

**The Mysteries of
A Course in Miracles**

**By
J J Dewey**

Great AD-Ventures
P. O. Box 8011 Boise, Idaho 83707

Copyright ©2022 by Joseph J. Dewey

ISBN-10: 0-9665053-5-2
ISBN-13: 978-0-9665053-5-1

All Quotes from the Course are from the original version published by The Foundation for Inner Peace with the exception of references with UR, OE or COA attached. These are versions that publish Helen Schucman's original text before editing.

CONTENTS

PART 1 the Mysteries of the Course

Introduction

Chapter One

Why Should We Take the Course Seriously?

Chapter Two

Who Wrote A Course in Miracles?

Chapter Three

The Message of the Course

Chapter Four

What is God

Chapter Five

The One Son of God

Chapter Six

The Holy Spirit and Angels

Chapter Seven

Mind, Spirit, Thought and Ideas

Chapter Eight

The Mad Idea

Chapter Nine

The Bold Adventure

Chapter Ten

What Heaven Is Not

Chapter Eleven

What Heaven Is

Chapter Twelve

Where is Heaven?

Chapter Thirteen

The Real World

Chapter Fourteen

The Two Scripts

Chapter Fifteen

The Mystery of Time

Chapter Sixteen

The Mysteries of the Dream

Chapter Seventeen

The Mystery of Relationships

Chapter Eighteen

The Mystery of Reincarnation

Chapter Nineteen
The Mystery of Salvation
Chapter Twenty
Reason and the Mysteries
Chapter Twenty-One
The Mystery of Oneness
Chapter Twenty-Two
The Mystery of Judgment
Chapter Twenty-Three
The Mysterious Path to Health
Chapter Twenty-Four
The Mystery of Freedom
Chapter Twenty-Five
The Great Mystery: Did Anything Happen?
Chapter Twenty-Six
The Mystery of Creating Ourselves
Chapter Twenty-Seven
The Convergence of the Paths
Chapter Twenty-Eight
Translating into Oneness
Chapter Twenty-Nine
Are We Replaying a Movie?
Chapter Thirty
According to Plan

PART 2

ACIM CONVERSATIONS

Part 1 - The Key to Unity
Part 2 - The Ego and the Spirit
Part 3 - Resolving Disagreements
Part 4 - Two Steps to Heaven
Part 5 - Is Heaven on Earth?
Part 6 - Is Anything Happening?
Part 7 - The Mind Which is in Heaven
Part 8 - Is the Son One or Many?
Part 9 - Are we Watching a Movie?
Part 10 - The Meaning Behind the Son
Part 11 - The Four Groups of Sons
Part 12 - The Eternal Idea
Part 13 - Should I Support Improving the World?

Part 14 - Where Did God Come From?
Part 15 - Is There Duality in Heaven?
Part 16 - Managing Feelings About Ukraine
Part 17 - What is Forgiveness?
Part 18- Understanding the Ego
Part 19 - The Ego and the True Self
Part 20 - Time in Heaven
Part 21 - The Key to Health
Part 22 - Is Anyone Awake?
Part 23 - Steps to Awakening
Part 24 - The Historical Jesus
Part 25 - Made vs Create

The Mysteries of A Course in Miracles

Introduction

Since *A Course In Miracles* was introduced to the public in 1976, a plethora of writings have sprung up commenting on it and explaining it.

A negative spin comes from mostly fundamentalist Christians who are upset that it claims to be a revelation from Jesus, but one that does not fit into orthodox interpretation. Thus, they view it as a crafty work of the devil himself made to lead the elect away from the real Christ.

I do not know of any full-length book critical of the Course, but there are many articles, videos and web pages attacking it.

On the other hand, most of the commentary on *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM for short) is positive, and there are many full-length books in addition to websites, podcasts, videos, symposiums and study groups making an attempt to explain to the average reader what the Course is really saying.

These authors and students mostly see the Course as a revelation of Christ and fully accept everything therein. The main question they try to answer is, “How can we best apply the teachings in our lives?” That seems to be the theme of every book I have examined on the Course itself.

So basically, writings and comments on the Course come from two camps. On the one side, we have those who reject the whole thing out of hand. Then, on the other, we have the true believers who accept it all without question and only wish to understand it better.

I know of no book delving into the Course where the author sees great value in the writings, but is prepared to take a dispassionate position on teachings that are controversial and difficult to understand.

Furthermore, ACIM covers numerous mysterious teachings that are not touched upon by writers who are trying to tell us how to apply the Course to have a better life, or to awaken. This ignored aspect of the Course needs to be examined and

examined with dispassion and reason rather than merely as an affirmation of a belief system.

This book is different in three different ways from anything I have seen published to date.

(1) We will discuss mysteries and teachings from the Course that are of high interest to readers but have basically been ignored by other writers.

(2) Instead of presenting the writings from the starting point of total acceptance or rejection, we will take the position of the observer and see how each teaching registers with the internal truth detector, with pure reason and the Course itself. The writings will be accepted at face value unless otherwise stated.

The Course itself places strong emphasis on reason, telling us that most are suffering from a lack of it:

“You do not realize the whole extent to which the idea of separation has interfered with reason. Reason lies in the other self you have cut off from your awareness. And nothing you have allowed to stay in your awareness is capable of reason. How can the segment of the mind devoid of reason understand what reason is, or grasp the information it would give? All sorts of questions may arise in it, but if the basic question stems from reason, it will not ask it. Like all that stems from reason, the basic question is obvious, simple and remains unasked. But think not reason could not answer it.” T-21.V.4

This book will attempt to stay true to the direction of reason as well as that which is verified by the inner Self.

(3) Instead of merely telling readers how to better apply the principles of the Course, we will look into what is taught there (and sometimes not taught) that many have glossed over or missed completely.

Besides, if you want to know how to apply the Course to your life, there is nothing better than the Course itself to learn to do that. We will leave that aspect to others and move on to the new, the beautiful and the true – the mysteries of Divine Thought.

Chapter One

Why Should We Take the Course Seriously?

I have been a seeker of wisdom and truth for my entire life which is beginning to be fairly lengthy by earthly standards since I was born in 1945. During this time, I have studied quite a number of spiritual and philosophical writings. Many of them which present themselves as enlightening or from other worldly sources do little for me. On the other hand, many who make no claims but just present the highest they know have been quite inspiring.

When a writing does come along that claims to be inspired by God, Christ or a Master I ask myself this question:

“Using my creative imagination, could I have written this?”

In almost all cases the answer is yes. That doesn't mean that all such works are not true or do not have truth. Instead, it means that some mortal in the flesh, or astral entity, could have just made the whole thing up.

But then, three or four times in my life materials have come to me that are so profound, as well as beyond that which I could have created, that my attention was indeed captured causing me to take them seriously. In addition to recognizing the writings as coming from a higher intelligence, I also found they presented truths that were verified by my Inner Voice as well as my personal spiritual experiences.

Therefore, a handful of teachings I have stumbled across in my life have become an earned authority to me. An earned authority is one that has proven itself reliable (though not infallible). An unearned authority is one that makes claims but with little or no evidence to back them up. The difference with an earned authority is this. When it teaches something that is not part of my belief system, I do not automatically reject it but take it seriously and mull it over in my mind. If I cannot accept it in the present, I put it on the shelf until I can get a definite yes or no on the matter and is in harmony with my Inner Voice.

If an unearned authority tells me that aliens from the Pleiades are going to arrive next year to take us into the fifth dimension, then I take that with a grain of salt.

But if an earned authority, that has proven itself in the past, makes an unusual prediction or statement, I will take it seriously and do what I can to find the truth of the matter.

This is my situation with *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM). This is one of those rare works that I take seriously. Here are the reasons:

(1) This is a work that was originated by a very high intelligence, definitely beyond the reach of the scribe Helen Schucman, a fine lady of normal intelligence but who showed no evidence of an almost supernatural intelligence necessary to produce such a work.

I ask myself: “Could I have written this using my highest creative thinking?” This is one of those rare times that I must admit the answer is no.

(2) There were a number of ACIM teachings, not found in other materials (that I know of) that I had already discovered to be true.

One was its teaching on guilt. The standard thinking is that guilt is associated with conscience and if we do not have it we are a lost soul. Shortly before coming across ACIM, I discovered for myself the illusion behind guilt and how to neutralize it. When I then read about the Course’s teaching on the matter, I was impressed indeed, for it was in harmony with my own discoveries. Here is a quote from the Course on the subject of guilt:

“What is truly blessed is incapable of giving rise to guilt, and must give rise to joy. This makes it invulnerable to the ego because its peace is unassailable. It is invulnerable to disruption because it is whole. Guilt is always disruptive. Anything that engenders fear is divisive because it obeys the law of division. If the ego is the symbol of the separation, it is also the symbol of guilt. Guilt is more than merely not of God. It is the symbol of attack on God. This is a totally meaningless concept except to the ego, but do not underestimate the power of the ego's belief in it. This is the belief from which all guilt really stems. T-5.V.2

A second teaching that impressed me was the importance of letting go of all grievances. Before I read ACIM I had come to the conclusion that grievances were extremely detrimental to spiritual progression as well as physical health. I was in great harmony with statements such as this:

“For every grievance is a block to sight, and as it lifts you see the Son of God where he has always been.” W-pI.78.3

“You who were created by love like itself can hold no grievances and know your Self. To hold a grievance is to forget who you are. To hold a grievance is to see yourself as a body. To hold a grievance is to let the ego rule your mind and to condemn the body to death. Perhaps you do not yet fully realize just what holding grievances does to your mind. It seems to split you off from your Source and make you unlike Him. It makes you believe that He is like what you think you have become, for no one can conceive of his Creator as unlike himself.” W-pI.68.1

A third point and a clincher was a personal interpretation I had on these words of Jesus:

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Matt 25:40

Now the standard Christian thought is that the least of the brethren are the homeless and downtrodden. But I concluded that this was not true, for almost everyone feels some empathy for them and wishes them well. Instead, I concluded that the least of the brethren were those who you thought of as being the worst and most irritating or evil people on the planet. I had never found any teaching to agree with me until read a similar view in ACIM. It reads:

“We will select one person you have used as target for your grievances, and lay the grievances aside and look at him. Someone, perhaps, you fear and even hate; someone you think you love who angered you; someone you call a friend, but whom you see as difficult at times or hard to please, demanding, irritating or untrue to the ideal he should accept as his, according to the role you set for him.

“You know the one to choose; his name has crossed your mind already. He will be the one of whom we ask God's Son be shown to you. Through seeing him behind the grievances that you have held against him, you will learn that what lay hidden while you saw him not is there in everyone, and can be seen. He who was enemy is more than friend when he is freed to take the holy role the Holy Spirit has assigned to him. Let him be savior unto you today. Such is his role in God your Father's plan.” W-pI.78.4-5

If I was not a convert to ACIM's brilliance, this was the turning point. This presented the idea I had in my mind better than I could have written it myself.

I wasn't impressed with ACIM, though, merely because it only taught things that was in alignment with my thinking, for this was not the case. It taught many things I had not considered before and a number that disagreed with my thinking. But because the intelligence in it is of a high order, it is an earned, though not an infallible authority with me. Therefore, when I come across something that appears to not be sound, I ask myself: "Could my thinking on this have been incorrect?" or "Am I correctly understanding that which is presented?"

This has happened a number of times and has always caused me to think. Some of these were resolved by finding clarifications in other parts of the Course, and others I now see were strong points emphasized in one direction to cause a shift in the reader's attention. Then there are mysteries not yet resolved. We shall be talking about some of these.

Chapter Two

Who Wrote A Course in Miracles?

Most believing ACIM students think that the Jesus of the Bible wrote the Course.

Why?

Because the author pretty much says so. Numerous times we come across statements where the author speaks in the first person as the voice of Jesus, such as:

“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.” T-6.I.9

“When I said “I am come as a light into the world,” I meant that I came to share the light with you.” T-5.VI.11

“When I said “I am with you always,” I meant it literally. I am not absent to anyone in any situation.” T-7.III.1

“I have also made it clear that the resurrection was the means for the return to knowledge, which was accomplished by the union of my will with the Father's.” T-3.V.1.

But then the author often speaks of Christ in the third person. For instance, he again speaks of the resurrection as follows:

“The resurrection is the complete triumph of Christ over the ego, not by attack but by transcendence. For Christ does rise above the ego and all its works, and ascends to the Father and His Kingdom.” T-11.VI.1

Statements such as this are typical of the third person referencing.

“Christ waits for your acceptance of Him as yourself, and of His Wholeness as yours.” T-11.IV.7

It may seem odd for an author to reference himself in the third person, but many have done it, so this is certainly not without precedent. It can, however, arouse suspicion if authorship is in question.

In defense, one could argue that ACIM teaches that the Christ, or the Son of God, in its wholeness is composed of all of us in our true nature, not just the one man Jesus.

It is interesting that the most quoted authority on the Course, who was also its original editor as well as a friend of Helen Schucman, Kenneth Wapnick, was not sure if the voice was the Jesus of history.

He wrote this:

“Returning now to Helen and the Course, while her experience most definitely was of Jesus-a person outside herself-relating to her and dictating to her, in truth the reality was much different. Helen was able to return her mind to that memory of God's Love-her true Identity-symbolized by her as Jesus. By uniting with him, she united with love. That union has no form or specifics, for love, as we have seen, is abstract and beyond all divisions of the ego. This love, of which Jesus was the manifestation, flowed through the separated mind we know as Helen (the water taking shape in the glass) and came out to the world as the three books we know as *A Course in Miracles*.” Absence of Felicity, Page 457

So here, Ken gives his view that Helen was not in contact with Jesus, a different entity than herself, but “was able to return her mind to that memory of God's Love-her true Identity-symbolized by her as Jesus.”

According to him Helen had the ability to unite with her Christ self which is still with God, and through this contact, with what is often called “the Higher Self,” she was able to manifest the Course.

Are there any other possibilities?

Some, of course, believe that Helen, as a clever person, was the author. However, most who have taken a serious study of it do not think she had the ability to create such a document.

Of course, many reactionary fundamentalist Christians believe that Satan was the author. This makes no sense for a number of reasons.

(1) ACIM emphasizes the most important teachings of the Biblical Jesus such as, love, forgiveness and the reality of the resurrection.

(2) One can disagree with some of the teachings, but any astute student must admit the Course guides us toward a behavior that is good and not evil.

As noted, any honest student who has really examined the Course must admit that the mind that revealed it is of a very high order, seemingly far beyond Helen's intelligence.

Is it possible that another entity who was neither Jesus or Helen revealed it? Is it possible that this entity also identified with Christ because he was speaking from the higher mind which is one with Christ or the "One Son" mentioned in the Course?

This is an interesting possibility not considered by most students.

Some who take a cursory interest in the Course may think the author is an astral entity such as those contacted in the trance state or by automatic writing. But most of these channelings do not create writings of such a high order of intelligence as ACIM. Those entities who are one with the Christ mind do not use such methods, but will use a means of mental impression or mental telepathy.

In Helen's case it was mental telepathy.

In September 1965 Helen Schucman was working to advance her career as a psychologist at Columbia University working in association with Bill Thetford, also a psychologist.

Out of the blue she started getting some impressions, visions and hearing an inner voice. She kept getting the feeling that something unusual was going to happen.

Then one evening in October while sitting in her bedroom she clearly and consciously registered a Voice which said: "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes."

She was somewhat alarmed, thinking she may be experiencing a psychological problem and called Bill for advice. Fortunately, instead of dismissing it, he told her to write down what the Voice said and they would talk about it in the morning.

The next day Bill reviewed Helen's notes and saw they were far from the gibberish of someone with a mental problem. The writing seemed to be presented with high intelligence and her notes ended with this profound statement:

"Nothing real can be threatened.
Nothing unreal exists.
Herein lies the peace of God."

Bill was impressed and advised her to continue taking notes. He wanted to read more.

She took down a few more notes and began to wonder what the Course was all about and what its purpose was. She asked the Voice and received this reply:

"The world situation is worsening to an alarming degree. People all over the world are being called on to help, and are making their individual contributions as part of an overall prearranged plan. Part of the plan is taking down *A Course in Miracles*, and I am fulfilling my part in the agreement, as you will fulfill yours. You will be using abilities you developed long ago, and which you are not really ready to use again. Because of the acute emergency, however, the usual slow, evolutionary process is being by-passed in what might best be described as a celestial speed-up." Journey Without Distance by Robert Skutch

For the next seven years Helen took the words of the Voice down in shorthand and read them off to Bill who typed them up.

Unlike many New Age trance channelers, Helen was quite reluctant and sometimes dragged her feet and delayed the work. Like the Voice said, she was not ready for the job, but apparently the world situation called for her early cooperation. Fortunately, her sense of duty got the best of her.

She was a non-religious Jew and didn't feel she was a good choice for the job so she asked the Voice: "Why me? I'm not religious; I don't understand these things; I don't even believe them. I'm about the poorest choice you could make."

The answer came back very clearly. "On the contrary; you are an excellent choice. In fact, the best."

"But why?" she anguished. And then, without a hint of doubt she heard the answer; "Because you'll do it."

(Quotations from Journey Without Distance by Robert Skutch)

Later, she learned that she had been an Essene in a past life, apparently in the days of Jesus, and had developed the mental skills necessary for her current work as a scribe using mental telepathy.

Kenneth Wapnick refers to the process of her work as **“internal dictation”; that is, she did not go into an altered state, a trance, or engage in automatic writing. She was always aware of what she was doing, even if she chose not to pay attention to it. Regardless of her attitude, the writing would continue.”** Absence of Felicity, Page 181

Many students of Eastern teachings, Theosophy and the Ancient Wisdom will rule out most anything from the trance state or automatic writing and believe that true masters use a process similar to what Helen described. This is very similar to how Alice A. Bailey received her teachings and ironically, she was also very reluctant to take the notes at the beginning.

So, we have a scribe receiving through a high order of telepathy giving us writings from a mind with intelligence beyond mortal wisdom. Whether one believes this was the mind of Jesus or some other high intelligence, the writing is compelling enough that any serious thinker would be wise to take its content seriously.

Chapter Three

The Message of the Course

Back around 1980, when I first studied the Course, a lot of the profound material in it went over my head. I recognized that it was a revelation of a high order, but at first I saw it as teaching the same thing as many other teachings I had studied, but just using a different terminology.

And what was that?

Well, I went through everything the Christian religion had to teach, then on to all kinds of teachings in New Age philosophy and on to Theosophy, Eastern religions and the Ancient Wisdom of the east.

They all teach some version of salvation. For Christians it is an after-death movement to heaven where you live with God and Jesus. For New Agers it is all kinds of things from being picked up by flying saucers to moving to a new dimension. For the esoteric thinkers it is freeing ourselves from the wheel of rebirth and going back to our formless Source. We then rest there until we are ready to incarnate into a new universe based on the principles of illusion but of a somewhat higher order than before.

When I first studied ACIM I figured it was in harmony with the eastern teachings of liberation, that we were living in a world of illusion and needed to see the true reality so we could finish the schooling here as soon as possible.

Then, when I studied the course for a second and third time, I began to see differences that set it apart from anything else that is in the spiritual mainstream.

The reason many casual students do not see the main purpose of the book is that the key ingredient of the whole presentation is not given until near the end of the main text. When I first read it I found it to be in contradiction to everything I had accepted so far, and it caused me to do much additional reflection on the course. And what is this mysterious teaching?

ACIM teaches that the whole creation of the perceived universe including all form, time and space was a big mistake, and the purpose of the Course is to correct the

mistake and take us home to a mysterious heaven where there is no form, no time and no differences but merely oneness, peace and bliss.

The only teaching I know of that comes close to this is in some gnostic writings that teach that the universe was not made by the Most High but a lower being called a Demiurge. Some Gnostics considered this being evil while others see it as simply misled.

Here is the main quote from the Course that caused me to do some rethinking:

“Let us return the dream he gave away unto the dreamer, who perceives the dream as separate from himself and done to him. Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh. In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects. Together, we can laugh them both away, and understand that time cannot intrude upon eternity. It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which means there is no time.” T-27.VIII.6

So then, according to ACIM, the creator of the visible universe was a holy being, called the Son of God, with all the attributes and creative powers of God. This Son is composed of all the lives in the universe, including you and me. Together, in an ancient time, we conceived this “mad idea” and created a universe based on principles of illusion that wound up placing us within it in a dreamlike state. We thus became trapped here thinking the dream is real when it is not. The purpose of the Course is to wake us up to our error as soon as possible.

A huge obstacle to us waking up is guilt and fear. This resides in us as a residual effect of attempting a creation that was contrary to the will of God. This produced an inner fear that we offended God and he may be angry with us. This has created a natural inner reluctance to approach God and return to His presence.

The solution presented is *A Course in Miracles*. If we follow the teachings, we are told we can save thousands, perhaps millions of years in this dismal existence and return to the awakened state, which, we are told, is so much better than this reality. The Course calls it heaven, our eternal home.

The Course tells us that we are the Prodigal Son who left his home and squandered his inheritance. Like the son in the parable, we feel unworthy to return home for fear

our Father will not accept us. Instead, the Course tells us that God is waiting with open arms for our return. The only obstacle in the way is our thinking.

The purpose then of the Course is to correct our thinking so we can escape this inferior world of illusion and death and move back home where we enjoy eternal life and joyousness. Therefore, unlike numerous other spiritual philosophies that deal with many aspects of life and cosmology, the Course focuses on overcoming those obstacles in thinking that stand in the way of our restoration to the presence of God.

Fortunately, in the process of guiding us in this direction, the Course does make comments now and then giving hints and details that touches on other mysteries of existence, and we shall be exploring some of these.

The basic obstacles the Course attempts to assist us with to make a return home possible are:

(1) Overcoming Fear. Of all the obstacles in our way, this is the biggest one, and, according to the Course, our greatest fear is the fear of God. Because of our apparent rebellion and attempt to make a world that is separate from God's real creation, we have a natural fear that we are an offense to God and would be rejected by him.

One of the main teachings of the Course is that this is self-deception that needs to be realized and transcended. The key to accomplishing this is through the understanding of and sharing of love. Along this vein the Course says this:

**“Perfect love casts out fear.
If fear exists,
Then there is not perfect love.**

But:

**Only perfect love exists.
If there is fear,
It produces a state that does not exist.” T-1.VI.5**

The Course makes a number of clever paradoxical statements like this. Most believing students love them, whereas others find them frustrating or inconclusive circular reasoning.

For instance, the orthodox left brain mind would reason that if there is fear, which is a state of mind, then that state of mind would exist or we wouldn't even be talking about it.

On the other hand, the right brain merely accepts such words as true like a beautiful piece of poetry.

(2) Forgiveness. The Course powerfully teaches that we cannot wake up to our true reality without forgiveness. Seeing our brothers and sisters as guilty of sin of any kind keeps us trapped in the dream.

It has an interesting take on forgiveness that I haven't seen presented anywhere else before.

It tells us that the orthodox idea of forgiveness is to see the other guy as committing a sin or offense of some kind, and to forgive in the regular sense means that you place yourself in the superior position of being big hearted enough to overlook the guy's error.

It tells us that this is not forgiveness at all, for we still see our brother as a sinner and guilty. Instead, we just see ourselves as being in a superior position.

On the contrary, it tells us that true forgiveness involves the person seeing the offense as something that never even happened. If the offense did not happen there is nothing to forgive and your brother is sinless.

If there is nothing to forgive, then forgiveness is instant and effortless.

This seems to be a strange doctrine unless one soaks in its reasoning, which goes something like this:

Suppose you have a dream that your best friend and business partner withdrew all the money from your joint account and ran off to Rio with your wife.

In the dream you were so furious that you wanted to kill the guy, not to mention your wife.

Then you wake up to the real world and discover that the offenses did not happen at all, but it was just a dream. Your best friend is still your best friend and your wife is still faithful.

You wipe the sweat off your brow and think to yourself, “A few minutes ago, I wanted to kill them both and now I love them as much as ever because nothing really happened.”

“There is nothing to forgive. It was just a dream.”

Like it or not, that is the reasoning ACIM presents as the attitude we must have toward forgiveness in this physical life, which it says is a dream.

I must say that this attitude is helpful in my life and I already used it to a degree before I read ACIM. It indeed helps to tune out offenses if they are seen as never existing.

(3) Grievances. A grievance is closely related to forgiveness, and the student must let it go before complete forgiveness is possible.

(4) Guilt. Guilt is closely related to fear, and creates an illusory feeling of unworthiness. If the prodigal son feels unworthy, he will not attempt the journey home and risk being rejected by his parents.

The Course tells us that guilt is caused by allowing the ego to supplant the true God. When this happens, we are under the power of the illusion. This problem must be seen in the correct light before the pilgrim can take solid steps toward liberation.

(5) The Special Relationship. The tendency is to show love and acceptance to those special people we care for and not to others, but the Course tells us that we must see Christ in all people, even the irritating ones. Our love for all must have no barriers.

(6) Overcome the Ego. Students must see themselves as united with the One Great Life which is God rather than as separate individuals identified with a body. One must identify with the spirit rather than the form, with the eternal rather than the temporary.

(7) Acceptance. To awaken from the dream, one must accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit, often called the Inner Voice. For many lifetimes the student has followed the outer voice of the ego and this must cease. The direction must be changed from the lower temporary voice to the Spiritual Eternal Voice. This spiritual guidance must be followed if we wish to see beyond the illusion and awaken.

This is easier said than done because of the great investment each of us has in the world of form. Attachments are strong and students have great difficulty in letting them go... until they do.

The Course covers numerous other topics to aid students on the path to liberation, but these seven are the main roadblocks wherein the emphasis lies.

Some complain that the half million words in the Course have a lot of repetition saying the same thing. Yes, it does repeat itself at times but never exactly and always supplying new insights that need to be absorbed. And in the seeming repetition are many side comments and hints into mysteries that go beyond salvation. We shall explore some of these.

Chapter Four

What is God?

To lay a foundation of understanding of *A Course in Miracles* we need to understand what it teaches about its four major players that compose the true reality of the entire universe. They are all follows:

God, the Father
The Son
The Holy Spirit
Angels

Anything else that we may think exists is not real and only exists in the dream state and will disappear when fully awake, according to ACIM.

God, the Father, of course, is the supreme creator who initiated all things. The Course is fairly sketchy about Him but does say a few things.

First it makes clear that when it speaks of God, it is speaking of a real life for it says:

“God is not symbolic; He is Fact.” T-3.I.8

In examining the teachings, the reader needs to recall that the author of the Course insists he does not speak in misleading symbols, but means what he says:

“you may believe from time to time that I am misdirecting you. I have made every effort to use words that are almost impossible to distort, but it is always possible to twist symbols around if you wish.” T-3.I.3

This gives evidence to the idea that when the author identifies with the historical Jesus that he is speaking literally and not symbolically. The first thing concerning God then that is obvious is that the Course identifies Him as a Father, a male figure. Some in our current generation are displeased with this and many figure the male identity was used because it was common vernacular at the time it was written to identify generic figures with the male gender and calling God an “It” seemed disrespectful. God is also called “Father” in the Bible.

Many Course students figure that it doesn't matter whether we call God a "He" "She" or "It." Others take it literally and feel that God is represented by the male gender. Most feel the female mother is somewhere in creation - maybe represented by creation itself.

Most students see the Father and the Son as merely convenient titles for life that is beyond duality, or male and female. After all, the Son, as taught in the Course, includes all of us no matter what gender with which we identify.

The Course doesn't tell us where God came from. Instead, it merely makes this statement that is repeated by many students:

"God is" M-27.6

So, God just IS, which is beyond understanding, and is a great mystery for it is written:

"No one on earth can grasp what Heaven is, or what its one Creator really means." M-23.6

The Course does make this curious statement:

"God is an idea, and so your faith in Him is strengthened by sharing. What you find difficult to accept is the fact that, like your Father, you are an idea." T-15.VI.4

So, here we are told that we are an idea. Obviously, we are an idea in the mind of God since it is stated many times that he is our creator.

But if God is also an idea, as it says, the question to be asked is whose idea is God our creator? Is he merely His own idea or is there some even greater being still that created our creator?

Here is an interesting statement along this line:

"He (God) is first in the sense that He is the First in the Holy Trinity Itself. He is the Prime Creator, because He created His co-creators." T-7.I.7.

What we could take from this is that our God may not be the first of the Gods, but first in the sense that his position in the Trinity is first, with the Son being second and the Holy Spirit third. All of them may be "ideas" from some eternal Source.

We'll examine this more closely when we discuss the Son.

As it is, our creator is said to have pretty vast creations. He is called, **“The Creator of life, the Source of everything that lives, the Father of the universe and of the universe of universes, and of everything that lies even beyond them”** T-19.IV.D.1

If there is a creator above our creator who came up with the idea of our God, then our creator would share in its life as we are to share the life of our creator. Thus, if all the Gods are as one life, they all would identify with being the creators of “everything.” Even of the Son it is written he is the **“co-creator of the universe”**. W-pI.152.8

The Course does give us a few more details about our Creator. We are told that God **“is the universe”** T-11.I.2 He is **“the sum of everything, then what is not in Him does not exist,”** T-29.II.10 He is **“the Mind which caused all minds to be.”** T-28.I.11

As Sons of God we are told that **“there is one life, and that we share with Him, with all creation, with their thoughts as well, whom He created in a unity of life that cannot separate in death and leave the Source of life from where it came.”** W-pI.167.11

Even though God is said to have created everything, this world that we perceive is not part of creation, for it is considered an illusion which does not exist from an eternal perspective. The Course says:

“The world as you perceive it cannot have been created by the Father, for the world is not as you see it. God created only the eternal, and everything you see is perishable. Therefore, there must be another world that you do not see.” T-11.VII.1

As stated earlier, the creation of the universe that we perceive is considered to not be from God, but a “mad idea” of the Son, an illusion or a bad dream. Understanding this illusion and how it fits in with reality is a key to understanding many of the mysteries of the Course. We will cover more on this later.

Most religious believers in God see Him as complete and in need of nothing. He just created us out of the goodness of His heart, but if we cross Him in any way He will either annihilate us or send us to hell, so we will cease to be any bother for Him.

The Course takes a significantly different view on this. First, we are told that God loves all his creations and has no desire to punish them or bring them pain. In addition, God does not want to be alone and is lonely when any part of creation attempts to separate itself from Him.

We are plainly told: **“He (God) did not set His Kingdom up alone.”** T-30.II.1

Then there is this:

“You dwell in the Mind of God with your brother, for God Himself did not will to be alone.” T-11.I.1

“God is incomplete without you.” T-9.VIII.9

“God is as dependent on you as you are on Him, because His Autonomy encompasses yours, and is therefore incomplete without it.” T-11.IV.7

So ACIM tells us that God did not set up his kingdom alone and it is contrary to His will that he be alone.

And why is that?

“God is lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him.” T-2.III.5
“His joy is not complete because yours is incomplete. And this He does know. He knows it in His Own Being and its experience of His Son's experience. The constant going out of His Love is blocked when His channels are closed, and He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him.” T-4.VII.6
“They are part of you, as you are part of God. You are as lonely without understanding this as God Himself is lonely when His Sons do not know Him.” T-7.VII.10

So, the Course presents the rare teaching that neither God or us is complete without each other. God needs you and me and all of his creations to be complete. As it is, the Sons of God thought they could create a more interesting universe than God had at the home front, and like typical children who reject the values of their parents, they thought they could do better and made this dream world in which we live. Basically, it has been the playground for the Sons of God.

But then, like the Prodigal Son, we eventually get tired of the pain and sorrows we have to endure here and decide to return home.

When we do, instead of being rejected, God welcomes us back with open arms – for He is lonely without us.

In relation to this the Course says:

“His Son removed himself from His gift by refusing to accept what had been created for him, and what he had created in the Name of his Father. Heaven waits for his return, for it was created as the dwelling place of God's Son. You are not at home anywhere else, or in any other condition. Do not deny yourself the joy that was created for you for the misery you have made for yourself. God has given you the means for undoing what you have made. Listen, and you will learn how to remember what you are.” T-10.V.11

Chapter Five

The One Son of God

The Course gives us more details on the Son than the Father. The Father is basically that life or “idea” that initiated all creation and the Son continues it. The Father, we are told, created the Son; the Son did not create Himself. Thus, we have a difference between the two as noted here:

“I and my Father are one, but there are two parts to the statement in recognition that the Father is greater. T-1.II.4

This agrees with Jesus of the Bible who said: **“my Father is greater than I.”** John 14:28

We are told then that God did not desire to be alone so He extended Himself by creating a Son like unto Himself with all the Father’s original creative powers. He could then take joy in the Son’s creations as if they are His own, for they share the same mind. We are told that **“He (God) created you (the Son) as part of Him.”** T-24.VI.1 and **“You were created only to create”** T-14.I.4

The first thing a Course student must grasp about this mysterious figure called The Son, or Son of God, is that it is a unity - sharing oneness with God yet is composed of all of us and more. When, therefore, the Course states that God has only one Son, it is speaking of a great life composed of many parts sharing the same mind and purpose.

Some students take the statement of the “one Son” or “Only Son” literally to the extent that they think this means there are no parts but just one life. Their thinking goes like this:

In this illusion we appear to be many but when we return to our Source, we will no longer be an individual in any degree, but all of us will awaken as the One Son with no parts. The One Son is just dreaming all of us into temporary existence as egos. You and I will disappear along with our egos when the final awakening happens.

This is not only an error in interpretation. but such a view misses many statements in the course to the contrary.

One could make this same error with the Father and the Son which are also grouped as one, but that oneness does not mean sameness for the Course says, as quoted earlier that, ***“I and my Father are one, but there are two parts to the statement in recognition that the Father is greater.”*** T-1.II.4

Then we read in the unedited version:

“the original statement was “are of one kind.” The Father and the Son are not identical, but you can say “Like Father, like Son.” UR T 1 B 22l.

Just like the Father and the Son share one mind and one life, but are separate parts of the whole, even so, is the Son composed of many parts that make up the one great life. This is comparable to cells in the body that are parts of the one life that make up the whole of your body. It is one life, but composed of many parts. This analogy was used by Paul in a similar approach to the Course:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, SO ALSO IS CHRIST. For by ONE SPIRIT we are all baptized into ONE body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into ONE SPIRIT. For the body is not one member, but MANY (All lives together)... Now Ye are the body of Christ (the Son), and members in particular.” I Cor 12:12-14, 27

Here the Course teaches a similar principle of the One and the Many:

“It should especially be noted that God has only one Son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. T-2.VII.6

“And here, before the altar to one God, one Father, one Creator and one Thought, we stand together as one Son of God. Not separate from Him Who is our Source; not distant from one brother who is part of our one Self” W-pl.187.10

“So do the parts of God's Son gradually join in time, and with each joining is the end of time brought nearer.” T-20.V.1

“God has but one Son, knowing them all as One.” T-9.VI.3

This one Son consists of many Sons and the principle of the many in the one will continue after the return home:

“When the Atonement is complete and the whole Sonship is healed there will be no Call to return. But what God creates is eternal. The Holy Spirit will remain with the Sons of God, to bless their creations and keep them in the light of joy.” T-5.I.5.

Notice that we are called “Sons of God,” plural, even after our final union with God.

This oneness applies to the entire Trinity:

“The Son of God is part of the Holy Trinity, but the Trinity Itself is One. There is no confusion within Its Levels, because They are of one Mind and one Will.” T-3.II.5 **“you are of one mind and spirit with Him.”** T-5.VII.3 **“There is one life. That life you share with Him.”** W-pI.156.2

So, just as you are a part of the “Only Son,” even so, the Son **“is part of the Holy Trinity.”** The parts of the Son share a Oneness as do the three parts of the Trinity which **“Itself is One.”**

So, what then produces this oneness? Is it caused by a merging where each part is exactly the same with no one having a unique contribution or individual existence?

No. What causes the oneness is that we all share the same Mind, Will, Spirit and Life. The mind and Spirit of God is circulating within you now giving you life, yet you live your life as a unique contribution. That will not change when we awaken. Instead, we will merely lose our ego which sees us as a separate unconnected unit. When this happens, we will see and accept the unity and oneness of life.

The Course makes it clear that when it speaks of the Son, plural or singular, it is talking about all of us for it says, **“WE stand together as one Son of God.”** W-pI.187.10 But what is often missed is how inclusive the Sonship really is. The Sonship is often referred to as an actual extension of God Himself:

“Very gently does God shine upon Himself, loving the extension of Himself that is His Son.” T-12.VI.7

Then it draws this fantastic conclusion:

“There is no end to God and His Son, for WE ARE THE UNIVERSE” and we are to **“See His creations as His Son.”** T-11.I.5.

“God created nothing beside you and nothing beside you exists.” T-10.in.2

“Without you there would be a lack in God, a Heaven incomplete, a Son without a Father. There could be no universe and no reality.” T-24.VI.2

“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God,” W-pI.183.10

Those are pretty inclusive statements for you and me, but this one tops them all:

“How holy is the smallest grain of sand, when it is recognized as being part of the completed picture of God's Son!” T-28.IV.9 “all living things as part of him.” M-23.2 “Know, then, the Sons of God, and you will know all creation.” T-7.XI.7

So, the Son not only consists of you, me and all humanity, but all life and creation down to “the smallest grain of sand.”

Since God created “nothing beside you,” this means that when we achieve full awareness we will share life with all things even to the tiniest inorganic particles. Since we all belong to one mind, and mind even creates the grain of sand, we can suppose that mind and life envelopes all things as a unity.

The Course places us as Sons in a very powerful position. We have all the powers that God has but are just unaware of who we are.

We are told that God **“created you out of Himself, but still within Him.” T-14.IV.4** You are to **“accept your rightful place as co-creator of the universe.” W-pI.152.8** **“all His extensions are like Him.” T-12.IV.6**

Then we have this powerful statement concerning those who realize their true identity:

“There is now no limit on his power, because it is the power of God. So has his name become the Name of God, for he no longer sees himself as separate from Him.” M-23.2

According to the Course, then, we are truly made in the image and likeness of God with all the powers of godliness, but instead of extending the work of the Father through true creation, we used our unlimited power to limit ourselves in a world of

illusion. Apparently, we wanted the challenge of overcoming these self-imposed limits.

Instead of having a fun challenge, we lost our true identity and have become trapped in the illusion and need help getting out. To that end was the reason the Course was written.

When we as Sons of God realize our true power, nothing will be impossible, as was said by Jesus in the Bible.

When students read *A Course in Miracles*, they usually see the creator Father as a single entity. The concept of the Son is not so cut and dried. It clearly tells us there is one Son and all of us in this illusion are part of it, but there is not agreement on what happens when we return to heaven. Some think the end result will be a Son that is a single entity with no individual parts, and others see it as one united life composed of many parts.

Earlier we showed clear evidence from the Course writings that the latter is true. The Son has many parts but shares in the one mind, as does the Father.

What is not so clear is what the Father is and how He differs from the Son. Perhaps starting with an analogy will help.

If one is writing a book on parenting, the writer may talk about the son, daughter or child in the singular even though the term may apply to the billions of them worldwide.

This he will also do with the father, mother or parent. The fact that he refers to “the son” or “the father” doesn’t mean there is just one entity on the planet in that position.

The same goes for *A Course in Miracles*. When it speaks of the one Son or the one Father, it talks about a singular position, not a singular entity.

Now, getting back to the parent and child, the analogy also tells us this. The father was once a son and the son will someday be a father. But even when the son becomes a father, he is still a son to his father, but also a father to his own son.

Contrary to common interpretation, the Course’s teachings are in harmony with this example.

First, it clearly tells us that the Son of God (us) will have sons just as the Father had Sons.

“Without your Father you will not know your fatherhood. The Kingdom of God includes all His Sons AND THEIR CHILDREN, who are as like the Sons as they are like the Father.” T-7.XI.7

There you have it. The Sons of God will have **“children, who are as like the Sons as they are like the Father.”**

This idea is reinforced here:

“His joy lay in creating you, and He extends His Fatherhood to you so that you can extend yourself AS HE DID. You do not understand this because you do not understand Him.” T-8.VI.6

It is certainly true that many students do not understand the Father and Son concept, but it is further clarified here:

“the Son gives Fatherhood to his Creator, and receives the gift that he has given Him. It is because he is God's Son that HE MUST ALSO BE A FATHER, WHO CREATES AS GOD CREATED HIM. The circle of creation has no end.” T-28.II.1

This truth is emphasized here:

“What He creates is not apart from Him, and nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin as something separate from Him.” W-pI.132.12

And if the Son creates additional sons “as God created him,” then what will the newly created sons call the creator Son?

They will call him “Father.” Yes, this Son will be a Father to his Sons but also a Son to his Father. He is thus a Father and a Son.

So why would this not apply to our Father? Would he also not be a Father to us but a Son to another creator?

Indeed. Consider this:

“The shining radiance of the Son of God, so like his Father that the memory of Him springs instantly to mind. And with this memory, THE SON

REMEMBERS HIS OWN CREATIONS, AS LIKE TO HIM AS HE IS TO HIS FATHER.” T-24.II.6

The Son’s creations (his children) are then to him “as he is to his Father.”

Furthermore: **“your creations, who are son to you, that you might share the Fatherhood of God,” T-24.VII.1**

We will share Fatherhood with God the same way we do with our fathers here. When we have children in this world, we share the principle of fatherhood with our earthly father the same as he did when he had us. The same goes for the next world. When we are Fathers, we will be like our creator Father who is also a Son.

“The Son of God has both Father and Son, because he is both Father and Son. ...What can the Son of God not accomplish with the Fatherhood of God in him?” T-11.II.1&4

“The Father must give fatherhood to His Son, because His Own Fatherhood must be extended outward. You who belong in God have the holy function of extending His Fatherhood by placing no limits upon it.” T-8.III.3

“A co-creator with the Father must have a Son. Yet must this Son have been created like Himself. A perfect being, all-encompassing.” T-24.III.6

Every creator Son is a Father and every Father is also a creator son. This is why we are told **“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God.” W-pl.183.10**

The final and ultimate question is who is our Father’s Father and how far back does the lineage go? Most would say there is no beginning which is hard to fathom, but so it is.

Our Father identifies with all other Fathers in the universe through the one mind as one Father, and all awakened Sons identify as the one Son, also through the one mind; and through this one mind the Father and the Son are One. Oneness Is.

Chapter Six

The Holy Spirit and Angels

The idea of the Trinity - the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - being three but one is presented similarly in *A Course in Miracles* and orthodox Christianity. The Father aspect, representing the all-powerful creator, has similar ingredients, but the Son is presented quite differently and in more detail in ACIM than in the New Testament. On the other hand, even though there is more about the Holy Spirit in the Course, overall it is significantly in harmony with the Bible.

Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus of the New Testament says this:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:16-17

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26

It is interesting that the word Comforter is translated from the Greek PARAKLĒTOS, which means “One who is called in” or “called to one’s aid.”

The Course tells us that the creation of the Holy Spirit originated at the separation of the Son from the Father. He was indeed called in to aid in assisting the Son to return to his right mind. It is written:

“He came into being with the separation as a protection, inspiring the Atonement principle at the same time. Before that there was no need for healing, for no one was comfortless. The Voice of the Holy Spirit is the Call to Atonement, or the restoration of the integrity of the mind.” T-5.I.5

So, His purpose is to call us **“to Atonement, or the restoration of the integrity of the mind.”**

Concerning the atonement, the Course also says this:

“Atonement means correction, or the undoing of errors.” M-18.4

The “Atonement centers on the past, which is the source of separation, and where it must be undone. For separation must be corrected where it was made.” T-17.III.5

“The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you, or rather to restore it to your awareness. You were given everything when you were created, just as everyone was. When you have been restored to the recognition of your original state, you naturally become part of the Atonement yourself.” OE Tx:1.31

So then, in the ancient past, we as Sons of God who had been given all the creative powers of the Father, had what the Course calls a “mad idea.” We wondered what it would be like to live in a universe of time and space that was separate from God and based upon duality rather than unity, where there was evil as well as good, pain as well as joy. We had this idea that could not be carried out in God’s reality so we created dream world of illusion and entered it as if falling asleep and dreaming. The trouble was that we went into such a deep state of sleep that we had no awareness that we were dreaming, so we accepted the world of illusion as real and forgot that we even had a true home in the celestial realm.

The Course says the story of Adam symbolized what happened to us:

“Yet the Bible says that a deep sleep fell upon Adam, and nowhere is there reference to his waking up. The world has not yet experienced any comprehensive reawakening or rebirth. Such a rebirth is impossible as long as you continue to project or miscreate.” T-2.I.3

“Only after the deep sleep fell upon Adam could he experience nightmares.” T-2.I.4

So one reason this whole separation was called a mad idea was that, instead of just entering a universe that was interesting and challenging, we also entered a dream state that gave us many “nightmares.”

This created a barrier in communication between the Father and the Son so deep that God decided a correction was necessary.

“God's extending outward, though not His completeness, is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him as one. So He thought, ‘My children sleep and must be awakened.’” T-6.V.1

God wanted to awaken His Sons, but there was a major problem. Whatever God places His attention on becomes as if it is real. If God entered the dream to redeem His Sons, then the dream would become real to Him as well and He would also be trapped. There would be created the risk of both the Father and the Son becoming eternally separated from their true home, eternally losing their identity.

To solve the problem and allow God to keep His attention focused on reality He created a special agent, The Holy Spirit, that could be a bridge between the two worlds.

So, God created the **“Holy Spirit, Who was God's answer to the separation.” T-17.IV.4**

“The Holy Spirit mediates higher to lower communication, keeping the direct channel from God to you open for revelation.” T-1.II.5

This gives some further light on the seriousness of the matter:

“He has created the Holy Spirit as the Mediator between perception and knowledge. Without this link with God, perception would have replaced knowledge forever in your mind. With this link with God, perception will become so changed and purified that it will lead to knowledge.” W-pI.43.1

So then, if the Holy Spirit had not been created as a link between the worlds, **“perception would have replaced knowledge forever.”** Perception is what makes the world of illusion real and “seeing would be believing,” forever without the aid of the Holy Spirit whose mission is to bring us the knowledge that there exists a reality which is beyond normal vision.

In addition to being a comforter who reaches across worlds to us, Jesus in the scripture told us the Holy Spirit would **“abide with you for ever.”**

This Biblical statement agrees with the Course which says:

“But what God creates is eternal. The Holy Spirit will remain with the Sons of God, to bless their creations and keep them in the light of joy.” T-5.I.5.

Next Jesus calls him, **“the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”**

The Course is in harmony with this scripture and adds:

“The Holy Spirit mediates between illusions and the truth. Since He must bridge the gap between reality and dreams, perception leads to knowledge through the grace that God has given Him, to be His gift to everyone who turns to Him for truth.” W-pII.7.1

“When you made visible what is not true, what is true became invisible to you. Yet it cannot be invisible in itself, for the Holy Spirit sees it with perfect clarity.” T-12.VIII.3

The scripture continues:

“but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

And the Course adds:

“The Holy Spirit is in you in a very literal sense. His is the Voice that calls you back to where you were before and will be again. It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn.” T-5.II.3

Next the scripture says:

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26

And the Course affirms as follows:

“The Holy Spirit, Who remembers this for you, merely teaches you how to remove the blocks that stand between you and what you know. His memory is yours.” T-14.IV.9

“truth can still set you free. Look as the Holy Spirit looks, and understand as He understands. His understanding looks back to God in remembrance of me. He is in communion with God always, and He is part of you.” T-5.III.11

The Course, however, goes beyond the Biblical statements of the Holy Spirit and sheds additional light. One point that we already covered was the purpose of his creation, which was to heal the separation from God.

The Course gives additional light on exactly what the Holy Spirit is. It says:

“He is part of the Holy Trinity, because His Mind is partly yours and also partly God's. This needs clarification, not in statement but in experience. The Holy Spirit is the idea of healing. Being thought, the idea gains as it is shared. Being the Call for God, it is also the idea of God. Since you are part of God it is also the idea of yourself, as well as of all His creations.” T-5.III.1-2

When it speaks of its mind as “partly” ours, it is speaking of the higher part of our minds:

“I do work with your higher mind, the home of the Holy Spirit.” T-4.IV.11

Then it adds this:

“Apart from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has no function. He is not separate from either, being in the Mind of Both, and knowing that Mind is One. He is a Thought of God, and God has given Him to you because He has no Thoughts He does not share.” T-13.VIII.4.

The Course emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is higher mind that dwells in both God and the higher part of ourselves, the same mind that was in Christ:

“The Holy Spirit is the Christ Mind which is aware of the knowledge that lies beyond perception.” T-5.I.5

As far as what its purpose is in addition to the atonement **“It is the Holy Spirit's function to teach you how this oneness (with God) is experienced, what you must do that it can be experienced, and where you should go to do it” T-25.I.6**

“The Holy Spirit holds this plan of God exactly as it was received of Him within the Mind of God and in your own.” W-pI.99.5

An important part of the mission of the Holy Spirit involves assisting us in the removal of guilt, as guilt is a major barrier between man and God.

