

WHAT IS SUBUD?

Edward Van Hien
2nd Edition



What is Subud? by Edward Van Hien was one of the first books to be written about Subud.

Leonard, his son, is now very keen to see that the text is still available so has published a 2nd edition for distribution on line.

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Subud is a way of life directly concerned with affairs of the spirit. It is also a Brotherhood bound together by a spiritual exercise (the latihan) through which God's guidance is sought and may be received. Subud is, however, not a new religion and has no dogma, creed, technique or theory.

Pak Subuh, who is an Indonesian, was the first man to receive the experience of the Subud Latihan as it is known today. In the last ten years thousands of ordinary men and women all over the world have been led to Subud. They have experienced its inner workings and many of them seem to have gained new strength and increasing peace of mind. The movement continues to grow.

In this book the author, who lays no claim whatever to outstanding spiritual gifts, explains in a simple direct way just what Subud is and what it means when you practice it. He has also collected together numerous extracts from talks given by Pak Subuh in the course of his first two world tours.

Those who agree with the author that:

The path of the spirit must be simple to enter (which is not the same as saying that it will be easy to tread):

The road signs must be as easy to understand for the illiterate as for the highly educated:

The path must be open to all regardless of colour, race and creed:

may feel that Subud is both what they have been searching for, perhaps without knowing it, and what they need in the often hectic circumstances of modern life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS and PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

My grateful thanks are due to those Subud friends who have read through the typescript of this book in its original form. I have named them all under this heading in the first edition and they will, I know, forgive me if I do not do so here again.

When I started to write this book I had been in Subud a mere two years. With the natural lapse of time this has now increased to over eight years.

Inevitably, then, people tend to ask whether my views on Subud have changed during this period. I hope, somewhat naturally, that my understanding has deepened a little and to that extent my 'attitude' will presumably have changed too. Certainly my own feelings all tend towards an increasingly profound gratitude that I should have been given the opportunity of coming into contact with Subud.

I have made only a few minor amendments and corrections in the first part of the book. I have not found it necessary to make any basic changes. This is because the book is intended chiefly for those who wish to enquire about Subud and also for the new member who has, perhaps, not yet found out all that he wants to know about the initial stages. It is reasonable to assume that the average enquirer's need today is very much what it was six years ago and that it is likely to remain the same for many years to come.

Part II of the book has not been retouched at all with the exception of Appendix A which, apart from the first two pages or so, has been completely re-written. I felt the need for this because the situation in Subud today is totally different from what it was six years ago.

When speaking to those who have read this book, my chief interest is always to find out whether there are any questions, important perhaps to a newcomer, which the book does not answer. I am relieved to be able to state that I have not yet been made aware of any major 'preliminary' problem that has not been dealt with in these pages. Each individual obviously has a few personal questions to ask and each has his own slant or approach, but that is only to be expected. Those who are 'ripe' to come to Subud usually find, at some stage or other in their reading, that there comes a time when further questions are useless. They realize that, in essence, Subud is an experience and that therefore it is only experience of Subud which can possibly give them an answer to those comparatively few doubts or queries which cannot be satisfied by talking or reading about it.

For many men and women in Subud (none of whom, even after a few years of Subud experience, would claim to be more than spiritual babes), the period of initial 'experiment' is over. The 'proof' of the effect of Subud in their daily lives is so overwhelming that they sometimes wonder how, previously, they ever managed to live without it. No one knows what stresses, strains, temptations or disasters lie ahead, but there must be many alive today who cannot conceive that they would ever again dream of facing any major (or even minor) problem without the guidance and comfort which Subud has brought to them.

PREFACE

Subud is directly concerned with affairs of the spirit from the nearly material to the highest states imaginable.

It is a general misfortune that, in the world today, matters affecting the spirit are almost universally looked upon with doubt, suspicion and even hostility. The word 'spiritual' has itself acquired a host of bewildering associations which may cause the average person to turn away from it, slightly embarrassed.

It is a sweeping assertion, but manifestly true, that most of mankind today is outwardly non-religious; it is also perhaps true that, deep down, most men are neither fully secure nor

entirely happy in their beliefs nor, for that matter, in their unbeliefs.

Although, today, Subud is available to help us towards higher realms of being, the approach in these pages is intentionally very much down to earth.

In assuming that most readers will prefer this, I intend no insult. The whole point of this book is that it shall be read by those who are still groping at my own low level. Those who have achieved greater insight can safely afford to ignore much of what is written here.

A characteristic of Subud (and perhaps all) spiritual progress, which many will recognize, is that what one feels moved to say or write now is probably quite different from what one would be willing to assert in one or two years' time.

In what follows there is no claim to originality. The more one reads or experiences, the clearer it becomes that, fundamentally, there is nothing new under the sun. There are only restatements, in a modern context, of old truths. This is perfectly logical, because, if there is such a thing as absolute truth, it is difficult to imagine how it could change.

Pak Subuh, the first man to experience Subud as it is known today, himself always ends his talks by craving pardon of his audience lest anything which he has said be considered out of place. How much more is it necessary for me to preface this book with the same request to be forgiven if anything that is written should happen to offend.

INTRODUCTION

There are as many approaches to Subud as there are people in the world. This applies to any subject-not only to Subud. What, then, you may well ask, is the value of one approach among so many?

Next there is the classic definition of a bore as 'a person who insists on describing the indescribable'. Most people who have been in Subud for some time will agree that in very many ways Subud is indescribable. Why, then, you may wonder, am I proposing to describe it?

Even if, as I suspect, I do not know the correct answer to either question, I must make some attempt at an explanation. First, although nobody else's approach to Subud will be the same as mine, it is probable that many people will have a background similar to mine in this or that respect, even if not in all respects.

Furthermore, quite apart from a similarity of background, there are sure to be a number of fundamental views, opinions and attitudes which others will share with me. To the extent, therefore, that I happen to echo such views, it may be assumed that at least one common

starting point will have been established.

If, after that, what I have to say helps anybody in the smallest degree to an understanding of what Subud means, this book will have been worth while. That is my answer to the first question.

The second question is not going to be answered; it is to be evaded. This book does not pretend to describe or explain (except quite superficially) the workings of Subud; I am not spiritually competent to do so. The entire emphasis of the description will be on the approach for those who are not yet in Subud or who are newly in it. If, incidentally, what is written also helps those who have been longer in Subud, or helps them to assist the approach of others, nobody will, I hope, be the loser.

There are already at least two books on Subud,¹ to which many others besides myself are deeply indebted for our beginnings. Both authors are brilliant men, and part of their approach could, perhaps on that account, be considered unusual. In particular there must be some people for whom Mr. Bennett's introductory thesis could be frightening in its learning and exposition. 'If,' some people say, 'I have to believe or study such theories before I can approach Subud-then Subud is not for me.'

To miss a trial of Subud for this reason would be a very great pity. Subud is available to everyone-in fact, the more simple and humble your approach, the better.

Perhaps the only justification for adding to Subud literature this personal approach of mine lies in the fact that I am not in the least brilliant, and have what may be described as an 'average Christian upbringing'.

I hesitate to inflict on you even a brief autobiography. Nevertheless, if you can imagine someone with the sedate background of an English preparatory and public school education, coupled with a subsequently acquired professional qualification, groping amidst the fairly common religious doubts of our time, I hope that you will think to yourself: 'This fellow is so ordinary that it could be me.'

A friend of mine who had read what I have written above said: 'It is quite permissible for you to stress your own ordinariness, but, at an early stage, you must emphasize the extraordinariness of Subud.' There is some force in that comment. Fear of boredom at the thought of the 'ordinary' should not be allowed to stop you at this point.

The Pocket Oxford Dictionary defines a 'miracle' as an 'Event due to supernatural agency, act of supernatural power, remarkable event', etc. If we accept that definition the coming of Subud is quite certainly a miracle of a most deeply significant kind. To say more at this stage would involve undue compression and would not help you much. For anyone who is still anxious to know what Subud is I fear that there is no escape from reading the rest of this book.

¹ Concerning Subud by J. G. Bennett and The Path of Subud by Husein Rofe.

PART ONE

WHAT IS SUBUD ?

1

APPROACH

To begin with it is necessary to state here what is repeated in closer context later, namely that Subud is not a new religion and that it has no teaching, no creed and no dogma. Nevertheless, in my view, Subud is a timely and powerful aid to the faltering belief that so many have today-belief that, somewhere and somehow, there is a realm or sphere of being which embraces matters of higher importance than the day-to-day affairs, petty or seemingly vast, with which humanity seems to be so fully engrossed.

I must apologize if the next few paragraphs seem to be stating the all too familiarly obvious. The queer characteristic of the obvious is that, quite obviously, it is never obvious to everybody. What is obvious in Washington is evidently not so in Moscow; what is obvious to a Christian is hard to believe for an atheist.

Almost nobody will deny that the world is in a turmoil-afar worse state than ever before in time of peace. True, technology has developed excitingly. We are putting men into space. If one had seriously tried to forecast, even a hundred years ago, what science has accomplished in the last thirty years, one would at best have been ridiculed and at worst put in a mental home.

Somehow there are many who still feel that 'progress' is inevitable and we point to these

technical achievements and to the welfare state type of politics as 'proof' that there has indeed been progress. But there are also many who will doubt whether, deep down inside us, there has been any progress at all. It is painfully clear that, fundamentally, mankind is just as material and cruel-minded as ever before.

The chief difference is that we now do everything on a bigger scale. The bow and arrow could kill one man at a time; the latest form of bomb can probably slay a million. Attila and Genghis Khan in their respective heydays slaughtered their way across Europe and Asia, murdering thousands. Less than twenty years ago Hitler caused millions of Jews to be exterminated. This in the name of Germany-not of some savage territory, but the land of Beethoven and Goethe, claiming to possess one of the most civilized cultures in the world.

It is futile to throw the guilt of all this upon one or two persons. We little men of today allow these tyrants to lead us. We commit, allow to be committed or do not prevent, directly or indirectly, the most terrible atrocities that imagination can conceive.

The saddest part of it all is that we feel rather helpless. The little men in America (generally described as a Christian country), no less than in Russia (popularly considered to be virtually atheistic), just do not seem to be able to call a halt to the creation of modes of universal destruction or to the modes of thought which lead to them.

Has religion-and, particularly for us, the Christian religion-nothing to offer us? Yes, of course it has; but the saying (attributed to many famous people) that 'Christianity is a wonderful idea-somebody ought to try it' is as true today as ever it was.

The vast majority of us do not feel that it is 'practical' to turn the other cheek; nor are we able, by a very long way, to love our neighbour as ourselves. We try-sometimes; most of us are not incorrigibly evil. We do not murder or steal (at least not as individuals) and we only occasionally tell lies. But even on the rare occasions when we feel comfortably holy we are not wholly comfortable, because, of course, we really understand nothing at all.

I once had occasion to write to an Anglican bishop about Subud and the following extract from that letter perhaps sums up reasonably adequately what I am trying to establish as a starting point.

'For some time I have shared the difficulty, experienced by many others, of not being able to understand the extraordinary number of divisions within the Christian Church of which the Catholic/Protestant split is perhaps the deepest.

A further difficulty has been that, even if Christendom were united, what of the 'salvation' of those who follow the other great religions? What of those who lived before Christ or have never heard of him? The more tolerant answers given to this sort of question usually take some such form as 'God is merciful'; but this is said with the implied intonation that, while we will each have our cloud and harp, anyone who is not a Christian might conceivably sit on a lower second-class cloud but would certainly be without a harp. They would, in other words, not be 'saved'.

Some Muslims are just as bad. The Koran is, as you know, packed with fulminations against

the 'unbeliever' who will burn while the faithful luxuriate in paradise. Even though few people these days believe such assertions literally, for me, personally, the conclusion has been inevitable that any exclusive claim to salvation by anyone religion must contain some very fundamental error somewhere. (Incidentally, these claims never seem to be made in this form by the founders.)

Speaking for myself, I had reached the conclusion that the right answer must somehow embrace the following:

- 1) The path of the Spirit must be simple to enter (which is not the same as saying that it will be easy to tread).
- 2) The road signs must be as easy to understand for a beggar as for a king; for the illiterate as for the highly educated.
- 3) The path must be open to those of all religions and not } only to Christians or only to Muslims, etc. Many religious people believe in 1) and 2), but few will accept 3).

It is not difficult to reach the above conclusions which are in no sense original. Having reached them, however, what does one do about it? Usually nothing.

It was at this point that we (my wife and I) encountered Subud. We very soon gathered that, in some way, a new miracle or dispensation was at work in the world.

It seems almost too good to be true that here is a means, of worship which is pure content and has no form of its own; Like water it is therefore able to fill the shape of the Christian vessel, the Muslim jar, the Buddhist flask and even the pagan pot.

After about two years' experience in Subud I can confirm that its manifestations range from the startlingly Pentecostal to the still, small voice. It has not made me any more eager to attend church, but a new and direct sense of worship is undoubtedly present. I have read and re-read the four Gospels and the Acts with the greatest pleasure; passages previously obscure have become clearer and many things formerly hard to believe with the intellect are seen to be literally true.

It is all quite amazing and remarkable and I hope that you will not get the impression that we have fallen uncritically for some new passing "ism". It seems that the Vatican knows of Subud. A number of monks in a Benedictine monastery have been "opened" and they will perhaps in due course report on the spiritual results.'

About five years ago, before I had even heard of Subud, I had, in my own mental make-up, reached the state outlined in the first few paragraphs of the letter quoted above, and had confidently decided to write a book which would solve all the problems of the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, the outline, committed to one sheet of paper, lay fallow for at least a year.

Then I came into contact with Subud, which embraced just exactly the conditions stipulated in 1), 2) and 3) above.

To these I should perhaps add a fourth. Most of us at some time or another feel the urge to 'get away from it all'-permanently. We think of a mountain-top, a Pacific island, a monastery

or the desert. Reflection soon brings home to us that there are not enough mountains, islands or monasteries for all of us and that the desert is very dry .I was fully convinced that not only must the solution be available to everybody but it must also be practicable in the hurly-burly of modern daily life-in a supersonic aircraft, in a bus, in the office, in the kitchen.

For me (and also for countless others) Subud has proved to be the key which was needed to open the door to many things from which we all seemed to be locked out. If, however broadly or even partly, you have also experienced the state of mind indicated above, coupled occasionally perhaps with that spiritually bewildered feeling which I am sure many of us share, then you may be encouraged to read on.

2

THE MEANING AND ORIGIN OF SUBUD

SUBUD is a contraction of three Sanskrit words: Susila Budhi Dharma. In Subud terminology, these have been interpreted as follows :

Susila means 'right living'.

Budhi refers to 'the higher powers and capacities latent in man himself'.

Dharma means 'submission to the Will of God'.

Taken together, they mean 'Right living according to the highest that is possible for man in submission to God's will'.

(A more complete interpretation will be found on p. 92.) From this definition it will be clear to many that the principle behind Subud is not new but has existed as far back as recorded history. It is a principle which is the kernel or root of all religions.

It is quite easy to state what Subud is not, and I make no apologies for repeating several times what I consider to be one of the most important principles to grasp, namely that Subud is not a new religion, creed, theory or dogma.

At this stage the exasperated reader is entitled to wish that someone would tell him what Subud is. With some misgiving I venture the following broad definition:

The principle at work in Subud is a spiritual action which offers us a new means or possibility of becoming quiet within ourselves. The more inwardly quiet we become, the greater is the likelihood that we will begin to receive, from some higher source, direct and individual guidance for the right conduct of our life.

The action of Subud is quite beyond our understanding.

The realization of this is perhaps the single most important contribution which each of us can make towards the smoother working of Subud within us.

The 'transmission' of the means to this inner working occurs at what in Subud is called the 'opening', in the presence of another person called a 'helper'. Thereafter we are at first advised to allow the action (Latihan) to work in us regularly twice a week for approximately half an hour, together with other members of our local Subud group. Later, we may add a third Latihan of half an hour at home.

Subud, as it is known today and in the sense in which it is the subject of this book, originated in 1924 through a man named Muhammad Subuh living in Java. He is often referred to as Pak Subuh, but his full title is R.M.² Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. The word 'Pak' is a term of respect and is short for 'Bapak', which in Indonesian means 'father'. Everybody in Subud knows Pak Subuh affectionately by the name of 'Bapak', and throughout the rest of this book either 'Bapak' or 'Pak Subuh' will be used.

This chapter is short because much of what could be written here is better placed in the next two chapters.

Some definitions

Opening. This is the term used in Subud for the occasion when a new member first receives the vital 'contact' which enables the action to start in him or her.

At First I did not much care for this word, which struck me as strange or even mildly bizarre. But I soon realized that other existing terminology--e.g. 'ceremony' or 'initiation'--already had meanings which conjured up, in the minds of most people, even more misleading connotations.

Helper. The name given to those authorized by Pak Subuh to 'transmit' (or, perhaps more accurately, to 'witness the transmission of') the contact to new members.

Latihan. An Indonesian or Malay word literally meaning 'exercise' or 'training'. As both these words indicate the necessity of some effort or contribution on the part of the 'trainee'

² R.M. stands for Raden Mas which, in Java, is a title which may be used by those of kingly descent until the fourth generation. After the fourth generation 'Mas' is dropped from the title. PakSubuh himself does not use the letters R.M.

or the 'one who exercises', such literal translations are hopelessly out of place. The very essence of the Latihan is that, of ourselves, 'we do nothing; it is different for each one of us; it cannot be learned or taught. Our only contribution is a sincere willingness to submit to the action.

A note on pronunciation. The 'u' in Subud and Subuh is pronounced rather like a 'double o'-not long as in 'food' but rather shorter like the 'double O' in 'book'. The final 'd' is pronounced as a 't'. Subud is therefore more like Sooboot and Subuh like Soobooht. The 'a' in 'Pak', 'Bapak' and 'Latihan' is almost exactly like the 'u' in 'luck'. So Pak is pronounced Puk, Bapak is Buppuk and Latihan is Luttihun.

3

BAPAK

ALREADY varying accounts of Pak Subuh's life have been recorded. He himself is stated to be vague as to the detail of many aspects of his life. In some ways this is just as well because, in my view, the exact detail, although interesting, is not really significant in relation to the phenomenon of the whole.

It is doubtful if any ordinary person can ever be said to 'know' a man of Bapak's spiritual stature. Although, therefore, I have met Bapak both in his own home and abroad, I cannot refer to any personal 'knowledge' of him. What follows as regards biography is a paraphrased precis of the facts surrounding Bapak's early life unashamedly culled from the books by J. G. Bennett and Husein Rofe to which reference has already been made; also from various talks and lectures that have been given during the past few years. For the rest it is a record of my own impressions from personal encounters.

Pak Subuh was born on 22 June 1901. He was named 'Sukarno' at birth and was delicate as a child. At one time it was thought that he would die, but an itinerant beggar happened to come to the door and, after making enquiries as to what was happening, indicated that sukarno was the wrong name for the child and that he should be called 'Muhammad Subuh'. His name was changed and his health improved. Pak Subuh was born and bred a Muslim.

He seems, from an early age, to have had clairvoyant powers, and, Although he occasionally tried to imitate his companions with little tricks and lies {boys will be boys even in Indonesia), he found that his voice failed him and that he could not do as they did. There seems to have been a prophecy that he would die at the age of twenty-four (or thirty-two-

Rofe has heard both ages mentioned). In view of this he felt that it would be useless to pursue the gains of this world, and, instead, he sought spiritual guidance from various teachers. It is recorded that, with remarkable unanimity, all the seers, gurus and Sufi teachers to whom he went for study indicated that he was somehow different. They said that they could teach him nothing, but that whatever was to come to him would emanate direct from God.

Bapak married in 1927 with Siti-Rumindah and had five children-three sons and two daughters. Bapak's first wife died in 1937 and two of his sons have also died. In 1941 Bapak married Siti-Sumari who is known as Ibu (mother) to all Subud members. Ibu's own daughter, Rochanawati, died early in 1966.

Between 1925 and 1933, that is between his twenty-fourth and thirty-second year, there occurred the happenings which were to clarify for him his particular mission in life. One dark moonless night in 1925 he was walking outside with some companions when a ball of light more brilliant than the sun appeared above him and seemed to enter him, filling him with radiant light and vibrations. It is recorded that others, too, from far away observed this extraordinary light and made enquiries the next day as to what it could have been.

There then began for Pak Subuh, during a succession of about 1,000 nights, the experiences which we in Subud know as the 'Latihan'-a purifying and cleansing process which (in his case) allowed him little sleep at night but nevertheless gave him the strength to carry on with his ordinary work during the day.

He did not then understand what all this meant, and was, if anything, unhappy at the thought of receiving something which was not apparently available to others.

It was not until his thirty-second birthday-the night of 21-22 June-that he received what, for want of a different word, we must term a revelation. This was to the effect that it was to be his mission and task to transmit to others the same inner working of the spirit which he himself had received. He was not to go anywhere unless he was invited and he was not to give this 'contact' unless he was requested to do so. It was to be given to all who asked for it.

It so happened that very soon afterwards all the pupils of a Sufi teacher in Java came to him asking for this contact which, they said, their master had told them to request. That is how Subud began.

At this time it also became clear to him that he should retire from his worldly work, and this he did, causing (so Rofe humanly records) no little anxiety and crisis in his immediate family circle. According to Rofe, Pak Subuh explained to his wife that God would now provide for them.

One of Bapak's endearing characteristics is his sense of humour, which can emanate so happily from him on almost all occasions. It is in no way a cutting wit, but a real sense of fun. It is difficult to convey on paper the quiet humour with which he told me once that since 1933 he had been 'un-employed'. He used the Dutch word 'werkeloos' (workless), which, to us who know the immense calls on his time, makes the remark even more gently amusing.

From 1932 to 1957 (with the intervention of the war years and the occupation of Indonesia by the Japanese) Subud spread slowly in Java. Looking back, it is obvious that these were not wasted years, as there grew up a small nucleus of men and women who were being 'spiritually fortified' against the time when the explosive spread of Subud from 1957 onwards would require the help of those with much experience and inner strength.

