

Commentary

ACIM[®] Manual for Teachers

1. *Who Are God's Teachers?*

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview

The Introduction ended by listing several questions that this Manual sets out to answer. The first question was, “Who are they?” referring teachers of God. The second question was, “How are they chosen?” This first chapter is the answer to those questions. Be prepared to have your mind changed about what a teacher of God is and who chooses them.

Paragraph 1

A teacher of God is anyone who chooses to be one. ²His qualifications consist solely in this: Somehow, somewhere he made a deliberate choice in which he did not see his interests as apart from someone else's. ³Once he has done that his road is established and his direction is sure. ⁴One decision has ensured the direction he will take from then on. ⁵A light has entered the darkness.¹ ⁶It may be a single light, but it is enough. ⁷He has entered an agreement with God, even if he does not yet believe in Him. ⁸He has become a bringer of salvation. ⁹He has become a teacher of God.

The first sentence answers the first *two* questions: Who God's teachers are, and how they are chosen. How is a teacher of God chosen? By the person himself. “Anyone who chooses to be one” becomes a teacher of God (1:1). There are no other criteria!

Of course, it isn't quite that simple. Choosing to be a teacher of God is a momentous choice. The final section of the Text is titled “Choose Once Again,” It's all about the black and white choice we must make between death and life, between ego and spirit. It is the choice to become a savior of the world, along with Jesus. That is the choice I think is referred to here. Choosing to be a teacher of God is the same thing as choosing to

¹ John 1:5 (RSV): “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

become a savior to the world by sharing salvation with everyone we encounter, and the same as choosing to be a miracle worker.²

The word “anyone” isn't without significance, though. Anyone can do this! *You* can make this choice. As we see in the final section of the Text, the day-to-day trials we encounter are all lessons offering us the chance to choose again, to choose for salvation instead of listening to our egos.³

I said above that there are no other criteria, just this choice. Jesus underscores that in the following sentence. He says that the “qualifications consist solely” in making a deliberate choice “in which he did not see his interests as apart from someone else's” (1:2). In other words, the moment you choose to think and act from oneness rather than separation, you have qualified as a teacher of God. Instead of perpetuating the ego's lesson, “I gain from your loss,” you are demonstrating the truth that “I gain from your gain.” In the Introduction, we saw that teaching is a constant process consisting of demonstrating our current mental activity. Are we demonstrating separation, the ego's belief system? Or are we demonstrating oneness, the Holy Spirit's thought system? Whoever you are interacting with, are you saying, “You are a part of me I do not yet know”? The Song of Prayer puts it this way: “I cannot go without you, for you are a part of me” (S-1.V.3:9). If you come from that frame of mind, you are, at that moment, a teacher of God.

Once you have made such a decision, you've *established* the road you will take and the direction you will travel in (1:3). Yes, you'll fall back, you'll choose wrongly again and again, but you will keep coming back, over and over. Lessons will keep coming your way, and you will choose again and again and again until you settle into the new way of thinking. As my spiritual mentor, Norman Grubb, once wrote, “Once caught, no escape.” That was the title of his autobiography!

The FIP edition omitted the fourth sentence in this first paragraph for some reason. It's an inspiring statement! It declares that all it takes is “one decision” to determine the entire remaining course of our experience “from then on” (1:4). You may have entered this world already intending to demonstrate the reality of the ego. Still, once you open your mind to the Holy Spirit in a single decision, you've made a crack in the dike that the ego has been constructing and reinforcing for eons. You've guaranteed that the dike will eventually collapse. You've become a teacher of God in training. I think that everyone who bothers to read these words has already made such a decision, probably many times. You have thus “ensured the direction [you] will take from then on.” “Once caught, no escape.

It has little to do with your theology or intellectual understanding. God created you as a vehicle for expressing His Love. When you allow that Love to flow through you to another person, you are, at that moment, a teacher of God.

Jesus keeps on elaborating on this liberating idea. He says that once you choose to operate from oneness, the light has entered your darkened mind. Once caught, no escape.

² You may want at this point to read over the “special principles for miracles workers” given early in the Text. (T-3.II (CE), T-2.5(A) (FIP))

³ See my commentary on T-31.IX on my website, <http://allen-watson.com>.

It may be only "a single light, but it is enough" (1:5–6). You have cracked open your mind to God's Light. Maybe you don't even believe in God yet. Nevertheless, you have entered an agreement with God (1:7). In that one shining moment, you have brought salvation to another mind, and you have become a teacher of God.

So. Who is God's teacher? *You are*. I am. This manual is for us. God is asking us, "Are you ready yet to help me save the world?" (C-2.9:1) All Heaven waits breathlessly to hear our decision. Will you say, "Yes?" Will you dare to say, with understanding, meaning every word: "Salvation of the world depends on me."

