

Pathwork on
“My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?”

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 82 *The Conquest of Duality Symbolized in the Life and Death of Jesus*, given on Good Friday (March 31, 1961) is a radical interpretation of the death and life of Jesus Christ. It builds on the honest and at first surprising confessional question to God of Jesus on the cross: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” – which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” I have always been inspired by this quote.

22	The life of Jesus Christ symbolizes this age-old truth in a very wonderful way. It has been known by all the sages and great truth seekers of all times. It is represented in many philosophies, religions and myths. Through Jesus Christ it has been symbolized in his actual life and death, for Jesus met his death in the very spirit I have stated here.
23	Many of Jesus' sayings and utterances were not recorded and passed on to posterity, especially those not understood by people because, in humanity's limited understanding, they seemed to contradict his other teachings. It is not mere coincidence, however, that his last utterance was recorded, and passed on to humanity, in spite of its seeming so crassly contradictory to what people believed of, and wanted to see in, Jesus Christ. Jesus' last words on the cross expressed his doubt and fear that he was forsaken by God. This has puzzled many people. How could that great spirit doubt and fear? Human illusion and idealization would have preferred that Jesus died in a glory of faith without the human doubts and fears he expressed in the hour of the culmination of his suffering. It was very important that this utterance be transmitted to humanity. Since every single facet of Jesus' life and death has deep symbolic meaning for humanity's personal problems, so this utterance, too, must have significance. It can be fully understood only if you grasp the meaning of this lecture and the previous one.
24	In his last hour, Jesus forgot all he had known, all the revelations and insights he had gained. Has it not happened to each one of you to some degree, in hours of depression and anxiety, that even though your intellectual memory retained what you have learned and known, you were not in command of this knowledge? Your soul was in a dark night of unbelief and doubt. Deceiving yourself about this state of mind, and not acknowledging how you really felt, is not the right solution. To feel guilty and proud as you think, "I should not feel and think this way" leads only to a self-deception that delays your coming out of your darkness.
25	Jesus illustrated this most clearly. He, the greatest of all created spirits, was in doubt too. He too had lost faith for a moment. But he acknowledged it, and did not hide it from himself or from others. What does that mean? It means the stark, naked fear of the unknown -- death -- and the acute suffering of physical, mental and spiritual pain. Jesus met it squarely, without pretense, without self-deception, without deceiving those who had faith in him. He was

	truthful to himself and therefore to all who believed in him. He was truthful even in his last moment. Many a spiritual teacher or authority would hesitate to admit moments of fear and doubt, would feel ashamed and afraid of losing face with the disciples.
26	This basic fear is often rationalized by "acceptable" explanations. The teacher may excuse this untruthfulness by the seemingly commendable attitude that does not want to let down or weaken the disciples. But in fact it is the lack of truthfulness that lets others down. Jesus' truthfulness had not let anyone down, even though they could not understand how it was possible that the master experienced doubt in his hour of death. Most did not know that in this very doubt and fear was an important directive and lesson for all. But even though they did not consciously understand, inwardly they felt more strengthened than ever, because truth goes directly to the heart and soul, even if, at times, it bypasses the brain.
27	When intellectual explanations do not obscure what the heart and soul perceives, and the personality allows the intuition to function in spite of seemingly contradictory intellectual considerations, the person has a deep purity and innocence that has nothing to do with the words "innocence" and "purity" as used by bigoted religionists. The person who has this innocence and purity adopts the childlike attitude Jesus recommended.
28	Jesus' advice to become as little children praises children's willingness to experience life intensely. Jesus' disciples have this quality; they too experience fully. And Jesus Christ himself showed this amply in his life as well as in his death. He went through his suffering to the full extent, without restriction, without shame in admitting his doubt and fear, pain and vulnerability. Only those who have this great childlike openness can experience true joy. This he demonstrated not only during his life, but also by his reappearance in spirit -- but of that, very little is recorded.
29	Again, as it occurs so often, this factor is misunderstood, or not fully understood. Even those who understand that Jesus' resurrection and appearance indicate the continuation of spirit life do not go far enough in understanding this phenomenon from a worldly point of view. They think simply that Jesus showed only that life goes on, and that is all there is to it. This phenomenon was not meant to prove just that life does continue in the spirit. It will mean something more to you right here and now, while you are still in this incarnation. If Jesus Christ in his hour of despair forgot what he had known, it is even more certain that other people will do the same when going through hardships. Intellectual conviction can only do so much in such times; Jesus knew this better than anyone.
30	Jesus' reappearance could not be more than theory for those who were not present, and for the succeeding generations, if it did not bear a deeper meaning. His reappearance clearly states: "After having met my ordeal fully, without pretense and self-deception, having gone through it to the ultimate end, I now

	<p>live in the true, full sense of the word. You, too, can do it. You do not have to wait for physical death, because you die many deaths every day, in all your little ordeals and struggles. The manner in which you meet these determines the subsequent life and fullness of joy that can be yours. If you meet these ordeals and struggles in a similar spirit of truthfulness, you will experience life and joy while still in the body to the same degree." This is the message, the ultimate meaning of his reappearance, apart from all other meanings. Here is the greatest lived symbolism ever demonstrated.</p>
31	<p>Life on earth is a symbol of reality, and not vice versa. And so it is with Jesus' life and death. It meant much more than a lesson to each individual about the history of evolution, life after death, and the promise after death. To find out what it really means you do not have to wait until the time when you leave your earthly body. You have daily opportunities. Whether you can now believe in a life after death does not even matter. Every day offers an opportunity for everyone, whatever he or she may or may not believe, to make the best of life by realizing what the everyday little "death" is, meeting it, and in so doing, learning to discriminate between that which is inevitable and that which is not. If you meet that which is inevitable -- physical death as well as the results of your past wrong attitudes -- in a spirit of relaxed passivity, while at the same time wanting to grow and learn from the experience, you will recognize where and in what way you choose difficulties that are not inevitable. For the more you choose the latter, the more you invite and court extremes that should be avoided.</p>
32	<p>Only by a very personal self-search can you determine how you react to both that which is inevitable and that which is not. This question poses a problem similar to that of independence and interdependence. Only personal self-analysis can provide the answer to each individual. There is no other way, no general rules to which one can rigidly adhere.</p>
33	<p>I recapitulate: Since isolation and loneliness come from an inner, unrecognized dependency, as opposed to the healthy interdependence which results from reliance on the inner self, so it is with the question of inevitability. By running away from that which is inevitable, you bring upon yourself avoidable handicaps. You are so afraid of the inevitable hardship that you take onto yourself more hardship. Find this pattern and you are bound to discover that inevitable hardship ceases after you have acknowledged and gone through it.</p>