

## Healing the Dream of Sickness

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
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### Part II

#### "The Cause of Sickness" (S-3.I)

Let us turn now to *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet, the first section in Chapter 3, "The Cause of Sickness" (S-3.I). We will read just the first three paragraphs, which present very clear statements of the cause-effect principle we have already seen. Remember, in the Course sickness is the belief in separation—that is where the guilt comes from. This will become quite important when we discuss the nature of healing later.

#### **(S-3.I.1:1) Do not mistake effect for cause...**

In other words, don't mistake the symptom—the sickness as it manifests itself in the body psychologically or physically—for the cause, which is the decision in our minds to believe the ego instead of the Holy Spirit: to choose separation over unity, guilt over love.

#### **(1:1) ...nor think that sickness is apart and separate from what its cause must be.**

This is our old friend, the principle *ideas leave not their source*. Here Jesus is referring to the symptoms. Sickness is not apart or separate from its cause, which is in the mind and *only* in the mind. That is why it is so important always to have an underlying understanding of the metaphysics of *A Course in Miracles*; otherwise you will mistake everything it says about the world: its purpose and seeming reality. You will think forgiveness and healing have to do with the world or bodies. These mistakes will just get you off track. There is literally no world because *ideas leave not their source*.

#### **(1:2) It is a sign [sickness, bodily symptoms], a shadow of an evil thought that seems to have reality and to be just, according to the usage of the world.**

This idea of *shadow* is an important one in the Course, and it is found throughout the material. The world is nothing but a shadow of our guilt. Many of you are aware of the important section "The Two Worlds" at the end of Chapter 18 (T-18.IX), where Jesus talks about the world and the body as guilt's shadows—they simply do what guilt tells them to do. We know from our everyday life that a shadow has no substance. You are walking outside and see the shadow of a tree on the ground. We can regard the tree as the reality within the world, and then the shadow would simply be the absence of light caused by the tree itself. The shadow has no substance; it is nothing. That is why Jesus uses the term *shadow* throughout the Course and here in the pamphlet.

Our sickness is a shadow. It is a projection of the evil thought that seems to have reality, and that evil thought is the belief that *we* are evil—"the home of evil, darkness and sin" (W-pl.93.1:1)—because of what we have done. We have selfishly and thoughtlessly destroyed God, crucified His Son, Christ, so we

could have what we want. When you think of the word *sin*, it is helpful to equate it with selfishness because that is something we are all acquainted with in our everyday lives. Sin is basically saying: "I don't give a damn about God, I want my life. And if my life has to be purchased at God's expense, so be it! I am going to have what I want. I want my separate existence. I want to be free of Him. I want to be autonomous. I want to be independent. I want to have thoughts that are mine, not tied in with Him. I want to love on my own, according to my terms. I don't want it tied in with Him. I don't like this ideas-leave-not-their-source business. I like having my own identity. And I don't care what havoc it wreaks. I don't care if it destroys Heaven. I will get what I want because I want it!"

That is the sin of selfishness, and that is how we all live here. It goes to the heart of specialness. I don't care how I use other people as long as my needs—my physical needs and my emotional needs—are met. Of course it is much better if I can dress all this up in spiritual or religious terms and give it a kind of context. But all that I am doing is trying to disguise what I am really up to. It is my selfish cannibalism that wants to take from outside and bring it inside, because that is what I need and that is what I want. And I don't care who suffers; all I care about is that I get what I want. That is the real guilt. That is the thought we label as evil and sinful. And so that is what sickness is: a shadow of that thought.

**(1:3) It is external proof of inner "sins," and witnesses to unforgiving thoughts that injure and would hurt the Son of God.**

We can see here, as we will see again and again—and of course on any page in the Course—how Jesus is redefining the problem. He is saying it is not outside; it is within our minds. We *want* to think it is outside, and so we have brilliantly, over centuries and millennia, defined sicknesses and come to understand disease: where it comes from, why it comes, how it comes and how to treat it—which is exactly what the ego wants. So all of our attention is rooted in the world and the body—you see the word *sickness* at the bottom line of the WORLD OF SEPARATION – PERCEPTION box on the chart. All of this is a very craftily and cleverly disguised way of protecting what *A Course in Miracles* refers to as "the secret dream" (T-27.VII.11), which is the real sickness. That is where the guilt is—where the seeming evil is in our minds. And only when we bring it back to its source in our minds can we realize what is in our minds, and that it is all made up.

Again, we are defining sickness loosely as being anything that causes me to be in a state of disquiet and not to be at peace, whether it is because I have a diseased organ, my body aches or my psyche aches because of something that a person did, or because of a memory or some interpretation of an event or a relationship. All these are proof that I have done a bad thing for which I deserve to be punished. Remember, the ego thought system rests on that secret dream that says God will exact His vengeance on us because of what we did to Him. And we carry that guilt with us into the world's dream. We think we keep it buried in our minds, but what we bury in our minds comes with us. Freud helped us to see that these demons are not nonexistent; they exist within us, and as much as we try to cover them over they are still there. So we will never be happy or at peace until we unearth the demons and tame the "wild beasts," as Freud saw them, to borrow Plato's analogy of the wild steeds.

