

Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Temecula CA

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part I

I originally thought that a good subtitle for this workshop on Jesus and the Holy Spirit was, "Who the hell are They anyway?" [Laughter] That actually implies what we will be talking about. A little more serious, and actually even more to the point is the title someone suggested to me: "Jesus and the Holy Spirit: What in the world are They?" But perhaps an even better subtitle for the workshop's major title, "Jesus: the Manifestation of the Holy Spirit," is "The illusion and the reality of Jesus." That is basically what we will be spending most of the workshop talking about. While it is probably true of all of the workshops that I do, I think it is even more the case here that I am conceptualizing the workshop as a whole. So much of what I will be talking about—at the beginning especially—may seem very out of "sync" with what you have probably heard me say other times, or with what you yourself have experienced about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. I am basically setting a context for a lot of what we will be talking about later on. So in this case, the whole is not found in each part as it is in the Sonship. But each part is an integral part of the whole. So please don't walk out after this first part of the workshop if I say something that seems blasphemous or heretical.

I would like to speak first about our old friend, Plato—he conceptualized something that is referred to in the Course at least one time specifically, and implicitly all the way through. A statement in the teacher's manual, which I quote frequently, says that "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). That statement, while not literally taken from Plato, is quite close to what he said of artists' representations of objects: "[they] stand at third remove from reality." (The complete context and reference for this description appears below.) I would like to begin with this, as it is a good entree into a discussion of reality and illusion in the Course, and even more specifically of the reality and the illusion of Jesus.

One of the major problems Plato wrestled with all his life—it is basically one of the major themes of all of his philosophical treatises—is the difference between appearance and reality. Much of what I will be talking about here at the beginning, in terms of Plato, you will recognize as an antecedent to what we find in the Course. Later in the workshop, I will discuss the role of Jesus, as well as Helen, in terms of the dictation of the Course. When I do that, I will discuss again how Plato was one of the major influences on the form in which the Course comes.

Let me start by beginning to make a chart (see below) —this will be different from what many of you are used to seeing me do. We will put *reality* at the top of the chart. Next to *reality* we will put *truth*. While Plato usually did not speak of God as such, he did speak about truth and perfection, and the world of Ideas. I am not going to give a long discussion of Plato; but he did talk about the world of Ideas, which from the point of view of the Course, would be the world of Heaven or spirit. Plato's concept of reality is

not quite the same, but certainly its place in his philosophy parallels the place of Heaven in the Course's philosophy. It is the only truth.

JESUS: The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit

	Plato	Ego	Holy Spirit	Heaven
REALITY - - TRUTH	ideal bed	God	God	Love God Christ
<hr/>				
CONCEPT - - SYMBOL	carpenter	sinned- against	loving	reflection of Love Holy Spirit Jesus content concept
WORDS - - SYMBOLS	painter - - poet	vengeful hateful insane bargaining angry	caring loving lonely weeps incomplete	Holy Spirit Jesus form answers prayers

Basically, Plato taught that for every concept or category of object and thought (i.e., material or abstract) we perceive here in the world, there is a corresponding *perfect* Idea or *perfect* thought—what he called "the world of Ideas." A famous example he used is that of a bed—something very commonplace. In the world of Ideas, there is the perfect bed, or the Idea of the bed. Then there is the category or concept of the bed, that is, a concrete symbol or conceptual form of the ideal bed. Plato used the example of a carpenter who builds an actual bed. And then there are the words describing a bed. Plato initially speaks of a painter representing a bed, but then he shifts to speaking of the poet (specifically Homer) as an artist representing things through words. The three levels are described in the following excerpt from Plato's *Republic* (598b-e; trans. Desmond Lee):

... what he [the carpenter] produces is not the form of bed which according to us is what a bed really is, but a particular bed. ... his product *resembles* "what is" without *being* it. And anyone who says that the products of the carpenter or any other craftsman are ultimately real can hardly be telling the truth. ... the bed the carpenter makes is a shadowy thing compared to reality. ... there are three sorts of bed. The first exists in nature, and we would say ... that it was made by god. No one else could have made it. ... The second is made by the carpenter. ... And the third by the painter. ... the artist's representation stands at third remove from reality. ... So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature at third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative artists.

