even knowing it. And what are these masters? Their appetites, their desires, their ambitions, and so on. They don't realize it, but that is where they are truly being bound hand and foot and becoming impoverished. Only those who know how and for what purpose they use their own energies and faculties can become servants of God.

How many people, even in civilized countries, are content to lead a life that is not that different from an animal's: they find food, they sleep, they seek shelter and they reproduce. They serve their physical needs, and in order to satisfy them they use all the faculties the Creator has given them. Others, who are more evolved, place themselves in the service of art, or science or philosophy. But if they think there is nothing beyond that, they are mistaken. The destiny of humans does not end with becoming an artist, a philosopher or a scientist. Humans are destined to develop even higher faculties, which will bring them into contact with the divine Principle within them. When they succeed in establishing this contact, the divine Principle will enter their physical, psychic and spiritual faculties, and they will become truly creative.

Those who serve the divine Principle are not serving someone or something outside themselves. This is why it is impossible for them to lose their freedom; on the contrary, they gain it. That is the basis of religion. And so long as humans do not seek to discover and serve God in themselves, they will have only an incomplete, distorted concept and image of him. And it is quite normal that, for some people, the idea of serving a power that could be anywhere or even nowhere is intolerable.

So, the notion of service and being a servant will only be correctly understood and accepted if human beings become aware that the Divinity they must serve is within them. The more they place themselves in its service, the closer they move toward it and the more they communicate with it.

Thanks to their work, they are able to dissolve the inner dross formed by their baser thoughts, feelings and desires, and they discover their being's quintessence. For want of a better word, we can call this quintessence 'light'.

Of all the visible realities, light is the one that best expresses the spiritual world. It allows us to see but is itself ungraspable. This is why God is often likened to light. God is said to be light, but what light? We do not really know light. What we call light is still only the coarse materialization of a power situated far away, which has agreed to manifest itself in the form of a glow, a vibration. So, God is much more than the idea of him we may get from light, and the only thing that can give us an idea of him or define him is what we are able to discover within when we place ourselves in his service. But even then, even if we can say what we are experiencing and what we are feeling, we cannot say what God is.

And do humans really think they can help others find and serve the God that is in them? The truth is, usually what we see is people dragging one another down. Just take the area of health: when anyone decides to stop smoking or drinking, there will always be those around who will tell them that one little glass or one cigarette can't do any harm. And someone will be invited to try a drug: 'Try it and see; it's an experience.' And that's not to mention the moral and spiritual areas. Anyone who wants to remain honest in a world of crooks will be told, 'You are so stupid. What are all these scruples for? Do what everyone else does!' And anyone who says they have a faith and they pray will receive the response, 'What? You still believe in that nonsense?'

Take a look at what is happening around you and in the world. You will see so many cases of people busy leading one another down paths where all they will encounter is physical and psychological ruin! Just look at the pastimes, distractions and amusements on offer. And everything they are presented with to excite their desires! How will they understand that if they placed themselves in the service of God they would become free?

There is still a lot of development needed before we start moving in the right direction. Each day, we are tempted, overwhelmed and bombarded by so many things! This is why our first task is to see things clearly, so that we can be discriminating and focus on those activities that help us dig deep down inside us to find the light.

But human beings are extraordinary! Many say they are seeking the light,

and you cannot doubt their sincerity; they have understood that it is preferable to be enlightened than to remain in darkness. But they want a light that does not demand any effort, and they do not stop anywhere long enough to do work of any depth. They pass from book to book, from one spiritual teaching to another – that is what they call seeking the light. And now that new spiritual movements are appearing all the time and new ‘initiations’ are being added to previous ones that are trying to make a comeback, they never stop moving. Yes, they move around, they float around, and they always pass by what could help them. Which is why, even though they are seeking the light, when they get to the end of their life they are still groping about in the dark.

When I hear what people who are otherwise intelligent and educated say, I am thunderstruck! There they are explaining their philosophy of life with the utmost seriousness, as if they were expressing all the wisdom and experience in the world, when, in reality, from the point of view of Initiatic Science, they are speaking like primary school children who still don’t know that a plus b makes ab. Yes, they know nothing about the alphabet of life: they don’t even know where any thought, feeling, wish or action is leading them. They think they are going in a certain direction, when in fact they are going in quite the opposite one.

We must serve everything within us that is most pure, noble and light-filled. And serving in this way affords all such qualities the possibility to manifest. That is what it means to be the servant of God. All human beings carry within them this impulse toward the light, but they obstruct it, because they are always seeking the easy way. This is why we should listen to the voice of our higher self, which advises us to be less lazy. Yes, because to be a good servant of the Lord, it is not enough to want to serve him; we have to prepare ourselves, we must learn and then put what we learn into practice.

