

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

Excerpts from the workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Roscoe NY

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part XIX

How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17) (cont.)

This section is now going to describe, in effect, the entire thought system of the ego, from its origin. It is brilliant in the way that it goes from our individual experience of getting angry at others' magic thoughts to the origin of that anger in our relationship with God. And after exploring its origin, we will be taken right back to examining our reactions to the magic thoughts of others. This shifting is possible basically because the ego thought system is all one piece. What I believe I did to God in that original instant and my fear of what God will do to me in retaliation are always present in my mind—right at the bottom of my consciousness. And everything that I do as an individual, ego body-self is simply the radiation of that original, underlying thought. It simply radiates out through my mind and is expressed in my specific relationships.

Think of a funnel that has a narrow neck at the bottom and then opens up and spreads out. The neck of the funnel is the basic ego idea of what we have done with God. Everything else that has ever appeared to happen since then is simply the fragmentation of that original thought. It is similar to what happens when we place a drop of red dye in a glass of water: the whole glass of water becomes red. Our whole mind becomes infected, as it were, with the original thought of attack on God and the fear of counterattack that follows from it. Everything in the world is simply an expression of that basic thought. So now the Course is first going to shift down to the neck of the funnel and describe what takes place there.

(5:3) A magic thought, by its mere presence, acknowledges a separation from God.

The very fact that I am involved in any kind of magic in the world must mean that I believe the world is real. Then that belief must come from the original premise that I am separate from God, because the world is a place of separation. My involvement in magic is an attempt to substitute for God. I am saying that it is not God Who will make me happy. It is not God Who will free me from this terrible pain. It is this magic out here. So my use of magic becomes a symbol of my attack on God, my separation from God.

(5:4) It [the magic thought] states, in the clearest form possible, that the mind which believes it has a separate will that can oppose the Will of God, also believes it can succeed.

The fact is that there is a world that I believe in. And the world that I am using as a substitute for God is the witness to the fact that deep down within my mind I believe I not only have a separate will that can oppose the Will of God, but that I have actually opposed it. I have usurped God's place, and I am sitting on His throne saying I am God, and the real God now is impotent. He can't help me, but I can help me.

My own god can; my own mind can. That is magic. And of course that is what special relationships are; they are our way of thumbing our nose at God and saying what You couldn't do for me, this wonderful person can, or this wonderful drug can. You can't bring me peace or freedom from my anxiety, but this bottle of alcohol or this medication can. You have no power in this situation, but these wonderful things in the world do.

(5:5-6) That this can hardly be a fact is obvious. Yet that it can be believed as fact is equally obvious.

In other words, how can there be a world separate from God? But the fact that we are all here says that, yes, we do believe it is a fact that we can separate ourselves from God.

(5:7) And herein lies the birthplace of guilt.

The belief that we are separate from God is sin. And that is the birthplace of guilt. I feel guilty because I believe I have usurped God's place. I have kicked Him off the throne, and now I am the one who is in charge. And the guilt over that, as we have discussed, is enormous. In fact, there are no words that can express the enormity of the self-hatred, the guilt, and the fear that are involved in that belief. And here is where the fear enters in:

(5:8) Who usurps the place of God and takes it for himself now has a deadly "enemy."

"Enemy" is put in quotes because obviously God is not an enemy; this is the ego's image of Him. And God is my enemy because I believe I have attacked Him. I must believe God is now justified in attacking me back. This is *God* we are talking about; He is going to destroy me.

(5:9) And he must stand alone in his protection, and make himself a shield to keep him safe from fury that can never be abated, and vengeance that can never be satisfied.

That is the ego, the belief that I am on my own. And the "shield" is the fortress that we have been talking about, the world. This "shield" will supposedly, according to the ego, keep me safe from God's fury that will "never be abated"; it will never go away. It is a vengeance that can never, ever be satisfied. God's thirst for my blood will never be satisfied. He will never get enough of it. That is the image that we all have of God. And so when religious people talk about the Love of God and how wonderfully kind and gentle and loving He is, they are covering over this thought. This explains why most religions of the world end up being murderous and justifying murder. The hatred underneath surfaces, but we never know where it is coming from. People then engage in "holy" wars and write "holy" books and espouse teachings that say it is the Will of God that we punish the infidels, pagans, heretics, etc.

These actions make no sense unless we understand the underlying dynamics, that deep within our minds we all feel that God is a blood-thirsty murderer. This thought is so horrible and so absolutely painful that we cover it over and very quickly make religions that say that God is all loving and God is wonderful. But the hatred slips through; we see it in the Bible. It also slips through when people begin practicing the religions of God. We displace our terror of God's wrath for our sinfulness and our guilt onto others, saying that other people are sinful and guilty, and now we will act on God's behalf and kill them.

