

Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov

The Laughter of a Sage



Izvor Collection

P R O S V E T A

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of a Sage**



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Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov



Chapter One

The sage lives in hope

During the course of a day we meet different people, and it is interesting and sometimes amusing to observe how they talk about events and life in general. While some people only dwell on what is going badly and what, according to them, will continue to go badly or even worse, others only notice and remember what is good and encouraging and continue on their way exclaiming: ‘How beautiful life is!’ So we call some people pessimists and others optimists.

For pessimists, the whole year is filled only with cloudy and rainy days, with, they will grudgingly admit, a few rays of sunlight. For optimists on the other hand, they only see sunny days interrupted by occasional beneficial rainfalls. If we were to present a project to the pessimist, they would immediately see a mountain of obstacles lying in their way. Optimists on the other hand, accept the project enthusiastically, leap over any objections that might be raised and immediately see the project as successfully completed to the greatest satisfaction of everyone. Pessimists always feel as if ill health is just around the corner; as soon as they are not feeling well, their thoughts turn to the hospital and the cemetery – they have of course already written their will, and they are ready to invite their friends to say their last goodbyes. Optimists always feel healthy, and if they fall ill they will be back on their feet again in no time.

And because the world is going badly, and since people are malicious and all good plans are more or less bound to fail, the pessimist concludes that it’s not really worth doing anything or working for others. They content themselves with taking care of their own business and leave other people to their sad fate. And it gives them great satisfaction when they see that the troubles, difficulties or misfortunes they foresaw actually come true! Pessimism leads to selfishness and even hardness, but also to laziness. Yes, since the pessimist is convinced there is nothing to be done to improve the situation, they become lazy, except when it comes to explaining all the good reasons they have for being pessimistic; then their tongue is extremely active!

And quite often, pessimists are writers. So many books have been written by people who needed to point out that the world is doomed to failure, that life is absurd and that nothing is worth anything. But, my God, if good should never triumph, if nothing has any meaning and if nothing is worth doing, why then even make the effort to talk or to write? It makes no sense. The only logical thing to do would be to keep quiet. Yes, why do these authors need to bring dark clouds into the hearts and minds of all those who read their books?

Of course, medical science has observed the influence of the state of our body on our state of mind; a pessimist will often have an illness of the liver or stomach. But we mustn't mistake causes and consequences. In reality, these liver or stomach ailments are caused by certain pernicious mental habits that these people have harboured in this life, or even in a previous life, and now their digestive complaints are reflected by their state of mind. Our psychological state constantly influences our physical state, and vice-versa.¹

And where does pessimism originate in humans? Some will claim it is their clear-sightedness. Not at all! It is caused by their ambitions and the disproportionate desires they have been unable to achieve. And so, disappointment after disappointment, they have ended up with a jaded outlook on the world. We often see pessimism present in the older nations, which have evolved on the basis of great projects they thought they would easily be able to bring to fruition. Certain successes led them to believe they would not only be able to dominate neighbouring countries, but also extend their influence to distant lands. And that's where they're mistaken! They want to devour the entire world, but they would do better to ask themselves first whether they would be capable of digesting it; and even if they start off with some success, little by little, difficulties, stalemates, defeats and losses arise. So, how then can the future be seen in a favourable light?...

Young nations, on the other hand, which have not yet had these experiences, are full of hope; they believe they can succeed where others have failed. Of course they may succeed, but only if they behave with wisdom and moderation, otherwise they will also end up like the others, disillusioned and pessimistic. Nations are just like individuals: they are governed by the same laws. Those that nourish ambitions exceeding their capabilities are destined to fail, and these failures ultimately taint their entire

view of the world. For many – countries or individuals – life can be defined as a transition from optimism to pessimism.

For the young, the possibilities are endless and many doors are waiting open, and if one closes, others still remain open. But little by little, one after another, the doors have closed, and so the faces we previously saw smiling and confident about life end up becoming masks: expressions darken, features droop, and bitter lines appear at the corners of mouths. Yes, youth makes plans and old age takes stock. And the balance sheet isn't always great.

Master Peter Deunov used to say, 'If humans fall into pessimism, it's because they do not know how to give their movement direction.' What type of direction was he talking about? To put things simply, we can say there are two directions: upwards to the spiritual world, and downwards to the material world. The material world and the spiritual world offer us their riches; in both cases, they are not easy to obtain, but, depending on which ones we seek, our experience of the difficulties they present is not the same.

Those who focus on material accomplishments, possessions, money and power and who do not achieve their goals are left with the bitter experience of their failures, as if they had lost everything. Whereas those who are driven by spiritual needs always feel supported. By aspiring to a higher life, they have constantly woven connections with the divine world, and these connections produce secret vibrations within them. Even if they do not fully accomplish all they aspire to, these vibrations they feel in their inner being protect them by shielding them from discouragement.

There is only one instance where you are allowed to be pessimistic, and that is when you are planning to do something bad. And then, it is a good idea to envisage failure; in fact, it would be better to do so! Failure is the best thing that could happen to you in this instance; it will spare you complications.² But when it comes to a good project, a generous project, even if you encounter difficulties in making it happen, you should be optimistic and remain convinced that you will eventually succeed.

So you see, this question of optimism and pessimism goes a lot farther than one might have thought at first sight. Only those who seek spiritual advantages can be truly optimistic; those who seek material advantages, even

if they are optimistic at first, will have to abandon their illusions one day or another, and they will succumb to pessimism. That's why, I repeat, pessimists are often very ambitious people who have become disappointed. Their ambitions were burdens that weighed them down since they did not know the true path to follow, the path that leads to the heights. And, faced with failures, what can we do if we have already expended all our energies to no avail?

So, optimism and pessimism should not be seen just as a question of temperament; they imply a true philosophy. Pessimists concentrate on small mundane things, while optimists open their soul to the vast expanses of heaven. In an initiatic school, there should never be pessimists. So, be aware that if you are pessimistic, it means that within you have not yet taken the right direction, your feet have not yet stepped firmly onto the path of spiritual science, for from the threshold of this science, you should have discerned that the true future of human beings is light, beauty, joy and fulfilment of their soul. Along the way, of course, you will come across difficulties, you will be confronted with obstacles, and so, in order to overcome them, you should not lose sight of your goal but instead delight in the anticipation of this joy awaiting you.

Only consciousness of our divine predestination enables us to keep hope alive. Otherwise, of course, when we see what the world is like, we all have good reason to be pessimistic, disoriented, anxious and overwhelmed. And so what should be done? Some people will consult psychologists and psychoanalysts... Others will consult astrologists, mediums, clairvoyants, as they do more and more nowadays, in order to be reassured. That goes to show that they have not understood where and how they should look for true certainties and real reasons for having confidence in the future.

I am not denying that there are people who know how to read the future, but they are rare.³ And even if they inform you of forthcoming events, it will still be up to you to decide how to act so as not to waste all your chances and to face the ordeals to come. So, instead of going to ask others about your future, it would be more intelligent if you took the time to create something solid in yourself that would enable you to use everything that happens to you – your sadness and your joy, your successes and your failures alike – for your evolution.

I have met so many clairvoyants, especially female clairvoyants, in my life! My first recollection of this was when I was nine years old. There were many gypsies in Bulgaria, and the women told people's fortunes. One day, while walking in the street, I passed one of them and she stopped me. She told me I had many enemies. Can you imagine that – at the age of nine! Surprised, I asked her, 'But why? What have I done?' She added that I also had many friends. Then she looked at my hand and declared that she could see a girl, who was pretty but overweight and curvaceous, and who loved me. And again, surprised, I asked her, 'But really, as fat as that?' She then told me she had fallen off her donkey that very morning and the fall had prevented her from seeing well. And then it was her turn to give me her hand so I could pay her.

The Bulgarians, however, try to tell the future in the coffee grounds instead. I can still remember a woman in Varna whose neighbours all invited her to come for coffee so she could then examine the dregs left in their coffee cups. If you do what she did, you'll never die of thirst!

And when I arrived in Paris, so many clairvoyants came to see me! Especially during the war, when the whole world was wondering when and how that tragedy was going to end. Some people asked me questions about the accuracy of their predictions. And I replied, 'If you are not sure about what you say, how can you be sure about what I am going to tell you?'

Of course, each of you can do as you please. Clairvoyants and astrologists are more often than not quite skilled, especially when it comes to predicting success, love, fortune and health, otherwise no one would consult them; and it goes without saying that at some time or other, something good eventually happens, even if it does not last. So, for those who need to resort to such practices to feel reassured about their fate, let them do so if it does them good, but I have to tell you that the only effective method you can trust is to move forward with the awareness of the future of light and joy that God has intended for his children.

According to a commonly widespread opinion, pessimism is supposedly a form of wisdom: when we know that evil can arise at any moment and from anywhere, we have to be vigilant and take precautions. Well, no, this is such a negative view and there is nothing wise about it. It is even harmful for the

psyche: when you concentrate on evil, everywhere and all the time, you do not see it when it really does appear, and the vigorous forces that would allow you to react become paralysed. So where then is the wisdom and the lucidity?

Wisdom, true wisdom, is something else, and what does it tell us? In the book of Proverbs, wisdom introduces itself: *‘I, wisdom, ... the Lord created me at the beginning... when he established the heavens, I was there... when he assigned to the sea its limit... when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always...’* That is how wisdom talks. In participating with God in the creation of the world, wisdom has explored God’s intentions and confidently sees the future in bright and magnificent colours. And not only is wisdom not sad, it is also cheerful and joyful because it plays alongside God.

The sage knows that humans’ destiny is to go back one day to their heavenly homeland. And along the way, humans will obviously come across evil of all kinds, they will suffer, doubt others and themselves, and they will become discouraged. But even in the worst moments they will not flounder, because engraved in their heart and soul there remain these truths: God created them in his image, and this image of God contains the potential for all riches and all victories.⁴

Pessimism is therefore not a child of wisdom but rather of the greatest ignorance. Of course, it is not a question of setting oneself against pessimism by pretending that there is nothing wrong; that would be ridiculous; not everything goes well, and sometimes many things go really badly. But optimism is a philosophical outlook founded on the knowledge of God, the universe and human beings. So, it is not the word ‘optimism’ that we should be using; given the way we use it in daily life, it is too often confused with a certain naivety and casualness that have nothing to do with anything philosophical. The optimism I am talking about is in actual fact hope – the certainty that the future can always be better. Even if the present is not great, the forces of life and good are so strong they can always triumph over the bad, from the moment a human being decides to join forces with them.

Someone might ask, ‘But what hope do I have? Everything I begin fails; my future is blocked!’ That of course depends on what you call your future.

If you see this future only in terms of material and social success, or as a love story like in fairy tales, then maybe your future *will* remain blocked. But your true future, your future as sons and daughters of God, is wide open before you. Every day is different. So, you didn't see the sun today? Tomorrow it will shine again. For those who know what to base their hopes on, nothing remains shut for ever.

True wisdom has nothing to do with a pessimistic conception of life; true wisdom is to be found in hope. In his *First Epistle to the Corinthians* Saint Paul wrote: *'But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory... But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him..."'*

In reality, there is only one thing that you are lacking: decision. You are still divided, you accept inner contradictions: you say you have chosen a spiritual life, but at the same time you continue to live like everyone else, worried about ensuring you have security and material success. Because, as you would say, you never know what the future holds, and your thoughts and time are taken up with these preoccupations. Anyone who knows their path and their goal does not weigh themselves down with these burdens, because they always have the wealth of their heavenly Father in sight, and this will give them everything they need.

You will say, 'But it is necessary, all the same, to anticipate the future and stock up, to make sure there is enough for the bad times.' Given the way we prepare for the bad times, of course they will come! In reality, we already possess safety-deposit boxes in a bank, from which we can make withdrawals. This bank, which God himself supplies, is within each one of us: in our determination, in our heart, mind, soul and spirit. And I beg you, please decide to use at least one of these treasures that have been entrusted to you.

There are a certain number of true optimists on this earth: they are gardeners and farmers. Yes, they bury seeds and kernels which, at first sight, do not amount to much. They wait and hope... and one day they have fields of wheat, corn and entire orchards of fruit trees. How many times have I drawn your attention to the similarities that exist between agriculture and spiritual

life! Seeds, kernels and everything we sow or plant end up growing and bearing fruit. And it works just the same way with our thoughts, our feelings and our desires...

In Bulgaria, Master Peter Deunov used to ask us not to throw away the kernels from fruit that we had eaten, such as peaches, prunes and apricots, but to plant them instead. And I give you the same advice. You may say that you do not have a garden for that. So plant them wherever you can; it is not important. The most important thing is that you become aware that a kernel is a being that needs to give birth to the living sprout it carries within; it suffers from keeping the sprout prisoner in the wood. Without favourable ground, the sprout will perish, when all it wants to do is live.

Of course, not all the kernels that are planted bear trees, but the main aim of this exercise is to make you more and more conscious that you also have other kernels to plant: ideas, thoughts and feelings. And when they bear fruit, not only will you be blessed with abundance, but you'll also be able to nourish many other beings. So try to cultivate this expanded consciousness, for that is true optimism and hope.

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'I, wisdom,... the Lord created me at the beginning...' – *Prov. 8:12-30*

'But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden...' – *I Cor. 2:7*

¹ See *Harmony and Health*, Izvor 225, chap. 8: 'How to become tireless'.

² See *Love Greater Than Faith*, Izvor 239, chap. 3: 'Constructive doubt'.

³ See *Looking into the Invisible*, Izvor 228, chap. 5: 'Should we consult clairvoyants?'

⁴ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 1: 'God, the beginning and end of our journey'.

Chapter Two

Like a shepherd watching over his sheep...

A thief, weaving their way through the crowd looking for something to steal, is almost clairvoyant. It is as if they have antennae – for they can sense which people are vigilant and awake and those who are half asleep. And what is the clue? Light. For a kind of clarity emanates from those who are alert, and the thief will not choose them as a target. They target those who are asleep on their feet, and they steal a wallet or handbag without the owner even noticing, because they are plunged in darkness. In the same way, in the invisible world, negative entities do not attack those in whom they sense light, for they know that they will immediately be identified and chased away.

Jesus said: *‘... if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.’* This refers to one of the greatest qualities that people can acquire: vigilance. It is precisely because we do not know at what time the thief will come (and the thief represents all the circumstances when we are threatened inwardly with the possibility of losing something precious) that we should never let our attention drift. So, I would say that it is not so much intelligence, goodness or devotion that a spiritual Master looks for in those who seek to become his disciples; it is vigilance. For if they are vigilant, they will avoid all the dangers that line their path. Whereas a lack of vigilance will lead to the gradual loss of what they have recently put a lot of effort into achieving.

Etymologically, the word ‘vigilance’ belongs to the same family as ‘vigil’, as in the phrase ‘keeping vigil’, meaning to keep watch or stay awake. Being awake is the opposite of sleeping. And what is it we should not allow to sleep within ourselves? Our awareness. Our body needs sleep and we should not deprive it. Not sleeping is one thing, but being consciously awake is another. While we might not be sleeping, our awareness might well be dozing, just as we can be asleep while keeping our awareness awake.¹ Our awareness is like a lamp, and in highly evolved beings, this lamp never goes out.

Both physically and psychically, vigilance and attention are essential. If you are not paying attention, you'll make a clumsy move, bump into an obstacle, fall over... Neither your knowledge, your fortune, nor your virtues will keep you from harm. How many remarkable people have died in accidents as a result of their lack of attention, whereas criminals, because they are vigilant, are often able to get out of difficult situations. We might even say that what characterizes a criminal is vigilance, precisely because they feel they are in danger. They are conscious of having broken the law, and they know that others may be looking for them, so they remain constantly on the lookout for fear of being seen or of leaving clues that might lead to their capture. Do not leave vigilance to criminals, thinking your innocence will automatically provide divine protection for you. If you are negligent, nothing and no one will protect you.

Master Peter Deunov once said: 'Why does the wolf exist? To teach the shepherd vigilance. If he sees that one of his sheep is missing, the shepherd must try to find where the wolf came in. If he finds an opening in the wall, he should fill it immediately. If he does not find a hole, he should ask himself whether the wolf might have jumped over the fence. The good shepherd ensures that there is no hole in the wall of his sheep pen and that the fence is high enough to keep his flock safe from any incursion by wolves.'

Whatever happens to human beings during their lifetime, nature's only aim is to educate them. Every one of us has been entrusted with a sheepfold, and it is up to us to ensure that there are no holes in the walls and that we erect a high enough fence. You may think to yourself, 'Sheepfolds, sheep, wolves... Has that really got anything to do with us?' Yes, it has, but you don't know it, because you have not yet deepened your knowledge of the language of symbols.

A wolf threatening your sheepfold is a symbol of the devil, the entity that represents all the dark and evil spirits that prowl around people, lying in wait for their slightest failing so as to jump at them. Protecting yourself from the wolf means maintaining a steady level of attention and keeping constantly alert. You are all shepherds: the sheep pen is your body, the sheep are your cells, and you also have guard dogs, spirits of light that protect you.

In truth, the arrival of the wolf is not only due to your, the shepherd's, lack

of vigilance: you yourself may have opened the door for it, or you may have lowered your fences, meaning you have weakened your defences. You say that you are vigilant? And yet thoughts and feelings come to you and rob you of your courage, your confidence and your joy. Yes, because your vigilance is like Nasreddin Hodja's².