You only have to look at what happens in everyday life: can anybody make a good employee, a good secretary or a good minister, just because they sincerely wish it? No, they have to have developed certain faculties and qualities. Well then, even more reason for doing so when it is about serving the Lord. What will they do if they haven’t prepared? Make lots of mistakes! They will think they have entered the service of the Lord when in fact they will remain servant to their prejudices, biases and illusions. And that is what makes fanatics: on the pretext of serving God, they give themselves the

mission of fighting those they call 'nonbelievers', 'infidels' and so on. In reality, they are only servants of dark entities that are seeking to use them to carry out their wicked plans.

To become a good servant of God, we have to dedicate ourselves to him, that is, make our entire being into a place reserved for him. Before saying mass, a priest begins by exorcizing and consecrating all the objects he is about to use, as well as the incense, the wine, the host, the oil, the holy books and even the vestments he has to wear. For even if nobody has touched them, these objects will have been subject to all the energy currents passing through space and have absorbed impurities.

And the priest also says words of purification and consecration for himself, so as to be worthy of being a mediator between God and the congregation. But the faithful who are there watching understand very little of this. So, what is the point of it all? I have nothing against you going to mass or taking part in any of the religious services; that's fine, but do at least try to understand what is happening right there in front of you.

If Christians really understood the gestures the priest makes before saying mass, they would know why they too should make their entire being into a place reserved for God. What is the point of calling themselves Christians? They go to extraordinary ends to protect their houses and possessions from intruders and thieves, they spray their fields and gardens with products to protect them from harmful insects, but inside themselves there are no doors and no windows, and even the walls sometimes don't stay up, with the result that thieves, insects and all the chaotic energies are free to go where they like. Medicine and psychology give erudite names to the disorders and illnesses that ensue, but anyone who has been taught Initiatic Science will simply say, 'They didn't know who or what to open or close themselves to.'

So, it is on the psychic level that humans should think of protecting themselves most, since that is where there is the greatest threat of danger. Because we are magnetic and composed of fluidic elements, each one of us can be used at any time for good or evil. But how many people are aware of this? They say, 'Oh, I've never been dishonest. I am a person of integrity in my family and at work.' But, in fact, unintentionally and unwittingly, they have taken part in criminal activities. How? They have fed their own negative states, and these states are a kind of fluidic matter that dark entities in the invisible world have taken over so as to carry out their own wicked plans. Does anyone think of teaching people about these realities? No, and yet,

wherever we look in the world, we see people taking and absorbing energies.

So, as long as you have not consecrated your whole inner being, you cannot be sure what use will be made of your energies or of your life. Many others can come and deliberately take your forces. And for you that is a double loss: not only have you been stripped of something precious, but also the beings of light will stop bringing you their help and their blessings. If you are so unaware that you allow evil entities to take hold of you and use you for their dark plans, the beings of light know you do not appreciate them.

Nothing you do in life is without consequence – nothing. So, as often as you can, say, ‘O heavenly entities, I am at your disposal; use all my forces.’ That way you will become a good servant of God, taking part in your master’s work. You are not asked to undertake superhuman tasks, only to dedicate whatever you do to the Lord, in order to contribute to the good of humanity.

During the day, you may experience some form of weariness and need to let yourself go a bit; that’s normal, but realize that at that moment you are defenceless. To protect yourself, say to the Lord, ‘Lord, I’m a bit tired right now; I don’t know how I can be of service to you, but I am at your disposal.’ Then no ‘enemy’ has the right to come in and make use of you; it is as if you were wearing an ‘engaged’ sign.

So, before you go to sleep each night, there is even more reason for you to take such precautions, in the knowledge that there is a police force in the other world making sure that the property laws are obeyed.³ The police in the other world are responsible for finding those entities that are trying to fraudulently enter you and saying to them, ‘So you want to violate this home and harm this person? Well, it’s not allowed. This person is consecrated to heaven and belongs to the Lord as his servant. Out you go!’

Why should it be only priests who need to prepare before standing before God? All the Lord’s sons and daughters are called to dedicate themselves to serving him. So, we must dedicate our whole body to the service of God – our limbs, our organs – so that every part becomes a repository and a transmitter of currents of pure energy.

Reciting a dedication produces changes in the vibrations of things and creatures. Since there are other subtler levels beyond the physical, what happens on the subtle planes eventually influences the physical plane. This is why, when a father and mother dedicate their child to the Lord at birth, they are laying down channels in the child’s psychic matter. Thanks to this, their

child will be attracted to a divine, luminous path and will receive currents of positive forces, while dark currents will be turned away.

Ignorant people always say, 'I want to live my life!' Let them say it, but you, yourselves, try to understand that it is only by dedicating yourself to the Lord that you will live your life to the full. Why would he want to deprive us of a life he has given us? Not only does he not deprive us of it, but day after day he allows us to discover all of its riches.

So, at night, as you are ready to go to sleep, let yourself go into the Lord's hands, and say, 'My God, I want to place myself in your service. Do with me what you will.' It is a very simple formula; repeat it from the bottom of your heart. And the next day, check to see whether it really is God you are serving in your thoughts, your feelings and your actions, because it is not enough to give everything verbally to God one evening and then, the next day, selfishly hold onto everything. And since God is present in all human souls and in the whole of nature, they too must be given something by you each day – at least a thought or a look of love.