(6:1-2) How can this unfair battle be resolved? Its ending is inevitable, for its outcome must be death.

The "unfair battle" is in the mind of the separated Son, the split mind that has become a battlefield in which the ego believes it is at war with God. Obviously the odds are heavily in God's favor; the ego is no match, so the ending is inevitable. So the ego asks, "Well, what do we do about it?"

(6:3) How, then, can one believe in one's defenses?

In other words, I made up a world, I made up a shield behind which I am going to hide from God. But at any moment I know God is going to come crashing down on me, like the sky in the Chicken Little fable. In that tale, Chicken Little is afraid that at any moment the heavens and the skies are going to come crashing down on her head. And that is really an expression of this fear, that at some point God is going to come crashing through the shield we made up and destroy us all.

So the question is, how can I believe in my defenses? My ego has told me that I defend myself from God by making this shield that will protect me. Yet obviously it is not going to work, because the guilt that says that I deserve to be punished is still in my mind. All of this has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with reality or with God. It has only to do with the ego's distorted thinking. So I believe I have made up a world as a shield, but it is not going to help. So now what do I do?

(6:4-6) Magic again must help. Forget the battle. Accept it as a fact, and then forget it.

This is the psychological defense mechanism of repression or denial. The battle raging in my mind is overwhelming and the terror is absolutely impossible to tolerate, so I just cover it all over. That is magic. It is an attempt to solve a problem by not solving it. The right way to solve a problem, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, is to look at it with His Love beside us, and say, "This is all made up. God doesn't do this. This is silly." But we do not look at it. Instead we close our eyes and cover the battlefield over so it remains, but we do not see it, like the ostrich sticking its head in the sand.

I accept it as a fact; I have made the error real. I accept that my mind is a battlefield, and that God is furious with me because I've usurped His role. Now He's going to try to seize it back and destroy me. But then I say, "I don't see it," except there is a part of my mind that is still experiencing it. And that is the source of all the terror, all the tension, all the conflict, all the pain that we feel.

(6:7-8) Do not remember the impossible odds against you. Do not remember the immensity of the "enemy," and do not think about your frailty in comparison.

In other words, I forget the whole battle; except I really do *not* forget it. It is still lurking deep within my mind.

(6:9) Accept your separation, but do not remember how it came about.

So the ego has me accept as fact that it is right; we have indeed separated from God. God is still a liar, and the Holy Spirit still does not tell me the truth. This is all very real. I accept the separation as real because it is something that I have done. But I am going to forget how it happened. So I live in this world, which obviously is a world of separation, but with no memory of how it came about.

We talked earlier about scientists looking at the Big Bang and investigating the origins of the physical universe. They have not been able to get back to that ancient moment when the whole thing began. It began with our thought of guilt and our need to defend against God's wrath by making a world. That is

what we have forgotten, and we never get back to that point. Scientists go back to the point when the world was made, but never to the thought that underlay it, the need to defend ourselves against God's wrath.

So that is how successful denial is as a defense. It is the most primitive of all defenses, but it is by far the most powerful because it keeps the world going. If we could ever remember how and why the world came about, we would say, "This whole thing is made up. It only exists in my mind. It's just like a bad dream." But we forget how it came about, and so now it seems very real, very present, and very insoluble as a problem. It is obvious that solving the problems of the world just gets more and more complicated.

(6:10) Believe that you have won it [the separation], but do not retain the slightest memory of Who your great "opponent" really is.

I believe my opponent is out there in the world: all the awful, terrible people in my life who do terrible things to me. Or my body is my great opponent. Or the world is my great opponent. Something out there is my great opponent. And I forget Who the real great opponent is in my ego mind: namely, God.

(6:11) Projecting your "forgetting" onto Him, it seems to you He has forgotten, too.

That is the height of magic. Not only do I want to forget about this, but I am hoping and praying—although, of course, I am not praying to anybody—that God has forgotten also. Because if God can remember, then I am finished.

Now the section shifts back to our everyday experiences: when I find myself getting upset at somebody else's magic thought. For example, we get upset because a *Course in Miracles* student sneezes. *Course in Miracles* students are not supposed to sneeze because they are not supposed to be getting sick! Or we find ourselves getting upset because of something that we read about in the newspapers. We find ourselves getting upset by a politician who steals: they are not supposed to do that! That is a magic thought: anything that upsets us.

(7:1-2) But what will now be your reaction to all magic thoughts? They can but reawaken sleeping guilt, which you have hidden but have not let go.

