

Commentary

ACIM[®] Manual for Teachers

17. *How Do God's Teachers Deal with Their Pupils' Thoughts of Magic?*

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

Remember that the definition of “magic” is *trusting in supposed causes that cannot have real effects*, such as reliance on the self rather than on God, or trusting your own will, choices, and judgment instead of following the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit. This chapter deals with how a teacher of God deals with the magic thoughts of their *pupils'* magic thoughts.

As you read, think about how you react when someone you are trying to help ignores your advice and follows a path that you know isn't going to work for them. If you felt a negative reaction, it was a form of anger. What might you do differently?

Paragraph 1

This is a crucial question both for teacher and pupil.¹ ²If this issue is mishandled, the teacher has hurt himself and has also attacked his pupil. ³This strengthens fear and makes the magic seem quite real to both of them. ⁴How to deal with magic thus becomes a major lesson for the teacher of God to master. ⁵His first responsibility in this is not to attack it. ⁶If a magic thought arouses anger in any form, God's teacher can be sure that he is strengthening his own belief in sin and has condemned himself. ⁷He can be sure as well that he has asked for depression, pain, fear, and disaster to come to him. ⁸Let him remember, then, it is not this that he would teach, because it is not this that he would learn.

¹ As used in the previous section, “magic” means relying on our own separate will to keep ourselves safe and solve our problems, rather than turning to God's will. Whereas the previous section deals with the teacher's reliance on magic, this section deals with the pupil's.

How someone in the role of teacher handles the ill-advised actions of their pupil is crucial, because mishandling the situation can hurt the teacher and become an attack on the pupil (1:1–2). A negative reaction on the part of the teacher can make the magic thought (the self-made fix to the pupil's problem) seem real and frightening to both of you (1:3). We learned in the previous section (16.8:5–6; 16:9:2–6) that magic thoughts are not fearful, they are actually meaningless, and have no effect, and that's part of what we need to learn and therefore teach. Reacting with anger or fear to the mistakes of others teaches the wrong lesson, so this is a “major lesson for the teacher of God to master” (1:4).

The first thing to put into practice when responding to someone's self-directed and ineffectual choices is, “Don't attack their choice!” (1:5) You may feel frustrated, impatient, and irritated. If you find yourself getting angry with someone you are trying to help you can be sure that you are strengthening your own belief in sin. You have granted reality and meaning to something that is basically meaningless. You've condemned yourself by becoming angry (1:6).

1:7 tells us that by attacking someone's magic thinking we have “asked for depression, pain, fear, and disaster to come upon” us. It isn't clear at first how that works, why these things result from our attack upon magic thinking. Let's unpack a bit.

Depression: This isn't hard to understand. If the person I'm trying to help decides to solve their own problem with some external diversion (e.g., a new relationship, drink or drugs, an exciting new hobby or trip) I may feel depressed because my help is being ignored. I'm feeling ineffectual.

Pain: How is my anger at magic thoughts asking for pain? I'm attacking, and that always brings a response of attack. My anger at my pupils' foolishness is a kind of grievance about them. Lesson 68 says, “If I hold grievances I am attacking love, and therefore attacking my Self.”

Fear: How am I asking for fear? Attack thoughts lead to guilt, and therefore to fear of punishment or retribution.

Disaster: By getting angry at my pupil I am anticipating disaster, and my belief in the inevitability of disaster will grant reality to it.

As a teacher of God I do not want to teach depression, pain, fear, and disaster, because those things are not what I want to learn. I want to learn love and acceptance. Therefore, anger is an inappropriate response. The appropriate response will be discussed shortly, and in the next chapter we'll see how magic thoughts can be corrected.

Paragraph 2

2 There is, however, a temptation to respond to magic in a way that actually reinforces it.² Nor is this always obvious. It can, in fact, be easily concealed beneath a wish to help. It is this double wish that makes the help of little value, and must lead to undesired outcomes.³ Nor should it be forgotten that the outcome that results will always come to teacher and to pupil. How many times has it been emphasized that you give but to yourself?⁴ And where could this be better shown than in the kinds of help the teacher gives to those who need his aid? Here is his gift most clearly given him, for he will give only what he has chosen for himself. And in this gift is his judgment upon the holy Son of God.

When we respond to magic thoughts in someone with anger, our response actually *reinforces* those magic thoughts. That isn't always obvious. It's tempting to respond with anger, if only mild annoyance, because it can seem like “a wish to help,” and often we will veil our anger by presenting it that way. For instance, “I'm angry only because I am trying to help you, and you aren't listening!” (2:1–3). That kind of duplicity always leads “to undesired outcomes” such as fear or resentment (2:4). Anger is always harmful, even when you kid yourself that it comes from good intentions.