“You whose mind is darkened by doubt and guilt, remember this: God gave the Holy Spirit to you, and gave Him the mission to remove all doubt and every trace of guilt that His dear Son has laid upon himself. It is impossible that this mission fail.” T-13.XI.5

“The Holy Spirit knows that all salvation is escape from guilt. You have no other “enemy,” and against this strange distortion of the purity of the Son of God the Holy Spirit is your only Friend. He is the strong protector of the innocence that sets you free.” T-14.III.13

Finally, a main part of his mission in connection with the Sons of God who are trapped within the illusionary dream is to link our minds with His and guide us until we awaken and arrive home. We cannot do it on our own and need His assistance:

“When you have learned how to decide with God, all decisions become as easy and as right as breathing. There is no effort, and you will be led as gently as if you were being carried down a quiet path in summer. Only your own volition seems to make deciding hard. The Holy Spirit will not delay in answering your every question what to do.” T-14.IV.6

For eons the Sons of God have been trapped in the dark and dreary world. The Course tells us that the only way out is to switch our attention from the lower mind of the ego to the higher mind of the Holy Spirit, which is linked to the eternal part of ourselves.

So, what do we have to do to make this miracle of infallible guidance happen? The answer is amazingly simple.

We have to ask, and when there is a response, we then must receive. Jesus stated this simple principle in the New Testament:

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Matt 7:7-8

Here is what the Course says about asking:

“The very fact that the Holy Spirit has been asked for anything will ensure a response. Yet it is equally certain that no response given by Him will ever be one that would increase fear. It is possible that His answer will not be heard. It is impossible, however, that it will be lost. There are many answers you have already received but have not yet heard. I assure you that they are waiting for you.” T-9.II.3

“The Holy Spirit will answer every specific problem as long as you believe that problems are specific.” T-11.VIII.5

“To ask the Holy Spirit to decide for you is simply to accept your true inheritance. Does this mean that you cannot say anything without consulting Him? No, indeed! That would hardly be practical, and it is the practical with which this course is most concerned. If you have made it a habit to ask for help when and where you can, you can be confident that wisdom will be given you when you need it.” M-29.5

The second part of the process is for the seeker to be open to receiving beyond theory, but in actuality. Here is what is asked of us to complete the process:

“Your little part is but to give the Holy Spirit the whole idea of sacrifice. And to accept the peace He gives instead, without the limits that would hold its extension back, and so would limit your awareness of it. For what He gives must be extended if you would have its limitless power, and use it for the Son of God's release.” T-19.IV.B.9

“you must choose to hear one of two voices within you. One you made yourself, and that one is not of God. But the other is given you by God, Who asks you only to listen to it.” T-5.II.3

“The Holy Spirit asks you to respond as God does, for He would teach you what you do not understand. God would respond to every need, whatever form it takes. And so He keeps this channel open to receive His communication to you, and yours to Him.” T-15.VIII.5

When full reliance is made on the side of the Holy Spirit, we are told all future decisions will be effortless, for the right choice will be obvious. For instance, if you were about to drive over a cliff and you realize you could prevent this by merely applying the brakes, then what choice is there really? In theory you could choose to not hit the brakes, but in reality the choice is so obvious that it is the only one to be made.

That is how choices along the path are seen for those who are at one mind with the Holy Spirit.

Angels

In addition to the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we are told there is one other group of inhabitants in heaven. This fourth group are the angels, and the Course says a mysteriously small amount about these beings. When it does mention them, it often does so as a side item.

It may seem somewhat contradictory that there is a separate category of angels mentioned when we are told that:

“God created nothing beside you (the Son) and nothing beside you exists.” T-10.in.2

“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God,” W-pI.183.10

Yet something else called angels apparently does exist. Here is one of the few pieces of knowledge given out concerning the angels.

“You were created ABOVE the angels because your role involves creation as well as protection. You who are in the image of the Father need bow only to HIM, before whom I kneel with you.” UR T 1 B 30y

So, the Son (us) is created “above” the angels, apparently meaning we are of a higher order because we are creators as well as protectors. Protection seems to be the job of angels.

Apparently, after the fall into illusion the angels tried to recover us, but were unable to:

“The Atonement actually began long before the Crucifixion. Many Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the Separated Ones but they could not withstand the strength of the attack, and had to be brought back. Angels came, too, but their protection was not enough, because the Separated ones were not interested in peace. They had already split themselves, and were bent on dividing rather than reintegrating.” UR T 2 B 43

The only way to see harmony in this contradiction is to see the angels as a part of the Sonship, but a group having a different job. Also of note is that teachings in the Ancient Wisdom tell us that angels eventually become Sons of God.

Here are some other quotes from the Course that give some light on the purpose of angels.

“Your newborn purpose is nursed by angels, cherished by the Holy Spirit and protected by God Himself.” T-19.IV.C.9

“Around you angels hover lovingly, to keep away all darkened thoughts of sin, and keep the light where it has entered in.” T-26.IX.7

“This do the body's eyes behold in one (your brother) whom Heaven cherishes, the angels love and God created perfect.” W-pI.161.9

“God's Name can not be heard without response, nor said without an echo in the mind that calls you to remember. Say His Name, and you invite the angels to surround the ground on which you stand, and sing to you as they spread out their wings to keep you safe, and shelter you from every worldly thought that would intrude upon your holiness.” W-pI.183.2

Note: The wings here must be symbolic, as ACIM says there is no form in heaven.

“You do not walk alone. God's angels hover near and all about. His Love surrounds you, and of this be sure; that I will never leave you comfortless.” W.ep.6

“He will not leave you comfortless, nor fail to send His angels down to answer you in His Own Name.” S-2.III.7

Thus, we complete our examination of the four groups of lives which compose heaven, who we are told are really one life to whom we give the generic title of God.

Chapter Seven

Mind, Spirit, Thought and Ideas

We have covered Course teachings on the celestial lives of the Trinity and angels, but what are the principles behind the great mystery of such lives and creation itself? This quote from the course certainly gives pause for reflection:

“God is an idea, and so your faith in Him is strengthened by sharing. What you find difficult to accept is the fact that, like your Father, you are an idea.” T-15.VI.4

Not only is God and us (the Son) ideas, but so is the Holy Spirit:

“The Holy Spirit is the idea of healing. Being thought, the idea gains as it is shared. Being the Call for God, it is also the idea of God. Since you are part of God it is also the idea of yourself, as well as of all His creations.” T-5.III.1

So the Holy Spirit and the Son (you and me) are ideas from God? What then would be the source of the idea of God and what exactly would that be?

First, we must become clear what an idea is and where it originates. The Course rings true when it says **“Ideas are of the mind.”** T-26.VII.4 **“every idea begins in the mind of the thinker. Therefore, what extends from the mind is still in it, and from what it extends it knows itself.”** T-6.III.1

It even goes so far to say that **“Everything is an idea.”** T-5.I.2

“Every idea has a purpose, and its purpose is always the natural outcome of what it is.” T-11.V.5.

The course repeatedly makes the statement that “ideas leave not their source.” This seems kind of odd reasoning since it certainly appears in this world that ideas do leave their source. For instance, the car you drive is the manifestation of many ideas from diverse individuals, and there it sits in your garage separated from the source of those who came up with the ideas that created it.

And how about you? You are currently in a body, maybe sitting in a chair, and separated from any intelligence that came up with the idea that is you.

This is incorrect thinking says the Course:

“Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them. Ideas are of the mind. What is projected out, and seems to be external to the mind, is not outside at all, but an effect of what is in, and has not left its source. ... God wills you learn what always has been true: that He created you as part of Him, and this must still be true because ideas leave not their source.” T-26.VII.4

So, your car which “seems to be external to the mind, is not outside at all” according to the Course. It tells us that everything in creation is composed of ideas sent forth by the mind. Many of these ideas seem to be external because we see them as such. This is an illusion because everything you see is projected by the mind.

So what mind is projecting your car?

This would be the collective mind of the Son of God, which includes all of us as a united life. The car is our idea. It is not there in the true reality, but seems to be there because we project it through the unlimited power of the mind.

And not only is your car an illusion projected by our group mind but so also is our whole world and everything in it. It tells us that our **“world ... is not here, although it seems to be.”** W-pI.155.1

“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” T-13.VII.17

So, if you dream of a car in the garage, the car is not really there, but merely a projection of the mind. This is the case with what we think is our waking state, but instead of experiencing a dream by yourself alone, you are experiencing a group dream of collective minds united with the idea of the creator Son.

The strongest emphasis around this idea is centered on us as creations or ideas in the mind of God. If we only appear to be here and have not left our Source, then where are we?

We are told that we dwell in “eternity... safe at home” even as we appear to be here. This is because **“God has given you a place in His Mind that is yours forever.”** T-11.I.6

So then, the real part of ourselves has not left our Source, God, but the dreaming part of ourselves thinks we are here in this world. Everything in this world is an idea from our collective mind that exists within, but is projected without.

To awaken and see the true reality, you need **“to return your whole mind to God, because it has never left Him. If it has never left Him, you need only perceive it as it is to be returned.”** T-6.II.10

All ideas then come from mind, and all mind is linked to God. From what we are told, all ideas from mind in the state of wholeness were perfect and good except for one. In this state of wholeness the mind of the Second Aspect of the Trinity, the Son, came up with a bad idea. In fact, it was such a bad idea it was called a “mad idea.” How a mad idea could have even originated in a creation from a perfect being is not explained by the Course, but merely lets us know that it happened and resulted in the making of this imperfect universe with its pains sorrows and death that runs contrary to the will of heaven.

This mad idea caused the mind to split into what some call the higher and lower mind. The higher mind is still linked to God and is in oneness with Him. This mind only comes up with good ideas in harmony with Higher Will. The lower mind is linked to this world, is cut off from God, and comes up with all kinds of bad ideas not in harmony with heaven.

We are told that **“You have made many ideas that you have placed between yourself and your Creator, and these beliefs are the world as you perceive it.”** 11.VII.4

There are many bad ideas that we have in this world, but there are three particularly egregious ones according to the Course.

The first is our creation of the ego which supports the idea of separation from God. It says, **“All that the ego is, is an idea that it is possible that things could happen to the Son of God without his will; and thus without the Will of his Creator.”** T-21.II.6

The second is the creation of our bodies with the idea of restricting our consciousness to such a limited and separative condition.

“The ego regards the body as its home, and tries to satisfy itself through the body. But the idea that this is possible is a decision of the mind, which has become completely confused about what is really possible. “T-4.II.7

The third particularly bad and false idea is the ego’s version of God as an angry, punishing revengeful being **“having made him out of your insanity, he is an insane idea. He has many forms, but although he may seem to be many different things he is but one idea;--the denial of God.” T-10.V.3**

Ideas, then are created by thought, and thought comes from mind. Since God is an idea, we can conclude that the life of God and all extensions, such as you and I, came from the thought of one great universal mind. We could say that the idea of God is a thought that correlates to the Universal Mind from whence all thought and ideas originate.

Indeed, mind and thought are linked to life itself: **“If I did not think I would not exist, because life is thought,”** says the Course. W-pl.54.2.

Thought is behind all existence, even that of God, and may be one reason even He is called an idea.

So then, behind all existence we have ideas, for **“Everything is an idea.”** Ideas come from thought, and thought comes from mind. The fourth ingredient in the scheme of things is Spirit. Where does it enter in and does it proceed mind?

It appears that mind and Spirit are closely related, are interdependent, and are both essential elements behind the creation of all things. They are not exactly the same, however. The biggest difference is that Spirit is perfect and unchangeable, whereas mind is capable of error since it is active in generating thought.

This quote reveals the difference between the two:

“Spirit is therefore unalterable because it is already perfect, but the mind can elect what it chooses to serve. The only limit put on its choice is that it cannot serve two masters. If it elects to do so, the mind can become the medium by which spirit creates along the line of its own creation. If it does not freely elect to do so, it retains its creative potential but places itself under tyrannous rather

than Authoritative control. As a result it imprisons, because such are the dictates of tyrants.” T-1.V.5

Consequently, the mind can choose between two masters and can even come up with a mad and crazy idea, whereas Spirit is static and perfect and never deviates from its high state. **“The mind is capable of illumination. Spirit is already illuminated,”** T-2.V.6 says the Course.

We are told that **“Spirit is the Thought of God which He created like Himself.”** C-1.1

The difference between Mind and Spirit is that **“Only the mind can create because spirit has already been created.”** T-2.IV.3

Even though mind is the creative and thinking force, it is dependent on Spirit for its power.

“Yet mind apart from spirit cannot think. It has denied its Source of strength, and sees itself as helpless, limited and weak.” W-pI.96.5

So, Mind introduced the “mad idea” to make a universe out of reach from Spirit, and then lost its ability to think accurately, thus becoming “limited.”

It comes down to this:

“Only the mind is capable of error.” T-2.IV.2 “It is essential to remember that only the mind can create, and that correction belongs at the thought level. To amplify an earlier statement, spirit is already perfect and therefore does not require correction.” T-2.V.1

So then, it boils down to this. The prime stabilizing force in the universe is pure spirit which is perfect and never deviates from this perfection. On the other hand, the mind is the creative force and creativity demands choice, which makes duality possible along with the possibility of good and bad choices.

The interdependence of the mind and Spirit is interesting:

“The term mind is used to represent the activating agent of spirit, supplying its creative energy.” C-1.1

“Spirit makes use of mind as means to find its Self expression. And the mind which serves the spirit is at peace and filled with joy. Its power comes from spirit, and it is fulfilling happily its function here.” W-pI.96.3.

An important realization concerning the universal mind which we all share is that it is a source of unlimited power of creation, for we **“are of one mind and spirit with Him. (God)” T-5.VII.3** and **“The mind that serves the spirit is invulnerable.” T 1 B 28c**

This great power is used for extending God’s creation when in harmony with Spirit, but when out of sync it can lose contact with Spirit and **“you have used your own mind, which He created in the likeness of His Own, to miscreate.” T-3.II.4** The problem is that mind still has this unlimited power even when going in the wrong direction.

For instance, when the Son made his greatest mistake and got his “mad idea” we are told that: **“In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” T-27.VIII.6**

The creation of illusion is no small matter, as noted here: **“The thoughts you hold are mighty, and illusions are as strong in their effects as is the truth.” W-pI.132.1**

One of the effects was the creation of the Ego, the self that has no contact with Spirit, but still uses Mind. Concerning this ego Helen’s original transcription reveals this:

“It may surprise you to learn that had the ego willed to do so, it COULD have made the eternal, because, as a product of the mind, it IS endowed with the power of its own creator. But the DECISION to do this, rather than the ABILITY to do it is what the ego cannot tolerate. That is because the decision, from which the ability would naturally develop, would necessarily involve true perception, a state of clarity which the ego, fearful of being judged truly, MUST avoid.” UR T 4 F 13

So even the ego, the false self, because it is “a product of the mind,” has great power to create and is only limited by its own self-deception.

We as Sons of God who have fallen asleep to higher reality are also asleep to the power of mind within us. We are told:

“The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating. It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains.” T-2.VI.9

However, the real power is manifest when we link up with other minds in harmony with Higher Will:

“Alone we can do nothing, but together our minds fuse into something whose power is far beyond the power of its separate parts. By not being separate, the Mind of God is established in ours and as ours. This Mind is invincible because it is undivided.” T-8.V.1

In conclusion, we have Mind and Spirit producing thought and ideas by which all things are created. We wake up to their correct use when we realize that ideas in the mind of God, such as you and me, do not leave their source.

Chapter Eight

The Mad Idea

In the timeless beginning there was only God, but there was a problem. God was lonely and **“God Himself did not will to be alone.”** T-11.I.1

Since His will is all powerful, a solution in the form of an idea capable of manifesting came to mind. He would create a grand universe full of life, but it would be a unified life of many parts. Thus we are told that God **“created you (the Son) out of Himself, but still within Him.”** T-14.IV.4 and **“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God,”** W-pI.183.10

So, God created a universe out of Himself by extending Himself with many parts but with one life, and called this masterpiece his “Only Son.”

In creating the Son, God took a great risk that may not have seemed obvious at the time. He made His Son like Himself and gave him all of his powers of mind, Spirit and creation. The Son would thus be a creator like the Father and cause a universal extension of all there is. The Son would give birth to other Sons and their Sons would create other Sons ad infinitum.

He also gave His Son free will like unto Himself. This seemed to be without risk because being like the Father, the Son could only create like himself within the universe of true reality. Every creation that is eternal and real has to be perfect and good, so what could go wrong?

Here is what the Course says went wrong.

“Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh. In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” T-27.VIII.6

The mad idea is explained somewhat here:

“Because of your likeness to your Creator you are creative. No child of God can lose this ability because it is inherent in what he is, but he can use it inappropriately by projecting. The inappropriate use of extension, or projection, occurs when you believe that some emptiness or lack exists in you,

and that you can fill it with your own ideas instead of truth. This process involves the following steps:

First, you believe that what God created can be changed by your own mind.

Second, you believe that what is perfect can be rendered imperfect or lacking.

Third, you believe that you can distort the creations of God, including yourself.

Fourth, you believe that you can create yourself, and that the direction of your own creation is up to you.

“These related distortions represent a picture of what actually occurred in the separation, or the ‘detour into fear.’” T-2.I.1-2

This idea that we can create ourselves caused the creation of the ego, the false self that sees itself as separated from God and Spirit, but still has powers of the mind. Concerning this ego, the Course says:

“This is the Son of God's replacement for his will, a mad revolt against what must forever be. This is the statement that he has the power to make God powerless and so to take it for himself, and leave himself without what God has willed for him. This is the mad idea you have enshrined upon your altars, and which you worship.” T-21.II.6

We are told that **“The ego made the world”** T-5.III.11 It turns out that this world the ego made is much different than the universe created by God. The main difference is that everything in God’s universe, our true home, is eternal, perfect and unchangeable. On the other hand, everything created by the ego is temporary, imperfect and will have an end. Even the stars which seem to be permanent to us will have an end, and their lifespan of billions of years is rated as only an instant compared to eternity.

The ego is most proud of its creation of the human body, for this is the vehicle of the ultimate separation from God according to the Course:

“God cannot come into a body, nor can you join Him there. Limits on love will always seem to shut Him out, and keep you apart from Him. The body is a tiny fence around a little part of a glorious and complete idea. It draws a circle, infinitely small, around a very little segment of Heaven, splintered from the whole, proclaiming that within it is your kingdom, where God can enter not.

“Within this kingdom the ego rules, and cruelly. And to defend this little speck of dust it bids you fight against the universe. This fragment of your mind is such

a tiny part of it that, could you but appreciate the whole, you would see instantly that it is like the smallest sunbeam to the sun, or like the faintest ripple on the surface of the ocean. In its amazing arrogance, this tiny sunbeam has decided it is the sun; this almost imperceptible ripple hails itself as the ocean.” T-18.VIII.2-3

Because everything in the ego’s universe is temporary, it is not seen as real by the inhabitants of heaven. We are told that only that which is eternal is real and that all things with a beginning and an end are to be compared to a dream. The only difference is the dream of the Son is a longer more real dream than what we have at night, but compared to the eternal true reality, all the ego’s creations come and go in an instant, even if they last billions of years to us. It is notable that the Course uses the word “made” in reference to the ego’s creations and generally reserves the word “create” to refer to eternal things.

So, in a nutshell we have this situation. God extends Himself through His grand creation, looking forward to an eternity of love, peace and joy of sharing with His Beloved Son. Then something went wrong and the Son got a “mad idea” to make a world that was very different from heaven, one with dualities, time, space, pain, pleasure and much more. The Son thought this would be an interesting diversion. Indeed, in our reality children do not accept all the beliefs of their parents and often desire to do their own thing to the dismay of their parents. Apparently, this was also the case with Father and Son in heaven.

The standard interpretation by most Course students of what happened next goes something like this:

The Son (which includes all of us) fell asleep and entered into an illusion that was totally not real (earth life where we are now). The Son entered a world of nightmares where there was pain, guilt and attacks of every kind one can imagine, all ending in fear and death. What the Son did not realize when having all these nightmares was that he was only dreaming, while his real self was still safe in heaven.

Even so, the Father was deprived of full fellowship with His Son while he was in his dream world so He immediately came up with a solution. Since He could not enter the dream state without making it real, He created the Holy Spirit to awaken the Son. The Holy Spirit performed his job perfectly, and the whole nightmare was over in an eternal instant. The Son woke up and it is now as if nothing happened.

Strangely, many Course students repeat this idea almost like a mantra saying things like:

“The world has never existed.”

“I am not here.”

“Nothing here is real.”

“I am in heaven with God.”

“The separation never occurred.”

They say quite a number of things along this line. If a regular person unfamiliar with the Course were to overhear some conversations of ACIM students, he may think that calling the men in white would be in order. On the other hand, the students see general humanity as buying into an insane “mad idea” from which they need to awaken.

So, are students in alignment with Course teachings when they insist that nothing exists or has happened in this world? Some focus so intently on this idea that you cannot have a reasonable discussion with them about anything that is happening. Tell them about a friend who has cancer and they’ll merely respond that the cancer is not real and show no empathy for the suffering person. They may quote something from the Course such as **“The guiltless mind cannot suffer.”** T-5.V.5 He reasons that if the suffering person realized he was not here, there would be nothing to feel guilty about and nothing to suffer. Meanwhile, this idealist still has his own share of painful effects that he tries to ignore.

The problem is that the Course does seem to say some fairly radical things, but like all teachings, one has to look at the whole rather than the part to get the full picture. For instance, if all we knew about Jesus was the story of him giving the money changers a good whipping, then we wouldn’t be inclined to call him the Prince of Peace.

The Course does give teachings that lean in two directions at times, and the tendency of students is to pick one and support it while ignoring anything said to the contrary. We see this in the Bible with its teachings on faith and works. There are scriptures that indicate that all we need is faith to be saved and others say works is necessary. Those who pick a side will ignore anything to the contrary.

In speaking of non-existence, ACIM says this:

“The world you see does not exist, because the place where you perceive it is not real.” T-28.V.7

“Everything you made has never been” T-12.VIII.6

“The body is the symbol of what you think you are. It is clearly a separation device, and therefore does not exist.” T-6.V.A.2

These and numerous other passages tend to cause some students to tune out to the effects in this world to the extent that they go deeper into the illusion from which they wish to escape.

So, for students who believe that the separation did not happen, and we are not even here but in heaven, let me ask this:

How is it that you are reading this with physical eyes?

Why did Jesus come here to a place that does not exist and give *A Course in Miracles* to Helen Schucman, who does not exist?

Why did God create the Holy Spirit to deal with a problem that does not exist?

Why is **“God is lonely without His Sons,”** T-2.III.5 after the separation that never happened?

Obviously, the “never happened” crowd are missing a piece to the puzzle, for just denying our existence here does nothing to awaken us to the higher reality.

So, what is the truth of the matter?

The problem involved is one that has repeated itself in many teachings given out through the ages. When a master teacher gives out material designed to shift the thinking of the students, he will often place extra strong emphasis on key points. Without this emphasis, students are likely to gloss over the important principles and not make changes in their thinking. This strong emphasis has positive and negative effects. The positive is that it grabs students’ attention and makes them think. The negative is that some go overboard in embracing the emphasized teachings and miss the intended enlightenment.

A Course in Miracles indeed has one particular controversial teaching that needs strong emphasis to get the attention of students, which is this: This whole world is created by our minds similarly to how our dreams are created at night, and does not exist in the higher reality. Now most people who study the course are not esoteric

students who see the world as illusion, as do the Buddhists, but are ordinary folk who have bought into the idea that this universe is as real as their eyes tell them it is. Therefore, the Voice of ACIM places extra strong emphasis on the idea that our world is not real.

Once this is understood, the next question to ponder is how the Course defines what is real and what is not.

The Course basically gives the following differentiation between what is real and what is illusion: Since God is eternal, that which He creates is also eternal and **“only eternity is real.”** UR T 1 B 22s That which is real has no beginning or end, but continues forever.

That which is not real exists in time and space and has a beginning and an end:

“The stars will disappear, and night and day will be no more. All things that come and go, the tides, the seasons and the lives of men; all things that change with time and bloom and fade will not return. Where time has set an end is not where the eternal is.” T-29.VI.2

Anything that exists in our visible universe will have an end, even the stars with lifetimes of billions of years. Compared to eternity, a billion years is an instant and when the star, the planet or the flower is gone, it has then merely passed as does a dream, and when gone is no more real than a dream. We read:

“Time and eternity cannot both be real, because they contradict each other. If you will accept only what is timeless as real, you will begin to understand eternity and make it yours.” T-10.V.14

“The separation is a system of thought real enough in time, though not in eternity. All beliefs are real to the believer.” T-3.VII.3

To see our universe as something that does not exist misses the point. The real point is that in the higher realty (the Course calls heaven), all attention is on eternal things that do not pass away and to awareness of those in heaven, it is as if our universe is not real. It only has a semblance of reality for the creator Son if he enters the dream state.

But consider this; even dreams have a reality to them. When you dream at night you are having a real experience, and often the influence of the dream will carry over

into the waking state. If you are being chased by a monster, you may wake up sweating with a much faster heartbeat than normal. If you dream of a pleasant fantasy and wake up prematurely, you may want to go back to sleep for a while and continue the dream.

Yes, dreams are illusions and not real on a higher level; but when you are in them, you are having a real experience, and some dreams even have an influence on the waking state.

But, unlike our dreams at night, this greater dream is much more complex with very consistent effects. Our entrance into the dream **“occurred over millions of years”** T-2.VIII.2 says the Course. What could have motivated us to have entered into such a bold, extensive and lengthy venture?

Many reading the Course come to the conclusion that the Son (us) just had a crazy idea in a moment where he wasn't thinking straight, but the dream was over in an instant and all is back to normal in heaven.

But what is overlooked is the Son shares the mind and intelligence of God, so this plunge into time and space was not done thoughtlessly. Just look at the complexity of our DNA in just one of the trillions of cells within the body and ask yourself if this and all creations in this world were made by some mindless, thoughtless being?

There is obviously more to the story than just a small temporary lapse of judgment on the part of the Son. We'll cover this next.

Chapter Nine

The Bold Adventure

Concerning the separation, the typical ACIM student interprets it this way. The Son (representing all of us) got this mad idea in his head - that creating a universe of time and space where each life is separate from other lives - would be a good thing to do. Thus was a dream world of illusion made, and all of us are trapped in it until we awaken.

On the other hand, a careful reading of the Course reveals there is more to the story than this.

In Helen Schucman's transcription before the edits, we read this about the separation:

After the separation began **“Many Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the Separated Ones but they could not withstand the strength of the attack, and had to be brought back. Angels came, too, but their protection was not enough, because the Separated ones were not interested in peace. They had already split themselves, and were bent on dividing rather than reintegrating. The levels they introduced into themselves turned against each other, and they, in turn, turned against each other. They established differences, divisions, cleavages, dispersion, and all the other concepts related to the increasing splits they produced. Not being in their Right Minds, they turned their defenses from protection to assault, and acted literally insanely.”** UR T 2 B 43-44

A key statement is that **“Many souls offered their efforts on behalf of the separated ones. But they could not withstand the strength of the attack and had to be brought back.”**

This tells us that not all the Sons of God became separated. Instead, there were many who stayed in heaven and never entered the dream state or the illusion.

This is verified in this quote

“The world is an illusion. Those who choose to come to it are seeking for a place where they can be illusions, and avoid their own reality.” W-pI.155.2

Notice the wording here: **“Those who choose to come...”** This tells us that there was a choice to come or not to come and obviously the Sons of God lined up on both sides of this great decision.

This puts a very different light on the orthodox view that the Son as a whole entered into the separation.

The story of the Prodigal Son, which is used in the Course, supports this view. It is interesting that in the earliest Christian writings the parable was not called “The Prodigal Son,” but “A Story of Two Sons.”

It may be helpful to examine the whole parable:

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

“Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

“And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

“And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

“And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” Luke 15:11-32

From the Course we read: **“Listen to the story of the prodigal son, and learn what God's treasure is and yours:” T-8.VI.4**

This verifies that the parable was an actual teaching presented by the Master and should be taken seriously by Course students.

The first thing we learn is that the sons were divided into two groups. The Prodigal left home and went to the far country. This represents the billions of us who came here to this material world which is “far” from heaven.

The other older son would similarly represent a large number who stayed home with the Father.

Here is an interesting reference dividing Sons, even among the Prodigals, into older and young with Jesus being the older

“You stand below me and I stand below God. In the process of “rising up,” I am higher because without me the distance between God and man would be too great for you to encompass. I bridge the distance as an elder brother to you on the one hand, and as a Son of God on the other.” T-1.II.4

What percentage of the Sons left? Perhaps a clue is given in the Book of Revelation that tells us that a third of the residents fell from heaven. (See Rev 12:4)

This is in harmony with the quote noted earlier from the Course telling us of Sons who did not fall, but tried to prevent the separation.

Also of note is that the one who stayed at home was the older, and the one who separated was the younger and Jesus now returned to heaven is called an “elder brother.”

As we presented in Chapter Five, the Sons of God also have Sons. For instance: **“The Kingdom of God includes all His Sons AND THEIR CHILDREN, who are as like the Sons as they are like the Father.”** T-7.XI.7

The Son which is **“A co-creator with the Father must have a Son. Yet must this Son have been created like Himself.”** T-24.III.6

Because the Sonship is ever extending, there would be something akin to older and younger sons in heaven. On earth we see that many of our young children tend to have a natural skepticism of the parents’ teachings and ways of doing things, and want to strike out on their own. Thus, it was in the parable, the younger, less experienced son who wanted to leave behind that which always was and try something new, seeking new experiences. After all, it is possible the older son had his own prodigal past and had learned his lessons.

It is assumed by students that there was just one separation, the Son as a whole entered the dream, the solution was implemented, and that was it. It is over and done when and when we wake up it will be as if nothing ever happened or will happen again.

When you think of it, this makes no sense and doesn’t even harmonize with the Course’s teachings. According to the Course, the creation of Sons is the way that God extends His kingdom. This has apparently been going on from eternity with God extending Himself many times – thousand, billions, trillions of times or more. Do you think that there was only one batch of Sons who wanted to separate and play in the worlds of time and space and then it was over, never to be considered again? Does it make sense that there would be no more prodigals and no new children would have any curiosity about what life would be like in such a world?

The Course gives some powerful clues that the Prodigal making the separation was not just one occurrence but has happened many times:

“Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now. ... The world of time is the world of illusion. What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach.” M-2.3 & 4

We are told clearly here that the beginning of time, which was the beginning of the separation, **“goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering.”** M-2.3

That is indeed a description of something that happened a very very long time ago. Perhaps it was farther back than the beginning of this universe. Perhaps thousands of universes have come and gone since this first manifestation of time at the first separation conceived by the first group of Sons.

This makes sense since it says that this instant of separation **“is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now.”**

The orthodox interpretation is that there is no reliving, but the Son rebelled one time with his mad idea and after he wakes up that will be it.

What is overlooked is that the creation of Sons is an eternal process and it is only logical that new sons would access the ancient memories along with the ideas of time and space and want to try them out.

The first event happened **“So very long ago, for such a tiny interval of time, that not one note in Heaven's song was missed. Yet in each unforgiving act or thought, in every judgment and in all belief in sin, is that one instant still called back, as if it could be made again in time. You keep an ancient memory before your eyes. And he who lives in memories alone is unaware of where he is.”** T-26.V.5

The first separation was apparently a lot more disruptive than realized, for we are told that it **“shattered heaven.”** T-18.I.12 But then God implemented a solution

with the creation of the Holy Spirit and eventually all the prodigals in that first round returned home awake, safe and sound in their right minds.

After this, heaven was no longer shattered by prodigal sons reliving the event and entering the dream, for it was established that the sleep could only last an instant (which could be millions of years) and all would safely return, making heaven complete.

This resolves the confusing idea presented by the Course that makes it sound to some like the separation never happened and we are not here on earth. The first separation happened very anciently, and the problem was solved and no longer exists in heaven, yet new prodigal sons can enter a dream state and relive the event as if it is happening to us now.

And why would Sons want to do that? One significant reason is the desire for children to play games.

After all, there are no games in heaven, for there is no duality or competition and younger sons especially want to play games. The Course tells us that the desire to play games was one of the motivations for the separation:

“The dream of judgment is a children's game, in which the child becomes the father, powerful, but with the little wisdom of a child.” T-29.IX.6

We are told that heaven is a **“place where truth abides and games are meaningless.”** W-pI.153.14 It only makes sense then that there is always a percentage of the new creation of Sons who want to play games which are not available in heaven.

Just look around you and witness the great attraction that we as humans have for games. We pay our sports heroes many millions and they are idolized by many. Most everyone at one time or another either plays or watches a game and finds it a source of great pleasure even though there are winners and losers - which the Course says is contrary to the order of heaven. It is also of note that many esoteric and wisdom teachings tell us that we are attracted to the game aspect of material life and even call this existence “the playground of the Gods.”

These wisdom teachings also tell us that the first separation from Spirit was so ancient that it is basically an eternity ago and repeats many times just as ACIM says.

But each separation involves a new group of evolving lives, or “Sons” as ACIM would say.

The parable tells us that the prodigal took with him his inheritance of the Father. That inheritance that belongs to the Son of God (us) is all the Father has, for the Father and Son are one and share all things through mind: **“you are of one mind and spirit with Him (God).”** T-5.VII.3

“There is only one Mind” UR T 2 B 26

“The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating. ... All thinking produces form at some level.” T-2.VI.9

So how much power is wielded by the Son?

“There is now no limit on his (the Son’s) power, because it is the power of God.” M-23.2

The Son shares with the Father the ultimate power. We are told that God **“has made you co-creator of the universe along with Him. He would but keep your will forever and forever limitless.”** T-30.II.4

“What lies in you has joined with God Himself in all creation's birth. Remember Him Who has created you, and through your will created everything. Not one created thing but gives you thanks, for it is by your will that it was born. No light of Heaven shines except for you, for it was set in Heaven by your will.” T-30.II.3

This indeed presents a glorious picture of the power that is in us but unrealized in this world of illusion. We are also told this:

“What God and His Sons create is eternal.” T-8.VI.3.

Basically, the Course does not consider something a creation unless it is eternal. It usually uses the word “make” when referring to the creation of things not eternal.

So, in that ancient time, beyond all memory, the Father and the Son shared the same mind and were busy extending the creations of God when the Son came up with the “mad idea.” Now keep in mind that when this idea surfaced, the Son was not asleep, but fully awake. Because it was conceived when the Son was awake it is written that

“the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” T-27.VIII.6

We are told that there are no real (or eternal) effects in the dream state, but an idea conceived in the waking or eternal state has eternal consequences.

The interesting thing is that this eternal idea consisted of creating that which is not eternal, and an idea conceived in unification proposed the existence of a universe with diverse dualities.

So, what happens then when an eternal mind creates that which is not eternal? Sounds like an impossible conundrum, but not quite.

Now the orthodox ACIM view is that the Son entered the dream state, the Father created the Holy Spirit to reach out to us and the problem was solved. We are all awake in heaven and only think we are here on earth. The problem is solved never to be entertained again.

But it is not that simple, since the idea was conceived when the Son was fully awake. This means that the universe of temporary things is eternal. This does seem like a mad idea, but here is how I believe it worked out.

In that far away time beyond any memory the Son had the idea and executed it. In turn the Father executed His plan, the temporary universe disappeared, and the Son returned. The problem was solved for that generation of Sons. But then the existing Sons extended the creation of God by fathering new sons, and some of these were captivated by the crazy idea and wanted to play games in a new universe of duality. Thus, a new universe was created and history repeated itself. **“What happened long ago seems to be happening now.”** M-2.3 This process has repeated itself an astonishing number of times. In relation to eternity, the birth and death of a universe is a mere instant.

So then, the eternal mind of the Son did create the eternal out of something temporary for the universes come and go forever. This gives a clue about it:

“an idea is free, incapable of being kept in prison or limited in any way except by the mind that thought it. For it remains joined to its source, which is its jailer or its liberator, according to which it chooses as its purpose for itself. T-19.I.16.

Because the idea is eternal and cannot be destroyed, it continues to be recycled and applied again and again by new generations of sons. So that which is made in time has an end, but the creative process is eternal since it was initiated by an eternal mind. Thus, we have temporary universes of form appearing, disappearing and reappearing endlessly.

It is interesting that even in this separated state the power of eternal creation still exists, but is not used.

“It may surprise you to learn that had the ego willed to do so, it COULD have made the eternal, because, as a product of the mind, it IS endowed with the power of its own creator. But the DECISION to do this, rather than the ABILITY to do it is what the ego cannot tolerate.” UR T 4 F 13

This interpretation of multiple separations puts *A Course in Miracles* in alignment with many teachings from the east and the Ancient Wisdom, which tells us of an eternal reappearance of universes and new souls to inhabit them, whereas the old souls obtain liberation and move on to a heavenly state as in the teachings of nirvana, the great pralaya or return to Spirit.

Indeed, ACIM tells us that it is not the only course teaching us about the path of return, but it does give us some great clues as to how to speed up the process.

“There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome. They merely save time.” M-1.4

Chapter Ten

What Heaven Is Not

In a nutshell, the purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to help us awaken to our true reality so we can return to heaven, our true home.

The separation and entering this dream state was perhaps more serious than realized by students, for we are told there was a possibility the Son could **“be lost forever in the madness of his wish.”** T-25.III.2

In other words, there was a danger that the Prodigal Son could wind up living with the swine forever with no realization that there was any home to which he could return.

We are told that the Father took quick action after the fall and created the Holy Spirit as a means of communicating with the Son to eventually bring him to his senses and awaken.

Evidently, this got a little behind schedule, causing a need for extra stimulation. This is said to come to us in the form of *A Course in Miracles*.

As noted in chapter two, the Voice told Helen that the Course was necessary because **“The world situation is worsening to an alarming degree. ... Because of the acute emergency, however, the usual slow, evolutionary process is being bypassed in what might best be described as a ‘celestial speed-up.’”** From Journey Without Distance by Robert Skutch

So then, the world situation produced an “acute emergency” requiring a celestial speed up. God was not going to allow us to be “lost forever” in our madness, hence the Course was given as a roadmap to heaven showing us the quickest way to get there.

You would think then that since the Course is of such great importance in awakening us to the journey home, to a heaven we have forgotten, that it would spend a lot of time refreshing our memory and tell us why it is a desirable place to seek.

Yet, instead of dangling a carrot before us to entice us to return, the Course is mysteriously silent about what heaven is like and why it is such a wonderful place compared to this material existence. It strangely tells us more about what heaven is not than what heaven is.

The Course explains why it doesn't give more details:

Concerning heaven it says, **“There is no need to further clarify what no one in the world can understand.”** W-pI.169.10 **“No one on earth can grasp what Heaven is, or what its one Creator really means.”** M-23.6 **“Nor is there any need for us to try to speak of what must forever lie beyond words.”** T-18.IX.11 Heaven **“can never be described”** W-pI.122.8

“We say ‘God is,’ and then we cease to speak, for in that knowledge words are meaningless. There are no lips to speak them, and no part of mind sufficiently distinct to feel that it is now aware of something not itself.” W-pI.169.5.

“for what we cannot speak of, for you go from there to where words fail entirely, into a silence where the language is unspoken and yet surely understood.” W-pI.129.3

So, basically, we are told that heaven is beyond our current understanding, but we will understand when we get there. Until then, nothing can be put into words that will mean anything.

This is one of the more problematic teachings of *A Course in Miracles*, as it seems to correspond with a major tactic revealed about the ego:

“I have said that the ego's rule is, ‘Seek and do not find.’ Translated into curricular terms this means, ‘Try to learn but do not succeed.’” T-12.V.7

So, we have the situation where many Course students would like to know what heaven is, to give them more impetus to take focus off the dream world to awaken to the heavenly, but we are told this is something we cannot find, not until we irreversibly get there.

This answer is like that which many young people find irritating about Sunday School. They ask questions about God, sex in heaven or why a loving God created hell, and they are told it is a mystery and you find all the answers after you die and return to God.

Well, many students would like to know more about heaven now. After all, we are told to give up everything to go there, for we can only live in one reality as indicated by the Course:

“It is impossible to see two worlds which have no overlap of any kind. Seek for the one; the other disappears. But one remains. They are the range of choice beyond which your decision cannot go. The real and the unreal are all there are to choose between, and nothing more than these.” W-pI.130.5

We live in the unreal and we must let it go to the extent that it “disappears” so we can enter heaven. But why would we sacrifice everything that holds us to this reality for another of which we know close to nothing? If this is indeed the path we are supposed to take, wouldn’t it make sense for Higher Intelligence to reveal more about our eternal destination?

Now, each of us has a spark from God within us that can be contacted through the soul, and because of this contact, I know there are higher and more perfect realms than this, but if I had to go by merely what was written in ACIM, I would be quite confused.

On the other hand, there are many who do go strictly by what has been written, some quite literally. Therefore, it may be helpful to carefully examine what *A Course in Miracles* says about heaven, for despite it saying that describing it is beyond words, it does give us some words that provide interesting insights.

First, as I said, it does tell us a few things that heaven is not. Let us look at some of these.

The one thing above all others that a Course student is supposed to realize is that there are no dualities in heaven. We have **“to recognize a condition in which opposites do not exist. And this is the condition of knowledge. Without this awareness you have not met its conditions, and until you do you will not know it is yours already.”** T-11.VII.4

In heaven, therefore, we will only experience the positive feelings, not the negative. There will be love, but not hate, peace and nothing to attack or disturb, joy and no pain or sorrow, formlessness and no form, and only winning, for there will never **“be a time when anything that it (God’s thoughts) created suffers any loss.”** W-pII.11.1

Instead, there will be **“an awareness of perfect Oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within.”** T-18.VI.1

Many students do not seem to realize that without the possibility of loss that there will be no games. Indeed, the Course speaks negatively of them: We are told that heaven is a **“place where truth abides and games are meaningless.”** W-pI.153.14 Heaven is a place **“where losing is impossible.”** W-pI.129.4

And what is it that gives us mere mortals some of our greatest enjoyments in life?

Games, where losing is possible.

One of the famous teachers and writers of ACIM is Gary Renard, and in his books, he spends considerable time telling us how much he enjoys watching ball games. I found it amusing that he spoke with more enthusiasm about attending games than going to heaven. I wondered in reading his books if he realizes that there will be no games in heaven, for there are no contrasting winners and losers there according to ACIM.

Indeed, even many spiritual writers are avid sports fans and like to attend or watch games in their free moments. Many also play games with friends and family when visiting.

We enjoy games because of the limitations, for if we knew each move in advance it would be no fun.

I submit that it is the thrill of playing games was the main draw that caused the separation. A large number of the Sons of God wanted to create a universe where we could struggle to win, and when we win with a risk of losing, we would experience a positive feeling unlike any available in the world of non-duality.

Life itself with its limitations is like a challenging game. You set goals for personal achievement and then you set out to realize them, or to win at the game of life. Then when you are successful, you get a positive feeling that is not achieved any other way.

If you think about it, this giving up the fun connected with games may be the largest obstacle in the way of entering ACIM heaven for many. Part of the problem is that

many students have not realized what the Course teachings are on this matter. Lesson 79 needs to be applied: **“Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved.”**

If students do not realize the changes that need to be made to end the separation, then the problem will never be solved.

That said, let us see what else that is available in mortality that may be missing in heaven.

There is no learning in heaven:

“The ability to learn has no value when change is no longer necessary. The eternally creative have nothing to learn.” T-2.II.5 **“everything you learned is meaningless, replaced forever by the knowledge of love and its one meaning.”** T-18.IX.12

There is no perception:

“nothing that the eyes have ever seen or ears have heard remains to be perceived.” T-27.III.7

“Perception did not exist until the separation introduced degrees, aspects and intervals” T-3.IV.1

“For the mind that knows this unequivocally, knows also that it dwells in eternity, and utilizes no perception at all.” UR T 13 A 1

There is no memory:

You will not remember change and shift in Heaven. You have need of contrast only here. T-13.XI.6

“Memory, like perception, is a skill made up by you to take the place of what God gave in your creation.” T-28.I.2 **“Nothing that you remember now will you remember.”** T-19.IV.D.6

There is no choice:

“The power of decision, which you made in place of the power of creation” T-14.VI.5 **“Nothing conflicts with oneness. ... What is there to decide? For it is conflict that makes choice possible.... The truth makes no decisions, for there is nothing to decide between.”** T-26.III.1 **“There is no choice of function anywhere. The choice you fear to lose you never had.”** T-27.III.7

There is no consciousness:

“Consciousness, the level of perception, was the first split introduced into the mind after the separation, making the mind a perceiver rather than a creator. Consciousness is correctly identified as the domain of the ego. The ego is a wrong-minded attempt to perceive yourself as you wish to be, rather than as you are.” T-3.IV.2

“Yet the very fact that it (consciousness) has levels and can be trained demonstrates that it cannot reach knowledge.” (where heaven is) C-1.7

There is no contrast:

“There is no darkness and there is no contrast. There is no variation. There is no interruption. “ T-13.XI.3

There is no time, space, form or motion

“Ultimately, space is as meaningless as time. Both are merely beliefs. ... Acts were not necessary before the separation, because belief in space and time did not exist.” T-1.VI.3-4

“Here will time end forever. At this gate (of heaven) eternity itself will join with you.” S-1.V.4

It speaks of **“the eternal formlessness of God.” C-6.5** and **“what love will mean to you when formlessness has been restored to you is greater still.” W-pI.186.14**

“As nothingness cannot be pictured, so there is no symbol for totality. Reality is ultimately known without a form, unpictured and unseen.” T-27.III.5

There will be no special relationships

“All of your ‘friends,’ your ‘protectors’ and your ‘home’ will vanish. Nothing that you remember now will you remember.” T-19.IV.D.6

Everyone on earth has formed special relationships, and although this is not so in Heaven,” T-15.V.8

There is no change

“Nothing will ever change; no shifts nor shadings, no differences, no variations that made perception possible will still occur.” T-17.II.4

“reality is wholly real, apart from size and shape and time and place--for differences cannot exist within it” M-8.6

There are no differences

“in Heaven They are all the same, without the differences which would have made a hell of Heaven and a heaven of hell, had such insanity been possible.” T-25.VII.10

There is no individuality.

“The structure of ‘individual consciousness’ is essentially irrelevant because it is a concept representing the ‘original error’ or the ‘original sin.’” C-in.1

We thus see that the Course tells us quite a few things that heaven is not. Without space, time and form what is left? It would seem that the answer would be nothing, but as we proceed, we will see that is not quite the case.

Chapter Eleven

What Heaven Is

Now that we have covered what is not in heaven, we are left with the question of what is there and why we would want to leave this world behind to make it our final destination.

We are told that heaven is not a place, and that within it is no space, form, distance, time or differences. All is one.

It sounds as though, by our definitions of existence, that heaven is composed of nothing and does not exist.

The Course (and many other traditions) insist that a non-dualistic heaven or celestial realm does exist and has certain qualities and aspects that can be seen as supplying the seeds of dualism.

As we noted earlier, the Course itself tells us that we cannot comprehend heaven, and thus it gives us little to go on. Nevertheless, it does give us a few things.

First, let us look at how *A Course in Miracles* defines heaven:

“The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect Oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within.” T-18.VI.1

“Heaven is everything God values, and nothing else. Heaven is perfectly unambiguous. Everything is clear and bright, and calls forth one response. There is no darkness and there is no contrast. There is no variation. There is no interruption. There is a sense of peace so deep that no dream in this world has ever brought even a dim imagining of what it is.” T-13.XI.3

“Heaven is the home of perfect purity, and God created it for you.” T-22.II.13

As noted previously, even though all life is linked through the One Mind, there are many parts. The four main divisions in heaven are the Father, the Son (includes billions of us), the Holy Spirit and angels.

What they do in heaven is pretty sketchy, but it does clearly tell us that there is great love, joy and peace there. There is no change, so these three states are consistent. And something important that does not exist there is fear, which allows love, joy and peace to be undisturbed.

Let us look at a few references concerning these three blissful states:

LOVE

First, we have brief explanations of what love is:

“In Heaven, where the meaning of love is known, love is the same as union.” T-16.V.3

“Love is extension. To withhold the smallest gift is not to know love's purpose. Love offers everything forever. Hold back but one belief, one offering, and love is gone, because you asked a substitute to take its place.” T-24.I.1

“Love is freedom.” T-16.VI.1

Here are some quotes that give us an idea of how love may play out in heaven:

“For it is the function of love to unite all things unto itself, and to hold all things together by extending its wholeness.” T-12.VIII.7

“it increases as it is given.” T-13.V.1

Love **“holds the universe together in its meaning.” T-15.XI.6**

“For love asks only that you be happy, and will give you everything that makes for happiness.” T-16.I.6

“For love is wholly without illusion, and therefore wholly without fear.” T-16.IV.11

“You have gone past fear, for no two minds can join in the desire for love without love's joining them.” T-18.III.7

“Love wishes to be known, completely understood and shared. It has no secrets; nothing that it would keep apart and hide.” T-20.VI.2

“His (God’s) Love remains the only thing there is” M-18.3

“Love is not learned. Its meaning lies within itself. ... Love is not learned, because there never was a time in which you knew it not.” T-18.IX.12

JOY

The next prominent quality found in heaven is joy, concerning which is written:

“There is no difference between love and joy. Therefore, the only possible whole state is the wholly joyous” T-5.in.2

“Joy is unlimited, because each shining thought of love extends its being and creates more of itself.” T-22.VI.14

So, joy is very closely linked to love, for it is indeed one of its qualities. You can’t have joy without feeling love also.