Vigilance is dulled by the attraction and appetite for pleasures. Indeed, how can you be vigilant when all you feel like doing is giving yourself over to what is pleasurable? Pleasures are like humidity that wets the wings of your soul and prevents it from flying. And when your soul can no longer fly, any old 'wolf' can catch you.

Nothing happens by chance. The wolf is the symbol of hostile and destructive forces that always appear where a law has been transgressed through lack of vigilance. If you transgress on the emotional level, in the realm of the heart, the wolf will appear in the guise of egotism, jealousy, harshness and the desire for vengeance. If you transgress in the realm of the intellect, the wolf will appear as a lack of discernment, wisdom and reason. And if you transgress in the realm of will, the wolf will appear as laziness, clumsiness and ruin.

And now, how should the fence be understood? A fence is a boundary, a barrier, and so also a protection. In the physical body, the skin performs this function, and in the spiritual plane, protection is provided by the aura. The aura is the true fence that keeps us safe from the wolves, and it is this barrier that we must keep firmly shut and as high as possible. How? By working with our heart and mind. The heart steadfastly maintains the fence and it fills the holes so that we can resist any blows, for love works in a special way by reinforcing our cells and making them able to resist illness and adversity. As for the mind, enlightened by wisdom, it erects a wall of light that cannot be cleared by the evil spirits crawling around in the lower regions.

Before beginning his work, a magus³ traces a circle around him in order to protect himself from dark entities. This circle is also a type of fence. You might say there is nothing high or solid about it. That is true, but the magus's love and wisdom brings such height and thickness to this circle that he is as protected as if he were in an impenetrable fortress.

You understand why it is so important to reinforce your aura with love and

wisdom, so that nothing negative can affect you. I told you, the aura is a skin, it's your spiritual skin. And it is as desirable for your spiritual skin to be thick as it is for your physical skin to be soft and delicate.⁴

There are people who can't stop complaining about the way others look at them, talk to them, treat them; they are so sensitive, it is as if they were covered in wounds. If you say to them, 'So, how are you doing?' and give them a friendly tap on the shoulder, their aura cringes because it is very thin. This is the sign that they do not have much love. While with those who have a very big aura, you can say whatever you like to them; it does not bother them or make them angry, for they are full of love. So then, if you are so sensitive to criticism and humiliation, do not try to justify yourself. It's simply that you do not have enough love to fill the holes and to build thick walls to prevent the negative currents getting through.

As for wisdom, it shows you the upward path, for it is not down below, at ground level, that we acquire a good knowledge of things. Those who want to see what is going on in the valley must climb up to a summit; once they are up high, not only can they see but they are also protected, for enemies cannot reach them. And one day, they are able to join the One the *Psalms* call the Most-High; and then, even in the midst of turmoil, something in them is able to remain there, on high, where nothing will harm them ever again.

Thickness corresponds to feeling, for feeling and warmth work to make things rounder and expand them, whereas wisdom and light draw them upwards. For the time being, it is their sorrows and their difficulties which make humans reflect and give them more wisdom. But this will pass, and one day joy and cheerfulness will come hand in hand with wisdom.

The shepherd who does not transgress laws keeps the wolves at bay: they are afraid of him because they sense that he is very strong. And the sheep too feel this strength, and they become more daring, uniting together to stop the wolves from entering. It is said that sheep are fearful. But that is wrong; they are fearful if their master has become weak from living in disorder and disharmony.

What I am telling you is true for the physical body first and foremost. When human beings lead a life that is not inspired by wisdom and love, their sheep – the cells of all their organs – suffer the consequences: they no longer

have the same vitality; you could even say they become discouraged. So, when illness sets in, they are unable to fight it off. A general seeking to give his army the impetus they require to drive back the enemy needs to show integrity and strength of soul. If he lets himself go, the soldiers will do likewise. This same law can be seen to be true in all areas.

Every one of you must become a vigilant shepherd and protect your sheep, not only checking every day that there is no hole in the fence, but also making the fence stronger and using guard dogs. As soon as you feel a kind of irritation, nervousness or discouragement, inspect your fence: there must be a hole in it. If a wolf comes prowling, as it inevitably will at some point, it will enter and devour some of your sheep.

Someone comes to me and says, 'I don't know why, but I feel strange; everything makes me tired and irritable and I don't feel like anything anymore.' Well, for me it's very clear: they have allowed holes to form in their aura, and their energy is escaping through these holes. They now have to deal with filling the holes.

Try this exercise for at least one week: watch your thoughts and feelings, try not to give in to any negative impulses, let the law of love and wisdom preside over you. You will feel your fence get stronger and higher on its own, and you will be surprised to notice that events and situations that were previously a source of irritation and worry no longer affect you.

It is our experience of the greatest difficulties and hardships that brings us true wisdom. A person's wisdom is evidence of all the experiences they have been through, of all the victories they have won over evil. The heavy price they have paid to attain their wisdom will make you respect and admire them. And if they are truly a sage, all you will read in their attitude and expression is the certainty that with faith, work and time, all difficulties can be overcome.⁵ You may still be able to see the marks of suffering on their face, but what will stand out the most is the presence of a light, of something very deep and secret that glows and shines.

Would you like to become such a sage? Do not let one day go by without thinking about filling the holes and reinforcing the walls that surround you, to ensure that no wolf can enter and devour your sheep. People never take enough precautions. For as long as we are on earth, we will encounter

wolves; there is no use in trying to eliminate them in order to save the sheep; that will not work, and it is not our role. What we have to do is to be vigilant and strengthen ourselves.

If wolves exist it is because there is a Creator to take care of them, and we should accept their presence. They have the right to prowl around the sheepfolds. But the shepherd has not only the right but the duty to protect himself and his flock. If he does not protect himself and if the wolf attacks his sheep, he will only have himself to blame.

You might say, 'But if I entrust myself to God, if I love him, he will protect me.' No, if you are not attentive and vigilant, even your love for God will not save you. God will say to you, 'You love me? That's all very good, but why do you want it to be me who does all the work?' Neither your love nor all your good qualities can exempt you from being vigilant. No virtue can replace vigilance.

And you might say, 'But do the beings of light in the invisible world not protect us?' Yes, of course they do, but they are not there only to protect us, they are also there to educate us, and often they leave us to cope on our own. A small child always has someone with it to ensure that nothing happens to it: it may be the parents, the grandparents, older brothers and sisters, or other people. But gradually, they begin to leave the child alone to learn to be responsible for its actions. Well, the same is true for our inner life.

Up to a certain point, there are entities in the invisible world that take care of you. But when you have acquired a certain level of spiritual maturity, they say to you, 'Now it is your turn to look after yourself.' The faithful make a big mistake in thinking that heaven is there to protect them; no, it is only there when they themselves are there. Heaven sometimes leaves us exposed to great dangers, and if we have not taken all the necessary precautions, of course we capitulate.

It can happen that certain people are protected in exceptional circumstances. Although they were unconsciously on the road to ruin, they are saved, because an angel in the form of an intuition or premonition comes to warn them of the danger. But those who have the privilege of being protected in this manner owe this to the fact that, in the past, they showed great vigilance.

In fact, how many times in your life have you already been given this protection! Yes, how many times have you escaped from unseen dangers that you were not aware of! But do not use this as an excuse not to be careful. Vigilance is required in all areas. So many precautions need to be taken each day so that everything that is useful, essential even, to you does not turn against you! Turning off water and gas taps, keeping a close watch on the fire or the candle that you have lit and remembering to put them out, not leaving any objects lying about that you or other people might trip over...

You are about to fall asleep and you cannot remember whether you have locked the door. Get out of bed and go and check, for it is not heaven's job to stand guard at the entrance to your home, or to take care of your affairs, whatever they are. Heaven gave you a brain, eyes, ears, feet and hands, and it says to you, 'You have all these instruments, so use them; that is what will keep you safe. When you put them to work, light beings will be there to look after you too.'

You may think that God will come and deal with things you have started but not completed, of mistakes you have made but not put right – and he will do so in your favour every time of course. Well no, it's up to you to do what is necessary and not to rely so much on him. If you place a bucket somewhere under a gutter, there is some hope that it will fill up when it rains; but if you don't put the bucket out, don't expect it to be filled. If you plant a seed in the ground, there is hope that a plant will grow, but if you don't sow anything, don't expect anything.

You might say, 'But that is childish, we know that.' Are you really sure? You don't open your heart to the divine waters from above, and yet you expect it to be filled. You don't sow thoughts and feelings of love and generosity, and yet you expect to live in peace and joy. When you have to take something to give it to someone, do you place all your attention and awareness in this gesture?... No, you do it without thinking. Well, from now on, take care to give something extra; add a good thought, a good feeling, a good wish for that person.

Take couples, for example. A man and a woman meet, and for some time each of them takes special care to please the other. But as soon as they get what they wanted – to live together or get married – they no longer feel as

obliged to make an effort and they let themselves go. You may say that daily life is so time-consuming, that there are so many worries, obligations and things to think about! That is true, but there is at least one solution: keep a little distance. Yes, for even when they live together, men and women would do better to keep a certain distance in order to avoid falling into the prosaic familiarity that is typical of daily life when they are not vigilant.

In a couple, it is good for each person to keep a little secrecy or mystery for the other, so as to maintain interest and curiosity for something new and unknown. For it is the unknown that protects this attraction that human beings feel for one another, and it is often through a lack of attention that they lose their love. So many men and women have confided in me and complained that their love was diminishing with time! Ah, yes, with time they become negligent; they forget the basic rules of reserve, modesty and beauty.

Attention maintains love and also life. So pay attention to all the creatures you encounter along your way, not only humans but also flowers, butterflies, birds and drops of dew. You can also put this advice into practice in your inner world. Butterflies and birds are the presences of invisible beings, which can fly and sing within you. Sometimes, when you open the window in the morning, you feel as if the birds are singing within, as if dew drops are sparkling on the flowers and leaves of your soul. Pay attention to this sensation; do not let it fade without trying to retain it for at least a moment.

Vigilance should be present with the smallest of things, even in the way you arrange your bedroom in the evening before going to bed, for angelic beings may come and visit you during the night, and if they see clothes and objects lying about, they are not very happy about it, and they might not return again. Tidy your home every evening, as if you were going to receive guests or friends.

And since the invisible world is populated with inhabitants of all kinds, if you don't want to be disturbed by certain hostile visitors during your sleep, you can place something next to your bed: a prayer, a thought you had written down, a sacred image, the photo of a sage or an initiate. You thereby place yourself under the authority and protection of a Being who extends their benevolence to all creatures.⁶

In the Gospels, Jesus said: *‘When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...’* But this parable of the good shepherd should be understood not only in its cosmic dimension – the Christ, pastor of all souls throughout the universe – but also in its mystical dimension. Our higher self⁷ represents the Christ within us, and he is the good shepherd who is vigilant and enlightened. And the sheep, our cells, must listen to his voice and follow him.

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‘If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming’ – *Luke 12:39*

The Most High – *Ps. 56; 57:3; 78:35; 91:1; 92:2, etc.*

‘When he has brought out all his own’ – *John 10:4*

‘I am the good shepherd’ – *John 10:14*

¹ See *Looking into the Invisible*, Izvor 228, chap. 16: ‘Astral projection while asleep’.

² On a beautiful summer afternoon, Nasreddin Hodja was coming back from town on his donkey after buying some bags of wheat. It was hot, and he thought a small nap would do him good. The idea of lying on a comfortable carpet of grass so appealed to him, he forgot the rumours he had heard about the presence of thieves in the surrounding area. He tied his donkey to a tree so it could not wander off, and he fell asleep. When he woke up, his donkey had disappeared, and all that was left was the rope tied to the tree trunk. So he said to himself, ‘If I am not Nasreddin Hodja, I have acquired a rope. But if I am Nasreddin Hodja, I have lost my donkey.’ So for you too, if, when your awareness is asleep, something that belongs to you is taken from you, all you will be able to do about it is philosophize like Nasreddin Hodja.

³ Unlike a magician or a sorcerer, a magus has worked long and hard on himself to be able to serve only what is good, and he is a conductor for light and love only.

⁴ See *Notre peau spirituelle*, l’aura, Brochure 309.

⁵ See *The Faith that Moves Mountains*, Izvor 238, chap. 13: ‘Rabota, vreme, vera: work, time, faith’.

⁶ See *Looking into the Invisible*, Izvor 228, chap. 15: ‘Protect yourself while you are asleep’ and *In Spirit and in Truth*, Izvor 235, chap. 12: ‘An image can be a support for prayer’.

⁷ See *Man’s Psychic Life: Elements and Structures*, Izvor 222, chap. 13: ‘The higher self’.

Chapter Three

Protecting the frontiers of our soul

Those who, through weakness and inattention, have allowed thoughts and feelings inspired by their lower nature to infiltrate them find themselves in the same situation as a country under occupation. Invaders have crossed the borders and taken control of the land. So they now have to live under the rule of their enemies, serve them and satisfy their whims.

Master Peter Deunov used this very comparison one day. Talking of the time when Bulgaria was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, he said, 'When an *effendi* [The title given to Turkish state dignitaries or clergymen.] entered the house of a Bulgarian, the Bulgarian felt obliged to give them something to eat or drink. Since they were not within their rights to send the effendi away, they had no other choice but to find favour with them. But if they were intelligent, they found ways in which to remain free while doing so.'

Yes, before you are able to free yourselves from enemies you have allowed to enter, you have to bear with them. Basically, it's exactly the same story of the shepherd and the wolf. When the wolf appears, the shepherd does not welcome it by offering all his sheep for it to devour. But, since he forgot to close the door of the sheepfold, or to put the sheep dog out to keep watch over his flock, he has no other choice but to say, 'Take one or two sheep, but don't devour my whole flock... And don't attack me; let me live.' Sometimes, in order to avoid the worst, we have to temporarily feed our enemies a little.

This rule is valid in all areas, and I can remember what I saw during my childhood in the village where I lived in Macedonia. When someone had a boil or an abscess, they would take a very ripe fig, for example, and place it on the sore and say to the entity that was responsible for it, 'Come and eat this; it's for you.' And after a while, the sore disappeared, and then they just had to throw the fig away.

And if someone had a mental disorder, people considered it was caused by

dark spirits. So they prepared a small round bread with a large amount of honey in it. They called on musicians to play, and they invited the evil spirits to come and eat. And then, they took the bread and they left the village in a procession, singing and reciting exorcism formulas, and they threw the bread as far away as possible. The spirits then hurried to eat the bread, and in doing this they freed the person. It is therefore possible to get rid of undesirable inhabitants by sending them elsewhere. The Gospels too tell of how Jesus chased demons from the body of someone who was possessed and made them enter swine, and the swine then threw themselves into the sea.¹

These practices, which date back a long time, still exist today in places where certain traditional medicines continue to be used. They are based on very solid knowledge. But obviously, to most of our contemporaries, all this is just nonsense; according to them, only doctors and psychiatrists can heal. They are mistaken. But, of course, the effectiveness of these remedies depends on the moral qualities and experience of those who apply them. Without these moral qualities and their experience, the ‘healers’ themselves risk being attacked.

How do lion tamers perform in the circus? When the animals become threatening, the tamer does not confront them. Instead, he throws pieces of meat down for them, and while they are busy feeding, he is able to take the necessary precautions or leave the cage. An ignoramus, on the other hand, would be capable only of irritating them even more and risking their life.

Violence is very rarely a good method for getting rid of an enemy or an illness. When you are hurt, you wait for your wound to heal completely; you don’t remove the scab and you wait for the new skin to form beneath it, and that way there will soon be no more trace of the wound. Each time we try to free ourselves brutally, whether through ignorance, carelessness or impatience, we run the risk of physical or psychological damage.

If you have put yourself into a difficult situation, it is only natural that you try to free yourself from it. But be careful, do not do so hastily. You can no longer stand your work... or the person you live with,... or maybe you want to change your life; of course that’s possible, but wait for the right time. Acting a day or even an hour too soon may turn out to be an expensive mistake. Start by doing the groundwork and clearing the air; this is something that needs to

be done slowly and in secret. And when at last, one day, you break free, you will see how much caution and preparation was needed.

Since no human incarnate on earth is perfect, almost everyone has to placate their negative instincts. But disciples of an initiatic school understand that they also have to work secretly towards their liberation. Every day, they pray, meditate, exercise their will and send messages to their friends in the invisible world. And so, at last, the time comes when they can say to all the occupants within them, 'Go away, this is the kingdom of God, and you no longer have a place here.'

Of course, these enemies will rise up, bear their teeth, show their claws and threaten them, 'Keep quiet, this is our territory and we are your masters.' But the disciples will reply, 'Yes, that was how things were in the first pages of the story, but now other pages have been written without your knowing, and much has changed. God is now my shepherd, and he protects me.' And even if the enemies open their mouths and spit flames, the disciples will be able to chase them away. But first they have to be vigilant every day without relying on providence.

For what most people usually call providence is a force that has, so they think, to watch over them and keep them safe from danger and adversity. Well no, not at all. Since there are many truths that they have not yet understood, providence never stands in the way of their receiving lessons necessary for their self-improvement. These lessons sometimes start with pleasant events, making them very happy... until the day they discover that these pleasant events also concealed a few traps.

For example, obtaining a good position or an important post might appear to be a success for which we are delighted and thank heaven. Yes, but those who become influential personalities tend to forget the essential qualities of kindness, generosity, humility and selflessness. And that is where resistance and hardships set in, to force them to put these virtues into practice. And that is when heaven does not shelter them, but watches over them and waits until they have learned the lesson.