Paragraph 2

² They come from all over the world. ²They come from all religions and from no religion. ³They are the ones who have answered. ⁴The Call is universal. ⁵It goes on all the time and everywhere. ⁶It calls for teachers to speak for It and redeem the world. ⁷Many hear It, but few will answer. ⁸But it is all a matter of time. ⁹Everyone will answer in the end, but the end can be a long, long way off. ¹⁰It is because of this that the plan of the teachers was established. ¹¹Their function is to save time. ¹²Each one begins as a single light, but with the Call at its center it is a light that cannot be limited. ¹³And each one saves a thousand years of time as the world judges it. ¹⁴To the Call Itself time has no meaning.

This paragraph expands on the answer to the question, "How are they chosen?" The selection process is indiscriminate. God's teachers "come from all over the world," and "from all religions and no religion" (2:1–2). It can be anyone; there are no restrictions. You might suppose that a teacher of God would be part of some religion, but no! Even someone utterly secular in the world's eyes, not associated with any formal religion, can be a teacher of God. Anyone who answers the Call qualifies (2:3), anyone who chooses to see that the interests of another person are *their own* interests because that "other" person is a part of themselves. And "the Call is universal" (1:4)! As the footnote in the CE points out, the word "Call" is capitalized, probably because it refers to the Holy Spirit. It is also *singular*; "the" Call. It's not referring to the *form* it may take, or what we often refer to as "my calling," as in, "I feel called to be a doctor." The Call is inherent in each of us. It is God's Love trying to flow out of us, as us. At one point, the Course refers to the Call as something internal that is our own voice: "You will awaken to your own call, for the call to awaken is within you." (T-11.VII.10:2 (CE), T-11.VI.9:1 (FIP)). In the end, we will realize that the Holy Spirit *is* not a separate voice, but our own:

"Be glad to hear the Voice of truth and healing speak to you, and you will understand the words He speaks, and recognize He speaks your words to you" (W-pl.126.10:4 (FIP)).

"Do you not understand that to oppose the Holy Spirit is to fight yourself? He tells you but your will; He speaks for you." (T-30.II.1:1–2)

This Call "goes on all the time and everywhere" (2:5). There is never a moment when God's Love is not pushing against the ego's mental barriers, eager to burst out to bless the

world. It is calling you and me “to speak for It and redeem the world” (2:6). God’s Love calls us to speak for It, to plead the case of Love in this world.

Not everyone *hears* the Call. Many do hear it, but alas, “few will answer” (2:7). “*All* are called, but few choose to listen” (T-3.VI.18:6 (CE), .T-3.IV.7:12 (FIP)). Jesus is asking us to be among the few.

Still, it is only a matter of time until everyone answers the Call; “Everyone will answer in the end” (2:8–9). But “the end can be a long, long way off” (2:9). *This is why teachers are needed. (2:10)* Those who respond to the Call *now* hasten the end of time by assisting others in awakening (2:11–12). Their one light is not limited to just them; it spreads. Each one who truly awakens to the Call “saves a thousand years of time as the world judges it” (2:13). I’m not sure if that is literally 1000 years or just a way of saying “a huge chunk of time,” but for sure, it’s way more than a week or two! How long is ultimately meaningless (2: 14): Everyone wakes up.

“For everyone is seeking to escape from the prison he has made, and the way to find release is not denied him. Being in him, he has found it. When he finds it is only a matter of time, and time is but an illusion.” (T-13.I.9:3–5 (CE), T-13.I.5:3-5 (FIP))

“The truth is still that the attraction of God is irresistible at all levels, and the acceptance of this totally unavoidable truth is only a matter of time. But you should consider whether you want to wait, because you can return now, if you choose.” (T-2.I.1:1–4 (CE), not in FIP)

As it says in Lesson 188, “Why wait for Heaven?... The light is in you now.” The Divine Voice is calling to each of us:

“ 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. The Self from Which I call to you is but your own.” (W-170.9:2-4)

Paragraph 3

3 There is a course for every teacher of God.⁴ ²The form of the course varies greatly. ³So do the particular teaching aids involved. ⁴But the content of the course never changes. ⁵Its central theme is always “God’s Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation.”⁵ ⁶It can be taught by actions or thought, in words or soundlessly, in any language or in no language, in any place or time or manner. ⁷It does not matter who the teacher was before he heard the Call. ⁸He has become a savior by his answering. ⁹He has seen someone else as himself. ¹⁰He has therefore found his own salvation and the salvation of the world. ¹¹In his rebirth is the world reborn.

Our function in the world is to become infected with the Love virus and be contagious spreaders of it. The form our function takes varies widely from person to person. Note that this seems to refer primarily to what the teachers *teach*, not to what they *study*⁶. Of course, to teach anything, you must study it first and study it thoroughly. We can apply it in both ways.