And what increases joy?

“To give without limit is God’s Will for you, because only this can bring you the joy that is His and that He wills to share with you” T-11.I.6

Then we have this:

“Joy is the inevitable result of gentleness. Gentleness means that fear is now impossible, and what could come to interfere with joy? The open hands of gentleness are always filled. The gentle have no pain. They cannot suffer.” M-4.V.1

It is interesting that ACIM associates joy with gentleness. The Course uses a variation of this word 117 times indicating its importance on earth and heaven. Very few spiritual traditions place emphasis on gentleness – a very significant word.

PEACE

One of the most quoted statements of the apostle Paul is about **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Phil 4:7**

This is the peace which *A Course in Miracles* speaks in association with God and heaven. It is a much different and deeper peace than a mere tranquility here in the world when there is no apparent conflict.

The Course gives us a reasonable description of this peace:

“peace is the condition of knowledge because it is the condition of the Kingdom.”
T-8.I.1 **“Peace is a natural heritage of spirit.”** T-3.VI.10 **“Peace is the state where love abides, and seeks to share itself.”** T-23.I.12

Peace is the natural condition of our heavenly home:

“You are at home there, too, because it is a place of peace, and peace is of God. You who are part of God are not at home except in His peace. If peace is eternal, you are at home only in eternity.” T-5.III.10 **“For peace is of God, and no one beside Him.”** T-15.IV.2

There is a higher part of our self still experiencing this peace:

“Your Self is still in peace (in heaven), even though your mind (on earth) is in conflict. You have not yet gone back far enough (to the memory of heaven), and that is why you become so fearful. As you approach the Beginning, you feel the fear of the destruction of your thought system upon you as if it were the fear of death. There is no death, but there is a belief in death.” T-3.VII.5

Peace is such an important heavenly quality that it supplied the “motivation” for *A Course in Miracles*.

“Forget not that the motivation for this course is the attainment and the keeping of the state of peace. Given this state the mind is quiet, and the condition in which God is remembered is attained.” T-24.in.1

Then we are told peace is linked to understanding:

“Think not you understand anything until you pass the test of perfect peace, for peace and understanding go together and never can be found alone. Each brings the other with it, for it is the law of God they be not separate. They are cause and effect, each to the other, so where one is absent the other cannot be.”
T-14.XI.12

Finally, the importance of peace is stressed as a key to finding heaven:

“I want the peace of God. To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything. If you could but mean them for just an instant, there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form; in any place or time. Heaven

would be completely given back to full awareness, memory of God entirely restored, the resurrection of all creation fully recognized.” W-pI.185.1

“Those who offer peace to everyone have found a home in Heaven the world cannot destroy” T-25.IV.4

In addition to these three qualities contributing to blissful feeling, ACIM tells us of other things we can expect to find in heaven.

TRUTH

One of the ingredients of heaven is truth which it describes as follows:

“truth is real in its own right, and to believe in truth you do not have to do anything.” T-12.I.1 “Truth can only be recognized and need only be recognized.” T-7.IV.1

“The truth is simple; it is one, without an opposite.” T-26.III.1

It places a lot of emphasis on the idea that real truth comes from God and nowhere else.

“All truth is here” (with God) T-15.IX.7 “truth is God” T-10.II.4

“Truth is God's Will. Share His Will and you share what He knows.” T-7.X.2

The reasoning behind this is that only in heaven will we find eternal things, whereas in our world of illusion all things will pass away. The Course does not consider anything that is not eternal as being real. All illusion is seen as something temporary, so when it is gone it is as if it has never been.

“Truth is the opposite of illusions because it offers joy.” T-22.II.2

“No illusion has any truth in it. ... any wish that seems to go against His Will has no foundation in the truth.” T-26.VII.6

“Truth is without illusions and therefore within the Kingdom. Everything outside the Kingdom is illusion.” T-6.V.C.9

Love is closely associated with real truth:

“It is the nature of love to look upon only the truth, for there it sees itself, with which it would unite in holy union and completion.” T-19.IV.A.10

And peace...

“truth stands radiant, apart from conflict, untouched and quiet in the peace of God.” T-23.I.7

and heaven...

“Yet Heaven is sure. This is no dream. Its coming means that you have chosen truth” T-18.II.9

And where do we find the truth?

“But it is given you to know the truth, and not to seek for it outside yourself.” T-29.VII.1

“Truth is. It can neither be lost nor sought nor found. It is there, wherever you are, being within you.” T-14.VII.2

“truth lies only in the present, and you will find it if you seek it there” T-13.VI.5

CREATION

The next question that is likely to arise in the mind of the seeker is what do we do in heaven wherein we use truth that brings love, joy and peace?

The Course makes it clear that our prime function is creation.

“your function in Heaven is creation” T-12.VII.4

“You were created only to create” T-14.I.4

“everything He creates has the function of creating” T-11.I.6

And why is creation so important?

“Unless you create you are unfulfilled, but God does not know unfulfillment and therefore you must create.” T-7.IX.3.

Now the question is – what do we create?

“Remember Him Who has created you, and THROUGH YOUR WILL created everything. Not one created thing but gives you thanks, for it is by your will that it was born. No light of Heaven shines except for you, for it was set in Heaven by your will.” T-30.II.3

Very interesting statement. The answer is we create “everything,” which would be the universe itself, which is verified in this quote:

“Without you ... there could be no universe and no reality.” T-24.VI.2

So then **“God Himself did not will to be alone.”** T-11.I.1 and created the Son and used the “will” of the Son to create all there is.

It is interesting that this is in harmony with this famous verse from the Gospel of John:

“All things were made by him (the Son); and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:3

So, we are left with this: God creates the Son and used the power of the Son’s will to create the universe. The problem related to our understanding from our reality is this: In heaven there is no time, space, form, stars, planets or bodies, so what do we create there?

We are told that we create the universe, but what is that in the plane of Spirit?

“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God,” W-pI.183.10

“God created nothing beside you and nothing beside you exists.” T-10.in.2

God thus creates the Son and the Son creates the universe, but the universe consists of only the Son of God. How does this make sense? What in the universe are we creating as Sons?

The answer is more Sons. **“Know, then, the Sons of God, and you will know all creation.”** T-7.XI.7

“your creations, who are son to you, that you might share the Fatherhood of God,” T-24.VII.1

The son remembers his own creations, as like to him as he is to his father.” T-24.II.6

“A co-creator with the Father MUST HAVE A SON. Yet must this Son have been created like Himself. “ T-24.III.6

We are now left with this interesting conclusion: **“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God (us),”** and each son **“must have a son.”**

The Course makes clear that creations in time, space and form which have a beginning and end are not real and do not fall under its definition of creation. A creation in terms of reality has to be eternal. Things that are not eternal are considered “made,” not created.

Thus, in heaven we, the Sons of God, will not be making stars, galaxies and bodies housing life forms. Instead, according to the Course, we will be creating just one thing: more Sons of God who are eternal.

Since the real universe, or all there is in reality, only consists of the Sons of God, then our only creation will be more Sons.

The Course tells us that this creation of Sons “extends” God, as extension of His being is an eternal process. **“There is no end to God and His Son, for WE ARE THE UNIVERSE” T-11.I.5.**

Exactly how we will go about creating new Sons is not clear, but it would probably follow the same process used in our own creation. The Course gives a hint here:

“God created every mind by communicating His Mind to it, thus establishing it forever as a channel for the reception of His Mind and Will.” T-4.VII.3

This seems to tell us that we will create Sons by communicating our minds to Potential Mind creating a link from God to us to the newly created Sons.

As we extend creation through creating more Sons, sharing and pure communication are said to enhance our joy.

“Communication, unambiguous and plain as day, remains unlimited for all eternity.” W-pI.129.3 “all talents will be shared by all the Sons of God.” T-1.V.3

The closest we find in the Course to anything related to what can be perceived in found in this description:

“Beyond the body, beyond the sun and stars, past everything you see and yet somehow familiar, is an arc of golden light that stretches as you look into a great and shining circle. And all the circle fills with light before your eyes. The edges of the circle disappear, and what is in it is no longer contained at all. The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere. Within it everything is joined in perfect continuity. Nor is it possible to imagine that anything could be outside, for there is nowhere that this light is not.” T-21.I.8

So then, the joy and fulfillment that the Sons receive in heaven are not related to things that seem to fulfill us here. There will be no pleasure that we associate with the body, no forms to perceive or create, no special relationships... not much of anything that our physical brains can understand. All the Course says for sure is that there will be many Sons linked together within a golden circle sharing as one, creating more Sons, and that will be a blissful situation beyond our wildest dreams.

Is it possible that many thought heaven was too much of a good thing and wanted more variety and challenges?

Obviously, there was a compelling reason that caused billions of Sons to rebel and create a universe of their own design. Of all the eternities that have passed in heaven it seems that the rebellion was the only happening that made for an interesting story.

Chapter Twelve

Where is Heaven?

Some Course students believe that heaven can be fully experienced here on earth while others do not. This latter group believe we have to first fully awaken from the dream. Then this universe will disappear and we will enter heaven. They cite numerous passages such as:

“For you realize that if you look on this and let the veil be lifted, they will be gone forever. All of your “friends,” your “protectors” and your “home” will vanish. Nothing that you remember now will you remember.... all that will occur is you will leave the world forever.” T-19.IV.D.6 &7

“God cannot come into a body, nor can you join Him there.” T-18.VIII.3

“The body is the symbol of the world. Leave it behind. It cannot enter Heaven. But I can take you there anytime you choose. Together we can watch the world disappear and its symbol vanish as it does so.” UR F-35

On the other hand, those who believe we can enter heaven while still in the world have plenty of ammunition such as:

“Atonement might be equated with total escape from the past and total lack of interest in the future. Heaven is here. There is nowhere else. Heaven is now. There is no other time.” M-24.6

“Heaven has come to earth at last, from which the ego's rule has kept it out so long. Heaven has come because it found a home in your relationship on earth. And earth can hold no longer what has been given Heaven as its own.” T-21.IV.7

Do we have conflicting teachings here or do we just need to see these statements in a correct light?

I maintain the answer is the latter. Allow me to explain.

The Course definitely teaches that our perception of this world of good and evil is caused by a dream state in which we find ourselves. It says **“The world you see**

does not exist, because the place where you perceive it is not real.” T-28.V.7 “It is impossible to see two worlds which have no overlap of any kind. Seek for the one; the other disappears. But one remains.” W-pI.130.5

Heaven, we are told, is only related to the eternal state and this dream state is only a temporary residence until we awaken. We must awaken to fully enter heaven.

But then the Course throws in another odd teaching that we must enter into the equation of truth.

“There is no need for help to enter Heaven for you have never left. But there is need for help beyond yourself as you are circumscribed by false beliefs of your Identity, which God alone established in reality.” C-5.1

Then it speaks of **“The Holy Spirit, seeing where you are but knowing you are elsewhere” (heaven) T-14.II.2**

Many Course students take the unusual view that they are already in heaven because they never left, even though they see themselves in the mirror every day, earn a living and take care of their bodies.

This quote sheds some more understanding:

“So is all reality, being of Him. The instant the idea of separation entered the mind of God's Son, in that same instant was God's Answer given. In time this happened very long ago. In reality it never happened at all.” M-2.2

So then, there are two places where events occur. One is in “reality” where heaven is, and the other is in “time” where the dream is taking place. Several times the Course makes it sound as if the separation never occurred at all when it is really saying it did not happen in the reality which it calls heaven. It does, however, say that the separation became **“a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” T-27.VIII.6**

The real effect was the creation of a universe in time and space where that which is perceived seems to be very real. Because everything in this world has a beginning and an end, events here are not considered real happenings from the celestial point of view. Even the birth and death of a star, lasting billions of years, is not considered real because, after it is gone, it is as if it had never been. In the eternal world, creations never come and go but always remain, says the Course.

Understanding this is a key to shedding light on the supposed contradictions that cause students to come up with widely different interpretations. Here is what the Course seems to be saying:

In the overall picture, heaven only consists of that which is eternal. Everything that is not eternal is not real or a part of heaven. Therefore, nothing in the illusion (or our created universe) has any connection with heaven.

How then do we explain the passages that tell us that heaven is available now in this world of dualities? To answer that question, we must look to see where heaven can be found within this realm of time and space.

Where is this illusive place?

Answer: It is within you. Even though you are trapped in the world of illusions, within yourself in the eternal present is heaven which has never not been there.

This was taught by Jesus 2000 years ago:

“Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:21

Indeed. **“Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect Oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within.”** T-18.VI.1

And where do we find this Oneness while we are still here in the world?

“In you is all of Heaven.” T-25.IV.5

“What is within your brother still contains all of creation, everything created and creating, born and unborn as yet, still in the future or apparently gone by. What is in him is changeless, and your changelessness is recognized in its acknowledgment.” T-24.VII.2

So, within ourselves, as well as our brothers and sisters, is a place beyond physical dimensions where our true Source resides that has never left heaven. Even while we are in this deep sleep and dreaming, we can stop, pay attention to the life within and

get a taste of heaven. There we will find **“a sense of peace so deep that no dream in this world has ever brought even a dim imagining of what it is.”** T-13.XI.3

“You will awaken to your own call, for the Call to awake is within you.” T-11.VI.9

So, the power to awaken enough to become aware of heaven is within us, but must be activated by our own consciousness and will.

“For what you chose to ‘sell’ had to be kept for you, since you could not ‘buy’ it back. Yet you must invest in it, not with money but with spirit. For spirit is will, and will is the “price” of the Kingdom. Your inheritance awaits only the recognition that you have been redeemed.” T-12.IV.7

“The changelessness of Heaven is in you, so deep within that nothing in this world but passes by, unnoticed and unseen. The still infinity of endless peace surrounds you gently in its soft embrace, so strong and quiet, tranquil in the might of its Creator, nothing can intrude upon the sacred Son of God within.” T-29.V.1

And how do we find this heaven within? That is what the Course is all about, especially the lessons in the Workbook. But catching a glimpse through inner contact is merely the first step. Eventually, our consciousness must shift to the Real World, a way of seeing things as they are. Then when we are ready God Himself will take the final step:

“The final step is God's, because it is but God Who could create a perfect Son and share His Fatherhood with him. No one outside of Heaven knows how this can be, for understanding this is Heaven itself.” T-30.V.4

“When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made. And then your Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.” T-11.VIII.15

Some students get caught up in the idea that we are not here, but are 100% in heaven now since the Course indicates the body and the world are not real, but consider this:

“The body is merely part of your experience in the physical world. Its abilities can be and frequently are overevaluated. However, it is almost impossible to

deny its existence in this world. Those who do so are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial.” T-2.IV.3

Denying this physical reality including the body and insisting you are in heaven is not helpful. You will not be fully in heaven until you first see the real world followed by the Father taking you there. What is fully here is the heaven within the core of your being that must be realized.

When the Course tells us that the Son is in heaven, we must remember that the Son is composed of billions of units here on this planet and trillions from other planets. As explained earlier, not all the Sons experienced the separation; so many units of the One Son never entered the dream. We are told that God is lonely until all the Sons return, so, from the world of time, the separation did happen and our awareness is not completely in heaven. If it were, our very bodies would disappear as the Course says happened to Jesus after the crucifixion according to this account:

“My body disappeared because I had no illusion about it. The last one had gone. It was laid in the tomb, but there was nothing left to bury. It did not disintegrate because the unreal cannot die. It merely became what it always was. And that is what “rolling the stone away” means. The body disappears, and no longer hides what lies beyond. It merely ceases to interfere with vision. To roll the stone away is to see beyond the tomb, beyond death, and to understand the body’s nothingness. What is understood as nothing must disappear.

“I did assume a human form with human attributes afterwards, to speak to those who were to prove the body’s worthlessness to the world. This has been much misunderstood. I came to tell them that death is illusion, and the mind that made the body can make another since form itself is an illusion. They did not understand. But now I talk to you and give you the same message. The death of an illusion means nothing. It disappears when you awaken and decide to dream no more. And you still do have the power to make this decision as I did.

“God holds out His hand to His Son to help him rise and return to Him. I can help because the world is illusion, and I have overcome the world. Look past the tomb, the body, the illusion. Have faith in nothing but the spirit and the guidance God gives you. He could not have created the body because it is a limit. He must have created the spirit because it is immortal. Can those who are created like Him be limited? The body is the symbol of the world. Leave it behind. It cannot enter Heaven. But I can take you there anytime you choose.

Together we can watch the world disappear and its symbol vanish as it does so. An then, and then... I cannot speak of that.

“A body cannot stay without illusions, and the last one to be overcome is death. This is the message of the crucifixion; there is no order of difficulty in miracles. This is the message of the resurrection: Illusions are illusions. Truth is true. Illusions vanish. Only truth remains.

“These lessons needed to be taught but once, for when the stone of death is rolled away, what can be seen except an empty tomb? And that is what you see who follow me into the sunlight and away from death, past all illusions, on to Heaven’s gate, where God will come Himself to take you home.” From “Special Messages”, by Jesus...Additional material through Helen Schuchman. Also quoted in Absence From Felicity by Ken Wapnick

So, we can get a glimpse of heaven while still here on earth where form is perceived, but as long as we still perceive form (which all reading this do) then our awareness is not completely in heaven. Concerning entrance, an important point overlooked is **“no one can enter Heaven by himself.”** W-pI.134.17

“Together is your joint inheritance remembered and accepted by you both. Alone it is denied to both of you. ... you may not fully understand as yet that you could never be released alone.” T-31.II.11

Yet how many ACIM students have gone it alone thinking they have fully entered heaven? The Course says this cannot be done. Furthermore, to enjoy the complete fruits of heaven, all the Sons must return:

“It should especially be noted that God has only one Son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until ALL THE PARTS OF THE SONSHIP HAVE RETURNED. Only then can the meaning of wholeness in the true sense be understood.” T-2.VII.6

All the parts have to awaken before there is a fullness to be had. Perhaps this is the reason that even Jesus, according to the Course, is not fully there. One thing we know for sure is that he is still involved enough in the dream to be aware of what is

happening here and to construct an entire Course related to it and transmit it to Helen Schucman, a person who was still perceiving in the dream.

Jesus himself tells us that, **“Because my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven, I can bring down the glories of Heaven to my brothers on earth.”**
UR T 1 B 40ab

So even of him it is written that only part of his Being (hands) is in heaven while another part (feet) are anchored on the earth, else he could not be a part of the great work to bring all the Sons of God home.

We are not there yet but through applying the principles of the Course such as love, forgiveness and letting go of guilt we can get a taste of heaven here, and this will give us impetus to move forward no matter what our belief system on other matters.

Chapter Thirteen

The Real World

Beginning ACIM students read about the “Real World” in the Course and they often think that it is just another term for heaven. After all, the Course tells us many times that heaven is our real home and the separation from heaven created the illusion, or dream state, where we have made real something that is not real at all in the eternal scheme of things.

In this illusion we have great difficulty seeing what is the true reality, for we have substituted the true with illusion. This caused the great separation as mentioned by the Course. Concerning ourselves who are trapped in the illusion, it says:

“You may be surprised to hear how very different is reality from what you see. You do not realize the magnitude of that one error. It was so vast and so completely incredible that from it a world of total unreality had to emerge. What else could come of it? Its fragmented aspects are fearful enough, as you begin to look at them. But nothing you have seen begins to show you the enormity of the original error, which seemed to cast you out of Heaven, to shatter knowledge into meaningless bits of disunited perceptions, and to force you to make further substitutions.” T-18.I.5

So, it tells us we have made a world where we have substituted illusion for the real and have become bewildered by the **“meaningless bits of disunited perceptions.”**

Reading ACIM, one could envisage a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle all put together making an easy-to-understand picture. The separation is like the shattering of that puzzle, and the bewildered dreamers are like a person looking at the pieces in a pile having no idea of the picture they make when they are all put together. One piece does not seem to relate to any random piece that can be picked up.

The Course tells us that in reality the picture has not been lost or destroyed. Instead, we are just dreaming about this loss, but it is a dream by our god-like minds which gives it such a strong appearance of reality that all things in it seem to be real.

According to the Course, the ultimate goal is to fully awaken and return to heaven where we are one of the pieces that complete the great picture, but first there is a major step that must be taken. We must first see the real world.

Seeing the real world does not take us to heaven but gives us a taste of it while still living in this world of illusion. When one sees the real world, he sees true reality, but just not yet able to go there. In other words, instead of seeing unrelated pieces, he obtains an understanding of the completed picture, understands the dream, and knows there is a path to returning to the true home.

Once the real world is seen, the journey is almost over, for it is written:

“The perception of the real world will be so short that you will barely have time to thank God for it. For God will take the last step swiftly, when you have reached the real world and have been made ready for Him.” T-17.II.5

Now keep in mind that a short time in relation to eternity could be a fairly long stretch to us, but it is obvious that seeing the real world signifies we are nearing the end of the journey in the scheme of things.

Among the various descriptions of the real world ACIM says this:

“The real world holds a counterpart for each unhappy thought reflected in your world; a sure correction for the sights of fear and sounds of battle which your world contains. The real world shows a world seen differently, through quiet eyes and with a mind at peace. Nothing but rest is there. There are no cries of pain and sorrow heard, for nothing there remains outside forgiveness. And the sights are gentle. Only happy sights and sounds can reach the mind that has forgiven itself.” W-pII.8.2

It also describes the real world as **“a borderland of thought that stands between this world and Heaven. It is not a place, and when you reach it is apart from time. Here is the meeting place where thoughts are brought together; where conflicting values meet and all illusions are laid down beside the truth, where they are judged to be untrue. This borderland is just beyond the gate of Heaven.” T-26.III.3**

The real world is perceived on two levels. The first is with our regular organs of perception and the second is through right-minded understanding, for **“Only right-mindedness can correct in a way that has any real effect.” T-2.V.A.14**

“The term ‘right-mindedness’ is properly used as the correction for ‘wrong-mindedness,’ and applies to the state of mind that induces accurate perception.”

T-3.IV.4

This “accurate perception” involves accurate perception of the world through our organs as well as an accurate spiritual perception involving understanding of true principles and reality.

SEEING THE REAL WORLD

Let us first examine the seeing of the real world through organs of perception. This is a concept not even considered by most Course students, for it doesn’t occur to them that the real world can be visually perceived. On the contrary, such students have missed key statements from the Course. For instance, we are told that the real world “can be perceived.” **“The real world is the second part of the hallucination time and death are real, and have existence that can be perceived.”** T-26.V.12

“The real world can actually be perceived. All that is necessary is a willingness to perceive nothing else.” T-11.VII.2

Seeing it in this world involves the “spiritual eye” which is often called the third eye or the ajna center in other traditions. It works in connection with our regular eyes and allows for true seeing in form as well as beyond form to the realm of correct understanding.

“Corrective learning always begins with awakening the spiritual eye, and turning away from belief in physical sight. ... We said before that the spiritual eye cannot see error, and is capable only of looking beyond it to the defense of Atonement.” UR T 2 C 19

“The Spiritual eye is the mechanism of miracles, because what the Spiritual eye perceives IS truth. The Spiritual eye perceives both the Creations of God AND the creations of man. Among the creations of man, it can also separate the true from the false by its ability to perceive totally rather than selectively. It thus becomes the proper instrument for reality testing, which always involves the necessary distinction between the true and the false.” UR T 1 B 32c

Beyond normal physical vision are many things to see in the real world, not only with eyes of understanding but in terms of seeing forms revealed by real light.

We are told that **“Things which seem quite solid here are merely shadows there; transparent, faintly seen, at times forgot, and never able to obscure the light that shines beyond them.”** W-pI.159.5

“The Great Light always surrounds you and shines out from you.” T-11.III.4

“Its (the body) thinness and transparency are not apparent until you see the light behind it. And then you see it as a fragile veil before the light.” T-18.IX.5

So, what is this light that shines beyond and “behind” the body, making it **“a fragile veil before the light.”**

The Course gives us a clear answer:

“You will begin to understand it when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now. That is the beginning of real vision. You can be certain that real vision will come quickly when this has occurred.” W-pI.15.2

What then are these **“little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now”**?

Many students of eastern religions and the Ancient Wisdom will understand immediately what the Course is talking about. It is speaking of the etheric double of all things in the physical world. This does not just exist in theory, but it is easily seen by those who look. When I have given classes on this, often everyone in the class can see it when they learn to look.

To see it involves a principle that I call “not seeing.” In this you tune out the physical and then you can see beyond it. It’s like *A Course in Miracles* says that you cannot see two worlds. If you tune out this world, the other appears.

To see those little edges of light, do this exercise:

Interlock the fingers of your two hands and point the tips of your two thumbs toward each other. Separate the tips of your thumbs by about an eighth of an inch. Now find a wall that is white or light in color and hold your hands up to the wall so when you look at the space between your thumbs the wall is on the other side. Concentrate now and stare at the empty space between your thumbs for about a minute. Do not put your attention on your hands or thumbs, but only the empty space between your thumbs. After about a minute, while keeping your attention on the empty space, pull your thumbs slowly apart so now you have about a quarter of an inch of space. As

you do this you should notice a thin film, about a millimeter from your skin, light blue in color.

What you are seeing here is your etheric double which is slightly larger than your physical. Learning to see this is the first step in seeing auras.

Here is a second exercise you can do.

Have a friend stand next to a light-colored background like a white or light-colored wall. Tell him to stand perfectly still and to not move his head. Now stare at his forehead for about a minute. Pick one spot on his forehead and do not deviate your attention from that spot. After 60-90 seconds have him move to the side, but continue to look at the spot as if he were still there.

What you see next will amaze you if you have not done this before. Your eyes will have taken a photograph of his etheric light, and you will see the after image of his head glowing before you. When you see his lighted head, note the shades of light and dark patches. The dark patches will indicate a blockage in the flow of energy. Most people have dark patches when they have a head cold, for instance.

These exercises illustrate the truth of the words of ACIM that the body is a **“veil before the light.”**

Not only the body, but the entire physical world has an etheric double, and one with real vision can see the **“little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now”** just as the Course says.

The etheric light is just one of the lights that can be seen in the real world. The next step in seeing is that which is commonly called the aura, which is much more difficult to see than the etheric double. Whereas I was able to see the etheric double right away, it took me several months of intense practice to clearly see the aura. To see the aura, which is more refined light than the etheric, one has to take the principle of “not seeing” to a higher level and completely tune out the physical world. You only look at one world and that is not the physical. I noticed numerous times that as soon as I caught a glimpse of the aura it completely disappeared the instant my vision went back to the physical, verifying the Course’s statement that you cannot see two worlds.

You can be aware of two worlds, but your focus has to be nonphysical to see the real world.

The next step up in seeing is what I call the auric film. In reality we are egg-shaped. The most concentrated aura of intense fluorescent light extends about a foot from our bodies. This is followed by a more refined mental substance that circles around us like electrons circle around an atom. Then about an arm's length from us is a film that corresponds to the film in the outer part of an egg. On this film is projected your thoughts in geometric forms which composes an advanced language in the real world. If you could clearly see the forms projected by mind on the auric film you could read the person's mind and have real communication with no distortion.

Once the student learns to see some of the effects in the real world, he will easily notice the **“little edges of light”** around the forms of this world. When his vision is in tune, he can look at the night sky and see all kinds of living etheric light and shapes projected by the various stars, and see that space is full of living energy and is not a vacuum.

The final seeing in the real world comes to us after the physical body dies and we no longer use the body's senses for seeing. In between lives we are in a higher state of consciousness equivalent to the real world. This is not the heaven spoken of by ACIM, but we are able to see reality much more clearly there as stated, **“Together we will disappear into the Presence beyond the veil, not to be lost but found; not to be seen but known.”** T-19.IV.D.19 **“To be without a body is to be in our natural state.”** W-pI.72.9

So, after death where we are “without a body” we are in a more “natural state” in the real world, but this is temporary until we are reborn into the physical. It is here where the finding of the real world is of the greatest importance, for finding it here is a major step toward a total reawakening and advance to the time that the **“Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.”** T-11.VIII.15

SEEING WITH EYES OF UNDERSTANDING

In addition to seeing the real world through our senses of form perception, we must learn to see it through our eyes of understanding. This basically means we will see things as they really are rather than seeing with distorted understanding as if in a fog in the dream state.

The Course says: **“I can therefore see a real world, if I look to my real thoughts as my guide for seeing”** W-pI.53.1. (11)

So, finding our real thoughts is a key to seeing with eyes of understanding where there **“is the new perception, where everything is bright and shining with innocence, washed in the waters of forgiveness, and cleansed of every evil thought you laid upon it. Here there is no attack upon the Son of God, and you are welcome.”** T-18.IX.9

“Nothing is now as it was formerly. Nothing but sparkles now which seemed so dull and lifeless before.” M-4.X.2.

“When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made.” T-11.VIII.15

To see the real world with eyes of understanding, the student must follow the precepts of the Course, such as forgiving all those who offend, let go of guilt, cease attacking others, etc. When he has covered the basics, he must look to his **“real thoughts as my guide for seeing.”**

What is the difference then between real and unreal thoughts?

The workbook places emphasis on this from the beginning, for it is an important point to understand as we progress toward salvation and the real world. The lessons start out by telling us that we do not even understand anything that is right in front of us, for any thoughts about them **“do not mean anything.”** This is followed by lessons telling us that we **“see nothing as it is now.”** Then reemphasizing that **“My thoughts do not mean anything”** and **“I do not know what anything is for.”** Finally, we reach this thought in lesson 57:

“There is another way of looking at the world.”

This is **“an attempt to recognize that you can shift your perception of the world in both its outer and inner aspects.”** W-pl.33.1

Notice that the way of looking at the real world involves both **“outer and inner aspects.”**

The key to doing this is to focus on your real thoughts: **“Delusional ideas are not real thoughts, although you can believe in them. But you are wrong. The function of thought comes from God and is in God. As part of His Thought, you cannot think apart from Him.”** T-5.V.6

When we think apart from God in the dream state, we are not thinking our real thoughts, which are thoughts shared by the mind of God. Think of this correspondence.

When we have a dream in this world, we often do crazy things in the dream not related to anything we would do in the waking state. In other words, our dream thoughts are often much different than our waking thoughts. Even so, in this greater dream our thoughts are much different than they would be if we are totally awake and in alignment with the mind of God. To take that great step to the real world we must access those “real thoughts” that are within us.

This is emphasized in lesson 45 which tells us that in the real world **“God is the Mind with which I think. ... My real thoughts are in my mind. I would like to find them.”**

The student must come to the understanding that, **“What I call ‘my’ thoughts are not my real thoughts. My real thoughts are the thoughts I think with God. I am not aware of them because I have made my thoughts to take their place. I am willing to recognize that my thoughts do not mean anything, and to let them go. I choose to have them be replaced.”** W-pI.51.4

Thus, the illusionary dream-state thinking is replaced with thoughts from the real thinker who is awake. The mind thinking real thoughts then sees things as they are, truth instead of error and peace instead of conflict.

“I can also call upon my real thoughts, which share everything with everyone. As my thoughts of separation call to the separation thoughts of others, so my real thoughts awaken the real thoughts in them. And the world my real thoughts show me will dawn on their sight as well as mine.” W-pI.54.3

As significant as it is to discover the real world, we must realize that this is not the final destination, for it is written:

“The real world still is but a dream. Except the figures have been changed. They are not seen as idols which betray. It is a dream in which no one is used to substitute for something else, nor interposed between the thoughts the mind conceives and what it sees.” T-29.IX.7

The Course describes the final goal:

“For as Heaven and earth become one, even the real world will vanish from your sight. The end of the world is not its destruction, but its translation into Heaven.” T-11.VIII.1

Chapter Fourteen

The Two Scripts

The idea of predestination is another belief on which Course students are divided. Some believe that every event and movement in life is already determined and others do not. The question then is why this split has occurred and what is the real teaching of the Course on the subject?

Predestination is a doctrine that has been around for many centuries and is usually associated with fundamentalist religion. The idea is that God knows everything so this would include every step you take and thought you think in life before it happens.

This is a frustrating doctrine for many as they think it robs them of free will. Why try if there is nothing you can do to change your destiny?

The question then is where do some students get the idea that every happening in life in this world is predetermined?

Actually, you can't blame them if they focus on certain references to the exclusion of others. Here is one that makes them think life events are all predetermined:

“The time is set already. It appears to be quite arbitrary. Yet there is no step along the road that anyone takes but by chance. It has already been taken by him, although he has not yet embarked on it. For time but seems to go in one direction. We but undertake a journey that is over. Yet it seems to have a future still unknown to us. Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion in which figures come and go as if by magic. Yet there is a plan behind appearances that does not change. The script is written. When experience will come to end your doubting has been set. For we but see the journey from the point at which it ended, looking back on it, imagining we make it once again; reviewing mentally what has gone by.” W-pI.158.3-4

And here is another passage that seems to support the idea:

“What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good? Perhaps you have misunderstood His plan, for He would

never offer pain to you. But your defenses did not let you see His loving blessing shine in every step you ever took. While you made plans for death, He led you gently to eternal life. ... Without defenses, you become a light which Heaven gratefully acknowledges to be its own. And it will lead you on in ways appointed for your happiness according to the ancient plan, begun when time was born.”
W-pI.135.18&20

From these and other passages many students have come to a conclusion that goes something like this:

The separation along with this world has already come and gone. We are not really here, but in reality are living comfortably with God in heaven. Instead, we are just under the illusion we are here. When it says “the script is written” it means that everything has already happened and we are just reliving it here. We are either like an audience watching a film that has already been made or actors in it. The whole movie has already been created and we have no control over the next frame that will be played. We seem to have free will like the characters in the film, but, like those characters, the script is set and the next sequence is written in stone, impossible to change. We are not really here but are mere actors reading our scripts.

They believe that all events in life “**are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good.**” as noted in the quote. Many thus figure that God wrote the script and we are following it line by line until we awaken in heaven.

There are quite a number of flaws in this belief which is out of harmony with numerous teachings in ACIM. To see them we have to look at the whole picture instead of just a part.

The first thing to understand is that there are two scripts. One is orchestrated by the Holy Spirit in connection with the Father and the other is written by ourselves, or the ego.

The above quote does not make it clear which script it is referring to, but does include a hint. Here it is again: “**Yet there is a plan behind appearances that does not change. The script is written.**”

A plan “that does not change” indicates it is referring to eternal things or the script written by the Holy Spirit.

Here is clear statement that there is a script written with God’s approval:

“We merely take the part assigned long since, and fully recognized as perfectly fulfilled by Him Who wrote salvation's script in His Creator's Name, and in the Name of His Creator's Son.” W-pI.169.9

When we then follow the script, we follow higher will through the Holy Spirit as noted here:

“When you have learned how to decide with God, all decisions become as easy and as right as breathing. There is no effort, and you will be led as gently as if you were being carried down a quiet path in summer. Only your own volition seems to make deciding hard. The Holy Spirit will not delay in answering your every question what to do.” T-14.IV.6

The script of the Holy Spirit **“are all but aspects of the plan to change your dreams of fear to happy dreams, from which you waken easily to knowledge.” T-18.V.1**

Then there is another script written by your ego self:

“Fear is a judgment never justified. Its presence has no meaning but to show you wrote a fearful script, and are afraid accordingly. ... Your dark dreams are but the senseless, isolated scripts you write in sleep.” T-30.VII.3&6.

“You add an element into the script you write for every minute in the day, and all that happens now means something else. You take away another element, and every meaning shifts accordingly. What do your scripts reflect except your plans for what the day should be? And thus you judge disaster and success, advance, retreat, and gain and loss.” T-30.VII.1-2

So then, we have two scripts with a big difference. The script of the Holy Spirit is known, does not change and the end is sure. The Son will awaken and the fearful dream will be gone. There is a script to follow that will take us back home. We could agree here that the steps to awaken are preplanned, for the only thing subject to our will is the time we take to make the Journey. After all ACIM is a **“required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary.” T-in.1**

So that which is preplanned or predestined are the steps presented in *A Course in Miracles*. It is only a matter of time before each of us follows the same steps that will take us back home. That is the script that is written with God’s approval and it works as follows:

“Once you accept His plan as the one function that you would fulfill, there will be nothing else the Holy Spirit will not arrange for you without your effort. He will go before you making straight your path, and leaving in your way no stones to trip on, and no obstacles to bar your way. Nothing you need will be denied you.” T-20.IV.8

The Course definitely tells us that God knows our true self and guides us without error when we yield to the Holy Spirit:

“Say to the Holy Spirit only, “Decide for me,” and it is done. For His decisions are reflections of what God knows about you, and in this light, error of any kind becomes impossible. “ T-14.III.16

On the other hand, the script of the ego is changeable and unpredictable. Unlike the unchangeable script revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, the ego’s script, written in this dream state, reveals that **“all that happens now means something else. You take away another element, and every meaning shifts accordingly.” T-30.VII.1-2**

Our ego script is so bad that God ignores it:

“It is not God you have imprisoned in your plan to lose your Self. He does not know about a plan so alien to His Will.” W-pI.166.10

So then God not only doesn’t write a predestined script concerning our mundane dream life that we plan and write a script for, but **“He does not know about a plan so alien to His Will.”** After all, why would God write a script for something He sees as not even happening?

We are told to **“value no plan of the ego before the plan of God. For you leave empty your place in His plan, which you must fill if you would join with me, by your decision to join in any plan but His.” T-15.IV.3**

The idea that God would write a script for us covering every boring thing that occurs in this world runs contrary to the Course teaching that God did not create the dream world and does not even pay attention to it:

“Is it not strange that you believe to think you made the world you see is arrogance? God made it not. Of this you can be sure. What can He know of the ephemeral, the sinful and the guilty, the afraid, the suffering and lonely, and the mind that lives within a body that must die? You but accuse Him of insanity,

to think He made a world where such things seem to have reality. He is not mad. Yet only madness makes a world like this.” W-pI.152.6

Yes **“What can He know of the ephemeral”** or what can He know about any scripts that involve the details of the dream for the Course speaks of **“God Himself, to Whom all conflict, triumph and attack of any kind are all unknown.” T-23.I.4**

The script from God is written to awaken us, but has nothing to do with the ingredients of the dream itself. After all, from God’s view this world never even happened:

“The instant the idea of separation entered the mind of God's Son, in that same instant was God's Answer given. In time this happened very long ago. In reality it never happened at all.” M-2.2

“Everything you made has never been, and is invisible because the Holy Spirit does not see it.” T-12.VIII.6

This world does seem real to us but God and the Holy Spirit do not even “see it.” Instead, the Holy Spirit seeks to guide us with a divine script that will lead to our awakening, and the script that deals with true reality contains a predetermined plan that has nothing to do with ordinary events in our illusion the ego made.

If it were true that every act of our life here was predetermined, then this would mean that we have no free will. If the supposed script says you are going to rise at 8 AM then there is no way you will be able to choose to sleep another 15 minutes. You have to get up at eight on the nose.

To the contrary, the Course makes it clear that we have free will.

“Free will is the attribute of the mind.” UR T(30) -30 T 1 B 37f

“Because your will is free you can accept what has already happened at any time you choose, and only then will you realize that it was always there.” M-2.3.

“the ego is the denial of free will. It is never God Who coerces you, because He shares His Will with you.” T-8.II.3

The Son’s **“free will was made for his own joy in creating the perfect.” T 2 A 12**

Because we were created free like the Father, we had free will in heaven as well as here on earth. We are told that we mainly used our free will in heaven to create, as regular decisions were obvious because we all saw the truth clearly. When the right path is clearly seen then the decision becomes automatic, almost as if there is no decision.

However, there was the time that the Son came up with the “mad idea” that involved creating and entering a world of illusion and limitation. Even though this ran contrary to the will of the Father, and the Father could have prevented it, He did not because of free will.

Then, when the Son entered this world of separation and limitation, he found he had many choices to make because the truth was not obvious any more. Instead of following a predictable frame-by-frame script, he has found himself in a world of uncertainty where the exact future is not predictable. Students know for sure that we will one day awaken from the dream, but cannot exactly predict what will come next in the dream. The Course verifies this:

“The plans you make for safety all are laid within the future, where you cannot plan. No purpose has been given it as yet, and what will happen has as yet no cause. Who can predict effects without a cause?” T-26.VIII.5

So the future within the dream is something we “cannot plan.” The reason for this is that we cannot **“predict effects without a cause.”**

The Course tells us that this world is a mere effect and can create no real cause. Cause comes from the eternal world. This means that events in this world with no real cause behind them cannot be accurately predicted.

“This world is causeless, as is every dream that anyone has dreamed within the world. No plans are possible, and no design exists that could be found and understood.” T-28.II.6

“Only what God creates is irreversible and unchangeable. What you made can always be changed because, when you do not think like God, you are not really thinking at all.” T-5.V.6

“everything in time can change with time.” T-22.II.3

We have free will within the unpredictable dream, but the ultimate choice lies before us:

“It is not difficult to change a dream when once the dreamer has been recognized. Rest in the Holy Spirit, and allow His gentle dreams to take the place of those you dreamed in terror and in fear of death.” T-27.VII.14

“Change but your mind on what you want to see, and all the world must change accordingly.” W-pI.132.5

The Course tells us that only a fearful and unpredictable script written by the ego is available for this world. For a reliable and predictable script, we must look beyond this world to the Holy Spirit. When we decide to follow His promptings then we are following a real script.

The Course tells us that neither God, the Son in his right mind or the Holy Spirit would concern themselves with a script dealing with the events of this world because such events are not recognized as real or even happening in reality. They only deal with reality or that which leads to it.

Think of this for a moment. If there were an accurate script, not written by the fallible ego, but by Divine Will, would not someone be able to read it? I have followed those who claim to see the future for numerous decades and haven't found one yet that made a really good exact prediction that came true. I'd compare the accuracy of these various prophets to a stopped clock which is right twice a day, and this is being generous.

If there is some exact script written for this world, then someone should be able to produce a paragraph or two from next month's newspaper, produce a winning lottery number or the exact path of the next hurricane. The fact is no one can do this because the ego writes the script for this world and the ego is far from perfect. The ego would like us to think it has the future under its control but alas, it does not.

“Fantasies change reality. That is their purpose. They cannot do so in reality, but they can do so in the mind that would have reality be different.” T-17.I.1

Based on cycles and past history we can roughly predict some things, but the ability to predict exact frames from the ego's erratic script eludes us.

Wise students will leave the ego's script behind and seek that of the Holy Spirit which provides sure and predetermined steps to lead us back home.

Chapter Fifteen

The Mystery of Time

Like many other spiritual traditions, ACIM teaches that time is an illusion here on earth, but in the celestial realm there is no time as we know it. The state in the celestial realm is usually described as “The Eternal Now.”

The Course does not use this term but does state that **“The present is the only time there is.”** W-pI.164.1

It also tells us:

“The present is before time was, and will be when time is no more. In it are all things that are eternal, and they are one.” T-13.VI.6

“The only aspect of time that is eternal is now.” T-5.III.6

This eternal now or “present” is often described by the Course as timeless or timelessness:

“In timelessness we coexist with God.” T-2.V.A.17

“all the past undone; the present saved to quietly extend into a timeless future.” W-pI.110.4

Time itself is a very mysterious entity. Scientists and philosophers have tried to explain it for thousands of years and still there is no uniform description of it that is accepted by all.

Time is generally associated with motion, as we use the motion of our clocks to measure it. The question then arises as to whether time would still exist if all that existed was some formless void with nothing in motion. In that situation some say there would be no time, whereas others say time still exists independent of form and motion.

People generally see time as events that move from the past to the future with a focus on the present, but various spiritual teachers and philosophers have often speculated

on the existence of an eternal present. This is the direction *A Course in Miracles* takes us. It says this:

“For time but seems to go in one direction. We but undertake a journey that is over. Yet it seems to have a future still unknown to us. Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion in which figures come and go as if by magic.” W-pI.158.3-4

Time as we understand it began with the separation:

“Ultimately, space is as meaningless as time. Both are merely beliefs. ... Acts were not necessary before the separation, because belief in space and time did not exist.” T-1.VI.3 & T-2.II.4

The Course here tells us that in heaven before the separation there were no “acts” (or motion) because there was no space and time. Without space, form and motion, time could not exist as we know it.

Indeed, it is difficult for us mere mortals to understand what an eternal present with no space, form or motion would be like. Some who have had near-death and various spiritual experiences tell us that they have experienced a sense of timelessness, but cannot seem to describe the feeling in a way that conveys much meaning.

That said, let us look at what the Course says about time to see if we can shed any light on the subject.

The first thing to register with the seeker is that ACIM says that time within our dream state is an illusion, but not time itself. There are two versions of time presented by the Course. There is time as we know it that flows from the past to the future. ACIM calls this horizontal time. Then there is real time which is the eternal present. This is referred to as vertical or collapsed time, (See T-1.II.6) After all, it says, **“The present is the only time there is.”** W-pI.164.1

So, time itself is not an illusion, for time as the present is real. What is illusion is the way we divide time and then perceive it.

The wording in the Course makes for some misunderstanding when speaking of time as being not real, for it is only speaking of time in this world when doing so. Students often think that all time is therefore not real, but this is not the case. There is also a heavenly time called “the present.”

We all have a reasonable idea of what time is in our material reality, but what would time be like in the eternal present in heaven? Let us examine the differences between time on earth and in heaven.

Time as we understand it here exists in a universe of form, space, motion and consciousness. It seems to go from an unknowable past to an indefinite future.

Time in heaven would definitely be different than time here, as the Course tells us that there is no space, form, action or consciousness there. Instead of consciousness, the word that best describes our state would be awareness as in this quote: Heaven is **“merely an awareness of perfect Oneness.”** T-18.VI.1

Since the eternal present is said to lack the aspects of time as we know it, many teachers say there is no time in the eternal world and this presents us with the problem caused by our imperfect communication using language. Words have their limitations. If one defines time as earth time alone, then he could rightfully say that time does not exist, even though there is a different version in the eternal world. That different version is sometimes called by a different name, such as the eternal present, timelessness, eternity etc., but it still is a version of time. It is just quite different from the ego’s horizontal version of it.

One definition of time is that it is a flow of events and change.

Do events take place in heaven? The answer to this is yes, and the main event there is creation. It is written:

“Unless you create you are unfulfilled, but God does not know unfulfillment and therefore you must create.” T-7.IX.3

All kinds of creation have taken place in heaven. The first creation was the Son, which consists of an unlimited number of parts, and the extension of the Son through other Sons is an ongoing process as discussed in chapter five.

Next, we had the creation of angels. This was followed by the event of the separation, and following this was the creation of the Holy Spirit.

We thus have events and changes going on in heaven that would involve some version of time.

“But wait,” says a student. “The Course tells us that everything in heaven is eternal and changeless. How could this be if creation is an ongoing thing?”

The conflicting idea presented in the Course that there is extension and creation, yet changelessness, is a paradox most students just chalk up to a great mystery that they’ll hopefully understand when they awaken. On the other hand, the Course does give us some clues to solve this conundrum. A major revelation is given in this quote:

“What is timeless is always there, because its being is eternally changeless. It does not change by increase, because it was forever created to increase.” T-7.I.7

This is a very interesting statement. It tells us that God’s creations are “timeless” and “eternally changeless” yet **“forever created to increase.”**

In other words, change is happening in the eternal present, but the actual change caused by extension or increase is always there and is incorporated into the Course’s definition of changelessness. The change or expansion created by extension is always going on, so from the eternal perspective it is not change.

It may be helpful to visualize a balloon being blown up that always expands and never ends. If you observe the balloon as always being in this state of expansion you could say that this state never changes, even though there is increase. Similarly, there is changeless increase in heaven from one angle of looking at it, but change or “extension” happens from another view.

We are clearly told that heaven itself is in this eternal state of increase:

“Beyond the body, beyond the sun and stars, past everything you see and yet somehow familiar, is an arc of golden light that stretches as you look into a great and shining circle. And all the circle fills with light before your eyes. The edges of the circle disappear, and what is in it is no longer contained at all. The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere.” T-21.I.8

So, heaven is encircled by **“an arc of golden light that stretches.”** **“The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity...”**

All heaven itself, or all there is, forever increases by stretching and expanding to infinity.

This corresponds to what scientists have discovered about our visible universe, which has many aspects that correspond to the invisible.

They have discovered that our entire visible universe is not only expanding, but the rate of expansion is consistently increasing. This discovery has baffled the greatest scientific minds and they have yet to come up with a solid explanation of how this could be, as it runs contrary to all expectations. The best they can come up with is that there is some mysterious “dark energy” that is at work creating the expansion.

Perhaps a better name for that which is driving the expansion of God’s creations would be “light energy” rather than dark. Scientists merely call it dark because they do not understand what it is.

Rather than teaching that there is no time, the Course tells us there are two versions of time.

One is time as we understand it in this world that moves from an apparent past to the future. This time is considered to be illusion and does not exist in true reality, but we have made it real to us.

Then we have what is “timelessness” or the eternal present. This is said to be the “only time there is,” but notice it is still identified with time.