And when they have learned the lesson, they will regain their prestige either in this life or another. But they will have to remember this lesson well and not try to get even. In Bulgaria we say, *Pazi, Bojé, sliapo da progléda*,

‘Lord, keep us from the blind who have regained their sight.’ Because humans are always in danger of being tempted to take revenge once their faculties, fortune or power are given back to them.

Everything that happens happens for a reason. This certainty is the main characteristic of the sage; it is why nothing can make him lose his light and love. Even though many events remain unexplained, he knows that one day he will receive the explanations. It’s true, life often confronts us with facts and situations that, at first sight, seem incomprehensible to us. But there is nothing worse or more dangerous than concluding that life has no meaning. The sage will never think, as certain so-called philosophers do, that everything is just chance and chaos. What pride to maintain that life is devoid of meaning, when they are simply incapable of understanding!

If you really have the desire and if you set to work, sooner or later you will eventually become free. For the time being, in one form or another, you are under occupation: intruders have moved in. Take for example, someone who would like to stop smoking. Their smoking habit is like an entity they have allowed to set up home within them and which makes them carry on smoking. Having understood that tobacco is harmful for their health, they make a radical decision: tomorrow, that’s it, I will stop smoking. And for a day, two days, three days, they stick to it and don’t touch another cigarette. But then their vision becomes blurred, they don’t feel so well, and they give in.

And what is true for tobacco is also true for all other bad habits: it is impossible to uproot them in one go. Just like the Bulgarians with the Turkish occupiers, they have to be a little accommodating. Yes, but there’s nothing to stop them from secretly preparing to be free. This is also the advice I have given to those wanting to become vegetarian: don’t stop eating meat from one day to the next; try replacing it gradually with food that appeals to you just as much. Nowadays, there is such a variety of foods, it is not very difficult to change one’s eating habits!

There are countless occupiers that people have to confront – all the instinctual impulses they are plagued with: jealousy, anger, greed, sensuality, pride, laziness... Laziness is the most dangerous of them all; yes, because it clings to the will. They know what they need to do, they feel they should do

it, but there is no willpower, and because will is the starting point for any decision, their life force is affected. But once the mind has really understood what is beautiful and good and the heart really desires it, the will has no other choice but to follow suit. And finally they are free!²

It is one thing to tolerate enemies when there is no other choice, but it is another thing to maintain friendly connections with them. As creatures of God, our enemies also have the right to live and to be present, and when we try to dislodge them from the places where they have taken hold, they protest, ‘Why do you want to chase us away now?’ For if they got in, it was because, either consciously or unconsciously, they were allowed to enter. And if the frontier had been tightly closed, when they tried to cross it these entities would have received a kind of electric shock, as animals or humans do when they try to get over an electric fence.

The only way to block these enemies – your lower instincts – is to protect the frontiers of your soul by being vigilant at all times. If someone speaks to you in an offensive way or acts in a way you don’t approve of and you are not vigilant, you might explode with anger, and once this energy has been set in motion, you cannot control anything – your words, gestures, or your heart beat. How many people regret having lost their temper! They promise themselves that it will not happen again, but at the earliest opportunity they explode once more. Well, there you have it – a lack of vigilance! If their awareness was awake and alert, they would catch that moment when they can still decide what happens next. But once this moment has passed and if their instinct takes over, the mechanism of anger is triggered and nothing can stop it.

Before this, they are master of all their instinctual energies. But afterwards, they become their slave. But nothing is fixed ahead of time. With vigilance they can use this moment where they still control the situation to orientate their energies. But once this moment is over, attention is of no use anymore, except for noting the damage that is caused.

Being vigilant means being aware of beginnings, and this truth is valid in all realms, even those you are not aware of. Take maternity for example. While a mother is pregnant, she can have an influence on her child by concentrating on all the good things she wishes for its health, character and

abilities³. You might say, 'But this beginning takes nine months!' Yes, a beginning does not have a fixed length of time; it can take months or even years, and during this time a great deal can be prepared through vigilance.

Yes, when war breaks out, it can be said to have started on a particular date, but it was being prepared years before, and that was when it began, a long time before the fighting broke out. When can it be said that a war actually starts? At the stage when the bombs are made. The day they are dropped, it's already the end. Bombs cannot be told, 'I beg you, please don't fall on those we love', because they will reply, 'For many long months, you prepared me knowing full well what you were doing, and I was listening to you. Now, it's my turn to act.'

Each person should know to what extent they can remain in control of the situation. For as long as you say: 'I'll try a little of this... I'll taste a bit of that...', you can expect surprises that will not always be pleasant. You don't want any of these surprises? Well, it would be better not to start. Providing you have not drunk wine, you can control your balance, but when you have drunk five or six glasses, people can tell you, 'Stand up straight, stop staggering' all they like, it is impossible to obey, the wine inside you is having a great time and just carries on dancing.

You have seen drunk people: the way they lurch from side to side is reflected in their mood, which goes from one extreme to another. They laugh and then they cry; they appear blissful one moment and furious the next; they fall asleep under the table, and then they break everything; they insult passersby or fall into their arms to embrace them. But wine is not the only thing that causes drunkenness; there are also thoughts and feelings that are like wine. Those who are under the influence of these other wines get lost in the mists and vapours of the astral world, they lose clear-sightedness, and their gait and their judgment falter.

But there is also a divine drunkenness: ecstasy. And this drunkenness, on the contrary, gives clear vision and lights up one's consciousness. Is it forbidden to become inebriated? No, God himself placed this need in humans. But, inebriation should be sought above, in beauty, in light, in drinking from the pure springs that gush forth at the summits of spiritual mountains. Rise up and drink these waters, and you will experience a

marvellous intoxication that will bring you balance, strength and clarity.

How many beings are aware of the feelings that move through their heart and the thoughts that run through their mind? If you meet someone and they ask you, 'What are you thinking about?', you may well not be able to reply. Well, this is how anyone and anything can infiltrate you, like at borders where there are no customs or where the guards are asleep. So wake up your border guards, otherwise your territory will be invaded by criminals and illegal or dangerous products... Whichever way things are presented, if we do not want to be a victim it is always about protecting a border.

Let's look again at those who do not know how to control their anger: they do not realize that this energy comes from far away and seeks to gain entry within. They even think, at least for a moment, that this powerful current is giving them some of its power. But that is an illusion, for the power lies in the current and not in the people it passes through. And after the current has passed, the poor wretches find themselves so weak that their jaw, legs and hands, everything, trembles.

Disciples of an initiatic school have learned that they acquire true power when they restrain and control the energy currents that surge within them and seek to transform them. The same is true of sexual energy: by controlling it, they can considerably reinforce themselves. This is why initiates, who have learned to master aggressive instincts and also sexual instincts, possess so much energy for thinking, talking and enlightening others.⁴

Without vigilance – vigilance in thought, feeling and will – no long-lasting spiritual attainment is possible. That is what I understood at a very young age. I might not have reached the point where I apply this vigilance at all times, but I have at least understood how essential vigilance is, and I practise it day and night. For vigilance is the brake that enables us to control the chaotic world that every human has within them. And it is necessary not only before, but also during, every action.

Vigilance is like a lamp that is alight and moving ahead of us. That is why nothing is more important than to work with the light. Only believe in the power of light, immerse yourselves in light, watch, drink and eat light: that is true science! All other knowledge is so poor, and don't be shocked if I tell you it is the knowledge of the ignorant.

You are busy with something or other, and suddenly, you feel a brightness, as if it were spring... and yet it's winter! This sensation, which may only last one second, indicates that a ray of light has entered you. But if a feeling of darkness invades you, along with a sensation of solitude and anxiety, be aware that there is an intruder trying to sneak in, or that your consciousness has wandered into a hostile region on its travels, for that can also happen. Do not remain in this state of darkness without reacting, for it is an open door to other more serious events that will automatically follow. Quickly take a look inside yourselves to try to understand how you got into this state. Then, using all the methods a spiritual teaching gives you, try to find your way back onto the path that will lead you among spirits of light and peace.

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Demons driven out by Jesus enter swine – *Matt. 8:28-33*

¹ See *The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, Izvor 210, chap. 7: 'The undesirables'.

² See *Man's Psychic Life: Elements and Structures*, Izvor 222, chap. 5: 'The apprenticeship of the will'.

³ See *Sons and Daughters of God*, Izvor 240, chap. 14: 'Populate the earth with sons and daughters of God'.

⁴ See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 8: 'The use of energy' and chap. 12: 'The sublimation of sexual energy'.

Chapter Four

Waiting and staying alert

You pray and ask to be visited by the light and by the angels... But so often you are busy looking elsewhere when they do come! Or you consider that other more urgent or more important matters are awaiting your attention. You then complain that spiritual life has brought you nothing. Of course, what can it bring to those who ask for the light and for celestial joy but are incapable of seeing them when they arrive?

There is no point in asking and praying, if you have not first developed the ability to feel that your prayers have been granted. This ability is like a device that lets you know you are about to receive a message or a present. So, instead of making various demands of heaven, take the time to prepare this internal device, which will vibrate at heaven's approach, alerting you to listen.

A king and his retinue are due to parade through a town: trumpets and drums sound out to inform the inhabitants, so that they can clean and decorate the streets and be ready to welcome and cheer their lord. Even if this kind of event is quite rare nowadays, it still takes place from time to time in certain countries. But on the spiritual level, the earth receives royal visits in this way every day. Great beings draw near to the earth, accompanied by winged creatures and musicians, for kings always have a court and sometimes even a whole army to accompany them on their travels. Nature spirits, inhabitants of earth, water, air and fire, hurry to be a part of the procession. They give their blessings to all those waiting by the roadsides, just as princes did long ago when they distributed gold coins to their subjects as they paraded by. Blessed are those who hear the sound of instruments announcing a visit: a prince of light is about to pass by, prepare yourselves, dress in your very best clothes, come and attend the procession descending from heaven.¹

Or if you prefer another image, think of the processions that take place during great religious festivals: some line the streets to see them pass by, others lean out of windows and balconies. Fathers hold their young children

high in the air, so that when they see the icons, something sacred is imprinted in their soul. Afterwards, everyone goes home, their faces shining. So, you too, be present when the heavenly procession passes by, for that is when you have the best conditions for making your requests.

Disciples always await a visit from a heavenly messenger, the coming of the Messiah, and because they wait, all their subtle energy centres are activated. They are like Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, who having fallen pregnant at a very late age said, *‘This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me’*. They are also like the elderly Simeon, of whom it was said: *‘It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.’* When the baby Jesus was taken to the Temple by his parents, Simeon took him in his arms and said, *‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation’*.

There is great strength to be found in waiting; it is what keeps us alert so that we are ready to open our soul and spirit to the visitors the moment they arrive. This idea is also contained in the Gospels in the parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins.² I have already explained how it should be interpreted. When the bridegroom arrives, the wise virgins, who have filled their lamp with oil, are able to attend the wedding, while the five foolish virgins, who have not thought to fill their lamps with oil, are not allowed to attend. The wise virgins, who have filled their lamps, are the symbol of the vigilance that is so very necessary.

And this vigilance that is so important is further emphasized in the passage where Jesus says to his disciples, *‘Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those servants’*. Not only were those servants who remained awake while waiting for their master to come invited by him to sit at his table, they were also served by him.

It is this attitude while waiting that enables us to perceive events in the

invisible world and the currents that flow through it, together with the subtle presences that bring us their blessings. You will say you do not see anything. Maybe, but there are people who can see. And besides, is it so necessary to see? If you do not see, you can at least feel, and that is so much more important.

For ‘modern’ people, of course, talk of waiting is something they find unbearable, even senseless. On the contrary, they are so preoccupied with material matters, are always in a hurry to reach their goals and want everything right away. That is why their inner hearing has become atrophied, why they do not hear the call that invites them to the celebration and so will not participate in it. Disciples, on the other hand, prepare themselves for the Lord’s coming: they mentally construct this receiving device within themselves and, because they wait, they are confident that they will not be absent, deaf or blind when heaven opens and the Spirit comes. They are like the look-out at the top of a tower – alert to every approach.

How often have you felt sensations that have nothing to do with the objective reality of the present moment! At any time of day and during the most trying times, you can experience the break of dawn within you, because your consciousness passes into a region where the sun really is rising, and so you receive its rays. The opposite is true too of course.

The more you are able to observe yourself, the more you will be able to understand the various phenomena and events of your psychic life which conform to the phenomena that occur in nature: dawn and dusk, blue skies and storms, hot and cold weather, clear skies and fog... It is so important to learn that weather too. Even if you are not aware of it, you are living in an inner world made of intangible substances and materials of unknown quantity, but which are also very real. The day you feel the reality of this invisible world, you will find yourself in a new dimension. And that is where you will receive true revelations, yes, there in these subtle worlds you are totally immersed in, which are more real than everything normally called reality.

Little by little, as you become aware of the goal you are heading towards, everything becomes clearer and vaster, and vaster spaces open before you. It is your inner sensations that tell you if have truly awakened to the world of

light where everything takes on a particular significance.

Never become impatient; on the contrary, learn to cultivate the ability to wait, for at any moment you may receive a warning, some news, a clarification. In doing so, you will create a kind of inner photocell that warns you if an entity or a current is passing by. Immediately seek to establish its nature, and if you feel it is a dark current weighing you down, move; move about, do something right away to neutralize it.

But when you feel a current of light come and gently touch you, stay still until it has taken possession of you. If you start wanting to change to a more comfortable position as an excuse for capturing it better, you will lose it and not be able to catch hold of it. Such currents do not wait, they pass by. It is therefore up to you to learn how to get them to penetrate deeply into your soul, so that then they accompany you in everything you do throughout the day.

The more a current is spiritual, the faster it is; and divine currents pass by as fast as lightning. If your inner device is not in a state to function instantaneously, they will escape, like a very subtle perfume rising from a precious bottle. Everything that lingers, that spreads or becomes incrustated even, is a manifestation of the lower world. Look at how our instincts have become so incrustated!

The farther you go along the path of love and wisdom, the more you will be able to retain the currents that come from higher worlds³. Entities of light do not linger around those who do not resonate with them; that is why inspiration, joy and ecstasy are only very fleeting moments for most humans. To make them last, you have to give these entities the conditions they need. So, prepare your brain, your heart, your lungs and every cell in your body by purifying them, so that one day they can become the home for such entities.

Why is the sage happy?... Though he does not ignore all the expressions of evil in the world and the suffering that results from it, he is always alert to any beneficial currents passing through him, and he does his best to retain them. He knows that he would be offending heaven if he allowed the treasures and the blessings it showers upon us every day to go to waste. The great weakness in human beings is not that they can feel evil, but that they do nothing about it and brood over all that is negative. If you asked them to

speaking about the moments of joy they have had in their life, how many would they be able to remember? Whereas they would be able to give an endless list of all their sorrows and disappointments.

Many of you listen to me as if I was telling you fairy tales.⁴ That might be true. But if you decide to cultivate this attitude of waiting, you will discover that these tales are in fact the only reality there is. Some days of course, you will feel nothing, despite your efforts to open up to heavenly vibrations. But do not become disheartened; you will succeed another day. The path leading to our heavenly homeland is a long and hard one. However, if there is one thing we must never doubt, it is that one day we will reach our destination. When it comes to worldly endeavours, however, things are a lot less certain.

When someone has failed an examination or failed to get elected three or four times, they are made to understand that it is not worth keeping on trying, that they should give up. But when it comes to our divine predestination, we should persevere at all costs. Put another way, when some people ask themselves whether it is best to be pessimistic or optimistic, they are asking the wrong question. It is really a matter of knowing which circumstances require us to be pessimistic and which ones give us reason to be optimistic. Well, we can only be optimistic if we commit to the divine path: that is how we will one day eventually reach our destination.

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‘This is what the Lord has done for me’ – *Luke 1:25*

The Holy Spirit gives Simeon a revelation – *Luke 2:26*

Parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins – *Matt. 25:1-13*

‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace’ – *Luke 2:29-30*

‘Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet’ – *Luke 12:36-38*

¹ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 18: ‘Visits from angelic beings’.

² See *New Light on the Gospels*, Izvor 217, chap. 9: ‘The parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins’.

³ See *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres. The Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Izvor 219.

⁴ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 16: 'Opening the doors to the dream world'.

Chapter Five

‘If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light’

We are told in the sacred books that the human soul has the power to move the heavens. Yes, the soul can move the heavens, but only through its desire to obtain the light. If it insists, demands and pleads, the Lord himself cannot refuse for he himself is light. The human soul is as powerful as God when it wishes for light, but only light, nothing else. All other prayers may be heard, more or less, but if it is light that is requested, the prayer is answered. When? That depends on the power of the soul’s desire and the perseverance with which it sets to work.¹

Actually, no human being, from among even the greatest of sages, has ever come out of their mother’s womb with a halo of divine light. How many tribulations and how much suffering a sage has had to go through to find his path and, when he has found it, never to stray from it! He too wept and pleaded for a long time. It is not so much the unfairness, the outrages or the betrayals that affect him; he weeps and pleads only to receive the light and keep it with him. And the angels carefully collect the tears he sheds for the light.