Husein Rofe came to Java in 1950 and was brought into contact with Pak Subuh. In 1956 Rofe was instrumental in bringing Subud to the West when, among others, he met J. G. Bennett, who was, in the early stages, largely responsible for carrying on the torch from there. Between 1957 and 1960, Bapak made two world tours, visiting more than thirty countries in which Subud came to be established. There are now about seventy groups in England alone and a similar number in the U.S.A.

How is one to describe Bapak? This is the age of the ordinary man and I am sure that Bapak is happy to give the impression of being an ordinary man. In this connection I cannot do better than to quote his own words as spoken to over 1,000 people at Friends' House in London on 17 August 1959.

'Someone once said to Bapak in Indonesia: "Bapak, you are very strange-you still wear a necktie, whereas you are a spiritual man and supposed to have a noble soul. You even drink tea and smoke cigarettes, and sometimes you go to the cinema; at other times you go to the shops and so on. Yet all these things are regarded as useless and as closing the way to God. Why don't you allow your beard to grow and lean on a stick, as do those others who are said to be near to God?"

And Bapak answered: "Oh, no; Bapak is not like that. Bapak is willed by God to be simply as Bapak is-to drink coffee, to eat butter, bread and cheese, also to smoke-because this is what people ordinarily do; and it will not close my way to God, because He wills me to be so.

"God is All-knowing and All-wise, and His Mercy towards man does not require him to withdraw from normal life. Man can truly receive the contact with God's Greatness and the working of God's Power within him at times when he is engaged in his normal occupation; at every moment he can be open to receive the action within him of the Power of God.

"In the times of the Prophets they wore the long shapeless robes that were customary in those days, because there were no tailors; they allowed their beards to grow, because there were no barbers. But at the present time there are plenty of barbers and specially good tailors who make well-cut suits and dresses. ...Why, then, should a man choose tasteless clothes and wear them because he thinks it is the Will of God? They are not the means by which man can be near to God. Those means are purity of heart and mind."

Although this all goes to stress Bapak's 'ordinary' aspect and qualities, there need be no illusion on one score-and that is that he is, of course, a very extraordinary man. Although his contact with everybody is easy-going and free from all ceremony, his natural dignity is immense. The sincere reverence which all those who work for him display quietly and discreetly is, to the outsider, most impressive and unmistakable.

Bapak always stresses that 'if he doesn't eat he is hungry, and if he puts his hand in the fire it will burn'. He also admits to making mistakes, although if one quotes this to his closest circle they move their shoulders or heads in very doubtful acquiescence.

Bapak is immensely practical. This is a joy to some of us who cannot see why goodness should necessarily be equated with inefficiency. It is, however, sometimes a bit of a stumbling block to those who still do not grasp the inescapable fact that men and women are here to live and work on the earth and that a solution to problems must come by bringing affairs of the spirit into daily life and not by abandoning daily life in order to flee to the spirit. (In other words, it underlines what we all know to be true: that holiness is for twenty-four hours of the day, every day; not just for church and Sunday.)

Finally, almost everyone asks: Who then is Bapak? What level or manner of man is he? He himself makes no claims whatever and I therefore feel that it would be wrong for others, like myself, to make any claims on his behalf. In his talks he always traces the line of prophets by following the Koranic sequence of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. Of one thing there is, for me, no doubt whatever. Humble as were his beginnings and poor as was his education, Bapak speaks as one having authority. Having stated that, it is necessary to add immediately that Bapak claims no authority and, in fact, disclaims it. It is of the essence of Subud that 'authority' is considered unnecessary because each one of us can, by the inner process of Subud, ultimately come to know all that is necessary for us.

The following illustrates one of Bapak's views. I once wrote to a friend with the request that he should ask Bapak if he would be prepared to sit for a portrait by any outstanding Indonesian artist he might care to name. Bapak replied, through my friend, that he hoped that I would not be offended if he refused, but that it was best not to create any form of attention which might lead men to look to Bapak rather than to God.

Although, as I see it, Pak Subuh is, from the spiritual point of view, probably the most important man alive today, he has described himself quite differently. In a talk given to the Subud World Congress in August 1959 he used the following memorable phrases:

'In all this, Bapak's function is like that of a school servant, who sets out the books, opens the door, clears the rooms and arranges the tables and chairs. When you are all in the classroom the teacher will come and give the lessons; and the teacher is not Bapak, but God Himself. Bapak is not a teacher, but only the servant of God. This is in truth Bapak's position in this spiritual work of Subud; under the Power of God and in His Hands.'³

4

³ From Subud and the Active Life. p. 134.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Is Subud a new religion?

A. No.

Q. Does Subud have any creed or dogma?

A. No.

Q. Does Subud have any teaching?

A. No. Pak Subuh is constantly reminding Us that what he tells Us is not to be regarded as teaching. He is reluctant to 'lecture' at all and usually expresses the hope that we will forget, and certainly not 'think about', what he says. He looks upon his talks as 'clarifications' which are necessary only because our minds are (to begin with at any rate) so restless and full of questions. Most of us have since childhood found nothing more infuriating than to be told that we are 'still too young' to understand something. It is probably quite true that we are too young, spiritually, to understand the full significance of Subud, but we are apt to resent those who tell us this. Possibly for this reason, Bapak does in fact give talks because we would, in our present state, feel baulked or cheated if our questions were not answered.

We are free to believe or disbelieve what Pak Subuh says. Ultimately we may be in a position to verify for ourselves the truth behind what is said. Pak Subuh has been known to say that 'the one great sin is teaching'. (This obviously refers to spiritual teaching.)

Q. Does Subud make any claims?

A. It depends what you mean by claim. The word 'claim' has sometimes the connotation of something not quite right. So often when we say of someone 'he claims to be this or that' we indicate that we hardly believe it. To 'claim' something means, I suppose, to assert something which cannot be immediately verified. Pak Subuh always says that Subud has no claims and that we should make no claims for Subud.

In another sense, of course, Subud 'claims' to be what it is. To the extent that an enquirer has not yet experienced Subud, he will be told what Subud is and what it sets out to be. But there is no 'claim' in the sense of 'guarantee' or 'promise' and I think that an understanding of that fact is quite important. Above all, Subud does not claim to be the only spiritual way. All the same, it is the belief of many in Subud that it is a way remarkably suitable for most people under present-day conditions.

Q. In order to enter Subud does one have to believe in God?

A. No-with qualifications. If you believe categorically that there is no God, and that it is quite impossible that God should exist, then Subud could hardly appeal to you. It is not,

however, necessary to believe in God, Allah, Brahma or the Life Force before entering Subud. One should, I think, believe in the possibility that there is a Power higher than ourselves and that in some way we are able to come into contact with that Power. To begin with it is not necessary to believe more than that.

Q. Does one have to give up one's own religion on entering Subud?

A. Most certainly not. On the contrary, those who enter Subud are encouraged to continue with the customs of their own religion and with the form of worship which appeals to them. I believe that the experience of most people is that Subud has strengthened their own faith: Christians become better Christians, Muslims become better Muslims, and so on. The remarkable fact is that many dogmas previously un-acceptable to the mind are later felt to be literally true. This is not to say that all dogmas are verified in this way or that all details of religious ritual are felt to be at all times necessary. Some practices may be voluntarily abandoned, because you come to see that, for you, they are no longer essential. For example, many who practice what they call meditation or Yoga find that their need for this diminishes as time goes on. But whatever changes there may be, these come from inside and are often unmistakably compelling, and 'right', for the individual concerned.

Q. Does Subud heal people?

A. There have been quite a number of cases of spectacular healing and many more of general improvement in health. But Subud does not claim to heal and any assertion to the contrary should be strenuously denied. Pak Subuh encourages people to receive normal medical attention. Many people (in my experience, particularly in the East) come to Subud for the sole purpose of healing. From my own observation I can say that many who come for what, in away, I consider to be the wrong reason (that is, purely for healing) stay for the right one. We cannot grumble about that.

Q. How do I join Subud?

A. You apply to the nearest Subud centre and you are then asked to complete a form setting out the usual personal particulars and affirming your interest in Subud. (A few details which might be helpful are given in Appendix B to this book.)

You are then asked to wait for three months during which time you are free to ask any questions which occur to you and to read literature about Subud. The three months waiting period is not inflexible-variations are often possible. In an emergency (e.g. very serious illness) it is probable that a person will, on request, be opened immediately.

The waiting period was instituted for practical reasons, chiefly, I think, to deter the large number of people who are merely curious or impulsive. Patience has always been considered a virtue and three months is not really very long when related to eternity. It is astonishing how even such a short waiting period causes some people to diminish their keenness and even to forget that they ever displayed interest. Although, therefore, this waiting period is occasionally criticized, experience has proved that it is a very valuable principle to adopt in normal circumstances.

It should be added that those who wait (usually called 'probationers') can derive a great deal of benefit during these three months from attending probationers' meetings and from being in the company of Subud members who have already been opened.

Men and women over sixty-three and wives of husbands who are already in Subud are not subject to the three months waiting period.

There is a general rule that no one should be opened under the age of eighteen. Pak Subuh has stated frankly that the fixing of this age is a compromise. He has indicated that, spiritually, the correct time is round about the age of puberty-very roughly at fifteen. In most countries, however, the legal coming of age is fixed at twenty-one.

5

INTERLUDE

WHETHER we wish to or not, we exercise a great deal of faith in our daily lives. I use 'faith' here in its widest, though not perhaps deepest, sense of believing in something which we cannot or may not be able to verify for ourselves.

'Faith' has come to have a deeper meaning than 'belief', but up to a certain point the words are interchangeable.

When we are children there are many things which we accept from our parents and which we believe without verification. Some things we are able to imagine because we have had similar, though not identical, experiences. 'if you fall from the balcony on the third floor you will probably break your neck and die' is acceptable because we know that it hurts to fall in the ordinary way and that to fall from a height is likely to hurt more. But consider the injunction 'Don't put your finger in the electric plug on the wall or you will be electrocuted'. This sort of instruction we have to accept blindly, and if we are sensible we verify it only indirectly much later on in life when we read of others who are the victims of electric shocks.

As we grow older so we increase the amount of 'knowledge' or 'belief' of facts and events which we cannot hope to verify. Some brilliant man occasionally revolts against accepted authority and, by refusing to believe the old, discovers something quite new. In this way Einstein 'exploded' or perhaps we should say 'extended' Newtonian physics. Following on this we accept, say, the 'Theory of Relativity' because many eminent men, who are qualified to know, accept it. But most of us do not understand the theory and do not wish to take the trouble to understand it, because in our daily lives we can get on quite well without it. This is

only one example; those who do master the 'Theory of Relativity' cannot be bothered with theories in other subjects in which they are not involved, but it does not prevent them from acting in faith on the strength of those theories.

It is rather curious to observe how much we, who pride ourselves on our hard-bitten intellects, are prepared to accept in the way of scientific conclusions. Yet when it comes to religion, theology and the like, our minds revolt at the idea of accepting anything which we ourselves seem unable to verify. And yet, in this field too, it is obvious that men far more brilliant than ourselves have come to accept dogmas which to us may appear to be childishly unbelievable.

What attracted me to Subud, perhaps more than anything else, was the assurance that I need not believe anything that I was told about Subud because, ultimately, I could verify by my own experience what was true and what was not true.

It would, I feel, be quite foolish to use this mental freedom to the uttermost and therefore to disbelieve everything that one heard until one could verify it. For myself, I have been more than happy to consider myself a child in the spirit. Just as, many years ago, I trustingly believed the advice and statements of my parents, so now I am content to accept for the time being the clarification of those more advanced in spiritual matters than I am.

You may well find, as I have, that you are able to accept as reasonably probable about ninety per cent of what you will be told-albeit with reservations. If you accept the remaining ten per cent with even greater mental reservations, that is only as it should be.

However, until you have had some experience you will have to accept a great deal on trust, and this applies to much of what you will read in the following chapters. This is unavoidable under the circumstances. I can only give you the preliminary assurance that Subud works for (and in) countless people and that there is no reason why it should not work in you as well.

6

THE OPENING AND THE LATIHAN

LET us now assume that you have completed your three months waiting period and have

decided, after what you have heard and read, that Subud is what you want, need, have been looking for or wish to try. You will of course, by then, have satisfied yourself as to what may happen at the opening, and what is the meaning of Latihan.

But I write now for those who have not yet had the opportunity of asking all the questions which occur to most people. When starting to write this book I had resolved that no 'teaching' would find its way into these pages. This decision was reached not only because Subud has no teaching but, chiefly, because I am in no way competent to expound any matters of the Spirit. I am not in a position to say 'This is how it is; that is how it is'.

Nevertheless, at this stage I can imagine many people asking for some clarification as to the theory of what is supposed to happen at the opening and afterwards. I set out the following in all honesty, but with the warning that I am not in a position to verify the process (and it is my belief that there are very few people in the world who can verify it). Nevertheless, speaking from my own experience, I can testify to the effect of the process.

Briefly, then, the concept 'Body, Soul and Spirit' is not unfamiliar, at least as an expression. It is generally thought that the soul is the link between our body and our spirit. It is also palpably obvious that, if indeed there is a God, mankind as a whole has strayed, and is constantly straying, further and further from Him. Where once Man walked with God most men now evidently do not do so any longer. In most men one could say, therefore, that the soul (although not dead) is at least very deeply asleep, or is very young and almost undeveloped. Our bodily cares, needs and worries have choked off contact with the soul, and if the soul is a link with the spirit then we must to a large extent be cut off from the spirit too.

Pak Subuh has explained that at the 'opening' some form of vital contact is made which enables the soul to awaken, or which opens up a channel to the soul. When awakened it can develop and bring us into contact with the Spirit, which, if we will let it, will once more guide us into the way in which we ought to live. We will, that is to say, come to be guided by something higher than ourselves-'from above' instead of 'from below'; from 'inside' rather than 'outside'.

All this is a clumsy expression in words of a process which cannot rightly be described. What is set out above may not even be accurate, but I believe that for many people it will afford a reasonable starting point. Nobody is required to use this theory; each of us is free to have his own theory or no theory, just as he pleases.

To those who are Christians, the opening and subsequent manifestations appear to bear a strong resemblance to what one imagines must have transpired at the original Pentecost scene. Here again I do not wish to appear to be inferring that it is what Christians call the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit which manifests itself at an opening or during subsequent Latihan.

All I can say is that I, personally, am convinced that something far higher than ourselves is at work. For those taking part, an 'opening' need be regarded as no different from a regular Latihan except that, of course, for one (or more) of them it will be the first Latihan.

An opening or Latihan may take place in any hall or room hired or available for the purpose and large enough for the numbers likely to attend. In a Subud group's early days the venue is often a room in a private house, with the furniture removed or shifted to the side.

I could not begin to enumerate the different types of rooms, barns, church halls or other meeting places in which I have done Latihan in various parts of the world. One conclusion emerges quite clearly: confirmation that the worth of true worship does not depend on surroundings.

I was privileged on one occasion to be allowed to undertake, on my own, a journey which had as its object the opening of some thirty Subud probationers-all of them Muslim.

Below, I set out the few words which I addressed to them before each opening session. (I sent this statement to Pak Subuh afterwards and asked him to let me know if I had said 'too much' or 'not enough' and if anything I had said was wrong. The reply came that it was 'enough'. As Bapak almost never criticizes, I hesitate to say that what follows has been fully approved by him; I can only conclude from the absence of correction that there is probably nothing fundamentally or dangerously wrong with what was said.)

'As you probably know, Subud is a contraction of three Sanskrit words: Susila Budhi Dharma. (The meaning of each word was then given.)

It is important to remember that Subud is a way of life and is not a new religion. Subud has no teaching, no dogma and makes no claims and you should not make any claims for Subud. You should all, in fact, continue the practice and custom of your present religion and you will find in time that Subud may strengthen many of your present beliefs and your faith.

It is also necessary to stress that I am here only to be a witness of your opening. Any power or grace that is present during the opening comes from God and not from me.

When presently we do Latihan it is advisable to remove your watch, your spectacles and any hard objects in your pockets. There is no mystic reason for this. It is a purely practical measure to prevent these objects from being broken or from hurting you.

When the Latihan commences you should stand quite relaxed with your hands at your sides. It is a good thing to close your eyes so as to be distracted as little as possible by what goes on around you. You should not try "to think" and you should not try "not to think"; in fact, you should do nothing but relax and receive what comes to you.

Now as to what may happen in the Latihan. Some people make movements of the head, the body, the arms or the, legs. Some people walk, some dance, some run and some lie down. Some people make noises, some talk, some shout, some sing, some laugh and some cry .These are only a few of the possible outward manifestations.

Most important of all is to remember that some people just stand and may feel nothing; some have been known to stand like this for as much as six months or even longer. If this should happen to you, you should in no way be discouraged. There is no merit or non-merit in movement as such and you should on no account try to copy others. Each of you will in

due course receive what is best for you.

Although Bapak gives no teaching, he constantly exhorts in his talks and writings that you should diligently and regularly attend Latihan twice a week, if possible, to begin with. Bapak also stresses that you should be patient and not look for quick results.

When we start the Latihan presently I shall say "Begin" and you should then close your eyes and relax; at the end I will say "Finish" so that you need not yourselves worry about when to stop.'

In amplification of the above it is perhaps necessary to elaborate the phrase 'you should not try "to think" and you should not try "not to think" '.

Most people find it extremely difficult, even impossible, to still their thoughts for more than fifteen to thirty seconds. I suppose that, logically, this results from the premise that you cannot very well use the mind to abolish the mind. The classic example is 'try not to think of a white elephant'. The more you try, the more you return every now and then to the image of an elephant-just to be sure that you have abandoned it.

In my own experience the most trivial thoughts ('I wonder what there is for dinner tonight') will keep on coming and going in the Latihan - at least in the early stages. I believe that one should just let them come; the main thing is not to try, of your own will, to develop them. That is: don't prepare, cook and eat the dinner when the subject of the evening meal happens to cross your mind fleetingly.

'Relax and submit' are the key words. The sooner one can do this, the sooner can the real worth-while process begin.

It is here necessary to emphasize that the circumstances in which I gave the short talks set out above were unusual. I had to travel 500 miles to reach the probationers concerned and had no means of knowing what each or any of them had read or been told about Subud. I therefore condensed into one statement most of the information which Pak Subuh suggests should be given at various times during a probationer's three months waiting period.

My statement should not therefore be taken as a model for use on any and every occasion. I quote it here merely because it summarizes usefully the points which I wanted to bring out in this chapter.

Some helpers are shy and a little nervous about what to say at an opening; others are still permeated with self-will and are full of unsuitable theories of various kinds. For this reason Pak Subuh has supplied certain 'model' statements, including one suitable for use at an opening. This is short and has as its main purpose the calming of the probationer's mind and thoughts, the restless condition of which is often the chief obstacle to a passive relaxed attitude. (All new helpers should be given a copy of Bapak's statements, which they will find invaluable as a guide to a correct approach when on duty'.)

Pak Subuh stresses continually that the action of the Latihan is beyond the working of our own intellect, emotions or will. These three faculties must, of course, be used for our daily

life, and the more developed they are, the better servants they will be. But none of these faculties is of the slightest use to us in our approach to God-in other words, in the Latihan.

In short, it is as foolish to imagine that mind, heart and desire can be used to find God as it is to assume that because we must cast them aside in our search for God we must therefore also abandon them in our everyday life.

As Pak Subuh says, if we were not supposed to use the mind at all God would not have given us one.

One more point needs to be stressed. In Subud men open men and women open women; men and women do the Latihan separately-never together, even husband and wife. Men's and women's Latihan may, of course, be done simultaneously, but in different halls or rooms.

Some people are puzzled by this segregation, but, once in Subud, they soon realize the necessity for it. Pak Subuh has explained that in view of the infinite variety of possible reactions in the Latihan a far greater sense of freedom exists in holding the Latihans separately. Joint sessions might exercise an inhibiting influence and that would nullify much of the benefit to be derived from spontaneous reaction, free from any form of embarrassment.

7

SOME EFFECTS OF THE LATIHAN

THE Latihan is the most important force in Subud. Submission to its workings is, for the world at large, the really strikingly new element in man's spiritual struggle.

In the previous chapter I made a brief reference to just a few of the possible outer manifestations of the Latihan. It is very important to understand that, as the Latihan is uniquely individual, no two persons will react in exactly the same way. It is safe to say that nobody (I think not even Pak Subuh) is in a position to tell you what your outward or inner reactions are going to be. Experience also shows that, usually, we ourselves do not know the specific significance of our movements and that it is unnecessary for us to know them. We are therefore all advised not to speculate on the meaning of movements and other manifestations; the process is one which we cannot understand with our minds. In fact if we think too much about our movements and our spiritual progress we may hinder or slow

down its workings.

Movements may well, at one time or another, be the same for two or more people (there are certain movements which seem to be fairly common to many), but Bapak has confirmed that the significance is likely to be different for each person. Just as two members of the same family often have quite different physical and psychological characteristics, so also will their spiritual reactions and progress differ.

I have, for example, observed an instance where two brothers, both over fifty-five, have had reactions in striking contrast. One had no outward movement at all for more than a year; the other felt, almost immediately, impelled to perform the swiftest and most beautifully formed movements of a kind of shadow boxing or fencing that I have ever seen.

To submit sincerely to the Latihan is to submit to a purifying process the necessity for which (although not in this form) is recognized by most religions. In the broadest possible terms our physical being is purified first, then our feelings and emotions and, last of all, our understanding. But it is important to realize that this is not the invariable order of things, nor does it necessarily happen in clearly defined stages. Often the stages overlap.

It is most inadvisable to try to hurry the process. In Chapter 9 I touch on some of the observed consequences for those who attempt, if I may use the phrase, to 'speed up God's work'.