We are told that **“Earth can reflect Heaven.”** T-14.IX.5 However, the reflections on earth are distorted, even so, symbols often reflect truth. Could we say then that the divisions of past, present and future that we have on earth are an imperfect reflection of time in heaven? If this is the case, then a higher correspondence should be at least hinted at in the course.

Indeed, this seems to be the case.

In addition to saying time is a trick it says:

“Fear is not of the present, but only of the past and future, which do not exist.”
T-15.I.8

But then it kind of backtracks like this message to Helen Schucman

From the Voice: **“There was a past, but it does not matter. It does not explain the present or account for the future.”** Chapter 5 Section 7 COA

Indeed, the past can have some residual value according to the Course: **“All your past except its beauty is gone, and nothing is left but a blessing. I have saved all your kindnesses and every loving thought you ever had. I have purified them of the errors that hid their light, and kept them for you in their own perfect radiance. They are beyond destruction and beyond guilt. They came from the Holy Spirit within you, and we know what God creates is eternal.”** T-5.IV.8

Here it again emphasizes that loving thoughts of the past are preserved: **“If all but loving thoughts have been forgotten, what remains is eternal. And the transformed past is made like the present. No longer does the past conflict with now. This continuity extends the present by increasing its reality and its value in your perception of it.”** T-17.III.5

“This interpretation ties the future to the present, and extends the present rather than the past.” T-13.IV.9

“The future now is recognized as but extension of the present.” W-pII.314.1

Interestingly the loving thoughts of the past **“extends the present.”**

These teachings are in harmony with the words of Paul in the New Testament:

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.” I Cor 13:8-10 NIV

Here we have an explanation as to why time, particularly the past, is often spoken of as being not real:

“Whenever we move from one instant to the next, the previous one no longer exists.” UR T 3 C 34

And that gives us the basic message of time on earth from the view of true reality. When we focus on the present, it is as if there is no past except for those things motivated by love, which are an eternal quality which is carried over into the eternal present.

Most of our time on earth is concerned with dealing with negating our fears and concerns with daily living and does not even exist from the view of heaven, but

anything linked to thoughts of love is incorporated into the eternal present and continues.

Even though time in heaven, as an eternal present, is much different than time in this world, there are still similarities related to our view of the past as well as the future.

Memory in this world is closely linked to the past, for in our current state that is where memory seems to be. The Course considers our memories here as part of the illusion.

“What you remember never was. It came from causelessness which you confused with cause.” T-28.I.9

“Memory, like perception, is a skill made up by you to take the place of what God gave in your creation.” T-28.I.2

Even though our use of memory on earth is discounted, it appears to be an asset we still use in heaven. The difference is that in the celestial sphere memory is associated with the present rather than the past.

“The Holy Spirit can indeed make use of memory, for God Himself is there. Yet this is not a memory of past events, but only of a present state. You are so long accustomed to believe that memory holds only what is past, that it is hard for you to realize it is a skill that can remember now.” T-28.I.4

So, God, the Holy Spirit and we in our awakened state still use memory, but instead of remembering the past we remember the “present state” or “now.”

“It (higher memory) is not past because He let It not be unremembered. It has never changed, because there never was a time in which He did not keep It safely in your mind.” T-28.I.8.

“Yet His memory shines in your mind and cannot be obliterated. It is no more past than future, being forever always. You have but to ask for this memory, and you will remember.” T-12.VIII.4-5

This is somewhat difficult to put our heads around, for anything we remember in this world is something from the past, but if we remember something from heaven, we bring again to our minds something that is eternal that is linked to the present, which always is.

The question now arises as to what is to be remembered by those who are awake?

The most important thing for us to remember is our Creator:

“Give up gladly everything that would stand in the way of your remembering, for God is in your memory. His Voice will tell you that you are part of Him when you are willing to remember Him and know your own reality again. Let nothing in this world delay your remembering of Him, for in this remembering is the knowledge of yourself.” T-10.II.2

“God's memory is in our holy minds, which know their oneness and their unity with their Creator. Let our function be only to let this memory return” W-pII.11.4

Remembering God is important, for this gives us a knowledge of ourselves and our oneness with Him. In addition, it is important to remember our heavenly home itself:

“This world you seem to live in is not home to you. And somewhere in your mind you know that this is true. A memory of home keeps haunting you, as if there were a place that called you to return,” W-pI.182.1

In addition, **“with this memory, the Son remembers his own creations, as like to him as he is to his Father.”** T-24.II.6

There is also an ancient song heavenly inhabitants are to remember:

“You know the ancient song, and know it well. Nothing will ever be as dear to you as is this ancient hymn of love the Son of God sings to his Father still. ... And who is there in whom this memory lies not?” T-21.I.9-10

We are also supposed to remember our true name:

“The miracle but calls your ancient Name, which you will recognize because the truth is in your memory.” T-26.VII.16

We are also to remember our “brothers” or the other Sons of God:

“And in our memory is the recall how dear our brothers are to us in truth, how much a part of us is every mind, how faithful they have really been to us, and how our Father’s Love contains them all.” pI.139.11

In our right minds we can retain the memory of that which **“is creative and good”** from this world:

“You can, however, apply it meaningfully and at any time to everything you have made, and retain in your memory only what is creative and good. This is what your right-mindedness cannot but dictate.” T-2.VIII.5

Then we have a promise of a memory of virtually everything connected with the true reality:

**“Very simply, you would remember your Father. The Creator of life, the Source of everything that lives, the Father of the universe and of the universe of universes, and of everything that lies even beyond them would you remember.
“ T-19.IV.D.1**

That is quite a promise to remember **“the universe of universes, and of everything that lies even beyond them.”**

Finally, we still have the memory of the initial separation in the memory of the Son: **“but being kept in memory appears to have immediate effects.” T-28.I.1**

In conclusion, we see that in our true state there is still memory, but it is connected with the present instead of the past, and with this memory many things are still recalled. Our priorities are merely different in our right minds.

In this world it appears that time moves from the past to the future. The Course says that this is incorrect and caused by an illusion. But in the true reality time still exists. It is called present time and moves within the present itself by an eternal expansion process called extension.

“all the past undone; the present saved to quietly extend into a timeless future.” W-pI.110.4

“No longer does the past conflict with now. This continuity extends the present by increasing its reality and its value in your perception of it.” T-17.III.5

Therefore, time moves in heaven from the present to an extended present it calls a “timeless future.”

This seems to explain why events in heaven, as described in the Course, happen in some type of timeframe even though it may be registered differently than the one we use in this world. Let’s go through some examples.

The prime example is our own creation. If we are created beings, then there was a time in the extension process before this happened, when it happened, and a time afterward.

Then the Son continues the creative process by creating more sons.

“your creations, who are son to you, that you might share the Fatherhood of God,” T-24.VII.1

You then will share creation with God by making creations **“who are son to you.”** There is a time in the extension where your sons have not manifest, a time when they are created and one afterwards, but because the process is always ongoing it is considered to be happening in the eternal present.

The Holy Spirit also had a creation:

“He came into being with the separation as a protection, inspiring the Atonement principle at the same time. Before that there was no need for healing, for no one was comfortless.” T-5.I.5

“He has created the Holy Spirit as the Mediator between perception and knowledge.” W-pI.43.1

The Course then tells us that there was a time “before” the creation of the Holy Spirit when **“there was no need for healing.”** Then after all awaken the **“Holy Spirit will remain with the Sons of God, to bless their creations and keep them in the light of joy.”** T-5.I.5.

Another creation is the angelic kingdom which would also have a before and after in the extension process.

“You were created ABOVE the angels because your role involves creation as well as protection.” UR T 1 B 30y

The event that started the separation is said to have occurred in “an ancient past.”

“Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now.” M-2.4

Time, as we understand it, goes way back **“beyond all memory.”** If this is referring to heavenly memory then that would be an ancient past indeed.

“Only in the past,--an ancient past, too short to make a world in answer to creation,--did this world appear to rise. So very long ago, for such a tiny interval of time, that not one note in Heaven's song was missed.” T-26.V.5

There we have it. The appearance of this world involved **“a tiny interval of time.”**

Which time was that – heavenly or earthly? We are told that **“the separation occurred over millions of years”** (T-2.VIII.2) so by our measurements. it was certainly no tiny interval. Therefore, the Course had to be referring to a tiny interval of time in heaven.

Time in heaven seems to be measured by instants, and an instant, which is short by heavenly time, may be very long by our standards. For instance, the Course refers to the mad idea of the creation of our world, which has been going on for over 13 billion years as a mere instant

“For what could house this mad idea against reality but for an instant?” T-20.VI.8

All of our universe of time and space is referred to as happening in **“The tiny instant you would keep and make eternal.”** T-26.V.4

Indeed, the reckoning of time in heaven is much different than it is here in world of illusion, making it difficult to understand in our current consciousness:

“The mind's preoccupation with the past is the cause of the misconception about time from which your seeing suffers. Your mind cannot grasp the present, which is the only time there is.” W-pl.8.1

We cannot fully grasp eternal time from our reality but the Course does give us a few hints which are worthy of contemplation.

Chapter Sixteen

The Mysteries of the Dream

There is a major problem created by some of the wording of the teachings of *A Course in Miracles* which causes numerous apparent contradictions to appear in the text. A prime cause of this problem is that the Course teaches about the true reality it calls heaven contrasted with the dream world wherein we currently dwell.

The problem occurs because of the way the two worlds are described. Heaven is said to be the only true reality there is, and this visible world is seen as being not real as is a dream.

“The world you see does not exist, because the place where you perceive it is not real.” T-28.V.7

“The world as you perceive it cannot have been created by the Father,” T-11.VII.1

Therefore, when the Course speaks from the reality as seen from God’s view, it often speaks as if this world, we apparently live in, does not even exist.

But the purpose of the entire course is directed to the inhabitants of this dream world that is said to not exist, so something must be somewhere. Unfortunately, the Course is limited to the use of human language in referencing things in this world.

Dealing with the two worlds in the script often causes confusion, for sometimes the Course is speaking from the view of the true reality, and readers think it is talking about this world. Other times it talks about this world, and readers think it is talking about heavenly things.

For instance, in speaking from the heavenly view it says: **“You dwell not here (on earth), but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” T-13.VII.17**

This and other verses telling us this world, the body, the past, etc. does not even exist is taken so literally by some students that it makes it difficult to have a conversation with them. If you casually mention anything about living in this world, they will

correct you and remind you that you are not here. The problem is that you cannot have an intelligent conversation about any subject without referring to the world we see and how it works.

Some students take a very simplistic view of the power of illusion in this world, seeing it as no more real than a dream at night. The Course says otherwise:

“It is a mistake to believe that a thought system based on lies is weak. Nothing made by a child of God is without power. It is essential to realize this, because otherwise you will be unable to escape from the prison you have made.” T-3.VII.1

In other words, having a flippant attitude toward this illusion we are in and just declaring we are not here falls short of what is needed for liberation. The power we inherited from God made this world, and it takes that same power to undo it.

That said, in this chapter we will look at several problematic interpretations of the Course and try to get some clarification. We have already covered several of these, such as time, predestination, the separation, the one and the many, and others, but here we will focus on illusions about the illusion, or the dream and the awakening.

The first question we will consider is: “Where are we?”

As pointed out in the previous quote, the Course seems to indicate that we are not even here, but “home” in “eternity” or heaven. Verses like this add to the confusion:

“There is no need for help to enter Heaven for you have never left.” C-5.1

“Father, Your Son, who never left, returns to Heaven and his home.” W-pII.241.2

In addition, we are told that our separation from God and heaven never even happened:

In time this (the separation) happened very long ago. In reality it never happened at all.” M-2.2

Many students take these quotes to heart and will correct you if you say anything that deviates from their interpretation.

If you talk of heaven as if it were a place, they will tell you that heaven is not a place. If you talk about being someplace in this world, they will tell you that this world does not exist and you are not here. If you mention anything related to the body, they will accuse you of thinking you are a body and lecture that you are not in a body that isn't even here.

What it boils down to is that you cannot have a normal conversation with some of these folk, for everything you can say about the world we live in is wrong minded as they see it.

The problem is that we are having an experience in this world, and one cannot say more than a few words without talking about something we see, hear or experience within it, causing ACIM critics to come forward and accuse you of wrong thinking.

Not only are some students violating the teachings of the Course with their zealous corrections bordering on attack, but they are also often more in error than the ones they seek to correct.

So, if we are not here in the world because here does not exist, where are we according to ACIM? Since we are told that **“Heaven is not a place nor a condition”** T-18.VI.1 then we must not be there either. It appears we are all nowhere if we take things literally.

On the other hand, as Descartes said, “I think therefore, I am;” therefore, we indeed exist and must exist somewhere.

A lot of this problematic dialogue comes from the imperfection of language itself, as many words can be used with several meanings. For instance, the word “place” often refers to a physical location, but other times it does not. Sometimes it refers to a non-physical state. When it says that heaven is not a place, it is saying that it has no physical location that we can visit in a spaceship, but then other times it does use the word as referring to a state of existence.

It is interesting that in the same paragraph where heaven is said to not be a place it says: **“The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God.”** T-18.VI.1

There are numerous passages using “place” in relation to heaven. Here is one more: **“And They come quickly to the living temple, where a home for Them has been set up. There is no place in Heaven holier.”** T-26.IX.6

So, from one view presented in ACIM, there is no such thing as a place anywhere, neither in heaven or on earth. There is no place in heaven because there are no physical dimensions there, and there is no place in this world because it is an illusion like a dream and does not really exist.

What does not seem to be realized by some students is that in the correct context the word can be correctly used in reference to things in heaven and the earth.

For example, our dreams we have at night are not real relative to our normal waking state. One could be technically correct in saying that the place you dreamed of does not exist. Yet in describing the dream, you may say you drove your car from one place to another. If one gave this description, it would be silly for the listener to say “you were not in any place!” That is disagreeing just to be disagreeable.

So, if we use ACIM language, how can we accurately describe where we are? This seems like a silly question to the man on the street who would say that he knows exactly where he is. Instead, this is a serious question for many Course students trying to understand the sometimes confusing and seemingly contradictory language.

To clarify, we need to ask whether we are in heaven instead of in this world.

This passage sheds some light: **“Now try to reach the Son of God in you. This is the Self that never sinned, nor made an image to replace reality. This is the Self that never left Its home in God to walk the world uncertainly.”** W-pI.94.3

So, we in this dream world can look within and **“reach the Son of God”** who never left his home.

This tells us there is a real part of ourselves that is still at home in heaven with God. But could it be that we are 100% in heaven and not here when we are having actual experience and perceiving here as being in this world? After all, when we dream at night our consciousness is mostly in the dream. Obviously, something is here in this place. Even when we dream we are having an experience in a non-physical place in the dream state, so why would we deny that anything is happening here?

The problem is in the Course language which only recognizes reality that is eternal and changeless. Thus, the earth and everything in it is not eternal, so it is not classified as real and sometimes seen as not even existing.

But there are two worlds where we experience life. The first is the eternal world which the Course calls heaven, and the second is the world of time and space where all things have a beginning and an end. All things with a beginning and an end are seen as not real because when they cease to exist and the focus is on the eternal present, it is as if nothing happened.

On the other hand, when living in time, lots seem to be happening, and from our perception we are living here now. After all, the Course says that **“the thought (of this world) become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.”** T-27.VIII.6

So, the creation of this world and universe of form became **“possible of both accomplishment and real effects”** to the extent that part of the Sonship separated and produced these effects that we experience here.

The Course is quite confusing in saying on one hand that this world and separation does not exist, yet speaks of it consistently throughout its entire half million words. Why go to such effort to redeem us from something that never happened and does not exist? This makes absolutely no sense when taken literally.

Obviously, this world has an existence, and the separation was real enough to cause God to be **“lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him.”** T-2.III.5

Some students will insist that this world never happened and we are not here, yet the Course says that the separation caused God to be lonely and to create the Holy Spirit to help bring the prodigal son home. In addition, Jesus has made a tremendous effort in creating *A Course in Miracles* as a guide to help us awaken and return home. Would he spend all that effort on nothing?

Why go to all that effort to create an extensive Course as a remedy for something that does not even have an existence?

Obviously, some are not understanding the true message of the Course, which is that a separation did happen causing God to think, **“My children sleep and must be awakened.”** T-6.V.1 and we are to **“not delay my coming home”** W-pII.242.1

Here the Course makes it clear that our existence here is more than a non-existent symbol:

“The Separation is NOT symbolic. It is an order of reality, or a system of thought that is PERFECTLY real in time, though not in Eternity. All beliefs are real to the believer.” UR T 3 I 6 “The separation is a system of thought real enough in time, though not in eternity” T-3.VII.3

This separated reality was created by mind. Since mind is eternal, it could also be:

“It may surprise you to learn that had the ego willed to do so, it COULD have made the eternal, because, as a product of the mind, it IS endowed with the power of its own creator.” UR T 4 F 13

The problem in understanding comes from the fact that the Course stresses that true reality only consists of that which is eternal, and since this separated world has a beginning and an end it is temporary. When it is over, all is like a dream that never happened in heaven.

But what is overlooked is time and space, as well as dreams, are real when we are in them, and we are definitely in a dream now or we wouldn't be discussing the Course.

To equate this dream, which we made real, to a dream at night, is somewhat misleading as they are significantly different. Let us list a few differences.

For simplicity's sake we'll call our existence here Dream 1 and a dream at night Dream 2.

(1) Dream 1 is much more complex and elaborate with many consistent laws and forms lasting billions of years.

Dream 2 is fleeting, lasting only a few minutes and has few if any laws.

(2) When an entity in Dream 1 wakes up, the other entities and forms do not disappear as they do in Dream 2, but are still there trapped in the dream. The awake person can even communicate with the people in Dream 1 after awakening.

Example: Jesus woke up but we and the universe is still here and he can communicate with individuals as he did with Helen Schucman.

In addition, the Course tells us of other advanced beings who have awakened, yet can communicate with us:

“There are those who have reached God directly, retaining no trace of worldly limits and remembering their own Identity perfectly. These might be called the Teachers of teachers because, although they are no longer visible, their image can yet be called upon. And they will appear when and where it is helpful for them to do so. To those to whom such appearances would be frightening, they give their ideas. No one can call on them in vain.” M-26.2

(3) Waking up from Dream 2 is simple, as the slightest disturbance will do the trick.

Waking up from Dream 1 is very complex as it involves billions of individual lives. All the billions of lives in the dream have to wake up before the larger composite life, called The Son, fully awakens. A great disturbance, even a super nova, does not awaken the One Son.

(4) Cause and effect and laws are consistent in Dream 1, but are lacking in Dream 2.

(5) You may have some vision and audio in Dream 2, but the rest of the senses from Dream 1 are pretty much dormant.

(6) We learn and apply things in Dream 1, but this rarely if ever happens in Dream 2.

(7) We use reason and choice in Dream 1, but we basically just drift along without thinking in Dream 2.

We thus see that blithely stating that our life here is like a dream doesn't really give the full picture. About the only way it is like a dream is that it has a beginning and an end. When anything ends, it is in the past, and when attention is taken off that past and focused on the Eternal Now, then it is like a dream which has passed.

What is similar in the two dream states is that we do have a real experience that has been created by the power of mind. In both cases the experience is caused by a creation of the mind.

According to ACIM, creation of our entire physical universe including our bodies are caused by a dream:

“Does not a world that seems quite real arise in dreams? Yet think what this world is. It is clearly not the world you saw before you slept. Rather it is a

distortion of the world, planned solely around what you would have preferred.”
T-18.II.1

“What if you recognized this world is an hallucination? What if you really understood you made it up?” T-20.VIII.2

This is in harmony with us not being our bodies.

The Course does not say the body wakes up. It is the Son who is asleep that needs to wake up:

“Sleep is not death. What He created can sleep, but cannot die. Immortality is His Will for His Son, and His Son's will for himself.” T-11.I.9

The real us is a part that is one with the One Son of God. From the standpoint of eternity, this world is not real but it was an actual happening with “real effects.”

“In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” T-27.VIII.6

Another source of confusion is that the awakening of the Son occurs in two stages, but many students lump them together as if it were one event.

The first stage is where part of the Sons wake up, and the second and final stage is where they all wake up, realizing they belong to the life of the One Son.

Most assume that Jesus is awake and 100% in heaven, yet He says:

“Because my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven, I can bring down the glories of Heaven to my brothers on earth.” UR T 1 B 40ab

It appears then that even Jesus does not yet dwell fully in heaven, for his **“feet are on the ground.”** In other words, he still has a presence in this earth or the dream world.

He gives additional light on this:

“I must understand uncertainty and pain, although I know they have no meaning. Yet a savior must remain with those he teaches, seeing what they see, but still retaining in his mind the way that led him out, and now will lead you out with him.” W-pI.rV.in.6

So even Jesus must remain connected to this dream world **“seeing what they see.”** Obviously, this connection allowed him to see into the lives of Helen and Bill so he was aware of what was going on in their lives.

And why is this?

Because all the Sons of God must awaken for the separation to completely end. Even those who achieve awakening cannot be completely at peace or in heaven until all have been liberated:

“And as they rest, the face of Christ shines on them and they remember the laws of God, forgetting all the rest and yearning only to have His laws perfectly fulfilled in them and all their brothers. Think you when this has been achieved that you will rest without them? You could no more leave one of them outside than I could leave you, and forget part of myself.” T-20.IV.7

Let me repeat this crucial part: **“You could no more leave one of them outside than I could leave you, and forget part of myself.”**

Furthermore, **“Souls cannot rest until everyone has found salvation.”** UR T 1 B 24a. 24 **“Ultimately, every member of the family of God must return.”** UR T 1 B 34b **“It is the duty of the released to release their brothers.”** UR T 1 B 29a

The goal is to have all the Sons awaken so that the whole Sonship can be at peace. Until then, a few will awaken here and there, but even here one cannot awaken alone, just focusing on himself. It can only happen by sharing the Sonship with your brother.

“For you will not see the light, until you offer it to all your brothers. As they take it from your hands, so will you recognize it as your own.” W-pl.153.11

“Together is your joint inheritance remembered and accepted by you both. Alone it is denied to both of you.” T-31.II.11

The sharing and awakening process will go on for a long period until it is complete, for the full salvation will take a very lengthy period of time as is written:

“the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.” T-2.VIII.2

Scientists tell us that this universe, which is the result of the separation, is over 13 billion years old. Is it possible that the full awakening could take that long? Or perhaps the Course is referring to the beginning of human consciousness which was millions of years back instead of billions.

Whatever the case, any amount of time from the point of view of eternity is counted as a mere instant. When fully awakened, even a billion years in the past is seen as an instant, or as nothing.

One final problem confronting students concerning the awakening is this. In some places the Course speaks of God as having only one Son, and then in others speaks of Sons or many parts. This causes a division on what will be the final result of our awakening.

Some take the One Son concept literally to the extent that they believe that they will awaken to be the One Son with no parts. Others see it as awakening with a realization of being connected to the One Life while still a part of it, something like a cell in the body has a distinct life but is also a part of the whole.

Reaching the right view on this should be a no-brainer. While it is true that the Course does speak of God having “one Son” 14 times it speaks of having Sons (plural) 54 times. When looking at the text as a whole, it is obvious that the One Son is composed of many Sons creating a united one life. This we covered in some depth in chapter five.

One of the best references illustrating this is the Course using the parable of Jesus concerning the Prodigal Son. One son left his home and the other stayed behind. This corresponds to the separation as mentioned here by the Voice:

“The Atonement actually began long before the Crucifixion. Many Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the Separated Ones but they could not withstand the strength of the attack, and had to be brought back. Angels came, too, but their protection was not enough, because the Separated ones were not interested in peace.” UR T 2 B 43

So, you have two groups here – the “Separated Ones” who entered the dream and the “Many Souls” who stayed with God. Obviously, the life of the One Son is composed of many parts that are capable of division.

This different interpretation of oneness also causes confusion on what happens when we awaken from the dream. Those who lean toward the One-Son-only interpretation see the dream as only being had by one entity and not as a shared experience of many parts. They say that when we dream at night, we may dream of many different characters; but when we awaken, we find they are just figments of our imagination. Only the single dreamer is real, they say. They therefore believe that when they wake up from this greater dream, that all the people in this world will disappear and be no more. Only the single dreamer will remain.

This interpretation has many problems. First, as we pointed out earlier, there are numerous differences between a night dream and our dream world here. There are some rough correspondences, but exact matches do not work.

The question to ask such a believer is who is the true dreamer – me or you? If it is you, then I will disappear when you wake up, and if it is me, you will be the one going into oblivion.

Indeed, if there is only one having the dream and it corresponds to a dream at night, then all the billions of people on the planet are just figments of your imagination and would disappear upon awakening.

The problem is that this did not happen in reality. The first we know of who has awakened was Jesus with his resurrection. So, after his awakening, did all his loved ones, friends and people in his dream disappear as do people in our night dreams?

No. He visited his apostles and loved ones who were still here and not yet fully awake. In fact, the entire world was still here.

As we quoted earlier: **“Yet a savior must remain with those he teaches, seeing what they see, but still retaining in his mind the way that led him out, and now will lead you out with him.”** W-pI.rV.in.6

So even though Jesus is awake, he still has an obligation to teach others what he knows.

“It is the function of God's ministers to help their brothers choose as they have done. God has elected all, but few have come to realize His Will is but their own. And while you fail to teach what you have learned, salvation waits and darkness holds the world in grim imprisonment.” W-pI.153.11

These passages and numerous others make it clear that we do not dream alone:

“Like you, your brother thinks he is a dream. Share not in his illusion of himself, for your Identity depends on his reality. Think, rather, of him as a mind in which illusions still persist, ...Your mind and his are joined in brotherhood.”
T-28.IV.3

“The special ones are all asleep, surrounded by a world of loveliness they do not see.” T-24.III.7

As stated earlier, the awakening happens in two stages. First, individuals awaken and assist loved ones to follow. Then in the far future, all the Sons of God will awaken together.

This passage reflects the whole story:

“All that is given you is for release; the sight, the vision and the inner Guide all lead you out of hell with those you love beside you, and the universe with them.”
T-31.VII.7

The one who awakens seeks to aid those he loves, producing an eventual chain reaction that eventually affects the whole universe.

It is this final awakening that corresponds more closely to the night dream. We altogether will share the life of the One Son, and when the many parts of the One Son fully awaken, the entire dream world will disappear. That is when the true disappearance of the universe will happen.

For us in time, the event is a long way away, but from the view of eternity only an instant will pass.

Chapter Seventeen

The Mystery of Relationships

My first read through the text of *A Course in Miracles* went pretty smoothly until about half way through when it started talking about the special relationship in quite a negative light.

In a nutshell, a special relationship, according to ACIM, is any relationship held by an individual where another person is seen as more special or the object of more love than anyone else. For most people, the spouse, one's children or good friends are seen as more special in their lives than strangers or various irritating people encountered in life. In fact, most counselors and books on marriage advise one to make the partner feel special by going out of one's way to do things for them that are not done for others.

It is kind of an accepted thing among humanity to go out of our way to make loved ones feel special. I've read a lot of spiritual-related materials and hadn't read of any teacher criticizing the special relationship. Many recommend seeing God, Christ or merely the good in all people and treating all with kindness and a giving heart even if they are obnoxious, but I hadn't come across any tradition demeaning the special relationship that would include marriage and children. Thus, when I encountered the Course's teachings on the special relationship, I found that my open mindedness was put to the test. If it were not for seeing the high intelligence behind the author and the innovating teachings presented, I might have discounted the whole thing. As it was, I read on and considered all with an open mind and discovered that when all the various teachings on this are put together in the bigger picture, a path to happier relationships is revealed.

That said, let us look at what the Course actually says about the special relationship. Here is a quote that gives the flavor of its outlook:

“The special relationship is a strange and unnatural ego device for joining hell and Heaven, and making them indistinguishable. And the attempt to find the imagined ‘best’ of both worlds has merely led to fantasies of both, and to the inability to perceive either as it is. The special relationship is the triumph of this confusion. It is a kind of union from which union is excluded, and the basis for the attempt at union rests on exclusion.” T-16.V.6.

Basically, this and other statements give a good description of a bad marriage. **“A strange and unnatural ego device for joining hell and Heaven”** is particularly graphic and even a somewhat humorous description for one who has gone through a difficult relationship.

As I read on, I found that the special relationship was not all bad and could be redeemed, but before we go there, let us present some of the reasons given by the Course why the special relationship can be a hindrance, and then what can be done about it. According to the Course, the big problem with the special relationship is that it is a substitute for God and His love.

“See in the special relationship nothing more than a meaningless attempt to raise other gods before Him” T-16.V.13

“In a sense, the special relationship was the ego's answer to the creation of the Holy Spirit, Who was God's Answer to the separation.” T-17.IV.4

So, we are to look to God and His Holy Spirit for completion, but this can be frustrated if we put more special attention on another person than we do on our true Source. As the Israelites molded the golden calf and made it more special than God, we can also fall into the trap of placing special people in our lives above our link with God. In simple language the Course is telling us to put God first above any person or thing in this world.

The Course tells us we have separated ourselves from God, and instead of seeking to return, we seek through special relationship that which we left behind:

“Hear Him gladly, and learn of Him that you have need of no special relationships at all. You but seek in them what you have thrown away. And through them you will never learn the value of what you have cast aside, but still desire with all your heart.” T-15.VIII.2

“The real purpose of the special relationship, in strict accordance with the ego's goals, is to destroy reality and substitute illusion.” T-16.V.9

The basic flaw in the special relationship is that it introduces inequality in love. Instead, we are supposed to be like God and love all other beings equally:

“You cannot enter into real relationships with any of God's Sons unless you love them all and equally. Love is not special. If you single out part of the Sonship for your love, you are imposing guilt on all your relationships and making them unreal.” T-13.X.11

And thus we have guilt associated with the special relationship, which seems to be a major reason for the negative descriptions of it.

“the closer you look at the special relationship, the more apparent it becomes that it must foster guilt and therefore must imprison.” T-16.VI.4.

“It is sure that those who select certain ones as partners in any aspect of living, and use them for any purpose which they would not share with others, are trying to live with guilt rather than die of it. This is the choice they see. And love, to them, is only an escape from death.” T-16.IV.4

Guilt seems to be just one of the negative effects of the special relationship:

“In looking at the special relationship, it is necessary first to realize that it involves a great amount of pain. Anxiety, despair, guilt and attack all enter into it, broken into by periods in which they seem to be gone. All these must be understood for what they are. Whatever form they take, they are always an attack on the self to make the other guilty.” T-16.V.1

When someone reads this, he may wonder why the Course speaks so negatively about guilt and other negative aspects belonging to the special relationship. After all, are there not a lot of people with positive and beneficial special relationships?

There are two key phrases in that last quote. The first is there are **“periods in which they (the negativity) seem to be gone.”**

Yes, many couples will have an enjoyable relationship for a few years and then all hell will break loose. They will either separate or continue together, merely enduring each other.

The second key statement is: **“Whatever form they take, they are always an attack on the self to make the other guilty.”**

This is interesting. The major problems in the special relationship are not caused by attacking the mate, but attacking oneself to evoke guilt in the other. How does this happen?

Lots of ways. Here are a few.

One partner says, “I do all the housework and what do you do? You just sit around, watch TV and drink beer.”

This person attacked herself by making her a victim and then attempted to make her mate feels guilty.

In another instance a partner may say, “I slave all day at a job I hate and you just sit around most of the day and can’t even get dinner ready on time.”

Again, he makes himself a victim and attempts to induce guilt.

These are stark examples, but many play little games that portray themselves as subtle victims to make the partner feel some unease with guilt. They say in different ways, “I do this for you and what do I get in return?” These games play out even in relatively stable relationships.

Guilt is a major barrier between humanity and the realm of Spirit. Guilt must be understood and released before the Son of God can manifest and return home. This is why the special relationship is discouraged and viewed with such negativity.

The trouble is that all of us have special relationships of some kind. They may be with a spouse, one’s children, friends, a car, a home, a job – virtually anything that the person is strongly attached to and shows special attention.

So, are we all doomed to stay in the illusion? It seems quite difficult to go through life without some sort of special relationship unless you are a yogi living in a cave. And aren’t there a few people with peaceful relationships free of guilt?

Fortunately, the Course does offer deliverance from the special relationship composed of guilt and turbulence to one of peace. It calls us to make a transition from the special relationship, which it sometimes calls the unholy relationship, to the holy relationship.

To understand what is needed to heal our relationships we must understand the problem of limitation in the special relationship. The limitation is symbolized by the body: **“The special relationship is a device for limiting your self to a body, and for limiting your perception of others to theirs.”** T-16.VI.3

In the spiritual realm there is no separation. As Spirit you are merged as one with every other part of the life of God. This ultimate sharing is what the Course calls heaven. Unfortunately, **“the body cannot be used for purposes of union. If, then, you see your brother as a body, you have established a condition in which uniting with him becomes impossible.”** T-19.I.4

Our life focus seems to be limited to a body, but in this limited condition we have an internal desire to reestablish that heavenly union that we once had. Communication and sex are the best we can do in this direction with bodies, but all efforts fall short aptly described here:

“On this side of the bridge you see the world of separate bodies, seeking to join each other in separate unions and to become one by losing. When two individuals seek to become one, they are trying to decrease their magnitude. Each would deny his power, for the separate union excludes the universe. Far more is left outside than would be taken in, for God is left without and nothing taken in. If one such union were made in perfect faith, the universe would enter into it. Yet the special relationship the ego seeks does not include even one whole individual. The ego wants but part of him, and sees only this part and nothing else.” T-16.VI.5

This problem of separation caused by seeing ourselves in bodies is something which many are completely unaware. They assume that the highest union to be achieved is through physical proximity and vocal communication. A few sense there is more but know not how to achieve it.

We are very limited in our unions in our special relationships, so God has given us the Holy Spirit to assist us in removing them.

“Everyone on earth has formed special relationships, and although this is not so in Heaven, the Holy Spirit knows how to bring a touch of Heaven to them here. In the holy instant no one is special, for your personal needs intrude on no one to make your brothers seem different. Without the values from the past, you would see them all the same and like yourself. Nor would you see any separation between yourself and them. In the holy instant, you see in each

relationship what it will be when you perceive only the present. God knows you now.” T-15.V.8

It is the Holy Spirit’s job to bring a “touch of heaven” into our special relationships. Since oneness and unity is the outstanding feature of heaven then that would be what He would seek to bring here:

“It is the Holy Spirit's function to teach you how this oneness is experienced, what you must do that it can be experienced, and where you should go to do it.” T-25.I.6

When we follow our own wills while seeing ourselves separated through bodies, we create special relationships. They seem to add to us, but in reality, they diminish us. But when we call in the Holy Spirit, which links heaven and earth, we transcend the limitations off the body and share in the one mind that is from God. When this happens, our vision is extended to the whole and the special relationship is turned into a “holy relationship.”

“Reason sees a holy relationship as what it is; a common state of mind, where both give errors gladly to correction, that both may happily be healed as one.” T-22.III.9

This “common state of mind” can never be achieved by those yielding to the ego. But the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son, and truth is seen correctly through its eyes. Two or more having the Holy Spirit in their relationship will **“give errors gladly to correction”** and all disagreements that occur in ego-centered relationships just vanish. Disagreements will no longer exist. Furthermore, we are told this:

“This is the function of your holy relationship. For what one thinks, the other will experience with him. What can this mean except your mind and your brother’s are one?” T-22.VI.14

This describes a oneness few experience, but it is the goal set by the Course and eventually will be achieved by all of us. Imagine being so closely linked to another that **“what one thinks, the other will experience with him.”**

Some have had this happen at high points in the relationship, but later drift back into the ego and live in their separate condition.

Jesus gave the key to making this sharing a permanent condition:

“And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
Matt 18:2-4

So, how is it that a little child is a key to entering the kingdom of heaven?

The child is humble and does not cling to the error of many preconceived notions. He is open to the idea that anything could be true. This is the outlook we must have to establish the holy relationship. All involved must be willing to turn all beliefs over to the Holy Spirit and then only go with those that He verifies to be true. When two people will do this and **“give errors gladly to correction”** they will share their minds as one and virtually enter the kingdom of heaven while still residing on earth, similar to Jesus in the Course who said, **“my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven,”** UR T 1 B 40ab

“In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship. ... So do the parts of God's Son gradually join in time, and with each joining is the end of time brought nearer. Each miracle of joining is a mighty herald of eternity.” T-20.V.1

It would seem that all seekers would jump at the opportunity for oneness and sharing, but the Course points out that there is a major obstacle in the way:

“Around each entity is built a wall so seeming solid that it looks as if what is inside can never reach without, and what is out can never reach and join with what is locked away within the wall.” T-26.I.2

Then it gives the solution:

“You whose hand is joined with your brother's have begun to reach beyond the body, but not outside yourself, to reach your shared Identity together.” T-18.VI.10.

“Alone we can do nothing, but together our minds fuse into something whose power is far beyond the power of its separate parts. By not being separate, the Mind of God is established in ours and as ours. This Mind is invincible because it is undivided.” T-8.V.1

“As we share this goal, we increase its power to attract the whole Sonship, and to bring it back into the oneness in which it was created.” T-5.II.11

If we have to “bring it back into oneness,” this would imply that we are currently not there yet, but this is indeed a goal to which we aspire. To achieve that goal involves sharing the mind of God with our brothers and sisters. This is also emphasized in the Course when it stresses that we cannot go home alone but must do all we can to take others with us.

“Together is your joint inheritance remembered and accepted by you both. Alone it is denied to both of you.” T-31.II.11

“How easy is it to offer this miracle to everyone! No one who has received it for himself could find it difficult. For by receiving it, he learned it was not given him alone. Such is the function of a holy relationship; to receive together and give as you received.” T-22.IV.7

It seems that everything connected with salvation and the holy relationship involves a spiritual sharing of the mind of God with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. For most, this higher sharing begins by working at their special relationships in hope of turning them into holy relationships. Based on what we have learned from the Course, let us see how we can make that happen.

Special relationships are created by seeing one’s loved ones as special, more deserving of our love and attention than others. On the other hand, the Course teaches that God loves all his children equally and does not favor one over another. We are supposed to incorporate this same attitude.

Does this mean we are supposed to dissolve our special relationships? It almost sounds that way in places, but it clarifies here:

“I said before that the first change, before dreams disappear, is that your dreams of fear are changed to happy dreams. That is what the Holy Spirit does in the special relationship. He does not destroy it, nor snatch it away from you. But He does use it differently, as a help to make His purpose real to you. The special relationship will remain, not as a source of pain and guilt, but as a source of joy and freedom.” T-18.II.6

“Your special relationship will be a means for undoing guilt in everyone blessed through your holy relationship. It will be a happy dream, and one which you will share with all who come within your sight. Through it, the blessing the Holy Spirit has laid upon it will be extended.” T-18.II.7

We do not have to end any of our special relationships. Instead, we turn them into holy relationships with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. The Course gives an overall picture of how this is to happen, but seems to leave the details up to us. This leaves some wondering how much specialness is allowed in dealing with your spouse, children and other loved ones. Is it wrong to give them birthday and Christmas presents beyond what you would give your neighbor or some guy you do not even know who is homeless? Are you supposed to go to your neighbor's home and give his kids hugs and love so they feel as special as your own children?

I think we can see that students can take this too far by looking at literal actions that can be taken.

Jesus had a major problem with wrong-headed literal interpretations in his day, especially concurring the Sabbath. The commandment said there was to be no work done on the Sabbath, and to the religious leaders, no work meant no work, so they devised hundreds of things that would be considered work that should not be done on the day of rest.

In the eyes of the authorities Jesus was breaking the commandment because he and his disciples did several things they considered work. To this Jesus tried to set them straight by enunciating the general principle which he followed. He told them, **“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”** Mark 2:27

In other words, man was not made to be a slave to a bunch of silly rules around the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made to benefit humanity and improve their lives.

We can apply this same principle with relationships. Relationships are not made to be a chain around our necks, but to bring us joy and happiness. If we try to make numerous rules about what we cannot do if a relationship is holy, then we make the same mistake as those who criticized Jesus. Instead, like Jesus, we must look at the principles to be followed. If we do this, the details will take care of themselves.

So, what is the principle behind the Holy Relationship that should guide our thinking?

Basically, it is this. We are all children of God and of equal importance in His sight. Each of us must come to the realization that all people everywhere are just as important and deserving of love as those loved ones in the inner circle.

Does this mean that you do not fulfill your responsibilities to those close to you and spend all your resources helping strangers?

No. Each of us has assumed certain responsibilities toward assisting loved ones in the world. If everyone were to not fulfill them, the world would be in chaos. The truth is we can fulfill our responsibilities toward loved ones while realizing the equality of all the sons of God and helping others when opportunity presents itself.

If we interpret this equality idea too literally, then we would have to criticize Jesus for turning water into wine for a select few hosted by his mother at a wedding. Jesus did not go around to other weddings to make sure they also had wine, yet we know he understood the principle.

The state of mind necessary for the holy relationship is determined more by one's thinking than an itemization of actions that need to be taken. When consciousness is in the right place, correct actions will naturally follow.

If one's attitude is in the right place, how does one consummate the holy relationship by sharing the mind of God with another individual?

It is important to understand that this can only be accomplished by two or more people who are willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit rather than the ego. If a loved one is unwilling to accept the spirit of oneness, then the student must look elsewhere until one who is willing to share the mind of God is found.

When one finds the right individuals for the holy relationship, then the real work begins. In special relationships no two people can agree on all things. There are always disagreements that separate them. In the holy relationship there are no major disagreements, for all potential conflict is solved by the one mind through the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the holy relationship this will take much effort, for no one likes to admit they were wrong in a disagreement. But if the two share with the Spirit together, they will resolve the differences and become one. Then as they practice the holy relationship, oneness will become natural and they will see through each other's eyes without effort.

In the beginning of our marriage my wife and I did our best to create a holy relationship, but sometimes a pointed disagreement got in the way. To solve this problem, we felt that we needed to reconnect with the Holy Spirit through the remembrance of the love of God, so when we reached an impasse one of us would suggest that both of us meet at the kitchen table and look in each other's eyes. Once the focus was established, we were to say "I love you" three times each, but it had to be said like you really meant it, not just the words. The strange thing was that by the time we had finished saying it three times the atmosphere completely changed. No longer did we feel any division or anger at each other, but instead we felt a great peace. And strangest of all we often could not even remember what we were arguing about.

Over the years we have had to use this less and less and now it has been a few years since this process was even needed. Now we rarely disagree on anything, except minor things like what to watch on TV, and here the problem is immediately solved by me letting her have her way.

Other times, especially in non-romantic relationships, there will be disagreements even with people who are spiritually sensitive. How do we achieve oneness so the holy relationship may be maintained?

Let us suppose that you have a friend or loved one with whom you are seeking a holy relationship. You have both invited the Holy Spirit into your lives to guide them, but you have reached an impasse and just do not agree on a certain point. What do you do?

The answer is quite simple. In prayer or meditation ask God for the Holy Spirit's help to bring you to oneness.

"The very fact that the Holy Spirit has been asked for anything will ensure a response. " T-9.II.3

"It is the Holy Spirit's function to teach you how this oneness (with God) is experienced, what you must do that it can be experienced" T-25.I.6

"To ask the Holy Spirit to decide for you is simply to accept your true inheritance. Does this mean that you cannot say anything without consulting Him? No, indeed! That would hardly be practical, and it is the practical with which this course is most concerned. If you have made it a habit to ask for help

when and where you can, you can be confident that wisdom will be given you when you need it.” M-29.5

To move the special relationship to a holy one merely involves bringing to the Holy Spirit as a guide and revealer. If you and your partner disagree, then place the two alternatives before the Spirit and ask about them. If you are both sincere as a little child, then you will both get the same answer.

For simplicity's sake it is best to reduce the disagreement to the point where it can be solved with a simple yes or no. Which is the best answer, A or B? If A is closest to the truth, then both of you will get a yes on that, as the Holy Spirit is not divided against itself.

Those in the ego, centered on the special relationship, can never achieve oneness and unity, but if two or more dedicate themselves to following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, higher unity and sharing becomes a reality, and instead of feeling like you have given something up or lost something with a change of mind, the feeling will be one of gain, completeness, peace and wholeness, or holiness.

Chapter Eighteen

The Mystery of Reincarnation

After I bought my first copy of *A Course in Miracles* back in 1980 and read the first few pages, I realized that this was a revelation of intelligence that was beyond the reach of a regular mortal channel. I immediately became curious as to whether it said anything about reincarnation, as this is a teaching I embraced that seems to separate the spiritual chaff from the wheat as far as recognition of truth goes. Since my copy had no index and I had no digital text to search, I had to plow through quite a bit to find a reference to it. The word was not found in the two main volumes which are the text and the workbook. Finally, I did find a reference to it in the small teacher's manual under a section entitled, "Is Reincarnation So?"

I was hoping for more enlightenment on this topic, but instead the Course presented it in such a way that it could be accepted by those believed in the principle, but would not offend those who did not. Then, after digesting what it said, I saw that the author accepted reincarnation, but wanted to make sure the reach of the Course was extended to those who did not, as there are many sincere people who have not arrived at this belief. In my younger years I was one of those people.

This is the core of what it says about the subject in the one section that mentions reincarnation:

"In the ultimate sense, reincarnation is impossible. There is no past or future, and the idea of birth into a body has no meaning either once or many times. Reincarnation cannot, then, be true in any real sense. Our only question should be, 'Is the concept helpful?'"

"It is certain, however, that the way to salvation can be found by those who believe in reincarnation and by those who do not."

"For our purposes, it would not be helpful to take any definite stand on reincarnation." M-24.1-3

As it does on many subjects, ACIM approaches reincarnation from an eternal perspective. Concerning the world as a whole it says: **"The world you see does not exist, because the place where you perceive it is not real." T-28.V.7**

Logically then if the world does not exist, then reincarnation in the world would not exist either, even if we live a thousand or more lifetimes in time and space.

ACIM only accepts something as having a true existence if it is eternal and unchanging. It tells us that if a thing is not eternal and has a beginning and an end, then it will wind up as being something in the past which does not exist:

“Fear is not of the present, but only of the past and future, which do not exist.”
T-15.I.8

It is indeed an interesting observation that once an event is passed, that it only seems real in our memories, and without those memories it is as if the past does not exist, but the present always does.

In each life most of us are born with no memory of previous lives and it is as if we had no past – or the past does not exist.

Since past lives belong to the past and the Course tells us the past does not exist, then reincarnation would be in that same category even though a past life may seem as real to us as memories of our parents when we were children.

The question the curious student may have is not whether events in this world are real in time and space, but what has happened in time and space?

As far as ACIM goes, all happenings in time and space are not real and a part of the dream. Even so, it is interesting to explore our history while we are here in the dream.

Who, for instance would not want to know how the Great Pyramid was made, who made it and its age? Or who killed JFK?. Then too, it would be interesting to uncover the truth about ancient civilizations like Atlantis, Lemuria and many other things.

Millions, or perhaps billions or trillions of years from now when the universe ends and the one united Son returns home, these types of past events will be of no significance; but for now as we explore the illusion in the dream state many past events are of great interest to the majority.

Helen Schucman, the scribe for the Course, put things in perspective:

“I saw my life represented by a golden line stretching infinitely backward and infinitely forward. There was a miniscule dip in the line which I recognized as standing for my present life. It was laughably tiny and barely noticeable.

“I clasped my hands in real delight.

“‘What can it possibly matter what happens in this little eye-blink of time?’ I asked myself, in happy amazement. ‘It seems too long and important while you’re in it, but in less than an instant it’s as if it never happened.’” From Journey Without Distance by Robert Skutch, Chapter Three

Compared to eternity, one life or many lives would be insignificant by comparison.

It is interesting that Helen was reluctant to accept the concept of reincarnation, but her resistance finally wore down after she was given numerous dreams and visions of past lives.

Here is one more from Skutch’s book:

“Especially affecting to her was her experience at Qumran, the site of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls.

“As they approached the actual area where the scrolls had been found, Helen abruptly stopped, visibly shaken. She stared at the opening of the cave, and suddenly burst into tears. Although Bill and Louis tried desperately to comfort her, she was unable to speak for almost five minutes. When she finally regained her composure, she spoke so quietly that the others had to strain to hear her.

“This is the cave,” she said in a tremulous voice; “this is the cave where I saw the scroll that said ‘GOD IS’.” None of the others said a word; there was nothing to say.

“A short while later, as they were breathing in the historical atmosphere of the Dead Sea surroundings, Helen began musing half to herself. ‘You know,’ she said, ‘something’s wrong with the water level. It’s too low; it used to be much higher.’ Bill, who took none of Helen’s thoughts lightly, opened a guide book he had bought when they had arrived in Israel, and began thumbing through it.

“‘Very interesting, Helen,’ he remarked. ‘It says here that at the time of the Essenes, the water level of the Dead Sea was a good deal higher.’ Everyone was

silent, and finally Helen, visibly moved, remarked quietly, ‘This is the holiest place on earth.’”