One very important thing to remember here is that the outcome falls not just on the pupil, but on the teacher as well (2:5). In Lesson 196 we read:

“All that I do, I do unto myself. If I attack, I suffer. But if I forgive, salvation will be given me.”

So if you attack your pupil you always are attacking yourself as well. “You give but to yourself (2:6). The relationship between teacher and pupil is the perfect example of this principle. What you give to your pupil redounds to you. This is clearer in the teacher-pupil relationship than anywhere else (2:7–8). You always give what you have chosen for yourself. The gift you choose to give, whether one of love or one of anger, is your judgment on the holy Son of God (2:9). As it is stated back in the Text, Chapter 8:

“As you see him, you will see yourself. As you treat him, you will treat yourself. As you think of him, you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose sight of yourself” (T-8.II.6:2-5 (CE)).

² This refers to responding to magic with anger and attack. As the previous paragraph explains, doing so “makes the magic seem quite real to both of them” (1:3)—it reinforces the reality of the magic.

³ The “double wish,” which plays a crucial role in this section, is the “wish to help” that is on the surface and the anger that is concealed beneath it, which is essentially a wish to *hurt*.

⁴ This is not only one of the most oft-repeated ideas in the Course, but it is also one that the Course frequently identifies as such. See M-4.VII.1:6 (“This has been emphasized throughout the text and the workbook”) and the footnote referenced in that line.

That is true of every encounter because every encounter is a holy one, but it can be seen best in the kind of situation where someone has approached you asking for help. You offer them what you are giving to yourself.

Paragraph 3

3 It is easiest to let error be corrected where it is most apparent, and errors can be recognized by their results.⁵ ²A lesson truly taught can lead to nothing but release for teacher and pupil, who have shared in one intent. ³Attack can enter only if perception of separate goals has entered. ⁴And this must indeed have been the case if the result is anything but joy. ⁵The single aim of the teacher turns the divided goal of the pupil into one direction, with the call for help becoming his one appeal.⁶ ⁶This then is easily responded to with just one answer, and this answer will enter the teacher's mind unflinching. ⁷From there it shines into his pupil's mind, making it one with his.⁷

What is the easiest way to recognize when you are reacting inappropriately to someone you are trying to help? By the results you see in yourself and your pupil (3:1). What happens? You are actually fighting one another. Barriers go up. Trust dwindles or disappears.

If you are teaching “truly” the result will always be release for both of you (3:2). The two of you have joined together with one intent, and that is always liberating. It always produces joy. What generates anger in a teacher? The anger referred to in sentence 3 is the teacher's anger. You believe you detect an agenda in the pupil that is not the same as yours; that's how anger enters your mind (3:3). That perception of separate intents by the teacher *must be the case* if the result is not release and joy (3:4). Notice how it's what is going on in *your* mind that determines the outcome!

⁵ This provides the solution to the problem that it is difficult to recognize anger in response to magic thoughts, given that it is “easily concealed beneath a wish to help” (2:3). The way to recognize its presence in the teacher's response is through the *results* of that response.

⁶ The “single aim” comes from the teacher relinquishing the second half of the “double wish” (2:4)—the wish to hurt—so that only the wish to help remains. The teacher's “single aim” will then enable the pupil to resolve his *own* double wish. He has had a wish to *be* helped and a wish to *resist* help. This resistance to help has no doubt been partly an act of self-protection in the face of the teacher's wish to hurt. But now that the pupil sees that the teacher *only* wishes to help, he is able to let resistance go and unify his mind behind his wish to *be* helped. So now, his “one appeal” to the teacher is a “call for help”: In one form or another, he sincerely asks the teacher to help him move beyond his magic thoughts.

⁷ The “one answer” is the answer that will help the pupil move beyond his magic thoughts. This will shine into the teacher's mind (from the Holy Spirit) and will then be accepted by the pupil because now he *wants* the teacher's help.