After being opened in Subud, most people report that their physical condition improves in all sorts of ways, both obvious and subtle. I have also met many people who have experienced quite spectacular improvements in health. Diabetes, T .B., stomach ulcers, asthma and certain heart conditions are some of the illnesses of which Subud friends and acquaintances of mine have been cured or relieved. I was once asked: 'How do you know that these cures are attributable to the workings of Subud?' The answer is quite simply that, of course, we cannot be certain. Few, if any, cases that I know of are medically documented, but, in most of the curative instances of which I am aware, no special medical treatment was being followed concurrently. The inference, therefore, to the individual concerned and to his or her friends is very plain indeed, even if it carries no scientific weight. To most of us there is, in fact, no reasonable doubt about it at all.

Here again it is of the utmost importance to understand that not everybody in Subud is healed of all their ailments. To wish for and to expect cures is really contrary to the whole spirit of Subud, which is, fundamentally, submission to the Will of God.

Many Subud members report a flare-up of old or chronic ailments before any definite cure seems to take place.

This flare-up is in fact characteristic of other things besides illness. Emotionally, one's weaknesses and failings (e.g. temper, irritability, etc.) may well become more pronounced for varying lengths of time before a definite improvement is observed.

In fact this purifying flare-up of the passions and emotions is probably responsible for the great difficulties experienced in the early stages by most Subud groups throughout the world.

The bickerings and conflicts which took (and still take !) place in the various committees and helpers' groups have not always been a good advertisement to those inside or outside Subud. As Bapak so often says, 'Man remains Man'. We are certainly not changed overnight. Until we are truly guided from within, our dominating wills continue to be a stumbling block to others as well as to ourselves.

However, having drawn attention to these difficulties, it is only right to record how wonderfully these tensions do dissolve and right themselves through the regular practice of the Latihan.

Next to health, or concurrently with it, there often comes a remarkable change in habits. There are countless instances where, for example, the intake of alcohol has, quite spontaneously, been reduced.

I cannot over-emphasize that the cases to which I refer are instances in which the effects are not caused by self-will or personal effort. We all know that it is possible to stop smoking or drinking by an effort of our own will. We stop or reduce our consumption because of health reasons, or because we think we 'ought to'. That, as far as it goes, is perfectly all right and in no way to be despised.

However, the Subud effects of which I write come from a different source.

Many people have told me that whereas, before, they were fairly heavy drinkers (not by any means, therefore, drunkards or alcoholics), now they cannot take more than one occasional drink without experiencing considerable distaste or even revulsion. My wife completely stopped smoking without any effort of will. One day she found that her cigarette just nauseated her. She tried again a day later, then one week and one month later-all with the same result.

A journalist friend of mine who used to be a 'half-bottle of whisky a day' man now finds that an occasional beer or two is plenty. Others report that they cannot touch alcohol at all. Others tell of marked changes in food habits, as, for example, total abstention from all meat; some just can no longer take pork. One Muslim friend told me that he was severely punished with sickness if he knowingly indulged in pork (which is forbidden in Islam) but suffered no ill effect if he ate it in small quantities unknowingly. Before entering Subud he had, without ill effects, consumed pork whenever it took his fancy.

Let psychologists explain this as they will, but, to us in Subud, it is quite clear and beyond doubt that these changes come from within and that they are necessary for the individual concerned. Just because these effects come to some people, nobody should leap to the conclusion that, therefore, all meat, alcohol or smoking is bad for everybody. Pak Subuh himself regularly smokes cigarettes or cigars and eats meat.

Over a period of time most people feel that, as a result of the Latihan, tensions and anxieties decrease. No special knowledge of medical matters is necessary to appreciate that this of itself is bound to have a good effect on health.

Most results are gradual and are therefore not noticeable to the casual observer; but an

individual's close relatives or friends are usually fully aware of the undoubted change.

Occasional 'hunches' and inner promptings occur to almost everybody, whether in Subud or not. But to those in Subud such occurrences are apt to happen with increasing frequency often for the benefit of others and certainly in a quite unmistakable way.

Again, clairvoyance, clairaudience, healing powers, the ability to sense the inner feelings or needs of others are all gifts which are possessed by certain people all over the world. Some people in Subud, however, find, even if they were quite insensitive before, that one or more of these powers may develop in the course of time.

Because these gifts are, to say the least, unusual, many people believe that they are of themselves signs of spiritual progress. Apparently this is by no means necessarily the case. Pak Subuh has often said that some of these qualities may well be of quite a low order. In fact the tendency to regard the acquisition of such powers as an end in itself can easily bar the way to higher spiritual development.

Some who have these powers already may well lose them on coming to Subud. Later they may return in a higher form. Others who acquire, say, healing or clairvoyant powers are often so fascinated that they pursue them for their own sake and consequently get stuck in a kind of spiritual rut. Others who already possess unusual powers imagine that Subud has nothing further to offer them.

While on the subject of unusual qualities there is one aspect which is worth underlining. It is a matter of common observation that a special gift, whether of clairvoyant powers or the quality of genius to compose like Beethoven or to play like Paganini, does not necessarily confer in its holder the attributes of a perfect (or even a particularly fine or noble) human being.

It is here necessary to add the caution that, just as we should avoid coming to Subud purely for health cures, so should we also beware of demanding or expecting the acquisition of unusual gifts of the spirit.

We are assured that each will receive according to his needs and it is perhaps helpful to bear in mind that it is God, and not we ourselves, who can best assess those needs.

In general most of us in Subud should be careful not to attribute every unusual factor or circumstance to the working of the Latihan. It is an easy habit to fall into, but to be too uncritical in one's conclusions can sometimes do more harm than good, especially in the eyes of those who are not in Subud. Quiet observation is a useful course to follow at all times.

Just in case it is not clear from what I have already written, I should perhaps stress what I understand to be the difference between the gifts which may come to us through Subud and those which may be acquired by practices such as Yoga or various forms of asceticism. Pak Subuh has on several occasions indicated that for those who want to develop certain powers (e.g. healing, or even those lesser powers possessed by many Indian fakirs who seem to suffer no ill effects from, say, prolonged fasts, sleeping on a bed of nails, exposure to extreme cold inadequately clothed, etc., etc.) there are numerous ascetic disciplines which

offer the possibility of acquiring such powers in due course. Powers acquired in this way may, so it seems, be used at will by the individual concerned. They are, in fact, the fruits of our own wishes, wills and thoughts.

If in Subud we acquire unusual gifts of any sort they are not necessarily available at all times, i.e. we cannot just turn on the switch and be sure that, on each and every occasion, power will flow as we wish.

Bapak has said that were he not to 'receive' from God, or, in other words, were he no longer to be the channel of God's Will, he would, of himself, be powerless. If this is true of Pak Subuh, how much more limited are we likely to be in the use of gifts from a higher source?

The words with which Jesus taught his disciples to pray 'Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven' should, in time, attain a very real significance for us in Subud. Few will deny that it is a phrase not easy to live by, however often it may be uttered.

8

HELPERS

AT the time of writing, a helper derives his or her 'authority' from Pak Subuh himself. This authority is confined purely to that of being allowed to open (on his or her own if necessary) those who wish to become Subud members.

Bapak has repeatedly said that no one in Subud has, on his own, any authority over anybody else.

All helpers are equal members of the helpers' group attached to their local centre and should, when requested to do so, act together in spiritual matters.

(In most groups there is also a committee who deal with the group's worldly affairs such as those connected with renting latihan premises, management of income and expenditure, etc.)

Except in very small groups, where it may be unavoidable, it is not considered advisable for helpers to sit on the committee. Where they do so, they should temporarily give up their function as helper. Generally speaking, the ratio of helpers in a group would not exceed about ten per cent of the membership.)

What seems to be the unique feature of Subud is the equal power of transmission (of

handing on the torch or kindling the spark or, perhaps even more accurately, 'of witnessing the kindling') which resides in each one of us. A person who is opened by the rawest and newest helper receives the same as if he were 'opened' by Bapak himself. This is quite extraordinary and the process has aptly been described as a 'spiritual chain reaction'. Each opened person, as it were, becomes in turn a source for opening others, just as in physics a chain reaction occurs when each fissioned atom, in turn, becomes the source for the fission of other atoms.

But, as Bapak so frequently says, 'Man remains Man'. Most Subud groups wherever formed—Europe, Asia or America—experience much the same difficulties as, I should imagine, were encountered by the early Christian communities. There are always some helpers who suffer (fortunately only temporarily) from some form of spiritual arrogance.

It was at the second Subud Congress, when helpers' representatives came to England from all over the world to attend, that Bapak painlessly pricked the balloon of spiritual pride which had inflated itself almost everywhere. As one journalist wrote: 'All the generals were reduced to the rank of corporals.'

Bapak explained that a true helper is one who can recognize his own mistakes and can correct them. This state is rarer than it sounds and it seems that even in Indonesia many have not reached it until after ten, fifteen or twenty years in Subud. Early in 1960 I asked Bapak how many real helpers there were in the world and he indicated that there were less than ten and that none of these were outside Indonesia.

Bapak has many times explained that if Subud were to spread and were not to rely solely on his own presence it was obviously necessary to appoint individuals all over the world who would be authorized to open others (or, rather, 'witness the opening' of others).

Bapak usually tended to pick those who were longest in Subud and who had attended Latihan most regularly and who therefore had more experience than others. He went on to explain that in many instances it was quite possible for the person who was being opened to be far more spiritually advanced than the person who opened him. (I remember one of us asking Bapak how long our purification process could take. His reply was: 'From three minutes to thirty years,' indicating, of course, that we all enter Subud at different levels and that the length of time in Subud was of itself no criterion of spiritual progress or development.)

It follows from all this that the present method of appointing helpers is more of an 'emergency' measure than an indication that those appointed are spiritually advanced. If all of us who are helpers would regard ourselves as 'emergency helpers' only, I think that it would nip arrogance in the bud. This should result in our being less of a stumbling block to others who do not happen to be appointed as helpers yet and who may inwardly resent the apparent (and it is only apparent) difference in spiritual status.

9

CAN IT GO WRONG?

Some Doubts and Problems

THIS chapter will deal briefly with certain doubts and queries which I have heard expressed from time to time. These affect people both before and after they join Subud. They are set out in question and answer form.

Q. If, in the Latihan, we are supposed to submit and open ourselves to a superior force, how do we know that we cannot be possessed by an evil force? How can we be sure that the force to which we submit is good?

A. The brief answer is that, of course, we cannot be absolutely sure of anything before we start.

We must be practical and down to earth about this sort of question. Most people get in touch with Subud by word of mouth or by reading literature on the subject. Then, at some stage or other, they may suddenly feel that, for them, Subud is absolutely right, that it makes common sense and that it fulfills the requirements of what a true approach to God (Brahma, Jehovah, Allah, Tao or the Life Force) should be.

After speaking to, or perhaps observing, others who have experience of Subud, each one of us must assess for himself whether it appears to be good or evil. From that assessment must come our decision.

We know that not all men who set themselves up to be religious, and who pray in church, temple or mosque, are for that reason necessarily good. Some of the occupants of one of the most holy offices in Christendom, the throne of St. Peter, have been thoroughly evil and wicked men. Were they possessed of good or evil forces? Manifestly evil, but that does not mean that an approach to God through the Christian Church is therefore evil too. In the light of this sort of historic fact how can any person accept from another person complete assurance as to the beneficial certainty, spiritual grade or qualities of something unknown?

I can only state for the reader that from my own experience and observation the power at work is good through and through. Such an assertion is, however, really valid only for me. It is of value to others only just so far as their own reaction and intuition will take them.

Q. If; as has been stated, we are being purified during the Latihan and if; during that time, we are throwing off evil forces, what happens to those forces? Is there some danger involved?

A. I do not know the precise answer, but a friend of mine posed a neat counter-question when he was queried on this point. 'Supposing,' he said, 'you have a room in a state of chaos and you clean it and tidy it up, what happens to the chaos?' One could add another question: If we pray, as many people do in church or at home, we might, for example, ask God that our temper or our greed should be cured. Supposing our prayer is answered, what happens to that temper or greed?

The effect is the same; all or part of an evil force or characteristic leaves us, but does anybody worry about what happens to it?

Many people, who have been in Subud for some time and who have become more sensitive, report that they can feel, and in a sense absorb, some of the forces cast out by others. Should this occur, a five- or ten-minute Latihan on one's own is usually enough to throw off such effects.

Bapak has said that if you visit a hospital or a friend who is ill it is a useful thing to do a short Latihan on returning home. Helpers always carry out a short 'cleansing' Latihan before and after an opening for the same reason. Bapak has also indicated that it is inadvisable that a general Latihan should be held in a house where there are children under three years old. By 'general' Latihan, I mean a Latihan involving strangers; parents, of course, may do Latihan in their own home at any time.

If we take the simple precautions referred to above there is no need to allow the spiritual effect of the purifying process to perturb us.

Q. Does the Latihan have any sort of 'hypnotic' effect? Are we controlled by it?

A. I would say, quite categorically, 'No' to both these questions.

The essential difference between the Latihan and, say, a trance or hypnotic state is that we are fully conscious throughout the Latihan and can stop it at any time. Although we have to submit completely to the action if it is to benefit us, we do so willingly.

If you do Latihan at home and the telephone or the door bell rings you can, of course, choose to ignore the interruption; but you can also break off the Latihan, answer the summons and return to the Latihan. In this respect it is the same as private prayer.

Occasionally, the state of Latihan will come to a person quite spontaneously and 'unasked'. These are considered to be very valuable moments and, provided it is convenient, should be submitted to. Pak Subuh has said, however, that if this should occur when other people happen to be present, one may 'stop' the process and make a mental decision to continue the Latihan some time later when one is alone. Nobody need therefore fear that the action of the Latihan will ever prove to be an unwanted embarrassment.

Again, a spontaneous Latihan need be stopped only if there is some chance of outward manifestation; it is, of course, perfectly possible for a state of Latihan to persist without

anybody else in the vicinity being in the least aware of it.

Q. Can the process go wrong?

A. The word 'crisis' crept into Subud terminology quite early on and it would not be right to omit entirely any reference to certain difficulties which are encountered by Subud members from time to time.

The term 'spiritual crisis' is liberally used outside Subud and it is no new phenomenon in the world. As Subud is a process of the spirit, it is not surprising that crises should from time to time occur.

I once asked Pak Subuh whether it was necessary for everybody to experience a crisis in the sense that such crisis was noticeable to the outside world. The answer was 'No'. As Subud embraces, in essence, a process of 'dying' to one's faults and to the harmful forces which motivate or dominate most of us, it seems logical that the experience will not always be pleasant. Many in Subud have related that it can be a (spiritually) very painful experience when a man begins to see himself as he really is.

But most of these crises are purely private and personal and are not visible to those around us.

There are, however, instances where a crisis can painfully and obviously result in a state which gives the outward appearance of mental unbalance. (This again is by no means unknown in religious experience outside Subud.)

Chiefly for this reason, most helpers' groups will not open persons with a case history of mental illness. Such persons can, of course, be opened and greatly helped, but a burden of this sort should not be undertaken unless a good service of 'after-care' is possible. I had occasion to ask one of the helpers in Djakarta what the usual procedure was, in Indonesia, in relation to those who wished to join Subud but who had at some time in the past been mentally ill. I was told that in most cases it was considered necessary for a close relative (a Subud member, of course) to be present at the opening and to be available to take physical care of the 'patient' should this prove necessary.

This relative could thus shoulder most of the fairly heavy physical and spiritual burden which would almost certainly have to be borne in such instances.

But leaving aside cases of mental illness which are, of course, of themselves abnormal, it is still possible for others to experience distressing symptoms to which the name of 'spiritual crisis' is certainly applicable.

With my own limited experience, both as to observation and from hearsay, it would be foolish to attempt an exhaustive explanation of the reasons for such occurrences.

However, from what I have heard Pak Subuh say, my own belief is that well over ninety per cent (perhaps all) of such cases are due to one of two things, or to a combination of both.

The first is the wish 'to go faster than God'. The second is the attempted interference of the

mind with a process which we are told quite firmly cannot be grasped by the mind.

The second, i.e. anxious thought, usually succeeds the first, i.e. impatience.

'Because something is good, therefore more of it must be better' is a line of reasoning all too frequently adopted not only in Subud but in other spheres as well. In Subud this can lead to crises when a person is not satisfied with the advice to do Latihan only twice a week for half an hour. Such people do not understand why the Latihan may not be used in the same way as, for example, prayer, which, if one feels so inclined, can be practiced for an unlimited number of hours a day. To argue along these lines is to miss, to a great extent, the significance of Subud and the Latihan.

In prayer-at least in the form in which most people know or imagine it-we do the asking and the thinking and the willing. In the Latihan we submit ourselves to God; asking, thinking and willing has no place in such submission.

It needs little reflection to understand that God is not bound by time. He can achieve what is necessary in a few minutes if it is necessary. Saul of Tarsus was completely changed in less than a week by a deep spiritual experience on the road to Damascus followed by a few days' blindness. His crisis, in its acute form, was a short one.

Most religions teach that the essence of worship does not consist of prayer in the form of 'asking' even if that asking is unselfish and is for other people. It is obvious that God must know our needs even before we know them. If one believes this, then 'asking' is unnecessary. In the Latihan we have the means of ultimately achieving true purity of worship.

In one of his talks to the Subud Congress in 1959 Bapak said:

'At this very moment, in truth, as we are speaking of these things, God hears and understands what we speak about; for everything contained in man and all that belongs to him is wholly surrounded and pervaded by the Power of God.

Therefore it is God alone who can give this awareness from beginning to end, for God is at the beginning of everything that is at the beginning, and at the end of everything that is at the end; He is within everything that is within and outside everything that is without. However far the heavens may extend beyond the reach of man, God is still farther beyond them; and close to us as are our heart, our mind, our eyes and our ears, God is closer yet. If you try to find Him, He is infinitely distant, impossible to be reached no matter what your effort may be; but if you do not try to find Him, but only surrender yourself to Him, He will be nearer to you than you can ever imagine. This understanding is the content of each and every religion.⁴

So long, then, as, in spiritual matters, we refrain from asking, expecting or willing, our progress should be sure even if it seems to be slow.

If, however, we try to hurry the process we may well achieve our aim and obtain certain gifts

⁴ Subud and the Active Life, p. 135

before we are ready for them. The result is bound to be lack of balance. Bapak had a telling simile when he addressed the 1959 Congress in the terms set out below. After indicating that 'crisis' is really an inappropriate word, Bapak uses the term 'state of delivery'. His advice is succinct:

'This is why Bapak consistently advises that in order to avoid experiencing such a state of delivery you should never follow the dictates of your heart, desiring to do as many exercises as possible in the hope of accelerating the process. You should take into account the fact that the strength of your feelings and thoughts is still greater than that of your soul. It may be that you have reached the age of forty , fifty , sixty or even more, but this is only the age of the desires, the heart and the mind, not of the soul: the soul has only just been born, and it is still unable to overcome the strength of these ordinary outer functions of yours. The situation can be likened to a journey made with two horses, of which the one on the right is fully mature, while that on the left is a newly born foal. The one is unable to keep parallel with the other, and the journey cannot as yet be expected to proceed harmoniously. That is why Bapak constantly advises that you should follow the exercise with patience and never be in a hurry. In this way your receiving will eventually become sufficient to allow you to go ahead gradually, steadily and in parallel, without the need to experience anything disturbing, which may cause anxiety to those who, see it.'⁵

Q. Can Subud be combined with other practices, disciplines?

A. In Chapter 4, 'Some questions and answers', page 37, I indicated that in joining Subud one need most certainly not relinquish one's present religion; also that it is not absolutely essential to give up the practice of other disciplines such as Yoga or 'meditation' and the like. In other words, to join Subud does not, of itself, demand the abandonment of such existing disciplines, spiritual or mental, as we hold dear. Broadly speaking, all that is quite true. One warning should, however, be taken seriously, and that is not to mix or confuse Subud with any 'system' which has spiritual advancement as one of its objects.

By 'mix' I mean that the Latihan should not be made the occasion for the simultaneous practice of other spiritual exercises. If you wish to continue Yoga or to 'meditate' (or to pursue any other system of conscious discipline or spiritual effort) you are free⁶ to carry on for as long as it still pleases you to do so, but do not undertake any of these during the half-hour devoted to the Latihan.

By 'confuse' I mean that it should not be assumed that any other 'system' is a necessary accompaniment of Subud.

The discipline imposed by the commandments of our own religion (or by the highest moral code that exists in our own country) sets us a sufficiently high standard. In fact we all know how difficult and even seemingly impossible of attainment such standards are. The Subud Latihan, undertaken with sincerity, patience and submission, will be a powerful aid in helping

⁵ Subud and the Attive Lift, p. 201

⁶ Bapak has, however, made it clear that Helpers should cease such practices or, if they wish to continue, should (temporarily perhaps) cease to act as helpers.

each one of us ultimately to attain what is necessary in that direction.

It would, however, be quite wrong to give anybody the impression that he or she will make 'better' or 'quicker' progress by combining Subud with existing 'systems' or disciplines, which are inevitably the product of our own wills. In that way often lies confusion-a confusion which, as indicated in my answer to the question above, could in extreme cases lead to a spiritual crisis. Pak Subuh, who almost never admonishes, included the following words in his message to the first U.K. Subud Congress held at Oxford in July 1962:

'You should know that all prophets and messengers who possess understanding and wisdom beyond the ordinary do not acquire them from teaching and guidance from any man; they do so because of the presence of the teaching and guidance from Almighty God within their understanding. In very truth it is God alone who can teach and guide the heart of man, his inner feelings and his soul, so that he may arrive at an understanding and wisdom beyond the ordinary .

Therefore, if you can be influenced to such an extent that you go astray-wanting to find a method that appears to be more capable of giving tangible guidance-the possibility is very great that it will bring you to a state of inner darkness, to be aware of which is extremely difficult for you.'

The vast majority of people have no need of this kind of warning, but there are always some who seek to improve on the best an unnecessary undertaking, when you come to think of it.

Q. We are told that in the Latihan some people are guided to unusual behaviour, including, for example, the utterance of loud, ugly and even bestial noises. Why is this sort of thing necessary?

