

## CAMEO 9

# Mrs. Albert, Miracle Worker

After a discussion of the Golden Rule and “Golden Rule behavior” (T-1.42.4:4), Jesus says to Helen, “Bill and you need considerable clarification of the channel role”<sup>1</sup>—the role of channeling miracles. To provide this clarification, he points to the example of Mrs. Albert, whom Helen has apparently just run into at the hospital bedside of Dave Diamond, a close colleague of Helen’s who is dying of brain cancer:<sup>2</sup>

Look *carefully* at Mrs. Albert. She is working miracles every day because she knows who she is.

After this pregnant comment, Jesus turns to Helen’s tendency to get people’s names wrong:

I emphasize again that your tendency to forget names is *not* hostility but a fear of involvement or *recognition*.

You had misinterpreted human encounters as opportunities for magic, rather than for miracles, and so you tried to *protect the name*. This is a very ancient and primitive way of trying to protect a person.

*Note* the very old Jewish practice of changing the name of a person who is very ill, so that when the list is given to the Angel of Death, the person with that name will not be found.

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1. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
  2. See Cameo 1.

It could easily seem that Helen's forgetting of names expresses an underlying hostility, but Jesus assures her that instead, she is actually trying to protect people *from* her hostility. By limiting her involvement with them, she is trying to limit *their* exposure to a destructive element in her—much like keeping your distance from others so that you don't infect them with your cold. And getting their names wrong does just that: it creates a distance, a buffer, that keeps her "germs" from reaching them. This was actually the very first thing that Helen had written about when she started her notebooks two days before the Course began coming through (hence, Jesus' above comment, "I emphasize again"):

I *think* there is an error about this not noticing and not remembering names, etc. I *do not* think it's only or even primarily, projection. It *may* be more a fear of involvement or interaction due to an interpretation of interaction as one above and the other subservient or one getting and the other losing. You avoid this if you don't meet. Or even see.

The reference in her current guidance to "the very old Jewish practice" expresses the same basic view. Somewhere inside, she believes that if she gets people's names wrong, the "Angel of Death" in her mind cannot find them. As this analogy implies, Helen's attempt to protect others from her destructive desires is quite primitive, almost childlike in nature, a point which Jesus then makes:

This is a good example of that curiously literal regression which can occur in very bright people when they become afraid. You and Bill both do it. Actually, it is a device closely related to the phobia, in the sense that they [Urtex: both] narrow fear to a simple aspect of a much larger problem in order to enable them to avoid it.

Helen is so afraid of her desire to exploit others that she regresses and comes up with this childlike solution. She reduces the larger problem of her destructive tendencies down to the specific issue of people's names. By narrowing the problem down to a smaller, more manageable package, she

thinks she can now magically control it: Just get their names wrong and they'll be safe.

Jesus then likens this basic strategy to phobias—specifically, it seems, to the Freudian view of phobias. Freud's most famous example of a phobia was the case of Hans. Hans was a boy who feared his father and wanted him to die, but then displaced this fear and aggression onto something safer: horses. He thus developed a phobia of horses. Now all he had to do was avoid horses and his problem was solved. Both Hans and Helen, then, narrowed a larger problem down to something simpler and more manageable in order to magically solve it. Jesus sees still more examples of this same basic strategy:

A similar mechanism works when you get furious about a comparatively minor infraction by someone to whom you are ambivalent. A good example of this is your response to Jonathan, who *does* leave things around in very strange ways. Actually he does this because he thinks that by minor areas of disorganization he can protect his stability. I remind you that you have done this yourself for years, and should understand it very well. This *should* be met with great charity, rather than great fury.

The fury comes from your awareness that you do not love Jonathan as you should, and you narrow your lack of love by centering your hate on a trivial behavior in an attempt to protect him from it. You also call him “Jonathan” for the same reason (see previous reference.)

Here we have two new examples of the same principle. Helen is frightened by her general lack of love toward her husband, Louis (whom she calls “Jonathan” for the very reasons already discussed). To protect him from the full weight of her anger, she reduces it to anger about something quite trivial—his behavior of leaving “things around in very strange ways.” For instance, Helen shared in a letter to Bill how she “got absolutely wild” when she saw that Louis had left his socks on the living room table.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, this “trivial behavior” of Louis's comes from him employing the same basic strategy. He thinks he can avert general chaos by purposefully setting up “minor areas of disorganization” and then convincing

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3. *Absence from Felicity*, 164.

himself the chaos is literally corralled in those tiny areas. Helen should be able to understand this, Jesus says, since she has done this same thing “for years.” He then offers this gem of marital advice: “This *should* be met with great charity, rather than great fury.”

Jesus now returns to the subject of names:

Note that a name is the human symbol that “stands for” a person. Superstitions about names are very common for just that reason. That is also why people sometimes respond with anger when their names are spelled or pronounced incorrectly.

Because they “stand for” a person, names can easily become a kind of verbal voodoo doll, so that mistreatment of the name seems to be magically transferred to the person herself.