When we see certain beings – the expression on their face, the look in their eyes and all that they emanate – the word that immediately comes to mind is ‘light’. As if, in their heart and soul, they were able to distil an imperceptible matter and then project it outwards in the form of light. Or as if they had captured something of the light diffused in space and condensed it within themselves. Their entire body seems to be made of a translucent substance, within which a flame burns. This must have been what people felt in the presence of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who the Jewish tradition called ‘the holy lamp’.

For many, this light remains a great mystery, because they do not know it is the result of very real processes of our inner life. The sage, the initiate, has obtained this light through their unceasing work on every form of self-

expression: thought, feeling, desire and action. From every thought, every desire, every feeling and every action they are able to make more disinterested, more generous and pure, they extract an infinitesimal amount of light.²

We all have the ability to carry out this work, or at least to begin it. Light is the very matter of creation, and through meditation and concentration we are able to extract a few atoms of light from everything that exists around us so as to integrate them into our own matter. Obviously, we find this light first and foremost in the sun, but it is also in the air that we breathe, in the drinks and food that nourish us every day.

Once we have a little of this light, we have every possibility of increasing it. How? By making it merge with the divine light. This union is what it aspires to above all else. But there is one prerequisite: that the path that leads it to the divine light should be free from all impurities. For impurities prevent the two from uniting. Separate drops of mercury can merge together again, if the surface they are on is perfectly clean, but if there is a tiny amount of dust, they are unable to. The same goes for the light within us. By purifying ourselves, we make the obstacles that separate our light from God's light disappear, until the day it becomes one with God's light. Nothing will be able to separate the two again.

This inner light whose only desire is to merge with the divine light is our soul. It has had to take so many paths that it is now covered with earthly dust. But once we have cleared it of all this dust, it will hasten towards God and unite with him for all eternity.

You may wish for many things so that you can be happy, but you must place the light first. On the path of life, let it be both your companion and also the goal you seek to reach. And avoid everything that can divert you from this goal, by trying to develop your inner eye.

A symbol commonly seen in Christianity and in certain spiritual movements is that of an eye at the centre of a triangle. It represents the all-seeing eye of God. This does not mean, as some might naively believe, that God spends his time watching us and keeping note of all our good and bad deeds in order to punish us or reward us later. This eye is also found within us. It is this inner eye that watches us and monitors us, and if we are aware of

its presence, we will progress on the path of light without the risk of straying.

The Hindu sages also make mention of this eye, which they locate at the nasal root; in the chakra system it corresponds to the ajna chakra.³ Yogis concentrate on this chakra to develop clairvoyance. But in our teaching, we do not direct our efforts in this way, for clairvoyance is a psychic ability that can be dangerous if certain moral qualities such as honesty, humility and strength of character have not been sufficiently developed first.⁴

It is through this spiritual eye that the divine light enters us to then spread throughout our body. This is why Jesus said, *'If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light'*. We are meant to understand from this that what Jesus referred to as an eye is in fact a spiritual organ, different from our physical eyes, which allow us to see only physical realities.

'If your eye is healthy...' We work to purify this eye by cherishing generous, disinterested thoughts, feelings and desires, with the awareness that this eye also protects us. And because it watches over us and it is good that we do feel watched, it prevents us from making mistakes. We must even ask it always to keep watch over us and be delighted that, when we do start to deviate, simply the sensation of being watched is enough to keep us on the right path.

As long as a person's moral conscience is not sufficiently developed, this supervision is necessary and beneficial. In everyday life, those whose consciousness has deepened, strengthened and been enlightened do not need to be watched over; they even work better when they feel free. If they must continually be monitored, they feel they are not being trusted, causing them to suffer and work less well or even stop working. In the spiritual realm we are discussing, for the supervision of the eye of God to be no longer necessary, human beings have to have first attained a very high degree of development and be fully aware of the importance of the cosmic work they are taking part in. But in the meantime, this surveillance is their protection, and not only must they accept it, they must request it.

The sage, the initiate, works long and hard to transform his body into an abode of light. And then, just as the sun projects its rays into space, so too, through his vibrations and emanations, through the look in his eyes, his words and his gestures, the sage projects light all around him. Even without

him trying or being aware of it, this natural and spontaneous radiance, coming from the depths of his being, embraces all creatures, and they receive it to the best of their ability.

But the initiate can also act consciously, voluntarily, by deciding to look at someone in a particular way or to project a beam of energy in certain places, to certain beings in particular. So you could say there are two types of radiance: the one which, by the simple fact that it exists, spreads spontaneously in all directions in space and so forms a circle, a sphere; and the other, a conscious and voluntary one, which is projected in a straight line and in a particular direction.

The circle is the projection of the sphere on a horizontal plane, and we can see it as a representation of the unconscious. The ray represents active consciousness, and the centre of the circle consciousness at rest. When someone decides to move into action, we can say that they stretch one arm out to the side, marking the radius of the circle; then the other arm out to the other side to form the diameter. And when they take a step forward, and then a step backward, a second diameter is created, which, together with the first, forms a cross.⁵

The cross represents the human being awakening and beginning to act in the four directions of space. But soon, following the intersection of the horizontal line and the vertical line, they are also able to consciously project rays in new directions. Certain painters depicted the Christ surrounded by rays, signifying that his level of consciousness enables him to be present and active in all regions of the universe. The Christ, the cosmic principle, casts his light everywhere and wholly, leaving nowhere in darkness; he is truly the holy Lamp. And through our work, we draw ever closer to this lamp, so that one day we too will be able to carry this light within us and distribute it.

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‘If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light’ – *Luke 11:34*

¹ See *La prière*, Brochure 305.

² See *The Philosopher's Stone. In the Gospels and in Alchemy*, Izvor 241, chap. 6: 'You are the light of the world' and chap. 16: 'The gold of true knowledge: the alchemist and the gold prospector'.

³ See *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres. The Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras*, Izvor 219, chap. 6: 'The chakras: Ajna and sahasrara'.

⁴ See *Looking into the Invisible. Intuition, Clairvoyance, Dreams*, Izvor 228, chap. 3: 'The entrance to the invisible world: from Yesod to Tiphareth' and chap. 4: 'Clairvoyance: activity and receptivity'.

⁵ See *The Symbolic Language of Geometrical Figures*, Izvor 218, chap. 6: 'The cross'.

Chapter Six

Seriousness, tears, laughter, celebration

During the course of a day, you meet different people, you receive different bits of information, you have various problems to solve and you also have numerous feelings, either enjoyable or disagreeable. All of this inevitably has an impact on your mood. It is therefore natural to go from being serious to laughing, from laughter to sadness or even tears, and vice-versa. Each state has its reason for being, and the most important thing is to experience it knowing there is always something to be learned from it.

But whether it is seriousness, laughter or tears, each one of these states can have various origins and meanings. People who seek to satisfy their egotistical interests have a serious look about them, but seriousness can also be seen on the face of those who are wondering how they can save the needy. In both cases, we talk about seriousness, but there is a great difference in the way it is shown! And laughter... Laughter can be stupid, vulgar, hypocritical or nasty, but it can also be subtle, frank, and full of love, like a bubbling spring. Yes, because the spring laughs as it generously pours forth the waters of life.

As for tears, we generally associate them with sorrow, but in reality any emotion can provoke tears. And just as we experience all sorts of emotions, we also experience all kinds of tears. There are tears of sadness, anger, fury, bitterness, and also tears of joy and wonder. Poetry, paintings and music can bring tears to our eyes, but the same is true of certain kinds of human behaviour when it is particularly beautiful and noble. And in their texts, mystics mention tears caused by ecstasy.

Whatever their cause, tears are useful since they release a certain inner tension. But of course tears of joy and wonder are the most beneficial. Do not simply brush your tears away, for they are precious. Master Peter Deunov advised us to collect our tears in a clean piece of fabric and keep the fabric safe, because such tears possess great power. Let tears of bitterness, sorrow

or anger dry up; they are simply a small quantity of salty water. However, keep those that have been wrung from the depths of your soul.

Tears of joy comfort us and make us more beautiful and younger. Some people think that by never crying they show strength of character. No, not at all, it all depends on the reason for crying. When the flowers in our inner garden start to wilt or have collected dust, they need to be watered. And so tears bring them back to life and wash them gently.

And just as tears do not show any weakness of character, laughter does not always mean a lack of care or seriousness either. Seeing how Master Peter Deunov sometimes laughed so heartily made me think; I understood that laughter was more beneficial for the mind than the seriousness and austerity that many people think is characteristic of the sage. This is because there are living energies in laughter, and they nourish the brain.

Children laugh or smile spontaneously. Even before they know how to talk, babies greet their parents and people familiar to them with laughter when they lean over their cradle. And if children's laughter is so enjoyable, it's because it is the expression of life and love. How many grandparents find in the laughter of very small children a little of the warmth that is slowly departing from them! This is because children are continuously receptive to currents flowing through them which contribute to their physical, emotional and mental development. Their reservoirs fill up with energies and their laughter is an explosion of life.¹

Laughter is a means of communicating life. When you laugh, the energies you have accumulated in you overflow and you feel the need to share something with others. Each time you feel an increase of life within you, you feel the desire to meet friends and new people because you have something to give: the surplus of life that is within you is waiting to be poured out somewhere, and laughter among friends is often the expression of this need to communicate life. However, if your reserves are empty, you will have no wish to laugh and nothing to give.

By laughing, you give life, but you also receive it. Observe yourself when you laugh: you can feel life entering you through the area of your belly. This relationship between our belly and life is an interesting one: the word *jivot*, 'belly' in Russian, means 'life' in Bulgarian. Life comes from our belly, and

by laughing we intensify the life that spreads throughout our body, causing our lungs and heart to function better. And even the brain: the relaxation brought on by laughter gives the brain suppleness; it has a beneficial effect on our thinking, and even our memory is improved.

Laughter enables us to bounce back, like a ball. There are events that are not necessarily cause for laughter, but it is easier to bear them if you are used to seeing the comical side of certain situations instead of taking them far too seriously. So, do not ever deprive yourself of laughter, of this powerful means of maintaining your inner balance and of making life lighter. Just because you may have reasons to be annoyed, sad or discouraged, it does not mean you have to let yourself remain that way.²

I too, often feel the heavy weight of life and have to keep a close eye on myself to ensure that the scales don't tip towards the negative side of things and that life does not lose its colours. There are times when I really have no desire to laugh, so what do I do? I often remember Nasreddin Hodja, and think of his adventures and the things he said, even if we don't always know whether his words were wise or foolish. This is another way I change the way I feel.

I do not deny the fact that daily life imposes all kinds of stress: in families, at work and in society – look at all the obligations, worries, disappointment and sadness! And how much energy each person has to muster in order to face up to and tolerate each situation! And every now and then, these energies need to be released. Initiates understood this well, which is why, no matter how far back you go, they had instituted celebrations at certain times of the year corresponding to particular astronomical configurations. Even Christian celebrations, for the most part, are only relics of ancient pagan festivals in a different form and with a different meaning.³ As the celebrations approach, festivities are organized: people collect food together, and they prepare decorations, fancy costumes or even disguises.

Do you think the reason initiates established these celebrations was for humans to have fun? No, their aim was first and foremost to make time for a break, to interrupt the rhythm of work, which at that time was never-ending and exhausting, because there was no such thing as holidays or leave. The initiates wanted to bring to the awareness of all these men and women, at

least for a moment, a sense of freedom from the weight of all the tasks that wore them out and destroyed their health; they wanted to create valves to release their unexpressed psychic energies. And so, these celebrations, with their songs, dances, games, laughter and the opportunity to meet others, enable to release these energies, also creating a fraternal mood that allows everyone to feel encouraged and supported.

But the initiates had something else in mind with these celebrations: they wanted to encourage humans to seek out energies in subtler regions that would regenerate and vivify heart and soul. In this atmosphere of joyous and beneficial exchanges, beings of light come to draw on the energies, using them to continue their work throughout the world. Would you like to help them in their work? You yourself can consciously entrust them with your joy and all the spiritual wealth you gain from a celebration, enabling others to benefit too. This joy and wealth will come back to you multiplied.

And so this is how the initiates, in all their wisdom, view celebrations. Because, wisdom is not only serious, it is also joyous. The day you understand this, you will feel that the energy you receive from being joyful feeds your supplies of seriousness. And then, how many new possibilities you will be given for delighting in the wealth and meaning of life!

¹ See *Le grain de sénévé*, Œuvres complètes, vol. 4, chap. 7: 'L'enfant et le vieillard'.

² See 'Know Thyself' – *Jnana Yoga*, Complete Works, vol. 18, chap. 8: 'Love', part 3.

³ See *The Fruits of the Tree of Life*, Complete Works, vol. 32, chap. 17: 'The cardinal feasts'.

Chapter Seven

The sage's lamp is filled with joyfulness

Suffering and difficult inner states are often caused by minor details of no importance. But because you were not vigilant, these details eventually blocked everything within you. All it takes is a little dampness, a hair, some dust, for a device to stop working. All the various parts of the device are still there, not one is missing, but now it is no longer working. And despite the fact that you still have your spirit, soul, mind, heart and physical body, you now feel discouraged, devastated and lost... all that because of one speck of dust! So, now what? As soon as there is any dust, blow on it and everything will return to normal.

You might say, 'Blow?... What do you mean, 'blow'?' In our Brotherhood in Bulgaria, when brothers or sisters came to Master Peter Deunov to tell him about their problems, he sometimes started laughing; and his laughter made them feel better, for it was the laughter of a sage. Yes, laughing is a way of blowing. But of course when someone comes to you to share their problems or sorrows, I do not really advise you to apply this method. Why? Because your laugh may not yet be the same as the sage's.

And what is so particular about the sage's laugh? It is a laugh of freedom. For what the sage has understood has freed him from the pointless burdens of life. He has gone beyond the regions of cloud and dust within himself – the astral plane and the lower mental plane – and risen to the regions where an eternal sun is shining.

And the sage's only wish is to impart this hard-earned wisdom to those who are with him or who come to visit him. But it takes so much time to communicate to others what one has already understood oneself! The only thing therefore that the sage can communicate immediately is the joy he derives from this wisdom – the joy that fills his heart to overflowing – and his laughter is the expression of this joy, which we can also call love. And people are made to reflect because of the joy and love they receive from him. At the

very least they ask themselves how they too can attain this state of consciousness.

There are obviously many things that could be said about laughter and its meaning. Philosophers, such as Aristotle, Descartes and Bergson, for example, have addressed this subject. Some people have pointed out that, in the Gospels, we are told that Jesus wept but never that he laughed. But what do we really know about Jesus' life?... As for moralists, they have been saying over and over for centuries that 'the sage never laughs without trembling'. Why? Because laughter, which is very often synonymous with mockery, disrespect and contempt, can become a dangerous weapon.

What's more, increasingly these days you'll see comedians making the whole world laugh by making fun of everything and everyone, and particularly people in the public eye, from politicians to members of the clergy. And they take advantage of the fact that the clergy can be foolish to ridicule religion too. Those who do so and those who encourage them by applauding are not aware of the regrettable effects of such an attitude. In this way, they nullify everything holy and everything that merits esteem and respect. Everyone starts thinking they have the right to deride anything and anyone, and that gives them a feeling of superiority.

You might say, 'But we know it's all just a game.' Maybe, but nevertheless it's still not good for anyone. Not even for those who ridicule, for often they make fun of beings who, even if they are imperfect, are their superiors. And what do they expect to gain by doing so?... apart from money of course. How do they not realize they are destroying something in themselves too?

And what can be said of the harmful effects of this attitude on the way children are brought up? Children need to respect adults; it is important for their development. And if they are forever being shown how ridiculous and ludicrous their parents, their teachers and their country's rulers are, it is not surprising they then show no respect for anything. And then people complain, 'Young people are intolerable – what insolence! Just look how they dare to laugh in adults' faces!' But whose fault is it? Who set them this example?¹

Opportunities abound for anyone to find themselves in a ridiculous situation because of the gestures they make, their attitudes or the words they

use. When someone stammers, uses a wrong word, is clumsy, or stumbles... everyone laughs. They feel good after laughing, but how does the person who was laughed at feel? Only those who find themselves ridiculous have the right to laugh at themselves; the others would do better to show a little more restraint. As for those who make fun of people with disabilities, that is truly criminal, and divine Justice is unforgiving. No one is ever free from the possibility of an accident, and those who laugh at others in this way become connected to them karmically: without realizing it, they attract negative currents to themselves, of which they will one day be the victims.

Sometimes there is nothing more hurtful than being made fun of. Some women have never got over the jokes made about them when they were children – for being too thin or, especially, too fat – or they were given all sorts of nicknames by their family or at school. Many have confided in me. Many people would rather be hit than be made fun of! But there we are: blows are punished by law, whereas the first nutcase who comes along can publically make fun of the most respectable men and women and not be concerned. And so, more and more, people make fun of others in order to hurt them. And in this case, anything goes; someone can even be mortally wounded by sarcasm, and no court will sentence anyone. And to make matters worse, the crowd laughs and applauds. This is why it is said that a sage never laughs without trembling.

And yet, true wisdom is neither sad nor gloomy, as many imagine it to be, for in true wisdom there is also love: heart and mind work together. The sage's lamp does not just project the cold light of the rational mind, picking up and highlighting the smallest of imperfections; it shines, but at the same time it spreads warmth and love, and that is why it is joyful. Yes, the sage's lamp is filled with joyfulness, just like the sun. Objectively, the sun shining in the sky seems to be just a ball of fire. But why then do children give the sun a big smile in their drawings? Children instinctively understand something very important: they sense that there is joyfulness in the light of the sun. Just as there is also joyfulness in the dancing flame of a lamp.