A. The simple answer is that only God can possibly know why it is necessary .It is a phenomenon which has puzzled me and no doubt many others, some of whom have been put off by it. It should perhaps at once be said that these ugly manifestations are usually of a temporary nature and that some very beautiful outward manifestations also occur. Although, therefore, I can not answer the question directly, it may be helpful to some if I pose a counter-question and also venture a reminder of what occurred at the original Pentecost scene. The counter-question is: As the process in Subud is one of physical and spiritual purification, and as most people admit that they are imperfect and that their characters may contain overt or latent ugly traits, what makes one imagine that ugliness can be thrown out beautifully? (Christians will know that when Jesus healed or purified those possessed of evil spirits this was, on occasions, accompanied by severe and ugly manifestations in the patient.)

In drawing attention to the original Pentecost scene I do not wish to imply that the process of the Latihan is necessarily the same. Nevertheless, some of the outward manifestations are remarkably similar. Christians will know that when the Apostles received the Gift of the Holy Spirit they spoke 'in tongues' ; i.e. in languages quite foreign to their education. (This, incidentally, also happens to some persons in the Latihan.) The effect of these utterances must have been bizarre in the extreme. In fact it is recorded that some of the bystanders said contemptuously: 'These men have been drinking.' The point I wish to make is that not everything that is holy necessarily comes in the serene or pious manner with which our imagination would equip it.

We may not understand it, but it does not become less holy on that account.

Q. It is apparently a fact that many people who have entered Subud and who have been opened have subsequently abandoned the Latihan. If Subud is so wonderful why should this happen?

A. Obviously it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of reasons, because, for one thing, I have not spoken to every person who has left Subud. But it is a fair question and I feel that I should attempt an answer.

First it should be said that I have not come across or heard of any instance where Subud has been abandoned on religious grounds or because of religious scruples. There may well be such cases, but I would say that these cannot be common. From what I have seen and heard I should imagine that an overwhelming proportion of those who leave Subud do so because of impatient disappointment, lack of understanding or just plain diminished interest.

In my view the explanation is not hard to seek. Inevitably in these early stages of development comparatively large numbers of people have sought to join from general motives of curiosity and perhaps exaggerated expectancy. In England, in particular, the fairly widely publicized healing of the film actress Eva Bartok (who is a Subud member) gave the first impetus to a small avalanche of enquirers. Many, I feel sure, have joined Subud for the purpose of healing or in the expectation of gaining, say, clairvoyant or similar powers. When nothing seems to happen immediately, disappointment and impatience take the upper hand and people lose interest. It has not been unknown for people to leave Subud soon after being healed! Such people obviously join for a limited purpose and go away when the reason for their coming has disappeared. In the early days there was no three months waiting period and the general experience was that wherever Pak Subuh went many (often hundreds) wished to be opened. For a number of these the seed, after opening, must have fallen on stony ground; it was accepted with joy, but it took no root in them.

To be fair, it is necessary to add that in those early days there were not enough Subud members available with sufficient experience to give the necessary help as and when it was required. Left to themselves it was perhaps to be expected that some odd notions should prevail in newly opened persons. I have heard of one instance where a woman told her fellow members that if 'something' did not happen to her in three months then she would leave Subud. This (perhaps not uncommon) attitude savours of giving God an ultimatum and cannot surely have much chance of success.

There is no doubt that sincerity, patience, trust and sub mission are some of the qualities which we ourselves must bring to the Latihan and, in particular, to the first year of it working, during which perhaps most doubts tend to arise.

Q. If Subud is intended for the good of all why is it not blazoned from the rooftops; why do not more people hear about it?

A. It has become obvious to most of us, and Bapak has said it often, that the world is tired of propaganda. Added to this we must bear in mind what is stated above, namely that there have not, in the past, been a sufficient number of helpers to cope with a really large number of applications. In my own view the present stage of semi-lull is one of consolidation, during

which small groups and their helpers, all over the world, are gaining experience against the day when the next influx takes place.

As it is, since it first left the shores of Indonesia Subud has probably grown more rapidly than any other spiritual movement in history. This is to be expected in a world where communication and travel is so swift. Nevertheless, religious history clearly demonstrates that not every onlooker who is privileged actually to witness the birth of a new spiritual force necessarily adopts or recognizes it for what it is worth. What Subud can give to people is desperately needed by almost all mankind. This does not mean that all mankind will embrace it on sight.

There are, I am sure, many of us who, in the first flush of enthusiasm, feel a generous urge to share Subud with as many people as possible. Even when we do not shout about it we are often watchfully on the look-out for recruits. This is a natural tendency and, in its own way, sufficiently laudable. At the same time there will be many who have found out that when such recruiting, however well intentioned, is tainted or mixed up with our own motives the results are not by any means always satisfactory. Yet very often, when we least expect it, an enquiry comes from an improbable quarter and opportunity is handed to us on a plate. As in most things, Pak Subuh favours the middle way. Subud is no dark secret and we do not need to hide it; on the other hand, blatant advertising or propaganda is inappropriate. We gradually learn to keep the balance between these two extremes.

Q. Does the membership of Subud carry any financial obligation?

A. Yes and No. There is a general understanding that no member will ever be refused an opening or prohibited attendance at a Latihan because he or she cannot afford to make any financial contribution.

On the other hand, in so far as each one of us is able to do so, it is clear that we have an obligation to pay for the minimum organization that is necessary to keep the worldly side of affairs in being. It will be obvious to everybody that the hire of a suitable Latihan hall or room costs money, as also the petty expenses of postage and stationery required to keep members informed of what is going on. This applies to all local groups or centres. In addition, there is usually some national organization (e.g., Subud North America and Subud U.K.) which looks after national needs and requires some sort of contribution from local centres to keep it going.

Finally there is the International Secretariat in Djakarta which acts as headquarters for the whole of Subud. Pak Subuh daily receives a large number of enquiries and requests for advice from all over the world. The secretaries who work full time dealing with Bapak's replies naturally need to earn money to live.

Funds, then, are required for all worldly needs, but all gifts are entirely voluntary and the amount is left to the individual concerned, who should donate, as Bapak puts it, 'from the heart' and not from any outer compulsion.

Q. Is it true that, even at this early stage, there are different interpretations of what Pak Subuh has said? Are there not contradictions? If that is true now what will things be like in a hundred or a thousand years' time?

A. I am sure that there are many different versions and views current about the full meaning and significance of Subud and the Latihan. It is now easy to see how, if distortions arise even in the lifetime of someone like Bapak, tradition and history must often be tangled beyond measure in the course of a hundred, let alone a thousand or more, years.

I must confess to being vaguely worried about this during my first year in Subud, and I used to lose few opportunities of correcting, with varying degrees of vehemence, what I considered to be misconceptions in others. But I very soon came to realize that one can safely leave things to the Latihan which seems to afford a tremendously powerful 'built-in, safeguard to the future of Subud. It is clear that in due course the Latihan will correct mistakes of view far more deeply and effectively than ever we can hope to do for others. For the very reason that Subud (or Bapak) has no teaching, there can be nothing fundamental to distort. It does not, therefore, ultimately matter if there are misunderstandings in the early stages. We are assured that if we continue with the Latihan sincerely each one of us can, in time, verify the truth of the clarifications which Bapak is often asked to give during his journeys and on other occasions. We can verify, that is, up to the limit of what is necessary for us at any particular time.

Q. What attitude does Subud take towards nuclear armaments, communism, spiritualism, reincarnation, etc., etc.?

A. This sort of question, substituting for the problems listed above any subject one cares to think of, is frequently asked. Fortunately, the answer is easy. As Subud has no teaching, tenets or dogmas, Subud has no official 'attitude' to anything.

The great religions already have teachings by which we are supposed to live but which, according to all evidence, we seem unable to follow. If Subud can be said to have any general attitude it would, I suppose, be 'non-interference'. Most often, interference is the product of our own wills, motivated by forces which are usually not of the highest.

By the practice of the Latihan our motives are purified at the same time as we are. Hence our 'attitude' towards any problem is likely to undergo changes for the better until such time as we know beyond doubt from within what that attitude ought to be and what action, if any, we must take in relation to it.

Q. If the process of Subud really accords with the general descriptions given is it not all too good to be true ?

A. This and similar questions have often been posed in my hearing by interested enquirers and used also to cross my own mind before I myself joined Subud.

Some of the reasons for this feeling probably lay in the rather optimistic and perhaps too rosily painted descriptive literature which appeared in the early days of Subud. The intuitive feeling that in this world one cannot get something for nothing is very strong and I would say, basically, probably quite correct.

The confusion comes if we reason that because we ourselves cannot hasten or control our spiritual progress, we therefore have no other responsibility whatsoever. This is fallacious.

We who are Subud members have, in our daily lives, just as much, and indeed more,

responsibility to conduct ourselves according to the teaching of our religion or according to the best moral and ethical precepts of our times and our education.

As Bapak has said: 'The judge who knows the law is morally more responsible than the criminal who is ignorant of it.'

The path of Subud may be easy to enter, but it is not on that account at all times easy to tread. Although, as we become increasingly purified we shall increasingly receive inner guidance as to what we are to do, it does not follow that the action to which we are guided is necessarily going to be without hardship. The story of Abraham and Isaac illustrates an extreme case of the formidable challenge with which we may be confronted if we are prepared to submit completely and unquestioningly to the Will and the Voice of God.

In the early stages most of us are in no condition to 'receive' either fully or accurately and, outside the Latihan, we must therefore still control our natures as best we know how.

In answer, then, to the question posed above, we can say that, although the coming of Subud may indeed seem 'too good to be true', in practice we shall find that it is not by any means an easy short cut to perfect and permanent bliss in this world. Certainly, at the outset, we are given something for nothing, but it is helpful to realize that this is only the beginning.

10

SUBUD AND THE ACTIVE LIFE

THE title of this chapter is also the title of a remarkable Subud book on which I have liberally drawn for quotations in these pages.

It is a record of proceedings at the second Subud International Congress held in London during 1959, and contains, among other information, the transcript of fifteen talks by Pak Subuh in answer to various questions posed to him at the time. It is a book which no Subud member should be without, as it contains answers to about ninety per cent of the usual run of questions which occur to most of us in our early Subud days.

It is a book to be read and re-read, as a thorough knowledge of its contents will effectively stop us from burdening others with unnecessary questions. It is also bound to help us in countless other ways, not least in our own dealings with newcomers who enquire about

Subud.

What I wish to stress here in concentrated form is a sentiment which is sprinkled in other chapters, namely that Subud is for use in our outer life even though, possibly, its most significant workings are for the rehabilitation of our own inner and spiritual life.

It is perhaps inevitable that many Subud members will, initially, take up some extreme position. At one end are those who might be termed spiritual hypochondriacs. Their attention is concentrated on their own spiritual 'status' ; they still use their minds to try to understand matters which cannot be understood by the mind, and, as Bapak has pointed out many times, this sort of attention actually slows up or bars spiritual progress.

Undoubtedly we would be right to concentrate on the log in our own eye and to forget the speck of dust in our brother's eye. (In other words, self-correction is highly desirable and criticism of others is to be avoided at all costs.) Few would cavil at self-analysis of that sort. I refer mainly to the introvert concentration on our own state of advancement. I should imagine that this could be as damaging as the habit of morbid concentration on our physical ills.

At the other extreme (and probably numerically far greater) are those who see in the Latihan the only practical purpose of Subud. They take the view that, as the Latihan will in the end purify and guide them, they may meanwhile do as they like in everyday life. Even more dangerous, they may think that they are already being inwardly guided when in fact their inner promptings are still emanating from their own lower natures.

Perhaps because of this, Bapak stresses that although Subud has no teaching of its own, we should continue to be guided by the teachings of our own respective religions or, if we are non-religious, by the highest known morals and ethics of our times. Subud has certainly not come to destroy religion; it has come as a supplement, perhaps even an umbrella, to all that is best in the religious and moral life of humanity.

Bapak stresses time and again that it is our duty to fulfill our worldly obligations and that, for these, we must use in the best way we can the bodily, emotional and mental instruments with which we are equipped. The Latihan does not teach us that two and two make four, nor does it, of itself, keep the wolf from the door if we ourselves insist on being idle.

The Latihan is constantly purifying our bodies, hearts and intellects so that, ultimately, we shall use these instruments in a quite different way. But for most of us it will be many years before that stage is reached to any worth-while degree of perfection.

Subud has, among other things, been referred to as an 'obscure mystic sect'. 'Obscure', in the sense that it is little known, it may be at present; 'mystic' in some of its implications it certainly is; 'sect' it is not by any definition. However, what is important is that, coupled with each description, there should always be the word 'practical'.

The average man does not realize that the greatest mystics were intensely practical people with a capacity for hard work and physical accomplishment which would astonish even the busy executive or worker of today.

The hard paths trodden by the great mystics are not available or even suitable for all of us. Subud is available to everybody and is as valuable on the factory floor as it would be in palaces or parliaments.

As Bapak says, God knows the state of mankind today and it is by His grace that the path of Subud has been made available to the ordinary man and woman of this age. But Subud does not diminish our ordinary responsibilities-it heightens them.

Our bodies, emotions and intellects are, or should be, our servants. Obviously, clean, well-trained and intelligent servants are better than dirty, ill-disciplined and foolish ones. Bapak stresses that these instruments of ours are useless in our search for God but that they are very necessary for life in this world and are in no way to be neglected or despised.

We have also been warned not to be in too much of a hurry to help others spiritually before we are in fact strong enough to do so. For most of us, spiritual 'capital' is as yet very limited and Bapak has compared excessive and premature zeal with spiritual 'over-trading'. It is unwise and unnecessary. In this sphere the Latihan will take care of virtually everything.

In relation to this very point, Pak Subuh has said, referring to our present spiritual poverty:

'...it is also necessary to remember your own being and its needs. For you can be likened to a man who wishes to become rich, but who has no capital, no property, no equipment with which to start a business, so that his wish to become rich remains in his imagination. Therefore, you should remember and take thought for yourselves in this way. ...so that you can work according to the strength that is in you. As it is with you now, you have not got the strength that is required.

Those of you who have already received the contact may wish to see many others receive it also. Some of you may wish to see a million members in England in the next six months. But what about this million if they cannot be looked after? ...Proceed slowly, therefore, little by little; a hundred, a thousand, two thousand, so long as they can all reach maturity and become complete.⁷

It is clear that the ideal way for Subud to spread is by example. In the early stages this means a rather slow tempo, because none of us can yet even faintly claim to be a good example. Nevertheless, there will almost certainly be a snowball-growth effect as soon as more people begin to show evidence, in their daily dealings, that Subud is working in them.

In other. words, Subud must emerge in the active life and we must consider ourselves more than a little responsible, Within : our limited capacities, to ensure that it manifests itself worthily.

Songs of Submission

⁷ Subud and the Active Life, pp. 139-40

Apart from Bapak's own writings and talks there is probably no finer book than Ronimund von Bissing's *Songs of Submission*, which was published less than a year ago. Its subtitle is 'on the practice of Subud', but, astonishingly, the word 'Subud' is nowhere mentioned in the book nor is Pak Subuh referred to by name.

Songs of Submission is of a rare calibre. Quite clearly, the author must have received its contents from a far higher source than that which inspires most of us. No Subud member should fail to possess it, nor will other enquirers who read it be sent empty away. It represents the finest description of the meaning and workings of Subud that I have read or can imagine (Bapak's own works and words again being excepted) and it would surprise me to hear a contrary view expressed. I have often referred to it as 'a book to end all books', even while myself transgressing this description. I have also heard it said that Bapak thinks highly of it and, for Western readers, its poetic imagery and simple phrasing will prove a quite exceptional delight.

11

RELIGIOUS APPROACH

As I am not a theologian nor a scholar of religion, what follows must be taken as a layman's view and not as that of an expert.

To many Christians it will perhaps come as a surprise to learn that there are at least eleven religions still actively alive today. In alphabetical order these are: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hebraism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. Some of these—e.g. Buddhism and Confucianism—did not start as religions and were at one time philosophies or systems of thought and action rather than religions. However, in one way or another, men have turned them into religions. Estimates of the number of adherents show that the Jains, Sikhs and Zoroastrians each number less than six million. Shintoists, numbering about seventeen million, are confined to Japan; the Jews number between ten and fifteen million. The other religions apparently number between three and six hundred million adherents each (except the Taoists, of whom, it seems, no numerical estimate is practicable).

What must be very obvious to anybody who thinks about the religious problems of the world today is that, quite definitely, what is not required is yet another religion. Piously and literally, Heaven forbid! Happily, major religious wars are a thing of the past. Even so,

imagination rather falters at the thought of some new religion trying to win the minds and hearts of men already committed to existing forms of worship. There would be utter and acrimonious confusion.

Human attempts at religious synthesis occur every now and then. The Theosophists (and not only they) have much literature devoted to pointing out the similarity of the truths behind all the great religions. The analogy of the facets of a diamond has been frequently used by those who have sought to demonstrate the essential unity of all religions each of which represents a different aspect of one great truth. These efforts at synthesis have clearly not gained general acceptance. The priesthoods of most religions have built their own edifices, not only of stone but also of theory and dogma, designed virtually to exclude all those who do not think as they do. In addition there are, within most religions, innumerable sects. Some of these almost fanatically exclude even co-religionists who happen to hold views different to their own.

If, then, we concede that neither a new religion nor a synthesis of existing churches, temples and mosques is a practicable proposition as far as unified worship of one God is concerned, what is the answer?

Man's own religious efforts have resulted in continually increasing diversity. To a situation of this kind, which can at best be described as one of tolerance without understanding, it is evident that only God can find a universally acceptable solution. It is with considerable awe that some of us recognize, in Subud, a possible instrument whereby each man may for himself eventually come to a full understanding and be inwardly convinced of the essential brotherhood and unity of all races, colours and creeds. This is in no way a new concept; it has, for centuries, been the dream and the object of idealist striving, and has now passed into the language of political cliché. Nevertheless, to be in Subud and to have been in Latihan at one and the same time with devout Hindus, Taoists, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims is to catch a glimpse of what unified and yet truly individual worship can be, and perhaps ought to be.

I have never been able to understand the tenets of those who believe that their religion has given to them, and to them only, a God (a prophet or a teacher) who has intervened finally and for all time in the affairs of mankind. The more we learn of the immense age of the Universe, and of the Earth in particular, the less credible does such a belief become. I would go as far as to say that any claim to exclusive salvation by anyone religion must, of itself, constitute, at the very least, a grave error.

It is only fair to add that some religious leaders and spiritual thinkers of today do not subscribe to such narrow interpretations. All the same, I do not know of any authoritative move towards a broader view of worship.

Speaking as one who has had a Christian upbringing, I have been interested in reports of instances, which have occurred all over the world, where Christian ministers of varying denominations have been opened in Subud and have given some indication of the deepening effect that the Latihan has had on their religious outlook. In this direction perhaps the most vital news was when we heard that a number of monks in a European monastery had been opened and were regularly practicing the Latihan.

Rightly or wrongly, I have always regarded the Roman Catholic Church as holding exceptionally rigid religious views.

It has, at any rate, not surprised me to learn that it has often been members of the Catholic Church who have expressed most qualms as to the permissibility, for them, of being opened in Subud and of submitting to the Latihan. It was therefore a fine experience to read a testimony (quite unofficial, as the writer is careful to emphasize) by one of the reverend fathers resident in the monastery referred to above. It was a living account of a man who was quietly convinced that Subud and the Latihan were in no sense incompatible with his own firm faith and that of his Church. This I found a most heartening and exhilarating sign.

Friends of mine in Subud have, with modest caution, reported an apparently increasing ability to grasp the deeper significance of much religious literature which they had previously classified as obscure and even forbidding.

The Cloud of Unknowing written in the fourteenth century by an anonymous English monk, The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence, and The Interior Castle by St. Theresa, are just a few examples taken from our Christian heritage. One could, however, equally well skip a continent and about twenty centuries and find much meaning in the Tao Te Ching, a collection of short and lovely poems which have been attributed to Lao Tze and which form the Taoist 'bible'. Indeed, I do not think that it is too much to say that many people in Subud achieve a clearer understanding of the language of the mystics than, so they now realize, they would have been likely to acquire outside the Latihan experience.

I should find it absorbing to ransack the literature of all religions for quotations which would illumine the Subud experience and which, in turn, the Subud experience would clarify, but the results would perhaps be out of place here.

For Christians in Subud (and I speak now for those who did not previously possess an unshakable faith of their own) a re-reading of the Gospels, Acts and Epistles will inevitably afford a rich field of study and happy recognition.

There must be any number of obvious examples where, for Christians, the Subud experience helps to confirm the literal truth of phrases which are by no means easy to prove or understand in other ways.

Easily recognizable instances among the sayings of Jesus are: 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you'; 'Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven'; 'Verily I say unto you unless you be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven'; 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God'; 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein'; 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Perhaps the most obvious and most often quoted example is when Jesus says 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you'.

It has always fascinated me to read how, after three years of constant proximity to Jesus,

even his close disciples did not seem to understand much about the new spirit and doctrine. It is, for example, almost unbelievable that only shortly before the Crucifixion there should have been arguments between some of them as to who should ultimately sit on Christ's right hand and left hand when he entered his Kingdom. The indignation of the other disciples when they heard of this also gives a childishly petulant rather than a spiritually mature impression.

Jesus had been teaching his disciples for some three years, not only in parables but in the meaning of those parables and by his own example in action. Yet, in spite of all that, they appeared, in some respects at least, to be almost none the wiser.

The difference in these same men, as reported after Pentecost, is remarkable. The confidence, savoir-faire and fresh note of authority is unmistakable. The advent of the Holy Spirit seems to have been demonstrably responsible for the change and it is wonderfully probable that, from that moment onwards, each of the recipients experienced the benefit of some inner teacher and guidance at work.

I am unable to enter the field of higher speculation as to exactly what force it is which works in us through Subud.

It is impossible to say that the subject is not important. It is. But it is permissible to suggest that it is not material-in every sense of that word. Our progress is not affected by knowing or not knowing the exact nature of the force.

What is important is our submission to the will, protection and power of God, and that is what we do in the Latihan. It is not for us to analyse this force in order to fit it into our own terminology. By trying to do so we are likely only to create further hindrances in our mind.