We have come to the earth to take part in the work of creation. Jesus said, '*My Father is still working, and I also am working.*' This work with God, for God, is the final word of initiation. Everything you give to God you raise up to his level. Then God repeats your gesture by reflecting it back, just as a mirror reflects a ray of light: you have given him everything, and he gives you everything.

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'O Lord, I am your servant...' – *Pss. 116:16*

'My Father is still working...' – *John 5:17*

'Teacher, I will follow you...' – *Luke 9:57-59,*

Solomon builds the temple in Jerusalem – *1 Kings 6:1-38*

¹ See *Man's Psychic Life: Elements and Structures*, Izvor 222, chap. 13: 'The higher self'.

² See *Freedom, the Spirit Triumphant*, Izvor 211, chap. 5: 'Sharing in the freedom of God' and chap. 6: 'True freedom: a consecration of self'.

³ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, chap. 2: 'The magic circle of the aura' and *Looking into the Invisible*, Izvor 228, chap. 15: 'Protect yourself while you are asleep' and chap. 17: 'Physical and psychic havens'.

Chapter Thirteen

Climbing to the Lord's altar

During the year I spent in India (Feb. 1959 – Feb. 1960), many things made an impression on me, including the presence of little altars in most of the houses. Hindus, rich or poor, set aside a place in their home for a few pictures and statuettes of deities. Some do not even have a home; they live outside on the pavements at the side of the road, and there they make an altar out of cardboard or wooden cases and a few pictures, and at different times during the day they come and bow down in front of it to pray. In our houses, in the West, how often do you find a place kept apart for the Divine? But even if you are unable, for various reasons,

to dedicate a place to the Lord in your home, there is nothing to stop you from dedicating such a place to him within yourself. You make plans for today, for tomorrow, for a few weeks', months' or years' time; that's all well and good, but how much room do you reserve for the Lord in these plans? Do you spend any time building an altar for him within yourself? God says to you, 'I have given you life, joy and beauty; I have given you a family, friends and so many other riches... Why do you not leave a place for me in your heart, when you welcome anyone and everyone there, even thieves, who will take everything from you?'

The gospels relate that a scribe came to Jesus one day and said to him, '*Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.*' And what did Jesus reply? '*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*' So, it does not say that Jesus accepted him. Then, addressing another man who was also there, he ordered him, '*Follow me.*'

But what does Jesus' reply to the first man mean: '*the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head*'? Obviously, he was not complaining about having nowhere to sleep or rest, but he had sensed that this man had so many thoughts, feelings and crude desires (animals) in him that he had no space for Jesus and his teaching. The scribe assured him that he would follow him everywhere, and he was no doubt sincere, but he did not know himself. And, using images, Jesus was wanting to say: you have never truly prepared a place within you for God. I have nowhere to rest my head, in other words, my wisdom will not be received by you; you are not yet ready to follow me.

How many people think they are capable of following Jesus or a spiritual Master, when without knowing it they are harbouring all sorts of animals!

This is why, despite Jesus, despite a Master, they have still not made contact inwardly with those regions of the divine world that can make sense of what they are and what they are doing.¹ Meaning is never given by the world below, by matter; it is given by the world above, by spirit – that spark, fire, light that bears witness to the presence of the Divine in human beings, just as an altar in a sanctuary does.

A building becomes a temple of the Lord because of the presence of an altar. Each day, you must climb to this altar, stand before God and place yourself in his service. By becoming a faithful, patient and selfless servant, you draw closer to him. For God is the greatest servant. Yes, when you yourself become a servant, you bring his image alive in you, and you become aware of your divine filiation. And never fear that this will prevent you from fulfilling your duties towards your family, your friends, society and humanity. Quite the opposite!

Make room within you for God, completely, with no half measures. As you gain a stronger sense of his presence, you will discover how rich your life becomes. When you have to confront tests, this presence will give you strength and freedom, and like King Solomon you will even be saved from hell. You don't know the legend?

King Solomon had been famous for his wealth and his wisdom and for building the temple at Jerusalem. But there is a legend that says that because he had also made big mistakes, when he died, divine Justice decreed that he would have to spend a period of time in hell. No sooner had he arrived than some devils saw him busy making measurements, from side to side, on the ground. Having found a length of string, he just kept taking measurements and making a note of them. The devils went to see Satan in person, who ordered them to interrogate him. 'What are you doing there?' they asked him. He replied, 'I am King Solomon. I was famed throughout the world. I had the temple at Jerusalem built so that the ark of the covenant with the Lord could be placed there. And now I intend to have a temple built here as well, which is why you see me busy taking measurements.' When Satan learned of Solomon's plans, he cried, 'Oh, my goodness! A temple – here? But he will contaminate the whole of hell, and that will be the end of my reign. Throw him out! He has no place here with us!' So, it is not without reason that Solomon was also famed for his wisdom.