But how much suffering and torment humans have to go through, how many inner battles they have to fight to taste the joy of the light, that feeling they experience when all the conflicts that were tearing them apart have been resolved in harmony!² Their laugh then becomes one of victory: they have

managed to rise above the raging elements and tame them. This is what the sage's laughter means. And it is why through his laughter he can comfort beings who suffer. From time to time I think back to Master Peter Deunov's laugh: he laughed like a child, and sometimes tears even came to his eyes. When he laughed like that, we felt he was so close to us, like a friend, a brother!

The laughter of a sage is the expression of a being who has freed themselves. Why do humans continue to create unnecessary limitations and burdens for themselves? They lose their joyfulness, because they sink deep into the material realm. All the burdens they have accumulated weigh heavy on their heart. If they get rid of them, they will be joyful again.

Many travellers who visit very poor countries are often surprised to see so many smiling faces, when people in wealthy countries look so gloomy. Of course, yes, contrary to what one might imagine, material abundance does not make people any happier. They have become prisoners of the artificial world they have created for themselves. Things have gone too far: the economy, finance and business now occupy such an important position that there seems to be no way out of this spiral. And while business prospers, apparently, the people themselves are in a state of collapse.

Of course, when they have to appear in public, leaders of all sorts do their best to put on an open, even smiling face. They know they must make everyone believe that all is well, that life is wonderful! But there is often something artificial in this attitude, and anyone who is even slightly perceptive will not be reassured by it; on the contrary, they can sense they are being lied to; they even get the impression they are being made fun of. Our facial expressions, the look in our eyes and our smile all communicate life. But it must be genuine life; it must come from within; it cannot be feigned. There is no substitute for spiritual work, for working on oneself to create an inner life that will reassure, soothe and encourage others. All this happens naturally for the sage. How could inner light not find the best way to express itself?

And you, what must you do if someone comes to talk to you about their disappointments and sorrows? Until you are able, like the sage, to calm them down just by laughing, remember one thing: those who come to you to

entrust you with their suffering often do so not so much to find a solution, but to get you to share the state they are in. And then what? If you let yourself become overwhelmed by their troubles, you will not be helping them, for you will become paralysed and will most likely go down with them. If you want to help someone, do not allow their distress to affect you. Stay clear-headed, peaceful and strong – this is the only way you can rescue them. You may say they will be annoyed if you do not share in their misfortune. That may be the case, but don't let it worry you.

Be aware of the fact that when you provide support for people in their negative states, you can only satisfy their lower nature. And the lower nature never remains satisfied for very long, for it is insatiable: a bottomless pit. You may think you are comforting someone with your sympathy and compassion, but shortly afterwards their upset and complaints start again, and it can continue like that their whole life. They will be happy that you are always there to share in their suffering, but it does not mean that they will get better. And what state will you yourself be in?

Take for example a child who falls and hurts themselves. If you say to them, 'Oh! poor darling, you've hurt yourself...' with a dismayed look on your face, that will only make them cry even more. But if you say to them, 'Get up, it's nothing, go and carry on playing', they will calm down very quickly. Adults are like children; we must not encourage their weaknesses and their negative states.

If one of your friends has a bad tooth, it would be stupid, not kind, to just show sympathy: you would advise them to have their tooth taken care of, otherwise they will end up losing their whole jaw. Well, psychologically too, there are a few teeth that need taking care of... or need to be pulled out! That is what true love is. This love is unknown to most humans: the tradition is to feel sorry for those who suffer and to cry along with them. Well no, you must help them put things right by challenging their despondency. And never mind if they get offended; keep on affirming the power of the light. That is the only way you will be able to help them.

You might say, 'But what if, despite this attitude, I do not succeed in helping them?' Well then, it means you cannot do anything for them. It happens. There are beings that cannot be helped, because they foster this

inner state that prevents anyone from helping them. But know that, despite all that, your efforts have not been wasted. Firstly, instead of letting yourself become engulfed, you have become stronger, and you will be able to use the strength you have acquired to help other people. Don't worry, you will always find someone who will be able to accept and appreciate what you do for them.

Now, the truth is that you can only help others in their difficulties and sorrows if you yourself have already been able to overcome your own. How many people speak to others about patience and courage while they themselves never stop complaining and whining about anything and everything! Even if you have very good reasons for being upset, worried or distressed, try first to pull yourself together. For worries and disappointments often grow out of all proportion simply because we are not immediately able to see certain events for what they are: minor incidents.³

When you immediately go and tell others why you are unhappy or annoyed, you burden them without necessarily solving your problems. If on the other hand you say to yourself, 'I am going out to walk for a bit to think about something else, or else I'll listen to some music, meditate and pray', this enables inner work to take place and has the result of freeing you of your troubles. By thinking about protecting others, you also protect yourself. And don't you think it's time you learned to laugh a little about your minor misfortunes? Until such time as you are able to help your friends with your laughter, look and see whether it might sometimes be the solution to your own problems.

Going around with your worries and unhappiness etched on your face shows that love is lacking, and it is a burden that you place on other people's shoulders. Do you not find that the world is already in a sad enough state? Why add your own sadness to things? Only ask for help if, after having done everything you can, you truly are not able to overcome your troubles. Before poisoning twenty people on the phone by telling them your woes, start by battling with them yourself using all the means that a spiritual teaching gives you.

Of course, daily life brings us reasons to be sad and annoyed – it is impossible not to be affected, but why show your feelings? You may say,

‘But how can I not show what I feel?’ When you meet someone, can you not make the effort to find a subject of conversation or even a funny anecdote that will do them good? Laugh together! And in doing them good, it will also do you good, for what they feel will come back to you. Yes of course, this is also how the law of the echo works, which I have already often explained to you in connection with spiritual life.⁴

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Chapter Eight

Tongue of iron and tongue of gold

Many people, when they meet up together, have nothing in particular to say to each other, but as soon as anyone else's name is mentioned, they find that person a subject for endless comment, and such comments are rarely inspired by indulgence or understanding. After a while they part company, but only to start again elsewhere. 'You'll never guess what so and so did!' And they tell the same story over again with a few additional details, for humans have a natural tendency to exaggerate, so the world is full of people who exaggerate, especially when it comes to telling juicy stories. They adapt the stories and add their own peculiar flavour to the dish, making it more and more indigestible. And the more indigestible the offering is, the more takers there are to enjoy it. And that is how they poison the atmosphere.

There is much to be said about the effects of the spoken word: how it creates forms, how it has an effect on the psychic and physical organs not only of those who are the object of the talk, but also on those who do the talking and those who hear it.¹ Knowing how to be fair, moderate and precise with their words is one of the finest qualities a person can have.

We write with our tongue, just as we write with a pen. Every spoken word immediately becomes a letter that we send not only to human beings, but to all the entities that inhabit nature. Whatever kind of creature you address, try to speak to them with a tongue of gold. Yes, for the human tongue can be made of various materials: lead, copper, iron, tin, silver, gold... You have heard of the Saint John who was called Chrysostom, meaning 'Golden Mouth' (in Bulgarian we say *svéti Ivan Zlatoust*). And why was he called this? Because the words that came out of his mouth had the ability to illuminate and pacify souls.

The spoken word, the choice of words and the way an explanation is structured are quite an art. I remember the way in which Master Peter Deunov spoke. Often, when we asked him a question, he would wait a moment, make a simple gesture with his hand to indicate that he had heard, murmur a few inaudible words as if he were talking to himself and then reply. So I said to

myself, 'If he, who would know the answer to our questions even before we have asked them, waits in this way for a few seconds to choose his arguments and weigh his words carefully, how much more cautious we ourselves should be!'

If anyone disturbs you, displeases you or seems to you to be open to criticism, does that give you the right to tear them to shreds? Do you think that would please the Creator and also the angels who accompany and protect them? Have you asked them their opinion?... It is true that humans are imperfect; this imperfection is part of their nature. But know that, just like you, they are on the path of evolution, and even if you are not yet able to tell what they will become in the future, that is no reason to continually point out their shortcomings and their weaknesses and ignore everything else about them.

We hear people giving their opinion on everything and everyone. Their judgement is erroneous and their tastes depraved, but what does that matter? Nothing stops them. They would do better to ask themselves if there are more objective or correct ways of seeing things. They will continue criticizing if they are really that keen to do so, but at least from time to time a beneficial doubt will cross their mind, and they will say to themselves, 'I see beings and things in this way, but maybe there is a better way to see them.'

When you have to give your opinion of someone, you must do so with the utmost delicacy, so as not to damage them or to harm their soul. And should you happen to hurt them unintentionally, try to repair your error; otherwise it will remain as a debt you have incurred towards them. Everything is taken note of in the subtle realms.² It is so important to be careful when we have to give an opinion on a human soul or when addressing one! A soul is a rich and deep entity that God created with immense wisdom, and if we treat it disrespectfully, heaven will take us for criminals. This delicacy that is necessary when approaching souls I also noticed in Master Peter Deunov. So what right do you have to shake them so brutally?

But if humans are asked to be delicate towards others, they are convinced they are being prevented from asserting themselves, because, in their eyes, asserting themselves and having a strong character means not only pointing out others' weaknesses and errors, but also telling the whole world about

them. In acting in this way, all they are doing is revealing their inner poverty. How can they be unaware of the negative effects this attitude has on the rest of their behaviour, even on their understanding of life? They cut themselves off from the harmonious currents of life and, little by little, nature closes itself to them. They no longer even know how to take a flower and look at it. Yes, I have noticed that too: just the way someone holds a flower tells me about their inner life.

As much as it is useful to see people realistically, it is useless and even harmful to dwell on their imperfections. Once you have seen and understood, you should not stay with that; move quickly onto something constructive. The sage does not waste his time and energy rummaging in filth... It's not that I am totally against criticism, not at all. In order to criticize, however, there are certain rules that you need to know and follow.

According to the cosmic moral laws, we only have the right to criticize in others those weaknesses that we ourselves have succeeded in overcoming. That is why, whereas humans will praise the lucidity and perspicacity of certain people, divine justice will often condemn them. The cosmic moral laws are very strict on this subject. Every time you judge someone negatively, you yourself are judged. By whom? By your conscience, your inner tribunal. All those who still see heavenly justice as an authority external to them – God or the angels, who will reward them or punish them – are wrong. The true tribunal is within us and is active day and night. With every error, we lose something precious, and every good and just deed brings us peace, light and joy.

The instant you point out a failing in someone else, a voice inside you speaks up and asks, 'And when you give your opinion in this way, are you sure you don't have this same failing in one way or another?... In your heart and soul, something is being lost.' And do you know what sentence and punishment are meted out to those who judge others when they have no right to do so? Light leaves them. Some might say, 'But we have never heard this voice!' Obviously not, because they have done everything they can to block it out. You know the proverb 'There are none so deaf as those who will not hear.' If you carry on refusing to listen to your inner voice, you really will become deaf.

Those who indulge in criticism find, some years later, that they have become impoverished, diminished and deprived. They also lose the faith that others had in them, for even if the people they pour out their criticisms to listen to them, they will say to themselves, 'If they are talking in such a way about so and so, it means they are capable of demolishing and betraying me too'. Malicious gossip alters the look in a person's eyes, as well as their expression, voice and skin tone; even quite unintelligent people will sense something unpleasant and distance themselves. Those who find pleasure in criticism exude a poison that slowly infiltrates others, who then do their best to escape it. They therefore lose their friends, and there is nothing worse than losing the confidence, friendship and love of others. Ask yourself what you yearn for the most dearly; is it not love?

For the moment, such and such a person does not appeal to you, but if you knew how to look at them better, maybe you would end up liking something about them. Life is so rich with new opportunities! In some circumstances, those you disliked might become your friends. So don't spoil these opportunities.

Why do humans in general tend to point out failings and errors? It is true, they do exist and we can't help but see them. But it is easier to improve a situation by concentrating more on what is good than what is bad. Instead of criticizing the flaws in others, look at their good side to see how it can be further improved. And even if they only have one single good quality, focus on that. Leave their failings alone, and help them to develop their qualities.

Learn to look at everything around you, even objects, with liking and gratitude. Yes, even objects, for they do you so many favours! Just because they are made of matter, you think they are insensitive, and so you bump them and knock them, and this is how you become neglectful and boorish. Then you behave in the same way with living beings.³ Yes, respect and consideration begin with paying attention to the smallest things.

You must always focus on a person's good side and say, 'God lives in their soul. I won't take any notice of the animals roaming all around.' Who doesn't have any wild beasts within them? For some people, these wild animals are caged or anaesthetized, but they are still there. If we don't hear many roars, it is because the animals have been put on a starvation diet and

have become weaker; but if they were to be fed a little, we would see the total devastation they are capable of causing.

Why harass men and women who are already struggling with so many difficulties? The most extraordinary thing is that people think that when they criticize others they display wisdom and also love: they allegedly want to help them mend their ways! But that is not what wisdom is about, nor love either. Loving beings is about understanding their difficulties and working sensitively to alleviate their suffering. Criticism, on the other hand, takes a dig at them and claws and wounds: it is not a tongue of gold but a tongue of iron.

So do not say that the reason you tear such and such a person apart is because you love them. No, that is not love; it is bloodshed. Love does not become stained with blood; it is great and full of light. Through love, you connect to God, and God advises what beautiful and useful actions to take.⁴

What is good criticism? It is a good gardener, who knows how to prune trees, how to encourage them to grow straight, how to rid them of caterpillars and harmful insects. A good gardener protects what is good, and magnificent flowers and fruit are the result. Yes, criticism is an art that consists in removing and cutting but doing so wisely; for if nothing remains, where then is the wisdom?

Evil is present in every human being in many ways. And before looking to root it out of others, start by trying to see how you can neutralize it within yourself, for really you have more ways to do something for yourself than for others. And if you cannot ignore them, at least turn your attention away from their failings, and try to recognize their qualities and imitate those.

Do not tell me that among all the people you make observations about, you have not noticed at least one good quality: an artistic talent, a sense of order and cleanliness, conscientious work, loyalty, and so on. There are many situations in which people's capacity for being useful and pleasant can come to the fore. Well, for each person, at least concentrate on one quality, and even look at how you can help them to improve on it. This will be far more beneficial both to them and to you. Otherwise, you will make their situation worse, and yours too.

Every being's evolution contributes to the evolution of all. The more you progress, the more you carry others along with you. Everyone's behaviour has an influence on the entire world. Science has discovered the circulation of waves in space. Well, thoughts, feelings and actions also produce waves that radiate out. And if the flaws of certain people bother you so much, that is another reason to improve yourself and to send them good thoughts.

A magnetic connection exists between weaknesses, just as it does between good qualities, to such an extent that, when you persist in thinking or talking about others' imperfections, you begin to resemble them. When you see only the negative side of beings, not only do you attract negative things, you also accentuate them within yourself. So, if you do not wish to see a particular character trait or behaviour that you dislike in others appear in you, do not dwell on it; otherwise, the day will come when you will act just like them, and even worse.

For me, criticism is a burden. I don't like to weigh myself down. That is why I do not like to take part in your personal matters. I like to talk to you about all the beautiful and good things that await you if you walk the path of the light.⁵ It weighs heavy on me to have to point out to you how often you stray from this path and go walking along other tracks that seem more pleasant, but which will cause you to lose your way. And if it so happens that I have to, I take precautions. Have you noticed how I behave when I have to say something negative? I always finish by talking about the positive side in order to neutralize the negative. Do the same: you must always end on a positive note, because good will always triumph in the end.

I have always made such efforts to discover the good side in people that I always notice virtues in them that no one else sees. And I am the one who benefits! And when I see a failing in them, I react in the same way a painter would: I see this failing as if it were a smudge on the canvas. And so I take a paint brush and I transform the smudge, I incorporate it into the composition, as if it were an element of the painting. Those who see it exclaim, 'My God, that's so original! Why has that detail been placed there?' That's the way it is; it was all planned.

How can we make the most of human quirks?... Neutralizing people's failings by incorporating them into a more general plan is obviously quite an

art. Well, this is the kind of art we are practising in this school of the Universal White Brotherhood. We have to adjust the way we see one another's imperfections, because it is this reconciliation of so many disparate elements that contributes to creating the new life.

So, make your minds up today to go to school. Sit at a desk, take out your books and start studying. You might say, 'But what about the others!' Yes, the others are there, they exist, you can see and hear them, but forget about them for a while. Everyone will have to sit examinations, and when it is your turn we will see what you have learned, remembered and of course applied. I am not the one who will make you sit the exams; that is life's role. And life is implacable, you won't be able to sweet-talk it by telling it tales about this or that person who has bothered you or stopped you from carrying out all your good plans.

The sage does not complain about the failings and weaknesses he sees in others. He does not criticize them, nor does he fight them; while putting up with them, he tries to transform these failings in himself, for this transformation produces an energy that he can then return in the form of light. This is how he works towards the coming of the kingdom of God.

¹ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor 226, chap. 4: 'The magic word'.

² See *The Mysteries of Yesod. Foundations of the Spiritual Life*, Complete Works, vol. 7, Part 2, chap 8: 'Purity and speech'.

³ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor 226, chap. 17: 'The exorcism and consecration of objects'.

⁴ See *The True Meaning of Christ's Teaching*, Izvor 215, chap 7: 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing'.