It is quite possible that she was recalling a life that was contemporary with Jesus. Wapnick’s book tells of a message from Jesus about what appears to be from that time period:

“Your earlier acute problem in writing things down came from a much earlier [i.e., in a past life] misuse of very great scribal abilities. These were turned to secret rather than shared advantage, depriving the ability of its miraculous potential, and diverting it to possession.” Absence of Felicity, Page 239

This explained her reluctance to be a scribe in this life, but even though not perfect, she was the best one for the job.

In addition, Wapnick’s biography says this:

“in many of his personal messages to Helen, Jesus referred to her other lifetimes, in addition to the references to Helen's past life experiences that came to her during the summer that preceded the beginning of the Course.” Absence of Felicity, Page 436

She also had several visions of past lives shared with Bill Thetford, who assisted her during the transcription process. In one life, that appeared to be ancient Atlantis, she was a Priestess and he was an assistant, similar to that with their work together with ACIM, and in another she was a priestess again in what seemed to be ancient Egypt and was expected to kill Bill, but hesitated and was executed herself.

Wapnick came to this conclusion in the biography:

“We have already seen in her letters to Bill, dating from 1965, that Helen did most certainly believe in past lives and their helpfulness in explaining, at least on one level, certain contemporary problems or conflicts.” Absence of Felicity, Page 435

That said, how about the text of ACIM itself? Outside of the one section that references the word “reincarnation,” does it give any other clues as to its existence in time and space?

The answer is a solid yes, especially when you consider the passages that only make sense when reincarnation is factored in such as this one:

“Just as the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.” T-2.VIII.2

The original before editing said the time period was “many millions of years,” so it is obvious that the separation and the return covers a very long time period.

If the separation and the return covers millions or billions of years, does it make sense that we who entered the dream would only spend a few decades immersed in it in a body? What would we be doing all those other millions of years?

Reincarnation is specifically mentioned and verified in the original UR text:

“Cayce’s whole approach put him in a real doublebind, from which he did not recover. When he spoke of a dream in which he saw his own rather immanent reincarnation, he was perfectly accurate.” UR T 3 C 29

The orthodox version also makes it pretty clear there is reincarnation, for it says point blank that **“rebirth is man's inheritance.” M-11.1**

“Such is each life; a seeming interval from birth to death and on to life again, a repetition of an instant gone by long ago that cannot be relived. And all of time is but the mad belief that what is over is still here and now.” T-26.V.13

Thus, we keep going through death and rebirth until we have lived in a thousand homes as stated here:

“We speak today for everyone who walks this world, for he is not at home. He goes uncertainly about in endless search, seeking in darkness what he cannot find; not recognizing what it is he seeks. A thousand homes he makes, yet none contents his restless mind.” W-pI.182.3

Indeed, it would take quite a few lifetimes to live in a thousand homes.

Then we have this benefit students receive from the teachers of the Course:

“Their (teachers) function is to save time. Each one begins as a single light, but with the Call at its center it is a light that cannot be limited. And each one saves a thousand years of time as the world judges it.” M-1.2

This idea is repeated here:

“Today we try to bring reality still closer to your mind. Each time you practice, awareness is brought a little nearer at least; sometimes a thousand years or more are saved.” W-pI.97.3

“The miracle substitutes for learning that might have taken thousands of years.” T-1.II.6

Saving us a thousand years in time would certainly include more than one life of less than 100 years, and the Course emphasizes that our progress is made through life, not death:

“Nothing is accomplished through death, because death is nothing. Everything is accomplished through life, and life is of the mind and in the mind.” T-6.V.A.1

The Course makes it clear that we must experience this world through rebirth until we accept the atonement:

“Nothing the world believes is true. It is a place whose purpose is to be a home where those who claim they do not know themselves can come to question what it is they are. And they will come again until the time Atonement is accepted” W-pI.139.6

Then after leaving the body at death, we are again called forth:

“While those as yet unborn will hear the call we heard, and answer it when they have come to make their choice again.” W-pI.98.4

If the Jesus of *A Course in Miracles* affirms the teaching of reincarnation, then you would think that the Jesus of the Bible would also. Many students and scholars think that the original scriptures had obvious references to reincarnation which were removed when the modern Bible was compiled. A famous church scholar and father, Origen, openly taught the doctrine of reincarnation and the pre-existence of souls. Interestingly, Bill Thetford recounts Helen Schucman identifying him as this third century entity in a past life in his autobiography.

Fortunately though, some of Origen's writings remain, and censors were unable to scrub all subtle references to reincarnation out of the scriptures.

The most obvious one concerns Jesus' comments about Elijah and John the Baptist.

In the days of Jesus many were looking forward to the fulfillment of the coming Messiah, as well as Elijah, who was supposed to come first to prepare the way.

The disciples of Jesus thought that he showed strong evidence that he was the Messiah, but one thing seemed to be missing. The Old Testament prophesies said that Elijah would come first. From their viewpoint, Elijah seemed to be missing from the equation. They referenced this prophecy:

"Behold, I will send you ELIJAH THE PROPHET before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5-6

They then asked Jesus that if he was the Messiah, **"Why then do our teachers say that Elijah must come first?"** Mat 17:10

He answered thus:

"I tell you that ELIJAH HAS ALREADY COME, and they failed to recognize him, and worked their will upon him; and in the same way the Son of Man is to suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that HE MEANT JOHN THE BAPTIST." Matt. 17:10-13 New English

This is another powerful affirming statement from Jesus: **"Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John...A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before my face, which shall prepare thy way before thee (This is a quote from Malachi near the prophesy of Elijah) Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven (Christ) is greater than he... For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, THIS IS ELIJAH, which was for to come."** Matt. 11:7,9-11,13-14

Now we can see why Jesus called John the Baptist the greatest prophet. He was aware of his past lives, and he was quite possibly other great prophets besides Elijah.

Jesus certainly attracted a lot of attention when he began his work, and many people were speculating as to who he was. There were many who actually considered that he may have been one of the prophets born again. Jesus asked his disciples: **“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elijah, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”** Matt 16:13-14

Notice here that Jesus did not refute this belief in reincarnation, but merely accepted Peter's answer that he was the Christ.

The apostles evidently believed in reincarnation at the time that they were current disciples of Jesus: **“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”** John 9:1-2

We see here that the disciples thought that the man who was born blind may have had to suffer so because of a previous sin. In other words, they thought he may have committed sins in a previous lifetime that led to his present condition. Jesus pointed out that the man was a special case. He was not born blind because of sin, but so that the works of God should be manifest. In other words, the man came with a mission to glorify the works of Christ by the great miracle to his eyes. Jesus did not, however, say anything to indicate that the disciples' belief in wrongful actions before birth was not a possibility.

Jesus gave us an interesting indication as to what was in store for his disciples. He said: **“There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, and sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but HE SHALL RECEIVE AN HUNDREDFOLD IN THIS TIME, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the WORLD TO COME eternal life. And many that are first shall be last and the last first.”** Mark 10:29-31

Here Jesus talks about two periods of existence. The first he calls “in this time” or the period of our mortal existence in the dream. The second he calls “the world to come”. In the world to come, or the heaven of ACIM, we receive “eternal life”, but in this age (or period of normal earth life if we accept the gospel) we will receive “an hundred fold” of houses, at least a hundred brothers, a hundred sisters, a hundred mothers, a hundred children, and a hundred different lands or places where we will live. This prophecy cannot be literally fulfilled without reincarnation. On the other

hand, Jesus knew that “in this time” or period of human existence we go through more than a hundred lifetimes, but eventually we would reach the eternal world at the end of reincarnation into time and space.

A point often overlooked in considering reincarnation is that all life and creation follow this principle of recycling. Just as rain falls to the earth, evaporates, and later falls as rain again, even so the recycling process of reincarnation is universal in time and space.

The Course tells us that it is a part of a **“universal course”** of which there are many **“other forms, all with the same outcome.”** M-1.4

Many of the teachings from the East are in harmony with *A Course in Miracles*, but just use a different vocabulary and phraseology. They not only teach the reincarnation of individuals, but of the earth, of solar systems and the universe itself. Some teach that the universe has incarnated many times, and the beginning is beyond the reach of memory.

And what does the Course say about the separation where time and space first began?

“Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now.” M-2.4

Remember that an “instant” as described in the Course can refer to many millions of years. Here we are told that this instant of the creation of the manifested universe is “relived” or reincarnated **“again and again and still again.”**

Perhaps the one Son of God with many parts to the whole has been dealing with the illusion much longer than appears from a casual study of ACIM.

Other traditions teach that the Son aspect creates a material universe on principles of illusion and manifests in it to learn and grow in intelligence. Then they return home to pralaya, or the heaven of ACIM. Then after a cycle of rest, new Sons of God are manifest and the cycle is repeated, giving new creations an opportunity to experience time and space, sunsets, birds singing and the playing of games. Some call this physical universe the “playground of the gods.”

However one wants to look at it, one can be assured that Helen's favorite, Shakespeare, spoke the truth when he wrote, **"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."**

Chapter Nineteen

The Mystery of Salvation

Some may wonder about the title of this chapter, thinking that the meaning of salvation is pretty cut and dry. We achieve salvation and go to heaven, right? That seems to be a Course teaching that is in harmony with orthodox Christianity, with not a lot of mystery behind it.

As with many concepts presented in ACIM, there is always more depth than meets the eye. Though it often uses the word as if speaking in a general sense, one must examine the overall presentation to get a clear picture.

For starters, ACIM makes this statement which runs quite contrary to the orthodox view:

“Your Self does not need salvation, but your mind needs to learn what salvation is. You are not saved from anything, but you are saved for glory. T-11.IV.1

To obtain salvation then one must be saved from something, but the Course says we **“are not saved from anything.”** If this is so, then why does it speak of salvation hundreds of times? If there is nothing to be saved from, why even bring the subject up?

Actually, there is something to be saved from and that something is nothing, or perhaps we should say NO THING. Because we are saved from nothing, the Course tells us we are not saved from anything.

The Course calls this nothing from which we are saved illusions, or the dream within which we seem to find ourselves.

“What is there to be saved from except illusions? And what are all illusions except false ideas about myself?” W-pl.58.3

This illustrates just one of many examples where the reader needs to get a whole picture of what the Course is saying, especially where illusion and true reality are at play, for it often dismisses everything in the dream of separation as if it did not

happen. But keep in mind that the comparison is to a dream and the correspondence is enlightening.

When you dream at night and then wake up, you may say to yourself, “that was quite a dream, but it never happened.”

Yes, it is true the dream did not happen in your waking reality, but that doesn’t mean it did not happen within the totality of reality. After all, you did actually have a dream and did have experiences within it. So, from another way of looking at it, the dream did happen. Whether or not you discuss the dream as a real event depends on your reference point.

If the Course’s reference point is heaven, then nothing happens anywhere in time and space. But if the reference point includes time and space, then lots of things are happening.

So, when the Course tells us that we “**are not saved from anything,**” it speaks from a reference point of eternity in heaven. But then when it turns around and speaks many times of things we need to be saved from, it speaks from a reference that includes the dream of time and space.

This shifting in the Course of the reference point from eternity only to eternity plus time and space produces confusion in students, and causes many to come up with some odd interpretations on various subjects.

Therefore, when reading about salvation, or any other subject, we must look at the context to see where the reference point lies. If it is heaven only, then there is no need for salvation and such a concept is not needed; but if time and space are included, then we have a situation where the Sons of God are trapped in the illusion of the dream state and definitely need to be saved. In this reference the Course asks:

“The question is always twofold; first, what is to be saved? And second, how can it be saved?” T-12.III.2

We have partially answered that question with the statement from the Course about the main thing with which salvation is concerned and that is illusion. (W-pI.58.3) We are caught up in the great dream and need to be awakened as noted by God Himself who the Course quotes as saying: **“My children sleep and must be awakened.”** T-6.V.1

The illusion is quite complex, and there are many ingredients involved from which we must be saved before we can awaken. Overall, there are four main things that ACIM tells us from which we need to be saved or delivered so awakening can happen.

The first and prime problem is that we must be saved from our false belief about ourselves. While in the illusion we see ourselves as powerless imperfect beings who are at the mercy of outer events which are often beyond our power with which to deal. The Son sees himself as **“the victim of this ‘something else,’ a thing outside himself, for which he has no reason to be held responsible.”** T-27.VII.1

To escape being a victim, the student must begin to question who he is:
“There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: ‘I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself.’ Yet in this learning is salvation born. And What you are will tell you of Itself.” T-31.V.17

To this the Course adds: **“Again, how simple is salvation! It is merely a statement of your true Identity.”** W-pI.77.1 The student must realize: **“I am not the victim of the world I see.”** W-pI.31

The Course makes it clear that when our true identity is realized that we are not a victim but share in the very powers of our Father God.

God **“created you out of Himself, but still within Him.”** T-14.IV.4 You are to **“accept your rightful place as co-creator of the universe.”** W-pI.152.8 **“all His extensions are like Him.”** T-12.IV.6

Then we have this powerful statement concerning those who realize their true identity:

“There is now no limit on his power, because it is the power of God. So has his name become the Name of God, for he no longer sees himself as separate from Him. (God)” M-23.2

We have all this power, but are asleep and under the illusion that we have no power. What are we to do to manifest our true self and salvation?

“Let us look closer at the whole illusion that what you made has power to enslave its maker. “ T-22.II.9

Thus, the Course acknowledges that the illusion does appear to enslave us. Since our very salvation depends on us waking up to our true reality, the question that needs to be addressed is what stands in our way. There are three main problems the seeker must solve. Let us examine them.

The Problem of Forgiveness

Perhaps the most discussed barrier between separated Sons of God and true reality deals with forgiveness.

The Course gives a somewhat different slant on forgiveness than does orthodox theology. In the standard teaching the one who forgives is seen as a person of superior virtue who overlooks the sins of an inferior person who usually doesn't deserve it. They see Jesus on the cross as asking to forgive his persecutors but thinking they really deserved to burn in hell.

Concerning this wrong-headed idea of forgiveness, the Course speaks of the “better person” who **“deigns to stoop to save a “baser” one from what he truly is. Forgiveness here rests on an attitude of gracious lordliness so far from love that arrogance could never be dislodged. Who can forgive and yet despise? And who can tell another he is steeped in sin, and yet perceive him as the Son of God? Who makes a slave to teach what freedom is? There is no union here, but only grief. This is not really mercy. This is death. ... All forms forgiveness takes that do not lead away from anger, condemnation and comparisons of every kind are death.”** S-2.II.2&8

“Unjustified forgiveness is attack. And this is all the world can ever give. It pardons “sinners” sometimes, but remains aware that they have sinned. And so they do not merit the forgiveness that it gives.” T-30.VI.3

Therefore, if Jesus had the ACIM attitude of forgiveness when on the cross, he had no thoughts of comparing himself to his enemies and didn't see himself as superior. He would not have been angry or had the spirit of condemnation at all, where the standard believer trying to forgive may be thinking: “I'll forgive you SOBs, but you don't deserve it.”

To this attitude the Course asks: **“Who can forgive and yet despise?”**

The Course presents us with a radical standard for us to attain. It says:

“Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in that view are all your sins forgiven.” W-pII.1.1

To this a skeptic may say: “If a thief steals \$100 from me then I am dealing with something that did happen. Aren’t I in denial if I say it did not?”

The answer is that you do not deny anything that has happened from your apparent past, but the key is to see the past in the light of eternal reality. It says this:

“Fear is not of the present, but only of the past and future, which do not exist.” T-15.I.8

The Course tells us the present is the only time there is, and the past only exists as a memory in our minds and is not real from a higher angle of vision.

In other words, if you got hit on the head and lost your memory, then it would be as if the thief had never stolen the \$100. For you the present would be all the time there is.

This is the state of mind with which forgiveness must be approached.

We do not deny that in the universe of time and space we have all made mistakes, but the disciple realizes that all such mistakes are in the past and only have reality if the mind decides to give it to them. Instead, the mind can dismiss the past and enter into the eternal Now where salvation leads us. No wonder the Course tells us:

“Salvation and forgiveness are the same.” W-pI.99.1 “Forgiveness is release from all illusions.” T-24.III.1

“He will teach you to remember that forgiveness is not loss, but your salvation. And that in complete forgiveness, in which you recognize that there is nothing to forgive, you are absolved completely.” T-15.VIII.1

So, this attitude of mind creates a tremendous benefit for the seeker. He or she is **“absolved completely”** and enters a state of innocence as well as **“release from all illusions.”**

Now some may say there are some offenses just too great to forgive. What if someone raped your sister or killed your parents? You couldn't just dismiss such things, could you?

It would be difficult, but when the correct attitude of mind is attained it can be done as was demonstrated by Jesus. His spiritual brothers who were supposed to represent kindness and love crucified him. Where others would have cursed them with their dying breaths, Jesus asked God to forgive them. He thus gave us an ultimate example to follow.

If the student can realize one important concept around forgiveness all will come into perspective and make universal forgiveness much easier. It is this: the greater the offense, the greater will be your opportunity to advance toward liberation. Forgiving the thief for stealing the \$100 may be a challenge, but most could do it without suffering much sense of loss. On the other hand, forgiving something big like rape or murder takes a lot more presence of mind, but offers a much greater opportunity for moving forward toward salvation or backward into greater illusion.

If one suffers a great offense and forgives as if it did not happen, then he has demonstrated his invulnerability which the illusion normally hides. Thus, the great offense offers a great opportunity.

On the other hand, if he suffers a great offense and allows it to consume him for the rest of his life, he is demonstrating his own perceived vulnerability and enters deeper into the illusion, making awakening more difficult than ever.

Therefore, while caught in the world of illusion, the rule of thumb should be to see all offenses as past illusionary events that can be dismissed, as if they never happened.

I have found this "never happened" idea quite useful in my own life, and when I treat offenses this way it removes their power to affect me in any negative way. It proves its validity by working out in harmlessness and peace through practical application in life.

The Course sums up the importance of forgiveness in this profound quote:

"Forgiveness is illusion that is answer to the rest... Forgiveness sweeps all other dreams away, and though it is itself a dream, it breeds no others. All illusions save this one must multiply a thousandfold. But this is where illusions end."

Forgiveness is the end of dreams, because it is a dream of waking. It is not itself the truth. Yet does it point to where the truth must be, and gives direction with the certainty of God Himself. It is a dream in which the Son of God awakens to his Self and to his Father, knowing They are One.” W-pI.198.2-3

The Problem of Grievances

Let us recap where we are with salvation. To obtain salvation we must see through the world of illusion to understand who we really are as Sons of God, but before this can be realized we must forgive all things that could disturb our peace. Just as a lack of forgiveness stands in the way of realizing our true selves, we have several obstacles standing in the way of complete forgiveness.

The first is quite obvious, which is merely a lack of motivation to forgive on the part of the student. The best cure for this is to make a serious attempt to practice it and witness how much peace is attained by it.

However, there are other problems that confront those who are sincerely attempting to live the spiritual life. A master hurdle that must be neutralized is any grievance the seeker has.

We are told in lesson 68 that “Love holds no grievances.” One could also say that forgiveness holds no grievance as well. Then there is this:

“For every grievance is a block to sight, and as it lifts you see the Son of God where he has always been.” W-pI.78.3

The Course tells us clearly that a key to forgiveness is to see the Son of God or Christ in our brothers: **“Christ stands before you, each time you look upon your brother.” T-25.V.2 “For as you see the Son you see yourself.” S-2.I.3**

The lifting of grievances is essential to forgiveness and remembering who we really are:

“It is as sure that those who hold grievances will suffer guilt, as it is certain that those who forgive will find peace. It is as sure that those who hold grievances will forget who they are, as it is certain that those who forgive will remember.” W-pI.68.3

The lifting of grievances is a key to releasing the light within us:

“your grievances are hiding the light of the world in you, everyone stands in darkness, and you beside him. But as the veil of your grievances is lifted, you are released with him.” W-pI.69.1

It is important to understand that grievances are a key ingredient to a counterfeit plan of salvation:

“The ego's plan for salvation centers around holding grievances. It maintains that, if someone else spoke or acted differently, if some external circumstance or event were changed, you would be saved... Each grievance you hold is a declaration, and an assertion in which you believe, that says, ‘If this were different, I would be saved.’” W-pI.71.2

“Holding grievances is the opposite of God's plan for salvation.” W-pI.71.10

“By holding grievances, I am therefore excluding my only hope of salvation from my awareness.” W-pI.86.3

Since a grievance is a powerful obstacle to forgiveness, which in turn is a powerful obstacle to seeing our true reality, it might be helpful to examine the problem more deeply. The Course makes this statement:

“Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved.” W-pI.79

Many do not understand grievances and do not even acknowledge they have them, so the first step is to understand them and learn how to dispel them.

A grievance is basically a negative feeling harbored toward another individual for saying or doing something that is seen as offensive or hurtful. The one offended sees the cause of the grievance as being the fault of another and not himself. The supposed solution is for the other guy to humbly apologize for the offense and to promise not to do it again.

The problem is that many do not take the correct action to solve the problem, the desired apology never comes, and the grievance remains as a festering wound that continues to grow in strength, often to the point of causing physical illness.

Just declaring you forgive the one who offended often does nothing, for a part of you still wants to hear the words “I am sorry” and just can’t let the grievance go. What do you do?

ACIM says, “**communication is salvation.**” T-15.VII.11 And indeed it is. The one suffering the hurt feelings must communicate with the offender. Taking this step is often very difficult and may require a determined act of will, but this is where the solution lies, and it is quite simple.

The one offended must approach the offender and merely explain to him or her what he did or said to hurt his feelings. The best-case scenario may go something like this:

Bill: When you said ABC it really hurt my feelings. It made me feel like I was a crazy man.”

Ted: Sorry about that. I was just joking around and didn’t mean any harm. I don’t think you are crazy at all.

In cases like this where the communication was made and accepted, the grievance disappears instantly. This is one of the Miracles mentioned in ACIM.

Probably about half the grievances we experience are caused by innocent remarks that are interpreted too seriously. But then there are others more difficult to resolve. In another situation maybe Ted did know what he was doing and wanted to hurt Bill’s feelings. What does Bill do then?

The answer is the same. Communicate.

Even though Ted was intentionally hurtful, there is a good chance his heart will be softened if Bill communicates his feelings sincerely. But even if he refuses to apologize or work things out, Bill will have a chance to get the grievance off his chest. After he has done all he can to resolve the matter, if he is willing, he can then legitimately forgive and let it go. If he does this the miracle of peace will be his. On the other hand, if Ted continues in the attack mode, he will have the negativity of the original grievance rest upon him. It will be as if the dark cloud of grievance was moved from Bill to Ted through the wrong-mindedness of himself.

Fortunately, though, with sincere and honest communication, most grievances can be resolved, and both parties can benefit and obtain peace.

Conclusion: To dispel the grievance honestly, communicate your feelings followed by forgiveness on your part. Then move on as if nothing has happened.

The Problem of Guilt

The final major obstacle to our salvation is guilt, and its negative power over the human spirit cannot be overstated, as it stops the progression of many in their tracks.

ACIM says this:

“Guilt is always in your mind, which has condemned itself.” T-13.IX.6

Notice that it doesn’t say that God, the Holy Spirit or even angels have condemned us, but guilt comes from our own minds which condemn ourselves.

Why in the world would we create so much pain and distress for ourselves as guilt is able to produce? It all boils down to seeing ourselves as having sinned and in need of punishment:

“You can hold on to the past only through guilt. For guilt establishes that you will be punished for what you have done,” T-13.I.8

So why would we condemn ourselves when God does not and **“The innocence of God is the true state of the mind of His Son. In this state your mind knows God”?** T-3.I.8.

The Course itself answers this question:

“You will not make decisions by yourself whatever you decide. For they are made with idols or with God. And you ask help of anti-Christ or Christ, and which you choose will join with you and tell you what to do.” T-30.I.14

Whether you see yourself as guilty or guiltless is determined by whether your decisions are made through the influence of idols or God, which is like saying the Christ or the anti-Christ.

Indeed, deception by these idols, representing the anti-Christ are the source of guilt:

“There never was a time an idol brought you anything except the ‘gift’ of guilt. Not one was bought except at cost of pain, nor was it ever paid by you alone.”
T-30.V.10

Since the idols, representing anti-Christ in this world, are the source of guilt, it then behooves us to understand exactly what an idol is and how it is able to accomplish such a nefarious deception.

An idol is basically a substitute for God. In Bible times people made idols, such as the golden calf, and bowed down and worshipped them. The Course tells us this act is a great error:

“A sick god must be an idol, made in the image of what its maker thinks he is.”
T-10.III.4

The question to be considered now is how does an idol bring “the gift of guilt” as taught in the Course? Perhaps an understanding of this is a key to the elimination of this major obstacle.

The main thing that produces guilt is the creation by our minds of a feeling that we have offended God or “sinned” against Him. To the contrary, the Course teaches that we are in a dream state and nothing we do here is real enough to offend God.

If guilt does not come from sinning against God, then where does it come from?

It comes from sinning against an idol, a substitute for God.

And where do we find such substitutes?

They are everywhere. Many there are who get in line to be your idol or voice of God from without rather than the true God which is contacted within.

In a religion or spiritual group, the voice of the outer god comes to you from your religious authorities, scriptures or books. If such an outer voice speaks for God and you accept it, then a violation of the word is interpreted as a sin against God which is followed by guilt.

If this outer voice from an accepted idol tells you to not drink coffee, dance, or go to certain movies and you violate the order, your mind will see it as a sin and you will feel guilt.

Another person who does not see such commands as coming from God will feel no guilt whatsoever.

The difference is that one is being controlled by an idol representing an outer authority and the other is not – at least in this area of living. ACIM says this:

“The authority problem is still the only source of conflict, because the ego was made out of the wish of God's Son to father Him.” T-11.in.2

Idols, or authoritative substitutes for the true inner voice of God, are everywhere and few escape the guilt they produce. Idols are found in not only religious leaders, but parents, family members, political, sports, entertainment and many other groups. Even hardened atheists accept idols that nurture their guilt.

But here's the strange thing, and the hidden cause of much residual guilt. Even the text of the most holy and accurate words on earth can become an idol that substitutes for God and can create guilt. Yes, even the words in the Bible or *A Course in Miracles* can become an idol that lead the mind away from the true God to a false outer one.

The problem is that words themselves are an imperfect substitute for the perfect word that comes from the Inner Voice. The Course says:

“Words can be helpful, particularly for the beginner, in helping concentration and facilitating the exclusion, or at least the control, of extraneous thoughts. Let us not forget, however, that words are but symbols of symbols.” M-21.1

Then we have this from the Voice of ACIM: **“I have made every effort to use words that are almost impossible to distort, but it is always possible to twist symbols around if you wish.” T-3.I.3**

So the greatest and purest words from the Bible, the Course or any sacred writing can be interpreted incorrectly, and if the student accepts their words as infallible literal truth he may suffer guilt through the illusion produced.

This problem is obvious when we see that there are hundreds of religions who interpret the simple words of Jesus in the Bible hundreds of different ways. *A Course in Miracles* is very straightforward in what it attempts to say, but even here many students disagree with each other about its meaning. The truth is that taking in the black-and-white words as infallible words from Jesus or God creates an idol. To escape this control of an outer god the seeker must always rely on a connection with the inner God through the Holy Spirit, as taught in the Course. Then the student can read any outer words and not be led into the trap of guilt. He will then be able to find more truth in the National Enquirer than one who is in illusion can find in the Bible.

To escape from guilt, the seeker must first realize that the inner Voice never condemns, but the outer voice does. If he feels any guilt at all, then this is a sign that he has been deluded into accepting the idol of an outer god who has falsely taken the place of the true Inner One. What he must do next is to identify the outer god to whom he has given power to control him with guilt.

Sometimes this idol is obvious and other times it is not. If he is a member of an authoritarian religion, then it is most likely that it is the religious authorities and teachers who have taught him how he is to feel guilty.

On the other hand, there are those who have tried to leave an orthodox religion behind and think they are free, but are not. The authoritative decrees still echo in their minds and have power to produce guilt.

Then for some it is more subtle still. An infallible acceptance of scripture or even *A Course in Miracles* followed by distorted black-and-white interpretations can create a false god, even out of the best of the world's symbolic words. If the seeker gives the black-and-white words more authority than the Inner Voice or ignores the Inner in favor of the outer, then the student will suffer guilt.

Accepting this in theory is not enough. The student must take action to identify the source of guilt and dismiss it. When guilt comes, he can say to himself: "The true God does not condemn. Where then is this condemnation coming from? I will identify it and let it be as if it never was. I refuse to be deceived any longer."

When the seeker truly finds the source of guilt, dismisses it, and commits to following the Holy Spirit within no matter what the outer voices seem to say, then in that instant guilt will just evaporate and be no more. Never again will the pilgrim have to suffer from guilt.

To this some may ask if it is not necessary to have a certain amount of guilt. After all, do we not need a conscience to guide us on the right path?

This illusionary idea is a final hurdle that must be handled to neutralize guilt completely. Our true conscience does not condemn and has nothing to do with guilt. Guilt is produced by a supposed sin that is committed, but the word "sin," as was used in the days of Jesus, was much different than how it is used to induce guilt today.

The word “sin” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word HAMARTANO which means “to miss the mark.” In other words, when the Greeks, 2000 years ago, shot at a target with an arrow and missed, they “sinned” (HAMARTANO) or missed the target. Is this how the word “sin” is used today? Verily, no. When the religious person thinks of sin in our age, he generally thinks of being unclean and ridden with guilt.

When you shoot at a target and miss the bull’s eye, do you feel degraded and guilty to the extent that you feel paralyzed and even feel unworthy to shoot again? No, of course not. When you miss you may find it mildly irritating, but you generally can't wait to have another try at it.

On the other hand, if the archer were to feel guilty, he would not consider himself worthy to shoot again until he has paid some price for redemption.

We would laugh at any sportsman with this crazy idea, yet that is how the ego manipulates us with guilt in our lives, and most find it no laughing matter.

Guilt has been identified with sin by those who have sought to control the souls of men, but among the enlightened prophets it was not always so. To them, sin was seen as a human error and salvation from sin was the path that leads to a correction of error. The prophets in times past did not seek to control through guilt, but sought to shift consciousness from error to perfection as they saw it.

The most prevalent sin today (using its true definition) is to be ensnared by guilt, for guilt is caused, not by your conscience, but by an error in human thinking.

It is indeed a great error to make a mistake and then condemn yourself through guilt to the extent that you become paralyzed and do nothing to fix the problem until you feel worthy again. When a mistake is made, the seeker needs to jump right back in making an effort to correct himself.

Indeed, the idea of correction of error rather than sin is a threat to the ego:

“Any attempt to reinterpret sin as error is always indefensible to the ego. The idea of sin is wholly sacrosanct to its thought system, and quite unapproachable except with reverence and awe. It is the most “holy” concept in the ego's system; lovely and powerful, wholly true, and necessarily protected with every defense at its disposal. For here lies its ‘best’ defense, which all the others serve. “ T-19.II.5

The diligent ACIM student will defy the ego and again see sin as mere error as was its interpretation in the days of Jesus.

Let us conclude then by itemizing the basic ingredients of salvation. First, the Course makes salvation sound like the simplest thing in the world. All we need to do is recognize who we really are and act accordingly. Then there's a big "but." There are three main roadblocks that take our vision away from our true reality. They must be mastered before this simple true vision can come. The student must forgive, let go of grievances and finally completely neutralize guilt and let it go back to the nothingness from whence it came.

When these steps are taken, he is said to be saved from living in the illusion of who he is NOT rather than who he IS.

Does this mean the journey is over and the seeker has entered heaven?

Not quite, though it will seem like heaven by comparison as he has established a solid link with God through the Holy Spirit. But...

"Salvation stops just short of Heaven, for only perception needs salvation." T-26.III.5

If salvation stops short of heaven, then what is missing? Here is the answer:

Salvation is nothing more than "right-mindedness," which is not the One-mindedness of the Holy Spirit, but which must be achieved before One-mindedness is restored.. T-4.II.10

Salvation takes us to right-mindedness, stopping short of the goal of one-mindedness which is the awareness that exists in eternity. The Course tells us what it means by right-mindedness:

"The term 'right-mindedness' is properly used as the correction for 'wrong-mindedness,' and applies to the state of mind that induces accurate perception." T-3.IV.4

We achieve salvation through accurate perception and the most important things to perceive accurately are forgiveness, grievances and guilt leading us to an understanding of who we are.

So, where does this salvation take us?

“How much do you want salvation? It will give you the real world, trembling with readiness to be given you.” T-17.II.7-8

“Salvation is a borderland (real world) where place and time and choice have meaning still, and yet it can be seen that they are temporary, out of place, and every choice has been already made.” T-26.III.3

Salvation is not the end of our journey, but it does take us to the real world which is the final step before our final atonement and liberation.

“The real world still is but a dream. Except the figures have been changed. They are not seen as idols which betray. It is a dream in which no one is used to substitute for something else, nor interposed between the thoughts the mind conceives and what it sees.” T-29.IX.7

Arriving at the real world leads to the final step:

“When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made. And then your Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.” T-11.VIII.15

Chapter Twenty

Reason and the Mysteries

There is some division among ACIM students over the use of mind, logic and reason in pursuing the objectives of the Course. Some think we should just study it and accept what it seems to say without question, whereas others see many items that seem to warrant greater understanding and ask questions to seek more depth in the meaning.

Actually, this type of division is very natural and is found to some degree in every group and organization as one side represents mind and the other emotion and the heart. Those polarized in mind are full of questions and are always seeking greater understanding, whereas those centered in emotion just like to accept things at face value and move on.

We are all influenced by both emotion and mind, but each individual tends to settle in one direction or the other. The mature person will balance the two, but many focus so much on one side that they miss the benefits of the other.

For instance, some who are centered in emotion will love the Course teachings on love, peace and awakening, and dismiss the idea of using mind and reason to understand the mysteries and nuances of the Course.

The question then arises as to whether it is of value to pursue the Course using mind, asking questions and using reason to see beyond what is written in black and white.

I submit that the use of mind in succeeding at understanding the Course is invaluable and will speed the student toward eventual graduation from it. The understanding of any true piece of the mystery of existence can only help the student, not hinder.

The use of mind and reason is accepted by the Course itself.

“What reason points to you can see, because the witnesses on its behalf are clear. Only the totally insane can disregard them, and you have gone past this. Reason is a means that serves the Holy Spirit's purpose in its own right.” T-21.V.7

Reason takes us to the source of ideas:

“reason sees the source of an idea as what will make it either true or false.” T-22.II.5

Reason is an important attribute of the higher part of our minds that can aid in our journey back home:

“The part of mind where reason lies was dedicated, by your will in union with your Father's, to the undoing of insanity. Here was the Holy Spirit's purpose accepted and accomplished, both at once. Reason is alien to insanity, and those who use it have gained a means which cannot be applied to sin. Knowledge is far beyond attainment of any kind. But reason can serve to open doors you closed against it. T-21.V.9

Here it calls this higher mind our “other self.”

“Reason lies in the other self you have cut off from your awareness.” T-21.V.4

The ego fights against the power of reason:

“Consider what the ego wants defenses for. Always to justify what goes against the truth, flies in the face of reason and makes no sense.” T-22.V.2

The ego is “devoid of reason” and doesn’t ask questions related to it:

“How can the segment of the mind devoid of reason understand what reason is, or grasp the information it would give? All sorts of questions may arise in it, but if the basic question stems from reason, it will not ask it.” T-21.V.4

Reason is a key ingredient in the undoing of the ego:

“The introduction of reason into the ego's thought system is the beginning of its undoing, for reason and the ego are contradictory. Nor is it possible for them to coexist in your awareness. For reason's goal is to make plain, and therefore obvious. You can see reason. This is not a play on words... reason sees through errors,” T-22.III.1

The Course gives this advice:

“Listen to Him Who speaks with reason, and brings your reason into line with His.” T-21.VI.8

“Reason cannot see sin but can see errors, and leads to their correction. It does not value them, but their correction.” T-21.VI.1

“You do not leave insanity by going somewhere else. You leave it simply by accepting reason where madness was. Madness and reason see the same things, but it is certain that they look upon them differently.” T-21.VI.3

Overall, the Course tells us that we gain the ability to transcend the erroneous thinking of the ego and gain the ability of pure reason through the Holy Spirit, which links us with higher mind, for reason is a quality of the mind.

Unfortunately, many spiritual seekers dismiss the mind as something that needs to be ignored. Many teachers of meditation say that we should be “mindless” and follow the script of the ego mentioned in the Course:

“the ego believes that mind is dangerous, and that to make mindless is to heal. But to make mindless is impossible, since it would mean to make nothing out of what God created.” T-8.IX.6

They may have a point when talking about the lower mind used by the ego, but the higher or real Mind “never sleeps.”

“The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating. It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains.” T-2.VI.9

If we wish to correct the errors of separation and awaken to true reality, the mind is essential:

“It is essential to remember that only the mind can create, and that correction belongs at the thought level. “ T-2.V.1

So, how important is mind?

“If I did not think I would not exist, because life is thought.” W-pI.54.2

Then the ultimate mind is from God:

“Father, Your Mind created all that is, Your Spirit entered into it, Your Love gave life to it.” W-pII.263.1

When we as humans use reason, mind and thought, we become seekers and ask questions, yet many in the various spiritual traditions discourage such things. A popular Christian bumper sticker a while back read: “I found it!” This was a

declaration that they had found the truth and there were no more questions and nothing more to seek.

Indeed, some religions excommunicate their members when they ask too many questions.

Since there is no organized body or authorized theology with ACIM, there is nothing to get expelled from, but there are times that seeking, reasoning and questioning does draw some criticism. Such a person is sometimes accused of being in the ego, insinuating that if he were not controlled by the ego, he would not be delving into anything not accepted by the common thoughtform.

So let us look at the only real authority on the Course, which is the Course itself, and see what it says about the matter. Does it approve of seeking and asking questions?

First, it tells us who doesn't approve – the ego:

“Its dictates, then, can be summed up simply as: ‘Seek and do not find.’ This is the one promise the ego holds out to you, and the one promise it will keep.” T-12.IV.1

It repeats this idea several times. Here is one more:

“the ego's basic doctrine, “Seek but do not find.” W-pI.71.4

The ego does not want you to seek and find because **“The ego cannot afford to know anything.” T-7.VI.4**

“true perception, a state of clarity which the ego, fearful of being judged truly, MUST avoid.” UR T 4 F 13

The Course is quite encouraging about asking questions and using the Holy Spirit to receive and verify answers:

“In all these diversionary tactics, however, the one question that is never asked by those who pursue them is, “What for?” This is the question that you must learn to ask in connection with everything” T-4.V.6 The ego does not know what a real question is, although it asks an endless number” T-8.IX.1 A Voice(God) will answer every question you ask, and a vision will correct the perception of everything you see.” T-12.VIII.4

As far as seeking goes, the Course speaks very positively about it:

“To seek and not to find is hardly joyous. Is this the promise you would keep? The Holy Spirit offers you another promise, and one that will lead to joy. For His promise is always, ‘Seek and you will find,’ and under His guidance you cannot be defeated. His is the journey to accomplishment, and the goal He sets before you He will give you.” T-12.IV.4

“It is impossible that anyone could seek it (the truth) truly, and would not succeed.” W-pI.107.6

It is not the Holy Spirit that discourages questions. Instead, the Course says this:

“The enemies of love do not want questions: With love as enemy must cruelty become a god, and gods demand that those who worship them obey their dictates and refuse to question them. Harsh punishment is meted out relentlessly to those who ask if the demands are sensible or even sane.” W-pI.170.6

It is recommended that we ask sincere and meaningful questions:

“A pseudo-question has no answer. It dictates the answer even as it asks... An honest question is a learning tool that asks for something that you do not know. It does not set conditions for response, but merely asks what the response should be. But no one in a conflict state is free to ask this question,” T-27.IV.5

“‘Seek and ye shall find’ does not mean that you should seek blindly and desperately for something you would not recognize. Meaningful seeking is consciously undertaken, consciously organized and consciously directed. The goal must be formulated clearly and kept in mind. Learning and wanting to learn are inseparable.” T-4.V.5.

“Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking? Thus you now can ask a question that makes sense, and so the answer will make sense as well.” T-30.I.12

Many more positive references could be supplied, showing that ACIM approves of seeking and asking questions. Since this is the case, why would some discourage such things as being motivated by the ego?

There are several statements that seem to give ammunition to this idea. Here is one:

“The ego analyzes; the Holy Spirit accepts. The appreciation of wholeness comes only through acceptance.” T-11.V.13

From this some students conclude that seeking, asking questions and analysis are related to the ego and should be avoided. Instead, we should just go with the flow and accept.

But accept what?

One can accept truth as well as error, and we certainly do not want to be on the side of the ego accepting error as truth.

“the ego proceeds to the next step in its thought system: Error is real and truth is error.” T-11.V.14

Instead of taking the passage concerning analysis in isolation, we need to examine the rest of the text which reveals the big picture. It continues:

“for to analyze means to break down or to separate out. The attempt to understand totality by breaking it down is clearly the characteristically contradictory approach of the ego to everything. The ego believes that power, understanding and truth lie in separation, and to establish this belief it must attack. Unaware that the belief cannot be established, and obsessed with the conviction that separation is salvation, the ego attacks everything it perceives by breaking it into small, disconnected parts, without meaningful relationships and therefore without meaning. The ego will always substitute chaos for meaning, for if separation is salvation, harmony is threat.” T-11.V.13

Far from reinforcing the idea that we should just blindly accept and not use our minds, these important words inform us as to the deceptive tactics of the ego in creating chaos.

It is a master at creating chaos because **“The ego's logic is as impeccable as that of the Holy Spirit, because your mind has the means at its disposal to side with Heaven or earth, as it elects. But again, remember that both are in you. T-5.V.1**

Yes, the ego is great at arguing, but it has a major flaw in its conclusions:

“You may have carried the ego's reasoning to its logical conclusion, which is total confusion about everything.” T-7.X.1

Instead of telling us that all use of mind, analysis and questioning are wrong, the passage under consideration reveals the mystery behind the master tactic of the ego to create chaos and confusion so that the truth will not be realized. And what is this tactic?

It is **“to analyze means to break down or to separate out.”**

“But isn’t that a good approach?” one may ask. Sometimes you have to see the separate parts of a thing to understand the whole.

True, but this has nothing to do with the ego’s reasoning. It doesn’t break down and analyze to find the truth but instead is **“obsessed with the conviction that separation is salvation, the ego attacks everything it perceives by breaking it into small, disconnected parts, without meaningful relationships and therefore without meaning.” T-11.V.13**

The sincere seeker of truth may break the whole into its parts and put them together again to enrich the understanding, but not the ego. It breaks the whole into parts and keeps them in separation. Looking only at the separate parts creates chaos and confusion. The advantage of dealing with the parts is that the ego can substitute truth for error and direct the needed parts to proving error is truth.

Let us pick a controversial topic today, such as global warming/climate change, and see how the ego deals with it. The first thing to realize is that the ego uses the same tactics on both sides of something controversial like this. It doesn’t care if you are on the right or the left. It only cares that you will not see the whole picture and support confusion.

When you see people arguing on either side of this issue, do you ever see them attempting to paint a picture of the whole problem and a wholeness solution?

Rarely.

Instead, what we see are those breaking the argument down to selective parts and using the part as proof of the whole.

Here's an example. In the summer there is a particularly hot spell in your part of the world, though temperatures may be quite normal in other parts. Those representing the ego will say the hot weather is proof that we are having global warming and we must act.

Then when winter comes and there is a cold spell, the other side will say, "Doesn't look like the earth is warming to me."

Another example:

We have a period where there are more serious hurricanes than normal. One side will proclaim they are due to global warming and must act.

Then we have a period where there are fewer hurricanes than normal and the other side will say this is proof there is no problem.

Arguing using only a piece of the whole will not give us the whole truth, but lead to error and confusion instead. The only way to get to the truth of this or any other controversy is to look at the whole picture with all of the parts put together. Only then can two see as one and be in alignment with the Holy Spirit which does see the whole.

The problem is that **"The ability to see a logical outcome depends on the willingness to see it."** T-7.X.2 Too many are just not willing to see the whole rather than the isolated part that supports their bias.

We must remember that all things were created by the mind of God and we share that mind. To not use that mind with its powers of reason is to neglect who we are.

"Alone we can do nothing, but together our minds fuse into something whose power is far beyond the power of its separate parts. By not being separate, the Mind of God is established in ours and as ours. This Mind is invincible because it is undivided." T-8.V.1

We'll end this chapter with a passage that presents a wonderful ideal to which students can aspire:

"Yet I do want to share my mind with you because we are of one Mind, and that Mind is ours. See only this Mind everywhere, because only this is everywhere and in everything. It is everything because it encompasses all things within itself."

Blessed are you who perceive only this, because you perceive only what is true.”
T-7.V.10

Chapter Twenty-One

The Mystery of Oneness

One of the greatest points of confusion as well as disagreement among students concerns the Course's teachings on oneness. There are a number of interpretations that have surfaced about how oneness and non-duality play out with God, the Trinity and the Sonship.

There is a fair amount of agreement that there is oneness in the true reality, but disagreement as to how literally it manifests.

We discussed some of these points earlier, but in this chapter we will explore the subject a little deeper.

The problem comes from the Course itself, for its intent seems to be to place strong emphasis on oneness. In doing so some passages give the impression that there is not only union in heaven but a oneness with no parts, or any individual identities or choice.

Then other passages give numerous impressions interpreted as there being many types of beings in heaven, to heaven being a perfect version of earth.

The best authority on this subject is the Course itself, so let us take a look at the whole context to see what it has to say.

The oneness of the life of the Son is the main point of disagreement, but there is also the oneness of the Trinity to consider. Concerning them it is written:

“Father and Son and Holy Spirit are as One, as all your brothers join as one in truth. Christ and His Father never have been separate.” T-25.I.5

“The ego is legion, but the Holy Spirit is One... For reality is one with the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” T-6.I.10

“Christ knows of no separation from His Father,” T-15.VIII.4

This oneness includes us as Sons: **“God created you as one with Him.” T-13.VII.8**

Concerning God as a whole it is written:

“there are no separate parts in what exists within God's Mind. It is forever One, eternally united and at peace.” T-30.III.6

So, concerning the Trinity, which includes us as Sons of God, we are told in these verses that we are “one,” there is “no separation.” And “no separate parts.”

If one takes these statements too literally, he could wind up believing that God has no parts whatsoever, and after our awakening and return to heaven, there will be no such thing as any individual life or choice, for there will only be one life. You as an individual entity will no longer exist. What is left of you will be God all alone with no one else with which to share anything. If there are no parts, there is only the One all alone.

One can get this idea if he goes by a few isolated passages, but the Course as a whole does not support it. The first thing we need to clear up is what the Course means when it speaks of oneness.

It gives us a clue in the first passage we quoted. Here it is again:

“Father and Son and Holy Spirit are as One, as all your brothers join as one in truth. “ T-25.I.5

Here it tells us that oneness is created by joining **“as one in truth.”**

This joining together of parts to maintain oneness is emphasized a number of times in the Course. Here is a good example:

“In the holy meeting place are joined the Father and His creations, and the creations of His Son with Them together. There is one link that joins Them all together, holding Them in the oneness out of which creation happens.” T-14.VIII.4

A key phrase is that **“There is one link that joins Them all together.”**

Then we have passages like this that seem to support oneness with no parts:

“What is the same can not be different, and what is one can not have separate parts.” T-25.I.7

Some will quote this and say, “See, in heaven there will be just one life with no parts.”

But notice that the verse does not say “no parts” but no “separate parts.” When the many parts of God’s creation are joined together into “one link,” then they are no longer separate parts, but united parts of one life.

Think of a puzzle with the pieces separated in a box. You look at one piece and it is not joined to anything, and only confusion would result by trying to see the whole picture from it. But then if one joins the pieces together, he sees a completed picture. The pieces are no longer separated parts, but joined into a union that creates the one picture.

Similarly in heaven, all lives are joined together so they are not separate but create the one life. If there are missing pieces, the life of God itself is affected:

“God is lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him.” T-2.III.5

The oneness of heaven can be manifest by a oneness through God’s teachers here on earth:

“God's teachers appear to be many, for that is what is the world's need. Yet being joined in one purpose, and one they share with God, how could they be separate from each other? What does it matter if they then appear in many forms? Their minds are one; their joining is complete. And God works through them now as one, for that is what they are.” M-12.2

These teachers are individual entities living on earth, yet they are not separate from each other because they are joined together since “their minds are one.”

This joining or linking together through sharing the one mind of God is what the oneness of ACIM is all about. It is not telling us that God or the Son is all alone with no parts.

For one thing, we are told that there are four categories of the parts of the One God in heaven.

The first is the initial creator who is called the Father. The second is the Son, who was created by the Father.

“I and my Father are one, but there are two parts to the statement in recognition that the Father is greater. T-1.II.4

We are told that the Son was “**created only to create**” T-14.I.4 and though the Father and Son are linked as one, there is a difference in that “**the Father is greater.**”

Then we have a third entity called the Holy Spirit who was created to fill a need that neither the Father or Son could do:

“He came into being with the separation as a protection, inspiring the Atonement principle at the same time. Before that there was no need for healing, for no one was comfortless. “ T-5.I.5

Finally we have the fourth major part of the one united life in heaven which are the angels:

“You (the Son) were created ABOVE the angels because your role involves creation as well as protection. You who are in the image of the Father need bow only to HIM, before whom I kneel with you.” UR T 1 B 30y

Whereas the Son was created to create and the Holy Spirit to atone, the angels were created to protect. Interestingly, the mission of the Son is said to be “above” that of the angels.

