

**Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part IV

I would now like to bridge what I have been saying with what I will be discussing next. Another major theme of this workshop, implied in what I have been talking about, is the idea that the Course is written on many different levels. In fact this is something I will be explicitly addressing later. As I have been saying, certain statements in the Course should be taken literally, while others should be taken metaphorically or symbolically. The idea that God weeps for us, or that God is lonely without us, or that Jesus or the Holy Spirit actually do things for us in the world are statements that ought to be taken as metaphors or symbols to correct the mistakes we have made. Jesus uses our symbolism, but gives it a different meaning and a different content.

The reason for discussing all this—and one of the major reasons for this workshop—is to make the point that we should not try to bring the Course down to our level, but rather grow to the level from which the Course is coming and attain the love that is the Course's true source. It is tempting always to try to bring the truth to the illusion. A major theme Jesus is always emphasizing in the Course is that our function is to bring the illusion to the truth, not the truth to the illusion. We do not bring the love to the fear—we bring the fear to the love. We bring the darkness to the light, not the light to the darkness.

Since we are the ones who made up this world and everything in it—and we made it as an attack on God and as a defense against His Love—it makes no sense, then, to try to drag God into the world and say, "Fix it." He basically would look at us and say, "Fix what?" Not that God has a mouth to say that—I am speaking metaphorically, of course. Rather, we should bring the thoughts that led to the making of the world to Him. And the Presence of God in our separated minds is what the Course refers to as the Holy Spirit. We are always tempted to make up our problems here, which really are attempts to exclude God. And then we want to drag this magical God into the world so that He will fix our problems here. That, as the Course explains, is bringing truth to the illusion. The Course is asking us instead to bring the illusion to the truth. Basically I am saying that we should approach the Course with a degree of reverence and respect, recognizing that it is coming to us at many levels. And the highest level is something that we want to aspire to, something that we wish to attain.

A little later, I will talk about the "ladder of prayer," the image used in the *Song of Prayer* pamphlet. A ladder has many rungs or steps, and we are at the bottom. The top of the ladder is the reality of God, which we discussed earlier (above the purple line on the chart). We will see as we discuss the opening of the pamphlet that Jesus' major purpose is to tell us that it is fine to begin at the bottom rung of the ladder, because that is where we are—but that is not where we wish to end up. In the section from the *Republic* that I spoke about earlier, Plato asks why we would settle for the imitation, or the copy, when we can have the real thing?

I thought I would read a brief excerpt from a letter that Franz Liszt wrote, which is relevant to the point I am making. Franz Liszt, of course, was a great musical figure in the 19th century. He also became the father-in-law of Richard Wagner, a great German composer in the 19th century. Wagners operas, or "music dramas" as he called them, always tended to be rather lengthy. After a performance of one of these operas, Liszt wrote a letter to a friend, in which he made reference to a common criticism of Wagners works—that they were much too long and difficult. And this is what Liszt wrote: "Great works should be embraced entire, body and soul, form and thought, spirit and life. One ought not to carp at Wagner for his length. It is better to expand ones scale to his." Rather than try to drag Wagner down, one should try to grow into his genius.

This would be even more to the point in terms of the Course. One of the big mistakes that Christianity made with the message of Jesus two thousand years ago was that, rather than trying to grow into what he was teaching, the Churches attempted to bring Jesus and his message down to the level of the world—which, of course, was very much an ego response. And so the message of the Churches became very much a message filled with suffering and sacrifice, murder and death, guilt, specialness, exclusivity, ritual and form, etc. People thought they understood what Jesus said and taught. And so they began to preach his message without recognizing that they had missed his whole point. And it is very easy now to do the same thing with the Course.

One major way this error occurs is in the confusing of symbol with reality, the confusing of form with content. It is of great importance to understand that much of the Course is written on a symbolic level because of where we are. If we grow into the symbol, then we will recognize that at the end, the symbol disappears into the reality, into the love that is always there. This is a major theme of the workshop that I will be developing further.

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Now let us turn to *The Song of Prayer* and read a few paragraphs from the first two sections. We will not be spending a great deal of time on this, even though what is contained here is extremely important. Our focus will be on the parts where, without actually using those words, Jesus speaks about the difference between appearance and reality, between symbol and truth. This is also a place where he expresses what appear to be contradictions in the Courses language, but he then goes on to explain why they are not really contradictions. This discussion will help lead us into considering Jesus specifically, both as the reality and as the symbol, and the importance of the symbol.

The metaphor used in this pamphlet, especially in the beginning pages, is that of a ladder. The top of the ladder is called the "song of prayer," a state identical to what is referred to in Lesson 183: "The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God, who calls upon his Father. And his Fathers Voice gives answer in his Fathers holy Name" (W-pl.183.11:4).

The "song of prayer" is the song of love and of thanks that the Father sings to the Son and the Son sings to the Father. But it is a soundless song without notes. The word *song* here is strictly a metaphor, just as it is in that wonderful section in the text called "The Forgotten Song" (T-21.1)—it is the same symbol. The song that we have forgotten is the song that links God and Christ. The song of prayer, or the top of the ladder, is really what is represented by the purple line on our chart. When we complete our spiritual journey, the whole ladder disappears, and we, in effect, disappear into the song of prayer—in fact, we *become* the song of prayer. So the opening pages of the pamphlet present this metaphor:

(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-3) Prayer is the greatest gift with which God blessed His Son at His creation. It was then what it is to become; the single voice Creator and creation share; the song the Son sings to the Father, Who returns the thanks it offers Him unto the Son. Endless the harmony, and endless, too, the joyous concord of the Love They give forever to Each Other.