So when the Course says that "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality," we can see the progression—there is a word that describes a bed, then a particular concept, that is, an actual physical bed, and finally the reality or true nature of bed, which is the perfect bed. The major theme of Plato's work was that this final level is the *only* truth—it is beyond the physical world, what we cannot see. Everything else is just an approximation of that.

I will put the *ideal bed* here (see chart). And below that the *carpenter* who builds the actual bed. And then there is the *painter* who paints the bed or the *poet* who describes the bed in a poem. In terms of words being "symbols of symbols," the physical bed or concept is a symbol, the word *bed* is a symbol, and so the word is a symbol of the symbol, the concept of the actual bed. The symbol is an attempt to represent something that is beyond anything in this world. So reality is the only truth—that is spirit. Everything else having to do with the world of appearances is illusory.

.....

Let us now look at what the Course has to say about God. We will first consider the ego's version of God. The ego develops a concept of God as a sinned—against God—as we know the ego's thought system begins with the idea that we have sinned against God and have attacked Him by separating from Him. So the ego's concept of God—obviously a distortion of the true God—is that He is a sinned-against God. The ego then uses a group of symbols to describe the sinned-against God: He is vengeful, hateful, insane, He believes in bargains, He is angry, etc. All of these are ways that we would describe God within the ego system. Obviously, on a conscious level most of us would not think of God in these ways, but, as Jesus explains to us in the Course, this is how we think of God *unconsciously*. To repeat, we begin with the true God or pure God. The ego then makes up a version of God as sinned-against, and then develops a whole series of symbols or words to describe to us what that God is.

Then there is God according to the Holy Spirit. This God is a loving God, Who has not been sinned against. This is the God of the Atonement. The Course principle of the Atonement is that the separation never really happened. According to the Holy Spirit, many different words can be used to describe this God: He is caring, loving, and giving. Three other words used in the Course to describe God—words we will come to again later—are: God is *lonely* without us, God *weeps* without us, and God is *incomplete* without us. If words are symbols of symbols, then Jesus is using such words in the Course to represent another symbol—God as loving. And these are just attempts to reflect what can never be understood in this world—namely, what it really means to say that God is Love.

When the Course talks about God being caring, loving, giving, lonely, weeping, and incomplete, it is using the symbols of the world of illusion, the world of appearances. Similarly with Plato, neither the bed painted by an artist or the bed built by a carpenter is the *real* bed. So the Course is using words to symbolize a concept of God that is beyond the specific words. But the concept of God as loving is not the reality either. Once again, words are but symbols of symbols, and therefore they are twice removed from reality.

As we will consider in greater depth later on, we are all here because we all think of ourselves as people with specific identities that can be described by all kinds of words. We think of ourselves as male or female, as American or British or Canadian or Russian, etc., as Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, agnostic, atheistic, etc. We also think of ourselves in terms of cultural or geographical identities, etc., all these are examples of words we use to represent concepts of ourselves. There are other examples of

this as well: We may think of ourselves as American, as God's chosen people, who are good and holy, who believe in democracy and freedom, etc. But none of these relates to who we really are as God's children.

Finally, to complete this overview before I begin to discuss it in more detail, we will put God at the top again (see chart), and beneath God we will put the Holy Spirit and Jesus. At this level, basically, we are talking about a concept. The concept that Jesus and the Holy Spirit represent is the principle of the Atonement—that the separation from God never truly happened. The Holy Spirit can be understood in the Course as being the memory of God's Love that came with us when we fell asleep. We took that memory of God's Love and our Identity as Christ with us into our dream when we fell asleep. Jesus is referred to in the Course as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (T-12.VII.6:1; C-6.1:1), which obviously is a central theme of this workshop. We will come back to this later. So Jesus also represents that same concept—the principle of the Atonement.