What does a successful interaction look like? You as the teacher maintain your "single aim" of healing, of being "truly helpful." You don't listen to your ego's desire to attack. When you do that, successfully avoiding the perception of divided intent in your pupil and trust that, in their heart of hearts, they want only healing, their divided goal turns into one direction: their call for help (3:5). Listen to these words from Chapter 12 for a more detailed description of this process:

"There is but one interpretation of all motivation that makes any sense, and because it is the Holy Spirit's judgment, it requires no effort at all on your part. Every loving thought is true. Everything else is an appeal for healing and help. That is what it is, regardless of the form it takes. Can anyone be justified in responding with anger to a plea for help? No response can be appropriate except the willingness to give it to him, for this and only this is what he is asking for. Offer him anything else, and you are assuming the right to attack his reality by interpreting it as you see fit."

"Perhaps the danger of this to your own mind is not yet fully apparent, but this by no means signifies that it is not perfectly clear. If you maintain that an appeal for help is something else, you will react to something else, and your response will be inappropriate to reality as it is, but not to your perception of it. This is poor reality testing by definition. There is nothing to prevent you from recognizing all calls for help as exactly what they are except your own perceived need to attack. It is only this that makes you willing to engage in endless "battles" with reality, in which you deny the reality of the need for healing by making it unreal" (T-12.1.3-4(CE)).

The only reason we perceive attack in another is our own "perceived need to attack. " Otherwise we will see always see an appeal for help "regardless of the form it takes." If we refuse to see anything but a call for help, we are affirming the reality of that call in our brother or sister and denying the reality in them of any need to attack. *Our steadfast belief in that call for help in them causes that call to be the only reality they acknowledge.* Their ego-driven motivation will be undermined by love.

Once teacher and pupil join in the one intent of healing, we can respond to the call with "just one answer," with the call for love being met with love, and "this answer will enter the teacher's mind unflinching." That is, the Holy Spirit will teach you in that moment exactly what to say or do to extend love. That love then "shines into [your] pupil's mind, making it one with [yours]" (3:6-7).

Paragraph 4

4 Perhaps it would be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact.⁸ 2It is always an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions, regardless of their seeming justification by what appears as facts. 3Regardless, too, of the intensity of the anger which is aroused. 4It may be merely slight irritation, perhaps too mild to be even clearly recognized. 5Or it may also take the form of intense rage accompanied by thoughts of violence, fantasied or apparently acted out.⁹ 6It does not matter. 7All of these reactions are the same. 8They obscure the truth, and this can never be a matter of degree. 9Either truth is apparent or it is not. 10It cannot be partially recognized. 11Who is unaware of truth must look upon illusions.

Here in 4:1 we are going over some of the same ground as the quotation I just gave from Chapter 12, about how we misinterpret calls for love as attack. “No one can be angry at a fact... [only to] an interpretation” (4:1–2). If you think you are seeing or hearing something that “makes” you angry, you are wrong. You are not reacting to the fact of the situation, only to your interpretation of it. We all too often insist on mistaking “what appears” as if they are the facts, and use them to justify our negative emotions. Yet Jesus affirms here that *regardless* of how appearances *seem* to justify our negative emotions, they just don't. The cause is always our *misinterpretation* of the appearances. It does not matter how great or how slight the anger is; it always comes from our interpretations. Lesson 21 says much the same thing as sentences 4 and 5 here:

“The anger may take the form of any reaction ranging from mild irritation to rage. The degree of the emotion you experience does not matter. You will become increasingly aware that *a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury* (my emphasis).

Try, therefore, not to let the “little” thoughts of anger escape you in the practice periods” (WV-pl.21.2:3-3:1 (FIP)).

It may be so slight as to be barely recognizable as anger, or it can be intense rage, thoughts of violence, perhaps even violence acted out (4:4–5). “It does not matter” (4:6). Every degree of anger is the same in its effects: They all mask the truth (that is, the call for love). That isn't a matter of degree. A twinge of annoyance is the same as intense fury! As C.S. Lewis once observed, “There is no such thing as being a little pregnant.” There is no such thing as “a little angry.” Anger is anger; truth is truth, and either truth is apparent or it is not (4:7–9). You cannot *partially* recognize the truth. Either you see it or you don't (4:10). Anger is a refusal to look at the truth (the call for love) and always results in the perception of illusions (forms of attack) (4:11).

Summing up: The teacher of God's task is to refuse to listen to the ego's interpretations of people or things and to ask the Holy Spirit for His perception of the truth, which

⁸ Remembering that anger does not reflect the facts “would be helpful” because this is what allows the teacher to let go of his anger, thus restoring his “single aim” to help.

⁹ “Apparently acted out” means physically acted out in this apparent world.

is always a call for love. Such a call always calls for one response: love. And when we offer love, it elicits a loving response from others.

