

Our Gratitude to God

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Part XVI

"Attainment of the Real World" (cont.)

(T-13.VII.15:2) Kneel not before the altars to sacrifice, and seek not what you will surely lose.

The ego's plan for salvation—to lead us away from God into nowhere—is through sacrifice, where we always have to give up something. This is not the major theme of our discussion, but the way we protect ourselves in this world is through the special relationship bargain, where we have to get something from others in order to survive. And the way we get what we want from others is to give them something, because we have to pay them for what we are stealing from them. That is the notion of sacrifice, what the Course refers to earlier as the ego's law of "giving to get" (T-4.II.6:5). If I am going to get something from you, I have to give you something in return.

In the ultimate sense, this is what we all believe we have to do with God. We all have been taught that to get God's Love and forgiveness, we have to give Him something, a gift of our sacrifice and suffering. It is clear that Christianity is not the organization or institution that invented this, nor did Judaism. No institution invented it. The ego invented it right at the beginning, and the institutions of the world have simply reflected in form the basic content that is in everyone, which is that the only way we can receive what we want is to give up something for it. There is not a free and loving exchange; it is always some kind of bargain where we want to give up and give to others as little as we can, but get as much as we can from them. That is the idea of sacrifice, and that is why the ego tells us God's Will for us is perfect misery, not happiness. God wants us to suffer because we are such terrible persons.

(T-13.VII.15:3) Content yourself with what you will as surely keep [the gifts of God's peace and Love, rather than the gifts of the ego], **and be not restless, for you undertake a quiet journey to the peace of God, where He would have you be in quietness.**

The ego's journey is anything but quiet and peaceful. It is always full of conflict, tension, and struggle, because the ego itself is a thought of conflict, tension, and struggle. It is a thought of the warfare between itself and God, and that is why being truly peaceful and quiet has no place in the ego system.

(T-13.VII.16:1) In me [this is Jesus speaking to us] **you have already overcome every temptation that would hold you back.**

If we join with Jesus and turn to him as our teacher, brother, and friend, then we have already overcome all temptations to listen to the ego. That is almost by definition, because to turn away from Jesus is to be that ego. To turn toward him is to turn away from the ego and everything that the ego would have us do: the temptations to hold on to grievances, not to forgive, to make judgments, to feel sorry for ourselves, etc.

(T-13.VII.16:2) We walk together on the way to quietness that is the gift of God.

The ego tells us God's gift is war and destruction, not quietness and peace.

(T-13.VII.16:3-4) Hold me dear, for what except your brothers can you need? We will restore to you the peace of mind that we must find together.

This is one place among many in *A Course in Miracles* where Jesus is asking us to take his hand and hold his love close to us, to turn to this other presence in our mind, a loving presence that represents a totally different thought system. If Jesus is a difficult symbol, then we should substitute another. What is crucial is that we not turn to the ego or to ourselves for help—we and the ego are synonymous.

The major theme of the Course is that in joining with Jesus we are also joining with each other. By joining with each other, we are joining with him. There is no difference. It is impossible to join truly with another person and let go of all the barriers—grievances, anxieties, and guilt associated with that person—without joining with Jesus. Remember, we do not have any choice other than to join with the ego or with Jesus (or the Holy Spirit). There is no other option. If we are going to join truly with another and let go of our ego's belief system, then we are automatically joining with the Holy Spirit or Jesus. Likewise, if we join with Jesus and ask his help in a situation, we are automatically joining with the other person, because it is impossible that anything his love would guide us to do would be separating. There is no difference. That is why lines like this appear: "Hold me dear, for what except your brothers can you need? We will restore to you the peace of mind that we must find together."

(T-13.VII.16:5) The Holy Spirit will teach you to awaken unto us and to yourself.

Here Jesus is really talking about the Holy Spirit as our Teacher. In reality, of course, the Holy Spirit's and Jesus' Voice are the same. The "us" here is Jesus and our brothers.