Jesus says "it is to become" because we have fallen asleep, so prayer is a state that we have to re-attain. The song is an abstract song, a symbol Jesus uses, since songs, melodies, and music are such an important part of our world here. It symbolizes what cannot be understood in this world. As I quoted earlier, "nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin" (W-pl.132.12:4). That statement makes no sense to us here, because we are very much in a world of separation. As I read earlier from the first section of Chapter 25 in the text, that is why Heaven comes to us as if it were separate from us. That is why the Holy Spirit appears to be a Voice outside us that speaks to us. In truth, it is not like that. But within the dream that we have made to exclude God, we then need a concept of a God Who includes us, Who speaks to us, and Who calls to us. In reality, God and Christ have never been separate—that oneness is what the song of prayer represents.

We will skip down now to the second paragraph:

(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 1) To you who are in time a little while . . .

It is always helpful to keep in mind that Jesus view of time is much different from ours. What to us may be a time span of thousands or millions of years, to him is just "a little while." All of time exists and existed in one, tiny instant. Only within the dream does time appear to extend linearly over billions and billions of years, with a past, present, and future. In truth, it all occurred within one instant. And as long as we believe we are asleep, it is still occurring within that one instant. Time has already been undone. And to be even more precise, it never really happened at all. Jesus is speaking to us from that place in our minds where there is no time, so for him we are here just a little while. Thus:

(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 1-2) To you who are in time a little while, prayer takes the form that best will suit your need. You have but one.

This is very important, and will be elaborated on in the next section, "True Prayer." We have but one need—to remember that we never left home. A statement in the text says that "the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven have everything" (T-3.V.6:3).

(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 3) What God created one must recognize its oneness, and rejoice that what illusions seemed to separate is one forever in the Mind of God.

"What God created one" is the Sonship. The Sonship now appears to be fragmented, and therefore it must recognize this oneness. We all remain one Christ within the Mind of God. We all remain as one Voice singing joyously that song of prayer, even though the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God appeared to have the power of separating us and fragmenting us.

(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 4) Prayer now must be the means by which Gods Son leaves separate goals and separate interests by, and turns in holy gladness to the truth of union in his Father and himself.

Prayer is used here in two ways. On the one hand it is the top of the ladder, the song of prayer that we sing to God and that God sings to us. Within the dream, on the other hand, prayer is a process, a ladder. So it is both a process and the end of the process. In another context, a wonderful line in the workbook

speaks about God as Love: "He the End we seek, and He the Means by which we go to Him" (W-pl.302.2:3). God is both the goal and the means by which we reach Him. Similarly, prayer, the song of prayer, is the goal, yet prayer also refers to the process. So prayer is both the ladder that we must climb, as well as the end of the ladder.

That is why the Course can be confusing at times. There are many instances in the Course where Jesus uses the same word in different ways. For example, *the holy instant* is used to refer to all the individual instants in which we choose love instead of fear, a miracle instead of a grievance, etc. But then *the holy instant* is also used at times to refer to the one great holy instant when everything of the ego totally disappears. Again, it is both the process as well as the end of the process.

The holy relationship is used both ways also. At times, Jesus quite clearly and specifically refers to the holy relationship as a process where we go back and forth between the special and the holy relationship. At other times, he uses it to mean the end of the process. We should read the Course as we would a great poem, where we do not analyze each and every word and try to deduce the whole context from it. Rather, we simply let the words speak to us.

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Now let us turn to the first paragraph of the next section, "True Prayer."

(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-2) Prayer is a way offered by the Holy Spirit to reach God. It is not merely a question or an entreaty.

Jesus is talking now about prayer as a process. In other words, prayer is not simply asking God to do things for us. That is the very bottom of the ladder—a God, or a Jesus, or a Holy Spirit Who answers prayers, Who tells us what to do, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say, etc.

(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 3-5) It [prayer] cannot succeed until you realize that it asks for nothing. How else could it serve its purpose? It is impossible to pray for idols and hope to reach God.

Prayer asks for nothing because we *have* everything. Praying for "idols" includes anything for which we ask help—getting a parking space, being healed of cancer, ending the conflict in the Middle East, getting a job we want, protecting a loved one from being hurt, etc. All these are idols because they are substitutes for the Love of God.

(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 6) True prayer must avoid the pitfall of asking to entreat.

True prayer is the top of the ladder. None of us is there, and Jesus is not demanding that we be there. Basically, he is making the same point I made earlier with regard to Franz Liszt's comment about Wagner. Jesus is not saying that we should be where he is. He is simply reminding us that that is our goal, and that we should not be settling for far less than what we can really have. That is the point of all this. In true prayer we do not ask for anything, because we know not only that we *have* everything, but that we *are* everything. Having and being are the same in the Kingdom. What we *have* is what we are—what we *are* is what we *have*. We *are* the Love of God—we *have* the Love of God. We *have* the Love of God because we *are* His Love. We cannot understand this from our perspective as separate individuals, so Jesus talks about prayer as a ladder.

On the bottom rung, *prayer* is asking for help. And to jump ahead a little, asking for help is not wrong. One of the major themes of the Course is that we are supposed to ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for help. But this asking is a correction for the fact that right at the beginning we told the Holy Spirit that we did not need any help. So the Course meets us where we are with the idea of then lifting us to where *it* really is.

(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 7) Ask, rather, to receive what is already given; to accept what is already there.

As we will see in the paragraphs that follow, this is the real meaning of prayer—this is what Jesus is really asking us to do. He is asking us to remember the love that we already have and that we are. I will give examples of that a little later.