It's true that when Jesus offered love to all, he was crucified. That didn't stop him. He saw it as a profound call for love, and offered the love being called for, saying out loud, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." That loving response has born fruit down through the millenia since.

Paragraph 5

5 Anger in response to perceived magic thoughts is a basic cause of fear. ²Consider what this reaction means, and its centrality in the world's thought system becomes apparent. ³A magic thought, by its mere presence, acknowledges a separation from God. ⁴It states, in the clearest form possible, that the mind which thinks the thought believes it has a separate will that can oppose the will of God and succeed.¹⁰ ⁵That this can hardly be a fact is obvious, yet that it can be believed as fact is surely so. ⁶And herein lies the birthplace of guilt. ⁸Who usurps the place of God and takes it for himself now has a deadly "enemy." ⁹And 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.

This paragraph begins an in-depth look at the psychology of reacting with anger to magic thoughts. Paragraphs 5 and 6 examine the self-replicating nature of magic thoughts and how they lead to guilt and fear. Paragraph 7 then shows how our reaction of anger to magic thoughts in another is caused by "sleeping guilt" over our own magic thoughts. Our anger over another person's magic thought "is a basic cause of fear" *in us* (5:1). We'll need to follow a long, tangled thread of thought to see the connection and "its centrality in the world's thought system" (5:2). Hopefully by the end that centrality will become apparent to us. The tangled thread begins, not with your pupil's magic thought, but with *yours*, a magic thought in you that takes shape in you before you even encounter your pupil.

Fix in your mind that a magic thought means a belief in reliance on oneself, n one's own wisdom and resources, rather than on God. First then, be aware that when anyone harbors such a magic thought, its very presence is based upon a belief in separation from God (5:3). A magic thought *presupposes* a separation from God. When your mind embraces a magic thought, you believe that you have "a separate will that can oppose the will of God and succeed" (5:4).

¹⁰. When we entertain magic thoughts, we believe that keeping us safe is not God's role, but the role of our own separate will. This implies that we believe our separate will can "oppose" God—in this case, by trying to take over His function of keeping us safe.

Obviously, no one can oppose God's will and succeed, if God be God. Nevertheless we are capable of believing that we can, and we do so believe (5:5). The belief is the birthplace of guilt (5:7).¹¹ Anyone who presumes to take the place of God, opposing His will in some way, has made "a deadly 'enemy'" for themselves (5:8). Having "sinned" against God, we imagine that God is angry and will punish us. In other words, we feel guilty. Now we have to protect ourselves somehow from God's "fury that can never be abated and vengeance that can never be satisfied" (5:9).

Paragraph 6

6 How can this unfair battle be resolved? ²Its ending is inevitable, for its outcome must be death. ³How then can one believe in one's defenses? ⁴Magic again must help. ⁵Forget the battle. ⁶Accept it as a fact and then forget it. ⁷Do not remember the impossible odds against you. ⁸Do not remember the immensity of the "enemy," and do not think about your frailty in comparison. ⁹Accept your separation, but do not remember how it came about. ¹⁰Believe that you have won it, but do not retain the slightest memory of Who your great "opponent" really is. ¹¹Projecting your "forgetting" onto Him, it seems to you He has forgotten too.

We are still talking about your magic thought as a teacher of God, something that precedes any interaction with someone else. Having embraced a magic thought you believe that God desires to wreak vengeance on you. How can you possibly resolved an "unfair battle" between mortal you and Almighty God? (6:1) Your defeat is certain; you are going to die (6 :2). You're screwed! If you accept this evaluation you cannot possibly believe in any defense you construct (6:3). So, once again, you resort to magic (a belief in a supposed cause that can't really have any effect) (6:4). What does your ego have you do? "Forget the battle" (6:5). Pretend it doesn't exist and maybe it will just go away. Block it out of your mind. "Accept it as a fact and then forget it" (6:6).

This is known as *denial*, and we are very, very good at it. The Encyclopedia Britannica defines denial as follows:

"Denial is the conscious refusal to perceive that painful facts exist. In denying latent feelings of homosexuality or hostility, or mental defects in one's child, an individual can escape intolerable thoughts, feelings, or events."

