The Message of the Crucifixion

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A Study of ACIM Text, Chapter 6, Introduction and Section I
Workbook Lesson for Meditation: #158, Today I learn to give as I receive.

An Overview of Chapter Six

This overview or outline of Chapter Six is my own perspective on how all the sections of the chapter fit together. I've studied the chapter repeatedly, and each time I have, my conviction that the connections I see between these sections are not just my own invention, but something intended by the author, grows deeper. Nevertheless I must say that the "outline" I see here is based mostly on inference, and is not the only possible way of understanding the chapter.

The Ego's Mistaken Premises

The journey back consists of the correction or undoing of our steps down the ladder of separation. In the ego thought system, attacking a brother rather than loving him is a foregone conclusion, an accepted way of being in the world. In the Introduction to Chapter Six, the Course presents us with three premises of the ego and tells us that we need to learn that these premises are insane in order to undo our insane conclusion:

> The way to undo an insane conclusion is to consider the sanity of the premises on which it rests (T-6.IN.1:6).

The three ego premises are given in 1:3, and the response of the Holy Spirit is given in 1:7. I juxtapose them here to point out the clear parallel:

Ego Premise	**Spirit's Lesson**
You believe that you have been attacked	You cannot *be* attacked
Your attack is justified in return	Attack *has* no justification
You are in no way responsible for it.	You *are* responsible for what you believe.

The ego's premises are the reasons it uses to justify anger and to prove that a brother is worthy of attack rather than of our love (1:4). They are, then, the rationale for the ego itself, since the ego is a belief in attack. Our journey back to God, once begun, can be seen as the Spirit's response to these three mistaken premises. These are the thoughts He must undo within our minds in order for our minds to return to the function of love for which they were intended.

Chapter Six as Response to the Premises

I believe that the rest of this chapter is a systematic response to these three ego premises. In outline form, here is how I see the chapter:

1. You Cannot Be Attacked

I. The Message of the Crucifixion

Supporting thoughts from this section:

> The real meaning of the crucifixion lies in the *apparent* intensity of the assault of some of the Sons of God upon another. This, of course, is impossible, and must be fully understood *as* impossible (3:4, 5).

In other words, *you cannot be attacked.* Assault is impossible.

> Assault can ultimately be made only on the body…Yet if destruction itself is impossible, anything that is destructible cannot be real. Its destruction, therefore, does not justify anger (4:1-4).

Notice that assault (i.e. attack) cannot be seen as impossible if you identify with the body and believe the body is real.

> The message the crucifixion was intended to teach was that it is not necessary to perceive any form of assault in persecution, because you cannot *be* persecuted (4:6).
>
> Rather, teach your own perfect immunity, which is the truth in you, and realize that it cannot *be* assailed (6:4).
>
> I elected, for your sake and mine, to demonstrate that the most outrageous assault, as judged by the ego, does not matter. As the world judges these things, but not as God knows them, I was betrayed, abandoned, beaten torn, and finally killed (9:1, 2).
>
> Teach only love, for that is what you are (13:2).

We "teach only love" by not teaching persecution, that is, by not reacting as if we are being persecuted or attacked. We can teach only love only by realizing that we cannot be attacked, that we are not bodies.

2. Attack Has No Justification

II. The Alternative To Projection

Supporting thoughts from the section:

> Since you have also judged against what you project, you continue to attack it because you continue to keep it separated. By doing this unconsciously, you try to keep the fact that you attacked yourself out of awareness, and thus imagine that you have made yourself safe (2:3, 4).

What we believe we are attacking outside ourselves is really a projection of our own minds, and therefore our attack is on ourselves. We have set the whole scene up, and therefore attack cannot be justified.

> Projection and attack are inevitably related, because projection is always a means of justifying attack. Anger without projection is impossible (3:5, 6).

Projection is the means we use to justify attack. Without projection, attack has no justification.

> The Holy Spirit begins by perceiving you as perfect (5:1). You cannot be anywhere God did not put you, and God created you as part of Him. That is both where you are and what you are. It is completely unalterable. It is total inclusion. You cannot change it now or ever. It is forever true. It is not a belief, but a Fact (6:2-8).

If our reality, the Fact about us, is that we are perfect, part of God forever, then attack cannot be justified.

III. The Relinquishment of Attack

Section III continues the theme of "Attack has no justification."