At the third level, we will put the Holy Spirit and Jesus (see chart) Who appear to us or Whom we experience in the world of form in terms of concrete or specific activities. Thus, the Holy Spirit "speaks to us"—He is defined in the Course as God's Voice. He is also defined in the Course as our Teacher, our Mediator, our Friend, and our Guide. Jesus in the Course obviously speaks of himself in the same way—he is our teacher, our older brother, our friend, our guide. He is the one who will lead us back. From the point of view of function in the Course, Jesus and the Holy Spirit can be used interchangeably.

So we are talking about two different levels of understanding the Holy Spirit and Jesus. There is the *conceptual level* where They are the symbolic expression of the Atonement principle—namely that the separation from God's Love never happened. We know it never happened because we experience their Love and their Presence in our minds. And there is the *level of form*—the specific ways in which we experience their Presence and their Love. These include the specific roles as Teacher, Guide, Mediator, Friend, etc., where we experience Them as doing specific things for us in the world—answering our specific questions, finding us parking spaces, healing illnesses, etc. All of this involves the level of form, which we will return to later.

But if we understand the idea that "words are but symbols of symbols," and that they are thus "twice removed from reality," then we would know that to have an experience of the Holy Spirit or Jesus speaking directly to us and answering our questions, or doing things for us in the world is really to be "twice removed" from the reality. *Once* removed from the reality would be simply having an experience of Jesus or the Holy Spirit as the Presence of God's Love—that is all, just as a Presence of Love. That, too, is only a reflection of the true reality—it is once removed. In Heaven there is no Jesus or Holy Spirit with a specific identity.

Let us look at a passage in the clarification of terms on the Holy Spirit that is relevant here: "His is the Voice for God, and has therefore taken form. This form is not His reality, which God alone knows along with Christ" (C-6.1:4-5). The Voice for God would be a form on the bottom level in our chart—so we experience the Holy Spirit as a Voice Who speaks to us, or as a specific Teacher Who teaches us. But this form is not His reality—His reality only God knows, because His reality is simply an extension or an expression of God's Love in Heaven. Near the end of this section, the idea continues: "For in its place"—in other words, in place of the ego's dreams—"the hymn to God is heard a little while. And then the Voice is gone, no longer to take form but to return to the eternal formlessness of God" (C-6.5:7-8).

As long as we are within the dream—basically these bottom two boxes (see chart)—we will experience the Holy Spirit or Jesus as a specific person or presence, and at the very bottom as someone who meets our needs and answers us when we need him. When the dream is over, the form disappears. And then the Holy Spirit returns to His true Identity as part of the eternal formlessness of God (in the top box).

This is an extremely important idea to keep in mind—which is the reason I am beginning with it—because as we work with the Course, we can very easily fall into the trap of confusing illusion with reality. Or as Plato said, of confusing appearance with the truth. This point is made very clearly in an important passage in the *Song of Prayer* pamphlet, which we will read in a little while. We are not seeking after the Jesus who does things for us here. We are not even looking for the Jesus who is that abstract presence of love. What we really want is to return home. That is the end, that is the goal. That is not the Course's final goal, however. Its final goal is to have us experience this Presence of Love that we call the Holy Spirit or Jesus, but to recognize that it does not exclude us, that we are that Presence of Love also.

While Jesus is spoken of in the Course (at the beginning of the section we just read from) as the "manifestation of the Holy Spirit," we are asked (also part of that section) to become his manifestation in the world as well. Just as Jesus is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit because he has nothing else in his mind except the principle of the Atonement—no thoughts of separation, of guilt, sin, fear, etc.—our goal is to become that same manifestation. That is what the Course refers to as being in the real world. At that point, we no longer experience a difference between ourselves and Jesus or ourselves and the Holy Spirit. In fact, we no longer need Jesus at that point. He tells us in the Course that the aim of any good teacher is to make himself dispensable (T-4.I.5:1-2). Once we have learned everything that Jesus is and that he knows, then we no longer need him as a teacher. In fact we will no longer experience ourselves as an entity separate from everyone else. That is what being in the real world means. We may still appear to be in this physical world, but we know it is a dream. And we know that our true identity is shared with everyone, including Jesus. At that point we become like him.

