

***A Course in Miracles:***  
**A Hope-filled Spirituality**

Excerpts from two Workshops held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Temecula CA

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

**Part X**  
**"Entering God's Presence" (Conclusion)**

Just to compound the whole thing—which is why the ego is so brilliant (the mother of all evil geniuses we might say)—once we choose guilt as a defense, we have to defend against the guilt. The ego just layers defense upon defense upon defense. We choose guilt as a defense that says sin is real, and then we have to protect ourselves from the horrors of guilt; namely, that God will punish us, because it is *one or the other*. Either I destroy God or He destroys me. We then project our guilt onto a world that we make and onto all the people we put there. We then get angry at people, magically hoping that God will see what is going on, recognize the principle of *one or the other* as sacrosanct, and say, "Yes, it is *one or the other* and here are the guilty ones." We now become the innocent ones.

If *you* have the guilt, I do not. I am guilt-less. Well, guiltlessness is the synonym for innocence. I am innocent; that person is sinful. That person will be killed. But the problem is that when I attack you by projecting my guilt onto you, there is a part of me that knows I am making this up and that you are not responsible for my being sick or upset, or for my perpetual state of disquiet. You have not done anything. Therefore I will believe that because I am attacking you, you are justified in attacking me back, and so I will be afraid. That is the attack-defense cycle that Lesson 153 talks about: "Attack, defense; defense, attack . . ." I attack you as a way to get rid of my guilt. My self-blame now becomes blame, but now you are going to attack me back, and I am afraid, which means the guilt that originated in my mind trying to protect itself from its fear of love now engenders fear. So I have fear and I have guilt as a defense against fear, which leads me to fear. Brilliant!—because we do not know what happened. All we know is that we are afraid of attack from every quarter. Any time we have an attack thought—which means any time we have guilt because guilt will inevitably and always lead to attack thoughts—we will feel guilty for the attack thought, and guilt demands punishment. I will believe the person I am attacking will attack me back.

Why do you think we get sick? We get sick because every time we take a breath, every time we take a step, we are killing hundreds of thousands of microorganisms, which will now get even, so we get flu, viruses, colds, and all kinds of strange and exotic diseases. Why do we choose to get sick? Because sickness is a way of mitigating God's punishment. We believe we deserve to be punished by God because of what we have done. And the ultimate punishment, of course, is death and being cast out of the Kingdom forever, which means hell. So we make a deal with God. Special relationships are always about deals and bargains. We say "Look, I know I did something terrible. I know You are very busy; there is a lot going on in Your world, so I will punish myself so You don't have to bother. I will get sick." And we actually think God falls for that.

What are the agents of our getting sick? All of these microorganisms that we willfully—with the height of selfishness and self-centeredness—destroy every time we take a breath, every time we eat something, and every time we take a step. Every time we get in a car and drive, God knows the havoc we are wreaking. We are killing everyone, but we don't think they are people, because they are very tiny and we cannot see them. But we know that they know and they have family, and the word spreads. "Get this guy. He just trampled hundreds of thousands of our kinsmen. Get him!" Then I get sick.

A prominent theory is that cancer is caused by a virus. Well, those are all the people we killed, except we don't call them people because we make distinctions among what we laughably call living things. Some we call people, and others we call germs, bad guys, and we don't think about that. When Buddha said we should have compassion for all living things, he meant it. That is why Buddhism, when it is truly practiced the way it originated, is a very kind and gentle discipline and spirituality. It teaches compassion for all living things. But we forge a belief in differences. We don't see everyone and everything as the same.

I am not saying we should stop breathing, or use special filters, or walk with a broom as some Buddhists do so as not to step on a living thing. We should just understand the insanity of the system, and how it is all about guilt and punishment. That is why we continually choose to come into this world. It is our guilt that drives us into this world; it is guilt that sustains us in this world; and it is guilt that reinforces the very guilt that led to our coming into this world. It is a very vicious circle. We are trapped in this vise of guilt. Guilt leads us to attack; attack leads us to fear a counterattack, which means we have to defend ourselves, which just makes us guiltier.