(T-13.VII.16:6-7) This is the only real need to be fulfilled in time. Salvation from the world lies only here.

This is kind of a fairy tale way of talking to a little child. Jesus is making it very clear that we really have no needs in this world except the need to awaken from this dream, the need to join with each other and forgive. That is the only need, and if we feel there is something in the world that has to happen and we have an investment in it happening, it is always because we feel there is something missing in us. If I am in a relationship with you and I want the relationship to change the way I want it to, it is always because I feel I have a need that has to be met. Our focus should not be on asking the Holy Spirit or Jesus to help us fix something out there, because that is to fix nothing. If we have already agreed that there is nothing out there and the ego is nowhere, then why bother to have the Holy Spirit tell us we should fix something that is not even there? That would be the same thing as asking help of the person who works the projector to fix the screen because the movie is not showing right.

The film that is running through our machine is a film of guilt, attack, sacrifice, and certainly of ingratitude. That is what has to be looked at. Our only real need then is to fix our thought system. That is the only way we can be saved from the world. You cannot be saved from the world by doing something *with* the world; unless you are insane, that is, because you would be doing something with a world that does not exist.

(T-13.VII.16:8-9) My peace I give you. Take it of me in glad exchange for all the world has offered but to take away.

This is the same theme that is in the prose poem, "The Gifts of God," where Jesus is continually saying to us, "My gifts are going to make you much happier than your gifts or the gifts of the world. Take my gifts instead." The reason this is such an important theme here is that all of us have believed on some level, whether individually or not, that Jesus' or the Holy Spirit's gifts are anything but peaceful, that They are going to destroy us, and that if we give everything over to Jesus, we will have nothing left. That is the control issue or the authority problem—that there will be nothing left of us. That is true, but who says that our individual self is such a good deal! Paraphrasing two passages, Jesus says to us, "Resign as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught" (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). Yet we keep insisting that we know what is best for us; this self that is really nothing, we think is a great thing to be worshipped, revered, protected, and idolized, etc. Or if we do not feel that way about ourselves, we certainly feel it about someone else's self whom we want to incorporate. The whole idea is to be able to give up any sense of self.

An important theme of the Course is to realize that we do not know what is in our own best interests (W-pl.24). Prior to his discussion of the ten characteristics of a teacher of God, Jesus says a teacher of God is someone who no longer sees another's interests as separate from his own (M-1.1:2). There is no sense of me and you. The idea of *kill or be killed* is that you have *your* interests, I have *my* interests, and they are not always the same; my interests are more important than yours. There is always a conflict.

Jesus is saying, "My gift, my peace, is much more valuable to you, because my peace is going to make you happy if you exchange it for all the gifts the world has given you. Even if you have gotten the gifts the world has promised, if you look at them openly, you would realize that they are nothing."

(T-13.VII.16:9) Take it of me in glad exchange for all the world has offered but to take away.

The world really wants us to sacrifice and give up things. The gifts of Jesus are there for us only to help us, not to hurt us or anyone else. Once we accept it within our mind, the love that comes from our mind joining with his extends through us into the world. It does not mean literally into the world, because there is no world. The world is only a representation of our thoughts. While we each have our individual thoughts, so we think, these individual thoughts and the individual mind are simply part of the collective mind. The Course says, "When I am healed I am not healed alone" (W-pl.137). That is why Jesus says we arose with him (C-6.5:5)—because all minds are joined. It is the joining of the mind in love that is the real world. When we all do it as one, that is what the Course calls the Second Coming, the end of the collective dream. Thus, Jesus is saying here not that the world is going to be covered, but the thought of love now is going to be spread throughout the mind of the Sonship.

(T-13.VII.16:10) And we will spread it like a veil of light across the world's sad face, in which we hide our brothers from the world, and it from them.

This is an image that seems to refer to something external, but it is really the love that we have accepted in our mind, which is now joined with Jesus, a symbol of God's Love in our mind. That love will extend through us. That is what Jesus means in the workbook when he says, "For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands through which I save the world" (W-pl.rV.in.9:3). Obviously, he does not mean saving the world outside. He is talking about saving the world from the thought that there is a world outside.

