

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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Part XV

How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day? (M-16) (cont.)

Let us turn now to "How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?" which will address the issue of magic. We will start with paragraph eight.

(8:1) Yet there will be temptations along the way the teacher of God has yet to travel, and he has need of reminding himself throughout the day of his protection.

"His protection," of course, is the Holy Spirit's presence. There is nothing in the world that is needed for our protection and nothing in the world from which we have to be protected. Protection comes from the peace within our own minds. What we believe protects us in the world is what the Course means by *magic*. We first believe that there is a problem outside our minds that has to be solved—whether the problem is in our own body, in other bodies, or someplace in the world. And we believe we know the solution, which we use to fix the problem we have defined. The solution then is what the Course calls magic.

For example, if I have a headache, which is a problem I experience in my body, and I say that aspirin will take care of the headache, the aspirin then is a form of magic. Calling it magic does not mean that the aspirin or any other form of medication or intervention does not work. It does work on the level of the dream. But it does not undo the *cause* of the headache, which is the unforgiveness or the guilt in my mind. The only way to "cure" the unforgiveness in my mind is for me to forgive.

The Course frequently contrasts magic with the miracle. The miracle involves recognizing that the problem—guilt—is in my mind and it is there that forgiveness can let it go. That is real problem solving. That is the miracle. And magic is everything but that. Magic keeps my attention rooted in my body and the world, and away from my mind where both the problem of guilt and its solution are found. Magic says my problem is outside my mind, in my body, or out there in the world, and I know how to solve it. So magic attempts to solve a problem without ever really solving it. And that is why the Course says that the ego's rule or maxim is: "Seek but do not find" (e.g., T-12.IV.1:4; T-16.V.6:5; W-pl.71.4:2). We are always seeking to find solutions to problems that do not exist. And, of course, we never find the solutions because the problems are not outside us. The only problem is our *belief* in being separate and guilty, and that belief is in our minds. Therefore, the only way of solving the problem is to bring it back into our minds and then release it to the Holy Spirit.

So again, magic says the problem and its solution are both outside. The problem is something in the world that is threatening me. And therefore, what will protect me is some expression of magic.

(8:2) How can he do this, particularly during the time when his mind is occupied with external things?

In other words, how can I remind myself throughout the day of what truly protects me? How can I remind myself that the solution to what concerns me is within my mind if I am continually preoccupied with what is outside?

(8:3-4) He can but try, and his success depends on his conviction that he will succeed. He must be sure success is not of him, but will be given him at any time, in any place and circumstance he calls for it.

Regardless of what is concerning me, I know that at any given moment I can find the help of God. I only have to ask for it and accept it. Magic says: "I don't need God. I know what the problem is and I can do it on my own." That thought is what gave birth to the ego in the first place: "I don't need God. I can do it on my own." So magic is a way of defending against the problem of guilt in my mind by shifting the problem outside my mind and trying to solve it there. We could then say, in a larger sense, that the making up of the world was the ego's magical attempt to solve the problem of itself!

As we saw earlier, the ego says that guilt is real and it is in our minds. We lock it in our minds so that it is shut tight, and then we project the problem outside and say the problem is outside our minds. The problem is all around in the world. That is the ego's way of magically solving the problem of guilt. And then we spend the rest of our lives trying to solve all the problems of the world, forgetting that there are no problems in the world because there is no world. The only problem is simply the *belief* that there is a world, and that there is a need for a world because that is what protects us from looking within our minds. The miracle brings the problem back within the mind and magic continually throws it back outside.

(8:5) There are times his certainty will waver, and the instant this occurs he will return to earlier attempts to place reliance on himself alone.

Myself alone, independent of the Holy Spirit, does not mean that my ego may not have me "join" with you—its own version of joining—and say: "You tell me what to do." But I am still the one who is setting the whole thing up.

(8:6-7) Forget not this is magic, and magic is a sorry substitute for true assistance. It is not good enough for God's teacher, because it is not enough for God's Son.

"True assistance" can only be of the Holy Spirit. Nothing in this world can ever take the place of God. The whole ego thought system began with the belief that it *can* take the place of God.

(9:1-2) The avoidance of magic is the avoidance of temptation. For all temptation is nothing more than the attempt to substitute another will for God's.

The original temptation occurred when the Son of God chose to listen to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. In the context of the Adam and Eve myth, Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to believe that a voice other than God's speaks in our minds, and even more to the point, that that other voice actually is our friend and God is not.

(9:3) These attempts may indeed seem frightening, but they are merely pathetic.

Things in the world appear frightening, but everything in the world is only a form of magic. Even a threat on the scope of nuclear war is nothing more than magic. It is an ego attempt to tell the Son what will

save him: "Don't look at the battlefield within your own mind because that will destroy you. Rather, look at the battlefield out here in the world. And we'll make it a really good battle so that you'll be preoccupied with it." That is magic because it is the ego's way of telling the Son, "Look outside and you'll be protected because you won't have to get in touch with the horror and the terror of the battlefield within yourself."