We thus have these two cycles that feed on each other: the guilt-attack cycle and the attack-defense cycle, and they end where they began, with guilt. We just go around and around: guilt, attack, attack, defense, and there is no way out of it. This is a wonderful passage from Lesson 153:

"It is as if a circle held it fast [meaning the mind], wherein another circle bound it and another one in that, until escape no longer can be hoped for nor obtained. Attack, defense; defense, attack, become the circles of the hours and the days that bind the mind in heavy bands of steel with iron overlaid, returning but to start again. There seems to be no break nor ending in the ever-tightening grip of the imprisonment upon the mind" (W-pl.153.3).

A very clear portrait of what life in this world is like! And people think this is a nice world. How can it be a nice world when this is going on all the time? Governments, religions, races live like this because individuals live like this. This is the ego thought system; this is what made the world. Why is the mind imprisoned? Because the mind *chooses* to be imprisoned.

There are two parallel sections in the text: "The Confusion of Pain and Joy" and "The Difference between Imprisonment and Freedom" (T-7.X; T-8.II). We get them backward. We think the above passage from Lesson 153 is about freedom: I am free from my guilt. Well, it really is imprisonment. Sometimes we think our life works wonderfully because we have mastered the attack part of this, but we forget about the guilt. The decision-making mind chooses to imprison itself because it is afraid of what would happen if the mind were free. If the mind were to be free, it would freely recognize its mistaken choice and freely choose again. When it chooses the Holy Spirit's Atonement, when it chooses Jesus as its teacher, and forgiveness instead of a grievance, our individual self will be gone, because this self is sustained by guilt and preserved by attack.

We choose to imprison our mind by guilt and then attack so that we never have to get back to that decision-making part and choose again. We all fled the mind as one Son collectively. We made the entire cosmos, the entire universe, and fragmented ourselves into little pieces of ego, stuck them in a body, forgot that we did so, and all we are left with is life here in the body, governed by principles we are not aware of: *one or the other, kill or be killed*. Someone is in back of us pulling the strings of our puppets, and we do not even know it. We think we are alive. That is the farcical nature of all this.

When you step back, you realize it is a farce. Something else is pulling the strings that make us do, say, think, and feel everything that we do, say, think, and feel. We have no idea that we are simply robots programmed by a guilt-driven mind that says, "God has never forgotten, so identify yourself with a body and you will be safe." We don't remember that. Otherwise, as one passage describes in a humorous way, we would say to the ego: You sold me a bill of goods. You told me I would be safe in a body. Yet, I am in a body and I am attacked all the time (T-4.V.4). But we forgot we were told that, so all we are left with is being in a body, listening to the same voice that says "attack, attack, attack," and we forget the mind's *decision* for guilt that keeps driving us to attack, attack, attack, and then defend, defend, defend. That is all we hear, and that is how we live.

We think the principle of *one or the other* has to do with my body versus your body, my religion versus your religion, my country versus your country, my sports team versus your sports team, my sex versus your sex. It doesn't matter. We are always fighting a battle, and we forget that the principle of *one or the other* has nothing to do with bodies. It has to do with an insane thought system that is in the mind, but is protected in the mind by its decision to forget we have a mind, and then to identify with a body that we believe is external to the mind. In fact, we don't even know we have a mind. We just think the body is here.

But if *ideas leave not their source*, then the bodies of the world and the world itself are simply projections of a thought system that has never left its source in the mind. That is why the problem has to be seen where it is, not elsewhere. My problem is not my special relationship with you or with my parents. It is not with my aging body, or with the people I am living with or working with. The problem is not with the government that I am a citizen of. *The problem is my mind's decision for the ego, pure and simple.* It is so simple that we cannot believe that that is what it is, which is why the ego made a very complicated thought system that culminates in a very complicated world in which there are no solutions. We will never solve the problems of the world or the body, because the body and the world are not the problem. The problem is that we are terrified of our mind's choosing to enter into the Presence of God. So we cherish our guilt, we cherish the seriousness of sin, we cherish our fear of God's punishment, and we cherish the defense that seemingly protects us from all that, which is living in this world as a body. And so we forget that the whole purpose of this course is to have Jesus encourage us to get back to the mind so we can choose differently: freedom instead of imprisonment. That is our only hope.