So, for every teacher of God, there is a “course of study,” so to speak (3:1), which they must learn and then teach. *A Course in Miracles* is one such course of study, but there are countless other forms, forms that “vary greatly” (3:2), as do “the particular teaching aids involved” (3:3).

A search for the phrase “teaching aid” in the Course reveals several things the Course puts in that category:

- Our bodies (W-pI.192.4:3 (FIP))
- Jesus’s crucifixion (T-6.I.11:6 (FIP), (T-6.I.18:3 (CE) and nearby)
- Time (T-15.I.9:4 (FIP), (T-15.I.10: 3 (CE))

It would be interesting to think about our bodies as teaching aids. What are they trying to teach us? Time is a teaching aid, I think, in the sense that time’s purpose is “to ‘give you time’ to achieve this judgment. It is your own perfect judgment of what you have made.” (T-2.XIII.8:4–5 (CE), T-2.VIII.5:8-9 (FIP)) And, although the Course does not specifically call it a teaching aid, I think meditation is another such aid in the Course’s curriculum. It is very much a part of Workbook practice.

Other forms of the universal course would include most religious teachings, especially those in the “perennial philosophy” camp⁷. The underlying universal course is why we

⁴ This means that there is a course for every teacher of God *to teach*. This is shown by the description later in the paragraph of the many ways in which this course “can be taught.”

⁵ T-14.VII.1:1-2: “Each one has a special part to play in the Atonement, but the message given to each to share is always the same: *God’s Son is guiltless*. Each one teaches the message differently and learns it differently.” The above passage seems to be an allusion to this, since both passages say that salvation’s single message that “God’s Son is guiltless” is taught by different teachers in different ways.

⁶ See 3:3 and 3:6.

⁷ See “The Perennial Philosophy”: by Aldous Huxley, or Huston Smith’s “Forgotten Truth.”

find so many common fundamental teachings in the world's religions despite drastic differences in form. It's important to realize that the Course is just one form of many. No Course student should ever think they've found the ultimate and only truth. It may be the perfect form *for you*, but not for many others. And even the Course may someday be superseded by a clearer and better path.

Though the forms and the teaching aids vary greatly, "the content of the course never changes" (3:4). That is, whatever form the universal course takes, the content is always the same: the central theme is, "God's Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation" (3:5).

When I reviewed the content of several books that emphasize the common teachings of the world's religions, such as those by Huxley and Smith (see the previous footnote), I was surprised to realize that they made minimal mention of guilt or the lack of it! I think, though, that their emphasis on our union with God at least implies our innocence. If we are one with God we must be holy! Guiltlessness is the active ingredient in the teaching, even though the teaching does not spell it out. Here are a few quotations I found:

*We see then that, for the Perennial Philosophy, good is the separate self's conformity to, and finally annihilation in, the divine Ground which gives it being; evil, the intensification of separateness, the refusal to know that the Ground exists.*⁸

O humans, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done,

and I shall not mind. O humans, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me,

*I would forgive you. O humans, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and were you then to face Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great.*⁹

Avideh Shashaani writes, "Islam does not see us as sinful beings to be redeemed, but as neglectful and forgetful beings endowed with a primordial light." (Oneing)

How do we teach this central lesson? "It can be taught by actions or thoughts; in words or soundlessly; in any language or in no language; in any place or time or manner" (3:6). That's a wide range of possibilities! Remember this when you want to teach others this lesson. Teaching does not have to be words; it can be soundless. It can be actions alone, or even *thoughts* alone! We rarely realize that our thoughts, without words or actions, can teach others their innocence or guilt. The final words open the door of possible ways of teaching to everything: "in any place or time or manner." Any manner! So, to be a teacher of God, you do not have to be highly educated or articulate. You often do not even need to speak or act! Everything we think or say or do teaches, as we saw in the first paragraph of the Introduction: "Teaching is a constant process; it goes on every moment of the day and continues into sleeping thoughts as well." We are constantly

⁸ Huxley, Aldous. *The Perennial Philosophy: An Interpretation of the Great Mystics, East and West* (p. 184). HarperCollins.

⁹ (Muhammad, the Qur'an and Sayings of Prophet Muhammad: Selections Annotated & Explained, P. 15) Quoted in *Perennial Wisdom for the Spiritually Independent* (SkyLight Illuminations) . Turner Publishing Company.

engaged in teaching, either innocence or guilt. “Everyone teaches, and teaches all the time” (T-6.I.3:3)

3:7 is a universal “get out of jail free” card. We are innocent of anything we’ve ever thought, said, or done. Who we were before we became teachers of God is utterly irrelevant! Once we’ve heard the Call and answered, we have become a savior (3:8).