So we deny the existence of the battle (6:7). We deny both God's wrath and our guilt that we think has evoked it. We forget the impossibility of winning (6:7). We simply refuse to think about how powerful God is and how weak we are (6 :8). We accept the "fact" that we are separate from God but we refuse to remember how that came to happen (6:9). (Of course, it never really happened!) We believe that somehow we've "won" our separation, without having any memory of the battle or who we were fighting (6:10). And

¹¹ Notice that in the CE, there is no sentence number six. This is an error; the numbering will be corrected in future printings. It happened because sentences 5 and 6 in the FIP edition have been combined into a single sentence 5 in the CE.

as the *piece de résistance* we project *our* “forgetting” onto God; we believe that God has forgotten about us. No cause for fear now (6:11)!

Robert Perry's notes here include a quotation from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition*: “Magical thinking is when 'the person believes that his or her thoughts, words, or actions might...cause or prevent a specific outcome in some way that defies the normal laws of cause and effect.'” That's just what we do.

Paragraph 7

7 But what will now be your reaction to all magic thoughts? ²They can but reawaken sleeping guilt, which you have hidden but have not let go. ³Each one says clearly to your frightened mind, “You have usurped the place of God. ⁴Think not He has forgotten.” ⁵Here we have the fear of God most starkly represented,¹² for in that thought has guilt already raised madness to the throne of God Himself. ⁶And now there is no hope. ⁷Except to kill. ⁸Here is salvation now. ⁹An angry Father pursues His guilty Son. ¹⁰Kill or be killed, for here alone is choice. ¹¹Beyond this there is none, for what was done cannot be done without. ¹²The stain of blood can never be removed, and anyone who bears this stain on him must meet with death.

Okay. That has been all about *your* magic thinking, you, the teacher. All this has occurred in your mind. Now you are a teacher of God trying to assist or instruct someone else, advising them on a course of action trusting in God's direction. And *they* reject your advice and trust in their own magic thought. Given the state of your mind, how will you react? (7:1). The magic thought in the other person inevitably triggers your “sleeping guilt.” You may have hidden it by denial, but you never let it go (7:2). When another person rejects your divinely guided advice and trusts in their own useless solution, the message you get is, “You have usurped the place of God. Think not He has forgotten” (7:3–4).

When you get angry at another's magic thought, you have believed that they are resisting God; they are sinful and in danger of retribution. But if they are, so are you, for your magic thoughts (7:5). Thus, your anger at them triggers fear *in you*. This is what sentence 5:1 meant when it said, “Anger in response to perceived

¹² The statement that opened this discussion (“Anger in response to perceived magic thoughts is a basic cause of fear” [5:1]) has now been explained. We believe that we have usurped God's role. We feel profoundly guilty for this and now fear the wrath of our deadly “enemy.” Believing we have no way of escape, we cope by forgetting the battle and concealing our guilt and fear deep in our unconscious. However, when we encounter magic thoughts—in ourselves or in others—it brings it all back up, since magic is one form of the original cause of it all. The sleeping fear and guilt are thus reawakened. This is especially so if we get angry at the magic thoughts of others, for that means that their magic is real and sinful, and therefore that, logically speaking, *ours* must be as well.

magic thoughts is a basic cause of fear.” Whether or not you believe in Puritan theology, you have just awakened fear that you and your pupil are both “sinners in the hands of an angry God.” as Jonathan Edwards once titled his famous sermon.

You are probably unaware that you feel this way. Of course you are, because you have deliberately pushed it out of your mind and buried it in your unconscious. This battle with God is so overwhelmingly terrifying that your only defense has been to blot it from awareness. Your fragile peace of mind depends on keeping it buried. And now this other person dares to have a magic thought, and you get angry. Why? Because they have reawakened the memory of your battle with God.

So, to push it down again, you attack the other person, at least mentally. As Jesus says here, “There is no hope. Except to kill” (7:6 –7). The whole terrifying battle threatens to leak out:

“An angry Father pursues His guilty Son. Kill or be killed, for here alone is choice. Beyond this there is none, for what was done cannot be done without. The stain of blood can never be removed, and anyone who bears this stain on him must meet with death.” (7:9–12)

That's what we are afraid of in our unconscious minds, whether we consciously believe it or not. How on earth can we ever escape from this dilemma? We are running away into chosen amnesia from a battle that does not exist over a “sin” of separation that never happened. Any direct attempt to address it leads to reinforcing the barriers in our minds, and indirect triggers like magic thoughts in others get morphed into anger, projecting blame for our discomfort on the other person instead of realizing it arises from within us. It seems hopeless.