I myself cannot believe that a devout Muslim is guided by a Spirit which is different to that which guides a devout Christian, but to introduce questions of dogma is, in my view, contrary to all that Subud stands for.

Whether or not we consider that it is the Holy Spirit which works in us through the Latihan is a matter which each one of us, before we are enlightened beyond all doubt, may decide for himself. It seems, however, possible to assert that the effect of the workings of both forces (if there are in fact two) appear to be the same or similar; also that the workings of the Subud Latihan permit one to understand-perhaps very roughly, but certainly more clearly than before-what manner of effect the Holy Spirit must have had on those who, as recorded in early Christian times, received it.

It is noteworthy (and, incidentally, also serves as a cautionary warning to those in Subud who may be expecting too much) that the workings of the Spirit did not entirely free the Apostles from human error and failings, nor for some of them did it prevent disaster in the physical sense. But it is clear that their new-found inner strength enabled them to surmount those afflictions in a manner very different to the reactions of the frightened and dispirited little group of men just prior to and during the Crucifixion. This could with advantage be borne in mind by all those who tend to look upon Subud as a miraculous cure-all or talisman.

Almost all of us achieve a certain rigidity in our way of thinking-whether at the age of, say, eighteen, twenty-five or thirty-five is an individual matter. There comes a time when we reach some sort of philosophic or religious conclusions even if it is only that no religion or philosophy is worth while. From everything that we hear, read or absorb after establishing our fixedness we tend to sift and gather in only those ideas that suit our private belief, or lack of it.

It is wise to remember, not only for ourselves but in observing others, that we each bring this rigidity with us when we come to Subud. The tendency in the early months, and even years, of Subud is to superimpose our own theories on to Subud. In support of this new-found experience, the Christian will delightedly quote the Bible, the Muslim quotes the Koran, Christian Scientists, Theosophists, followers of Gurdjieff, the Arcane and Rosicrucian schools-all will try to fit their new experience into confirmatory compartments of the old. In doing so, each will use the language and terminology familiar to him. This is inevitable and not harmful of itself if not forced or indulged in to excess.

The wonderful thing is that, as time goes by, we automatically, even if gradually, cease to impose our own theories on Subud and it is then that the reverse process can fruitfully begin. This is all part of the procedure by which the old house of our ideas has to be cleaned and swept before any real reorganization is possible, let alone new or refurbished furniture introduced.

No one should take this to mean that old positions, perhaps sacred ones, must in all cases eventually be abandoned. On the contrary, the whole beauty of Subud is that it is complimentary to almost any belief except extreme atheism. (Incidentally, I have observed the remarkable effects of Subud even on an atheist!) What does, however, happen is that the old and fixed beliefs are purified; bad and long-since conflicting notions are discarded and the good reintroduced in far finer form.

In this, as in so many respects, Subud seems to be a permanent miracle at work.

One of Pak Subuh's most frequent sayings is 'Experience first, explanations afterwards'. He indicates that proof of the reality behind Subud will come in time through the regular practice of the Latihan. More than ever today (and that is saying something) mankind demands proof. To those not blessed with an unshakable faith, it seems that theory and dogma are not only unsatisfactory but tend to act as an irritant as well. For thousands of people Subud has been an instrument for furnishing incontestable proof that there is more to this world than mere matter.

What, in this practical day and age, could be more reasonable than encouragement in the form of "Try it and see for yourself"?

In closing this final chapter I cannot perhaps do better than to quote yet another highly significant extract from one of pak Subuh's talks to the second Subud World Congress.

'Now, why is it that so many intellectual people doubt the validity of the various religions, although these have existed for so long and have so many adherents? The reason for this is that, up to the present, that which is written in the holy Scriptures has remained no more

than words, and these cannot provide evidence of reality. This is why so many intellectuals are unable to accept or believe in the existence of God; it is because they can find no convincing proofs in religion as it has come down to us, whereas the Prophets, for instance, to whom these revelations were given, were able, in their own time, to demonstrate the evident reality of what they received from God and taught to their followers.

This situation arises from the fact that those who profess the various religions are yet unable to practice the truths contained in their scriptures; it is also due to the progress of the age in which we live and to the development of the thinking mind, the heart and desires of men. It is a fact that the more man has developed his mind and his will, the weaker have the links become between man and his soul and between the soul and God. But this situation is known to God. He understands what is necessary for man, and it can be seen, by the appearance of Subud, that it is the Will of God to bestow His Grace upon us, since without His mercy it would be impossible for us to restore our link with the soul and thus re-establish contact with the Power of God.

You are yourselves aware of the situation obtaining when someone is opened. New members who come to be opened are required only to submit themselves to God with patience and sincerity. Words denoting "patience" and "sincerity" are frequently pronounced by many people, but yet, although constantly repeated, they never bring about any contact as a result. Although similar sentiments may be much more eloquently expressed, they are empty of contact so long as they are not pronounced by the Will of God, but arise only from the thinking mind, which is itself influenced by the lower forces which dominate and oppress the true inner nature of man. In our opening, however, the Will of God makes it possible for our thinking and desiring to come spontaneously and at once to a standstill, and thus it has been made very easy for us to receive contact with the Greatness of God. It can be seen, therefore, that this does not depend upon prayer or upon pronouncing the words surrender, patience and submission, but upon something that is in us by the Will of God; that is, Subud. And this is in accordance with the meaning of Subud, which is an abbreviated form of Susila Budhi Dharma.

Susila denotes the nature of a man in whom are to be found the true human qualities that he should possess according to the Will of God. Budhi means that there resides within a man superior power which can guide him when he is able to be aware of it. Dharma signifies the submission of man before the Greatness of God above all, so that his own experience proves to him that no other wish is stronger in him than his wish for God, and that of all his love none is greater than his love towards God; this is beyond everything he has ever wished or could wish for himself. All the Prophets have taught that a man should love God even above his own soul.

This is a symbol for us in Subud. It is certainly very hard for you to live in this way in your own individuality, but once God wills it so, we can hope that what Subud stands for—namely the perfection of human society united in the worship of God—will be attained both by you yourselves and by your descendants. Subud is not a religion, for it stands as a symbol for man both within the communities of the various religions and also outside all organized religions, and only if a man's nature corresponds to the symbol of Subud can he be described as really Subud. In Subud each one will meet with and become aware of reality according to what he himself has experienced, and a man who becomes Subud will really be able to

receive the guidance from God which exists in and for every individual. He will then be aware of what is right and what is wrong; he will also understand how to live while he is on this earth in such a way as to achieve happiness for himself and his family. It will be a matter of course that a state of well-being should accompany the fulfillment of his worldly obligations; not only his soul but also his body will enjoy good health, so that such a man can be said to be healthy both outwardly and inwardly. In Subud, in the exercises that we receive, we are being led from the lower to the higher, from the outer to the inner, and this will result in a balanced condition of well-being. Each of you will also be able to receive for yourself what has to be done by you, and eventually you will be able to comprehend the truths contained in all the scriptures and to become a true follower of the religion to which you belong. The whole of this process is worked in you by the Power of God alone.⁸

POSTSCRIPT

If, after many words, we ask again 'What is Subud?' it is perhaps easier to sum up than it was at the beginning.

The essence of Subud is the practice of the Latihan, the Latihan and again the Latihan. It is the Latihan that, in its present form and transmission, is new to the world-certainly to humanity at large. With the Latihan goes the concept of worship of God whereby we aim at pure and passive 'receiving' rather than 'asking'. In the Latihan God does the work; we do nothing. It is from the effects of the Latihan that all else will flow including, ultimately, a fuller understanding of what is necessary for each one of us.

If you can come to Subud in all sincerity; if when you are in Subud you can bring to bear your fullest trust, even in adversity and when life is not going so smoothly; if, when nothing seems to be happening or if progress is less swift than you had hoped, you can exhibit patience; and finally if throughout you can, in all humility, contribute a true spirit of submission-if, then, you can develop all these qualities, your progress must beyond all doubt be sure, even though at times it may seem slow.

It is odd that a whole book on Subud can be condensed into seven words-the Latihan, receiving, sincerity, trust, patience, submission and. ..the Latihan.

Any attempt to describe the indescribable must fail somewhere. Let the sole excuse be that, at a certain stage, words are the only means of communication that we possess. I apologize if there have been too many words and if some have, through human error, been misplaced.

⁸ Subud and the Active Life, pp. 3¹⁻⁴

PART TWO

Extract from Talks given by Pak Subuh On his journey rounds the world

FOREWORD

In writing what has now become Part One of this book I have quoted extensively from Bapak's talks. It was never my original intention to include further selections of his sayings in an introductory volume of this nature. The chief reason for my reluctance was that, no matter how often one repeats the statement that 'Subud has no teachings', it is evident that the more one quotes from Bapak's words, the more will the average person insist on finding in them some 'teaching'.

That danger apart, however, there can be no question that the more one can absorb of the spirit of Bapak's explanations, the nearer one will be to the spirit of Subud. I have therefore allowed myself to be persuaded to make the selection which constitutes this second part of the book. Moreover, in doing so I have come to realize how valuable it could be to an enquirer to observe for himself or herself just where the true emphasis of participation in Subud is to be found.

As the choice is my own, it is clear that these selections contain what I consider to be the important essence of what Bapak has to say to those who enquire. I have allowed a certain amount of repetition-chiefly of those points which, in my view, cannot be restated often enough.

Bearing in mind that this book is intended mainly for the 'interested outsider' and for the 'beginner in Subud', I have included only such passages as I feel can easily be understood by a Western newcomer. Once you are in Subud you will have access to the many interesting clarifications which Bapak has given on spiritual matters all over the world; many of these, however, are not relevant to the purpose of this book.

I am not in a position to check the translations for possible errors. Nevertheless, I feel happy to be able to endorse, either from experience or imaginative belief: everything that I have quoted. In other words, if there are errors in translation I do not feel that they can be grievously contradictory to the spirit of Subud, in so far as I, with my very limited capacities, can judge this.

The headings which I have added are intended as a guide to one or two of the chief contents of the passage selected. The reader will often find much more than the caption appears to indicate.

A little grouping of subject-matter has been attempted, but no strict logical sequence has been sought. There is so much of value in each extract that all should be absorbed and then-as Bapak would be the first to say-forgotten.

As a matter of general interest, I have detailed the approximate date and the place of each talk. 'S. & A.L.' stands for Subud and the Active Life.

1: DEEDS, NOT WORDS

Friends' House, London; 22 August 1959

At the present time men no longer believe in words, but look for facts. Bapak himself feels that it is indeed the Will of God that the appearance of Subud is bringing about in man the facts which He demands in preference to words.

Because there is this surfeit of words Bapak does not wish to give a lot of talks, for if after listening to him you start to think about what he has said or try to understand what he has told you, then the more Bapak speaks to you, the more will his words be the source of fresh impurities, rather than a means of purifying the content of your head, your heart and your feelings. Therefore Bapak hopes that all of you will only listen to what is being said now, and not indulge in any thinking or feeling about it, for this process of inner working takes its own course in you and can produce the facts by which you are able to realize that changes do take place in your nature. This is the way that things should happen in Subud, corresponding to the precept 'Deeds, not words'. It is deeds that count, not words. So we should not speak much about it, or discuss it, for what is needed is the practice; that is, the Latihan. The Latihan is important. It should have priority and be regarded as fundamental for all of us, so that we may be able rightly to accept the action of the Power of God within us.

This, then, is the same as what was said earlier: that these clarifications that Bapak has been giving are really intended to help to quiet the working of your thoughts, your heart and your desires. They are not intended to speed the process or induce a stronger desire in you, nor should they be regarded in this light. Bapak hopes that all of you will listen to these explanations only with a feeling of thankfulness to God so that in this way your inner feelings, your thinking and your hearts may become purified, thus making it easier for you to receive in the Latihan.

If it were necessary to give you explanations about spiritual matters in the usual way these would have to be very wide in scope and would take a very long time. But Bapak considers and feels that such explanations would be quite pointless, since on the whole you are still in the early stages-at the very beginning-and things which are too far from your present level should not, of course, be spoken of. Bapak can illustrate your present state by the picture of someone building a motor-car, of which he has so far acquired one or two wheels. It is no use for such a person to start imagining how fast his car will go, what kind of oil it will need, or how many miles it will do to the gallon, so long as he possesses no more than one wheel. When the process of acquiring a car-to which your own state is analogous-is accomplished, then it will be easier to specify its use. It will then also be possible to say how far and fast it will go, how much fuel it will need and for how many years it is guaranteed.

Bapak hopes that you will have patience, sincerity and trust in your submission to God.

2: TALK TO PROBATIONERS

Singapore; April 1960

[Note: It is most unusual for Bapak to talk direct to those who are not yet in Subud, but in Singapore he did so. I was present at the time. The tape-recorder was not functioning, but shorthand notes were taken of the English translation by Dr. Zakir, who was then interpreting.]

I have selected the following passages from the talk. These include references to the time when Bapak first received the workings of the Spirit in him and also the circumstances attending the cure of Eva Bartok.]

What is it that we have to surrender to God? It is not wealth, the ones we love, nor whatever else we possess, because God has no need of those things. What we have to surrender is our mind, our heart and our desires, because those are instruments that form an obstacle to our coming closer to God.

This is what Jesus Christ meant when He said that God always be with us if we can surrender ourselves to Him, if we can love Him more than anything else, more than ourselves. This means that the love that we have with our hearts and our feelings is an obstacle that prevents us from coming true love of God, because this outer love is only love of we like to believe we love. But the love that we must have God must be greater than this.

Only by surrendering himself completely to God, not making use of his mind, his heart or his desires, is there a possibility for man to come into contact with the Power of God.

This is what we do in the Latihan-we surrender ourselves completely, we do not make use of our mind, heart or desires-but we only accept and receive whatever God sends. So you will understand that Subud is only a symbol of that way of living for man in which he can fulfill the Will of God and carry out the Will of God for himself in this world and the world to come.

Therefore in the Subud Latihan we do not have a teaching; there is nothing we have to learn or do, because all that is required of us is complete surrender. A person who claims to know the way to God is really one who is anticipating God's gifts without having received them.

The only thing we do is surrender ourselves completely and only accept and receive whatever God sends or wants us to have. This is indeed what every prophet has said: 'Surrender yourself entirely, submit completely to God, and then God will take care of you and give you guidance.' In these spiritual exercises we do not expect anything in particular. We do not make for ourselves any image, but we only receive whatever God may send us.

So this Divine Power, which works in us during the Latihan, will bring to each person what is already in himself ...The exercises or Latihan of two people can never be the same, because everyone is different from everyone else. Therefore it is clear that there cannot be a theory or a spiritual teaching in Subud because each person is different from another. Whatever he needs and whatever he receives will be different from what somebody else needs and receives. This is why we cannot give any rule or prescription of how to behave when you are in the Latihan, because this is something personal for everyone.

Every person will find the right way towards God for himself and what may be the right way for one may be completely wrong for another. Therefore you must not suppose that you have to follow or become like Muhammad Subuh. You must become your own self and you must develop your inner self if you want to find the way to God. You must not follow or imitate anyone else, because you must find your own way to God. Usually if there is a teacher he teaches his followers to do exactly the same as he does in order to reach what he has reached. But this is really wrong, because not only between a teacher and his followers but even between two brothers of the same parents there is already a big difference: not only in outward appearance but also in their character and in their whole inner being. So surely you can understand now that what is the right way for a certain teacher to find God is not necessarily the right way for his pupils. ...

In Subud there is no discrimination between the different religions, because what comes to a person is really what is already there within him. So if a person is a Christian he will meet with the real Christ in him, and if a person is a Buddhist he will meet the real Buddha in him.

The same if he is a Mohammedan, he will meet the Muslim in himself. And then, if you really know your inner self, then in everything you do you will be guided by the Divine Power because the Divine Power works in you through yourself, and whether you work in your office or drive a car or do anything else you will be guided by the Power of God, which is always working within you. And not only within you, but also outside of you.

That is why in the Latihan we will not harm our religion, because what we think and what we carry out is only the Will of God, and we only carry out what is already within us. So a person who has a religion will experience in the Latihan only according to what is in his religion and according to what is within him.

Some among you may ask where Bapak got all this from, and Bapak answers: 'He received this when he was in the same situation as you are. He was working, he was still doing his job in the office and whatever he had to do, and even liking it. All of a sudden everything stopped. His mind stopped working, his heart stopped working, his desires stopped working and then he received as everybody receives in the Latihan. He was not looking for wisdom, he did not have a guru, a teacher. He just received it. ...'

You may have heard about the healing of Eva Bartok. It was not Bapak who helped her or cured her. But he showed her how to worship God and it was her good fortune that God willed her to get well. So she got well and everything was well with her. But it was not Bapak who cured her. He only showed her the way to worship.

The healing of a person is only a matter between him and God, and no one else can interfere.

Further, Bapak leaves it to you to decide whether or not you want to come to these spiritual exercises, because in the worship of God there is nothing compulsory. Everybody must be free. But whenever one asks it will be given.

3: THE COMING OF SUBUD

Friends' House, London; 11 August 1959

All that is necessary is contained in the excellence of the Commandments received by the Prophets from Abraham to Mohammed; but, in spite of all, man remains man and is easily swayed by the forces of the world around him. Without being aware of what is happening, he comes, as time goes on, to attach ever more importance to his wishes and desires, and follows their dictates ever more readily, and he relies more and more upon the powers inherent in his thoughts and feelings.

Ever since the days of the Prophets man has obviously been given more than enough teaching; but, although this good counsel is available to him, he still lacks the strength to put it into practice. Everything that has come down to him has become, and remains for him,

only material for thought. He merely thinks about what is needed for this life. He depends entirely upon thoughts and with his thoughts he assimilates everything. Since all teaching thus stops short in his mind and never gets any further, he is unable to put it into practice, unable to make it real. There are many who occupy their whole minds with theological speculations; they ponder them for years and years, and in the end both their minds and their feelings are lost in bewilderment.

Now, with the coming of Subud and that which by the Grace of God we have received in Subud, it is His Will that the way should be opened for mankind, through the practice of the Latihan, to live in a manner that accords with all that has been taught by the Prophets. None of us, including Bapak, should make too definite statements about Subud; still, the evidence of our own experience and the state in which we find ourselves when receiving prove to us that Subud is a way of receiving which does not depend upon our desire, our self will or our thinking mind, but rather that this way opens for us when everything within us has been killed, and comes by the Will of God, which is above and beyond our human understanding. That it is so means that it is God Himself who works on the being of man, since man no longer responds to teaching received from without and since it is quite impossible for him to change the content of his own nature, unless he is helped by a Power infinitely greater than his own.

Therefore no theory is to be found in Subud, but only a fact which works and grows and goes on by itself. We receive and experience this working; our hearts change, our characters change, our physical health changes, and what was wrong in us is put right-all this is the working in us of a powerful force of life, which cannot be known by our ordinary instruments and organs of perception. The work of this Life Force within us-the elimination of our faults and the development of what is good and true and real-requires no assistance from our thinking minds, our hearts or our desires, for the mind and heart and desires of man have no power to work any change in his nature. To make straight the soul and the nature of man is not in the power of his mind and heart and desires, but belongs to God alone, who wields a force immeasurably beyond the grasp of man.

4: RELIGION

Friends' House, London; 17 August 1959

The best way for man is one in which his inner nature can be transformed, so that he will really come to know his true human nature; to recognize the feeling of common humanity, to know harmony in human life, to recognize the oneness of the human race. It is because of this principle that religion has no respect for race or for persons. Religion is for all who wish to come to it, for all who have faith in God-it is open to all who approach it and all that is required of them is that they should worship God. It is the same with us in Subud. In the Latihan there is no distinction of race or religion, for any distinction between men closes for them the way which leads to God.

5: SUBUD IN RELATION TO EXISTING RELIGIONS

S. & A.L., pp. 108-9

Subud has not come to destroy religion; it has come, by the Will of God, to bring harmony into all religions, so that in their totality they may represent one human family, one aim and one God.

Later on you will be able to prove for yourselves the truth of this unity.

6: SUBMISSION IS IMPORTANT

Paris; November 1959

For the beginners among you, Bapak hopes that you will be patient when doing and receiving the Latihan; do not harbour feelings of wishfulness; do not wish to know, to understand more rapidly; do not toy with the idea of appealing to God for quicker receiving. Prevent your thoughts from interfering with any movements that may come to you. Do not, when you begin to experience movements, allow your heart or thinking to get hold of them with ideas like: 'I wonder what movement will come next?' Avoid that; just let the movements happen; let your mind and heart be mere onlookers. When God is active within man, man must take a back seat. You may compare it to watching a film in a cinema: you cannot alter the events, for they have been fixed beforehand, nor the running of the film, for it is projected from behind you. Just so the inner work in the Latihan. And though you may have this or that wish, you cannot alter anything, for it happens according to the Will of God. Hence your heart and mind are really mere spectators of God's work in you.

Equally, if in your Latihan your thought is still operating-in other words, if you remember events or things, or when your heart remembers events or things-let it happen; do not prevent it. If your heart or mind tries to struggle against the activity of your thoughts, this does not lessen but strengthens this activity. Left to itself, however, it will gradually subside: the heart will cease to flow over for there will no longer be any receptacle into which the overflow of this activity can pour.

As for those of you who attend church or other places of worship-and many of you may be accustomed to regular attendance-there is, as far as what you have received in the spiritual Latihan is concerned, nothing against it. If you feel allegiance to a church you should of course continue to attend worship. Only-while worshipping in church, Bapak's advice is that you should do whatever the service requires, but not the Latihan, for the Latihan is different; and if you were to break out into the direct spontaneous worship which comes to you in the Latihan you might startle and shock others who know nothing about it. For the Latihan is worship as ordained by God Himself, whereas the services in church and similar places are

worship as organized by man; and although both forms of worship are intended for God, there is a difference between them.

