

## Miracles versus Magic

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Temecula CA

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

### Part II Introduction (cont.)

Magic works not only on the level of form, but also on the level of content, in the mind. The mind is split into two parts, what the early chapters of the text refer to as the wrong mind and the right mind, the home of the ego and the home of the Holy Spirit. The entire wrong mind is also magic, a magical solution to a nonexistent problem. What the world is attempting to solve, which boils down to the problem of guilt in our minds, is also nonexistent, and is also magic. Guilt is not something that just appears. Guilt is something that is purposive, and is made by the ego. It is important to remember that when we speak of the ego, we are not talking about a separate entity: *the ego is us*. The ego is the part of our mind that likes being on its own, autonomous, independent, separate, unique, differentiated, and, of course, it likes being special. That is the ego. Thus, the ego is not a kind of entity or strange thing that has invaded us. *We are the ego*.

We, as the one ego mind, invented guilt as a solution to a problem, and therefore guilt itself is magic. It was made to ensure that we would feel so terrible about ourselves and our mind that we would want to leave the mind, in a magical attempt to flee from the horrific consequences of our guilt. That is the purpose of guilt: to convince us that there will be terrible consequences because of it. These consequences are so horrific—nothing less than annihilation at the hands of God—that we cannot wait to get away from it. The ego's solution—"the maladaptive solution to the nonexistent problem of guilt"—is to flee the mind and make up a world. But guilt itself is made up. Why does the ego want us to be afraid of remaining in our mind?—because if we remain in our mind, we will change our mind about the ego. The part of us that likes being separated, alone, on our own, and free is terrified that it will lose its freedom. The only way we can lose our freedom is if another part of our mind, which we refer to as the decision maker, will choose against the ego. That is the fear. If we choose against the ego, then we must choose for the Holy Spirit, the memory of who we really *are*. The ego is the thought of who we really *are not*.

Choosing the ego, thus, is choosing nothing, because we are choosing who we are not. Choosing against the ego is choosing who we are, as God created us. That is the reality and the truth. Anything else has to be the denial of reality and truth, which automatically makes it an illusion. Guilt, then, becomes the magical attempt to protect and solve the presumed threat of losing this imaginary and illusory self. Thus, you can see that right from the beginning the whole thing is made up. We choose a self that does not exist, and then we build a kingdom and a castle on what does not exist. Then we seek to protect this kingdom—to protect what does not exist. Moreover, we believe there are all kinds of monsters, threats,

and other things around us that can invade our kingdom, against which we have to protect ourselves. All these monsters and terrible things in the world that we are so afraid of are nothing more than the projection of the monster of guilt, which is in our mind, and made up in order to protect the self, which, again, is made up.

Thus, it is just one made-up thing leading to another made-up thing, leading to another—layers and layers of defenses and attempts to protect ourselves against nothing. Every attempt to protect ourselves is magic. But, again, the principal characteristic of magic is that it does not work. It cannot work because it is set up not to work. It is protecting nothing from nothing, which means magic will always fail.

However, because we do not know that it is protecting nothing, by invoking solutions of nothing against perceived problems that are nothing, we continue to play the game over and over again, which is why nothing ever changes in the world.

To state it again, what the miracle does is expose all of this. That is what *A Course in Miracles* does. A line I often quote says that the miracle "merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false" (W-pII.13.1:3). We could say that the miracle looks on magic and reminds the mind—the decision maker in our mind—that what it sees is false. It exposes the lie. It looks on the world's devastation as a reflection or a shadow of the devastation of guilt in our mind, and gently reminds us that what we are looking at is not true. If it is not true, it does not need a defense, nor do we. We do not have to implore Jesus or the Holy Spirit to help us with the defense, or to help us with the body or the world.

What has been wrong with Christianity right from the beginning—as with every formal religion right from the beginning—is that once the founder or the visionary is gone, the followers invoke magical gods. It is a magical god if that god, its representative, or the teaching of the representative has anything whatsoever to do with the world, cares about the world, sees the world, worries about the world, fights with the world, and/or does anything about the body. It is only a magical god who would "count the hairs on your head," care about war, cancer, or sickness. How could the true God care about something that does not exist? Only a magical god does. Unfortunately, most of the gods that *Course in Miracles* students get involved with—whether they call it God, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, or anything else—are all magic, because they are appeals for these people to do something about the world.