Once again, the Manual plainly sets forth the turning point of becoming a savior or a teacher of God: “He has seen someone else as himself” (3:9). It’s worth pointing out that this says nothing about turning to God or believing anything about God or even believing *in* God, for that matter. It’s a recognition you make *about other people*. It answers the two fundamental questions: “Who am I?” and “Who are you to me?”

You may wonder, as I have, how seeing another person as myself teaches the truth that God’s Son is guiltless. To me, seeing another person as myself implies acceptance and welcome. The ego survives by constant attack and defense, viewing all others as separate from itself. When I see someone else as myself, I have embraced them. I have welcomed them as part of myself rather than seeing them as a separate, potential enemy. It means love because I love myself; therefore, I love them as part of me.

Looking at it that way presumes that I do love myself. If I do not love myself I will also project that self-hatred onto other people. Forgiveness always goes both ways, to myself and others. It is the same answer to both basic questions. *Who am I?* The innocent Son of God. *Who are you to me?* The innocent Son of God. We share the same holy Identity. When you or I see another person as ourselves, we have found not only our own salvation, we have found the salvation of the entire world (3:10–11). We have found Oneness, the absence of all separation.

Paragraph 4

4 This is a manual for a special curriculum, intended for teachers of a special form of the universal course.¹⁰ ²There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome. ³They merely save time. ⁴Yet it is time alone that winds on wearily, and the world is very tired now. ⁵It is old and worn and without hope. ⁶There was never a question of outcome, for what can change the will of God? ⁷But time, with its illusions of change and death, wears out the world and all things in it. ⁸Yet time has an ending, and it is this that the teachers of God are appointed to bring about, for time is in their hands. ⁹Such was their choice, and it is given them.

¹⁰ This manual, in other words, is primarily “intended for teachers” of *A Course in Miracles* (though see M-29.1:4-5 for a qualification of the idea that it is intended for *teachers* of the Course). To call the Course “a special form of the universal course” is merely to say that it is a *particular* form, not that it is a superior form. The “universal course” is the Holy Spirit’s general curriculum for guiding all minds to salvation. Other forms of the universal course would be any religion, spiritual path, philosophy, healing modality, or approach to life that contains salvation’s central theme—“God’s Son is guiltless”—in whatever words that message may be expressed and however explicit or implicit it may be.

Although the central theme of every spiritual path is guiltlessness, *A Course in Miracles* is “a special form of the universal course” (4:1). This manual is a form intended for the teachers of that particular form, the teachers of ACIM. All the thousands of forms of the universal course lead to the same outcome (4:2). All of them save time (4:3), which seems to imply that even people who make no effort to follow a spiritual path will wake up eventually to Oneness. The various forms can shorten the time it takes.

Why is saving time such a big deal? Because the thing that tires us so much is the way time drags on. Never mind that time isn't ultimately real. It seems never-ending. The latest estimates are that the human race began somewhere between five and seven million years ago! Time is what “winds on wearily” (4:4). The world is “old and worn and without hope.” It's drained (4:4–5). If we look back at history with all its wars and insanity, it can be very depressing. Will we ever learn? Will the world ever be at peace? Time “with its illusions of change and death” seems to wear out the world and all it contains (4:7).

Yes, we can affirm that God's will cannot change, so the outcome is inevitable (4:6). But time drags on and on and on. Lives come and go. It's been over 2000 years since Jesus came and died. Sometimes, it seems hopeless.

Time, though, “has an ending” (4:8). And that's what we are all hoping for, whether we know it or not: the end of time. Teachers of God in every form exist to bring about the end of time because “time is in their hands” (4:8).

If you've made that choice, if you have even once seen another person as yourself, you've taken on the job of ending time (4:9). You can do it! Ever since time began (or seemed to), there has been a timeless Call to hasten time's end issued to everyone who thinks they are in time. You and I have a role to play in shortening how long it takes. I am reminded again of the eloquent expression of this written by Ken Wilber in his book, *The Religion of Tomorrow* (Where Wilber says “integral,” it implies “oneness. “):

You are engaged in one of the most monumentally progressive movements that has ever been seen in history. The very activity in your consciousness is building internal objects and ontologically real phenomena of an Integral nature that literally are being stored in the real Kosmos and that will one day reach down and bring men and women to their knees with joy and gratitude and grace and awe, will rewrite history as we know it, and will shape the world with a greater Truth and Goodness and Beauty than has ever been conceived or seen or known. YOU, my friend—by every Integral thought that you have, conceive, read, write, share, hear, pass on, dream, or envision, by the very fact of your interiorly entertaining that Integral object of awareness—YOU are driving a progress that will one day bring the world to a shuddering surrender of gratitude and grace and all-caring embrace. (Wilber, *The Religion of Tomorrow*, page 645).

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.``

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE Text restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.