However, when the barriers which had obstructed your progress eventually open out before the consciousness of your inner being and you have reached the required stage, you will be able to enter into contact with your inner life whenever you wish. This means that you will be able to worship God in a dancing hall or a market-place, and of course you will be able to worship God wherever other people worship Him, as in a church. And if your neighbour worships in silence, you, too, will be able to remain silent, for you will already be familiar with the manifoldness, with the variety of ways of worship and of approaching God.

7 : SUBUD IS COMPATIBLE WITH ALL RELIGIONS

S. & A.L., pp. 75-6

In Subud there is nothing at all that goes against anything in any religion, whether Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or against the beliefs of those who do not follow any faith; for we practice the reality, so that we can bear witness to the truth and so that we come to the true worship of God. In Subud there is no theory—there are theories already in existing religions—but only receiving. And if people ask you what is taught in Subud, the answer is: 'Nothing.' If they then ask why so many follow these spiritual exercises, the answer is: 'The nature of Subud is receiving. No one is given any theories; as soon as he starts the Latihan, he will receive. It is a receiving and the manifestation of the working of the Latihan in him.'

In this way people may wish to find out about it and to receive the contact, for there may be those among you who will say: 'I have been theorizing for a long time, and yet I do not find reality in my theories. Is it true that in Subud one can find something real?' To that the answer is: 'About that I cannot say yes or no. You must try it for yourself, for all that is there is from God and is received by your own being, neither more nor less.'

[Note: The last sentence of this passage and the first sentence of the next may seem, superficially, to be inconsistent. I have, however, deliberately included both, as it seems to me that careful reading and understanding of the whole context could hardly fail to provide the necessary clarification. It is evident that what may be clear to those in Subud should not form the basis of pressure or persuasion when speaking to those who have not yet received evidence within their own experience.]

8 : SUBUD HAS NO CLAIMS

Friends' House, London; 22 August 1959

We should make no claim that what we have received comes from God, but we should base everything upon the available evidence. That is the right and proper way; that we should not speak about anything for which there is no evidence. It is useless to speak in glowing terms

of Subud, for what is needed is the experience. That is the basis upon which to reach the conclusion that, in truth, that which we have received clearly comes from a stream that-although we are incapable of understanding it-is beyond the power and influence of our thinking mind, our heart and our desires. This means that it comes from beyond the reach of lower forces, and from beyond all that is usually referred to as magic. For the same reason, it is pointless to say that we receive this from God, for none can know this save God alone. The manner of God's giving to man requires no gesture of the hand, nor does it require any thought or feeling as it would in man, but all is in His Power, which is beyond our knowledge. It will be enough if we say to other people that this comes from beyond our knowledge, our thinking mind and our hearts, and therefore it follows that it must come from a level that is really free from anything pertaining to our desires, our hearts and our thinking.

As for ourselves, we have already received evidence that we experience a gradual process of change in the content of our inner nature. The change that we begin to see and feel being brought about in us is incomprehensible and unknown to us. Indeed the action of the Power of God can bring about that which is beyond any expectation of man's thoughts or desires. We should therefore not give any high-sounding explanations to those who wish to hear about it, and if as a result they ask what we have received in Subud, the answer is that they should come and experience it for themselves. For there is no theory or teaching in Subud, nor does it make appeal to the mind of man, but in it are to be found proofs that he can experience for himself.

It is clear that what is needed is that each of you should have enough experience for yourselves that you may in this way be able to be an example to your fellow man. When you have the qualities arising from such experiences, the qualities of Subud, present in each one of you, you do not need to follow the way of propaganda, for people will of their own accord become attracted; not because they are influenced by anything you may say or do, but because they will see and recognize the presence of the truth within you.

9: BAPAK CLAIMS NO SPECIAL STATUS

S. & A.L., pp. 72-3

We should never seek for men to call us wise or to acknowledge Subud as first among movements for the good of man-kind. Never! Say only that Subud is like other manifestations of the Power of God-even to those who know nothing of God, because it is God who knows. This is why Bapak never claims to be a saint, a prophet or anything like that-never. Pak Subuh is only Pak Subuh. For it is God alone who knows how Pak Subuh stands before God, and it is not possible for men to know it, so there is no need to say that Pak Subuh is a man who is close to God. For the same reason, Bapak wishes all of you to work for Subud in patience, not being in any hurry to influence other people; so that in this way, if God so allows, we shall be under His protection.

10 : WE ARE NO BETTER THAN OTHERS

Vienna; December 1959

Concerning the high attainments and the perfections of the spiritual life, let us not say that we are better or more perfect than others-it may well be otherwise. We merely have the conviction that what we have received is true direction and guidance, so that we can become aware of, and understand, what the life of man really means, our life on earth as well as after death.

11: LATIHAN WITH THE SICK: PREPARATION FOR LATIHAN

S. & A.L., pp. 112-13

There is also the question of doing Latihan with sick people, for wherever Bapak goes he bears of the many sick people who need to be accompanied in their Latihan. Before coming to do Latihan with a sick person it is necessary first to purify one's own thoughts and feelings,⁹ so that one's presence may be of assistance and not worsen the illness of the person one wishes to help. In this way you will become accustomed to having a pure state in your inner feelings, and this will eventually enable you to know what you should do when confronted with a sick person who needs help and support.

Generally speaking, the same thing applies to your own Latihan. Bapak hopes that when you come to the place of

Latihan before the exercises you will not bring with you a head full of thoughts; for then you will not be able to receive, but will only be throwing off the thoughts which you have carried with you into the place where the Latihan is held. You should not do this. It is better that you should quieten your-selves before coming to the Latihan and not think of anything, so that when you begin the exercise this one half-hour may be truly profitable for you all. The essence of this is that you should not come to the Latihan in order to get rid of your thoughts, but so as to be able to receive what you need.

12 : THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SUBUD LATIHAN AND HEALING

Extract from a Subud chronicle originating in Indonesia

⁹ This often means a short preliminary Latihan

The Subud Latihan is, in fact, the worship of man towards Almighty God; therefore it is not right to regard it as a means for curing the sick.

What happens, however, is that when someone who has been ill for a long time is restored to health after doing the Latihan this is a subsequent result of the spiritual exercise he has received; because this is awakened by a life-force which is not influenced by the heart and mind, so that all the parts of the body feel as if they had been awakened from sleep, and whatever part of the body is weak and feeble will have its power restored.

Such happenings make people believe that Subud is a means of healing the sick; however, the health that is regained is only an automatic result of the exercise that is received.

Good health is, indeed, of great importance to us for our life in this world. Everyone realizes this, but because the Subud Latihan is the result of our surrender to the Power of God (which means because of our worship of Almighty God) the matter of health is not of prime significance in Subud, but is rather something which is subjected by the Latihan to the general process of awakening.

As you know, the Latihan that we have received causes the body to move, and these movements later intensify and expand. All these movements occur outside the control of our own will, which means that they are not made purposely, but are awakened at the moment when the mind and heart have ceased to function. It is a fact that at such a moment the various parts of our body start to move automatically, which proves that there is life in it, for usually the body is moved by our will and desire. Through these movements we get the feeling that each part of the body is being purified and corrected of the mistakes which have for so long resided in us. The kinds of impurities and mistakes that have been in us for so long are caused by our wrong deeds, wrong actions and wrong behaviour, since we are always influenced by lower forces which play a part in our lives. Not only do we ourselves become clean through the process of purification, but also our human soul has the opportunity to operate and develop, and that will create a better inner feeling, in which there will be a separation of the work of each of the lower forces, and also between their work and that of the true human force.

So, in conclusion, the Subud Latihan which we receive and practice is not some kind of healing method; it is that which enables us to worship God according to His Will.

13: SPORT AND TEACHING COMPARED WITH THE ACTION OF THE LATIHAN

Eindhoven; 4 October 1957

Regarding physical exercise, people are generally advised to train themselves in sports

because, it is said, much practice of sport will keep the body healthy. But this kind of sport which has been thought out and developed by the mind cannot enter deeper than the ordinary physical level. Moreover, a person may be unlucky and overstrain his body, especially if he indulges in sport excessively, and thus may not improve but may even harm his health, owing to mistakes made in practicing such sport.

It is quite otherwise with the movements which arise and develop from the soul. These are set in motion from within and not from without, and thus come from beyond the mind, imaginations or emotions of man. And these movements will certainly affect, pervade and regenerate all our limbs and organs which are weak, diseased or out of order, and make them well and healthy again. But this true health brought about by movements coming from the soul is not health as we usually understand it: it is the essence of health which cleanses and purifies. Furthermore, this work accomplished by the power of God received through the soul does not rest, once the physical body has been cleansed; but it passes on and penetrates to the heart, to the mind and to the consciousness of man, so that our hearts, our feelings and our minds will be purified by the power of God which has been received by the soul, until it finally reaches the true inner consciousness.

Indeed it is true to say that there is no method or teaching which is able to cleanse and purify the human heart and mind, unless it comes from God and be received by the soul.

There are, to be sure, methods and teachings containing advice calculated to improve man's habits and conduct, and reinforced by instilling fear of punishment from God. But advice is merely advice. Thus we can observe that men who can obtain good advice, easy of access and skilled, will indeed refrain from doing evil while they think of that advice; but under the compulsion of circumstances which govern their desire to possess something which they think will be good to have or enhance their prestige, they will no longer follow and obey it. And it is a fact that there are not a few highly educated men, themselves able to give good advice, who are equally capable of committing actions which are harmful to their fellow men and contrary to what is right.

It is quite different when man can receive power direct from his own soul, for then, however much evil there may be in him, his heart, mind and desires will become good, his attitude and conduct humane.

14: AUSTERITY

Friends' House, London; 17 August 1959

Bapak once knew a man who was indeed highly gifted: that is to say, he had the power to foretell the future, and to know that which could not be known by the intellect. He attained these powers through the practice of self-denial, through fasting and the cessation of all desires. So long as he continued to practice these austerities his abilities and his sensitivity were indeed astonishing. But when later he came into contact with many people from the towns, and began to eat bread, butter and cheese and to drink milk, then his extraordinary powers came to an end. It is clear that the faculties acquired through this kind of austerity will disappear when one no longer practices it, for the powers thus attained demand the

constant practice of fasting and depriving oneself of sleep and all comforts-and no eating butter for the rest of one's life. So if you wish to go by that way you will have to refrain from eating bread, butter and cheese.

In Subud, by the Will of God, we receive contact with His Greatness-while still eating bread, butter and cheese. Since we are able to receive from God in this way, we can continue to receive while living and working normally as an inhabitant of this world.

15: WORLDLY OBLIGATIONS AND THE WAY TO GOD

Eindhoven; 4 October 1957

On the other hand, the Latihan should not be regarded as a kind of mysticism in the sense in which this term is commonly used, involving the withdrawal from all worldly activity; for a man who follows such a path has his mind fixed on death, on the end of life, and considers worldly affairs and his life in this world as of little importance. But such is not God's will and intention for man. And therefore it has been made possible for us to receive what God grants to man: that is this state in our Latihan, and yet, besides this state of receiving, we are also fully able to carry on our usual activities in the course of our worldly affairs. In order to follow the right way of development, there is, on one hand, the path of fulfilling our worldly obligations, and, on the other hand, the path to God. How is this possible? Because this is true knowledge given by God, so that by His Power we are enabled to distinguish what is needed in this world and what is needed in the hereafter. Hence, while we live in this world, there are two roads for us: On one we carry out our ordinary obligations in this life, involving our ordinary emotions, our minds and imaginings, whose concern are the things of this world. The other road, which leads to God, must remain free from human emotions, human thoughts and human imaginings. And this is why Bapak always tells you that you should never allow your Latihan to be adulterated by thought, for the Latihan is the true way to God. Thus we shall learn to walk both roads while in this life, and-if Bapak may speak frankly--Our thinking, our brains and our hearts should not be allowed to become entangled when they ought to be detached. As to the reason why many people, struggling along a path which they think will lead them to God, in the end become unbalanced, crazy, muddled in their thinking and confused in their hearts-that is because their way to God, their form of worship and obedience, are based on thinking, on their own brains and desires.

Surely, this cannot be right. God alone can give His Grace to man, so that man can truly receive the conception of God or the divine spark into his inner self, and thus find the way to God, free from desires and the activities of mind and ordinary brain. This will lead us to a state of well-being in which, for instance, there will be less worry and wondering, and less theorizing, since the thinking faculty will be used only for worldly purposes and not be turned towards the here-after .

These are Bapak's explanations concerning the reality and true intention behind the Latihan,

which you have received. But Bapak advises and urges you to continue in the Latihan without haste or hurry , and never allow to enter the least trace of desire that it should intensify, or that you should become more skilled in it, nor should you desire to receive it more quickly. Just continue your Latihan in the normal way, free from wishing, free from desires for speedy results: thus the Latihan will progress smoothly, and you will make more headway than by constantly hoping and wishing for results.

16 : THOUGHT NECESSARY FOR WORLDLY OBLIGATIONS

Vienna; December 1959

As regards our thinking, our emotions and desires, with these we must work for the welfare of our life on this earth, which means to work for food and clothing, for the needs of our family, always provided that we do nothing to harm other people. Outside the Latihan we must make use of our thinking power, our emotions and desires. Do not neglect them! Do not let them fall into disuse! It is quite enough to stop using your thinking, your emotions and desires for half an hour twice a week during the Latihan, for, truly, that time-half an hour twice a week-is the time you need to be able to receive the working of the Power of God within yourselves.

17: SUBUD DIFFERS FROM EXISTING 'ISMS'

Oslo; August 1959

As Bapak has explained before, the Latihan in Subud is in truth man's worship of God, in accordance with the Will of God Himself, who gives guidance and directions within us. Therefore Bapak hopes that our brothers and sisters will never try to use any method or technique to assist the flow of the work of God's Power within you.

It is true that to a superficial glance from our ordinary understanding there seems to be a considerable similarity between the spiritual way of the Subud Latihan and those of other ways, such as spiritualism, magnetism, etc., and, for example, the movements occurring in the Latihan appear, in the early stages, to be very much like those occurring in the others. This may be compared to the sounding of keys on a piano: the resulting sounds are very much the same, whether the person pressing the keys is an accomplished pianist or whether he has been taking lessons for only six months, because at this stage the whole process is still at a rather low level.

Or Bapak may perhaps give another, clearer, comparison: take a child who has just started to learn how to write; it does not matter very much whether his teacher is a university professor or not: the lessons required by the child at this stage, that is the basic beginner's lessons, are

very much the same in all cases. Later, when the child reaches the higher stages of study, the lessons given by an ordinary teacher may no longer be felt to be adequate, and a university professor may be needed.

The same happens in the spiritual Latihan: you cannot yet know and receive that which could enable you to become aware of the difference between other spiritual exercises and those of Subud. The difference between the knowledge derived from the thinking mind and the understanding given by God is that the latter enables you to discern whether the leader of a spiritual movement is genuine, whether he really receives revelations from God; this can be seen only from the spiritual point of view. But you have not yet reached the stage from which the spiritual level of such teachers can be tested.

Outward, that is ordinary, knowledge and intellectual ability can be seen by a diploma or certificate which shows, for instance, that the person concerned is a university professor; but the spiritual level cannot be known in this way. Only after you have become able to ask God Himself will you be in a position to know the capacity of the spiritual knowledge of a teacher who truly dwells in the realm of the Power of God. This is the difference between the knowledge of the intellectual mind turned towards worldly purposes and the height or loftiness attained in the spiritual life.

It is thus clear that the level attained by a person in the spiritual life can be determined, decided and given by God alone and not by anyone else.

Concerning whether what you have been doing is in accordance with the will of God, whether it is really the true way to God or not, and concerning what you are likely to receive in future, you should be able to ask God yourself when you have reached that stage. We cannot possibly improve upon, or assist in speeding up, the work of the Power of God within ourselves, for if this were possible, if we could give help and smooth the way for the inner work to be speeded Up, then this would mean that the force working within is not the Power of God, but the personal force of the individual concerned.

18: WE SHOULD KEEP WITHIN THE LIMITS OF OUR STRENGTH

S. & A.L., p. 77

Our work for human welfare should not go beyond the limit of our strength, so that although our progress may be slow it will be steady, and we shall not meet insuperable obstacles.

For if God does not will that Subud should influence the world quickly, we should not wish it to do so. This means that we should not anticipate the Will of God and that we should, as far as possible, work according to our own strength. If we can carry only a ten-pound weight, then we should not try to carry a hundred; if we can carry a hundred pounds, we should not strain ourselves to carry two hundred. We should act according to the strength that is in us, while we wait to see what it is the Will of God for us to do. ...

19: THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO WORLDLY PROBLEMS

S. & A.L., pp. 85-7

It is the Will of God for mankind--especially for mankind in the present century--that in his life man should make use of his mind and feeling, which are indeed the instruments by which he can find the way to live rightly in the world and to earn his livelihood according to what is necessary for his existence. Thus it is the Will of God that what we have received in Subud should help man to live and work in the ordinary way, fulfilling ordinary life obligations, whilst at the same time God will guide and care for his inner life. In this way man will be able to produce from within himself the right actions which are appropriate to fulfill his obligations both in this world and in the world after death.

In this lies the difference between the process of the spiritual exercises of Subud and what are usually referred to as spiritual disciplines. In the ordinary way, when a man thinks about God and about the life after death he directs the whole of his thinking and feeling towards God in the attempt to understand the world beyond, and in this way he forces himself into a position of isolation from the ordinary conditions of life in this world. There are quite a number of people who in this way are more concerned with, and attach more importance to, the life after death than to their lives in this world. In this way they hinder progress here on earth, where it is indeed very necessary that it should continue.

That is why there are so many people--especially intellectuals--who advise others to make no effort to follow any spiritual discipline, saying that this can only lead to a miserable life in this world. And so it also comes about that many people of high intellectual ability scorn religion; they pride themselves on their cleverness and despise those who follow the spiritual life. The intellectuals taunt the followers of religion and the spiritual ways, saying they should ask their God to supply them with their worldly needs and to send them money from above so that they need not exert themselves to work.

One cannot say that either side is right or wrong, for both are right and both are wrong. Those intellectuals who despise the spiritual life believe that it really is impossible for anyone to receive money without in some way striving for it and say that if one hopes for money to come from God one can receive nothing, for God has no money.

Those who are thus mocked and despised by the intellectuals have the attitude that happiness and success in this world are of little value, whereas happiness and position in the life after death are infinitely to be prized.

These people hold that misery in this life does not matter and that we need take no thought for this life; it is better to die so long as we are sure of paradise. There is something right in both points of view, but it should be understood that if man were not intended to make use of all his various parts, God would never have created them. If man were not intended to use his thinking and feeling, God would not have equipped him with these instruments, while if he were not meant to walk and write and handle objects, God would not have created him with hands and feet. It is clear that God has made all these parts of man for a purpose, and that they should be used in a proper way. In truth it is a sin in the eyes of God if man does not make use of his endowment, for this means a refusal to put to use that which God has bestowed upon him. It is the will of God that man should use and work with everything he has-his brain, his heart, his emotions and everything else-provided that he will remember to be always vigilant in his use of all these instruments and thus be able to use them in a proper manner and in accordance with the work he undertakes.

20: MONEY

S. & A.L., pp. 90-4

In Subud you have now begun to know how to work and act in the world without neglecting your worship of God, so that in this way you will eventually no longer be influenced by what you are doing. When this transformation is complete you will be able to work honestly, with a pure heart and in the worship of God.

The reason why a man who devotes himself entirely to money-making has no time for the worship of God, and lacks the inner serenity that comes from a feeling of thankfulness towards Him, is because the whole of such a man's being is completely dominated by material forces. It can be said that, for such a man, material possessions are his god. But those of you who have begun gradually to be able to distinguish between the various forces acting within you will become aware by degrees and feel the way in which material forces should be associated with material objects. You will also see how vegetable forces go with the vegetable world, animal forces with the animal world, human forces with the human world and that the perfect human soul-the Rochani-goes straight to God and worships Him.

So long as you have not reached this point at which you can really be aware of this relationship of all forces, you may still feel anxious and rather doubtful about it. In the meantime, until you are able to receive this awareness, it will be quite sufficient for you that, while you do your ordinary work, you never neglect your spiritual exercise of the worship of God; because it is in the Latihan that you are purified and set free from what material influences remain in you.

As day follows day, month follows month and year follows year, you may be able to receive and experience for yourself what Bapak has just been speaking of, so that you will become true Subud men and women who obey the commandment of God; that is, people who are able to do their work and fulfill their obligations both in this world and in the hereafter.

This is quite different from the situation of a man who concentrates entirely on the life after death. For us in Subud it is necessary to fulfill our worldly obligations while we still live on earth, and at the same time we receive in our soul, our being, our feeling, what is the Will of God. Thus, when we come to die we continue to live through the change in condition.

Although money-making may be included in the field of our activities and although to all outward appearance this may be just the same as any other similar concern, in reality it is quite different. In the ordinary way it is the nature of those who are engaged in making money to be dominated and influenced by it, whereas we, when we work with money, are not over-powered by it but are its masters, and it is we who have power over it.

It is true that we cannot obtain money from God for our life in this world, because money is a human factor and is made by man, not by God. Therefore if we look to God to provide us with money we may not get any, for God has never created it. It is clear that when man needs money it is through other men, through human agency, that he must obtain it. However, the most important thing in our lives here is that we should be able to allow the various powers in us to work properly and to make proper use of them; that we should know how these forces work and operate in us, so that we are protected from debasement of our stature as true human beings.

21: GOD'S GRACE IS FOR ALL

San Francisco; March 1958

Perhaps it is because God knows the situation in which contemporary man finds himself that He has given him now something to lighten his burden, to ease the way towards the contact with the Life Force which always envelops him. Bapak (Bapak does not wish to imply that he alone has received this: it may be that other people, too, have received this, and Bapak is just one of several) was given and has received this Grace, and has now brought it here to communicate this contact with the power of God that each of you can feel within his innermost self.

Thus it is indeed the Will of God that what Bapak has received is not for him alone but for all mankind, irrespective of race or language, colour or nation, because, as Bapak has said earlier, as God Himself has neither race nor language, the knowledge which comes from God is bestowed upon mankind as a whole, and not for any particular race or this or that particular group. And the contact which Bapak has communicated to any of you will continue to work by itself and will always be present within you.