⁵ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap 2: 'Beginning the journey'.

Chapter Nine

Victory over suffering: the smile of God

A smile is an expression which is harder to define than a laugh because it is far more discreet. A laugh makes a sound, and it can sometimes even be noisy; our mouth opens, and our eyes crease and may even close. A smile, however, is silent and is accompanied by an imperceptible movement of the lips and a slight creasing around the eyes.

A smile is one of the first languages a child uses, one that their parents and those close to them observe lovingly. A child's smile is full of innocence and purity. An adult's smile can become ironic, wry or even hypocritical. How many smiles are used to mask anger, discontentment, resentment or the desire for revenge! And so, every day, there are artificial smiles dispensed left, right and centre. They are simply screens, and this can be sensed.

Every feeling can be expressed through a smile. Discouragement, giving up or, on the other hand, hope and the determination to get back to work, self-sacrifice or the desire to take revenge – all these can sometimes be accompanied by a smile. But look how different each one is! A wry smile has something caustic about it. A wise smile is very subtle, hardly perceptible but full of meaning. And I won't even mention the stupid smile.

Those who are depraved can also be recognized by their smile. Even if they have a beautiful appearance, a lovely forehead, fine and regular features, their smile – a slight twist of the lips – betrays their decline. I have, on the odd occasion, met such beings, and it was their smile that revealed their true nature to me. That is why I know I cannot figure someone out completely unless I have seen their smile.

There are smiles that captivate me. Like the smile of a mother looking down at her child as she cradles or feeds it: it is the smile of totally selfless love; her entire soul pours out in this smile, a smile which is also nourishment for her child. And how often I have also been struck by the kind of smile that can transform an unattractive or even ugly face! For a lovely smile is

accompanied by a lovely expression, and this expression, full of love and goodness, so lights up their face that their physical features seem to melt away, and all that remains visible is this light.

What joy and comfort the smile of certain beings can bring us! It's like receiving a present that we were not expecting. And the sun's smile, when it emerges from behind the clouds to surround us with its light!... But the most beautiful and desired smile, the one our entire soul longs for, is the smile that God bestows on us after suffering, when we thought we would not be able to survive. As soon as this smile appears, the darkness, anxiety, fear and threatening images dissolve away, and everything lights up and becomes harmonious. This smile is worth more than all the riches and all the other joys on earth. No violence can win it, only love, hope and faith. We often need to wait a very long time to merit such a smile, and it is the greatest of rewards.¹

We can accept an ordeal, we can understand it, but also experience bitterness, sadness and regret at the same time: we would of course have preferred not to have to go through it! In that sense we say that the ordeal is not yet over. And when will it be over? When we are capable of rejoicing in it. It is possible that a hardship may appear to have brought us nothing, and it may even have made us lose a great deal, even beings that are dear to us. And yet, we feel that our light, our love and our strength have increased, and we are overcome with peace and joy. It is this sensation that tells us that God has at last smiled upon us.

A spiritual Master wishes for his disciples to receive the smile of their heavenly Father. And when he himself smiles at them, he endeavours to bring them something of this divine smile. I now understand the smile that Master Peter Deunov had at times when he was looking at us. How can I describe his smile to you? It was subtle but never disdainful. He expressed enormous indulgence with a touch of humour that seemed to say, 'My poor friends, how did you get into this mess? But hang in there, nothing's lost; you'll soon get out of it.' And there was so much love and encouragement in his smile!

A smile is already a greeting, a sign of acknowledgement we give the people we meet, even before we do so with words. And so we should be aware of what we express when we smile. Of course, it does not mean that we should create an artificial smile by studying ourselves in the mirror. This

smile, which must express kindness, gentleness and understanding, should come naturally from our heart and our soul.

We must therefore go down into the depths of our being to look for silence and light. The sculptors within us will then know which nerves and muscles they should stretch or release. We can have confidence in them; they will know how to work on our lips, eyes and forehead, and little by little, the shape of our face and the expressions on it will become more harmonious. If you try to change your smile yourself, you are more likely to become deformed. Work with love, hope and faith, and give yourself over to the inspiration of your inner sculptors.²

¹ See *The Wellsprings of Eternal Joy*, Izvor 242, chap. 3: 'Suffering is a stimulus' and chap. 4: 'Seeking God's answers within'.

² See *The Faith That Moves Mountains*, Izvor 238, chap 1: 'Faith, hope and love'.

Chapter Ten

Every sacrifice we make engraves the mark of the sun within us

To be joyful, you have to be free, and to be free, you have to stop taking more and more burdens on your shoulders. Joyfulness is linked to the notion of lightness. What makes us light? Love. Love warms us and expands our heart, and then, like a balloon rising up into the atmosphere, we become light, in other words joyful.

Joyfulness is one of the most poetical expressions of love. When you love someone, you only have to hear their name or see them from afar and you become joyful, and your soul begins to sing. You may say that unfortunately this is not always the case and that, if the person you love does not love you, seeing them from afar or hearing their name may only make you suffer. That is true, but that means that the love you feel for them is not yet true love. True love is self-sufficient; it does not expect anything, and because it does not expect anything, it receives everything.¹

Loving without expecting to be loved, and also working without expecting to be recognized or rewarded: this is what the sage has learned to do, and it is why he feels free and light. He has understood that there is no worse hindrance than expecting to be loved or to be appreciated for one's work. People wait and wait in expectation... and this expectation paralyses them and they lose their momentum. For it is only through activity that human beings can find fulfilment: physical activity but especially the activity of their heart, mind, soul and spirit.

How has humanity been able to survive and grow on earth? It is thanks to agriculture. And what does agriculture consist of? It involves planting seeds or seedlings. In time, a seed will produce hundreds of other seeds and a seedling will grow to become a tree covered in fruit. And so, in order to live in abundance, we need to at least start by sowing a seed or by planting a tree.

In the visible and the invisible worlds, if you would like to receive love, light, joy and all heaven's blessings, you must not remain inactive, but

instead sow and plant. In this case, of course, the seeds and seedlings are of a very different nature: they are thoughts, feelings, actions, words, looks and smiles that are inspired by all the best you possess in your heart and soul. And in return, you will receive flowers and fruit in abundance.

Do not be content to simply take this image as something pretty and poetical: use it as the foundation for your life. Understand that in order to obtain something you want, you yourself must first have something to give. This is a law, a rule. In this way, the spiritual world can be compared with an enormous shop where you receive everything you ask for, but only if you have a certain currency to give in exchange. And the most reliable currency you can present to heavenly beings is selfless work and sacrifice. Sacrifice is like gold, which always retains its value because the sun protects it, in the same way a national bank protects a country's currency.

Every sacrifice you make to protect and express what is great and beautiful, so that all beings on earth are able to benefit from it, fills your heart and your soul with the gold that has currency in the great celestial stores. It is as if the sun were to mark you with its seal. And the day you bear the mark of the sun, you will be recognized by light beings, and they will say, 'This being is one of ours, they bear the mark of the sun, and they are our brother, our sister.'²

How many people will protest and say that they have already made enough sacrifices. But what do they term sacrifices? They may make some efforts to help others, but they will still do their best to serve their own most egotistical interests. That is why their help always turns out to be insufficient or inappropriate. We cannot succeed if we want to have it both ways. There is always a choice to be made between generosity and egotism, between high ideals and base instincts. Examine your good deeds, even those that appear to be the most generous: you may discover that since your birth only two or three have been truly altruistic.

The universal Soul maintains life for all creatures: it nourishes them, it quenches their thirst, and they continuously receive something from this abundance. So why not be inspired by this generosity and try to share what we possess with others? Jesus said, '*You received without payment; give without payment*'. Yes, whether it be beauty, intelligence, wealth, an artistic

talent or knowledge, we should do all we can to share it with others. In the eyes of heaven, who gave it to us, even our health is a possession others have the right to benefit from. Whatever it may be, we only have the right to take a portion of it: a quarter; yes, the quarter that is destined for the earth, as I have already explained to you.³ We must allow others to benefit from the rest. Any other behaviour is contrary to the divine law and makes exchanges between earth and heaven impossible.

For many people, ignorance of this law is often the cause of boredom. Yes, does that surprise you? There are so many rich people who have all they need but who are bored, because they do not know how to use what they possess! Despite their houses, parks, travels, receptions and parties, they are bored. And boredom is often the first step on the path to crime.

Even an intelligent and likeable person cannot be counted on if, more often than not, they put their own interests ahead of those of others. At some point, something unexpected is bound to occur, and they will then behave in a way that is neither intelligent nor likeable. What's more, anyone who cannot agree to give up certain things is never really satisfied. They of course feel a certain satisfaction at the time they obtain the success, the activities or the comfort they sought; but when they encounter difficulties, they become unbearable as they lack the inner capacity to overcome them.

You must always keep a place in your thoughts for others, knowing that, every time you do not try to act as well as you could, somewhere in the world, something always becomes darkened or is compromised due to your shortcoming. And 'acting well' does not necessarily mean providing material help. No, but think of the consequences that your thoughts, feelings, actions and intentions can have on others. What good does it do to give someone a sum of money, if at the same time, your suggestions and behaviour influence them to spend that money in a way detrimental to them? There are so many solutions for helping humans! You must find these solutions, in the knowledge that none of the good you do will be lost. And once you have done it, do not think about it anymore and, above all, do not expect anything in return. Be like the sun that brings light, warmth and life to all creatures: it does not ask them whether they are grateful. Most of them are not even aware of what they have received.

You may say, 'But when we have worked, when we have helped someone in one way or another, it is only right that we receive something in return!' Yes, that is justice, but love, the love that urges you to give without expecting anything in return, is over and above justice. Justice is already present in humans, but not yet love. Even criminals have some kind of sense of justice, even animals. And how many crimes have been committed supposedly to restore justice!⁴

You have helped someone and, in the name of justice, you feel that, in some way or another, they owe you something. But if you persist in waiting for what might never come, you are unhappy, irritated, and you may even have a small desire for vengeance. And what is making you brood over these hostile feelings now? The fact that you have done good! Is that intelligent? Why not try to preserve the joy you felt in doing good? While waiting for recognition in whatever form, you limit yourself and you become gloomy. Act only because you feel what you do is useful and good. Don't expect anything in return and you will live in freedom, in the light, for the sun will have marked you with its seal.

Love is the ability to pluck what is most dear to us from ourselves and give it away. But this quality is rarely apparent. It is more common to see beings busy fighting to keep what they have and to take what belongs to others if they can. Is it really intelligent to waste so much time and energy when, soon, they will have to leave everything behind? Oh yes, one day death comes, and whether humans like it or not, it strips them of everything. Why have they not learned to give before the hour of death? And when the time comes, whether they like it or not, they leave everything behind. All they are left with are the light and the joy they acquired by knowing how to give.

True life, the intense life that, even in the midst of the din of the earth, keeps you connected to heaven, is found in selfless work. When you are sure you are working for a just and noble cause, nothing must deter you: not the mockery, nor the criticism that will of course inevitably arise. You will not achieve anything great if you trust other people's opinions and wait for their approval before you act. And besides, they are so inconsistent! One day they approve of you, and a little later, for no apparent reason, they criticize you and turn away.

In life there are times when you are successful, recognized and appreciated by others, and there are other times when you are side-lined. If the idea of love and selfless work is not what animates you, you run the risk of becoming discouraged and bitter. But if you know the law, you'll say to yourself, 'I worked in the past, and in doing so, I acquired certain qualities. Now that conditions have changed, I obviously need to work in a different way to develop other qualities.' That is how you remain in control of the situation.

And whatever the situation, because you know how to do the most important thing, which is to keep your will and determination intact, this light enables you to triumph over difficulties. Even in the most unfavourable of situations, never miss out on the chance to do good; thanks to your efforts, a path will open up in your heart and soul. And don't be too quick to be satisfied with what you have achieved: a great deal of time is needed to transform the heart's desires in the fire of sacrifice, just as the charcoal that we burn becomes flame.⁵

God judges us according to our heart. And when the earthly world is not able to reward us, God does. For good never goes unrewarded. However, don't expect that the good you did will necessarily be repaid in the same way. It can be repaid in totally different ways, ways that you cannot know in advance. You give money, and you may expect to get money in return. But you might receive health, friendship, hope, inspiration... or the feeling that you are a true child of God, for, just like your heavenly Father, you give without expecting anything in return. The law of justice is a cosmic law that nothing and no one can fault. Humans are discouraged from doing good because they have misunderstood this law of justice. They fear that someone will take advantage of them. No, they should not be afraid.

Heaven does not hold out against those who have understood the value of selfless love. It rewards them day and night. And even when they have been wronged, it sees to it that they even experience the injury as a reward. You might be shocked; you can't accept that? That's because you have not yet experienced it. What I would like to make you understand is that God built the universe in such a way that what we don't get in one realm we receive in another, and a thousand times better if we are attentive to it. Those who know the secret of love and sacrifice give everything and they receive everything.

You may say there are cases where people who sincerely wanted to help others have been so deceived and exploited that they have lost everything. Of course. But when I speak of selfless love for others, I am not saying that you have to offer yourself as food to swine. Like the fable in which an acorn fell next to a path: fired up with altruistic fervour, it wanted to go out and help the world. Its father, the oak tree, said to it, 'You are small and vulnerable. Be careful, first start by hiding in the ground; your roots will grow, and when you have grown tall, then yes, you will be helpful.' The acorn replied, 'You have no heart; I am full of love for all creatures, and I want to help them.' But then a pig came along, saw the acorn and ate it.

Before wishing to help the entire world, you have to send your roots deep down into the earth and become like a tree, which will offer its flowers, fruit, shade and, one day, even its wood. There are sacrifices that are pointless and foolish. Giving and helping need to be learned, for it is not enough to have a big heart. Just as a true sage has to have developed qualities of the heart, in the same way, those who wish to show their love must also possess certain qualities of the mind, such as discernment.

And how do you acquire discernment? Precisely by being selfless, for selflessness gives humans the ability to see clearly, whereas selfishness and cupidity blindfold them. When people are obsessed with seeking their own egotistical interest, they have a distorted view of what is happening around them. And because they do not see reality for what it is, what they think they are doing to their advantage is in fact to their detriment. Yes, indeed; being egotistical does not necessarily make matters better.

I would never tell you to devote yourself to others without discernment. I don't mean you to become victims; I want to see you in peace, light and joy. And I know that you will only find this peace, light and joy by knowing how to give. For every sacrifice we make imprints the mark of the sun within us. Never forget that there is a connection between this world and the world above: when you do something down here on earth, you provoke something identical above, in heaven. What you give will one day be given back to you, while all that you keep for yourself is lost.

How long can you hold onto a feeling of joy?... The next day, or only a few hours later, you are sad. So, think about offering your joy to others too.

Turn to the Lord, to the divine Mother, and to all the heavenly entities, who will know how to keep and protect your joy, and say, ‘O Lord, O divine Mother, and all you heavenly entities, I feel such joy! But I don’t know what I can do with it, and I am afraid of losing it. So I entrust you with it; use it for the good of other creatures.’ And this is how you will not lose it. And if you wish to protect your love, entrust that too to the heavenly entities.

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‘You have received without payment; give without payment’ – Matt. 10:8

¹ See *The Seeds of Happiness*, Izvor 231, chap. 17: ‘Love without asking to be loved in return’.

² See *The Splendour of Tiphareth*, Complete Works, vol. 10.

³ See *The Key to the Problems of Existence*, Complete Works, vol. 11, chap. 14: ‘Give therefore to Caesar’.

⁴ See *Vie et travail à l’École divine*, Complete Works, vol. 31, chap. 8: ‘Comment dépasser la notion de justice’.

⁵ See *The Mysteries of Water and Fire*, Izvor 232, chap. 2: ‘The secret of combustion’.

Chapter Eleven

‘The greatest among you will be your servant’

In their relationships with others, humans, either consciously or mostly unconsciously, seek to be served, and in all ways possible. They tend to think others are there only to fulfil their needs, to help them, understand them and share their opinions and tastes... or their dislikes. And how many try to make their relatives, friends and colleagues instruments of their success! Perched on their pedestal, they impose themselves on others, as masters would on their servants, and those who do not submit to them and seek to demonstrate independence should beware!

But have these people who so need to impose themselves given a thought to the power of example? You may be asking yourself what example has to do with it... Well, it's very simple. Those who try to dominate others create many disciples for themselves. All those people around them who they want to order around observe them, take note and retain the lesson that they are giving through their behaviour. Yes, unconsciously, they become teachers, and not one of their lessons goes unnoticed.

Little by little, having been taught well, the ‘disciples’ begin to act like their master, first of all towards other people and later towards their master as well. And so the situation gets complicated: the master realizes that the people they thought to be totally devoted to them are in fact conspiring against them. The master thought they had been subdued, but now rebellion is brewing. But does the master understand that this is the result of the very lessons they gave to their disciples? No, most of the time it's quite the opposite: the master persists in wanting the disciples to give in, creating more and more disorder and consternation; until one day, the disciples feel things have gone too far, and they end up ousting the master. And so all that is left is a poor wretch who complains of having been betrayed and who thinks of committing suicide.

Humans' misfortune is caused by their not realizing that their idea of what

will bring them satisfaction and the way they go about achieving it will only lead them to poverty and maybe even self-destruction.¹ And so they persist... until there is total collapse. Maybe not always material collapse, but spiritual collapse, in themselves and possibly even in their friends and family, who were influenced by their example.