Within the dream that thought of love has to be experienced, so we need symbols. Jesus himself was such a symbol, but he is not here in the body any longer. So now he needs our bodies to be symbols of his love, just as his love was the symbol of the Holy Spirit's Love. When we join with him, this light of love will spread and radiate throughout the Sonship, dispelling the veils of hate that kept us separate from our brothers, and through projecting our guilt, keeps them apart—in our minds—from the world of forgiveness.

(T-13.VII.17:1) We cannot sing redemption's hymn alone.

The ego's redemption hymn is that we do it alone, because to the ego, salvation or redemption is to be alone. The primary thought of the ego is: "I am on my own. I do not need God; I can do this by myself. Therefore, I do not have to be grateful to God or to a Holy Spirit or to anyone else, because I can do it on my own." Salvation then depends simply on my doing it on my own. Certainly that has been a major theme of many spiritualities in the world; that is, that all I have to do is be alone with God; I do not need anyone else. I just go and be alone with God, which would make sense in terms of the idea that God is in my mind and is not outside. But the way it often has been practiced is more reflective of the idea that I do not need anyone else, and no one else counts. All that counts is that I have a wonderful, beautiful, powerful, and mystical experience of God. Then the world does not matter. That is not what the Course is talking about. It seems to be similar, but the attitude is much different.

That is why gratitude is such a major theme in *A Course in Miracles*—that we be grateful, not only to God and Jesus or the Holy Spirit, but for the world itself, not because the world is real, but because the world is a classroom in which we learn that it is not real. Redemption's hymn cannot be sung alone; it has to be done through a spirit or an attitude of joining with Jesus and everyone else.

Another way of understanding this, in terms of the undoing of the ego system, is that in the ego's thought system, the way I am saved is by taking my unconscious guilt and dumping it onto you. It does not matter to me what happens to you, because now I am free of it. That is another way of saying all that matters to me is *me*, not you. It is like a seesaw effect. In order for me to go up on the seesaw, you have to go down. That is what we do when we project. We believe magically we have gotten rid of our sinfulness and guilt by giving it to others. In exchange, we have stolen their innocence, so now we are the innocent ones, and they are the guilty ones. Remember, the ego's system is always one of differences. If I am guilty then you must be innocent. But if you are guilty then I am innocent. The way I ensure that you are the guilty one is by continually dumping my guilt onto you; I attack you, and make judgments of you. Therefore, why should I be grateful to you?

The undoing of that is realizing that I cannot get to Heaven by stepping on you. I can only get to Heaven by walking *with* you. That is what the Course means when it says, "The ark of peace is entered two by two" (T-20.IV.6:5), "Salvation is a collaborative venture" (T-4.VI.8:2), and "We cannot sing redemption's hymn alone." It does not mean that to do the Course you have to walk with someone physically, or that you have to have a lover or a spouse, or an employer who is a pain in the neck. It does not mean anything like that, because relationships exist in the mind, not in the body. You usually do not have to work hard at finding someone that you have to forgive.

As many people have observed, the ego's world is a world of opposites. Newton held that for every action there is a reaction, a theory that would seem to come right out of the ego thought system. And one way of understanding how different the Course is to contrast it with other kinds of spiritualities such

as Taoism that talks about yin and yang, or with Jung's theories that talk about reconciling opposites and bringing them together. *A Course in Miracles* is saying you cannot reconcile what does not go together. What you do with love and hate is recognize that love is not love and hate is not hate, either. Both are illusions. In other words, you raise yourself above the battleground or above the opposites. And it is in doing that that they are reconciled by disarming. Neither of them is true; but in the ego's world, they are—absolutely. This is a world of opposites. In fact, that is what the ego's birth is. The ego looked at God and said, "We are not the same; we are different; we are opposite. One is the Creator; one is the created. And I am going to see to it that I am on top." That is the original seesaw.