The Course thus tells us that in heaven there are four categories of lives with four different purposes yet united as one, all sharing the same mind of God. They are not separate parts, but united parts joined together by the one mind.

The next point of confusion comes over the life of the Son. All students agree that the Course clearly tells us that the one Son of God is us, but that is as far as the unity goes. Because the Course says several times that God has only one Son, they literally interpret this to mean that there are no parts, and one entity who is the Son is all there is. In other words, when they awaken and find themselves in heaven, they will discover that this whole world was a dream of the one Son with no parts. None of the people in the dream existed in any fashion.

It is amazing that this belief has gotten as much traction as it has since the Course gives us quite a few details of what it means by the “one Son.”

Here is just one example of many that could be cited:

“It should especially be noted that God has only one son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until all the parts of the Sonship have returned.” T-2.VII.6

Notice that the word “part” is used four times in this short statement about the “one son.” Each individual, such as you and I, are **“an integral part of the whole Sonship,”** and if **“any of its parts is missing,”** the transcendent oneness is **“obscured.”**

One of the best illustrations that there are parts or groups in the Sonship is the account of the initial separation as follows:

“The Atonement actually began long before the crucifixion. Many Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the separated ones, but they could not withstand the strength of the attack and had to be brought back. Angels came, too, but their protection did not suffice because the separated ones were not interested in peace.” UR T 2 B 43

Here is a description of the beginning of the journey of the Prodigal Son (or separation) and the interplay of three groups. The first were the Sons (a part of the Sonship) called the “separated ones” who began the journey into the world of dreams and illusion. These are the Prodigal Son in the parable.

The second was another group of Sons, or “many souls” who did not separate and tried to prevent the separation. These are represented in the parable by the faithful son who remained with the Father.

Not mentioned in the parable but in the Course, were angels who tried to help “but their protection did not suffice.”

Thus was oneness disturbed and heaven “shattered” for a time (See T-18.I.12)

This shattering caused this situation:

“The Sonship in its Oneness DOES transcend the sum of its parts. However, it loses this special state as long as any of its parts are missing. This is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved UNTIL all of the individual parts of the Sonship have returned. Only then, in the true sense, can the meaning of wholeness be understood.” UR T 2 E 52

This account clearly tells us that the Son consists of not just one part, but all the individual lives are a part with free will. We can use that will to unite with the One Life of God, or we can create the illusion of going against it as happened in the separation.

A point of confusion and division occurs among students as they read certain passages that sound like we are in the midst of the separation and need to be saved, but then there are others that make it sound like we never left home, nothing has happened and nothing needs to be done. These two descriptions sound like they cannot both be true. Here is a passage that sheds some light.

“Therefore, it is the tiny part of yourself, the little thought that seems split off and separate, the Holy Spirit needs. The rest is fully in God's keeping, and needs no guide... This is the little part you think you stole from Heaven. Give it back to Heaven.” T-18.IX.1

“Any part of the Sonship can believe in error or incompleteness if he so chooses.” T-2.VII.6

The answer to the conundrum is that there are two parts to ourselves. The first is that “tiny part” of ourselves that split off. That is you as you seem to exist in a body in this world. Then there is the “rest (that) is fully in God's keeping.” This is the real part of yourself that is still linked to the one life of the Sonship in heaven. This is sometimes called your “other self” as in this text:

“There is another vision and another Voice in which your freedom lies, awaiting but your choice. And if you place your faith in Them, you will perceive another self in you. This other self sees miracles as natural.” T-21.V.3

Concerning this “other self” it says:

“You are part of reality, which stands unchanged beyond the reach of your ego but within easy reach of spirit.” T-4.I.8

That little part of the Sonship that “you stole from Heaven” is “irreplaceable”:

“You are altogether irreplaceable in the Mind of God. No one else can fill your part in it, and while you leave your part of it empty your eternal place merely waits for your return.” T-9.VIII.10

Sounds like the part that is you is pretty important for **“without you there would be an empty place in God's Mind.” T-11.I.2-3**

Another point that produces some confusion is the Course's statements about the part and the whole such as this one:

“The idea of part-whole relationships has meaning only at the level of perception, where change is possible. Otherwise, there is no difference between the part and whole.” T-8.VIII.1

“The recognition of the part as whole, and of the whole in every part is perfectly natural, for it is the way God thinks, and what is natural to Him is natural to you.” T-16.II.3

Those who believe in no individual parts will say that this proves their point. They say ACIM talks about parts, but the parts and the whole are the same, meaning that the talk of parts is symbolic, as there is only one life with no parts. There only seems like there is more than one part in our dream world. When we wake up there will be no parts.

Speaking of parts, this thinking is another example where the whole rather than the part of the teaching needs to be considered. We have already given ample evidence from the Course itself that there are four major parts or divisions in heaven itself, and that the Son has parts. When the Course speaks of the parts containing the whole, it is not saying there are no parts, but describing the parts similar to how we would a hologram.

A hologram can appear as one image or be divided into many. When divided, the parts contain the information of the whole so they can duplicate the complete image. It is interesting that the investigation into holograms was very elementary when ACIM was received, and Helen Schucman most likely had never heard of one; yet the Course talks about God and its parts as if they correspond to a hologram.

The Course also says this:

“The whole does define the part, but the part does not define the whole. “T-8.VIII.1

That is an amazing description of how the initial hologram relates to its parts. The whole affects all the parts, but the part does not affect the whole. Change the image of the initial hologram and all the parts change, but anything you do to the part does not affect change to the whole.

ACIM tells us that God extends or expands His creations, and all creation shares in the extension, but the part cannot create itself and affect the whole.

Students with a knowledge of holograms are therefore quite impressed with the correspondence in ACIM of God and Its creations with holographic science since the Course was written before the general public knew what a hologram was.

So, just as a hologram can have many parts with each part containing the whole, so can the many extensions of the one Son do the same.

There are, however, two ingredients of heaven that are one with no parts that link the Sons of God so all the parts function as one life. The first is the mind of God and the second is the Spirit.

ACIM tells us the Spirit is perfected so even the illusion of division with it is impossible. This heavenly Spirit is not even aware of our world but only has contact with us through the Holy Spirit which was created for that purpose.

The mind represents the creative function of God and He has shared it with us. With the separation the one mind had the illusion of being split into the higher and lower, with the higher being linked to Spirit and the lower to the ego. The split only happened in the illusion of the dream, but all powers of the mind whether in or out of the dream come from the one mind.

You could compare Spirit and mind to space that contains our universe. When we send a rocket into space or observe stars in it through a telescope, we do not speak of spaces plural but always space singular.

Why?

Because there is just one space, but that one contains everything, trillions of parts.

Similarly, the mind and Spirit from God are one, singular, yet Spirit contains everything and mind links everything.

You are a Son of God, a part in the divine space or Spirit of God, yet when in your right mind you are the life of the whole as if you are the whole.

We **“are of one mind and spirit with Him. (God)”** T-5.VII.3

The paramount fact that **“God is love”** (T-9.I.9) tells us that there are many parts to the one life we call God. For love to exist there has to be more than one. After all, we are told that **“love is the same as union.”** T-16.V.3 Union can only happen when there is more than one part.

To be united with His Sons is very important to God, for it is written that **“God is lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him.”** T-2.III.5

Because God is love, He desires to be united with His Sons, and for this reason seeks the end of the separation.

The very function of love tells us that many parts are involved:

“For it is the function of love to unite all things unto itself, and to hold all things together by extending its wholeness.” T-12.VIII.7

Love **“holds the universe together in its meaning.”** T-15.XI.6

This tells us that love is a power that can **“hold all things together”** and holds the actual **“universe together.”**

We can see that this teaching on love is true when we examine how it plays out in our lives. Think of a time that you fell in love. What was foremost in your mind? There was nothing you wanted more than to be with that person and be as close and intimate as possible.

Because God is love, He desires to pull all of His Sons toward a great center where they all share their essence.

This could not happen if God were all alone. If this were the case, love could not exist because there would be no sharing or union.

As it is, we stand **“before the altar to one God, one Father, one Creator and one Thought, we stand together as one Son of God. Not separate from Him Who is our Source; not distant from one brother who is part of our one Self.”** W-pl.187.10

Chapter Twenty-Two

The Mystery of Judgment

Some may question the idea of associating judgment with mystery and wonder where is the mystery in it. After all, isn't judgment pretty cut and dry? Isn't this something we are just supposed to avoid and that is pretty much all there is to it?

It is not quite that simple. Yes, there are some passages in ACIM that make it sound like the rejection of judgment should be an easy black-and-white thing, but then there are others telling us that judgment can be a good thing. As usual, to understand what the Course is really saying, we have to look at the whole rather than the isolated part.

The most famous statement from Jesus concerning judgment is not in *A Course in Miracles*, but the Bible. He said this:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

Often these are all the words of Jesus on the subject that people focus on, and do not realize that Jesus explained what he meant right afterwards saying:

“For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Matt 7:1-2

Instead of saying point blank that all judgment is bad, he was telling us how the law of cause and effect plays out when we do judge. The way we judge will produce an effect that will come back to us. If we judge benevolently or harshly, we will wind up being judged the same way by others.

Because erroneous and harsh judgment can come back to haunt us, he advised this:
“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.” John 7:24

We seem to have the same problem in understanding judgment in *A Course in Miracles* as from the Bible. For instance, if we read the following passage, we may figure that all judgment is bad and to be avoided:

“God's teachers do not judge. To judge is to be dishonest, for to judge is to assume a position you do not have. Judgment without self-deception is impossible. Judgment implies that you have been deceived in your brothers.”
M-4.III.1

Then it says something like this that puts quite a different spin on the subject:

“Watch your mind carefully for any beliefs that hinder its accomplishment, and step away from them. Judge how well you have done this by your own feelings, for this is the one right use of judgment. Judgment, like any other defense, can be used to attack or protect; to hurt or to heal. The ego should be brought to judgment and found wanting there. Without your own allegiance, protection and love, the ego cannot exist. Let it be judged truly and you must withdraw allegiance, protection and love from it.” T-4.IV.8.

A key sentence here is, **“Judgment, like any other defense, can be used to attack or protect; to hurt or to heal.”**

Again, the student must step back and look at the whole meaning the Course is trying to put forward on this subject. When this is discovered, then that which seemed to be contradictory seems complementary instead.

To understand judgment, we must first define it. This is especially necessary because ACIM puts a different interpretation on it than is held in common usage, for most dictionaries give a definition like this one:

“An opinion that you have after thinking carefully about something or your ability to understand a situation well and make good decisions.”

The Course defines it in a more negative light, especially in how we use it in relation to our brothers:

“Evaluation is its obvious prerequisite. *Judgment always involves rejection. It never emphasizes only the positive aspects* of what is judged, whether in you or in others. What has been perceived and rejected, or judged and found wanting, remains in your mind because it has been perceived.” T-3.VI.2

This seems to be the meaning the Course attaches to judgment unless stated otherwise, but this is just one aspect of judgment, something we can call the negative aspect. The positive aspect does not involve rejection and exclusion, but acceptance

and inclusion. For instance, you may meet people you like and make a judgment that they would be fun to spend time with. Or perhaps you made a judgment that ACIM is good material and you should study it. These are judgments of acceptance and inclusion.

Some think we should avoid all judgments, but consider how impossible that would be for even a couple hours. When the alarm clock goes off in the morning you have to make a judgment as to whether to get right up or stay in bed a few more minutes. When you shower you make a judgment as to how hot the water will be and how long you will be in there. When you eat breakfast, you have to make a judgment on what will best satisfy you. When you drive to work and approach a yellow light you have to make a judgment as to whether to go for it or be cautious and stop. By noon you will have made hundreds of small judgments.

It may be that when we return to heaven that judgments of any kind will not be necessary, but to function here in this world they are a necessity, even for advanced ACIM students.

The Course doesn't say much about mundane and necessary judgments we use to function, but in most cases it is referring to a negative assessment of our fellow men and women. It particularly discourages us from judging others to be sinners or bad people in the traditional sense. Any judgment where you see a brother as morally inferior to yourself just takes us further into the illusion. Because **“we were created as equals”** (T-5.II.9) and since it is the **“perfect equality of giver and receiver on which the miracle rests”** (T-1.II.6) it is necessary that one member of the Sonship not judge another to be inferior, or even superior for that matter, for **“Equals should not be in awe of one another because awe implies inequality.”** T-1.II.3

Now, inequality concerning a skill is another matter. If you have never skied and join a class, it would be insane to think you are equal in skill to your instructor. But you can see yourself as equal in potential and that would make sense. The key to the correct use of judgment is to avoid the ones concerning inferiority that lead to shame and guilt.

Another category that the Course tells us we should avoid is where a correct judgment is impossible because we do not know all the facts. It asks:

“Remember how many times you thought you knew all the “facts” you needed for judgment, and how wrong you were!” M-10.4

Because we rarely know all the facts in a situation, **“It is surely good advice to tell you not to judge what you do not understand. No one with a personal investment is a reliable witness, for truth to him has become what he wants it to be.”** T-12.I.5

It then tells us why making accurate judgments on our own is so difficult:

“In order to judge anything rightly, one would have to be fully aware of an inconceivably wide range of things; past, present and to come. One would have to recognize in advance all the effects of his judgments on everyone and everything involved in them in any way. And one would have to be certain there is no distortion in his perception, so that his judgment would be wholly fair to everyone on whom it rests now and in the future. Who is in a position to do this? Who except in grandiose fantasies would claim this for himself?” M-10.3

This gives a clue as to why it is such an egregious error to make negative judgments on our brothers and sisters, especially where we condemn them in any way. The problem is that when we judge another, we are only going by a small slice of his life. We are unaware of all the struggles he has gone through, the bad relationships, the frustrations and other negative things he may have had to endure. But the biggest factor usually left out is that every brother, no matter how much in error he seems to be, is a Son of God at the very core of his being, and this divine life can surface when judgment is suspended and forgiveness extended.

Since we humans are so bad at making judgments, one may wonder how we can possibly function in the world. We have to make some judgments, but we do not want to be wrong all the time.

Again, the Course comes to the rescue and tells us how we can make accurate judgments.

“We said before that the Holy Spirit is evaluative, and must be. He sorts out the true from the false in your mind, and teaches you to judge every thought you allow to enter it in the light of what God put there. Whatever is in accord with this light He retains, to strengthen the Kingdom in you. What is partly in accord with it He accepts and purifies. But what is out of accord entirely He rejects by judging against. This is how He keeps the Kingdom perfectly consistent and perfectly unified. Remember, however, that what the Holy Spirit rejects the ego accepts.” T-6.V.C.1

A key thought expressed here is that the Holy Spirit **“sorts out the true from the false in your mind, and teaches you to judge every thought you allow to enter it in the light of what God put there.”**

He can do this accurately because, **“He does know all the facts; past, present and to come. He does know all the effects of His judgment on everyone and everything involved in any way. And He is wholly fair to everyone, for there is no distortion in His perception.”** M-10.4

That sounds great, does it not? We all have a source of infinite intelligence so the judgments we do make can be accurate. How do we go about accessing this great source? The answer given may be said to be an act of faith:

“And so I give all judgment to the One You gave to me to judge for me. He sees what I behold, and yet He knows the truth.” W-pII.347.1

The answer is quite simple. We first realize how flawed our own judgment is, especially when judging others, and then we give judgment over to the Holy Spirit. This may be easier said than done, for we are told **“It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn.”** T-5.II.3

It takes effort and great willingness because the Voice of the Holy Spirit is often called the “still small voice,” and it takes a lot of focus and willingness to listen and follow before a sure connection is made. He is called our **“link with God,”** where **“perception will become so changed and purified that it will lead to knowledge.”** W-pI.43.1

The trouble is that all who think they are guided by the Inner Voice do not put forth the **“effort and great willingness”** to remove the veils of communication, and in this case the ego is happy to step in and be the substitute voice of the Holy Spirit.

It is obvious that many who claim to be guided by God, or the Holy Spirit, are not connected to the same source, as many disagree with each other. Egos will disagree with the Holy Spirit as well as other egos, but those who listen to the Inner Voice and truly hear it will not disagree with each other on issues related to oneness.

“Because He (Christ) hears one Voice, He cannot hear a different answer from the one He gave when God appointed Him His only Son.” T-31.II.7

“It is His (the Holy Spirit’s) holy function to accept them both, and by removing every element of disagreement, to join them into one. He will do this because it is His function. Leave, then, what seems to you to be impossible, to Him Who knows it must be possible because it is the Will of God.” T-15.VIII.6

There are indeed a plethora of teachers out there claiming to speak for God. How do you tell who is speaking the truth when so many disagree?

The responsibility lies on each individual seeker. He must make his own valid connection with the Holy Spirit. Then he can recognize that same spirit in another who has that same connection. When two or more give judgment to the Spirit, their judgment will agree.

The Course sums it up well in this quote:

“If you will lay aside the ego's voice, however loudly it may seem to call, if you will not accept its petty gifts that give you nothing that you really want; if you will listen with an open mind, that has not told you what salvation is; then you will hear the mighty Voice of truth, quiet in power, strong in stillness, and completely certain in Its messages.

“Listen, and hear your Father speak to you through His appointed Voice, which silences the thunder of the meaningless, and shows the way to peace to those who cannot see. Be still today and listen to the truth. Be not deceived by voices of the dead, which tell you they have found the source of life and offer it to you for your belief. Attend them not, but listen to the truth.” W-pI.106.1-2

The ego offers many “petty gifts” to distract seekers away from the true voice, but the successful student must ignore them and keep his mind steady in the light that comes from the one mind of God.

We’ll end this chapter by shedding light from ACIM on that mysterious subject pursued by many Bible students called the “Last Judgment.” Many Bible believers see this as a future time when God will call forth all souls to stand before Him to be sternly judged as to whether they will go to heaven or hell. The Course gives us a different interpretation on this.

For one thing it says that **“Judgment is not an attribute of God. It was brought into being only after the separation, when it became one of the many learning devices to be built into the overall plan.”**

So, if the last judgment does not involve God judging us, where then comes the judgment?

It comes from none other than ourselves.

What is it we are to judge?

We are to eventually re-establish ourselves in our right mind and correctly judge our creations.

And what creations are these?

Before the separation we participated in right-minded eternal creations with God. Then, after the separation, we lost the awareness of who we are and participated in wrong-minded creations that were temporary and not eternal. In the last judgment we become aware of our true identity and make a judgment as to which type of creation in which we will participate. Our last judgment will be when we arrive home, judge the real from the unreal, and continue the process of eternal creation in extending the universe of God.

The Course sums it up this way:

“The Last Judgment might be called a process of right evaluation. It simply means that everyone will finally come to understand what is worthy and what is not. After this, the ability to choose can be directed rationally... Everyone will ultimately look upon his own creations and choose to preserve only what is good, just as God Himself looked upon what He had created and knew that it was good. At this point, the mind can begin to look with love on its own creations because of their worthiness. At the same time the mind will inevitably disown its miscreations which, without belief, will no longer exist.” T-2.VIII.3-4

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Mysterious Path to Health

A Course in Miracles says quite a bit about the health of our bodies and minds, and some of it is quite controversial, even among believing students. However, if one sees the Voice that spoke to Helen Schucman as coming from Jesus, or a divine source exceeding the intelligence of our earthly authorities, one must take the information seriously, even if it goes against orthodox thinking.

Here is just one of many statements that some find difficult to accept:

“Sickness is a decision. It is not a thing that happens to you, quite unsought, which makes you weak and brings you suffering. It is a choice you make, a plan you lay,” W-pI.136.7

Just about all of us have been quite ill one time or another, and in the midst of great discomfort, who among us have had this thought: “This illness is just what I planned and have chosen for myself. This is working out great!”

I doubt if anyone reading this actually thinks this way, but obviously the author of the Course knows this and is trying to instill a truth in us that is beyond our normal consciousness.

It also says some controversial things about how illness and pain can be eliminated such as:

“Healing is accomplished the instant the sufferer no longer sees any value in pain.” M-5.I.1

Most who are suffering pain would not agree with this and respond something like this: “Are you kidding? This pain has no value to me and I sure did not choose to have it.”

What we frail mortals fail to realize is that while we may not consciously choose to have pain and disease, they are still the result of our choices. For instance, many choose to eat or drink things that are not good for them that causes discomfort they did not consciously choose. Then, as the quote says, many receive some type of

value from the pain itself, such as sympathy, others waiting on them, or an excuse to avoid unwanted work.

We'll delve more into causes and cures as we go along, but first let us see exactly what the Course means when it speaks of sickness:

“Healing is the opposite of all the world's ideas which dwell on sickness and on separate states. Sickness is a retreat from others, and a shutting off of joining. It becomes a door that closes on a separate self, and keeps it isolated and alone. Sickness is isolation. For it seems to keep one self apart from all the rest, to suffer what the others do not feel. It gives the body final power to make the separation real, and keep the mind in solitary prison, split apart and held in pieces by a solid wall of sickened flesh, which it can not surmount.” W-pI.137.1-2

The teaching is then that the core cause of illness and pain can be traced to our original separation from God. Before the separation there was equality, and what one felt, all felt which was unbounded joy and love. No one wanted to share anything painful, so all sharing was the desirable feelings of love, joy, peace etc.

Then, after the separation, we found ourselves in the illusion of being isolated in bodies. Whatever you felt was not shared, but kept to yourself. In our current situation one person can feel intense pain and a loved one next to him will not feel the pain at all. He may have empathy for the pain, but will not actually feel it.

According to ACIM, then, the core cause of pain and illness is this illusion of separateness and isolation. The Course speaks of a number of things that will help with removing illness, but the foundation of all healing is found in removing the separation between the Sons of God trapped in the illusion of their own making.

Think of it this way. You may have a friend who is very ill and undergoing intense suffering. You feel bad for him but are suffering no actual pain yourself. You go about your business during the day and maybe give him a passing thought of sympathy a couple times, but outside of that your life proceeds as normal.

But let us suppose you actually felt his pain. What would change then?

There would be an instant change in thinking. Immediately you would want to eliminate the pain and bring healing. Think of it. If we all felt this way now and

shared our brother's pain, it would not last for long because decisions would be made to do something about it and replace it with positive feelings.

Look at it another way. You see a homeless guy on a corner with a sign asking for money. You may feel sorry for him and give him a few dollars. But let us say you completely shared his mind and were no longer separate. Suddenly, you would want him to have as much as you, or at least enough to have some comfort. You may wind up withdrawing some money from your bank account so he can get some relief. If we all had the barriers of separation dissolved, then poverty would greatly diminish as your brother's poverty would be your own.

Few, if any of us, have the barriers of separation completely removed in our consciousness, and when we suffer pain or illness we suffer alone as does our brother.

“The idea of separation produced the body and remains connected to it, making it sick because of the mind's identification with it.” T-19.I.7

However, reversing this separation is a major key to healing:

“All sickness comes from separation. When the separation is denied, it goes. For it is gone as soon as the idea that brought it has been healed, and been replaced by sanity.” T-26.VII.2

That is interesting. As soon as the idea of separation goes, so does the illness associated with it for **“No mind is sick until another mind agrees that they are separate. And thus it is their joint decision to be sick.”** Then it tells us the cure is that **“Uniting with a brother's mind prevents the cause of sickness and perceived effects. Healing is the effect of minds that join, as sickness comes from minds that separate.” T-28.III.2**

Then it makes this interesting statement:

“No one is sick if someone else accepts his union with him. His desire to be a sick and separated mind can not remain without a witness or a cause. And both are gone if someone wills to be united with him.” T-28.IV.7

This makes the key statement that an individual cannot remain sick without a “witness.” In other words, a separation that produces sickness cannot be maintained unless one has others to witness that it is real, or happening to him.

And what do we naturally do when a loved one is ill or in pain? We witness to him that it is real by showing sympathy and helping him get the medical care he seems to need.

According to ACIM this is the wrong approach, for it just reinforces the belief in the separation and the illness.

What then should we do? Should we be like a Vulcan from Star Trek, show no empathy and merely declare that all their suffering is an illusion, and that he needs to just acknowledge this and get over it?

No. That will not work either. In addition to suffering pain, the patient will become angry at you for your lack of sensitivity.

So, if you believe in the advice of the Course, how will you help your brother in distress?

For starters, you do not blatantly declare to him that his whole problem is an illusion in his mind. Even though this is technically true, saying such things may just increase the separation between you.

Ask him to describe his problems and listen to him with a caring attitude, but not saying anything to reinforce the belief. Then after you have established a rapport, seek the Holy Spirit with him in a way that is acceptable to his belief system. The Holy Spirit is essential here because it is our only means of healing separation while we seem to be in physical bodies here on earth.

If the use of the term “Holy Spirit” goes against his belief system, then you can use soul, higher self or just Spirit or God. The important thing is to join with your brother and seek union through the contacting of Higher Intelligence. This can be accomplished through mutual prayer or meditation.

Healing with the Mind

So, the ultimate key to good health for you and your loved ones is to remove barriers and share consciousness as if you were one. Unfortunately, the Course tells us that there are a number of problems that create barriers between individuals, and these barriers must be surmounted before success can be obtained.

The first and perhaps the greatest barrier is wrong thinking. Our thoughts are potent forces that can lead to health or disease:

“Are thoughts, then, dangerous? To bodies, yes! The thoughts that seem to kill are those that teach the thinker that he can be killed. And so he “dies” because of what he learned.” T-21.VIII.1

“The sick are healed as you let go all thoughts of sickness, and the dead arise when you let thoughts of life replace all thoughts you ever held of death.” W-pI.132.8

“Healing is a thought by which two minds perceive their oneness and become glad.” T-5.I.1

One common wrong thought concerning health is that the body and not the mind is the source of all or at least some disease. When the average person becomes ill, he rarely will attribute the problem to his mind or thinking, and instead see it as a problem produced by the body. To the contrary, the Course gives this view:

“The body cannot heal, because it cannot make itself sick. It needs no healing. Its health or sickness depends entirely on how the mind perceives it, and the purpose that the mind would use it for.” T-19.I.3

“Thus is the body healed by miracles because they show the mind made sickness, and employed the body to be victim, or effect, of what it made.” T-28.II.11

So, the first correction of thinking needed is the realization that illness comes not from the body, genes, inheritance, etc., but from our wrong-minded thoughts.

“These patients do not realize they have chosen sickness. On the contrary, they believe that sickness has chosen them.” M-5.III.1

The Course does not differentiate much between physical and mental illness. Instead, it seems to categorize illness or pain of any kind as coming from the mind. It is written:

“all sickness is mental illness,” P-2.IV.8

The problem is that **“What you made has imprisoned your will, and given you a sick mind that must be healed.” T-6.V.C.9**

Indeed, it tells us that all discomfort, pain and illness come from a mind that has chosen illusion over truth, which is said to be insane:

“As you look with open eyes upon your world, it must occur to you that you have withdrawn into insanity. You see what is not there, and you hear what makes no sound.” T-13.V.6

“the content of individual illusions differs greatly. Yet they have one thing in common; they are all insane.” T-13.V.1

The world itself is sick and insane:

“This is an insane world, and do not underestimate the extent of its insanity.” T-14.I.2

The mental illness of general insanity seems widespread as indicated in this quote:

“The insane protect their thought systems, but they do so insanely. And all their defenses are as insane as what they are supposed to protect. The separation has nothing in it, no part, no “reason,” and no attribute that is not insane. And its “protection” is part of it, as insane as the whole. The special relationship, which is its chief defense, must therefore be insane.” T-17.IV.5

Again, it is pointed out that the “separation” is the cause of all insanity as well as any mental or physical health problems originating from it. Here is the basic problem that needs solved:

“For you have taught yourself how to imprison the Son of God, a lesson so unthinkable that only the insane, in deepest sleep, could even dream of it.” T-14.XI.2

And here is the cure: **“When a brother behaves insanely, you can heal him only by perceiving the sanity in him. If you perceive his errors and accept them, you are accepting yours.”** T-9.III.5.

So, according to ACIM, we have the situation where our wrong thinking creates an insane world where lots of pain and illness becomes the norm. Unfortunately, just accepting that we need to get our mind right and thinking straightened out is not enough. That only indicates the general direction we need to proceed. Fortunately, the Course gives us a number of problems we must circumvent in order to achieve healing. Let’s examine several of them.

Obstacles to Master

1. FEAR

The Course tells us that fear is a great obstacle to right-mindedness and hence to good health. It gives the controversial thought that many are actually afraid to be healed.

“An individual may ask for physical healing because he is fearful of bodily harm. At the same time, if he were healed physically, the threat to his thought system might be considerably more fearful to him than its physical expression. In this case he is not really asking for release from fear, but for the removal of a symptom that he himself selected. This request is, therefore, not for healing at all.

“The Bible emphasizes that all prayer is answered, and this is indeed true. The very fact that the Holy Spirit has been asked for anything will ensure a response. Yet it is equally certain that no response given by Him will ever be one that would increase fear. It is possible that His answer will not be heard.” T-9.II.2-3

This tells us that we consciously say we want healing because of fear of bodily harm, but there is something else of which we are even more afraid. We are more afraid of a change to our thought system required by the healing.

Then it tells us that we may pray and ask for healing and the answer will be given, but we may not hear that answer because of our fears.

The bottom line is we fear changing from wrong-minded to right-minded thinking more than we fear pain, illness and even death.

“If your miracle working inclinations are not functioning properly, it is always because fear has intruded on your right-mindedness and has turned it upside down.” T-2.V.4

“All healing is essentially the release from fear. To undertake this you cannot be fearful yourself. You do not understand healing because of your own fear.” T-2.IV.1

We are promised that the overcoming of fear can lead to healing:

“If you are afraid of healing, then it cannot come through you. The only thing that is required for a healing is a lack of fear. The fearful are not healed, and cannot heal.” T-27.V.1

2. GUILT

We do not need a revelation from on high to convince us that guilt has a negative effect on both physical and mental health. It is obvious that guilt can cause great emotional pain and stress to the nervous system. Most also realize that the stress it produces can have physical effects and weaken the body, making it more susceptible to illness. But according to the Course, its physical effects and relationship to fear are more powerful and pervasive than realized by most.

“Under fear’s orders the body will pursue guilt, serving its master whose attraction to guilt maintains the whole illusion of its existence. “ T-19.IV.B.13

“Guilt, too, is feared and fearful. Yet it could have no hold at all except on those who are attracted to it and seek it out.” T-19.IV.C.1

Guilt is also related to wrong-mindedness or insane thinking:

“It is guilt that has driven you insane.” T-13.in.1

“For you must learn that guilt is always totally insane, and has no reason.” T-13.X.6

Sickness itself is a sign that guilt is present:

“For sickness is the witness to his guilt.” T-27.I.4

And finally, it tells us that overcoming guilt is a key to eliminating sickness:

“The guiltless mind cannot suffer.” T-5.V.5

“Sickness where guilt is absent cannot come, for it is but another form of guilt. Atonement does not heal the sick, for that is not a cure. It takes away the guilt that makes the sickness possible. And that is cure indeed. For sickness now is gone, with nothing left to which it can return. W-pI.140.4.

Guilt not only aggravates illness, but it robs those with it of their peace of mind. Such a lack of peace can be a greater disturbance than many physical problems.

Earlier in this book we discussed guilt and how to eliminate it completely. It is advisable for those having problems with this negative emotion to review those teachings and take them to heart. After all, peace of mind of the guiltless is priceless.

3. FORGIVENESS

True forgiveness is essential to healing according to ACIM. It says that **“To forgive is to heal”** M-22.1, and **“that forgiveness is healing needs to be understood.”** M-22.3 It is essential to the miracle of healing for, **“Only forgiveness offers miracles.”** T-25.IX.8 **“Forgiveness recognized as merited will heal. It gives the miracle its strength to overlook illusions.”** T-30.VI.5

These quotes make a lot of sense when you think of it, for if one holds a grievance toward another, he is holding in a lot of negative emotional energy which has no constructive effect on any level. Much ill health is caused by a blockage of the free flow of life and emotional energy, and grievance caused by unforgiveness certainly contributes to this problem. Letting go of a grievance toward a brother can open the door to a miraculous healing on both physical and emotional levels.

Forgiveness not only heals the one doing the forgiving but also the one forgiven:

“Therefore, those who have been forgiven must devote themselves first to healing because, having received the idea of healing, they must give it to hold it.” T-5.IV.7

So, the one forgiven can also be healed if he seeks to heal others. He **“must give it to hold it”** for **“Forgiveness is not real unless it brings a healing to your brother and yourself.”** T-27.II.4

The forgiven and the forgiver must ask this question: **“And who is there whom his forgiveness can fail to heal?”** M-18.4

The power and extent to which healing can affect us is profound, for it says: **“no one in whom true forgiveness rests can suffer.”** T-27.II.3

That is quite a statement that would be difficult for many to accept who are suffering. If it is literally true then this would tell us that there are dimensions of forgiveness that is beyond the current consciousness of many, and we need to examine ourselves to see where the principle of forgiveness yet needs to be applied.

Indeed, the Course asks: **“Does pain seem real in the perception? If it does, be sure the lesson is not learned. And there remains an unforgiveness hiding in the mind that sees the pain through eyes the mind directs.”** W-pI.193.7

The fact that it speaks of “unforgiveness hiding” tells us that some are deceived into thinking that they have forgiven all when they have not for **“there can be no form of suffering that fails to hide an unforgiving thought. Nor can there be a form of pain forgiveness cannot heal.”** W-pI.198.9

The important thing that is healed through forgiveness is our “sight” or the way we look at things, especially separation:

Rejoice in the power of forgiveness to heal your sight completely. W-pI.75.9

“Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation. Correct perception of your brother is necessary, because minds have chosen to see themselves as separate.” T-3.V.9

This healing of the perception of separation coincides with the healing of the mind: **“So does your healing show your mind is healed, and has forgiven what he did not do. And so is he (your brother) convinced his innocence was never lost, and healed along with you.”** T-27.II.6

We are given this advice:

“From knowledge, where He has been placed by God, the Holy Spirit calls to you, to let forgiveness rest upon your dreams, and be restored to sanity and peace of mind. Without forgiveness will your dreams remain to terrify you.” W-pII.7.4

Finally, we are given this as a goal:

“My forgiveness is the means by which the world is healed, together with myself.” W-pI.82.1

4. LOVE

We have just noted the importance of forgiveness in relation to healing. This is important, but healing cannot be complete without the foundation emotion leading to completeness.

“It (forgiveness) is the source of healing, but it is the messenger of love and not its Source.” T-18.IX.10

When we return to our Source, forgiveness will no longer be needed, but there will still be love which is a basic aspect that God shares with all creation. When true healing occurs, love is always there manifesting in some way.

The other two barriers to healing of fear and guilt are also neutralized by love.

“all healing involves replacing fear with love.” T-8.IX.5

“Be not afraid of love. For it alone can heal all sorrow, wipe away all tears, and gently waken from his dream of pain the Son whom God acknowledges as His.” W-pII.10.4

“The attraction of guilt produces fear of love, for love would never look on guilt at all. It is the nature of love to look upon only the truth, for there it sees itself, with which it would unite in holy union and completion.” T-19.IV.A.10

Many spiritual healers recognize the importance of love in producing positive results. Even experiments with growing plants verifies this. Plants that are sent loving thoughts become much healthier than those sent negative thoughts.

A Course in Miracles reveals that love has more power than is generally realized:

“Love cannot suffer, because it cannot attack. The remembrance of love therefore brings invulnerability with it.” T-10.III.3

That is quite a statement telling us that love cannot suffer and brings “invulnerability with it.” Many may wonder at this statement as we have all seen many decent and loving people endure suffering. The Course does give us this clue:

“by not offering total love you will not be healed completely.” T-13.III.9

So, for a real miracle of complete healing to occur, love must be given with no reservations

“Miracles occur naturally as expressions of love. The real miracle is the love that inspires them. In this sense everything that comes from love is a miracle.” T-1.I.3

The full expression of love is the greatest miracle. Even so, many who suffer seek the miracle of physical healing and seek to achieve it. But even though the suffering places great attention on the body, one must force his focus on love instead so miracles can take place, for **“If a mind perceives without love, it perceives an empty shell and is unaware of the spirit within.”** T-1.IV.2

The miracle of healing requires us to not let the discomfort of the body distract from awareness “of the spirit within.”

The one who is ill must take responsibility for his health and fulfill his own needs for love because, **“When you do not value yourself you become sick, but my value of you can heal you, because the value of God's Son is one.”** T-10.III.6

We are all valuable to God and to be whole we must value ourselves.

“Miracles are merely the translation of denial into truth. If to love oneself is to heal oneself, those who are sick do not love themselves. Therefore, they are asking for the love that would heal them, but which they are denying to themselves. If they knew the truth about themselves they could not be sick.” T-12.II.1

And what is the truth about ourselves that heals? It is that we were created through the love of God and we are agents of love. To see ourselves as otherwise causes ill health.

“To love yourself is to heal yourself, and you cannot perceive part of you as sick and achieve your goal.” T-11.VIII.11

However, one cannot have completeness of healing without assisting and sharing love with others:

“Perceive in sickness but another call for love, and offer your brother what he believes he cannot offer himself. Whatever the sickness, there is but one remedy. You will be made whole as you make whole, for to perceive in sickness the appeal for health is to recognize in hatred the call for love.” T-12.II.3

“You will be made whole as you make whole” is reinforced in this statement:

“A miracle is a reversal of the physical order because it brings more love to the giver AND the receiver.” UR T 1 B 10

The goal of love in healing is summarized in this passage:

“There is no sadness where a miracle has come to heal. And nothing more than just one instant of your love without attack is necessary that all this occur. In that one instant you are healed, and in that single instant is all healing done.” T-27.V.4

5. MIND

God extended His mind in us, giving us power to create anything which we imagine and make it real. This worked out fine as long as the Sons of God were in harmony with Divine Will and saw truth as it is. But then the Sons got this “mad idea” and wondered what it would be like to live in a world of time and space where even separation from God would be possible. This could not happen in eternity, but the power of the mind was so powerful that the Sons went to sleep, and in their dreams “miscreated” many strange things that led to nightmares and produced the possibility of pain and disease.

“you have used your own mind, which He created in the likeness of His Own, to miscreate.” T-3.II.4

The Course tells us that in this dream where fear prevails, we still have all powers of creation, but often misuse it when we choose fear instead of love:

“The fearful must miscreate, because they misperceive creation. When you miscreate you are in pain.” T-2.VII.3

“The very fact that you are afraid makes your mind vulnerable to miscreation. You are therefore likely to misunderstand any healing that might occur, and because egocentricity and fear usually occur together, you may be unable to accept the real Source of the healing.” T-2.V.2

Even though we are in a dream of separation, we are still linked to our Creator:

“you cannot depart entirely from your Creator, Who set the limits on your ability to miscreate. An imprisoned will engenders a situation which, in the extreme, becomes altogether intolerable. Tolerance for pain may be high, but it

is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way.” T-2.III.3

The “better way” is to remember who we are and use the mind for perfect creation instead of imperfect miscreation.

“The lesson (of healing) is the mind was sick that thought the body could be sick.” T-28.II.11

The ego takes advantage of this power to miscreate:

“The ego regards the body as its home, and tries to satisfy itself through the body. But the idea that this is possible is a decision of the mind, which has become completely confused about what is really possible.” T-4.II.7

We must realize our true situation as prisoners of the ego and the body so we can use the mind to eliminate pain and ill health:

“It (the body) holds in prison but the willing mind that would abide in it. It sickens at the bidding of the mind that would become its prisoner. And it grows old and dies, because that mind is sick within itself... Let us be glad that you will see what you believe, and that it has been given you to change what you believe. The body will but follow. T-31.III.4&6

The solution then is simple. We change what we believe and creation will follow:

“The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. It never sleeps. Every instant it is creating. It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains.” T-2.VI.9

There is no miracle you cannot have when you desire healing. But there is no miracle that can be given you unless you want it. T-30.VIII.4

That sounds pretty simple. We just need to desire the miracle of healing to make it happen. But, one must realize that wholeness is required for miracles:

“All forms of sickness are signs that the mind is split, and does not accept a unified purpose.” T-8.IX.8

“Wholeness heals because it is of the mind.” T-8.IX.3

In other words, all the ingredients of the healing must be desired to produce results.

For instance, if one has diabetes because of a bad diet with lots of refined sugar he, of course, would like to be healed of the disease, but is he willing to cease eating the processed foods that caused it? We are like little children who do not want to go to the dentist but also do not want to brush regularly and cut down on sugar.

A split mind cannot be healed. To be healed, the mind has to be directed to wholeness physically, emotionally and mentally. When all the ingredients of health are embraced by the mind, then there will be wholeness in thought and the miracle can happen.

The Course gives this solid advice in connection with the mind and healing:

“All mind is whole, and the belief that part of it is physical, or not mind, is a fragmented or sick interpretation. Mind cannot be made physical, but it can be made manifest through the physical if it uses the body to go beyond itself. By reaching out, the mind extends itself. It does not stop at the body, for if it does it is blocked in its purpose. A mind that has been blocked has allowed itself to be vulnerable to attack, because it has turned against itself.

“The removal of blocks, then, is the only way to guarantee help and healing. Help and healing are the normal expressions of a mind that is working through the body, but not in it.” T-8.VII.10-11

6. FAITH

In discussing factors that lead to healing, the subject of faith must indeed be included. In the New Testament, faith was credited by Jesus more than anything else as being responsible for the healing miracles. He often gave credit to people's faith for their healings. Here are just several statements:

“thy faith hath made thee whole.” Matt 9:22

“Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.” Matt 9:29

“great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” Matt 15:28

This is perhaps his most famous statement concerning faith:

“If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” Matt 17:20

Moving a mountain would indeed be an impressive feat, on par with the resurrection itself. It was His way of saying that **“all things are possible to him that believeth.”** Mark 9:23

The Course mentions this great power of faith as if it should be a common thing:

“Why is it strange to you that faith can move mountains? This is indeed a little feat for such a power. For faith can keep the Son of God in chains as long as he believes he is in chains. And when he is released from them it will be simply because he no longer believes in them, withdrawing faith that they can hold him, and placing it in his freedom instead.” T-21.III.3

The passage goes on to tell us why we do not see more acts of significant faith saying: **“It is impossible to place equal faith in opposite directions.”**

It tells us that we can place our faith in illusion and falsehood as well as truth: **“Faith and belief are strong in madness, guiding perception toward what the mind has valued.”** T-21.V.8

Thus, we cannot move mountains because we have faith in our own limitations rather than the real source of power which is within us.

It is interesting that we see that the people who gathered in the home synagogue of Jesus had misplaced faith that Jesus could not perform miracles. He found the people had little positive faith in Him because they knew His family. The people figured that one of their own with whom they were familiar could not be the source of such miracles. Concerning them it is written:

“And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Matt 13:58

Even Jesus could not assist in healing those who thought it was not possible.

We are told that, **“Faith goes to what you want, and you instruct your mind accordingly. Your will remains your teacher, and your will has all the strength to do what it desires”** W-pI.91.5

To have the faith that produces miracles, we must merely “instruct” our minds so we can accept the fact that “will has all the strength to do what it desires.”

Sounds pretty simple, but few fully incorporate such instruction because we have more faith in sickness than in health:

“Because the miracle worker has heard God's Voice, he strengthens It in a sick brother by weakening his belief in sickness, which he does not share.” T-10.IV.7

It is certainly obvious that many have much more faith in illness than health. The miracle worker must therefore work to weaken that negative faith and redirect the mind to positive faith for **“faith can be rewarded only in terms of the belief in which the faith was placed.” T-13.IX.2**

We are told that our basic problem is that our **“lack of faith in the power that heals all pain arises from your wish to retain some aspects of reality for fantasy.” T-17.I.3**

The problem always goes back to the divided mind, which is especially true concerning health. We desire good health, but we also desire things that are not good for our health. We desire to have positive faith, but we tend to focus on a belief in negativity.

A united mind can indeed manifest miracles through faith, and nothing unites the mind more than truth: **“Where the goal of truth is set, there faith must be. The Holy Spirit sees the situation as a whole.” T-17.VI.6**

Faith is increased by the sharing of truth and right-mindedness. Jesus taught this when he was here:

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matt 18:19-20

Just two or three uniting in faith can make anything happen. The Course expands on this idea:

“Every situation, properly perceived, becomes an opportunity to heal the Son of God. And he is healed because you offered faith to him, giving him to the

Holy Spirit and releasing him from every demand your ego would make of him. Thus do you see him free, and in this vision does the Holy Spirit share. And since He shares it He has given it, and so He heals through you. It is this joining Him in a united purpose that makes this purpose real, because you make it whole. And this is healing. The body is healed because you came without it, and joined the Mind in which all healing rests.” T-19.I.2

Faith, healing, the Atonement, forgiveness and sharing all work together:

“To have faith is to heal. It is the sign that you have accepted the Atonement for yourself, and would therefore share it. By faith, you offer the gift of freedom from the past, which you received. You do not use anything your brother has done before to condemn him now.” T-19.I.9

Finally, before the fulness of miracles can manifest, we all must work on ourselves and our own healing:

“There have been many healers who did not heal themselves. They have not moved mountains by their faith because their faith was not whole. Some of them have healed the sick at times, but they have not raised the dead. Unless the healer heals himself, he cannot believe that there is no order of difficulty in miracles. He has not learned that every mind God created is equally worthy of being healed because God created it whole. You are merely asked to return to God the mind as He created it. He asks you only for what He gave, knowing that this giving will heal you. Sanity is wholeness, and the sanity of your brothers is yours.” T-5.VII.2

7. PEACE

Peace is an important ingredient in the healing process, as none of the six categories we have covered so far would be effective without it.

The attainment of peace is essential to overcoming fear and guilt. Peace is a sign that true forgiveness has taken place. Love and peace go hand in hand. We cannot be in a positive state of mind if we are not at peace, and without it we cannot center ourselves on our inner core to exercise true faith.

The state of peace is a sign that the miracle worker has all the ingredients together to proceed with his or her work of love, service and healing.

You would think that all students would greatly desire this quality, but the Course indicates this is not the case.

Lesson 185 encourages students to embrace this statement:

“I want the peace of God.”

Then it makes these remarks:

“To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything. If you could but mean them for just an instant, there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form; in any place or time... No one can mean these words and not be healed.” W-pI.185.1-2

Obviously, there are a lot of people dealing with sorrow and ill health who would tell us that they desire peace, but according to the Course there must be something lacking in such desires, else their suffering would end. What is it that could be missing? Here is a clue:

“When a brother is sick it is because he is not asking for peace, and therefore does not know he has it. The acceptance of peace is the denial of illusion, and sickness is an illusion. Yet every Son of God has the power to deny illusions anywhere in the Kingdom, merely by denying them completely in himself.” T-10.III.7.

This points out several helpful things to aid in the attainment of peace and healing. First, we already have peace in our core, but one “does not know he has it.”

Secondly, one has to ask for it so the barriers can be removed. How many are there who are not at peace and in ill health, but have not made the simple gesture of asking their Source for peace and healing?

Third is “the acceptance of peace.” True peace comes from focusing on the Christ at the core of our being, for this state of mind has to be accepted to be retained. This is easier said than done as many distractions of life force us to look upon the world without more than the world within.

The fourth key to peace is “the denial of illusion” for “sickness is an illusion.”

Denial is often seen as a negative motion but the Course tells us that it can be put to positive use. We can use it to deny those things that are not true, not real or illusion. Since sickness of any kind is a part of the illusion, then a denial of it may be in order.

The question is, how do we go about denying pain and ill health? The key is to see that which is true rather than that which is not true. We are told that sickness is an illusion. An illusion is something that seems to be there but is not. This tells us how to deny sickness. One must attain the state of mind that sees and accepts it as something that does not exist in reality. I like to call this a state of “not seeing” rather than denial. When you do not see the imperfection, that which remains is perfection.

There is a spiritual maxim that says “energy follows thought.” The Course says something similar: **“every thought you have brings either peace or war; either love or fear.”** W-pI.16.3

Wrong-mindedness and miscreation guides energy in directions that produce disease. Taking thought away from the illusion removes the energy that feeds the illness and thus it has to disappear.

To accomplish this one has to honestly examine his thoughts and desires to see if he is really willing to let the destructive ones go and be replaced by the right-mindedness of the Holy Spirit which includes forgiveness. **“The Holy Spirit calls to you, to let forgiveness rest upon your dreams, and be restored to sanity and peace of mind. Without forgiveness will your dreams remain to terrify you.”** W-pII.7.4

As stated earlier, peace is strongly connected with the previous six factors needed for healing. The first, which is fear, is huge. We are asked this:

“Can pain be part of peace, or grief of joy? Can fear and sickness enter in a mind where love and perfect holiness abide?” W-pI.152.2

Unwise thinking creates the problem:

“You have chosen to create unlike Him, and have therefore made fear for yourself. You are not at peace because you are not fulfilling your function.” T-4.I.9

But it offers solutions:

“For the instant of peace is eternal because it is without fear.” T-15.II.2

“You have escaped from fear to peace, asking no questions of reality, but merely accepting it.” T-18.VI.11

The second problem, which is guilt, is on the opposite side of peace:

“Peace and guilt are antithetical, and the Father can be remembered only in peace.” T-13.I.1

“Peace and guilt are both conditions of the mind, to be attained. And these conditions are the home of the emotion that calls them forth, and therefore is compatible with them.” T-19.IV.B.10

We are called **“to lay all guilt aside. Reflect the peace of Heaven here, and bring this world to Heaven.” T-14.X.1**

The Course stresses several times the importance of forgiveness in the attainment of the peace that heals:

“When peace is not with you entirely, and when you suffer pain of any kind, you have beheld some sin within your brother, and have rejoiced at what you thought was there.” T-24.IV.5.