A wonderful poem that Helen took down called "A Jesus Prayer" is basically a prayer from us to him, praying that we will become like him. When we eventually become like him, which all of us will do—in other words we will be free from our egos—then we, too, will become the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And there will no longer be the separate entities we have in the second box (see chart). We will all be part of the Atonement principle. We will all be the living manifestation that the separation from God's Love never happened. That's the goal. When that happens, the Course says God then takes the last step, and everything disappears except God. And we all disappear into the eternal formlessness of God. Or, as it says near the end of the workbook in a very beautiful passage, we all "disappear into the Heart of God" (W-pII.14.5:5). At that point there is no more separation.

Our goal is simply to be in the real world so that we become that concept of the Atonement. As we will see—and this is a major theme of the workshop—we all have to reach that point. And in order to reach it, we need a symbol of God's Love that we can relate to, that we can experience. That is what I am calling the illusory nature of Jesus, or the illusion of Jesus. It is extremely important—and this is a point that I will reiterate throughout the workshop—*not to skip over steps*. As long as we believe we are a separated body—as we all do, otherwise none of us would be here—then we need the illusion of someone who is separate, but who represents something other than what we believe we are. We all

believe that we are good, healthy egos. So we need the illusion of someone who represents God's Love for us. Jesus, in terms of the Course, is that person for us.

There is a beautiful section in the teacher's manual, which we will look at later in the workshop, that expresses this. As long as we believe we are here, as long as we have the illusion of ourselves as having a separate identity, physical and psychological—remember we are twice removed from reality—then we need the illusion of someone else who appears to have a separate physical and psychological identity, whom we call Jesus, to take our hand and lead us beyond this thought system. The goal, however, is ultimately to realize that the hand we hold is our Own—not our own as an ego, but our own with a capital "O." The hand that we hold is really the hand of Christ. But until we can learn that is our own hand, our experience is that Jesus extends his hand. As he explains early in the text, by taking his hand we are transcending the ego (T-8.V.6:8). By choosing Jesus as our teacher, we are saying that we no longer want the ego as our teacher.

When we take Jesus' hand and no other hand, when we accept his love and no other love, when we accept his reality as the only reality, then we have learned all the lessons. We become the same love that he is an expression of. That is the end. Until that time, however, we desperately need someone who can represent that other choice for us. Several references in the Course—which we will look at later—explain how at the moment that the separation seemed to occur and we all fell asleep, the principle of the Atonement arose. That is what the Course refers to in some passages as the creation of the Holy Spirit. In truth it was not that God gave an answer to the separation, because if God truly gave an answer to the separation it would mean that there actually was a separation. When the Course speaks like this—as I will elaborate on shortly—it is speaking in the realm of symbolism or mythology.

In reality, when we seemed to fall asleep, we took with us into the dream the memory of God's Love—that is the connecting link. That is the principle of the Atonement. The Course explains that the plan still had to be set into motion, which means that, within the dream, some aspect of the separated Sonship would have to live out or manifest that principle of the Atonement. And that person, of course, is Jesus. That is why he speaks in the Course of his being in charge of the Atonement (T-1.III.1:1). All of these are symbols and metaphors. Jesus is not a general who has been put in charge of the forces—it is nothing like that. The Course is using a metaphor to describe Jesus as our older brother—he is a symbol for us. Other cultures and religions have other symbols, but for us he is the symbol of someone who has demonstrated that the Atonement principle is true—that it is possible to be in the dream and remember the Love of God without reservation or qualification. So the principle of the Atonement came into existence at the moment that the separation seemed to occur. But within the world of illusion, it still had to be set into motion, and it was Jesus who did that for us. Again, all this is within the realm of symbol.