So we carry this guilt with us—the thought that says we deserve to be punished. Then when we get sick, or something goes wrong with our bodies or with our lives, our ego will interpret it as God's punishment. John Calvin built a religion on the idea that God punishes those people who are sinners. And you know you are a sinner by the fact that something goes wrong in your life—that you are not wealthy, for example. New Age people do the same Calvinistic-type thing. They say there is something

wrong with you if you are sick. What they don't realize is that, sure, there is something wrong with you if you are sick, but *everyone is sick*. Sane, healthy people don't come here. Sick people come here because their sickness is a belief that they are separate from God. Rather than single out certain members of the species as being sinners, failures, or bad people because things are wrong with them or their lives, we should expand that to realize that there is something wrong with *everyone*, whether your life goes well or not, according to society. Bodies are *never* healthy. Bodies always die. Freud also said that from the moment you are born you are preparing for death. He meant that biologically as well as psychologically. So everyone here is sick no matter how well you think your body is. A body cannot be healthy, because a body is nothing, as we will see shortly.

*Sickness is not in the body*. It is not the body that has to be healed. The *belief in death* is the problem, not the fact that the body dies. The body doesn't die, because the body doesn't live. That does not mean, though, that it is immortal. It doesn't live! How can nothing live? How can nothing die? Death is a *thought*, as *A Course in Miracles* teaches us over and over again. It is a thought that has its origin in the belief that God died so I could live, and now I will have to die so He can live. That is the ego's interpretation of physical death: it is God's vengeance. But whether the body lives or dies, the thought of death is with you anyway. It is not the body that has to be appealed to; it is not the body that has to be healed; it is not the body that has to be helped. It is the mind that has to be helped, but you cannot help a mind that you don't believe exists.

That is the only positive thing one can say about a sickness. It calls your attention to a problem, and when you really ask Jesus to help, he will help you understand that the problem is not in the body—it is not because of another person or what a pathogenic agent has done to hurt you or make you sick. The problem is your decision-making process. It went awry; you made the wrong choice. That is the problem. Once we recognize that there is a problem and we cannot blame other people for it or seek a solution for it outside ourselves, the body becomes a very helpful instrument—but not because the body is anything great. It is not anything great. It is not anything terrible. It is nothing. It is simply a device that we project onto, and once we project onto it, we can remember that the ego speaks first and is wrong (T-5.VI.3:5; 4:2). Thus, we recognize there is a problem for which we need help, and that help consists of going within our minds, where Jesus or the Holy Spirit are. The help They offer is what healing is, which is to teach us that the sick body—the diseased organism that we identify with as ourselves—is simply a shadow of a belief in evil that we have made real in our minds. Understanding that, we now can do something about the problem, because we realize the problem is not outside; the problem is inside. As the beginning of Chapter 21 states, the world is "the outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.in.1:5). What is outside tells us what is inside. We have a teacher in our minds who will guide our vision from outside—where our sensory organs put it—back to what is inside, in our mind. That is what Jesus is talking about here. Again, when the body is ill or when there is pain, our ego speaks first and interprets that as: you are getting what is due you!

When Jesus describes the world's dream, as he does near the end of Chapter 27, he talks about there being a murderer out there who wants your death to be "lingering and slow" (T-27.VII.12:1). That is what the body does and how it dies. From the moment we are born, our death is inevitable, but it is slow. That is what a torturer likes to do. He does not want to snuff out your life just like that; he wants you to pay for your crime, your sin, your injustice. And that is what we believe God is doing when we believe He made the body. He plots our death, but it will be lingering, slow, and very painful. Of course what we do with all that is say it is not God Who did it. *You* did it—someone or something else is

responsible for my disease. So I am not being punished for *my* sin, it is *your* sin that is trying to make me suffer. Once I perceive it that way—and we were born to perceive it that way—I will gladly suffer. I will gladly be abused and victimized. I will embrace, cherish, and hug tightly to my heart how I have been abused, misunderstood, and unfairly treated throughout my life. I will gladly suffer so I can say, "Behold me, brother, at your hand I die" (T-27.I.4:6). And that means God will punish *you* when He sees *my* suffering, abused, and victimized body—both mentally and physically. That suffering is pointing an accusing finger at someone and saying, "You did this!" And in my magical, insane thinking I believe God will listen to me and follow my accusing finger that will point directly at you. Then He will punish *you*.

Thus, sickness, disease (dis-ease), discomfort, are shadows. They are a red flag that says there is sin here, and following the ego's purpose in making up the world—its wish fulfillment—I will see sin as resting in you or something, some agent outside, rather than in me. This is why:

**(1:4-5) Healing the body is impossible, and this is shown by the brief nature of the "cure." The body yet must die, and so its healing but delays its turning back to dust, where it was born and will return.**

That is why people like to have life last longer and longer. And in our society now it is a premium. It used to be that if you lived to be forty or sixty it was a big thing. Now eighty is nothing. People want to be a hundred or a hundred and ten, even a hundred and twenty. People want to live forever and ever. Why? Because we want to cheat the Reaper. We want to cheat God. And all we are doing is making death real because we are trying to cheat it. We are making guilt real by trying to deny that there is any guilt, because if I don't die, that means God has not found me and so I stay in this body. Why would anyone who is sane want to stay in this body? This is not home. As the Course says, this is a travesty, a parody of the marvelous creation of God: *Christ* as spirit, not as body (see T-24.VII.1:11; 10:9). The body is the home of guilt, not of love. That is what Jesus is saying here. The "brief nature of the 'cure'" refers to our apparent cure of a disease; but in the end the body dies—as proof that the ego's thought system of sin, guilt, and fear is alive and well, and, above all, true.