Supporting thoughts from the section:

The title, "The Relinquishment of Attack," is clearly about letting go of the belief that attack is justified.

> You cannot teach what you have not learned, and what you teach you strengthen in yourself because you are sharing it (1:9).
>
> That is why you must teach only one lesson (2:1).

Just note, for the moment, that this thought parallels the second lesson of the Holy Spirit in Section V(B), "To have peace, teach peace to learn it."

> The only safety lies in extending the Holy Spirit, because as you see His gentleness in others your own mind perceives itself as totally harmless. Once it can accept this fully, it sees no need to protect itself (3:1, 2).
>
> Safety is the complete relinquishment of attack. No compromise is possible in this (3:7, 8).

All attack must be relinquished. This is the only way we can find safety. We must teach peace to learn it, or extend peace to others to have it for ourselves.

> The only way to have peace is to teach peace. By teaching peace you must learn it yourself, because you cannot teach what you still dissociate (4:3, 4).

3. You Are Responsible for What You Believe

IV. The Only Answer

Supporting thoughts from the section:

> …the Holy Spirit is the Answer…the ego always speaks first (1:1, 2).

The ego and Holy Spirit are the two alternatives within our minds; *we are responsible* for choosing which thought system we listen to.

> The most inventive activities of the ego have never done more than obscure the question [of what you are], because you have the answer and *the ego is afraid of you* (2:9).

The implication here is that there is a part of our mind that knows the answer, and the ego is afraid of our mind because it has the power to choose to listen to the Answer.

> The ego uses the body to conspire against your mind…(5:1).
>
> The ego, which is not real, attempts to persuade the mind, which *is* real, that the mind is the ego's learning device; and further, that the body is more real than the mind is (5:3).

The mind is the ego's "enemy" because it has the power to choose; the power of decision is ours, so we are responsible for what we believe.

> Abilities must be developed before you can use them…In an impossible situation, you can develop your abilities to the point where they can get you out of it. You have a Guide to how to develop them, but you have no commander except yourself. This leaves you in charge of the Kingdom, with both a Guide to find it and a means to keep it. You have a model to follow who will strengthen your command, and never detract from it in any way. You therefore retain the central place in your imagined enslavement, which in itself demonstrates that you are not enslaved (9:1-7).

This is a strong, very clear statement that you are responsible for getting out of your impossible situation. The Guide is the Holy Spirit; the model is Jesus, in His crucifixion. But "you have no commander except yourself." *You are responsible.*

The Lessons of the Holy Spirit

I believe that the three lessons of the Holy Spirit presented in Section V of this chapter recapitulate the same three responses to the premises of the ego:

- You cannot be attacked.
- Attack has no justification.
- You are responsible for what you believe.

The lessons of the Holy Spirit are given in response to the three ego premises from the Introduction. I emphasize that this is just my interpretation of the chapter, but even if you disagree or do not see the connection I do, I hope the comparison of the thoughts will be useful to you.

In the three lessons of the Holy Spirit there are two layers to each lesson: a layer we might call form, and another layer we can call content. At the form level, the first two lessons appear to have little to do with the three premises of the ego. I believe, however, that at the content level they are clearly connected. The surface form of the lessons carries a deeper content, a content which, in the first lesson especially and to some degree in the second lesson, is almost subliminal. In learning the surface form we are learning another, hidden lesson without even being aware of it.

Lesson 1. **Form:** To have, give all to all.

Content: This is the introduction of an idea radically contrary to the ego's thought system. It is the beginning of thought reversal, the realization that there is an alternative. Subliminally, by undermining our identification with the body, it teaches that I am not a body and cannot be attacked.

Lesson 2. **Form:** To have peace, teach peace to learn it.

Content: This lesson identifies which thought system is more desirable. I not only see an alternative to attack, I *want* the alternative. By teaching peace and receiving it, I realize attack has no justification.

Lesson 3. **Form:** Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom.

Content: This lesson contains the clear-cut choice for the Holy Spirit's thought system and the steadfast rejection of anything else. Vigilance *is* a state of mind that knows I am responsible for what I believe.

Lesson One: To Have, Give All To All

The first of the lessons consists of the introduction of the key idea that giving and receiving are the same; only the wording is slightly different: "To have, give all to all." This is an example of the *indirect* way in which the Holy Spirit teaches. "A wise teacher teaches through approach, not avoidance" (V.3:1). Instead of telling us what *not* to do (i.e. attack) He tells us what to *do* (teach or extend love).