This tale tells us that, even if we are plunged into hell, we can tear ourselves free, if we know how to create the right conditions for doing so.

And the only way to become free is to demarcate a space within ourselves and dedicate it to the Lord.

In this space we are simultaneously temple, altar and priest.²

The Lord wants only one thing for his creatures: that they should benefit as much as possible from the wealth he has placed in their physical body and in their heart, mind, soul and spirit. And they will truly benefit from this wealth only if they learn to dedicate it to him. Everything dedicated to God is protected by spirits of light in the invisible world. A quality or a talent you dedicate to God will grow and become greater, whereas if it is not dedicated you will lose it. Even if you do still possess it, it is as if you had lost it, because inside yourself you do not benefit from it as much as you could.

There are so many talented people – artists, philosophers, scientists – who fail to make the most of their talents! By dint of study and practice they have acquired knowledge, a certain technique and ability, but their work leaves them inwardly dissatisfied. You have to understand this – you can possess great riches but at the same time be deprived of them, because you have not dedicated them to ensure they are protected. People think about protecting lots of unimportant objects, but when it comes to their essential wealth – their qualities and talents – they forget to make that secure.

Climb each day to the Lord's altar and ask to be guided and inspired, and angels will accompany you. Later, you will come to learn that, on the paths you have taken, many accidents and misfortunes have been avoided, and many good things, on the other hand, have been achieved. The heavenly beings will say to you, 'Look – we have done all that through you.' Yes, one day, you will know what you have done or, rather, what has been done through you, how many magnificent beings have manifested because you dedicated a place within you to the Lord.

Spirituality does not consist of vague aspirations. Those who are truly spiritual begin by building an altar in their soul for the Lord, and they keep a flame burning there at all times. Each day they must climb to this altar, aware that they are entering the divine presence, and only then do they know what they must ask.³

As long as you speak to the Lord solely to ask him to satisfy your personal desires, it means you have not yet entered his presence. The day you enter the Lord's presence, there is only one thing you can request: to be filled with light. But, really, you feel you have nothing more to ask: when you enter the

presence of the Lord, his light pours into you, and when you come back down this light will continue to live in you for a long time. Each one of us carries an altar within, so to climb to the Lord's altar really means to pray.

¹ See *The Seeds of Happiness*, Izvor 231, chap. 6: 'The meaning of life'.

² See *Creation: Artistic and Spiritual*, Izvor 223, chap. 12: 'Building the temple'.

³ See *La prière*, Brochure 305.

Chapter Fourteen

Keep walking!

The Cabbalah tells us that when God created repentance (*teshuvah* in Hebrew), he said to it, 'Each time people turn to you, you must erase their mistakes.' The word *teshuvah* also means 'return'. Sin distances us from God, and repentance brings us back to him. That is the meaning of the gospel parable of the prodigal son: he had left his father's house and, after squandering his entire fortune on pleasures, was forced to take on the wretched, humiliating position of swineherd in order to survive. Having understood the error of his ways, he decided to return home to his father, who received him with open arms and ordered great celebrations in his honour. If we too become aware of our mistakes, if we regret them and sincerely wish to return to our heavenly Father, he will receive us.¹

But it is not enough to acknowledge our mistakes and regret them. Even if our remorse and the tears that sometimes accompany it help to purify us, in order to be pardoned we must make amends. God created repentance to erase our mistakes, but they will only be truly erased if we 'do' penance.

Penance implies something active not passive. It is not enough to absent-mindedly mumble a few prayers prescribed by a priest after confession. It is necessary to make real amends. This is what the Cabbalah also teaches, since it links *teshuvah* to *Binah*. *Binah* represents nature, a loving but strict mother, the guardian of the laws. In the sephirah *Binah* sit the twenty-four elders, the lords of destiny, who give to each person according to merit.² We can return to the Father's house only if we put right our mistakes.

We will still make many more mistakes, of course. We will feel remorse for them, but remorse is of value only at the time. Once we understand that we have behaved badly and what made us do so, we have to try to make amends for our mistakes and, above all, get back to work. We repair nothin at all by wailing and beating our chest, and we even become a burden for others. Salvation lies not in the remorse but in the work that follows.

So, now that you are committed to following the divine path, do not stop. As long as you are still moving forward, you repel your inner enemies and, whatever happens, you maintain control of your destiny. One after another, obstacles fall away from you if you keep moving, because you have put in motion the powerful laws of life.³

Spiritual life is like climbing a high mountain, and on these arduous, steep paths you are bound to go through moments of weakness, discouragement or even collapse. But that is no reason to stop. For a few days you will feel you are dying, and then you will come back to life. Yes, in the depths of discouragement you must hold on to this mysterious glimmer of light, which is still there inside you. It tells you that the ‘death’ you are experiencing will be followed by a resurrection and that no one can help you better than you can help yourself, because you have all powers.