When you do something that is magic and I get upset about it, I am upset because your magic thought is a reminder of my magic thoughts. But not simply my everyday magic thoughts; they are also a symbolic reminder of the original magic thought that I can only escape from God's wrath by forgetting about it, using the defense mechanism of denial. So if I find myself getting angry at your use of defenses—which is what magic is—it is because they are a reminder of my own use of magic. And why do I use magic? To keep my guilt out of my awareness so I don't have to contemplate the awful thing I did to God and the terrible catastrophe that is inevitable: God's punishment for my sin against Him, which my guilt demands.

My magic thought was an attempt to keep all this deeply buried in my mind so I never have to look at it. Your use of magic, then, becomes a reminder of my use of magic. And my use of magic, when I become aware of it, even dimly, is the reminder of my "sleeping guilt," what my defense is supposed to protect me from. So, as we read, it but reawakens sleeping guilt, which I had hidden, but obviously have never

let go. The miracle enables me to let it go. If I look at my guilt with the Holy Spirit's Love next to me, it disappears. Magic makes it real, but pushes it down and covers it over.

(7:3-4) Each one [each magic thought] says clearly to your frightened mind, "You have usurped the place of God. Think not He has forgotten."

That is my real fear. Each magic thought reminds me that I have stolen from God. I have usurped His place. I have sinned against Him and obviously He can never forget. He must always seek to punish me for what I have done. I had thought I could successfully screen all that out, but your magic thought is a reminder of my magic thought, which is a reminder of my guilt, which is a reminder that God is going to destroy me.

(7:5-6) Here we have the fear of God most starkly represented. For in that thought has guilt already raised madness to the throne of God Himself.

My guilt, which demands God's punishment and God's vengeance, has made God as insane as I am; it has enshrined madness on God's throne. God is insane and furious about my sin against Him, which obviously in reality never even happened. And so God must destroy me for what I never really did. The ego has taken God's Love, truth, and sanity and turned everything upside down. Now God is insane, God is furious, and God is anything but loving.

(7:7-11) And now there is no hope. Except to kill. Here is salvation now. An angry father pursues his guilty son. Kill or be killed, for here alone is choice.

The battlefield is out in the open now and this is the only choice that exists in this world: it is either you or me. The entire physical world is based on it. Think for just a moment. What keeps us physically alive is eating something else, which is a form of killing. The only way our physical bodies can survive is by killing something else and consuming it, whether it is an animal, vegetable, or anything else. Even in the act of breathing we are destroying hundreds of thousands of microorganisms. The only way a physical organism can survive in this world is to feed off, or kill something else. So the very basic, gross physical facts of our existence in this world are expressions of *kill or be killed*. And this is not even talking at all about anything psychological.

The anger that we feel is an expression of "kill or be killed." Either I am going to be killed by this wrathful God Who is going to punish me for my guilt, or I am going to project my guilt onto you and believe that God will kill you for your sin. The sin I do not want to look at in myself I will see in you. I am trying somehow to get God on your neck instead of mine. That is the only choice in this world: it is either you or me.

(7:12) Beyond this [choice] there is none, for what was done cannot be done without.

Sin now is real; there is no way of changing it. That is a fact in the ego world. And so one cannot just pretend it is not there. The only question now is: who is the sinner? Of course, deep down in my mind I know that *I* am, but I cannot look at that. So I say, "I'm not the sinner. You are. And you deserve to be killed instead of me." There is no question God is going to kill somebody. My hope is that it will not be me. It will be you. We see that in the history of Christianity. The Christians will be saved and the pagans, infidels, and nonbelievers will be killed. Magically I hope I can get myself off the hook because I have now gotten God on their neck. Of course, the whole thing is totally made up.

(7:13) The stain of blood can never be removed [that reference, of course, is from Lady Macbeth], **and anyone who bears this stain on him must meet with death.**

The stain of blood when I killed God and usurped His place is on my hands. And I want to transfer it quickly onto your hands. So with the stain now on you, you will be killed instead of me, since of course there is no way that I can kill God. That is the situation of the world. And the only way that I can cope with it is through magic, the magic of denying this whole terrible battlefield, this whole terrible script, by just pushing it down. Then I push it out of my mind by projecting it onto the world, saying, "All the evil people, all the victimizers, are out there. All the rapists, all the killers, all the crooks are out there and not in me." Then I want to make a bargain quickly with God and join His side, so that I can feel that I am justified, I am good, and I am holy; and so He will hate all the other people out there. Magic makes all of this happen for me psychologically. I deny it in myself and project it out onto you so that you are the sinful person who will be punished.

Thus, I get upset over your magic thoughts because they remind me of my own sin and guilt. As a teacher of God, my lesson is to be aware continually that even a mild twinge of annoyance represents my desire to see the sin, not in me, but in you because of your use of magic. The next step is to recognize that I really do believe the sin is in me and that is why I have gotten upset. It reminds me that I believe the sin within me must be punished. And within this system there is no way out.