Each of us is a model for others. And by adopting the attitude of a servant or that of a dictator, we will obviously not achieve the same results. If you serve others with wisdom and generosity, some may be inspired by your lessons, and when they come to apply them, you will be the first to benefit. It is only natural that you appreciate sympathy, love and even help from others, but you will only obtain these if you start by setting an example yourself. Some day or other you will reap the fruits of the seeds you have sown, the good and bad alike.

The moral of the story is based on a very simple principle, since it is the very basis of agriculture: we reap what we sow.² From parents to heads of states, including teachers and all those responsible for anything, each one should meditate on this law and understand the advantage of becoming a servant instead of playing at being the master... or the mistress.

Living as a couple is very often just a series of confrontations: which one of the two is going to impose their authority? Yes, once again, a husband should serve his wife, because she is his disciple and will imitate him; and a wife should serve her husband, because he also is her disciple and will follow her example. If both compete for domination, they are setting the ground for endless struggles, but if they compete to serve, they create the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, only servants exist: they are angels, archangels and all the other hierarchies of beings of light... God is the only Master. It is on earth that we find creatures who so badly need to have servants, sometimes even slaves. And those who do not succeed through merit try to dominate using violence or trickery.

But, so often, those who expect to be served set themselves up for disappointment! It is rare to receive exactly what we want from humans. Listen to those who have domestic servants or who always expect something of their family and friends. Instead of being satisfied, they complain: the work has not been done as it should, objects have not been put back in the

right place, they have not been brought exactly what they asked for, or it hasn't been brought at the right time or in the way they wanted. There are endless reasons to complain.

If you really have something to ask of others, try at least not to appear too demanding. But most of all, understand once and for all that in order to be happy, you are the one who should be serving others, for then you will tap into an unsuspected source of energy inside you, and this energy is inexhaustible.

You may also come across people who will offer their services to you, and why not? But, again, if you accept, know that things will not always proceed as you hope. And in any case, you will feel happier if you yourself seek to be of use to them. Do so according to your abilities of course, because you first need to know what you are capable of. But once you have worked that out, in everything you do, think about how you yourself can help others. And then, if they are not grateful or if they do not even realize what you are doing for them, what does that matter? You are happy because you know what you are doing. What the others know or don't know is not really important; they might understand one day.

Does an infant know what its mother does for it? She is totally devoted to serving this little being who demands all her attention, who screams, cries and wakes her up in the night. Patiently and lovingly, she takes it in her arms to feed it, cradle it and send it to sleep. She does not expect her child to thank her; for devoting herself to her child is what makes her happy. But one day, much later, when this child has grown up and realizes all that their mother has done for them, they take great care of her, and in their heart they see her as a divinity.

It is true that, at first sight, the idea of serving others is never very attractive; it is even humiliating. But this is because we do not know what true service is. We do not know what we should be serving in others: their lower self (their taste for money, power and pleasure) or their higher self (their yearning for light). History has shown men and women serving others they hated in order to lure them onto paths where they would get lost and thereby becoming instruments of their downfall. They were therefore serving their lower selves. However, the service I am talking to you about here is that

of the higher self.³

It is the higher self, the divinity in others, that you should serve. In the Gospels, why did Jesus say, '*The greatest among you will be your servant*'? Precisely because, in order to be able to serve the divinity in other beings, we first need to be very great. Those who are great never feel diminished or humiliated in serving others in this way, because their greatness is that of the spirit.

Spirit never feels humiliated when it penetrates physical matter in order to enlighten and vivify it. So neither should you feel diminished when you serve others to help them see more clearly or to find the best solutions to their problems, even if their problems seem unimportant to you. If you are aware of the power of your spirit, you will never fear lowering yourself to the level of the small, the weak and the ignorant. You will know that nothing can make you lose your nobility and your true greatness.

Jesus was great because he knew how to make himself infinitely small. He never demanded that anyone bow down to him or serve him; he was the one who became the humble servant to all. And like Jesus, those who reach a remarkable degree of evolution must not use their greatness as an excuse for imposing their authority on others. The stronger we are, the more we must show humility.⁴ That is greatness.

Of course it's already quite something to have found the light, but that is not enough. It's then a matter of attitude and behaviour. Knowledge or spiritual power must never be used to dominate others. May everyone reach the greatest heights possible, but only within themselves; outwardly, we should not put ourselves on a pedestal. What sense is there in achieving great heights if we then crush our fellow human beings? Many prophets beheaded others thinking they knew the truth. Knowing the truth has never given that right to anyone.

And so what can we say about a Church which, instead of being humble and merciful, burned many wonderful beings at the stake and razed entire cities? The aim was supposedly to save souls, but it was often an excuse to subject them to its power. The whole world was meant to see it as representing Christ on earth. Well, the Church thereby committed the worst of errors. And what did it gain by having this attitude? As we say in Bulgaria:

‘Even if the hodja goes to the top of the minaret, he always sings the same song.’

Truth contains an immense amount of energy, but great care should be taken to wrap it up nicely so that others are able to receive it and digest it without it causing any damage. The sage expresses the power conferred to him by truth through love, kindness and gentleness.⁵

And if you really wish to become a master, start by establishing authority over your own cells, which are your servants. You have millions of tiny servants, which are also your disciples. Yes, for your cells also observe you and then follow the example you set. Practise on these disciples. For you can exercise full authority over them. Command and order them to contribute to your physical and spiritual health all you like. But in all other circumstances, be servants.

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‘The greatest among you will be your servant’ – *Matt. 23:11*

¹ See *The Seeds of Happiness*, Izvor 231, chap. 2: ‘Happiness is not pleasure’ and chap. 3: ‘Happiness is found in work’.

² See *Cosmic Moral Law*, Complete Works, vol. 12, chap. 1: ‘You reap whatever you sow’.

³ See *Man’s Two Natures: Human and Divine*, Izvor 213, chap. 10: ‘Address the higher self in others’.

⁴ See *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 11: ‘Pride and humility’.

⁵ See *Truth: Fruit of Wisdom and Love*, Izvor 234.

Chapter Twelve

Giving thanks: a source of light and joy

You are walking in the street when suddenly, for no particular reason, you feel overcome with a sense of inner expansion, making you feel lighter. Now, not only do you find everything you haven't noticed before interesting and charming, but the passersby also seem so friendly that you find yourself wanting to smile at them and share this sudden joy and cheerfulness that has come to visit you. Do not try to find the reason: true joy has no cause, just as true sadness has no cause.

I am not saying that there are no objective reasons for being joyful or sad. But true joy is a state of the soul, which is beyond the hardships, obstacles and sorrows and so experiences life as a gift from God and overflows with gratitude. True sadness however is a psychological state that blinds a being to everything that is beautiful and good, to the point that they only ever hold onto the reasons for being distressed.

If you want joy to visit you often, cultivate gratitude – gratitude towards the Creator, towards nature and towards humans. And even if you have no reason at all to be glad, joy will come and take you by surprise, like when friends surprise you with an unexpected visit.

You may say that in order to feel the need to give thanks you should have a reason. No, just give thanks. Do not ask yourself what reasons there are for saying thank you. If you want to experience this spontaneous joy that brings flavour, colour and light to your life, learn to give thanks also for no reason at all. Of course there are always reasons for saying thank you: you can thank God for the life you have received, this life that allows you to discover such riches; you can give thanks for the good fortune you have in being healthy, in having a family and friends... And also think about all the bad encounters and all the accidents that can happen in a day, which you have been spared. When you arrive home safe and sound after being out in the car, for example, do you think about giving thanks? So many accidents can happen on the roads,

and sometimes we come closer to them than we realize!

When you say the words 'thank you', you cause a source of light, peace and joy to well up in your soul. And this source floods all your cells. Little by little, you feel something in you becoming invigorated, fortified and lit up. And if one day you are faced with great hardships, not only will you not fall apart, but you will still be able to give thanks, and it is this ability to give thanks during trying times that will help you to overcome your hardships.

How many good things come from a feeling of gratitude, and how many bad things stem from a lack of gratitude! Yes, things go a lot further than the feeling you experience at a given time. From the moment you consciously feel gratitude and cultivate it in order to make it grow, it does not remain passive. Thanks to the law of affinity, its vibrations attract impressions and sensations of a similar nature. All blessings come from this one small thing: an impulse of gratitude.

In everything you experience, both sorrows and joys, there is something for you to discover for your fulfilment and your understanding of life. And gratitude is the key that opens the doors to true knowledge. That is why, when you wake up in the morning, before thinking about anything else, say the following: 'Thank you, God, for giving me life again today, so that I can serve you and carry out your will for your glory and for the coming of your kingdom on earth.'¹ With these few words, you place yourself under the protection of heaven, you give a good orientation to everything you do during the day and you find the right attitude to have when faced with any events that may arise. It is not enough to say 'Thank you, Lord' only when you receive good news or anything else that makes you feel good. You must learn to give thanks everywhere and at all times.

The truth is that when events take place, we cannot know whether, in time, they will prove to be bad or good for us. How many circumstances have people thought favourable which ultimately were the cause of their downfall, whereas the hardships they experienced turned out, in the long run, to be beneficial! We cannot say at the time whether the circumstances are fortunate or misfortunate; we need to wait to see what the far-off consequences of each event are, in order to be able to decide.

Wisdom therefore consists of being able to see the difficulties and

hardships as something providence sends in pursuit, to follow hot on our heels and force us to take paths which will lead us to great discoveries. If something was not chasing after us, we would not do anything and would remain ignorant and weak.² So many treasures are awaiting us in this way! Those who start complaining or rebelling at every drawback will pass by these treasures without seeing them.

This philosophy must become second nature to you. When faced with each unpleasant or hurtful situation, make a habit of saying to yourself that at the end of the road there may be some happiness waiting for you. Since you do not know what lies ahead, do not waste your time complaining or rebelling; give thanks to heaven instead. When you say ‘thank you’, you release energies in you that will help you cope. This is the power of giving thanks: it is already taking on the obstacle that is looming, and it neutralizes the poisons that your sadness, anger and discouragement were beginning to instil.

There is nothing more difficult than trying to interpret the nature of events as they occur. This is true of what happens both to us and to others, because we do not know the past or the future. For example, let’s say you know someone who is prey to a vice that is destroying them: it may be alcohol, drugs, debauchery, gambling, etc. You say to yourself you should help them so they can free themselves from it. Of course you mean well and you try your best to save them. But you do not succeed and you feel saddened. So then, say to yourself that maybe this vice they are prey to is actually preventing them from committing more serious actions.

Yes, there are beings who are inhabited by the genius of evil: in a previous life they committed crimes; in this life the laws of karma have condemned them to remain slaves to a passion, and this passion diverts them from other activities, where they would prove to be even more dangerous. Since they are totally wrapped up in their passion, they are no longer really in a state to cause harm – it is as if they were numbed. Yes, it is very difficult to interpret current situations and events, because we do not know the past or the future. Voltaire developed a similar idea in his philosophical story, *Zadig*.

But let us come back to you and the best way for you to overcome difficulties. Since you do not know the reasons for that which happens to you, make a habit of thanking Heaven. Even if you objectively have no reason to

give thanks, say: 'Thank you Lord...', 'thank you my God'. It must come naturally to you, without having to consciously use your willpower, just like breathing.

In Bulgaria, a very long time ago, I was travelling one day with a friend. It was evening, and we had arrived at a station with no possibility of going further. A pointsman who was working there offered to put us up for the night in the station. When I woke the next morning, I watched him work. He was very obviously already drunk, but he went about his work very conscientiously, and he greeted the drivers on the trains that passed by. I talked with him a little, asking him questions, and he explained that he was so used to his job, having done it since his youth, that he could continue doing it with precision, even when he had been drinking. He was a very good man and I have not forgotten him. So you see, sometimes we cannot get anything out of sober people, and it's better to talk with a drunk man who loves his work!

Obviously, I am not suggesting you imitate his liking for a drink. But, what I do suggest is that, just like him, you get used to carrying out your daily task in a conscientious way. And your daily task is to always be grateful to the Lord, whatever happens. Whether or not you do so consciously, give thanks, because it is recorded regardless.³ In giving thanks you purify and light up the atmosphere in and around you. So, give thanks immediately, spontaneously and automatically; you will then have all the time you need to remember why and how you gave thanks.

Yes, give thanks at all times and for everything,... even for the good you do. I have told you that you must never wait for your good deeds to be acknowledged. It is sometimes difficult: even if you do not expect to receive anything in return, you at least hope that someone acknowledges the fact that you have done something well. This is not always the case, however; sometimes people even manage to make negative comments. You will be able to overcome the disappointments and sadness you may then feel by being grateful yourself for having been able to make yourself useful. So when you do something good for others, it's not so much that they have to thank you. It's you who must thank them for having given you the opportunity to show not only your kindness and generosity, but also your wisdom, your intelligence and other qualities and abilities we must use when we want to be

of service.

In order to really walk on the path of the light, we need to know many truths that most human beings overlook. They think that because we do this we are spending time on very minor and unimportant details. Yes, very small things... but the entire universe is made up of very small things: atoms and electrons that we cannot even see. It is these little things that are the essential elements for creating and maintaining life.

For example, you may feel you are lacking or missing something; you suffer and are about to complain. Stop yourself right away and think of everything you do possess. Why should the realization that you need or are missing something suddenly make you feel gloomy? Thank God every day for the fact that the sun rises... Thank him for the air, the water and the light... Thank him for everything you can see, hear, taste and understand. Thank him for having given you the ability to be in contact with him and with all the heavenly beings. You will say, 'But God does not need our gratitude!' Yes, he does, but he needs it for us, not for himself. He requires the beings he created and who live in him to be aware of what they possess, because they are his children, his successors.⁴ Not recognizing the wisdom and the love of God produces dissonance in cosmic harmony.

Knowing how to give thanks is proof that we are conscious, that we have seen and understood. That is why gratitude is such an essential quality. If humans do not know how to give thanks, it is because they are half asleep and have not learned to see, listen to or feel beings and things. In their psyche, their five senses have become anaesthetized. When they wake up in the morning, how many of them think of saying, 'I am alive! Lord, send me a ray of your divine grace so that I can be conscious of everything you have given me'?

And then, when you are having a wash in front of the mirror, how can you not be in awe of having a forehead, eyes and hair?... What do you think about in front of the mirror in the morning?... And when you are running the tap or the shower, what do you think about then?... And then, when you see your wife, your children... Perhaps you'll say you don't have any. Alright, but when you go out, you are bound to encounter someone. And what do you think of when you see them?... All the beings who live around you, like those

you meet, are there to make you think and refine your sensitivity. When will you learn to rejoice and give thanks for all the endless riches in life so that you can become more alive yourself?

Those who know how to rejoice will pick up a stone on the path and say, 'Look at what I've found!' To them, this stone is a testimony to the world's creation: as they hold it in their hand, they can sense the billions of years that have passed by and the forces that have shaped it for it to become this stone on a path. These are the kind of experiences you could be having!

Have you ever asked yourself how you can take part in the life of nature? You see the sun, the moon and the stars rise and set... You see the seasons pass, but what have you learned from the passing seasons? Spring, summer, autumn, winter: the four seasons are the doors opening onto the mysteries of the name of God, the four letters, iod hé vav hé, **יהוה**, which are connected to the four elements.

On the circle of the zodiac, spring starts with Aries, a fire sign; summer starts with Cancer, a water sign; autumn starts with Libra, an air sign, and winter starts with Capricorn, an earth sign. The beginning of each season therefore takes place in the sign of one of the four elements. Aries, fire, corresponds to the letter iod, **י**; Cancer, water, corresponds to the letter hé, **ה**; Libra, air, corresponds to vav, **ו**, and Capricorn, earth, corresponds to the second hé, **ה**. With each one in its corresponding season, the four elements have free rein to manifest. And so, one after the other, over the course of a year, fire, water, air and earth have their say.⁵

Why do humans so often feel like strangers on earth? Because they do not know what to do in order for earth to get to know them. Earth feeds them and carries them, and they come and go in all directions along its roads and paths, never thinking to send it their gratitude and their love. You would like earth to recognize you? When you walk in nature, stop from time to time and lay your hand on the earth and stroke it, and say, 'O earth, my mother, I appreciate your solidity and your generosity so much! By showing you my respect, my gratitude and my love, I want to give you back a little of everything you give me.' In this way you will make yourself known to earth, and you will no longer feel like a poor wretch thrown onto foreign soil, but like a son or daughter of God in your homeland.

And while you are doing so, think of breathing deeply and consciously too, while addressing the angel of air. Say: 'O, dear angel of air, you who are a servant of God, who is beautiful and powerful, blow through me and take away all the impurities from my lungs, heart and brain, and give me harmony so that I may become a servant of God like you'. And because the angel of air is everywhere, because it conducts all the currents that flow through the atmosphere and slips through every crack, it is very sensitive and will hear you. It then instructs others to bring you some emanations of a very subtle fluid called ether, and you will feel as if your being is expanding and rising up in space.

The universe we live in is not closed to us; we have all kinds of interactions with it: physical, psychological and spiritual exchanges. Consciously or unconsciously, we resonate and we breathe with and in the universe. This universe is a living, intelligent, organized whole, and above all it is organized as a hierarchy. Yes, a hierarchy, from the most dense and dark regions to the divine world, which is pure light. And as human beings are created in the image and likeness of this universe, we find the same regions in ourselves, with the same materials and energies and with the same entities.