What we experience as discouragement is a breaking of the vital inner link between our two natures – the earthly and the heavenly. The earthly nature is like matter, to which the heavenly nature must endlessly bring light and life. Our earthly nature pulls us down, whereas our heavenly nature takes us up high. This is why when our earthly nature manages to escape the control of our heavenly nature, what we experience is a collapse and utter dejection.

To maintain or restore the link between our two natures, we must become like alchemists and learn how to work with fire. It is fire, sacred fire, that welds our lower nature to our higher nature. A true alchemist will blow on this fire continually, whereas those who are just amateurs will stop after a while and say, ‘Why should I keep getting two elements to hold together when they are always separating?’ Well, that is precisely why we have to persevere.

If we are to give birth to the child, the philosopher’s stone, which will transform all our inner base matter into spiritual gold, we have to forcibly bring together those two antagonistic elements – our earthly nature and our heavenly nature.⁴ The fire that brings them into contact with one another is fed by faith, hope and love – unshakeable faith in the powers God has placed in us, hope for the future he is reserving for his children and, finally, the constant love for what is true and beautiful. If it is other people’s attitudes that cause us to lose courage, we must call on love. But if our discouragement comes from ourselves, because we are tired of making an effort and facing difficulties, we must ask faith and hope to help us.

Recently, a friend told me that one day when he was feeling low and desperate he went for a walk in the countryside. At one point, he sat down on a rock, and there, on this rough, bare rock, he noticed a few blades of grass that had managed to grow and survive in a tiny crevice. He looked at them for a long time, and suddenly something inside him came to life. He couldn’t

understand how these few blades of grass, which had needed such a tiny amount of earth to grow, could have forced him out of his despondency. In reality, it was not the grass that had done this; by looking at the grass he had unconsciously brought about a change deep down inside. Yes, we hold within us all the powers of regeneration, and sometimes all that is needed is a tiny spur for them to be activated.

All beings and things around us can be of help to us. It may happen outside our awareness and our will, but it is our job to make this phenomenon conscious and not wait until nature comes to our aid by chance. Look at ants and bees: they are tireless; you will never see an ant or a bee get discouraged. You may say that nature created them that way. That is true, but, given everything it has created, it is nature that teaches us, and it is up to us to be intelligent enough to learn from its lessons. You will certainly have noticed that when you are sad or discouraged, thinking of someone you love or admire brings you comfort. Why? Because the pictures we have in our head or heart are not passive. They have a life and powers; they are like transformers and sources of energy. An image can be the ruin of us, and it can save us. An image can intoxicate us, and it can act as an antidote. Every image is linked to an idea, and when you concentrate on an image it starts to work on you – it marks you. Never neglect the inner work you can do with images, as it is of great benefit.

You might say, 'I can't do any more. I've come to the end of the road.' Yes, maybe it is the end of this road now. But you have many more roads within you. Put a new one in its place, and you will be able to go on your way.

It is true that there are times when you feel overcome by a terrible weariness – the feeling that you can't take one more step. It is difficult to fight a feeling, whatever it is, but when you feel this kind of weariness, that is all the more reason to remain convinced that you still have resources and that you will soon be able to get going again. One day, of course, you will arrive at the end of the final road, but for now you are not yet there, and if you are able to hold onto thoughts of courage and hope, you will soon be back on your feet. You will have found another path and you will go on your way completely refreshed.

Feeling is one thing, and thinking is quite another. All too often, feeling rubs off on our thoughts. You feel exhausted – which is natural – and this feeling triggers thoughts and feelings of discouragement, sadness and despair.

Well, no, at times like these, thinking has to act on feeling: even if it cannot conquer the feeling, it must be there like a light, like a distant beacon. It is telling you that you can get up again, so, despite your weariness and your exhaustion, that is what you must believe, not your feelings. You may not have a single drop of energy in your tank, but the cosmic reservoir is full, and that is where you must go in your imagination to draw some energy. Yes, thought is also useful for that – if the flame of your inner night light is about to go out, draw even a few drops from this reservoir of energies and it will burn again.

The best time for drawing energy from the cosmic reservoir is in the morning at sunrise. While you are watching the sun, focus on the cells of your body until they vibrate as one with the solar spirit. Little by little, you will feel that this is where true knowledge is given to you – knowledge that will bring you a sense of aliveness at every moment. Once you have started to communicate this powerful vibration to your cells, never again allow yourself to stagnate; try to keep moving.

I will continue to insist that you value those moments when your whole being is filled with currents of spiritual energy. Do all you can to keep them alive. Do not neglect them, and don't then go and waste these energies on mundane activities. Some people will justify neglecting the moments of grace they have experienced by saying that perhaps it was all an illusion, nothing but the fruit of their imagination. Heaven has purified them, enlightened them and strengthened them, and they are wondering whether they might have been deluded! But when they feel weak, overwhelmed or tormented, they don't question that – to them, that's reality. There are no words to describe human ignorance and ingratitude.

