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Attitudes

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Attitudes

In some contemporary uses of the words, having "an attitude" is usually applied to a person who is somewhat negative toward others, or at least non-compliant. But we all go about our lives with attitudes, which can be positive, and therefore helpful to us and to others. We are neither programmed with attitudes, nor do we create them as we might compose a message or draw a picture. Attitudes grow, whether or not we consciously nurture them.

An attitude of hope is worthy of consideration as being both positive in its effects, and mysterious in its origins. Hope is perhaps more intangible than either faith or love, because we have so many experiences of the latter wherever we go and whatever we do. But hope? Which, of our daily actions, might be expressions of hope? Or, how do we exercise hope so that as we grow in our capacity as persons of confidence and care, we might also become more hopeful?

Whatever we might think about hope, we are sure that it is not a commodity that can be acquired somewhere, any more than one can buy love. Love, even proper love of oneself, is clearly personal, and is not some possession like a piece of jewelry. Faith too is about persons whom we trust, including ourselves, for we do not really trust things, except by analogy. And hope is perhaps even more reliant on relationships with persons than either faith or love.

Hope, like flowers and other plants, has roots; it does not exist on its own. We can call up hope when we are in difficult circumstances if we already have one or more significant, trustworthy, and loving relationships in our lives. If a child learns that it can rely on parents, that child will develop hope. Most of us who are older have family and friends whom we can legitimately hope will assist us in time of need. And, regarding ourselves, we might have reasonable hope based upon years of experience that we will be able to meet whatever challenges might arise.

The self-confidence we have developed by this time in our lives, the wisdom which enables us to make friends who are trustworthy, arises consciously or implicitly from our relationship with God. God is the source of inspirations and insights that enable us to look ahead and to know within ourselves that "all will be well" even while our minds are occupied with many reasonable objections to the contrary.

Hope is founded on experiences of God's goodness, whether in terms of the cosmos in which we live or through personal encounters including those that

take place in prayer. When we recognize that we have been cared for in some manner that encompasses all of our experiences of trust and love thus far in life, even if we do not choose to name the source as God, we are people with an affinity for hope.

For hope to mature and to develop as an attitude within us, we do well to call to mind in a regular fashion, daily events, both small and large, that reveal the movements of trust and love that we receive and give. An attitude of gratitude becomes, without our consciously making it so, an attitude of hope.