Preoccupation with anything of the world is magic: preoccupation to save the planet, to save the world, to make the earth pure, to rid the world of cancer, AIDS, polio, starvation, famine, etc. All these are magical attempts to solve a problem that will never be solved. The whole history of the world as we know it is just a progression from one war to another, from one disease to another, and another, and another. And it will never ever change.

These are all ego smokescreens so that we never look where the problem really is. That is magic. The ego is saying to us: "There is no way you can deal with this awful terror and guilt within your mind. So we just won't address it. We will just lock it away and never go anywhere near it. We will magically solve the problem by seeing it outside and then solving it there." That is temptation.

(9:4) They can have no effects; neither good nor bad, neither rewarding nor demanding sacrifice, healing nor destructive, quieting nor fearful.

These are all the things that we do in the world, all of our magical attempts. Jesus is again saying that there is absolutely nothing in the world. There is nothing good, there is nothing bad. Nobody gets sick; nobody gets healed. Nobody is born; nobody dies. It is all made up. And we are just choosing among different puppets, saying: "This is a nice puppet. This is not a nice puppet."

And all of this is just a continuation of the ego's attempt to replicate God's power. In contrast, in the real world we look at everything and simply say, "It's all the same." There are no various manifestations of sickness or disease in the real world, because the real world is not the world. It is an attitude, a state of mind. And when everybody shares that state of mind, the world simply disappears. The goal of the Course is not to rid the world of famine and pestilence and disease and war—that would be ridding nothing of nothing.

People have been trying for centuries to have a perfect world, a utopia. But the world cannot be made perfect because it was made from an imperfect thought. The Course says in the section "The Special Function" that in this world, which is not perfect, we can yet do one perfect thing, which is to forgive (T-25.VI.5:1-3). The idea is not to conceive of a perfect world; that is not the point. The Course's approach is to look at the imperfection in the world and smile at it. And then it disappears.

(9:5) When all magic is recognized as merely nothing, the teacher of God has reached the most advanced state.

All magic, which is all of the solutions to all of the issues in the world, is neither good nor bad. It is nothing. Once we place a value on any of the solutions, we are obviously giving them a reality they do not have. They are neither good nor bad. They are nothing. The only "bad" and "good" are the ego's and the Holy Spirit's thought systems in our minds. And they have nothing to do with the world.

(9:6-9) All intermediate lessons will but lead to this, and bring this goal nearer to recognition. For magic of any kind, in all its forms, simply does nothing. Its powerlessness is the reason it can be so easily escaped. What has no effects can hardly terrify.

One of the recurring symbols in the Course that I mentioned earlier is that of children's toys. Jesus talks about toys being frightening to a child because a child does not recognize that they are simply toys. And when the child realizes that they are toys, they are no longer frightening (T-30.IV.2-3). Similarly, the Course is trying to help us realize that all the things of this world are simply toys, and they are not frightening. How could we be frightened of something that is not alive? We need to realize that everything is simply part of a puppet show and the puppets are absolutely lifeless. The action is all occurring on the level of the mind.

It is our ego mind that tells us that we should be afraid and that fear is real. When we realize that, then nothing in this world, without exception, will cause us any anxiety or pain at all. The goal is to realize that nothing in this world has any power over us. It may have power over the body. As the Course says: "Are thoughts, then, dangerous? To bodies, yes!" (T-21.VIII.1:1-2). But if we recognize that we are not bodies, then they can have no effect on us. Now we don't just jump from the ego thought system right into this realization. It is a step-by-step process: the "intermediate lessons" Jesus refers to here. And that is why there is a strong emphasis on this being a process.

What helps us move along in our process much more speedily—at least on an intellectual level, even if we are not ready yet to experience it—is understanding that there is literally nothing here. I am upset about the purpose that I have given to this lifeless puppet that I call myself, or that I call this planet, or this nation of people. My reaction has absolutely nothing to do with anything that is here. It is simply a projection of a thought in my mind that my ego tells me will magically protect me from my real problem, which is God's vengeance. And when I begin to see that everything here is an expression of God's vengeance from my ego's point of view, I realize it is insane. My realization may begin as an intellectual process, but very rapidly it can become an experience, as I begin to apply these principles to the things in my life that are making me anxious, upset, angry, guilty, and fearful. I begin to see that I really can look at things differently. I am not upset because of what is out there. I am merely upset because of what I believe is real within my mind. I cannot change what is out there, but I can certainly change what is within me. No matter what is going on around me, I can be peaceful. That again is what it means to be a teacher of God.