I want to convince you to appreciate those rare moments when you are given the gift of pure energy currents that will sustain you all your life. Do all you can to hold on to them. It is not effort that makes you tired; what tires you is your tendency to open your mind and heart to dark and heavy thoughts and feelings. How can you not be tired if you are a burden to yourself?⁵ Concentrate on the sun, and allow its rays to penetrate you. By doing this you will create a kind of tunnel inside you, and at the end of this tunnel you will arrive at the regions of light, feeling free and light in yourself.

There is something else important you need to know. Whatever we undertake, in whatever area, material or spiritual, it is the effort we make that

counts. Heaven never takes any account of the outcome, only of our efforts. It is heaven that decides the outcome, because everything we do is part of the whole and must therefore serve God's plans and be in harmony with them. Perhaps what we are working for is not meant to turn out how we want it to. So, only the efforts we make are ours, not the result. Perhaps you think that's unfair? No, it's not, because every effort we make has some result.

How many men and women have died for an ideal, seemingly without having achieved their goal. But their example has fuelled the enthusiasm of a whole host of other people. They were like seeds, like yeast: one day, the goal will be achieved and even better than they had hoped. This is why those who do achieve success should be grateful to all the men and women who came before them whose work made their success possible. These men and women made sacrifices and may even have been victimized, but it is possible that they may return in another life to reap the fruit of their labours. Historians know nothing of the past lives of the people they study, which is why, when they state that such-and-such a person succeeded where someone else had failed, they may be mistaken.

We must never be concerned about success, only about the efforts we need to make, because no one can work in our place. Let's leave the beings on high to decide when these efforts will produce visible, tangible results. The absence of concrete results does not mean that we have either not worked or not worked well, only that the time for success has not yet arrived. There is nothing to be worried about. Those who do not know this law torment themselves or take their feelings out on other people and so destroy the spiritual benefits of all their efforts. Whatever happens, you must tell yourself, 'On the face of it, all the effort I've made hasn't had much result, but in reality I know that today it is already bearing fruit.' Even if we cannot see results, they will always be there in hearts and souls. Nothing remains fixed or stagnant.

You need this light that restores things to their right place. Success on the physical plane is not up to you, for it depends on what the twenty-four elders decree. If you do not succeed as you hope to, it is because it is not yet time. Do not allow yourself to be tainted by the materialistic notion of success that is so widespread at the present time; it can bring nothing of good for you or for anyone else.

So, carry on working: that's all. If you were really sensitive, you would sense that there are already results on the subtle planes, and as results already

exist on high, one day they will eventually come down onto the physical plane.⁶ And do not be too overjoyed if you achieve any rapid successes. If your work has not previously registered on the fabric of the psychic and spiritual planes over a long period, these successes will not last.

The condition for true success does not lie in the strenuous and spectacular effort of a moment but in the daily repetition of small efforts. When water falls onto stone, one drop at a time, it will eventually erode it. And yet a drop of water is so gentle, and stone is so hard! Never stop making an effort for a single day, for the secret of success lies in continuity and perseverance. If you stop, you even risk losing what you have achieved, because matter possesses an immense power of resistance and it always tends to return to its original inert state. You must work constantly to raise it up and, then, keep it at the level you yourself want to rise to, so as to make it your home.

If you want to be full of life, keep wanting to move forward for as long as you can. There is so much potential slumbering in you, just waiting to be woken up. But instead of waking it up you continue to put it to sleep. We meet people who are fifty, sixty years old or even less, and they seem already dead and buried. Yes, you can even see the tombstone over them saying, 'Here lies –'. Why? Even if we become tired and old age is approaching, we should tell ourselves there is always something more to understand, something else we can begin, and we should never give way to numbness or stagnation. Even if we are paralysed or are dying, there is still something we can do – even if it's only thanking heaven.⁷

Make sure that when you come to the end of your life you are still youthful, because you have understood what life really is: non-stop change and adaptation. In Initiatic Science, there is no such thing as young and old, only beings who have the task of working on themselves. No one must say, 'Oh, the years have flown by – I'm old already.' Those who use their age as an excuse for their inertia reduce the number of days they still have left to enjoy. Because they keep saying, 'I'm getting old... I'm old... Leave me alone', they create a mental image of old age, and this image has a very negative effect on their psychological state as well as their physical state. If they focused instead on being young and said, 'Oh, it's so wonderful to be young!' they would feel increasingly flexible, active and open to life. That is what being young really means. The physical body, of course, loses its vigour and stamina over the years, but even at the moment of death, a look or a

smile can still express youthfulness.

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¹ See *Les deux arbres du Paradis*, Œuvres complètes, t. 3, chap. IX: ‘Les deux arbres du Paradis: 3. Le retour de l’enfant prodigue’.

² See *Angels – and Other Mysteries of the Tree of Life*, Izvor 236, chap. 15: ‘Binah: I The laws of destiny’.

³ See *The Faith that Moves Mountains*, Izvor 238, chap. 13: ‘Rabota, vreme, vera: work, time, faith’.

⁴ See *The Philosopher’s Stone – in the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 10: ‘The philosopher’s stone, fruit of a mystic union’.