Paragraph 8

8 Into this hopeless situation, God sends His teachers. ²They bring the light of hope from God Himself. ³There is a way in which escape is possible. ⁴It can be learned and taught, but it requires patience and abundant willingness. ⁵Given that, the lesson's manifest simplicity stands out like an intense white light against a black horizon, for such it is. ⁶If anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact, it is never justified. ⁷Once this is even dimly grasped, the way is open. ⁸Now it is possible to take the next step. ⁹The interpretation can be changed at last. ¹⁰Magic thoughts need not lead to condemnation, for they do not really have the power to give rise to guilt. ¹¹And so they can be overlooked, and thus forgiven in the truest sense.

This “hopeless” situation is the classroom for God's teachers (8:1). He sends us into these situations on purpose because we can “bring the light of hope from God Himself” (8:2). *Escape is possible* (8:3); that is our message. We can learn the way to escape, and we can teach it (8:4). All it takes is “patience and abundant willingness” (8:4).

Maybe you are thinking, “Oh! That's all!? I thought the Course said all it takes is a *little* willingness. What's this *abundant* thing?” It takes only a little willingness to overlook what isn't there, and let the truth be true in individual situations (T-26.VI.10:1 (CE), T-26.VII.10:1 (FIP)). To do it over and over, consistently, takes patience and abundant willingness. We must do it over and over, perhaps hundreds of times a day. This is what qualifies someone as a teacher of God. The basic lesson is strikingly simple (8:5); it's learning to do it consistently that requires the patience and abundant willingness.

That simple lesson is that anger always comes from an interpretation, not a fact, and therefore is never justified (8:6). Anger arises, not from what the other person says or does, but from your interpretation of it. Get even a dim realization of that, and “the way is open” (8:7). “Aha! The problem is with my thinking!” Once you realize that, the way is open for the next step: changing your thinking, changing your interpretation of what you see (8:8–9). You do not have to get angry at magic thoughts in others or fear your own because “they do not really have the power to give rise to guilt” (8:10). You can simply overlook them, which is to forgive them “in the truest sense” (9:11). Once again, the Course points us to forgiveness as our function, with a clear explanation of just what that looks like.

Paragraph 9

9 Madness but seems terrible. ²In truth it has no power to make anything. ³Like the magic which becomes its servant, it neither attacks nor protects. ⁴To see it and to recognize its thought system is to look on nothing. ⁵Can nothing give rise to anger? ⁶Hardly so. ⁷Remember then, teacher of God, that anger recognizes a reality that is not there. ⁸Yet is the anger certain witness that you do believe in it as fact. ⁹Now is escape impossible until you see you have responded to your own interpretation, which you have projected on an outside world. ¹⁰Let this grim sword be taken from you now. ¹¹There is no death. ¹³ ¹²This sword does not exist. ¹³The fear of God is causeless. ¹⁴But His love is cause of everything beyond all fear, and thus forever real and always true.

“Madness but seems terrible” (9:1). That's a startling statement, isn't it? To me, madness has always seemed scary. How awful to be overtaken by delusions! But madness really “has no power to make anything” (9:2). We are speaking here of the madness just discussed: the insane notion that separation from God is desirable or even possible, with the even crazier idea that God gets threatened and insanely mad, wanting to punish us in eternal hell, and that blocking it all out of awareness somehow makes us safe and leads to happiness. Yes, it's crazy. But it has had exactly zero effects! We are not separate. We have not lost Heaven. God isn't angry. We don't need any defenses.

¹³ Proverbs 12:28 (KJV): “In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.”

When we are willing to look at the ego thought system, and to recognize it when it crops up in our heads, needn't be fearful. It's nothing to be afraid of. It is, in fact, nothing at all. How can this “nothing” in a brother or sister give rise to anger in us (9:5). It cannot (9:6). We need to realize that if we feel such anger rising in us we are giving reality to something that isn't really there; our anger is “certain witness” that we believe the delusion is the truth (9:7–8). Our anger at *their* insanity only demonstrates that we share it!

We're caught in an endless insane loop until we see that we are responding to our own interpretation, one we've projected onto the outside world (9:9). We've taken up a “sword” of attack to defend ourselves (needlessly) against God's wrath, which the other person is communicating to us through their magical behavior.. Let God take away that sword (9:10). We fear God wanting to kill us, but death does not exist (9:11). Nor does our defense (the sword of anger) exist (9:12). There is no reason to fear God (9:13). God's love is the “cause of everything beyond all fear, and thus forever real and always true” (9:14).

The message we want to teach is the message we want to learn: You are innocent; God is not angry with us. God loves us forever, and is the cause of everything. There is no other cause. You are not separate from God, never have been, and never will be.

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.