“How willing are you to forgive your brother? How much do you desire peace instead of endless strife and misery and pain? These questions are the same, in different form.” T-29.VI.1

The fourth point is love, which goes hand in hand with peace:

“Love has now returned to our awareness. And we are at peace again, for fear has gone and only love remains.” W-pII.323.2

“Peace be to you to whom is healing offered...What occurred within the instant that love entered in without attack will stay with you forever. Your healing will be one of its effects, as will your brother's.” T-27.V.11

A whole mind is essential to peace:

The Wholeness of God, which is His peace, cannot be appreciated except by a whole mind” T-6.II.1

Peace is closely associated with mind, as evidenced by the fact that the phrase “peace of mind” is used 34 times in ACIM. Here is just one example:

“There are no small upsets. They are all equally disturbing to my peace of mind.”
W-pI.5.4

Finally, we see that peace is essential in the use of faith:

“Your faith must grow to meet the goal that has been set. The goal's reality will call this forth, for you will see that peace and faith will not come separately. What situation can you be in without faith, and remain faithful to your brother?”
T-17.VII.4

“Then follow Him in joy, with faith that He will lead you safely through all dangers to your peace of mind this world may set before you.” T-13.VII.15

Peace is indeed an essential ingredient for healing and it is a journey without distance to find it:

“There is a place in you where there is perfect peace. There is a place in you where nothing is impossible. There is a place in you where the strength of God abides.” W-pI.47.7

Find that peace within and “nothing is impossible,” anything can be healed.

That said, we cannot end this section on peace without including the most famous quote of all from ACIM:

**“Nothing real can be threatened.
Nothing unreal exists.
Herein lies the peace of God.”** T-in.2

8. OTHER HEALING FACTORS

In addition to the seven factors we have covered, ACIMs tells us of others to which we need to pay attention.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The miracle of healing cannot take place without the Holy Spirit:

“Every situation, properly perceived, becomes an opportunity to heal the Son of God. And he is healed because you offered faith to him, giving him to the Holy Spirit and releasing him from every demand your ego would make of him.

Thus do you see him free, and in this vision does the Holy Spirit share. And since He shares it He has given it, and so He heals through you. It is this joining Him in a united purpose that makes this purpose real, because you make it whole. And this is healing. The body is healed because you came without it, and joined the Mind in which all healing rests.” T-19.I.2

The Holy Spirit is the link for us between the worlds of heaven and earth. If we are to bypass the laws of this world and use the laws of the higher, we need His assistance. When a miraculous healing is attempted and met with failure, it is because the Holy Spirit was not fully involved and His messages of healing not entirely heard and followed. We must always include him for **“the Holy Spirit is the only Healer.” T-13.VIII.1** In addition: **“The Holy Spirit will direct you only so as to avoid pain.” T-7.X.3.**

That which we seek must be in harmony with the Spirit, for even the scriptures tell us that **“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.” James 4:3** We must ask for that which is in harmony with the will of heaven which takes us from pain to joy, from incompleteness to wholeness.

JUDGMENT

Ego judgments interfere with healing:

“peace must come to those who choose to heal and not to judge.” T-21.VIII.2

“It must be true the miracle can heal all forms of sickness, or it cannot heal. Its purpose cannot be to judge which forms are real, and which appearances are true.” T-30.VI.7

“Instead of judging, we need but be still and let all things be healed.” W-pII.in.10

DISTORTED PERCEPTION

We live in a world of time and space where we learn through what is perceived. The trouble is that we perceive many things incorrectly, as well as wrongly interpret that which is perceived. This leads to many problems including ill health.

Correct perception is a miracle itself and is essential for healing:

“The level-adjustment power of the miracle induces the right perception for healing. Until this has occurred healing cannot be understood. Forgiveness is

an empty gesture unless it entails correction. Without this it is essentially judgmental, rather than healing.” T-2.V.A.15

Healing involves perceiving our brother accurately:

“To heal, then, is to correct perception in your brother and yourself by sharing the Holy Spirit with him. This places you both within the Kingdom, and restores its wholeness in your mind.” T-7.II.2

And how do you tell if your perception is off?

“How can you tell when you are seeing wrong, or someone else is failing to perceive the lesson he should learn? Does pain seem real in the perception? If it does, be sure the lesson is not learned.” W-pI.193.7

The wrong perception of separation is the main correction needed:

“Forgiveness is the healing of the perception of separation. Correct perception of your brother is necessary, because minds have chosen to see themselves as separate.” T-3.V.9

REMEMBERING

To be a true miracle worker we are told that we must remember our origins. When we recall who we are, get a sense of heaven and a difference between laws that govern reality and illusion, then the presence of the Holy Spirit is fully invited in and miracles can occur.

Here we are told that if we could remember the truth about ourselves, we “could not be sick.”

“Miracles are merely the translation of denial into truth. If to love oneself is to heal oneself, those who are sick do not love themselves. Therefore, they are asking for the love that would heal them, but which they are denying to themselves. If they knew the truth about themselves they could not be sick. The task of the miracle worker thus becomes to deny the denial of truth. The sick must heal themselves, for the truth is in them...”

We must remember **“that all power is of God. You can remember this for all the Sonship. Do not allow your brother not to remember, for his forgetfulness is yours. But your remembering is his, for God cannot be remembered alone. This**

is what you have forgotten. To perceive the healing of your brother as the healing of yourself is thus the way to remember God. For you forgot your brothers with Him, and God's Answer to your forgetting is but the way to remember.” T-12.II.1-2

The very power to manifest miracles is inherent of what we are:

“Your claim to miracles does not lie in your illusions about yourself. It does not depend on any magical powers you have ascribed to yourself, nor on any of the rituals you have devised. It is inherent in the truth of what you are.” W-pI.77.2

“what you are you must learn to remember.” T-6.V.C.5

The path to true remembering is through the Holy Spirit:

“He (the Holy Spirit) is perfectly aware that you do not know yourself, and perfectly aware of how to teach you to remember what you are.” T-12.VI.2

Yes, He will teach us but we must first **“Listen, and you will learn how to remember what you are.” T-10.V.11**

When remembrance comes, **“You are entitled to miracles because of what you are. You will receive miracles because of what God is. And you will offer miracles because you are one with God.**

“Your claim to miracles does not lie in your illusions about yourself. It does not depend on any magical powers you have ascribed to yourself, nor on any of the rituals you have devised. It is inherent in the truth of what you are. W-pI.77.1-2

This understanding leads to unlimited power:

“The Oneness of the Creator and the creation is your wholeness, your sanity and your limitless power. This limitless power is God's gift to you, because it is what you are.” T-7.VI.10

This remembrance will bring “perfect healing.”

“Into this empty space, from which the goal of sin has been removed, is Heaven free to be remembered. Here its peace can come, and perfect healing take the place of death.” T-27.I.10.

Discovering this remembrance of our true identity is the purpose of the Course itself:

“This course will teach you how to remember what you are, restoring to you your Identity. We have already learned that this Identity is shared. The miracle becomes the means of sharing It.” T-14.X.12

SHARING

The Course stresses many times that we must assist and join with our brothers to obtain heaven. Here it tells us the effect on our health by going it alone:

“For healing is the opposite of all the world's ideas which dwell on sickness and on separate states. Sickness is a retreat from others, and a shutting off of joining. It becomes a door that closes on a separate self, and keeps it isolated and alone. Sickness is isolation. For it seems to keep one self apart from all the rest, to suffer what the others do not feel.” W-pI.137.1-2

True miracles happen through sharing:

“You have done miracles, but it is quite apparent that you have not done them alone. You have succeeded whenever you have reached another mind and joined with it. When two minds join as one and share one idea equally, the first link in the awareness of the Sonship as One has been made.” T-16.II.4

Those who are centered on themselves alone will not be able to manifest miracles for **“God cannot be remembered alone”** T-12.II.2, for we, along with our brothers, must tune into where we were in creation to become miracle workers.

We are told that **“The cause of pain is separation, not the body, which is only its effect”** T-28.III.5

If the cause of pain and illness is separation, then the cure is again to be united:

“No one is sick if someone else accepts his union with him. His desire to be a sick and separated mind can not remain without a witness or a cause. And both are gone if someone wills to be united with him.” T-28.IV.7

Not only must healing be shared but it is also essential to enter back into the kingdom of heaven:

“The Kingdom cannot be found alone, and you who are the Kingdom cannot find yourself alone.” T-8.III.6.

On the other hand, we do not want to share in the illusions or sickness of our brothers:

We should not “give support to someone's dream of sickness and of death. It means that you share not his wish to separate, and let him turn illusions on himself.” T-28.IV.1

The Course stresses that we are all in this together and healing is a shared experience:

“Do not accept your brother's variable perception of himself for his split mind is yours, and you will not accept your healing without his. For you share the real world as you share Heaven, and his healing is yours. To love yourself is to heal yourself, and you cannot perceive part of you as sick and achieve your goal. Brother, we heal together as we live together and love together.” T-11.VIII.11

We find that union and sharing are the ultimate healing solution:

“Healing is shared. And by this attribute it proves that laws unlike the ones which hold that sickness is inevitable are more potent than their sickly opposites. Healing is strength. For by its gentle hand is weakness overcome, and minds that were walled off within a body free to join with other minds, to be forever strong.” W-pI.137.8

ACIM and Orthodox Medicine

Many students read along in the Course about the principles of healing and think it is wonderful how a healed mind in tune with heaven can have perfect health, but then when the moment comes that illness threatens, what do they do?

Do they review the Course's teachings that **“illness is a form of magic”** T-5.V.5 and seek to apply the non-magical instructions of the Course in healing?

Often the answer is no. Instead of using ACIM principles, they seek orthodox healing techniques which the Course says **“are restatements of magic principles.”** T-2.IV.4

I am reminded of a good friend I had a few years back who was an avid student of spiritual philosophy and alternative medicine. Seemingly, out of the blue she developed cancer, and after the doctors scared the dickens out of her with a diagnosis and needed treatment, she seemed to throw all her previous beliefs out the window and placed all her faith in orthodox medicine. She lived a few months more in great pain and distress before a painful death took her.

I see this happening with ACIM students. They study the Course and think it is great, but then when they get a few sniffles they run to their doctor, take antibiotics, and whatever else the establishment advises.

The Course uses the word “magic” quite a lot in describing illness as well as the orthodox methods of treating it. Concerning physical illness, it says:

“Only the mind is capable of error. The body can act wrongly only when it is responding to misthought. The body cannot create, and the belief that it can, a fundamental error, produces all physical symptoms. Physical illness represents a belief in magic. The whole distortion that made magic rests on the belief that there is a creative ability in matter which the mind cannot control.” T-2.IV.2

So, the health problems caused by magic comes from the belief **“that there is a creative ability in matter which the mind cannot control.”**

Then it tells us that it is wrong minded to attempt to cure magically-induced disease with magical treatments on the body.

“All material means that you accept as remedies for bodily ills are restatements of magic principles. This is the first step in believing that the body makes its own illness. It is a second misstep to attempt to heal it through non-creative agents.” T-2.IV.4

“Magic is the mindless or the miscreative use of mind. Physical medications are forms of “spells,” T-2.V.2

So, if we do not use orthodox healing techniques, what should we do?

First of all, the Course tells us that if we follow its precepts, we will never be ill in the first place. We’ve already covered numerous statements to this effect that if we

follow the teachings on love, forgiveness, correct use of mind, etc., the health of the body will take care of itself.

Unfortunately, none of us are perfect and just about all of us have physical challenges now and then. So, when this happens what should we do?

The problem is that any illness we have is generated through a misuse of the mind and has nothing to do with the body itself according to ACIM. Since the illness is caused by belief in magic outside the mind, the tendency is to seek for a cure in the same place. We thus seek for outside doctors and medicines that treat the body when in reality the mind has the problem that needs correction. We are told that:

“The body cannot heal, because it cannot make itself sick. It needs no healing. Its health or sickness depends entirely on how the mind perceives it, and the purpose that the mind would use it for.” T-19.I.3

The creative power of the mind is all powerful and if we use it correctly, we are told we will never be ill in any way and even death will be overcome. Some Course students are overwhelmed by the ideals the Course presents to us and are dismayed by their inability to reach them. Some feel uneasy seeking orthodox means of healing because of the statements ACIM made about them. It is stressed that using the laws of God is associated with the mind and the laws of the ego with the body:

“When you heal, you are remembering the laws of God and forgetting the laws of the ego.” T-7.IV.2

Orthodox medicine is thus ego centered, and the Course gives some controversial statements about certain practices. As of this writing, vaccination is a hot topic among Course students. It says this:

“Think of the freedom in the recognition that you are not bound by all the strange and twisted laws you have set up to save you...You really think a small round pellet or some fluid pushed into your veins through a sharpened needle will ward off disease and death.” W-pI.76.3

So right here it dismisses the need for prescription drugs as well as natural supplements in pill form. The “sharpened needle” would refer to vaccinations and other medical injections.

In that same section these thoughts are reinforced. It speaks of **“‘laws’ we have believed we must obey. These would include, for example, the ‘laws’ of nutrition, of immunization, of medication, and of the body's protection in innumerable ways... Dismiss all foolish magical beliefs today.”** W-pI.76.

The Course even dismisses the use of glasses to improve vision:

“Thus you believe that you can change what you see by putting little bits of glass before your eyes. This is among the many magical beliefs that come from the conviction you are a body, and the body's eyes can see.” W-pI.92.1

One may wonder how the scribe Helen Schucman felt about this since she wore glasses. Not only that, but both she and Kenneth Wapnick died after a painful bout with cancer. Helen, though, told us that she was far from the perfect student of the Course. There were parts of the Course that even she had difficulty in accepting.

In speaking of magical or orthodox dealings with pain it says:

“All belief in magic is maintained by just one simple-minded illusion;--that it works. All through their training, every day and every hour, and even every minute and second, must God's teachers learn to recognize the forms of magic and perceive their meaninglessness.” M-16.11

So, the Course acknowledges that orthodox treatments work, but if true teachers see correctly, they will “perceive their meaninglessness.”

Then Jesus is quoted as saying this:

“I am repeating here a Biblical injunction of my own, already mentioned elsewhere, that if my followers eat any deadly thing it shall not hurt them. This is what Cayce could NOT believe, because he could not see that, as a Son of God, he WAS invulnerable.” UR T 3 C 39

Here Jesus was referring to this scripture concerning believers:

“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Mark 16:18

So, if miracle workers accept the laws of God above the laws of the ego, they will be “invulnerable” and can even **“eat any deadly thing it shall not hurt them.”**

The question is – how many are awake enough to be invulnerable and not be subject to the laws of the ego? Even Socrates, as evolved as he was, died when he ate the poison hemlock. How many students do we know that are of the caliber of Socrates, let alone Jesus?

Apparently, just proclaiming that you believe is not enough. There are Christian groups that take this scripture seriously and handle deadly snakes to demonstrate their faith and some get bitten and die. While the Corona Virus has been raging, some Christian ministers have publicly declared they are invulnerable to it because of their faith, yet have caught it and died. The media loves to publish stories of such people and make light of their faith.

Yes, there have been many who fell short in their faith, but there have been a few who have not and many students of the Course have reported witnessing miracles in their lives. The problem, even for a strong believer who has witnessed some miracles, is this. Under the law of God there is no order of difficulty in miracles, but under the ego there definitely is. It is very difficult for the mind of even the most fervent believer of ACIM to fully accept that there is no order of difficulty.

He can therefore accept the idea that a certain disease may be cured by a miracle, but raising the dead or moving a mountain is another matter. How many can fully accept something like these that seems utterly impossible to the ego? None that I know of to the point where they can accomplish them. Or how about restoring the sight to one blind from birth as did Jesus?

For the rank-and-file students, letting go of this order of difficulty by the mind is a great obstacle, and though there may be some who make such claims, rare are the actual demonstrations of such power and invulnerability.

Fortunately, for those of us who have not yet reached invulnerability, the Course recognizes that most have need for some of the ego's magic. Many who seem spiritually evolved and shun orthodox treatments still wear glasses, take food supplements, and are selective about their diet. For those lacking in full-fledged faith in invulnerability, the Course indicates it is because we have a fear of using the mind to heal above applying medicines to the body. It says:

“If you are afraid to use the mind to heal, you should not attempt to do so. The very fact that you are afraid makes your mind vulnerable to miscreation. You are therefore likely to misunderstand any healing that might occur, and because egocentricity and fear usually occur together, you may be unable to accept the

real Source of the healing. Under these conditions, it is safer for you to rely temporarily on physical healing devices, because you cannot misperceive them as your own creations. As long as your sense of vulnerability persists, you should not attempt to perform miracles.” T-2.V.2

So, if we perceive ourselves vulnerable enough to need medicine, vaccinations or medical assistance to heal the body, an attempt at miracles may lead to “miscreation.” If nothing is impossible for the mind, then indeed, we must be careful what we create with our thoughts.

The Course adds this about orthodox treatments:

“All material means that you accept as remedies for bodily ills are restatements of magic principles. This is the first step in believing that the body makes its own illness. It is a second misstep to attempt to heal it through non-creative agents. It does not follow, however, that the use of such agents for corrective purposes is evil. Sometimes the illness has a sufficiently strong hold over the mind to render a person temporarily inaccessible to the Atonement. In this case it may be wise to utilize a compromise approach to mind and body, in which something from the outside is temporarily given healing belief. This is because the last thing that can help the non-right-minded, or the sick, is an increase in fear.” T-2.IV.4

Again, it associates the problem of vulnerability with fear. The problem is that fear is a very subtle thing, and many think they have no fear when they merely have fear that is suppressed that still makes them vulnerable. When the student still has vulnerabilities, we are told that the use of regular medicines is not evil, but may be the right thing to do because the “healing belief” is in the orthodox medicine. If that is where our belief is, then that is where we must go for treatment. If we believe in the medicine, the doctor or the vaccine, that is where the benefit may be until the student is able to place more faith in mind/spirit than directly treating the body.

“So do we lay aside our amulets, our charms and medicines, our chants and bits of magic in whatever form they take. We will be still and listen for the Voice of healing, which will cure all ills as one, restoring saneness to the Son of God. No voice but this can cure.” W-pI.140.10

The Course does give us an interesting hint as to how wrong thinking can cause physical problems. In speaking of Helen’s vision problems, it says:

The result is a kind of “double vision,” which would have produced an actual diplopia, if she had not settled for nearsightedness. This was an attempt to see the concrete more clearly through the ego’s eyes, without the “interference” of the longer range. Her virtual lack of astigmatism is due to her real efforts at objectivity and fairness. She has not attained them, or she would not be nearsighted. But she HAS tried to be fair with what she permitted herself to see. ... B., you were more capable of a longrange view, and that is why your eyesight is good. UR T 4 C 6&9

Notice how it tells us that physical vision problems corresponds to wrong thinking. Helen’s nearsightedness was caused by **“an attempt to see the concrete more clearly through the ego’s eyes, without the “interference” of the longer range.”**

In addition, **“Her virtual lack of astigmatism is due to her real efforts at objectivity and fairness.”**

Bill had good eyesight because he was **“capable of a longrange view.”**

This concept that physical problems correspond to misdirected thinking has been picked up by a number alternative healers and authors. It is said, for instance, that if we allow someone to bother us too much, we may develop a headache or pain in the neck, for we see them as a pain in the neck. If one doesn’t have the backbone to stand up for himself, he may develop back problems. If we let others get under our skin, we may develop skin problems. If another does not give love when needed, he could develop problems with the heart and so on. Fear is said to greatly lower our defenses against contagious diseases.

Numerous writers who have contemplated the mind/body connection have come up with corresponding wrong thinking behind every physical problem. It is an interesting subject that a student of ACIM might want to investigate.

CONCLUSION:

The Course presents a number of ideals concerning health and healing. Sometimes it makes it sound like students should have perfect health if they just grasp its basic elements. Other times it seems to tell us that healing others who are ill is a simple matter of following the teachings. These ideals cause some students to get a little frustrated with themselves.

Let me encourage all readers to forge ahead no matter how small or great your results have been so far. Very few have mastered the teachings to be able to perform

miracles as did Jesus in the Bible, but it is essential to keep in mind that he set the example of what all of us can and will eventually accomplish. The important thing is to honestly examine ourselves to see where we are now, and then to take the next step.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Mystery of Freedom

The Freedoms of Body and Mind

A reader may look at the title of this chapter and ask why we would attach the word “freedom” to mystery. Isn’t the meaning of freedom pretty simple and cut and dried?

Actually, there is great disagreement about the principle of freedom. Everyone claims to be for it, but there are many ideas about what it is and how it is to implemented.

It is interesting that many of those who are relegated to history as the greatest enemies of freedom claimed to be its champions. Hitler, in his rousing speeches, often presented himself as fighting for freedom. Slaveholders during the U.S. Civil War stressed that freedom was their cause. Fidel Castro claimed to be a freedom fighter before enslaving the people of Cuba.

The first question to be addressed when solving the mystery of freedom is why is it that the vast majority of people claim to support it when it is obvious that many do not?

The answer is actually quite simple and it comes down to looking at that which the ego values. The ego values freedom for the separated self in the body, even if it comes at great pain and loss of freedom to others. We are told that **“the rock on which its church is built, and where its worshippers are bound to bodies, believing the body's freedom is their own.”** T-22.III.4

On the other hand, the Course stresses equality, and the idea that helping our brother is the same as helping ourselves.

So, in this world we have two versions of what real freedom is:

Version One: The greatest freedom possible for the individual self with little regard for the price others have to pay.

Version Two: The highest quality of freedom for the whole, or that which brings the greatest amount of freedom for the highest number of people.

The second is, of course, the one that the spiritually-minded person would pick between the two.

On the other hand, the Course speaks of freedom from a higher level than we normally think of it in this world. It tells us that the most desirable freedom pertains to the mind, whereas the general idea of freedom in this world is centered on the body. It makes this statement:

“Do you want freedom of the body or of the mind? For both you cannot have. Which do you value? Where freedom of the body has been chosen, the mind is used as means whose value lies in its ability to contrive ways to achieve the body's freedom. Yet freedom of the body has no meaning, and so the mind is dedicated to serve illusions. T-22.VI.1-2

The Course teaches that we have the choice of freedom on two levels – that of the body and of the mind, and that we cannot choose both. We have to settle for one or the other.

Choosing freedom of the mind over body may seem to be a simple choice that many obviously make, but like many alternatives in ACIM, the correct choice is not that easy or that simple.

Here's what would happen if the student completely chose the mind over the body:

“Declare your innocence and you are free. The body disappears, because you have no need of it except the need the Holy Spirit sees.” W-pI.199.4

This is what ultimately happened to Jesus when his body disappeared in the tomb, but then he reappeared in it when there was a need.

Then there was a previous incident where his body disappeared. This was where the people of his home synagogue were enraged with his words and sought to kill him:

“And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way,” Luke 4:29-30

So, apparently Jesus was awake enough at this point that he was able to make his body dematerialize and then reappear beyond the reach of the mob.

Since they could not hurt his body unless he gave them the power, is it any wonder then that he had no fear?

The Course tells us numerous times that our fears are connected to the body and gives this advice:

“Those who would free their brothers from the body can have no fear. They have renounced the means for sin by choosing to let all limitations be removed. As they desire to look upon their brothers in holiness, the power of their belief and faith sees far beyond the body, supporting vision, not obstructing it.” T-21.III.8

When we are free from fears connected to the body, we have chosen **“to let all limitations be removed.”**

Think of how true this is and how free you would be if you had no concerns about your body. You could speak freely or do anything you want, and no one could imprison you or hurt you. Just imagine an ACIM graduate speaking out for his oppressed brothers in North Korea, and the Dear Leader being powerless to stop him or do anything to harm him. That would be fun to watch.

Or imagine if you were falsely accused and imprisoned. You could just pass through the midst of them as did Jesus, or through the walls of the prison itself as did Peter as related in Acts 12:4-11.

In addition, many fears connected with the body are related to pain and disease it can suffer. Think of how your sense of freedom would be enhanced if you had no concern in this regard. You would have no fear of infections, of disease or even accidents. Medical attention would not be needed at all.

And how about food, housing and money to supply the body’s needs? Even these would not be needed if we were free from the body.

“Think of the freedom in the recognition that you are not bound by all the strange and twisted laws you have set up to save you. You really think that you would starve unless you have stacks of green paper strips and piles of metal discs.” W-pI.76.3.

So here the Course tells us that if we were totally free from the body, we would not need money or the things money can buy such as food and shelter. Maybe this is why Jesus said:

“Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Matt 8:20.

One can imagine the possibility of doing without food, as some yogis claim to do, but doing without shelter seems impossible to many.

Yet, even here some have demonstrated the great power of mind over matter. Wim Hof, a Dutch athlete, has shown us what the power of mind can accomplish. Here are some of his accomplishments.

- Running a half marathon above the Arctic Circle, barefoot, only wearing shorts
- Swimming underneath ice for 66 meters
- Hanging on one finger at an altitude of 2,000 meters
- Climbing Mount Everest while wearing only shorts
- Running a full marathon in the Namib Desert without drinking any liquid.

He makes the interesting statement that he is not special because anyone can do what he has done.

As a result of his conquest of the limitations of the body, he says, “I am not afraid of death.”

If a student reads the choice between body and mind and assumes he has chosen mind, perhaps he needs to think again. After all, how many can climb Mount Everest in their shorts or do without food and water as some yogis are able to do?

Focusing on Mind Over the Body

What is unrealized by some students is that the end of the journey is often presented by ACIM, and many students are far from achieving the ideal presented.

The problem for students is when they read of the ideal in ACIM, they want to think that they are either there or an instant away from what is presented. They do not want to consider that they may be lifetimes away from the liberation presented.

The question then arises as to why ACIM would present the final liberation as if it is available right now. The answer is quite simple.

No matter how great or long is the journey, the one taking it must be able to see the end result in his mind, or he will get discouraged and not continue.

ACIM often presents the end goal as if it is available right now if a simple decision is made. Although it is true that it is a simple decision, it is not very simple from the view of one who is immersed in the dream.

Let us suppose you were on the edge of a cliff, and suddenly you hear an inner voice that tells you to jump and you will be safe because you will be able to fly.

It would be a simple and easy decision if you could fully accept and believe the voice, but for most of us it would be difficult to arrive at a state of consciousness where one could actually jump. Believing in theory that you could fly and fully trusting in that belief are two very different things.

Even so, casually believing what the Course says about obtaining freedom from the body by freeing the mind is easy, but placing that belief into practice requires some daring and difficult decisions. Believing that you are invulnerable as the Course teaches is one thing, but acting it out in bypassing doctors, vaccinations and medicine is something else.

Even though very few have yet achieved freedom from the needs of the body at present, the day will come when each of us will achieve this, and the belief in this possibility is what the Course is attempting to achieve. It is the way of things that one first has to believe that something is possible before he will eventually act and manifest that belief.

Students must see the desirability of freeing themselves from the needs of the body and believe that such a freedom is possible before they will decide and act in that direction. Eventually, all will have no concern about the body as mentioned here:

“Yet it is not the body that can fear, nor be a thing of fear. It has no needs but those which you assign to it. It needs no complicated structures of defense, no health-inducing medicine, no care and no concern at all.” W-pI.135.5

“As these (limits) are laid aside, the strength the body has will always be enough to serve all truly useful purposes. The body's health is fully guaranteed, because it is not limited by time, by weather or fatigue, by food and drink, or any laws

you made it serve before. You need do nothing now to make it well, for sickness has become impossible.” W-pI.136.17

We are told that we can choose to place our attention on freedom of the body or of the mind, but cannot do both. If our focus is on the body, then all our efforts will be centered on making the body comfortable and safe. Our focus will be on making sure the body has nice surroundings, good food and drink, good healthcare, medicine, suitable transportation and much more.

If our focus is on the mind, then we seek to do the will of God as revealed through the Holy Spirit. Jesus was directing us toward the freedom of the mind when he said this:

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Matt 6:24-34

These statements from Jesus in the Bible correspond very closely to many of the teachings in ACIM. For instance, Jesus here says to **“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.”**

This is confirmed in the Course:

“The Bible enjoins you to be perfect, to heal all errors, to take no thought of the body as separate and to accomplish all things in my name. This is not my name alone, for ours is a shared identification.” T-8.IX.7

“I am in need of nothing but the truth. My only need I did not recognize. But now I see that I need only truth. In that all needs are satisfied, all cravings end, all hopes are finally fulfilled and dreams are gone.” W-pII.251.1

This idea of taking no thought for the care or needs of the body is a difficult one for both Christians and ACIM students to accept or explain. Instead of teaching anything that could justify neglect of the body, the emphasis is usually placed on the positive statements of Jesus such as this from the above quote: **“seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

ACIM students also place emphasis on positive statements such as:

“In time, He gives you all the things that you need have, and will renew them as long as you have need of them. He will take nothing from you as long as you have any need of it.” T-13.VII.12

So, what is the correct path to take here? Are we supposed to overlook the body to the point of neglect, or are we supposed to have a prosperity consciousness focusing on abundance in all things as many teach?

The correct path, according to the Course, is to place attention on freedom of the mind. That is a choice to be made, for we cannot simultaneously place focus on both mind and body freedom.

Freedom of the body is pretty easy to understand. It includes the taking care of the body so it has no needs and is free to do whatever the ego directs. On the other hand, freedom of the mind is more esoteric. We need to clearly understand what the Course means by this if we are to choose it.

The Laws of the Ego vs Laws of God

The Course teaches that our shared mind is an extension of the mind of God and has power to make any idea real that it desires. At the Separation, the mind decided to make the unreal seem real and the universe of time and space was created. Thus, the mind made the unreal while still retaining its power to create the real, but it **“cannot**

serve two masters.” T-1.V.5 It therefore has to focus on what the Course calls “miscreation” in one direction or “creation” in the other. The result is “the mind is split between the ego and the Holy Spirit,” T-3.VI.7

The natural inclination is to choose freedom of the body supported by the ego, for if any pain is involved, we automatically seek to free the body from it. The Course tells us that true freedom is found in choosing freedom of the mind. This is found by following the Holy Spirit which represents right-mindedness and leads toward true creation.

So, the Holy Spirit represents right-mindedness and true creation, whereas the ego wrong-mindedness and miscreation. Even though it has us convinced it represents freedom of the body, following it only brings pain, disease and death of the body.

Following right-mindedness through the Holy Spirit may seem neglectful and careless, but if the student does it with a firm decision he will not only heal his mind but a heal his body as well. The mind has power to heal the body, but the body has no power over the mind. Therefore, it makes more sense, even from a material viewpoint, to seek freedom of the mind rather than freedom of the body as the top priority.

This is easier said than done, for as soon as any pain arises in the body what do we do? Do we first seek to heal the mind or do we reach in the medicine chest for pills and make an appointment with the doctor? If this is the first thing we do, then our prime choice is freedom for the body over freedom of the mind.

The reason this is so is because all the effects in the body are produced by the mind. If we choose something not related to mind to cure something caused by mind, then we are deceived into thinking freedom can be found on the material level rather than the spiritual, by the ego rather than the Holy Spirit.

The choice between freedom of mind and body comes down to a choice between the law of God and mind vs the ego and the body.

The Course tells us that we have made up all kinds of laws governing the body which we are deceived into thinking we must obey. It speaks of:

“different kinds of ‘laws’ we have believed we must obey. These would include, for example, the ‘laws’ of nutrition, of immunization, of medication, and of the body's protection in innumerable ways... Dismiss all foolish magical beliefs

today... Hear Him Who tells you this, and realize how foolish are the ‘laws’ you thought upheld the world you thought you saw.” W-pI.76.8 & 10

“Think of the freedom in the recognition that you are not bound by all the strange and twisted laws you have set up to save you.” W-pI.76.3

What is often overlooked is that all but a very small handful of people on this planet place the laws of the body above the laws of mind. Who among us is completely unconcerned about taking care of the body and its comfort and shelter and is entirely reliant on the laws of God? Chances are the reader knows of no one. Yet the Course tells us that we are to be **“under no laws but God's.”**

“Here is the perfect statement of my freedom. I am under no laws but God's. I am constantly tempted to make up other laws and give them power over me. I suffer only because of my belief in them. They have no real effect on me at all. I am perfectly free of the effects of all laws save God's. And His are the laws of freedom.” W-pI.88.3

The problem is that in the true reality God’s laws **“are the laws of freedom,”** but though that seems to sound good in theory, it doesn’t seem real in practice. Who, for instance, being diagnosed with a terminal disease, will seek to first obey the laws of God over the laws of the ego? Who would completely reject all medical treatments and seek to heal the mind first?

Not many.

Yet the Course tells us that this is where true freedom lies.

The Course explains why the understanding and thus the choice for the laws of God is so difficult:

“The Holy Spirit is the Translator of the laws of God to those who do not understand them. You could not do this yourself because a conflicted mind cannot be faithful to one meaning, and will therefore change the meaning to preserve the form.” T-7.II.4

Here we learn that if we try to understand the laws of freedom on our own that we will fail. We need the Holy Spirit to be a “translator” for us. Without this translation from Spirit to our regular consciousness we will choose the laws of the ego every time, **“and will therefore change the meaning to preserve the form.”**

This last quote is a key one. For, when we choose the laws of the ego for safety over the laws of God, we tend to rationalize and **“change the meaning to preserve the form.”**

For instance, the student will say something like this: “Of course, I am going to take my medications. The Course doesn’t tell me to kill myself.”

He thus changes the meaning of the laws of God to the laws of form, thinking to “preserve the form.”

Between the body and the mind, the mind is the better choice because:

“The higher mind thinks according to the laws spirit obeys, and therefore honors only the laws of God.” T-5.I.1

BUT...

“Fidelity to other laws is also possible, however, not because the laws are true, but because you made them.” T-6.IV.11

We tend to favor the laws we made which separate us from God, yet we are encouraged to switch to eternal laws by this:

“In the holy instant the laws of God prevail, and only they have meaning. The laws of this world cease to hold any meaning at all. When the Son of God accepts the laws of God as what he gladly wills, it is impossible that he be bound, or limited in any way. In that instant he is as free as God would have him be. For the instant he refuses to be bound, he is not bound.” T-15.VI.5

And this...

“God's laws will keep your mind at peace because peace is His Will, and His laws are established to uphold it. His are the laws of freedom, but yours are the laws of bondage. Since freedom and bondage are irreconcilable, their laws cannot be understood together. The laws of God work only for your good, and there are no other laws beside His. Everything else is merely lawless and therefore chaotic.” T-10.IV.4

Then we are told this:

“You must choose between total freedom and total bondage, for there are no alternatives but these.” T-15.X.9.

The problem that makes the choice for freedom difficult is that neglecting the laws governing the body seems to be very dangerous and careless. For instance, many seem to strongly depend on certain medications, and without them they will seem to suffer great distress or even death.

If another gets cancer, then he may feel he has no choice except to place his faith in medical professionals. How many of us have made such a firm decision in favor of the laws of God that we need pay no attention to the laws governing the body? Who among us could drink poison with no negative effects as mentioned by Jesus?

The Goal of True Freedom

The Course tends to simplify all we need to do to obtain healing, freedom, liberation, heaven etc. It reduces these seemingly giant steps to a simple decision. It encourages us to make the right decision and in an instant transformation will occur.

This is indeed true in principle, and we can see why the Course presents it this way. It is deemed wise to present the ultimate goal before us as if it is now, in the present time, for, as the Course says, **“The present is the only time there is.”** W-pI.164.1 By keeping the goal before us at all times, it gives us something positive to advance toward so more progress is taken in each life. Rarely does the Course give a hint at the idea that the journey home will take a significant amount of time, but it makes an exception here:

“Just as the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.” T-2.VIII.2

So, here we are told that the Separation took millions of years and the journey home may take even longer. But, even though the journey is long, when the student is ready, he can make the right decision in an instant and in that instant transformation can occur.

Any of us could return home tomorrow if we were completely ready to give up all things in this world of time and space, but such relinquishment is much easier said than done, and many who think they are ready are far from it.

Even so, it is always important to keep the end goal before us as the Course does. As a result, it says that it can shorten the time that we have to spend in this world.

The problem of gaining the greater freedom of the higher mind boils down to this. We seem to be in a body and there seems to be a necessity to pay attention to it, take care of it and keep it safe. If there is any problem with the body, our attention is naturally drawn to it. Helen and Bill had this problem, for they were told:

“You have been told again and again that it (the Course) will set you free, yet you sometimes react as if it is trying to imprison you.” T-13.II.7

Indeed, many feel their imprisonment will be greater if they do not pay sufficient attention to the body.

Fortunately, there is a realization that will make this possible and it is this: The Higher Mind is linked to the Holy Spirit. The will of the higher mind is one with the Holy Spirit, which is one with God. In this state of unity all that you will is fulfilled. Are you going to will that your body be healthy and usable or in pain and a diseased state?

You will have full power to keep your body healthy and vital for as long as it is needed. This teaching was covered in our chapter on health.

What requires a leap of faith is this: The student must switch his attention away from the body and the cares of the world to rely on the direction of the Holy Spirit through the higher mind.

“Say to the Holy Spirit only, ‘Decide for me,’ and it is done. For His decisions are reflections of what God knows about you, and in this light, error of any kind becomes impossible.” T-14.III.16

When you and the Spirit become one, then all decisions are made in the direction of the kingdom of God and not of the body, or of this world. When this is the case, all that is required for a happy existence will be supplied. You will not have to concern yourself with doctors, medicines or special care.

Jesus said it well here:

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like

one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matt 6:28-30

By switching our focus away from the cares of the world to the kingdom of God and the higher mind, we will be richer than Solomon, and all our needs will be fulfilled, but in the higher state we will define needs much differently than does the ego. We will value treasure in heaven much more than the treasures of the earth.

As we noted earlier, when a full awakening has occurred, there will be no concern for the body, for no one would have power to hurt or imprison it. We would be free beyond our wildest dreams here. There would be no need for healing the body for it would never get sick, and the realized Son of God could keep it as long as needed. He could even make it disappear as a dream disappears when awakening, but then make it appear in another location by entering the dream again in service of those still in illusion.

The Course speaks of reaching this realized state as if it is just a simple decision. It makes it sound like we just have to make the obvious decision and we are there in an instant, and the dream is completely over.

Yes, when the final and complete decision is made to let go of the world, this will be the case but overlooked by many students is this: We have millions of years invested in this dream of time and space, and when such a major investment is made, there is a great reluctance to just let it go. This is why the Course tells us it may take a longer time to wake up than it did to separate and go to sleep.

The Course makes no itemization of steps that need to be taken to fully awaken, though it does cover many things we can do in different places in the text. When we reflect on our own progress, it becomes obvious that there are steps and degrees of awakening to full freedom.

There is one major step mentioned by the Course, and that is an advancement of our attention from this world to what it calls the "Real World." As discussed earlier, the real world is not yet heaven, but those achieving it see with much greater clarity than those who have their attention on the dream. Nevertheless, the fact that it exists tells us that there is a step between heaven and earth. And if there is one, there could be many more.

I submit that there are many steps, but to keep our attention in the right place, ACIM places major focus on the last step.

Some of the steps are obvious, such as learning to forgive our brothers and sisters, overcoming fear and guilt, letting go of grievances, seeing innocence in associates, etc. Perhaps the most important step is to realize that more is needed than taught in mainstream religion when the person becomes a seeker, wanting to know who he really is.

Obtaining the Highest Freedom

To discover one's true identity requires an advance in freedom, for until the seeker makes a break from outer authorities (called idols by ACIM), he has limited freedom indeed. The various governments of the world allow different degrees of freedom for the body, and many who live in Democracies feel fortunate that they are "free." But even a perfect society can offer only limited freedom of the body if the mind is not free.

"An 'imprisoned' mind is not free because it is possessed, or held back, by itself. It is therefore limited, and the will is not free to assert itself." T-3.II.4

The question that needs answered is how is the mind imprisoned and how is it freed?

As the quote says, the mind is the source of its own imprisonment. If the seeker is held prisoner by the mind, then he is not free in any society. Here are some examples. Assume that each of these lives are in a free country.

Jim is a member of a cult that is very strict about those with whom members can associate. The cult leader tells Jim that his parents are too far removed from the truth and he must cut off ties. Jim loves his parents and doesn't want to disown them, but because the leader supposedly speaks for God, Jim obeys.

Gloria has a job she loves but her boss keeps making unwanted sexual advances. She is afraid to say anything for fear of losing her job. She feels trapped.

Bob was just elected to Congress and starts his job with a desire to do the right thing for the people no matter what. Shortly thereafter the party leaders sit him down and explain how things work. Bob must become a team player and vote the party line no matter what. If he doesn't, he will receive no support for reelection, no leadership

positions and will be shunned by members of his party. Bob feels violated but figures he must play along even though he votes contrary to his belief system at times.

Veronica is a serious Course in Miracles student and is approached by a homeless guy in obvious need of assistance. He asks her if she can spare \$5. After adjusting to his somewhat startling ragged appearance, she thinks to herself: "This is not real. This is just a dream. It doesn't mean anything. Nothing here has even happened." She then ignores him, moving on, keeping her \$5 since giving it away does not matter.

All these examples have one thing in common. The person in each of them is not in prison because of any government or political system, but is held hostage through his own miscreations and wrong-headed thinking.

To obtain the higher freedom mentioned by the Course, the student must rely on the inner voice over the many outer ones that compete for his attention. When the shift is made to rely on the higher mind, he will then have power to ignore the preacher, the politician, the media or even the book that tells him what he must do. He is independent of all things in the dream, and follows solid direction from the Holy Spirit through the higher mind.

Making this switch will give the student power over his own life and happiness today, and expand to total control even to power over death in the future.

It is interesting to contemplate how free one would feel if he had no concern at all for the care or protection of the body.

A question considered by some students is how involved we should be in improving this world of form and whether we should even be concerned about physical freedom as it is generally understood.

Yes, it is true that one who is totally awake is also totally free and does not need to worry about this world, but those who are not yet liberated find they have to take certain steps to ensure the body stays healthy and the individual maintains his freedom.

The loss of freedom, even as it is understood by the world, hinders the liberations of the Sons of God as a whole. After all, how many Course in Miracles books do you suppose there are in North Korea? Pretty close to zero because freedom for the body there is very low.

Freedom on every level possible is important to insure maximum spiritual progression for the whole. We are told this:

“Freedom cannot be learned by tyranny of any kind, and the perfect equality of all God's Sons cannot be recognized through the dominion of one mind over another.” T-8.IV.6

Notice here that tyranny happens because of the dominion of one mind over another. This can happen through domination of others with a belief system, as happens with a cult leader, or with political restrictions on what people in bodies can do such as North Korea. Dominion of one mind over another reaches down to the physical level, and such dominion needs to be corrected wherever it manifests.

The Course recognizes that such hurtful things can descend to the body level:

“The body in the service of the ego can hurt other bodies, but this cannot occur unless the body has already been confused with the mind.” T-7.V.3

The Course tells us our wills can be imprisoned:

“You have imprisoned your will beyond your own awareness, where it remains, but cannot help you.” T-9.I.4

“How wonderful it is to do your will! For that is freedom. There is nothing else that ever should be called by freedom's name. Unless you do your will you are not free.” T-30.II.2.

In addition to this it says:

“The Holy Spirit opposes any imprisoning of the will of a Son of God, knowing that the Will of the Son is the Father's. The Holy Spirit leads you steadily along the path of freedom, teaching you how to disregard or look beyond everything that would hold you back.” T-8.II.4

This has to be referring to the imprisoned will here in the illusion because: **“In the holy state the will is free, so that its creative power is unlimited.” T-5.II.6**

But here on earth, **“There is no man who does not feel that he is imprisoned in some way. If this is the result of his own free will, he must regard his will as if**

it were not free, or the obviously circular reasoning involved in his position would be quite apparent. Free will must lead to freedom.” Tx:3.71

The only place where there is a lack of freedom is in the world of illusion. It is here where we need more freedom, not in the eternal world. One of the steps to true freedom involves freeing up the body with the mind. As the mind becomes free, the body automatically becomes healed and the removal of restrictions seemingly placed by other minds are also removed.

These words of wisdom on freedom are appropriate:

“Whom God created as His Son is slave to nothing, being lord of all, along with his Creator. You can enslave a body, but an idea is free, incapable of being kept in prison or limited in any way except by the mind that thought it. For it remains joined to its source, which is its jailer or its liberator, according to which it chooses as its purpose for itself.” T-19.I.16.

Because ideas are free, their communication and free flow are among the most beneficial things we can participate in within the illusion. Many there are who try to restrict, censor or prohibit the free flow of ideas, and this is indeed an error that needs correction.

We’ll conclude with this quote which gives the goal of the Course itself, which is to set us free toward happiness and peace.

“This course has explicitly stated that its goal for you is happiness and peace. Yet you are afraid of it. You have been told again and again that it will set you free, yet you sometimes react as if it is trying to imprison you.” T-13.II.7

Chapter Twenty-Five

The Great Mystery: Did Anything Happen?

Understanding the Illusion

We have discussed in previous chapters about what is real and what is not, and as to whether anything has happened or not. Yet, diverse interpretations of students around these ideas are so persistent that the subject seems to warrant a more in-depth investigation.

If the student believes that he has not left heaven, nothing has happened and he is not here, then nothing in this world means anything – even ACIM would be meaningless if we take this idea to the extreme. Glomming on too tightly to this belief can cause numerous problems in this world. The student may find himself ignoring the problems of life as they come up because they are seen as not real, as well as having difficulty in communicating with the people of the world who are also not real and have never studied ACIM.

An outside observer may wonder how on earth someone could acquire such strange beliefs. The answer is that some passages in ACIM seem to teach that nothing here exists, and it was delivered by none other than Jesus as a supreme authority. It is the thinking of many that if Jesus said it, then it would be wrong to doubt.

If the student is afraid to be skeptical of controversial statements because of the divine authority behind them, then perhaps he can turn his skepticism on himself and ask if he is really correctly understanding what is being presented. Is it possible the Course is not saying what he thinks it is saying?

Truly this must be the case, for there is much disagreement among students in interpreting some of the teachings. If two views oppose each other, either one or both of them has to be false. One of my favorite quotes from the Course is, “**truth is true, and nothing else is true... there is no contradiction to the truth.**” W-pI.138.4

We see things differently using our lower minds, but this need not be the case as a solution is available through the Holy Spirit:

“We have one Interpreter. And through His use of symbols are we joined, so that they mean the same to all of us. Our common language lets us speak to all our brothers, and to understand with them.” T-30.VII.7

We can reach a point where the symbols of our language can mean the same to all of us if we unite through the “one Interpreter.” To steer us in that direction let us look at what the whole of the Course says about being here.

Probably the most confusing and the cause of numerous conflicting interpretations are the statements from the Course suggesting that the separation never happened and we are not here. We are not even in bodies.

Here is a quote suggesting the separation never happened.

“The full awareness of the Atonement, then, is the recognition that the separation never occurred. The ego cannot prevail against this because it is an explicit statement that the ego never occurred. The ego can accept the idea that return is necessary because it can so easily make the idea seem difficult. Yet the Holy Spirit tells you that even return is unnecessary, because what never happened cannot be difficult.” T-6.II.10-11

After reading this, one might ask that if the ego never existed, then why does it talk about the ego as if it does exist, even telling us that “the ego cannot prevail” and what “The ego can accept”? How does something that does not exist “prevail” and “accept”?

As far as not being here, it tells us that our **“world ... is not here, although it seems to be.” W-pI.155.1**

“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” T-13.VII.17

Then this one seems to be a real clincher:

“There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach.” W-pI.132.6

But a few sentences later it adds this explanation:

“There is no world apart from your ideas because ideas leave not their source, and you maintain the world within your mind in thought.” W-pI.132.6

It is interesting that this world is created by our “ideas.” It is also notable that everything is created by ideas. The whole universe of time and space as well as the separation is the result of a “mad idea.”

Even God and ourselves as Sons of God are ideas:

“God is an idea, and so your faith in Him is strengthened by sharing. What you find difficult to accept is the fact that, like your Father, you are an idea.” T-15.VI.4

All ideas come directly or indirectly from the mind of God accompanied by the power of God to make them at least seem real. Even the Ego is an idea with divine power:

“All that the ego is, is an idea...” T-21.II.6

“had the ego willed to do so, it COULD have made the eternal, because, as a product of the mind, it IS endowed with the power of its own creator.” UR T 4 F 13

The big question is what is the difference between an idea that is real and one which is not real, as all ideas are manifestations of the mind of God accompanied by unlimited power? The Course does not address this directly, but does indirectly in discussing the difference between the real and the unreal.