⁵ See *Harmony and Health*, Izvor 225, chap. 8: ‘How to become tireless’.

⁶ See *The Powers of Thought*, Izvor 224, chap. 5: ‘How thought materializes on the physical plane’.

⁷ See *The Laughter of a Sage*, Izvor 243, chap. 12: ‘Giving thanks: a source of light and joy’.

Chapter Fifteen

On the threshold of a new year

Instinctively, humans are always projecting into the future, living in hope that tomorrow will be better, but this projection into the future is often only an escape. They hope and hope, but why would things sort themselves out? They hope that the future will be better than the present, but based on what? Where is this 'better' going to come from? The truth is that, if all they do is hope without working, the future will be even worse.

Good things rarely come from outside. If they do, so much the better, but it is you yourselves that have the power to turn events to your advantage or to your detriment. You can experience every event in one of two ways: one way lifts you higher, and the other brings you down or even causes you to fall. Those who do not have enough wisdom, love or willpower turn even the most favourable outer conditions into hardships for themselves and others. So, what kind of future can they hope for? If a car breaks down in the middle of the road, all the others are forced to stop, traffic is brought to a standstill, and there's a bottleneck! In the same way, if you live a single day in a negative way, you create a kind of bottleneck for the following days and, if you don't try to get back on the right path straightaway, for future incarnations too.

Most people are used to taking life as it comes: they have no idea that events are a substance that has to be adapted, just as we make certain foods edible by cooking them and adding particular ingredients. Would you eat fish as it is when it's just been caught, with its scales, fins and bones still intact? No. And would you eat vegetables straight from the ground? You wouldn't do that either. Cooking is the art of making all kinds of products edible, even tasty, that would otherwise be indigestible or bland if they hadn't been cleaned, cooked and seasoned.

So, you need to understand that the happiness you long for will only come if you do some real inner 'cooking' first. There is no point expecting to pluck the good moments in life the way you would pluck a ripe fruit from a tree as you pass. You must learn to work with each situation, particularly difficult, painful situations, by adding elements from your spirit and soul, that is, elements of divine wisdom and love.

Some people claim they are able to not be affected by life's difficulties. That is not possible: everyone, unless they are a stone, feels pain when

anything undermines their health, their sensibility or their convictions. And not only is it not possible, it is not desirable: what can you expect of a stone among human beings? But if someone does their best not to be discouraged, whatever suffering they have to endure, you can tell they will go far.

You may say, 'Never be discouraged? How is that possible?' Because of goodwill. Yes, goodwill, because willpower alone is not enough. When there are difficulties, it is not enough to grit your teeth or clench your fists and say, 'I'll be fine.' Firstly, you cannot be certain that you will manage to be stronger than events, and you will end up exhausted and overwhelmed. And even if you do manage to win through, you run another risk, that of becoming hardened. We can be impressed by the willpower of certain people who do not allow difficulties to discourage them, but we don't necessarily want to spend time with them, because they are often too hard on other people and highly scornful of them.

What I call goodwill is a will supported by an intelligence that tries to understand events and draw the lesson from them and by a heart that is not closed to others. This goodwill is also a form of patience – nothing discourages it. This is why we can say that patience is a virtue that must accompany all other virtues. We have to be loving and patient, wise and patient, strong and patient; otherwise, love, wisdom and strength quickly begin to lose their power.¹

Imagine you have planted the seeds of a plant that you know produces wonderful flowers, but you are unaware that it flowers only every hundred years. Such plants are rare, but they do exist. So, you wait, anxious and perturbed. Your impatience only proves that you do not know the nature of this wonderful flowering plant. And then there are other seeds that produce flowers after only a few weeks; of course, you like them more, but these flowers are more common. All activity you engage in is like a seed you are sowing. If you get results quickly, you are satisfied, but ask yourself sometimes whether those seeds that develop rapidly are the best kind. More often than not, it's the opposite.

When someone is patient, it proves that they have hidden knowledge. There are beings who come to the world already possessing this knowledge: each day they set to work, and whatever happens they persevere, they are tenacious. They are born under a favourable aspect of Saturn. Time, for them, is measured in very long intervals, and as it is always time – Saturn – that has the last word, the harvest is not only beautiful but abundant.

Each planet has its own particular periodicity. The Moon's is the smallest, travelling through the zodiac in twenty-nine days. Then comes Mercury, then, in order, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

And beyond Saturn, we still have Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, which take even longer to revolve round the sun.

The time it takes for seeds to develop or ideas to become reality is the same as for planets revolving around the sun. Seeds or ideas require different lengths of time depending on their nature. To succeed in ventures of a spiritual nature requires a lot of time, because here Uranus, Neptune and Pluto must also be of support. Spiritual work is influenced by the slow planets, which travel in large circles around the sun.

Ideas and thoughts are living entities.² When they leave our mind, they create a circle in space, passing through different regions, where they take on appropriate elements, before returning to their place of origin, which is us. Each thought needs a fixed amount of time to draw a circle. The most spiritual, noble and divine thoughts draw very large circles. They travel through all regions, as far as the divine world, before coming back down, bringing their treasures with them.