So then, the question is: what attitude should we have with respect to this hierarchy? You may not realize it, but this question is an extremely important one. Because if humans encounter so many difficulties and expose themselves to so much suffering, it is because they have not yet found the right attitude with respect to this hierarchy in themselves, which is in the image of the cosmic hierarchy, of which God is the summit.⁶

But what is an attitude? It is a result and a summary of what we are. It reveals the state of our physical body, but also of our psychological and spiritual bodies, together with the quality of the energies that circulate and act within them. This attitude shapes and moulds us; it links us to the various regions in space. And if our attitude is one of respect, love and, above all, of gratitude, it attracts currents and spirits from the world of light.

¹ See *The True Meaning of Christ's Teaching*, Izvor 215, chap. 5: 'On earth as it is in heaven' and chap. 4: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness'.

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

³ See *The Book of Divine Magic*, Izvor 226, chap. 11: ‘The three great laws of magic: 1. The law of records’.

⁴ See *The Faith that Moves Mountains*, Izvor 238, chap. 8: ‘Our divine lineage’.

⁵ See *The Fruits of the Tree of Life*, Complete Works, Vol. 32, chap. 7: ‘The four elements’.

⁶ See *Angels and other Mysteries of the Tree of Life*, Izvor 236, chap. 1: ‘From man to God, the notion of hierarchy’.

Chapter Thirteen

Getting your name written in the book of life

In several passages of the Bible, mention is made of a book called ‘the book of life’ or ‘*the book of the living*’. This book, which is obviously a symbol, contains names, and we are told, for example: ‘*Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous*’, as well as: ‘*If you conquer,... I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels.*’

You may ask, ‘But how can we know if our name is written in the book of life?’ I can only answer with a comparison: you will know that your name is written in this book, in the same way that you know if your name has been recorded in the register of an organization or administration. When you subscribe to a newspaper, a secretary makes a note of your name and address, and, every day, the postman delivers the latest copy of the newspaper to your home. If you happen to change address, your newspaper will be forwarded to you at your request. Since you receive this newspaper every day, you know that your name is recorded on file somewhere. In the same vein, when your name is recorded above in the book of life, it’s like subscribing to a newspaper, but a very special one that speaks to your soul and your spirit and daily brings you new knowledge, a better understanding of things, peace, light and joy. So, blessed are those whose name is recorded in the book of life!

Those with their names on a list cannot be forgotten. Humans know this very well, for they are forever busy keeping registers. The difference between heavenly registers and earthly registers lies in the fact that it is not necessary to ask to be included on heaven’s list: you need to merit it through your work and your efforts, and then, even without requesting anything, you will be inscribed. Those who do not work are not listed anywhere and do not receive anything. They might as well just copy the man who thought it the height of sophistication to have business cards and, for lack of other titles, had ‘gas and electricity subscriber’ put after his name! Of course, that’s also a

subscription!

Now, of course, you also need to understand that if the book of life is not a real book, the name recorded in it is not the one written on your identity papers. The book of life is a symbol of the universe, and if it is stated that names are written in this book, it is because, from the point of view of spiritual science, names express the quintessence of a creature and sum up their entire being.

A passage in the Gospels reports that the disciples came to Jesus and said, *'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'*, and Jesus replied, *'I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'* Whether the names are written in heaven or in the book of life, it has exactly the same meaning. But what exactly did the disciples understand by Jesus' words? If they had understood, they would have behaved differently when he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. And yet, it is said that at that moment, *'all the disciples deserted him and fled'*.

Walking on snakes and scorpions is obviously an image representing victory over *'the power of the enemy'*. *'And nothing will hurt you'*, added Jesus. But the disciples were not ready; they were still too attached to the earth and too susceptible to worldly attractions. How could they bear to see their Master arrested like a criminal, when they were expecting his victory? Having based their conclusion on a prediction made by the prophet Zechariah, they believed that Jesus was the king of the Jews who was to come: was he not part of king David's lineage? And if Jesus became king, he would be in power, and he would share that power with them. But Jesus had no worldly ambition. When he appeared before Pilate, who asked him, *'Are you the King of the Jews?'*, he simply replied, *'You say so'*. For Jesus, true royalty was heavenly royalty. He did not mistake worldly goods for heavenly goods, as we see in the episode where the Pharisees ask him about the tax due to Caesar. Neither did he mistake human glory for heavenly glory.¹ So, if you wish to become a true disciple of Jesus, try not to mistake heaven and earth either. And above all, do not ever think that a spiritual commitment should bring you material benefits.

Some people are surprised that Jesus' disciples were not able to prove themselves worthy of their Master; they even think that they themselves would have been more courageous and nobler in the same situation. But I wouldn't be so sure! Nothing is more difficult for human beings than detaching themselves from their lower nature; it sends its roots deep down into matter, and it fears, above all, whatever threatens its security, its comfort or its prestige, and so on.² People may believe they are disinterested, strong and brave, but when the temptations or hardships present themselves in a way they were not expecting, they succumb.

With your name recorded in the heavens,... or in the book of life, everything else pales in comparison: power, riches, glory... Nothing else, says Jesus, should delight us, and that is why we must be of service to a sublime idea – the kingdom of God on earth – so that all human beings can live in peace, abundance and light. Yes, everyone, and not only a few, as is the case for now. How can people who claim to be enlightened accept this situation? We only embody something great and beautiful in proportion to what we do for the collective whole, for all of humanity. That is how our true worth increases, because we become collaborators of God himself.

The sage works for the good of the collective whole, and he is a labourer in the Lord's field. Beings of light come to him to mark him with their seal, and once he has been marked, it is as if he has been added to a list. What is owed to him is noted down next to his name, and every day he receives post, or we could even say a 'salary'. This salary comes in various forms: strength for his spirit, expansion for his soul, light for his mind, warmth for his heart and health for his physical body. We can use another image and say that he is connected to a kind of power station: the wires that link him to the power station convey currents, which permeate him, setting his psychic and spiritual apparatus going.

In a house, we can switch on so many appliances by plugging them into electric sockets: lamps, heaters, oven, iron, stove, radio, television, washing machine!... Look at how many activities are possible thanks to the electric current conveyed by a power station! The same goes for you, from the moment your receivers and channels are in a working state: thanks to the heavenly current, an entire inner life awakens and is set in motion.

But so many people are like buildings during a power failure! Neither the lifts, the lights nor anything else functions. Why? Because neither the wire that connects them to heaven nor the book of life interests them. The only things that count are visible, tangible achievements and money. Yes, but at the end of the day, money will really only help them find a good place in hospital or in the cemetery.³

Through your thoughts, your feelings and your actions, strive to participate in divine life and to spread this life all around you: your name will be written in the heavens, and you will no longer be deprived of anything. But as long as your name has not been recorded, how can you expect the heavenly beings who are leafing through the book of life to know you and send you their blessings? Where would they send them if your name is not indicated anywhere on high? So yes, things are exactly as they are on earth: once your name is known and has been recorded, you receive post and money. You are well aware of that: look at insurances, pensions, and so on.

Become collaborators in divine work, labourers of the kingdom of God, so that your name will appear in the book of life. Yes, and may those who still receive nothing, who feel poor, forgotten and miserable, know that it is never too late to make themselves worthy of being registered in the book of life. The Gospels tell us that Jesus was crucified between two criminals.⁴ But while one of them was provoking him by mocking him, the other one, having recognized Jesus' exceptional greatness deep in his soul, addressed the following prayer to Jesus: *'Remember me when you come into your kingdom'*. And Jesus replied, *'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise'*.

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'Let them be blotted out of the book of the living' – *Ps. 69:28*

'If you conquer, ...I will not blot your name out of the book of life' – *Rev. 3:5*

'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us' – *Luke 10:17*

'See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes' – *Luke 10:19-20*

'All the disciples deserted him and fled' – *Matt. 26:56*

Zechariah's prophecy – *Zech. 9: 9 and Matt. 21:1-8*

'Are you the King of the Jews?' – *Matt. 27:11*

Tax due to Caesar – *Matt. 22:21*

Jesus crucified between two criminals – *Luke 23:33*

'Remember me when you come into your kingdom' – *Luke 23:42*

¹ See *The Key to the Problems of Existence*, Complete Works, vol. 11, chap. 14: 'Give Therefore To Caesar' and *True Alchemy or the Quest for Perfection*, Izvor 221, chap. 10: 'Vainglory and divine glory'.

² See *Man's Two Natures, Human and Divine*, Izvor 213.

³ See *Cosmic Moral Law*, Complete Works, vol. 12, chap. 15: 'We must not sever the link between the world below and the world above'.

⁴ See *Spiritual Alchemy*, Complete Works, vol. 2, chap. 1: 'Gentleness and humility'.

Chapter Fourteen

Seated at the banqueting table

The thunder of anger, threats and divine retribution resounds throughout the Old Testament. Not only does God speak to Noah, Abraham, Moses and all the patriarchs and prophets, endlessly listing the reasons for the irritation humans cause him, he also sends floods and drought, makes fire fall from heaven, and so on. In the New Testament, it is the opposite: Jesus presents God as a father, a father who is certainly demanding, but also full of love and mercy. So where does the truth lie?... The only way we can get a better idea is through images.

Let us consider the universe as a kingdom, with God as its sovereign. This kingdom is governed by laws, but it is not the king who ensures they are enforced or that those who break them are punished; there are ministers, magistrates, police and prisons who do this... The king spends his time on grand projects to ensure his kingdom's prosperity and his people's wellbeing. This king is also merciful and can grant his grace to a person who has been sentenced to death by a court for a crime they have committed. Like in those old tales where the guilty are being led to execution and manage to escape: they enter the royal palace, pass through all the doors without the sentinels being able to stop them, burst into the great hall where the king is feasting, surrounded by his friends, and cry out, 'Mercy, Sire!' And the king grants them his mercy; he even occasionally gives orders for them to be seated and given food and drink.

This is how the Lord acts. Have you made mistakes and blamed yourself inside; or maybe, even without being guilty of any particular error, you suffer because you are still so imperfect, so weak, so miserable? Even in the depths of your distress, never forget that God awaits you in his palace. Hurry towards him; run very fast to escape from everything that can prevent you from reaching him. And what enables you to run like that? Prayer. Intense and fervent prayer. Prayer enables you to jump over obstacles and pass through all doors... And when you enter the banqueting hall where the Lord is rejoicing among the angels and the souls of the righteous, he says to his

servants who are about to drive out this intruder, ‘No, since this person’s desire has propelled them right to us, they have the right to take their place among us; make space for them.’ And you are accepted, just as you are.

Just because I use images, like in stories, does not mean you shouldn’t take what I am saying to you seriously, for it is the truth. It is time that things became clear in your mind: God does not get angry, he does not get annoyed with humans, nor does he punish them; others take care of that. He simply waits for us at the banqueting table, and when we are capable of reaching him, he welcomes us.

In ancient times, there was a custom that corresponds exactly to what I am trying to make you understand. If criminals who were being pursued managed to enter a divinity’s sanctuary, they found themselves under its protection, and no one had the right to arrest them. This custom also existed in the Middle Ages, when, of course, churches were used as places of refuge, and this is can still be the case today. This tradition is based on specific knowledge, the same knowledge I am explaining to you now.

In one way or another, the truths of Initiatic Science can often be found in the form of certain rules or customs established by humans, at least for a certain period of time. The right of asylum is therefore the application of a particular truth of the inner life whereby, if you are able to take refuge in God, despite the enemies that pursue you within or without, no one has the right to persecute you. For as long as you remain up on high, your pursuers are kept at a distance. So then, run! And in order to run very fast, you need to be connected with the light. For light is God’s fastest creature, and it will help you escape your enemies and propel yourself towards to the banqueting table.

Some believers will obviously be surprised by the idea of a table where God and his angels are gathered for a feast. But if you read the Gospels, you will find that Jesus used this very image of a feast on several occasions, like in this parable:

‘Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. At the time for the dinner he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it;

please accept my regrets.” Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.” Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” So the servant returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his servant, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” And the servant said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” Then the master said to the servant, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.””

This is how things often are in life. Those whose capabilities, education and social standing might lead us to think they would make themselves available to participate in the celebrations that God organizes in heaven, and to partake in the food of his wisdom and love, instead prefer to carry on looking after only their own selfish interests, their own business and their pleasures.

Look at the excuses those who were invited put forward for not attending the feast: one wants to go and see the piece of land he has just acquired, another is in a hurry to try out his oxen, and the third, who has just got married, prefers to stay at home. And so, because all the prestigious people who have been invited have engagements elsewhere and the feast is ready, all the owner of the house can do is send someone to go and find the beggars, the crippled, the blind and the lame – in other words, all the disadvantaged – who happen to be in the street. Even if, on the face of it, they are not the ones who will be able to appreciate the feast the most, why not give them the opportunity?¹ Are they not sons and daughters of God too? We can at least try to touch their hearts.

And this is what Jesus did when he went to meet the crowds along the roadsides. As the scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who at the time represented the Jewish intellectual and moral elite, refused to listen to his word and fought against him, all he was able to do was invite others to the Father’s celebrations. And just as it says in the text, the king’s servants ‘gathered all whom they found, both good and bad’.

Now, it’s true, there is a slightly different version of this feast parable in

the Gospels: a king invites guests to a feast for his son's wedding, and because they do not come, he asks his servants to gather all the people they can find in the streets. Once the hall is full, the king enters, and he notices *'a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen'*.

This means that even if all humans are called to the divine feast, to truly participate they must fulfil certain conditions. I have just explained that you can only be welcomed by God if you are able to propel yourself towards him. It's like having to pierce a sea of clouds that is hiding the sun from you. As soon as you are able to rise above the clouds, the sun welcomes you, smiles at you, and you even get the feeling that it was expecting you. But in order to rise above the clouds, you must make yourself lighter, that is to say, get rid of all the heaviness that is keeping you in the dark layers of consciousness.² The wedding robe is therefore the robe of the sage; it symbolizes the state that has been reached by those working to make themselves lighter, to purify themselves, so that they can soar towards the light.

Even in daily life, the clothes you wear correspond to certain activities, and therefore to certain states of mind as well. When someone is wearing festive clothes, it shows not just that they are going to a celebration, but also that they are in a festive mood, just as when someone is wearing clothes for mourning, for work, for sport and so on, it also implies a corresponding state of mind. So you see, the Lord invites everyone to sit at his table, even those who may not be considered worthy of the invitation. But, at least for a moment, they must make an effort to harmonize themselves with the entities of light participating in the heavenly feast. That is what wearing 'the wedding robe' means.

The Lord awaits us at his table. He has invited us all, but in order to be received we must nevertheless fulfil certain conditions, just as we have to for receptions here on earth. Imagine you are invited by a king to a banquet he is holding at the palace: if you show up dirty, dishevelled and in rags, the guards or the sentinels at the gate will say to you, 'No, it is not possible for you to enter'. 'But I have been invited!' 'Yes, but are you aware that this is

the royal palace? You cannot enter dressed like that.' Not only do you need to be invited; you also have to dress appropriately. A similar idea is expressed in the Gospels in the parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins. Only the wise virgins, who had oil in their lamps, were received by the bridegroom at the reception hall.³ There are similarities between this oil, which gives light, and the aura, the robe of light that admits us into the heavenly community.⁴

The robe we need to wear in order to enter the Lord's palace is something inner, a pure aura of light. And why not even wear jewellery: necklaces, bracelets, tiaras and so on, for precious stones and pearls are symbols of heavenly virtues. Never lose sight of the symbolic meaning of all these things: ceremonial clothes, jewellery, and so on, for they are not simply adornments for improving the appearance of those who wear them. This is why mention is made of them in the Bible and in all holy books.

If you have the time, make your own necklaces. Thread together pearls of a colour and shape that appeals to you. And how many?... It could be a symbolic number: 22, 36, 72, 108, 144, and so on. But that is not what is most important. The main thing is that you understand that making a necklace is something of great significance: the thread represents your thoughts, which have to bring together powerful entities, represented by the pearls; the needle is your will, which guides your thoughts. And when you wear a necklace, whether or not it is one you have made, be aware that you are wearing an object of great spiritual significance.

Contrary to what most religions continue to state, humans' shortcomings and mistakes never bother God. The summit where God dwells is like a very high tower where neither their noise nor their disorder can reach him. Everything gloomy, impure and disharmonious is rejected and pulverized. For us, this high tower, out of the reach of all noise, disorder and suffering on earth, is found in our causal body.⁵ When we arrive at the summit, we are reunited with God within ourselves. But this state of fusion can only take place after much work and considerable effort.

Though it is rare, we may also be propelled into heaven when we least expect it. And then we take part in the heavenly feast... Obviously we would like to remain there forever, but it is not possible, because we have not yet

been able free ourselves; there are so many things that keep us attached to the world below! If heaven accords us this grace, it does so to give us a sense and intuition of that space of light where we are one day destined to live. These unexpected joys that we sometimes feel tell us of our liberation to come.

When the trees begin to lose their leaves in autumn, you know that winter is on its way; and in winter, when the snowdrops begin to open, they announce the arrival of spring. And just as with nature, you receive precursory signs at a soul level too, and you must learn how to recognize and interpret them.

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

⁴ See *Notre peau spirituelle*, l’aura, Brochure 309.

⁵ See *Man’s Psychic Life: Elements and Structures*, Izvor 222, chap. 10: ‘The causal body’.