Why do we continually appeal to magic and make up gods to be magicians? Why do we not see that the world is a "maladaptive solution to a nonexistent problem"? Why do not we see that our physical individual life is a maladaptive solution to an individual problem? There is a very good reason: because we are children of magic. We were born in magic. Magic was the principle that gave birth to us, so why would we choose anything but magic? If I believe I am magic, then of course I want a god to be magical, too. In fact, I cannot understand a god or a Jesus who is not magical. I cannot understand this book, this course, unless it is magical, because *I* am magical. Thus, when Jesus tells us in the text, "You cannot even think of God without a body, or in some form you think you recognize" (T-18.VIII.1:7), he is talking about magic. Of course I have to think about God as a body in some way, because *I* am a body.

What is the body? The body is part of the ego's magical solution to the nonexistent problem of guilt. This is not called *A Course in Magic*; it is called *A Course in Miracles*. We are not encouraged to ask the Holy Spirit or Jesus to do things for us. That would be what *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet would imply is asking-to-destroy. In the first chapter of the pamphlet, Jesus talks about asking, although he does not use the phrase asking-to-destroy. In the second chapter, which is about forgiveness, he does talk about

"forgiveness-to-destroy," but in the first chapter, when he talks about asking God or the Holy Spirit for specifics, he says that that is the same as looking on sin and then forgiving it (S-1.I.4:2), which he later calls "forgiveness-to-destroy" (S-2.II). Asking for specifics is asking-to-destroy, because it is an attempt to destroy the power of the miracle. It is an attempt to once again crucify Jesus by rendering him totally impotent. How could he possibly help us if we prevent him from going to the one place where he can help us, which is in the mind? Actually, we do not prevent him from going there—he is already there. What we do is prevent ourselves from going there. The whole purpose of this course is to convince us that we want to go back to the mind, because that is where the true solution lies. Everything and anything else is magic.

The reason *The Song of Prayer* was written a year after the Course's publication was that people were not understanding what prayer is and what asking the Holy Spirit means. Well-meaning *Course in Miracles* students were already becoming miserable "sinners"—like twenty-one hundred years of Christians—because they were asking for specifics and invoking a god of magic. I assure you, Jesus does not care what you do in this world, because he knows you are not in this world. He cares about the decision you make in your mind, because whatever you do in this world, which is not even here, is the reflection of a decision that your mind makes. That is the cause.

What the miracle does is drag us all, kicking and screaming like little babies who will do anything to get their way, from our fixation on the world and the body and all the problems, both personal and collective. The miracle drags us—against what we think is our better judgment—from the world to the mind. It takes us from the world of magic to the world of healing. The problem, once again, is that we do not want to go. Thus, one of Jesus' great challenges for all students of this course is to convince us that we really *do* want to learn what he is teaching, because we do not think we want to learn what he is teaching. We want him to teach us what *we* want to learn, but we do not want to learn what *he* is teaching, so he has to convince us. In other words, to use Freud's very important term, he tries to help us overcome our *resistance*. You cannot overcome something when you are not aware of it. One of the most important values of the workbook is that if you really pay attention to what you are doing and to what you are not doing, you will recognize how deeply resistant you are to the exercises. And if you are not deeply resistant to the exercises, then either you are not aware of your resistance, or you are so spiritually advanced that you do not even have to bother doing them. That is the real value of the workbook. There is no way we could accept the one-year mind-training program that is the purpose of the workbook if we were not aware of our resistance to learning it. We want a workbook of magic, and the workbook seems to subscribe to that—it deals with 365 lessons for a calendar year, as if there really were a calendar year. Why is it 365 and not 387 or 242?—because we have decided that a year is 365 days!

Again, the workbook comes in a magical form. It is very much governed by our conception of time. Jesus talks about minutes, hours, and days. Each 24-hour day is structured for one year. It gives us time to sleep, but otherwise it is very carefully structured—all based on our conception of time, which he tells us, as I just quoted, is a magic trick, a "vast illusion" (W-pl.158.4:1). Jesus uses our concepts and our structures, which are magical, to lead us beyond them, to the miracle. Again, what is extremely important is to pay careful attention, not so much to what the workbook says, although obviously you should, but to how you *react* to what the workbook says. This means not just intellectually, but personally: how often you forget; how willing you are to trivialize certain things, or to make other things

seem to be of great magnitude. Watch how you approach the workbook. That will help you get in touch with your resistance.