You might object that when you are hired by a company, you are expected to get results quickly. Yes, when it's a question of earning money, you have to get a move on, which is why so many stores and shops offer people products and things to satisfy their material needs, even their lower needs, as this is very quickly achievable. If they were offering things to feed the soul or spirit, they would go bankrupt.

Wisdom requires us to take account of time for the physical plane and, at the same time, of eternity for the soul and spirit. Because humans live their life in a great rush, they deprive themselves of this element of duration, of the infinite, which would give meaning and flavour to life. When they do not find what they are looking for quickly enough, they immediately pass on to something else. This is why, in their inner life, they don't arrive anywhere. Patience is a quality of great age; hope, a quality of youth. Yes, youth hopes, and if it does not see what it is hoping for quickly enough, it becomes impatient, whereas old age no longer hopes for very much but has learned to endure patiently. Really, patience and hope should get together. Where there is hope, patience must come to support it. And when there is patience, hope cannot be far away. If we do not hope for anything, how can we be patient, and why would we be? There is nothing to wait for. But when patience and

hope walk a path hand in hand, year after year, the future becomes wide open.

One year is ending and another beginning.³ It is the time when everyone makes wishes for themselves, their family, their friends and for the whole world. And it is customary when we meet to say, 'Happy new year!' But before you think about the new year, speak first to the year that is ending. You are surprised. What? Speak to the year? Yes. The Cabbalah tells us that a year is a living being, so you can communicate with it. So, address the year that is ending, and ask it to remember you. Since it is alive, it is not passive: it has recorded not only our actions but also our wishes, feelings and thoughts. On its last day, it makes its report to the lords of destiny and connects us to the coming year.

The modern world has become accustomed to thinking of time as a kind of abstraction measured by clocks and watches, when in fact a year, a day, an hour even, are living realities. What's more, we still hear expressions like 'I thank God for the hour when...' or 'I curse the hour when...' In Greek mythology, the god Cronos represented time, and the Hours were also divinities, being the daughters of Zeus, the master of the gods. There are many things that could be said on this subject.

While you are waiting for the new year, ask yourself how you are going to leave the one that is ending. Try to think of it with gratitude. Tell it, 'Thank you, dear year; you have prevented a great many difficulties for me and brought me so many good things!' Try hard to recollect these good things. If you know how to speak to the present year, it will speak of you to the one that is beginning and say, 'This is a true child of God, full of gratitude, so you can bring him or her new presents.' But prepare yourself, because in order to receive them you must at least be present, that is, aware, when they are being shared out.

So, I will repeat here what I have already recommended concerning the first twelve days of the year. Each one represents a month. So, do your very best to live these first twelve days in the best way possible to give a solid basis to the whole year. Since all our actions and psychological states have consequences, we must pay close attention to them as they occur.

On the physical, material level, we all know that a clumsy gesture or a moment of distraction can destroy a life. This is why there are so many warnings everywhere. On the roads you see signs saying, 'Dangerous bend',

‘Slippery surface’, ‘Slow, work in progress’, and so on. And then there are all the products telling us, ‘Do not swallow’! We are given countless warnings not to put our own or other people’s health, even life, in danger. It only takes a second for anyone to create irreparable damage, and then all the beautiful plans they were making for the future will have come to nothing.

In the life of the psyche, the moral life, there are no such signs and labels to warn people that giving in instantly to a bad impulse will create disorder in their soul, mind, heart and sometimes even their physical body. This is why, when it comes to spiritual life, it is even more important to be aware of the present moment.⁴

Life is a long chain of moments that have to be lived with awareness one after the other. If you constantly project yourself into the future, it is like skipping the middle links of the chain. What will you gain by having a piece of chain that is not attached to anything? You do not create your future by beginning at the end, and simply imagining a beautiful future will not sort out the present. Begin at the beginning, move through the different stages, and you will make progress – you will rise higher and higher until you reach the top.

Maybe you would prefer to hear me give illusory promises of success and bliss? Well, no, I can only tell you the truth: your future happiness lies in work and in effort. All the efforts you make are recorded in the book of life, on high,⁵ and thanks to these efforts, many, many blessings are being prepared for you. When you receive them and you ask, ‘Why am I receiving these presents?’, you will be told, ‘Because, as a result of your work, you have risen to the regions of light, and you have also brought light and peace to beings who were in darkness and distress.’

There is nothing more I can tell you. Keep walking the path of light. And what will be at the end of the path? You will find out when you arrive, and you will be dazzled.

¹ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 12: ‘Patience: its unexpected treasures’.

² See *The Powers of Thought*, Izvor 224, chap. 4: ‘Thoughts are living entities.’

³ See *The New Year*, Brochure 301.

⁴ See *The Laughter of a Sage*, Izvor 243, chap. 2: ‘Like a shepherd watching over his sheep’.

⁵ See above, chap. 13: ‘Getting your name written in the book of life’.