When I first studied this chapter, I was very puzzled by the content of the two pages or so that appear under this lesson's title. Much of the content appears to have nothing to do with the idea in the lesson title! The first five paragraphs, and especially the first two, are all talking about *the body*. The emphasis seems to be on teaching that we are not bodies, but minds:

> When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone, you will know that you will last forever (1:1).
>
> …life is of the mind and in the mind (1:3).

> Tbe body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life (1:4).
>
> God did not make the body, because it is destructible, and therefore not of the Kingdom. The body is the symbol of what you think you are. It is clearly a separation device, and therefore does not exist. The Holy Spirit, as always, takes what you have made and translates it into a learning device (2:1–4).
>
> [The Holy Spirit] always tells you that only the mind is real, because only the mind can be shared (3:1).

The last sentence contains a hint at the connection between all this "body" teaching and the "lesson of the Holy Spirit" in the title, which is, "To have, give all to all." It says, "only the mind can be shared." Now if that is true, then if you are going to give something, all you can give is the mind. You cannot share the body. You share in mind; minds join and bodies do not. You can give truly only on the level of mind. You can share ideas, and shared ideas do not decrease, they increase. You gain by giving them away. The best way to "have" an idea, to hold on to it and make it increase, is to share it, to give it away.

By teaching us, "To have, give all to all," the Holy Spirit is indirectly teaching us that we are not bodies. He "communicates only what each one can give to all" (5:10). The thought about giving to have comes into conflict with the way we think about ourselves and about reality in general, disturbs our thinking, and pushes us to look at things in a new way. If we listen, and if we let the idea in and practice it, eventually we will begin to learn that we are not bodies. As we learn that we are not bodies, we will come to realize that we cannot be attacked.

So in a very indirect, roundabout fashion, this first lesson of the Holy Spirit is actually helping us to counteract that first ego premise: "I am being attacked." It is teaching by approach rather than avoidance. It is not directly contradicting our perception of attack; it is teaching us a positive action and attitude which, if followed, will totally undermine the negative teaching of the ego.

Lesson Two: To Have Peace, Teach Peace To Learn It

The second lesson of the Holy Spirit counteracts the second premise of the ego, and teaches us, "Attack has no justification." It is a bit easier to see the relationship between the form of the lesson—"To have peace, teach peace to learn it"—and the content, which is "Attack has no justification." Teaching peace is clearly the opposite of perceiving attack as justified. Note how the comments on this lesson begin:

> All who believe in separation have a basic fear of retaliation and abandonment. They believe in attack and rejection, so that is what they perceive and teach and learn (1:1, 2).

It seems clear to me that these opening sentences indicate that what is being taught is something which will counteract the belief in attack and rejection which is characteristic of "all who believe in separation." Once again the lesson is fairly indirect, however. Rather than saying, "Do not teach attack by viewing attack as justified," the Holy Spirit is saying, "Teach peace to learn it." Again, He is teaching by approach rather than avoidance, telling us what to *do* rather than what *not* to do. He knows that if we practice this lesson, our motivation to learn and to change will steadily increase, because as we *teach* peace we *will* learn it. What we give we will receive. We will like the results. We will be moved closer to making a clear choice between attack and peace, and we will choose peace rather than attack.

Lesson Three: Be Vigilant Only For God and His Kingdom

The third lesson of the Holy Spirit is a very clear countermove to the ego's third premise: "I am in no way responsible for my justifiable counterattack." To be vigilant against illusions, against our sickness, against the ego, and for the Kingdom, as presented in this section, is nearly identical to, and clearly consonant with, the teaching that we are responsible for what we believe. It is asking us to watch our thoughts and to allow only the thoughts of God to occupy our minds. It is asking us to be responsible for our thoughts, moment to moment.

The Lessons As Stages of the Journey

While these three lessons of the Holy Spirit can be understood as undoing the three premises of the ego, and therefore applicable to us all, in any given moment, they can also be understood as pictures of the stages on our spiritual journey. In fact, the third lesson mentions that it is followed by "the last step" which is taken only by God. That last step refers to our transition from the real world into Heaven, from the world of form into the formlessness of spirit. So obviously, the three lessons *do* represent stages we pass through on our spiritual journey, and it is very beneficial to read them over in that light.