Therefore do not fear that once Bapak goes away it will cease to work. Once it is present it will continue to work, it will always remain present in the self of man or, to be more precise, within the self of each of you. This will enable you to worship God in your accustomed way, as a Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and so on and attain true worship in away the evidence of which you will be able to grasp and feel. Such evidence is that man will become able to worship God in any situation, such as going about his usual business, while attending church

service, while sowing or cultivating crops, as well as on business journeys-in all these man will be able to worship God, because God is always with him, guiding and protecting all his activities. This has also been said by Jesus and recorded in the Gospels, and you may have read there that you should believe that God is always with you.

22: SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS GRADUAL

San Francisco; .March 1958

No doubt you are asking yourselves whether it is really possible for you (here in the United States) to attain all that Bapak has described. Bapak's answer is that it is not merely possible, but certain; for there is already the evidence of people in England, Germany, Switzerland and other countries; at first they started exactly as you are doing today, but little by little, and after not even a very long time, they have become able to receive it truly, so that they are able to bear witness as to the truth of what Bapak has been saying now. The way or process of receiving is, of course, a gradual one, starting at the bottom as with a child that goes to school. He naturally does not, on his first day, enter straight away the seventh class or the higher school, but he begins with the Froebel-training or infants' school, where he learns first of all how to hold a book, how to use a pencil, to be punctual in leaving home and entering school, and to obey the teacher. Only when he has learnt this does he enter the first year of elementary school.

As far as this process is concerned, Bapak may say that you are still at the beginning, when you have just been awakened and begin to grow. What is old in mankind is the thoughts, which have developed to such a degree as to give birth, for example, to modern science as we know it today. This kind of knowledge has nothing to do with God, it is a purely human knowledge and quite unsuitable and useless for finding the way to God. In order to become able to receive God's Grace, man can do nothing but surrender and bring to a standstill all these activities, in accordance with God's own Will.

Why is it that the knowledge and science achieved by thought-processes cannot bring us to God and cannot be used for finding the way to Him? The reason is, as Bapak has said earlier, that the Nature of God is utterly different from that of man. Hence all that is within man is not applicable to the Nature of God, which is entirely different from the nature of man. You can form your own judgment on the strength of this evidence: man's knowledge and understanding are confined within his brain; his wishes and imaginings within his heart and emotions; but when man dies, his brain, heart and emotions will be shattered and vanish and everything dependent on their functioning will collapse and vanish as well

Now this Latihan, this worship of God, is a way given to man so that he may find something that can be understood, felt and assimilated without having to rely on the instruments man commonly uses. And it is clear that God can bestow Grace only upon a man who has completely stilled his own powers and emptied himself of all influences. This means that when man dies, and all in him has vanished, God will give him a consciousness, a knowledge

and an understanding far beyond those he had upon earth. Therefore all of you who are following the Latihan should refrain from thinking and speculating about it, and merely accept that which is given to your inner self, keeping it free from all thought, desire and passion. Thus whatever you will eventually receive will be beyond your expectations, and untainted by your thoughts or desires.

These spiritual exercises of Subud are therefore essentially not a teaching such as can be transmitted from one person to another, but they are an awakening of the soul which has awaked through the Power of God and continues to grow by itself, and this awakening of the human soul will eventually bring about integrity, sincerity and health in the being of man. The action of the awakened soul will not only improve the health of the physical body, but the heart, too, will be attuned to what is good and upright; mind and thinking will become capable of faith in the truth, as was willed by God for the salvation of his life both in this world and in the hereafter. For it is in the nature of the human soul to bring the internal and external qualities of man into correspondence with its own needs, so that man should be pure both inwardly and outwardly. Once this is achieved, man's external qualities and faculties cease to be barriers to the development of his human soul.

Those of you who have only just started to do the Latihan, or are here for the first time, will, Bapak hopes, do your Latihan in patience and put your trust in God, who will give you what is necessary for you, provided you fulfill man's undertaking to God, to serve Him as an instrument whose only task is to comply with the intentions God has for him

23: MOVEMENT AND QUIET

Vienna; December 1958

Perhaps you would prefer another method; perhaps you wonder why it should be necessary to worship God with this kind of movement, when it is possible to worship God in a quiet, easy way, sitting down, without shouting or moving about, just as other people worship God. But truly-and Bapak wants you to know this-the movements which you have received and performed do not simply go on like that these movements serve to free the inner self of its defects of the dirt which has been brought in through the desires, thoughts and emotions.

Clearly, then, these movements are caused by the process of purification of the inner self from dirt, and the inner self as well as the outer body will thus resume their original condition. And the longer you exercise, the more will this action deepen and broaden, until you will become able to receive in your understanding and finally even in your consciousness.

In this way your inner being will be fitted to follow the movement of life, for life vibrates and moves onwards at great speed, and if you can share in the movement of life it means that you have attained stillness and calm. Let us compare it to flying by plane: though the

plane may move at a speed of 500 miles per hour, yet if you are inside the plane you do not feel its speed, for you share it. It is quite another thing if you are outside a vehicle: it may travel at no more than forty miles per hour, but since you have no share in it you notice its speed as it passes you by.

If, contrary to this, someone wishes that the Latihan should be done in stillness, wishes to worship God by stilling everything, although life itself moves so very fast, then, if you wish to worship God while arresting all movement, the highest you can possibly achieve is to watch the whirl of life in its course, without being able to jump on and to move along with the speed of life as it revolves onwards on its path.

Truly, also, although it may be your wish to be still in your worship of God, yet such stillness belongs to the will and effort of emotion, thought and desires: your body may look still, you may be sitting still, you may not be seeing or hearing what is going on around you, but your thoughts, your emotions, your desires go on churning inside you. And, thus, all that has been the object of your thinking or emotion presents itself again to your vision; and it may be said, therefore, that such stillness is of your outer body only, while your inner being, your thoughts, emotions and desires, are not still at all.

In the Subud Latihan, on the other hand, once you are able to follow them really, you will be able to remain calm while in movement, and you will be calm within calmness. This means: though the wheel of life turns fast you will remain calm on it, and if you stay outside of that wheel you will yet remain calm.

24: ADVANTAGES OF GROUP LATIHAN

Paris; November 1959

It is clear, then, that what happens in Subud does in no way go against what God has ordained for man, nor against the kind of life man leads in this world, namely that man can establish mutual understanding between various nations and even various kinds of life. Thus you will learn to know and recognize everything and you will, for instance, know where the dangers are. And thus, when you finally return home—for example when you return to your house of life after death—you will already know what dangers lie in wait for you and to where this way or that way leads. We all need to acquire this knowledge while we still are on earth; don't delay acquiring this knowledge until after you are faced with death—then it is too late. Don't expect to stumble upon this knowledge then, for, as Bapak has told you, to learn to know or recognize everything takes a very long time.

In the Latihan there is unity between you and you begin to be educated, your feelings begin to unfold and you know one another, and in this communion and mutual knowledge you grow into a brotherhood. This is the purpose of the communion among you that you become able not to create but to have created within yourselves a group of human beings which is a unit, the inner feeling of a group which is open and thus enables all members to

be related to one another.

Your heart, of course sees it the other way round; for instance: 'I can't do the Latihan because of the noise; I'd rather do it by myself' That is exactly what the heart, the thinking and the desires are like; and, as Bapak has said before, this is what divides the nations, separates people into I and You, and declares 'this is my brother' and 'that one is no brother of mine'-such is the way of the heart. But once the inner feeling has been freed from heart, ~g and desires, it will return to the state in which the feeling of man can penetrate and embrace everything, so that there is no more division between one and the other. This has been spoken of in the religions, for it is said that religion is not for one or two people, not for one or two nations, but for mankind; for there is one God for all men.

You should accustom yourselves to receive what can be received from God, while being one in a crowd. People do not always die in peaceful conditions: they may die in a car-crash, they may have a stroke in a cinema, they may die of shock having won in the Pools or having lost their job. Man may die in many different circumstances, but if you are accustomed to a wide range of conditions you will know how to die and be ready to do so without hindrance.

Seen from the outside, too, you have the quality of being together in harmony, in sympathy with one another, however many people there are. When Bapak allows you to do the Latihan at home it is in order that you may experience and feel, as Bapak has told you, the difference between life alone and life with others. Thus you will come to learn and to be aware of what death is like in a crowd and what death is like at home, or, in other words, how to die in a crowd and how to die in conditions of peace. So Bapak says that you may do Latihan at home but that you should never neglect to attend the common Latihan which you share with others; for you must be aware that you do not yet know and understand your own measure. You do not yet understand your own capacity. In the common Latihan-although your heart and mind are not aware of this-there is mutual help, especially from those who are more advanced. Also, those who help do not feel or understand that they are inwardly helping others. Their heart may say: 'I myself have not enough-how can I help others?' But with the soul it is not like that; the soul is in harmony with others and likewise the inner feeling, the inner self. For only in genuine harmony, in real unity, will man be able to face God, who is one for all mankind.

Therefore Bapak appeals to you and hopes that besides doing the Latihan once or twice-no more-per week at home, you will also do it twice, or at least once, in a group with your brothers. Bapak hopes that you will help to strengthen the state of your group-which means doing the Latihan regularly twice in the group and once at home. That is very good. Thus you will in the end experience the truth of what Bapak has said here, once you are really able to receive.

If in Subud you receive what you require by doing the exercise by yourself in peaceful conditions, then, if you go to the cinema, your receiving will stop. It is different with Bapak: his receiving continues even while watching a film, or while working, or counting money, or while he is concerned with the needs of the household, or in the company of friends. So also when he is with you here, his receiving does not stop. In coming here to Paris, which is a very crowded place, it does not disappear; it is still there. Why is it so? Because Bapak is able to receive in a crowd as well as in quiet conditions.

25: NO ADVICE, THEORY OR RITUAL REQUIRED

Chicago; June 1959

However, with the coming of Subud-though Bapak himself does not know its real significance, for it all depends on God's Will-God is at work within us, so that we begin to receive and to understand the reality and the practical value of the advice contained in these books: Zabur, Torah, Gospels and Qu'ran. In Subud, therefore, there is no more need for advice, for theories, for rituals for the worship of God, for God Himself will guide you as to worship as well as to leading the right kind of life in this world and in the hereafter. Hence Subud is not another religion, but it is what God wills for us for the realization of what is contained in various religions. Hence, for those of you who are Christians, once you have received a good deal in Subud, Christianity will become really true for you, because you will see clear proof of its truth, and you will become real Christians. And equally those among you who follow Islam will become true Muslims, and not one of those of whom it is said: 'Muslim yesterday, but not tomorrow' or 'Muslim tomorrow but not the day after'.

Such is the evidence which Bapak has heard from all kinds of people: from Christians, for example, that what they receive and practice in Subud confirms their beliefs so that they say that Subud is entirely in accordance with Christianity; it is the same with the religion of Moses and Abraham: its followers say that Subud fully agrees with what they have read and understood in their books; and thus, too, say the Muslims: that Subud is truly in complete accordance with what is found in the Qur'an. Thus this Subud Latihan is truly man's worship of God, which comes and begins to act by the Will of God at the moment our hearts, desires, and thinking suspend their activity. Those of you who have been in a position to receive and feel movements within yourselves do not think of anything at all while the movements are within you and you do not feel as if you were having thoughts whereas for those of you who do not yet experience any movements, thought is still active. It is so because the spiritual Latihan of Subud cannot take place, and cannot work by means of thoughts or desires.

God knows well enough how weak man is with regard to his own heart, desires, and thoughts. But, with the advent of Subud, man has found true help against temptation from heart, desires and thoughts. Indeed the Latihan which you have received can be described as being very simple, and many people think and feel that the Subud Latihan is just some ordinary exercise, which does not lead to God-so they say-but they forget that God can do anything according to His own Will, which is quite beyond the understanding of man. And God knows also that man, with his desires, heart and thoughts, is constantly accompanied and influenced by lower forces which ideally ought to be his tools but which through his

own fault have become his masters, his leaders, taking the lead within his individuality. This is the reason why it is required that at the time when a man submits to God another, man, who has already received God's Grace, should act as witness.

Those of you who have not been able to receive anything after their opening so far are perhaps saying: 'We should like to stop our thoughts and desires, but they will not stop and we are not yet able to receive what we should be able to receive by now.' You simply have to accept this situation and trust in God: the time for your inner happiness has not yet come.

26: NO NEED TO BELIEVE WHAT HAS NOT YET BEEN EXPERIENCED

Chicago; June 1959

Here ends Bapak's explanation. It is no theory, it is simply an explanation based on the experiences which Bapak has had on the spiritual way, and which you will have as well. Hence it is not a theory asserting that things must be such and such; not at all; it is simply an explanation of the experiences one meets on the spiritual way. Bapak does not want you to believe anything you have not experienced yourselves; so he hopes that you will not blindly believe his explanations-it is necessary that you yourselves should experience what can be found in the Latihan, and only then will you be able to say whether or not what Bapak has said is true.

27: SUBUD AN AID AGAINST CONSTANT CORRUPTION IN DAILY LIFE

Vienna; December 1959

Without the help of God man cannot possibly clean away the imperfections and impurities which are in his inner being, because it is not just once in a day or two, not just once in a month or two, that the inner being of man is corrupted by worldly influences or by desires, emotions, or thought-it is being corrupted every minute, it is being invaded every second, so that man simply has no chance to clean himself, for while he cleans one defect, a hundred new ones enter, and while he cleans a hundred, he is invaded by a thousand more.

Therefore God gives us help, and in various ways, and one of these is what we have received here. Bapak does not say that such help is available only in Subud; there may be other places and other people who receive it; but in any case in what we have received here we have

proof and evidence that it is help from God. God has given us help in so far as He has provided a possibility for our obtaining His help in coping with our faults and our lives and in finding the right way leading to Him, the way in which we can obey His commands.

28: IMPATIENCE

Friends' House, London; 17 August 1959

Bapak hopes that you will not be impatient or try to understand the meaning of what you receive. Simply accept it, for when you have reached the required state you will of yourselves understand it. This means that God is at the beginning of everything that is at the beginning. The qualities of the Prophets of old may serve as an example. They were open in their wisdom and in their consciousness-this was due neither to their own will nor to study, but came as a result of God's Grace to those who based their worship and trust in the Greatness of God upon the purity and cleanness of their hearts and upon submission to His Will. Following that example, you may come gradually to that state, so that eventually you may hope to attain it while still living in this world; and this world may be the scene of true welfare and harmony for human life, with human beings who truly worship God.

29: MIND, HEART AND DESIRES

Paris; November 1959

And what, you may ask, is the content of mind, heart and desires? Bapak would explain that the contents of the mind consist of the understanding which produces the feeling that a man understands something; in other words, man's intelligence. The contents of man's heart consist of wishes, like the wish to be capable or efficient, the wish to be good, the wish to receive more quickly, the wish to be cleverer than others, the fear of defeat, the hurt feeling when being called stupid, and so forth; if a man hopes for speedy receiving so that he may soon be near to God, that, too, belongs to the desires. And the contents of the emotions are feelings which give rise to the idea that one has already found God, and met Him and spoken to Him, and has become God's beloved, and so on.

Such are the contents of whatever there is in man's self, i.e. in his thinking, heart, desires and emotions. And therefore it is necessary to separate these from the inner feelings or inner self, so that a man should not fall victim to imagination, but really return to his original state, to that timeless state before he fell under the influence of the world, under the influence of the kind of experiences which prevail in this world and even increase their grip on it.¹⁰

As long as the mind, the heart, the desires and the emotions are firmly rooted in man's self, it means that he genuinely thinks himself more important than others, and can therefore not

¹⁰ Literally: 'experiences which have been spread on earth and are still spreading'

possibly attain the true inner feeling of the soul: that true, pure feeling which is capable of knowing what is beyond mind, heart and desires. In the Latihan, however, these are kept at bay by the Power of God, so that you become able to receive the life of the inner feeling, which is really beyond the influence of mind, heart, desires and emotions.

Bapak used the words 'kept at bay' and not 'discarded', for what takes place is a separation, a kind of relegation, or subordination, so that the mind, heart and desires are reduced to the role of followers or servants, for the nature of mind, heart and desires is that of servants to the soul or the pure inner feeling of man.

And why does Bapak call mind, heart and desires mere servants? Because their field of application is this earth, where alone they can be of use. Eventually, when the time comes and man returns to his rightful place, the servants cannot accompany him there; they are left behind in the place to which they belong by the human soul which is entitled to enter.¹¹

Is it really true that a man's mind, heart and desires cannot follow his human soul when it returns to its own world? Bapak illustrates it thus: to some extent when falling asleep-and to a much larger extent when facing death-you can realize how the thinking mind, the heart and the desires lose their power. When asleep, a man is merely detached from them-he has, as it were, shifted from a place A to a place B, but he has not disappeared altogether. Yet, as you can verify, the power of mind, heart and desires is unable to exert itself.

Still more, when facing death, man's mind, heart and desires weaken and lose their force. And with the loss of mind, heart and desires of which man has been so proud, of which he thought so highly, as if they were rulers within man, he-that is you-will fall into darkness, because mind, heart and desires vanish when death draws near, when death is at the threshold and the inner being has not yet awoken to life.

It is otherwise if the Power of God has been active within you in your exercise, for your inner feeling has begun to wake up and come to life; and coming to life means not owing to the influence of heart, mind and desires, but, on the contrary, owing to liberation from all these influences. Having come to life, the inner feeling is able to recognize and to be aware of life free from the influence of mind, heart and desires, which cannot possibly guide or accompany our inner life or our soul to the realm of life after death.

As your inner feeling (or inner self) comes alive, freed from mind, desires and heart, it becomes able to receive what you need and what is God's will for you, so that you are able to receive within your inner self (a knowledge of) what life is like after death and 'before I was born'.

And then you need no longer ask 'Can I feel what my life after death is going to be like?' For this will no longer be a matter of question and answer, since the inner feeling will be freed from the influence of mind, desire and heart.

¹¹ Berkuasa (=authorized, entitled) stands without object, and may equally refer to the past or point of departure, meaning that the human soul has power over the servants in the place to which they belong.

This is in accordance with the saying of the Prophets, that only that man will or can go to heaven who already has heaven; in other words: heaven is already within him before he goes there. To give some analogous examples: A man will be able to have experience of a rich man's life when he has become a rich man; he can tell whether it is pleasant to be, say, a doctor or a cabinet minister only after he has himself attained such a position and thus feels what it is like. And similarly when you have really received and really possess the 'rasa-peribadi', that is to say an inner feeling freed from mind, heart and desires, you will no longer ask questions. For the heavenly state, the state of life after death, cannot be grasped by thinking nor felt by the heart and the emotions, but it is within your inner feeling, your inner self, your 'rasa-peribadi'¹²

Thus our spiritual Latihan truly brings guidance and directions for us from God, so that we can observe God's way of separating the 'rasa-peribadi' from the desires, mind and heart. And, truly, we need the science of separation or chemistry¹³ in everything concerning our nature. ...

But not only man is proficient in this science of separation; God's knowledge of it goes even deeper and he can separate the inner self, the 'rasa-peribadi', from the feeling which is under the influence of thinking, heart and desires. And with this separation God's work in man becomes easy and can accomplish that which is necessary.

This could not, of course, possibly be done by man himself, for man, in this connection is in the position of a mere object. How could a broken table mend itself or a broken chair be repaired by a chair? This kind of thing is simply not possible. A broken chair, a broken table can be repaired only by a human craftsman. And for man the craftsman is God alone. The only one who can repair man, when damaged, is God.

30: AVOID TRIVIAL QUESTIONS

Garstang; September 1959

There is evidence that most of you still stress the importance of your own interests, and this can be seen through the questions put to Bapak. Such as: How can I become happier than I am now? How can I receive good luck? What is going to happen in the future?

This kind of question indicates that the person is more attached to the importance of his own progress rather than to submission and faith and trust in the power of God. In this way a person spoils the reality of his worship of God, because he pays more attention to his interest for things in this world than to what God might indicate for his happiness.

¹² 'Rasa-peribadi' and 'rasa-diri' are used synonymously

¹³ The Dutch word for chemistry is scheikunde, which literally means art of separating.

In this way if a person receives indications they will relate to his own interests, but not to his true inner interests. But when man truly submits to God, God knows the requirements for man on earth and hereafter. When man has the qualities that belong to a true inner nature then he acts in accordance with the example set by Abraham. This illustrates that we must first love God with sincerity.

For example, when Bapak was being tested he was asked by God: 'What will you sacrifice?' Bapak replied that he would sacrifice everything, his own soul, his inner feeling, in order to come to true worship of God. After this Bapak had to suffer disasters. He had to leave his work and forsake all pleasures, and his own family and friends thought him unwell mentally. But Bapak determined that he should love God-with the result that he went easily through all his difficulties. Many things appeared to him impossible, like his journey round the world and how to provide for his family, but all these difficulties dissolved. Now Bapak has gone round the world twice and given to man what he must give.

You must not, however, try to imitate Bapak, but rather practice to follow the workings of God from within. At the right time, God will indicate what is necessary. We should make ourselves examples of right living.

Then Bapak hopes for all here to be sincere and truly submit. In ordinary life don't give way to your heart or give up under difficulties, because then you educate yourselves to be insincere and you diminish your submission to God. By attachment to trivialities you forget yourselves. When your attachment to family, possessions and property is more valuable than your submission to God, then at death these attachments will drag you down, because the qualities that dominate you belong to this world. Giving way to the cries of your heart and your own interests, rather than to the love of God, will keep you in this world. But if rightly submitted at death, man will return to that level that accords with God's Will for him.

It is to be regretted that many questions are put to Bapak concerning bad luck, marriage, the right type of partner, etc. It is much to be regretted, because then people look on Bapak as a 'fortune-teller', whereas Bapak should rather be regarded as a pioneer who opened the way to find the right path in this world and the hereafter. This should be made known. It is not a disadvantage for Bapak to answer questions, but for the questioner there is no benefit. A man cannot picture what he really needs, so he should simply surrender.