Jesus then explains (in teaching that is included in Chapter 1 of the Text) that “the Jewish superstition about changing names was a distortion of a Revelation.” This revelation actually said “that those who ‘change their mind’ (*not* name) about destruction (or hate) do not need to die.” In other words, the original revelation claimed that if you can solve the real problem, if you can change your mind about hate, you can actually transcend death. This sounds extreme, but then as proof Jesus offers his own resurrection. He implies that this is how his resurrection came about—through him letting go all of his hate: “That is why I demonstrated that death does not exist.”

This, then, is the path that Helen needs to take. Rather than reducing the problem of hate down to a trivial matter of changing names (something the interpreters of the original revelation seem to have done as well), she needs to face and solve the problem itself. If she does, she will experience her own resurrection.

After some further teaching (also included in Chapter 1), Jesus came back to Mrs. Albert:

Returning to Mrs. Albert (not Andrews), she corrected your error about her name without embarrassment and without hostility, because she has not made your own mistake about names.

She is not afraid, because she knows she is protected. She made the correction *only* because you were inaccurate, and the whole question of embarrassment did not occur to her.

Clearly, Helen had done it again, calling Mrs. Albert “Mrs. Andrews.” Mrs. Albert, however, did not take this personally. She didn’t see mistreatment of her name as mistreatment of *her*. How could she, when she saw her identity as secure, safe, and unassailable? In her eyes, then, the issue wasn’t about her; it was just a simple matter of correct terminology. This allowed her to rise above both hostility *and* embarrassment, which often seem to us like the only two options. She was able to respond without hostility (aggressively asserting her correct name) and without embarrassment (feeling too shy to speak up). She corrected Helen purely as a matter of factual accuracy, and remarkably, “the whole question of embarrassment did not occur to her.”

She was also quite unembarrassed when she told you that everything has to be done to preserve life, because you never can tell when God may come and say “Get up, Dave,” and then he will.

She did not ask what *you* believed first, and afterwards merely added, “and it’s true, too.” The *right* answer to the SCT [Sentence Completion Test] item is: *When they told me what to do, I:* “referred the question to the only Real Authority.”

Helen later offers this clarification in the Urtext:

(Helen Schucman note: If you ask somebody what he believes before you tell him what you believe, then you are implying that you will say what he approves. This is not “the real authority.”)

Just as Mrs. Albert was unembarrassed in correcting Helen about her name, so she was equally unembarrassed in declaring her convictions about the power of God to heal the dying. Jesus praises her for this, framing it as the correct choice on the issue of authority. If before speaking she had first tested the waters to see if Helen would agree with her, then

she would have made *Helen* her authority. Instead, she openly expressed her convictions without knowing what Helen would think, because (it is implied) she felt prompted by God. Thus, when faced with the question of what to say, she “referred the question to the only Real Authority.”

Jesus implies (in teaching included in Chapter 1) that by referring the question to the Real Authority, Mrs. Albert was witnessing for him rather than being ashamed of him. She was standing up for her belief in Jesus and in his teaching. He concludes:

Those who witness for Me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned *belongs* to them.

This clearly implies that Mrs. Albert’s statement about God’s power to heal Dave was a miracle. Thus, we have yet another concrete example of a miracle in this early dictation.

To understand why this was a miracle, you need to put yourself in Helen’s shoes. Here you are, getting this woman’s name wrong in order to put distance between the two of you so that your hostility can’t reach her. You might also be holding back your own spiritual beliefs and experiences, because (as Jesus tells Helen more than once) you are embarrassed by your love of Jesus. Overall, then, you are keeping your distance out of “fear of involvement,” fear that is rooted in a sense of your own identity as being flawed and shaky.

And now here is Mrs. Albert, sweeping that distance away. As you stand at the bedside of a dying friend, she innocently declares, “You never can tell when God may come and say ‘Get up, Dave,’ and then he will.” She affirms, in other words, that God’s love has power over even the most “terminal” disease, including the one right in front of you. She doesn’t bother to first check out if you’ll agree, and afterwards, instead of apologizing for her directness, she merely adds “and it’s true, too.”

Imagine the effect on you if (as Jesus implies) she says all this without a hint of hostility, without any attempt to force her beliefs on you. Would it not lift your mind into new possibilities? And would it not model to you a new way of being? In this new way, you could feel secure in an identity that

is pure and protected. And out of this security you could fearlessly share with others what *gives* you that security: the power and love of God. This clear and direct channel from your heart to their ears would replace the neurotic “fear of involvement” that crippled you before.

No wonder Jesus told Helen and Bill to “look *carefully* at Mrs. Albert.” She had already become the kind of channel that he was trying to train them to be. This does not mean that she held any unusual metaphysical beliefs. Indeed, the clues in this material suggest she may well have been a traditional Christian. Yet she had what Jesus saw as the key ingredient: She was “working miracles every day.”