It is not what one thinks is necessary but what God gives both for this life and the hereafter that really matters. Trivial questions should not be put to Bapak, since his task is to spread what he has received from God to enable people to stand on their own feet. Through this awakening there will be a process which will rectify the entire nature of man, inner and outer, and will purify all defects in due course.

It is not necessary to listen to Bapak's advice, but to be independent and receive directly.

31: THE SIMPLICITY OF SUBUD

Calcutta; April 1961

How can it be-some among you may ask-that Subud can find such a simple way which is truly so easily received and carried out by man?

Bapak himself also does not know the answer to this question; he does not understand why it should be so simple, for at the time when Bapak received it he did not search, no! Bapak still worked as usual, still used his thinking as usual, but maybe as the Grace of God has bestowed gifts on men-among them Bapak-so it can be said that it was not Bapak who sought knowledge, but knowledge sought Bapak. Bapak was pursued by the knowledge. Bapak says this because at the time when Bapak received it it was quiet like this and Bapak wanted still to work and to do some writing. ..(Bapak illustrates an experience he had while he was trying to write, but this is not fully recorded).

This happened every evening. When Bapak picked up his book in order to work at his book-keeping, as soon as he began to work, Bapak's hand went like this ...his pen was put down, Bapak stood up like this (with gestures) and then walked into his room and prayed. It continued like this. Thus Bapak did not seek knowledge, but the knowledge sought Bapak. This is what Bapak calls the gift from God. What Bapak received so that it could reach you now is by its nature a gift from God. ..it is not from man, no! Therefore we can receive this Latihan in a very simple way, for truly when Bapak received it it was like that also. Thus what you receive here is just the same as when Bapak received it.

But Bapak is not like a clever person, no! Bapak is not like someone called a Mahatma, no! Bapak is also not like a scholar, no! Bapak is also not a wise man, no! Bapak is the same as you all. It is only because God prepared Bapak that he could submit to Him, that he could truly surrender because he was filled completely by the Power of God; yes, whatever Bapak needed was there.

32: ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

S. & A.L., pp. 26-9

Regarding organization, it is impossible to have anyone international form uniting all the various centres and branches, since the laws, conditions and customs of each country differ

one from another. The Brotherhood of Subud is not in reality an organization, but a brotherhood of mankind throughout the world. That which is usually referred to as the organization of Subud is not an organization in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather the administrative structure necessary to serve the needs of the Brotherhood. That which gives unity to the Subud Brotherhood is the Latihan, which comes from God and by means of which we worship God, and this cannot possibly be organized like some worldly undertaking. In truth, it is God alone who directs, leads and guides the common worship of all mankind, and therefore this Subud Brotherhood of ours, standing before God, is beyond the reach of any human regulations.

None the less it is necessary to have some form of administrative machinery and records for this Subud Brotherhood of ours, to maintain external relationships between its members in such away that harmony, mutual understanding and mutual help can be established. Since the whole of the administrative and financial side of the work must be related to the national laws and customs of each country, Bapak has always recommended that all this should be done entirely in accordance with the local conditions. In this respect Bapak recommends that each Country should be autonomous; that is, that each should have its own administration to be responsible for all the practical problems of the Brotherhood in that particular area.

The distinction which should be made between the administration and the spiritual side-that is, between committee and helpers-is an important one. The committee exists to look after the practical needs of its membership. For example, the committee formed in the United States is solely concerned with the practical affairs of the Brotherhood in that country , and not outside it, whereas members of the United States helpers' group may give explanations and initiate new members in any country .A helper from America can open people in Europe and helpers from Europe can open people in America. Thus the members of a committee are concerned only with their own locality, whereas the helpers may exercise their functions wherever they may be or are required to go.

If questions arise for members in the course of their experiences in the exercise these can be referred to the group of helpers in that locality, and if this group cannot answer them then these questions can be forwarded to another group if this is considered necessary .If they still cannot be answered, then they can be sent on to Bapak himself; but it is to be hoped that helpers will deal with all the minor problems that continually arise, so that Bapak can be spared from having to answer them.

It should be clearly understood that the committee and the organizational side of Subud are no more than an instrument to serve our brothers in the worship of mankind towards God. Subud should never be allowed to crystallize into organized forms, for this would be to subject our worship of God to manmade rules, as if God Himself were to be organized by man. Therefore, although there are chairmen, deputy chairmen, secretaries and treasurers on the committees, there are none on the spiritual side, for here there can be no leadership save by God alone.

Organization in Subud is not like other organizations; it is no more than the administrative machinery required by the Brotherhood in the various countries. It is obvious that appropriate places are needed for the purpose of our worship together, and there are many

other needs for which the means should certainly be provided. It should be the responsibility of the committees to look after the financial side and to meet such needs within the given area. We should not rely only upon contributions from members to meet all these needs, for we have to remember that some of those who come in all sincerity to worship God are unable, for various reasons, to contribute anything. The committee should be able to lighten some of the burdens carried by their brothers, so that none is prevented from participating in the worship of God simply because of money. In this way, also, Subud avoids the suspicion that it is only open to the prosperous and not to the poor; it will be demonstrated that it is open to all who sincerely feel the need to worship God.

33 : IN AFFAIRS OF THE SPIRIT WE MUST BECOME AS CHILDREN

S. & A.L., pp. 39-40

You should not forget that it was only through his surrender and faith in God that Jesus in the end became a light to the world, so that his counsel is of the highest value to mankind. All this was achieved not by learning or through following any theory, but only by following after God.

Be sure, then, that the way in which your senses come into contact with the soul, leading you towards God, is by re-entering the state you experienced as a small child, free from the influences of the external world.

34: HELPERS NEWLY APPOINTED ARE NOT NECESSARILY SPIRITUALLY ADVANCED

S. & A.L., pp. 63-4

Bapak points out that in reality your appointment as helpers-apart from those in Indonesia-is an emergency procedure, necessary to save time. As you will realize, heavy traveling expenses would be involved if Bapak himself or helpers from Indonesia were to be present at every opening; moreover time and expense would make it impossible for Subud to spread quickly. For this reason Bapak considers it necessary to appoint helpers from among people outside Indonesia who have had a little experience in the receiving of the Latihan; because it is not necessary to have attained a high level in order to open others and exercise with them-it is quite enough if the being of these emergency helpers has become a channel through which

the mighty Life Force can flow.

It is different now from those former times of which Bapak was speaking last night (at Friends' House, Euston Road), when the Prophets and their disciples taught their message to mankind. In those days, teaching sufficed to spread religion, because what was required was simply faith. But the man of today cannot be asked simply to have faith; he wants proof. Subud brings proof, but this cannot be given by words; it can be given only by the reality within you, which can attract others, and by the transmission of the contact, which is only possible by being near to them. This cannot be done by preaching, as it was in olden times, when one man could teach many others at the same time-perhaps 10,000 in one evening. In Subud, one person cannot open any such number at the same time, but only four, five or perhaps ten at once, according to his own strength and ability to bear the burden which results from transmitting the contact, which can really be heavy. This has already been experienced by those who start new people and exercise with others.

It is because of the fact that many people wish to be opened and come to Subud that Bapak considers it necessary to appoint many of you to sit on the spiritual side as helpers in every place. It is to meet this need that he has appointed as many helpers as possible, although they do not yet possess the qualities required in a helper. Nevertheless, Bapak feels they are already in a position to transmit the higher power to others who wish to receive the contact.

35: PROPAGANDA UNNECESSARY FOR SUBUD

S. & A.L., pp. 69-71

If we attempt to sow the seed of Subud as this is ordinarily done in the world-that is, by means of our thoughts and desires-not only will our efforts to penetrate into human society be obstructed, but they will be fraught with danger; opposition and hindrances will stand in our way, so that instead of making progress we shall find ourselves stranded among conflicts and enmities. Attempts to act in this way will bring us into competition with our fellow men.

The nature of man is such that although he may recognize and be aware of his own faults, and of the shortcomings of his outward behaviour, yet it is impossible for him to admit these deficiencies to others and to give up that which by now he has come to enjoy.

This, as Bapak has said before, is why it depends upon the Will of God alone whether the truth of Subud will make progress and spread in the world or not, since Subud comes by the Will of God and is beyond the knowledge, the expectation and the power of man. This means that it is the Will of God that works within the being of man; and if it is God Himself who works in Subud, it is His Power that will remove every kind of barrier which hinders its development. It is God who will awaken the inner feelings and the inmost hearts of men, so that whether humanity is willing or not it must surely acknowledge that the Will of God which

is in Subud makes this a real path whereby men can come to the true worship of God.

How God in His Almighty Power will work this, man cannot understand. He can only speculate as to what God will bring to pass, for the working of God is beyond the measure of man. For example, history shows us that the hearts and minds of men cannot be brought to faith in God by any forcible action of their fellow men, who, of course, also use hearts and minds to achieve this aim. But God can compel men to believe in Him, for His Power is able to manifest in such ways that mankind cannot but experience it.

36: FAULT FINDING IS VALUELESS

S. & A.L., p. 74

We should not wish to find fault with others; we seek our own truth. For instance, Bapak seeks his own truth and does not wish to find fault with other people. But if other people wish to follow us, we accept them. We do not wish to persuade them to join us, or criticize what they have been doing—we seek only our own truth and needs. For if we find fault with others and try to correct their shortcomings, our chance of correcting ourselves is extremely slender. Again, therefore, seek the truth of your own being and do not look first at what is wrong in others. This will add to the steadiness, speed and clarity of your own receiving.

37: THE SPREAD OF SUBUD

S. & A.L., p. 139

Bapak is aware of the drive in your hearts and minds, especially here in Europe and in America, which is like an express train traveling at a hundred miles an hour. It is different in Indonesia; their hearts and minds are not driven at this speed, but more like a train going at fifty miles an hour. But Bapak advises the middle way, not too quick and not too slow. Seventy-five miles an hour will be fast enough. So our work in the spreading of this Subud should be fairly energetic but not too much of a drive. Do not go slowly and tell yourself: 'Ah well, it is not necessary' ; and then go happily to sleep.

38: SUBUD AND CHILDREN

S. & A.L., pp. 154-6

Bapak hopes that you will not think deeply about this, neither speculate on how to correct your children nor on how to influence them to become such human beings that they truly

worship God. It is through your own practice of these spiritual exercises of worship, which come from the Will and Power of God, that His working within you will automatically influence the self and the inner feelings of your wife and children.

Bapak therefore hopes you will have no anxiety or concern about your children because they cannot be opened until they reach the age of eighteen. Have no fear that they will be left behind; for they are, in truth, carried with you and influenced by you.

Such is the way of the spirit as decreed by the Law Of Almighty God.

With regard to the bringing up of children, there are two ways. The first is by precept and example, by giving them good advice in accordance with the teachings of religion and all that is really good and sound in human laws and customs. The second way, which is even stronger and which can have a really deep effect on them, comes from your own spiritual Latihan; as Bapak said earlier, these will influence the souls of your children in such a way that their character is changed without their own awareness of it.

39: EACH NATION TO CONFORM TO ITS OWN LAWS AND STANDARDS

S. & A.L., pp. 187-9

The evidence you should bring before human society is that of your own standards of behaviour. These should, in the first place, accord with that which is symbolized in the word Subud-that is, Susila Budhi Dharma-and, in the second, with the recognized morality and traditions of the country in which you live.

For instance, let us take as an example the people of Indonesia. As a rule the Indonesians do not dance in the Western style; they drink very little wine; a man does not walk hand in hand or arm in arm with a woman, even if she is his own wife. An Indonesian, therefore, should conform in his behaviour with the recognized customs of his people in order to give an example to society there.

In the same way, while you set an example by your good behaviour, those of you who belong to other races should never depart from the accepted good standards of your own country. To take another example, an American should behave according to the principles of Susila Budhi Dharma-that is, of the true human qualities-but at the same time he should not lose his American characteristics. He should faithfully adhere to the good customs of people in America and should observe the laws of that country.

To make this clear, Bapak will explain further. By living with these realities according to the customs and traditions of each particular country, we respect the worldly and spiritual freedom of all peoples and all nations, so that nobody is bound. If the example of our way of life were to be founded on the customs of Indonesia, for instance, the Americans and the

English would certainly be unable to follow it, because the way of life is different in each country.

That which should serve to direct and guide people in every country, in setting a good example in their lives, is that they should act and behave in a way that does not go against the Will of God, as it has been set forth in the teaching of all religions. This accords with what is symbolized in Subud by the words Susila Budhi Dharma. All our actions should be founded upon living according to the true human qualities. We should enter into the feelings of others; we should show mercy and help those who need love and help; we should behave to others as we would wish them to behave towards ourselves-that is, we should not hurt other people, because we should realize that it is painful and that they suffer as much pain as we ourselves do when we are hurt, So in nothing that we do should we cause harm to others or deprive them of their peace, Your own condition should be such that you are aware of the consequences of your actions, both as regards the other person and for yourself.

The point of this is that we should be truly human, and the way in which these truly human qualities should be manifested is through life lived according to the accepted customs of the country to which you belong. If we take America as an example, people there help one another financially, because there is a lot of money in America; and this is therefore one way to manifest the human qualities in that country, But if we take Indonesians as another example, their way of helping others can seldom be by means of money, because they are a poor people; their way is by giving advice and setting an example-although a certain amount of material help is given, it is not usually very much, but that which is given is, as a rule, very beneficial to those who receive it,

The meaning of what Bapak calls being human is very wide indeed in its scope, and you may understand it yourselves, as you should realize that the great underlying principle is brotherly love towards all mankind; we should be able to feel all humanity is one-one in heart and in feelings and one in the worship of God, If you have come to possess these qualities it means you also possess the very qualities symbolized in Subud, in the words Susila Budhi Dharma,

APPENDIX A 'TESTING'

[Note: Here is a subject which I was at one time reluctant to cover in an introductory volume. To those not yet in Subud (and even to some who are in Subud) much of what is stated below can have little meaning.

On the other hand, no subject has aroused greater interest. Wherever I have been in my travels-Singapore, Japan, America, England-more questions have been asked about testing than about any other subject.

I can only beg those who are not in Subud-or who have as yet no experience of testing, to suspend all judgment as to its implications until they are in a position to verify matters for themselves. For the rest, I sincerely hope that the following observations, rudimentary as they are, may prove helpful.]

'Testing' is a subject which seems to have been surrounded with a mysterious and hesitant silence. That testing embodies a great mystery is palpably true and it is beyond me to explain its workings. Yet Bapak himself so freely encourages us to test and to practice testing that I have been astonished at the lack of elementary comment on this aspect of Subud.

What follows is intended chiefly for beginners; I am not competent to write more.

The effect of the Subud Latihan is that we submit ourselves to an action in which we receive power or guidance from a source that is beyond ourselves. Testing is where we pose a question and then allow the Latihan to commence in us in the hope "that we may receive an answer.

In other words, by asking a question we ask for specific guidance on matters or problems which we do not feel competent to resolve ourselves.

I remember sitting in at an informal discussion when, with Bapak present, we asked: 'What sort of question can we test?' Dr. Zakir, who accompanied Bapak on that particular tour, said: 'Well, you wouldn't test for such things such as "where shall we hang the clock?"', But, apart from the completely trivial, it is apparently quite in order for us to test almost anything, if we feel that it is necessary.

It seems clear to me that matters which we can solve more appropriately with our own minds and intellects do not need testing-particularly where the emotions are not involved.

In fulfilling our worldly obligations, common sense and knowledge, coupled, I would suggest, with a sense of humour, are what we need most of the time. Even in Subud it is wise to look both ways before crossing the road.

The borderline between what may or may not be appropriately tested is often vague and shadowy. Each one of us must determine this frontier for himself. In the experience of many of us, this frontier is constantly changing.

Below in question and answer form I set out information gleaned from Bapak or from helpers who have accompanied Bapak on his world tours or who have been closely connected with him. These are questions which many of us have asked-sometimes even before we were ready to take our first hesitant steps. They are also questions which may be answered by any local helpers' group with some experience of testing.

How do I start to test? You pose a question and then allow the Latihan to commence in you. It is, of course, better to carry out testing after a full Latihan, as you will then be in as receptive a state as is possible for you at that moment of time.

How do I frame the question? To begin with (and until you are able to receive more

complicated answers) it is best to pose a question to which the answer can be a simple 'yes' or 'no', or can be satisfied in terms of 'right' or 'wrong'. For example, if you are considering the merits of, say, five different jobs in which you could earn your living, it is probably wiser to name each job one by one and ask 'Is this the right work for me?' rather than to ask 'which job shall I take?' Learning how best to frame our questions is a process which develops naturally as our experience grows.

How do we receive an answer 'yes' or 'no'? That will depend upon your reactions in the Latihan. If, for example, you have, as yet, experienced absolutely no movement or feeling of any sort during the Latihan, then it is probable that you will not yet be able to receive even a simple 'yes' or 'no'. But if you have movements of some kind, it will probably be possible to recognize a simple 'code' applicable to yourself which will vary according to your action in the Latihan. It is, to begin with, of little use to adopt a 'code' which involves reactions not yet experienced.

So the 'receiving' or 'code' may be different for each person? Yes. In fact, it usually is. A normal way to start is to allow the Latihan to commence and to pose the question 'How do I receive the answer "yes"?' Then see what happens. After ~at, pose the question: 'How do I receive the answer "no"?' Alternatively 'How do I receive if a course of action is right?'-'. ..is wrong?' On the answers to these questions you can base the interpretation of your receiving.

How can I be sure that I am receiving the right answer? Most people cannot be sure for a very long time and that is why Bapak always advises testing with a helpers' group to begin with. Those who are not personally involved in a particular problem are less likely to be burdened with the anxieties or prejudices which often beset those who are closely concerned with it.

Here I will digress with some general reference to the change in attitude towards testing which has occurred during the six years since I first compiled the material set out in this appendix. At that time, very few individuals, and not so very many helpers' groups either, had sufficient confidence or experience to 'live by' testing or to come to decisions by testing together. Committees (and even helpers) were often suspicious of it and in some instances openly hostile.

Today, the situation-and I speak chiefly from experience of Subud in the United Kingdom-is very different. There has been a remarkable change for the better. Confidence and trust have demonstrably increased and very few decisions are now taken without prior submission to a helpers' group for testing.

A Subud member in India has aptly used the simile of a 'compass' in relation to testing. It is indeed true that each Subud member carries permanently with him (if he but knew how to use it) a spiritual compass to help him maintain the course which he ought to be following. As with a compass at sea or on land, one's navigation tends to improve with experience of its use. On a dark night or in fog when one's ordinary sight is almost useless and landmarks virtually disappear, the guidance afforded by a compass, correctly interpreted, helps to keep us on the right track and, by analogy, testing can help us to do the same in our daily lives.

By now, many of us could fill a small volume with our own experiences of testing both for

ourselves and in relation to others.

As the action of the Latihan goes deeper, so does a member increasingly turn to this worship of God 'inside' to guide him to do what is right on the outside. The expression 'testing for the Will of God' has been used, but Bapak has indicated that the pure Will of God could prove overwhelming when related to our own relative insignificance. But we are assured that, through testing, guidance from God will come for all who sincerely seek it.

It goes almost without saying that our receiving is sometimes likely to be imperfect, but then so also is our workaday knowledge and judgment on which we normally base our decisions.

Speaking for my wife and myself I can say that in following the guidance received in testing we have never yet been let down. This is not the same as saying that the course of events or the action required has always been easy. On occasions (fortunately very rarely) it has involved considerable difficulty.

What is clear, however, is that the more we are able to bring sincerity, trust, patience and submission to bear the greater seems to be the measure of protection when we test. This applies even when our receiving is imperfect or over-influenced by our own wishes and will.

It is obvious that God knows our exact degree of sincerity and, even more important, he knows our precise needs. It follows that it would be a mis-use of testing to treat it as a means of fortune telling, to use it out of idle curiosity or to undertake it with any sense of 'demanding' an answer. It is perhaps self-evident that we should submit to the guidance received in testing, but what is equally sure is that we must also surrender, on occasion, to an apparent 'lack of guidance'.

It is common knowledge that members of a helpers' group do not always receive unanimous guidance. This does not, of itself, necessarily indicate 'correct' and 'incorrect' receiving. Those with a little experience in testing have realized that, sometimes, different aspects of the same problem are received. Often, by testing around a question, unanimity is achieved and this sometimes points to the conclusion that, perhaps, the wrong question was asked in the first place.

I have occasionally found that Subud members, in their early days, imagine that, in testing, our guidance should come in some spectacular form-visions, inner voices and the like. They do not seem to realize that our needs can often be adequately met in a much more simple way.

It seems clear that our receiving is tailored exactly to our needs. If a plain 'yes' or 'no' is all that we require, then that is all we will receive.

Many people expect that not only should they be given spectacular guidance but that they should also be shown 'why'. In my view this is a classic example of our habit of demanding more than we need. It also tends to confuse (by the use of our mind and our thinking), the simple quality of guidance which, ideally, is received beyond intellect and thought. If it is necessary for us to know 'why', we may be sure that the knowledge will be given to us sooner or later.

To live in Subud without accepting the Grace so freely given to us in testing is like setting oneself a task while at the same time deliberately cutting oneself off from the one means which can lead to its successful accomplishment. Subud without testing is, in short, a contradiction in terms.

Like everything else in Subud, testing is above all an experience—a very special experience of receiving. It lies at the heart of Subud and therefore of our daily lives. It is a great blessing which most of us accept with an increasing sense of wonder, reverence and awe.

About the Author

Edward (formerly known as Gordon) Van Hien was born in Singapore in 1916. Although his parents were Dutch, he received his preparatory and public school education in England. He was articled in London where he qualified as an accountant.

He spent some twenty-four years of his professional life in Singapore, including an interruption of three and a half years in prison during the Japanese occupation. He was married and had two children.

He joined Subud in 1959 and was active in Subud affairs as and when necessity arose.

Edward van Hien passed away in 1978. The book was first published in 1963 by Rider & Co in the UK and reprinted in 1968.