The Course tells us that our bodies, which certainly seem to be here, are not here at all according to some statements in the Course:

“At no single instant does the body exist at all. It is always remembered or anticipated, but never experienced just now.” T-18.VII.3

In addition to this we are not in our bodies:

“The Christ in you inhabits not a body. Yet He is in you. And thus it must be that you are not within a body.” T-25.in.1

Yet, even though we are not in a body that is not there, it is still an idea and all ideas carry with them the unlimited power of God and creation to make thinking real:

“so does the body testify to the idea that made it.” T-24.VII.10

So, all creation whether it be in heaven, in the real world, or in the illusion, is the result of the manifestation of ideas. In fact, **“Everything is an idea,”** T-5.I.2 and...

“Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them. Ideas are of the mind. What is projected out, and seems to be external to the mind, is not outside at all, but an effect of what is in, and has not left its source.”
T-26.VII.4

So, all creation, real and unreal, comes from ideas which come from mind. Many seem to be external but are not and are projected by the all-powerful universal mind of which we are a part. Projection produces the real and the unreal - **“We once said that without projection there can be no anger, but it is also true that without projection there can be no love. Projection is a fundamental law of the mind, and therefore one which ALWAYS operates.”** UR T 7 I 1

The Real and the Unreal

To understand the phrase “leave not their source,” we could compare our world to how a virtual reality game works. Once you put on the gear, create an avatar and start playing, it will seem like the game is real and external to your eyes. But then as soon as it is turned off, the whole thing which seemed to be out there is just gone.

Where did it go?

You look at the computer or the device that houses the game, but even that is not the game. Then you think of the code that manifests the game, but where did that come from?

It came from an idea of the invisible mind as does everything in creation. Your game which seemed to be real and out there has never really left its source, which is mind.

When we then talk of the world, bodies’ appearance, etc. not being here the question arises as to whether anything is anywhere. After all, the Course tells us that even **“Heaven is not a place nor a condition.”** T-18.VI.1

So, technically, if we use the language of the Course, one could say that not only are we, our bodies and the world not here, but nothing is here, or anywhere that could be considered a place. All that exists in the true reality then are ideas, mind, and spirit, and that which they manifest.

If nothing is really here, there or anywhere but everything is an idea, whether it is in heaven or earth, then what is the difference between that labeled real and not real according to the Course?

Here is the answer:

“Here is the paradox that underlies the making of the world. This world is not the Will of God, and so it is not real. Yet those who think it real must still believe there is another will, and one that leads to opposite effects from those He wills. Impossible indeed; but every mind that looks upon the world and judges it as certain, solid, trustworthy and true believes in two creators; or in one, himself alone. But never in one God.” W-pI.166.2

So, there it is. The world we see is not real because it **“is not the Will of God.”**

So, to be classified as real, it has to be a creation in alignment with God’s will. Furthermore:

“Since creative ability rests in the mind, everything you create is necessarily a matter of will. It also follows that whatever you alone make is real in your own sight, though not in the Mind of God.” T-2.VIII.1

Those things we make “alone” or with a view of separation are not considered real. True or real creation involves wholeness:

“The full power of creation cannot be expressed as long as any of God's ideas is withheld from the Kingdom. The joint will of the Sonship is the only creator that can create like the Father, because only the complete can think completely, and the thinking of God lacks nothing. Everything you think that is not through the Holy Spirit is lacking.” T-5.IV.7

The key phrase here is **“The joint will of the Sonship is the only creator that can create like the Father.”**

To create the real, one has to not seek anything for the separated self, but be in alignment with the life of the whole Sonship, which in turn is in alignment with God.

This explains a statement of Jesus in the Bible:

“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself”. John 5:19

John the Baptist said something similar:

“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” John 3:27

In this world people do and receive all kinds of things but unless they are in alignment with the will of God they are not counted as real.

“And what is real except the creations of God and those that are created like His?” T-8.VI.5

The problem from the standpoint of reality is that we have free will and can use our Godlike powers to do anything. We can even use them to create contrary to the will of God. The Course tells us that the problem is that there can be no real creation that runs contrary to divine, will so any such creation becomes unreal or illusion, or like a dream that seems real.

The basic quality of real creations is that they are eternal, whereas the unreal are in time and space and are temporary with a beginning and an end. Even **“The stars will disappear, and night and day will be no more.” T-29.VI.2**

“Only an instant does this world endure.” Lesson 300

“You have made many ideas that you have placed between yourself and your Creator, and these beliefs are the world as you perceive it.” T-11.VII.4

So, we have established the basic difference between what is real and what is not, as defined by the Course. But the question is this. Does defining something as not real mean that it has no effects or any kind of existence at all? Rather than telling us that our world has no existence on any level, is it not more probable that the point is to emphasize the fact that our world is an illusion from which we can awaken to a much greater reality?

When we awaken from a nighttime dream we may say, “Wow, that seemed real but it didn’t really happen.”

When you say it didn’t happen are you saying that you never even had the dream?

Of course not.

Then what are you saying then?

You are not saying that the dream itself never happened. Instead, you are saying that it did not happen in your waking state. Our dreams definitely happen and we can even remember some of them, and they may have an influence on us, but if one dreams of robbing a bank and ending up in jail, he may exclaim upon awakening, "I'm glad that didn't happen." But it did happen in the dream state, and this can even be acknowledged in the waking state. That is the point to bear in mind as we search out the true reality of how real or not this world is.

So yes, it is true that this world did not happen and does not exist in the true reality of Spirit or the eternal world, but the question is how much reality does it have when taking all things into consideration and pondering the effects of a dream? Has anything occurred?

Just like we do with an unusual dream where at one time we may speak of it as if it is something that didn't happen, but then another time we may speak of it as if it did, and even discuss its effects, even so does ACIM talk about our world. Sometimes it speaks of it as if it does not exist, but then other times it speaks of it in detail as if it is very real. This closely corresponds to how we handle our own nighttime dreams. They seem real on one level but on another they are not.

Something Did Happen

Are there references then in the Course that indicate that something did happen?

Indeed. Right off the bat in describing the initial separation, the event is treated as a real happening.

"Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh. In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects." T-27.VIII.6

Obviously, this is a description of a real event described as a **"serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects."** We are also told it **"shattered heaven."** T-18.I.12. Something that could shatter heaven would be a pretty big deal.

That is not how you describe something that has no existence on any level. Also note that it was an “idea” and remember that **“Everything is an idea,”** T-5.I.2 Even God is an idea. All ideas have some sort of reality.

Concerning ideas it is written:

“You can enslave a body, but an idea is free, incapable of being kept in prison or limited in any way except by the mind that thought it. For it remains joined to its source, which is its jailer or its liberator, according to which it chooses as its purpose for itself.” T-19.I.16.

Because the separation and creation of our world is an idea from the divine mind of the Son it is **“free, incapable of being kept in prison or limited in any way except by the mind that thought it.”**

Indeed, when we look at this world, life in it and the perceived universe of galaxies we see that this idea has been quite unlimited. It took more than a passing thought to put together a single strand of DNA, let alone billions of galaxies. Some in heaven might have considered this a mad idea just because of how great the undertaking would be.

It is interesting that even passages that say nothing happened still tell us of something happening, such as:

“Nothing at all has happened but that you have put yourself to sleep, and dreamed a dream in which you were an alien to yourself, and but a part of someone else's dream.” T-28.II.4

Essentially, this passage is saying that nothing happened, but then something did happen. That which happened was that we put ourselves to sleep and dreamed up a universe of time and space.

This passage does a similar thing:

“Your starting point is truth, and you must return to your Beginning. Much has been seen since then, but nothing has really happened.” T-3.VII.5

Again, it says nothing happened but while nothing was happening it tells us **“Much has been seen.”** Maybe it wasn't seen in heaven, but it was certainly a happening in the mind where all ideas originate.

Then there is this about our world:

“It seems to you the world will utterly abandon you if you but raise your eyes. Yet all that will occur is you will leave the world forever.” T-19.IV.D.6

Here it speaks of an occurrence. And what is that? It is that **“you will leave the world.”**

How can you leave something that does not exist on any level? How could leaving nothing be an occurrence or happening?

Then when we leave this world, there is something happening in heaven:

“There is a hush in Heaven, a happy expectancy, a little pause of gladness in acknowledgment of the journey's end. For Heaven knows you well, as you know Heaven” T-19.IV.A.6.

Why would heaven be glad and give “acknowledgment” to finishing a journey that never happened and does not exist?

Obviously, the “acknowledgment” is to something that did happen.

There are many other happenings spoken of by the Course which relates to our world. We are told that judgment **“was brought into being only after the separation, when it became one of the many learning devices to be built into the overall plan.” T-2.VIII.2.**

So, because of this separation, which many maintain did not happen at all, there was created an “overall plan” which caused judgment to come into being.

The text continues:

“Just as the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.”

Here it says point blank “the separation occurred.” Not only did it occur, but the occurrence lasted millions of years and will take millions more to solve the problem.

Solving this problem involves the creation of an “overall plan” as just mentioned. Why create a plan to solve a problem that does not exist? Obviously on some level, there was a real problem and a plan was needed. And who came up with the plan?

There is a **“plan of God for your salvation.”** T-21.V.6

“You have not been asked to work out the plan of salvation yourself because, as I told you before, the remedy could not be of your making. God Himself gave you the perfect Correction for everything you made that is not in accord with His holy Will. I am making His plan perfectly explicit to you, and will also tell you of your part in it, and how urgent it is to fulfill it.” T-5.VII.4

A plan for salvation was a major ingredient:

“Salvation is my only function here. Salvation and forgiveness are the same. They both imply that something has gone wrong; something to be saved from, forgiven for; something amiss that needs corrective change; something apart or different from the Will of God. Thus do both terms imply a thing impossible but yet which has occurred, resulting in a state of conflict seen between what is and what could never be. Truth and illusions both are equal now, for both have happened. The impossible becomes the thing you need forgiveness for, salvation from.” W-pI.99.2

The main purpose of the Course is to bring us salvation, which it says is our only function here, and salvation itself implies **“a thing impossible but yet which has occurred.”** This creates the situation where, **“Truth and illusions both are equal now, for both have happened.”**

So, God Himself created a plan to bring us home after this real, but unreal separation occurred. The first step in this plan was the plan of Atonement and the creation of the Holy Spirit. No matter how you look at it by any standard of interpreting ACIM, the creation of the Holy Spirit was real, and it was only created to deal with the supposedly unreal problem of the separation.

“So God created the “Holy Spirit, Who was God's answer to the separation.”
T-17.IV.4

If the separation had not happened, then there would have been no need to create the Holy Spirit. But the fact that a real and eternal creation was made in response to the separation tells us that something indeed did happen. God would not create an eternal and real response to something that literally did not happen and never existed.

In fact, we are told that without the creation of the Holy Spirit, the separation would have lasted forever and we would never return to heaven:

“He has created the Holy Spirit as the Mediator between perception and knowledge. Without this link with God, perception would have replaced knowledge FOREVER IN YOUR MIND. With this link with God, perception will become so changed and purified that it will lead to knowledge.” W-pI.43.1

Fortunately, **“there is no possibility that the plan the Holy Spirit offers to everyone, for the salvation of everyone, will not be perfectly accomplished.” T-13.XI.11**

Looks like we dodged a bullet thanks to the creation of the Holy Spirit.

Not only does the Holy Spirit play a role in the plan, but so do we.

“To each He gives a special function in salvation he alone can fill; a part for only him. Nor is the plan complete until he finds his special function, and fulfills the part assigned to him, to make himself complete within a world where incompleteness rules.” T-25.VI.4

Each of us has a “part assigned” as part of the plan. We must find our “special function” and fulfill it.

There could be no plan or special role for us to play in it if it were in response to pure nothingness. Something had to happen to cause such a response,

Then, as we covered earlier, the whole separation corresponds to the parable of the Prodigal Son. Part of the Sonship separated and the rest, along with angels, tried to save them but were unable to. As a result, God was **“lonely without His Sons” T-2.III.5**. He therefore created a plan along with the Holy Spirit to assist.

Does all this sound like nothing literally happened? Indeed, it sounds like a whole lot has happened, but because the happening involved the entering of illusion we can say nothing happened which has an eternal effect in heaven, which is the true implication of the Course.

Where And When Are We?

There is disagreement among students as to whether we are in some place other than earth or heaven, as well as whether we are even in time.

If they think that nothing happened and the world does not exist, then it does make sense that we cannot be somewhere that has no existence.

To the contrary, we have pointed out that such statements by the Course are relative and have to be interpreted in context with other statements in the opposite direction.

The Course defines reality as that which is eternal. Anything that is not eternal is not defined as having a real existence. For instance, according to the Course, the physical body is not eternal and **“does not exist.”** T-6.V.A.2 and **“The world you see does not exist.”** T-28.V.7

A black-and-white interpretation misses the relativity factor as well as the fact that ACIM has its own peculiar definition of what real existence is.

It is merely telling us that our world of time and space has no existence that has anything to do with the eternal world. This does not mean it does not have an existence on another level. The fact that we seem to be here testifies that this reality has happened and the Mind of the Son has made it real for us.

The Course tells us that both heaven and earth do “exist” but “as separate states.”

““Heaven and earth shall pass away”” means that they will not continue to exist as separate states.” T-1.III.2

The other disagreement centers around time. The problem comes from the teaching that **“there is no time.”** T-27.VIII.6 and **“Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion in which figures come and go as if by magic.”** W-pI.158.3 **“What you remember never was. It came from causelessness which you confused with cause.”** T-28.I.9

But then it explains it in a way that us regular mortals can understand:

“Whenever we move from one instant to the next, the previous one no longer exists.” UR T 3 C 34 **“The present is the only time there is.”** W-pI.164.1

We can relate to this in our reality of time and space, for we understand that the past only lives in our memories and if we got amnesia then there would be no past and it would be as if it did not exist, or time as we know it would not exist.

Jesus in the Course even acknowledges this:

“There was a past, but it does not matter. It does not explain the present or account for the future.” Chapter 5 Section 7 COA

But the past and time itself happens in our minds:

“the past has gone. It never happened in reality. Only in your mind, which thought it did,” T-18.IV.8

Time not only happens in our minds but the mind is responsible for the manifestation of any possible idea from the life of God through the Father - or the Son in His right or wrong mind.

The confusion with time is exacerbated by the teaching concerning the separation stating that **“In time this happened very long ago. In reality it never happened at all.”** M-2.2

Then some think that we are told that our present lives (that do not exist) are a replay of events from the ancient past. This is due largely to this passage we covered somewhat in the chapter on The Bold Adventure.

“Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now. ... The world of time is the world of illusion. What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach.” M-2.3 & 4

The idea some get from this is that the separation was completely over eons ago. Our current dream and life as well as all lives on the planet were lived way back then, and for some unexplained reason we are pretending to live them again. It is as if we were in a movie theater watching a movie of our past life. Everything has already been filmed and we think we are the characters therein. If your character decides to go shopping at 3 PM Thursday then there is no way you can decide otherwise because the movie has already been filmed and there's no changing it. You just think you make decisions in your life which is already set in a movie.

Believers in this idea overlook the really crazy thing in the text that **“an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now.”**

So, here's what we are supposed to believe with this interpretation. The separation along with the dream of this universe began and ended long ago. We are not here; we are no longer dreaming and have awakened and are with God in heaven. Even though the Course says there is no past in heaven, for some odd reason we are obsessed with the past and through our own freewill we watch this film of our lives **"again and again and still again."** In the process of watching this film we get so engrossed that we completely identify with our old selves. That is what we are doing now. We have identified with the movie so much we think we are back there again.

When you think of it, this is an illusion that tops the illusion of the separation itself.

For one thing, we are told that this dream we entered is no fun picnic, but an insane nightmare full of pain, hatred, guilt and death. If we have already been through all the drama and are aware of all of our lives from beginning to end why then would we want to go to these strange movies, forget heaven, identify with our old selves and suffer all over again and again for millions of years?

This sounds like one of most sinister versions of hell that one could imagine.

Our worst nightmares here in this reality are better than this supposed movie we are watching in heaven. Here, when we have a nightmare and awaken it is over and generally we do not have it again. The Course calls this life we are in a nightmare, and to think we volunteer to live a nightmare over and over thinking it is real is pure madness.

Now the Course calls our original plunge into this dream insane, but that insanity of doing it once without understanding would be nothing to the insanity of doing it again and again on purpose after we have supposedly learned our lesson and returned home.

Let us suppose you were tortured to death in a certain life. Would you really want to leave the joyous existence in heaven to be tortured again and again and, unlike watching a movie, actually seem to feel the pain?

Thank God this belief does not hold water and is not in harmony with what ACIM is attempting to teach us.

Then consider this. If we are reliving an exact replay of our life in the initial separation this would mean that in our original life, before any replay took place,

that we were talking about this life as being the replay of a movie. Why would we be doing this when no replay had yet happened?

Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, probably watched movie footage of him stepping foot on the moon a number of times. He may have even said something like: "I have watched this many times and it feels like I am doing it all over again."

But would he have made a statement like that when he was actually first stepping on the moon?

Of course not.

But, if our life is an exact replay of our initial separation then we would have had to have been talking about the replay before there was any replay.

Does not make sense.

As proven in previous chapters, the Course tells us at times we are not here because our dream world is not occurring in the real world in eternity. The same applies when the Course says the separation never happened. Again, it is defined as a dream and a dream is not considered as a real happening.

Even so, a dream is an event that creates a real experience by the mind within the dream state itself.

When you wake up from a dream and you tell it to a friend, do you end with a disclaimer like this: "I didn't really have a dream."

Of course not. You really did have a dream and spent some time there, but you may say something like: "I'm glad the dream didn't happen." In other words, the dream did happen, but not as part of your waking reality.

If we are not reliving our life like in a movie, then how do we explain this passage we quoted earlier:

"Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now." M-

We are told that time began after the separation and its beginning is very ancient. It goes back **“beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering.”**

How far back do you suppose that is? Well, we know that time has been in existence since the beginning of this material universe, and scientists make a good case that it is over 13 billion years old. That’s pretty old, but the age of the universe is embedded in the elements and universe itself, so when it says **“past even the possibility of remembering,”** it may be indicating that the beginning of time and the separation was much further back.

It is interesting to note that many spiritual traditions, especially from the East, tell us that there were many universes before this one whose beginning goes back beyond all memory. In addition, many scientists theorize that there were many universes before this one, and the creation will continue after this one is gone. If this is true, then the beginning mentioned by ACIM could have been many trillions of years ago.

Whether the beginning of time was billions or trillions of years ago, we know for sure that it was a very long time ago. It is interesting, though, that time in the Course is spoken of as merely lasting for an “instant.”

“Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity.” T-26.V.3

“For what could house this mad idea against reality but for an instant?” T-20.VI.8

Understanding the Dream

If each of us were participating in the extended dream, we could have lived millions of lifetimes. What could be the sensible truth here?

A careful study of the Course gives an interesting explanation as related earlier, but here it is in a nutshell.

There is one Sonship, but many parts called Sons of God. When the separation first occurred, not all the sons participated. Part stayed in heaven and part went into the dream state to make worlds of time and space that would seem real.

In that instant, God created a solution to the problem which involved the creation of the Holy Spirit to guide the wayward Sons back home. We are told that in the eternal

world, cause and effect happen simultaneously so, from the view of heavenly understanding, no time has passed between the beginning and end of the separation even if it lasts billions of years for us. In heaven it is an “instant.” But a heavenly instant can contain a near eternity of time or very little time depending on the intent of the creation.

Here is the Course’s explanation of the “instant” involving the separation and the solution:

“How long is an instant? As long as it takes to re-establish perfect sanity, perfect peace and perfect love for everyone, for God and for yourself. As long as it takes to remember immortality, and your immortal creations who share it with you. As long as it takes to exchange hell for Heaven. Long enough to transcend all of the ego's making, and ascend unto your Father.” T-15.I.14.

Here is the knowledge that helps us understand the supposed replaying of the dream:

The Sons of God have **“children, who are as like the Sons as they are like the Father.” T-7.XI.7**

So, all Sons of God create by creating additional Sons. This would include the first batch of returned Sons. They would resume their creation function and produce additional Sons. Putting it in human terms, the family picture must have gone something like this:

Young Son: “Tell me Dad about your adventures in time and space.”

Returned Son: “It was quite an experience with lots of up and downs. There were a lot of struggles and it wasn’t peaceful like where we are now.”

Young Son: “I think I’d like to try it out. I’d like to find out what it is like to experience an imperfect world.”

The Returned Son shows concern but realizes the Young Son has free will so he cannot stop him. The young Son has the same powers to manifest a dream that he did.

Thus, what is replayed again and again is experienced by the newly created Sons, who are the Sons of the Sons who have returned who want to experience time and

space. The solution to the separation happened long ago and most of the Sons in the one Sonship are “safe at home,” but obviously some, like ourselves, are not.

Obviously, you and I are in the dream because we are here experiencing it in present time. We are consciously experiencing it and perceiving it. It is an actual happening that you are reading these words, even if you are reading them while dreaming.

The Course tells us the Sonship continues in heaven undisturbed, as many parts of it are completely awake and fulfilling their function. It can thus be said that the Son has not left heaven, for the life of the Sonship continues there but the Course says of the separated parts that **“You are not yet awake, but you can learn how to awaken.”** T-9.VI.5. And the Father Himself is quoted as saying, **“My children sleep and must be awakened.”** T-6.V.1

So, in heaven we have the one Sonship which consists of trillions of parts. Most parts are awake and participating in the ongoing process of creation, but some are asleep and not participating.

Adam represents the current Sons asleep in this world and concerning him it says:

“Yet the Bible says that a deep sleep fell upon Adam, and nowhere is there reference to his waking up. The world has not yet experienced any comprehensive reawakening or rebirth. Such a rebirth is impossible as long as you continue to project or miscreate.” T-2.I.3

Here it is clearly stated that our part of the Sonship is currently asleep – not awake in heaven, and awakening is **“impossible as long as you continue to project or miscreate.”**

We who are dreaming have actually chosen to do so:

“You have chosen a sleep in which you have had bad dreams, but the sleep is not real and God calls you to awake.” T-6.IV.6

When a Son seeks for “the impossible,” or things contrary to God’s will, his **“decision offers it to him as he requests.”**

“If he asks for the impossible, if he wants what does not exist or seeks for illusions in his heart, all this becomes his own. The power of his decision offers

it to him as he requests. Herein lie hell and Heaven. The sleeping Son of God has but this power left to him.” M-21.3

This is where we are now. This is happening now in time and space, and to deny that which is happening in any reality is to move further into the illusion.

Like the world, the body is also not real and often spoken of by students as not being “here.” Yet the Course warns us not to take this too far, for “the body is merely a fact.”

“The body, if properly understood, shares the invulnerability of the Atonement to two-edged application. This is not because the body is a miracle, but because it is not inherently open to misinterpretation. The body is merely a fact. Its ABILITIES can be, and frequently are, overevaluated. However, it is almost impossible to deny its existence. Those who do are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial... There is little doubt that the mind can miscreate. If one denies this unfortunate aspect of its power, one is also denying the power itself.)” UR T 2 C 8

This is telling us that even the dream is created by the mind which has the power of God and though miscreation occurs, **“it is almost impossible to deny its existence,”** and to do so we are engaging in an **“unworthy form of denial.”**

It makes a similar statement concerning the separation, which many deny even happening:

“The Separation HAS occurred. To deny this is merely to misuse denial.” T 2 E 50

Yes, the Courses tells us that what we have made here is unreal from the viewpoint of heaven, but then it often emphasizes how real it is to us because of the power of thought:

“The thoughts you hold are mighty, and illusions are as strong in their effects as is the truth.” W-pI.132.1

That is quite a statement – that our **“illusions are as strong in their effects as is the truth.”**

To illustrate, just think of the attention we place on our bodies, concerning which it says: **“At no single instant does the body exist at all.”** T-18.VII.3

If the body is sick or is injured, we seek treatment; if it is hungry we feed it; if we need to communicate with someone we move the body close enough to talk to them.

We treat the body, the world and time itself as if they are pure truth in heaven. Of our own free will we have chosen this path:

“This mad direction was your choice, and by your faith in what you chose, you made what you desired.” T-21.III.5

“You have elected to be in time rather than eternity, and therefore believe you are in time.” T-5.VI.1

No, you are not fully in heaven watching a movie, for **“a part of you remains outside (the unity of heaven), unknowing, unawakened, and in need of you as witness to the truth?”** W-pI.169.13

Something, the impossible, indeed has happened:

“Here the world of idols has been set by the idea this power and place and time are given form, and shape the world where the impossible has happened.” T-29.VIII.6

“Thus do both terms imply a thing impossible but yet which has occurred, resulting in a state of conflict seen between what is and what could never be. Truth and illusions both are equal now, for both have happened. The impossible becomes the thing you need forgiveness for, salvation from.” W-pI.99.1-2

“Why are you surprised that something happened in the dim past, when it is so clearly happening right now?” UR T 4 C 7

It is indeed an unworthy form of denial to merely keep proclaiming “nothing is real,” “nothing happened” and “I am in heaven” when the illusion is still real enough to us that we care for the body and earn a living in the world from which salvation is needed. If our beliefs are valid then our actions will harmonize with them. Ironically, many proclaim themselves as being in heaven yet act as if they are in hell.

The seeker must realize where he is before he can correctly arrive at any destination. If you think you are in New York when you are really in Los Angeles and want to

go to Las Vegas, you may wind up going west instead of east and driving into the ocean.

Even so, if the student is under illusion, and captivated by more illusion, then he only goes deeper into the dream instead of awakening. Here is what happens when you really awaken:

“but the sleep is not real and God calls you to awake. There will be nothing left of your dream when you hear Him, because you will awaken.” T-6.IV.6

Look around. Is the world still there? Is your car still in the driveway? Do you see your hands in front of you? Then you are not yet fully in heaven and still in the dream of illusion.

“The miracle does not awaken you, but merely shows you who the dreamer is.” T-28.II.4

And who is the dreamer?

He is the all-powerful Son of God who can accomplish anything he sets to do, but first he must realize who he is and where, or what state he is currently in. When he sees his situation correctly, he can then take real steps toward returning home.

“So do we lay aside our amulets, our charms and medicines, our chants and bits of magic in whatever form they take. We will be still and listen for the Voice of healing, which will cure all ills as one, restoring saneness to the Son of God. No voice but this can cure. Today we hear a single Voice which speaks to us of truth, where all illusions end, and peace returns to the eternal, quiet home of God.” W-pI.140.10

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Mystery of Creating Ourselves

The Meaning of Creation

The Course tells us a number of times that we did not create ourselves. Instead, it stresses the importance of recognizing that we were created by our Father, God.

When I first read this, I thought it was an extremely odd statement. First of all, I do not know anyone who thinks he created himself.

“How would it be possible to create yourself?” I thought. One moment you are nothing and do not exist, and that which does not exist wills itself into existence. How could nothingness will itself into something?

This indeed seemed like an impossibility to me. Furthermore, I didn’t know of anyone who believed such a thing was even possible. How in the world does one conceive of that which has no existence willing itself into existence? If there is nothing there, then there could be no will to will itself into existence. Even will is something.

Then, as I studied the Course more thoroughly, I began to realize that I had not been interpreting the phrase correctly, and I suspected that many other students made the same mistake. The reason for the mistake is obvious.

When the typical believer talks about God creating us, he assumes that at one time we did not exist, and then, when God decided to create us, we did exist. In other words, thanks to God, one moment we did not exist and the next one we did.

Therefore, when ACIM speaks of us creating ourselves, it seems natural to think it means that some believe they just thought themselves into existence from nothingness. This was the concept that made no sense to me.

As I studied the various references to creating ourselves, I discovered that the meaning was quite different than I supposed at the beginning. The statement doesn’t have anything to do with bringing us into existence out of nothing. This did not happen because we have always existed. The Course is quite clear that we are eternal and never had a beginning:

“For God has never condemned His Son, and being guiltless he is eternal.” T-13.I.9

“You are immortal because you are eternal,” T-13.I.8

“There are no beginnings and no endings in God,” T-11.I.2

“Heaven, where everything eternal in it has always been.” T-12.VI.7

Since the Course tells us that we are Sons of God who were (and part of us still is) in heaven, then we have “always been.”

If creation, then, means to bring something in existence from nothing so that it has a beginning, then we are not created beings because we have always existed. Something that has always existed has no beginning, or creation as the word is generally understood.

On the other hand, there was a “beginning” to our creation as discussed in the Course:

“Your creation by God is the only Foundation that cannot be shaken, because the light is in it. Your starting point is truth, and you must return to your Beginning.” T-3.VII.5

We are thus eternal beings without beginning to our existence, but there was a beginning to our creation.

Obviously then, when ACIM uses the word “create,” it applies its own special meaning to it, just as it does with numerous other words and phrases.

If the Course’s use of the word “create” does not mean to begin an actual existence from nothing, then what does it mean?

Instead of bringing something into existence, the Course teaches that creation is a complete sharing. The sharing is so complete that the receiver obtains all the powers and attributes of the creator.

There are many references in the Course that substantiate this. In this first one we are told what “true creation” is. Jesus tells us that he made the decision to share his

knowledge **“because the decision itself is the decision to share. It is made by giving, and is therefore the one choice that RESEMBLES TRUE CREATION.”**
T-5.II.9

True creation thus involves a full sharing, a quality that we inherited:

“The soul yearns to share its Being as its Creator did. Created by sharing, its will is to create.” UR T 7 J 3

“You cannot separate your Self from your Creator, Who created you by sharing His Being with you.” T-7.V.6

So then, your soul was created by God **“sharing His Being with you.”**

We, in turn, become creators and do the same thing:

“This is an ongoing process in which you share, and because you share it, you are inspired to create like God.” T-7.I.1 **“and to create like Him is to share the perfect Love He shares with you.”** T-7.I.6

When the typical religious person thinks of God creating, he usually imagines God just speaking the word and, poof, the creation appears. Then when he thinks of a human creation, he thinks of the person coming up with an idea and then gathering and assembling the parts to manifest it.

According to ACIM then, creation by God or the Son does not conform to either of these traditional ideas. Instead of manifesting something in time and space, heavenly creation is sharing and extending the one life of the Godhead.

This brings us to some curious questions. We are told that God **“created you by sharing His Being with you.”** T-7.V.6

If you did not exist before creation, then how could God share his being with you? If he shared with you, there had to be something with which to share.

Secondly, what was the “you” that was in existence before the creation event in which God created you through sharing with “you” and what was the difference in the “you” mentioned before your creation and afterwards?

Before and After Creation

These questions are indeed applicable when we consider that the Course teaches that we are eternal beings without beginning or an end.

The mystery deepens when we realize that ACIM teaches that God Himself had a creation. Hopefully, the reader's head will not explode as we examine this thought.

First, the Course definitely tells us that **“God is an idea, and ... like your Father, you are an idea.”** T-15.VI.4

Then it tells us that **“Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them. Ideas are of the mind.”** T-26.VII.4

This tells us that we, as Sons, are ideas. We have not left our source who is God.

But wait! God also is an idea, and, like us as an idea, He also has not left His source.

What is the source for God?

It tells us clearly **“Ideas are of the mind.”**

So, the source for God is Mind, and since our source is God, then Mind is ultimately also our source. Indeed, Mind is of extreme importance, for it is written: **“If I did not think I would not exist, because life is thought.”** W-pI.54.2.

The source of all creation, then, is an idea of some kind, and the source of ideas are the mind; and without mind there would be no thought, and without thought there is no life, and without life there is no existence.

Thus, the source of all existence is Mind. Putting this all together, the only explanation is that in the eternities there is one great life which is the Universal Mind. The idea of God was then created by the thought of this Mind from whence all things come.

The fact that God was created is affirmed in the Course for it says:

“Your will to create was given you by your Creator, Who was expressing the same Will IN HIS CREATION.” T-2.VIII.1

The original text words this a little differently but implies the same meaning:

“His instincts for creation were given him by his own Creator, who was expressing the same instinct IN HIS CREATION.” UR T 2 E 44 (Caps mine)

Earlier I pointed out, with backing from ACIM quotes, that The Father Created the Son with many parts, and the Sons created additional Sons. Sons who created Sons obtained the position of Father in relation to their created Sons. Similarly, your Father was also a Son who created you and thus became a Father to you. The Father and Son are One as taught in the Course, for all Fathers are also Sons.

But the core to understanding it all is to realize that God, Fathers, Sons, the Holy Spirit are all ideas which leave not their source.

And what is their Source?

Mind.

And what is Mind?

Basically, the same as intelligence, or light, truth and love.

Therefore, from Universal Mind came the idea of God which left not its Source; and God became synonymous with the Universal Thought which created all there is.

We thus arrive at a teaching that is in harmony with many of the spiritual traditions of the East which teach something similar.

We therefore come to the conclusion that all life is an idea which has left not its Source, and the ultimate Source for all is some type of universal mind, or something we might call pure intelligent Spirit.

As mentioned earlier, earlier, we are eternal beings without beginning, and God, our Father, created, transformed, added to and extended Himself to us by sharing Himself. This sharing did not bring us into existence, for we never had a beginning, but it created a new version of what we are. This offered the eternal ability to create by sharing as our Creator did with us.

This text adds further light on this thought: **“Real birth is not a beginning; it is a CONTINUING. Everything that CAN continue has already BEEN born. But it can INCREASE as you are willing to return the part of your mind that needs**

healing to the higher part, and thus render your creating (creation) undivided.”
UR T 5 F 5 \

Indeed, as the Course stresses, we are eternal beings, and since this is so our creation is merely “a continuing.” Our creation does not bring us into existence, but provides an opportunity for “increase.”

Earlier we asked, what was the “you” that was in existence before the creation event in which God created you through sharing with “you” and what was the difference in the “you” mentioned before your creation and afterwards?

We know that which is the essential you has always existed, even before your Creator brought you into His own being through the sharing of Mind. Before this creation/sharing event, you existed as some type of undeveloped potential that had not yet obtained the qualities shared with you by your Creator. Before your creation, you merely existed as potential, but afterwards you shared in all that the life of God has.

The Course tells us that we were created to create, and as Sons we will create additional Sons and extend the Life of God eternally.

There is apparently an infinite number of potential Sons that can be stimulated, or activated with Mind, so they can become a part of the One Sonship.

The main difference before and after our creation is that before creation we did not have the ability to create through the united Sonship, but afterwards we did. We were also able to experience love through sharing in a way unknown to us before creation.

We Wanted to Create Ourselves

Having covered this esoteric ground, we can finally face the prime question as to what the Course means when it tells us that at the separation, we wanted to create ourselves. We even thought we were the ones who created ourselves:

“Father, I did not make myself, although in my insanity I thought I did.” W-pII.260.1

We are told that we had the mistaken notion that **“since man can create himself, the direction of his own creation is up to him.”** UR T 2 A 5

The Course tells us that is folly because **“you cannot escape from fear until you realize that you did not and could not create yourself. You can never make your misperceptions true.”** T-3.IV.3 Each is called to recognize that, “I am as God created me.”

We see then that the thinking that separated the Sons who left from those who stayed behind was the belief of some that they not only created themselves, but could continue creating themselves and to make this possible, they created a universe of form in time and space.

At this point we must clarify what is meant by their intention to create themselves. The previous quote gives some light. Here it is again:

“since man can create himself, the direction of his own creation is up to him.”
UR T 2 A 5

We who are experiencing this world believed we created ourselves and will continue doing so because we are the masters of our destiny, and can become whatever we decide to be.

So, the main difference here was that the Sons who stayed behind remained a part of the collective where all the decisions of the unified life were recognized as their decisions because they all shared the one life.

The Sons who separated wanted to create themselves as individuals with the result that each would be different and unique.

Now, when students first read the Course and were told that we made the error of thinking we created ourselves, they think, “Yes, of course. I didn’t create myself. God did.”

This interpretation does not reveal what happened and what was such a tremendous attraction that many billions of the Sons of God separated so they could create themselves.

To create yourself is to be in charge of what you as an individual will become. To understand the attraction just look at how people live their lives. They want to be in charge of what they do, what they think, what they decide, etc. Very few want some other entity besides themselves telling them what they can make of their lives. Most

everyone in this world wants to mold their own lives according to their own desires and do not want to give up that power to anyone, even God.

To understand the attraction of creating ourselves as compared to yielding to a creator, we can reflect on the stories in Star Trek about the confrontations with the Borg.

The Borg consisted of one great life where no one had any individuality and had no hand in creating themselves. Instead, what they were and their placement was entirely determined by the collective life or the godlike queen.

The Borg corresponds in some ways to the life of the One Son in heaven, but with a major difference. The lives in the Borg had no free will and the lives in heaven do.

The Borg declared that “resistance is futile” and forcefully assimilated anyone who crossed their path, usually against their will.

On the other hand, heaven merely waits for us to come to our senses and return. We come to heaven because we enjoy the shared life, not because we are forced into it. But like the Borg, resistance is futile, but for a different reason. It is only a matter of time before we want to return home.

Despite the differences, the similarities of the Borg and the Star Trek Federation are close enough to heaven and earth, as presented by ACIM, for us to glean an understanding of why so many Sons of God wanted to leave the collective and have some experience as an individual in the marvelous worlds of time and space.

When we watch Star Trek no one thinks, “Man, I would really like to join something like the Borg where I would have no identity.”

On the other hand, many think that they would like to join something like the Star Trek Federation where you could still be an individual, create your own destiny and explore new worlds. The fact that the members of the Borg were always at peace and had no pain was not seen as a selling point to either Star Fleet or the Star Trek audience.

The correspondence is not exact but close enough to give us an idea as to why so many Sons of God were attracted to becoming an individual and participating in a world where there were differences, games, time, space, consciousness, perception and many things that were unknown, waiting to be discovered.

Recognizing the Problem

The Course tells us to **“recognize the problem so it can be solved.”** (Lesson 79)

We are also told:

“Heaven is chosen consciously. The choice cannot be made until alternatives are accurately seen and understood. All that is veiled in shadows must be raised to understanding.” W-pI.138.9

Yet the biggest problem of all is that which caused the separation. But the only problem seen here by most students is that the Son got a “mad idea” in his head, went into temporary insanity for an instant, and then God presented a solution and the problem was solved. The Son is now safe in heaven.

Those who encapsulate an event that “shattered heaven” into such a simplistic super Reader’s Digest version are not seeing the problem - hence avoiding the solution - for we are definitely trapped here in a dream world in need of “salvation” as presented by ACIM.

Perhaps the reason that we see no graduates from *A Course in Miracles*, where the body disappears in the eyes of many witnesses and then reappears as in the case of Jesus, is that the problem is not understood, and if it is not seen or understood then it cannot be solved.

According to the Course, the problem started in heaven when many Sons of God became dissatisfied and wanted to create themselves, or to have some say in their individual destiny.

Even though heaven was a place of peace and love, many apparently wanted more than this.

The world we created is said to be **“a distortion of the world (heaven), planned solely around what you would have preferred.”** T-18.II.1

“It is, then, only your wish to change reality that is fearful, because by your wish you think you have accomplished what you wish.” T-17.I.2

What does this tell us? We “preferred” another world we envisioned in preference to heaven. We then had a “wish” to change our reality and we actually thought we

had accomplished this, apparently with the creation of this universe of form, time and space.

“Whenever projection in its inappropriate sense is utilized, it always implies that some emptiness (or lack of everything) must exist, and that it is within man’s ability to put his own ideas there instead of the truth.” UR T 2 A 5

This tells us that we thought we could fill some emptiness with our own ideas, though we probably didn’t see these ideas as opposing any truth.

In addition, we wanted to change our identity:

“The ego is a wrong-minded attempt to perceive yourself as you wish to be, rather than as you are.” T-3.IV.2

It looks like that after an eternity of bliss that we wanted to try something new.

We actually embraced the illusion:

“The world is an illusion. Those who choose to come to it are seeking for a place where they can be illusions, and avoid their own reality.” W-pI.155.2

According to this, we did not just blindly stumble out of heaven, but we wanted to “avoid” it and replace it with ideas of our own making we thought were better than heaven.

The Course calls this a “mad idea”, but obviously that is not the way that many billions of the Sons of God looked at it.

Just visualize the vast numbers of the Sons of God who chose to create themselves. On this planet alone there are seven billion Sons, not counting the ones not in incarnation.

Then in our galaxy there are over 200 billion star systems, many with earth-like planets, and we assume many with intelligent life.

Then, in the known universe, there are billions of galaxies, many larger than our own. Therefore, the number of the Sons of God must be staggering, but consider this:

“How holy is the smallest grain of sand, when it is recognized as being part of the completed picture of God's Son!” T-28.IV.9

If the smallest grain of sand is a **“part of the completed picture of God's Son!”** then the planets, stars and galaxies would certainly be also. In other words, all creation we see about us is a part of the Sonship which left heaven for the adventure of self-creation. The Son, through all of its parts, wants to experience every possible angle of what being different would entail. He wants to experience all that there could be available to experience whether in the illusion or in reality.

To see the separation as a brief instant of insanity that was quickly corrected misses the point and completely overlooks the problem.

The idea of creating ourselves and controlling our own destiny was a big deal and was something much more than just a passing thought.

Consider this: What do we really know about heaven? Not much, but we are told this.

“Nor is there any need for us to try to speak of what must forever lie beyond words. “ T-18.IX.11 Heaven “can never be described” W-pI.122.8

All we are told about heaven is that it is a place where there are good feelings. The message of the Course is basically this:

“Trust me. You’ll feel great when you enter heaven.”

We are told that in heaven there is no form, so there is NO THING to feel good about. Perhaps then a great draw was that we wanted SOME THING to stimulate new and different feelings. Things with differences would stimulate both positive and negative feelings, but we figured it was worth the risk to have a great adventure where such a range of feelings could be experienced.

It is obvious that the creation of our reality was more than some crazy afterthought. Just look at how much thought had to be put into our creation, beginning with the atom and its many parts balancing energies with great precision. Then the atoms were joined to create molecules and finally living cells with extremely complex DNA. Finally, all this intelligence combined to make organic bodies as avatars for our experience.

All this creation took much more than some quickly passing thought. Instead, our universe is the product of extremely intelligent and deliberate thinking that took place over billions of years.

A Request for the Impossible

Let us encapsulate our situation from the beginning.

We are eternal beings without beginning or end. Some essence in us existed before creation for at creation we are told that **“His (God’s) Mind shone on you in your creation and brought your mind into being.”** T-4.IV.9

What is the ‘you’ that God used to bring your mind into existence? This would be the part of you that has always existed, even before God created you.

As some type of basic intelligence, we were invited to join a collective that we presently call God. That we had a choice in this matter is evidenced by this statement:

“Man was not created by his own free will alone.” OE Tx:1.87

In addition, Jesus is said to have exercised his free will in his creation:

“As You are One, so am I one with You. And this I chose in my creation, where my will became forever one with Yours.” W-pII.329.1

So, our free will was involved as we were going through the creation process, but we did not have power to create ourselves.

Evidently, there was a choice on our part that allowed us to participate in the great creation process, a process that we could not accomplish on our own. We did not create ourselves, but chose to be created or transformed into a part of a greater whole where each of us would play a special function.

Intelligences, called Sons of God, took us under their wings and nurtured us, becoming as fathers to us. These fathers created or transformed us into lives that shared with the whole, having greater abilities and functions than we had before.

There was an important rule that we all followed which is called “The Principle of Glory” in my other writings. That is, you do not take glory for yourself for that which was accomplished by another. Our creation/transformation was accomplished

through the stimulation and sharing of our Fathers and not through our own efforts. We only made the choice to allow it to happen.

Thus does the Course place great emphasis on the fact that we did not create ourselves. We owe our creation to our Father, and the sharing involved was so great that we should be eternally grateful and never want to leave the divine collective.

But, apparently, after an eternity, some began to feel a sense of lack, that there was experience to be had outside the golden borders of heaven.

Sons who wanted experience outside of heaven approached God for a special favor. Here was the response:

“You were at peace until you asked for special favor. And God did not give it for the request was alien to Him, and you could not ask this of a Father Who truly loved His Son. Therefore you made of Him an unloving father, demanding of Him what only such a father could give. And the peace of God's Son was shattered, for he no longer understood his Father.” T-13.III.10

So here we were in heaven with a complete sharing of bliss, love and peace, and after an eternity we began to wonder if there was something else to experience. What would it be like to live in a world of contrasts, of beginnings and endings, or even where we had limitations and vulnerabilities?

“Absolutely no!” said the Father. “That is not in the program.”

The Father’s rejection thus shattered our peace, for in previous times He had given us everything possible. Now the Sons had given a request that was deemed impossible. This denial of exploring other states of existence caused the Sons to become dissatisfied with the reality and sameness of heaven.

This caused us to lose our sense of peace, and the Sons began **“seeking for a place where they can be illusions, and avoid their own reality.” W-pI.155.2**

The rejected sons did not give up their dream by merely acquiescing, but pondered on how they could manifest it. We began to **“dream of (our) ability to control reality by substituting a world that you prefer.” T-18.II.4**

So, our peace there was shattered, but we came to the realization that we had all the creative powers of God, for He shared them with us in creation. We could therefore use those powers to “control reality” and create a world according to our desires.

God told us we were seeking for the impossible but we maintained the belief it was possible, so we went ahead with the creation of a universe of time and space with contrasts, beginnings and endings. This creation did not appear in the eternal reality, but manifest as an illusion or dream in which we volunteered to enter to increase our world of experience.

And thus, here we are in this illusion. We are not the first, but repeating what has been done before many times. When we have passed through every experience desired here, we can then return to heaven with a greater degree of contentment than before and resume as creative Sons of God creating new Sons who will have a similar curiosity about worlds of time and space.

The True Cost of Liberation

When a student comes across *A Course in Miracles* and reads the beautiful promises of heaven, and how we can get there just by letting go of this dream in which we find ourselves, he often thinks he is ready to make the move at any time.

The problem is that he has lost his memory of heaven and what there was about it that made him want to leave and create his own world.

Even though the memory is not consciously available, the subtle effects of it still remain and must be transcended. Thus, the student may think he is ready to let this world go, but he may be far from solving the problem that brought him here to begin with.

Let us suppose you were a dissatisfied prince and wanted to go to another country that was much different than your home to see what it was like to live there. But then when you arrived at the foreign land you got hit on the head and had amnesia and couldn't remember where you came from.

Then an old friend shows up and identifies you and tells you of your home and all the wonderful amenities you had as a prince. That sounds pretty attractive, so you return home. Then, on arrival, your memory returns and you realize that you were not done exploring the foreign country. So you wind up again being unsettled at home and wanting to go off and explore again.

The point is that, like the prince, we have lost our memories and are attracted by the wonderful stories of heaven. But if we had our full memories returned, we would understand why we made the journey here in the first place, and we may feel that we are not yet done exploring all there is to experience here.

For instance, just think of all the special relationships you have with friends, family, romantic relationships, work etc. Can you let them all go to join the collective?

Think of all the possessions you have acquired through a lifetime of labor. Can you let them go?

Think of all the learning you have attained in this life that you will no longer need.

Think of how much care you give your body. Are you willing to not pay any attention to it and just accept what happens?

Then think of your life itself with your goals and what you want to accomplish. Can you just let all that go?

But, perhaps the most difficult to release yourself from is your desire to create yourself. Here on earth, you are in charge of your destiny and decide what kind of person you want to become and talents that you will acquire. If you want to enter ACIM heaven you have to let all that go. You will then have no part in creating yourself, or becoming who you want to be. You already have an assigned and eternal place in heaven and none other is available.

Maybe you are not as ready for the move to heaven as you think. Maybe you need to get some more of creating yourself out of your system before you are ready to return.

The parable of Jesus comes to mind here:

“For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

“If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.” Luke 14:28-33 NIV

Many would-be followers are like the guy building the tower who did not properly understand what it took to complete the project. Even so, many students see the completion of the Course and waking up as much more simplistic than it is. Many are completely unaware of the reasoning behind the decision to come here in the first place.

Think of it this way. Billions of Sons of God chose to make this world and come here. And when we made the choice, we were in a spiritual and mental state much superior to what we have here in this material sphere.

The choice was made in full awareness and involved creation that took tremendous intelligence, labor and time. This adventure was not something decided on a lark, but took tremendous planning and thought to pull it off.

Yes, we must recognize the problem so it can be solved. We must realize that the problem was an idea with great appeal and will only be solved when the appeal of this world fades and is replaced by the desire to return home.

Studying *A Course in Miracles* is a good first step.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The Convergence of the Paths

The Many Paths

The Course makes this curious statement about itself:

“This is a manual for a special curriculum, intended for teachers of a special form of the universal course. There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome. They merely save time.” M-1.4

Here we are told that *A Course in Miracles* is **“a special form of the universal course.”**

Concerning this “universal course” we are told that **“There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome.”**

Having been a student of many spiritual philosophies, I have seen threads of similarities running through most of them. Therefore, I wouldn’t be surprised to see an inspired work like ACIM to state that there are other harmonious teachings that steer us toward liberation. I wouldn’t have been surprised if it had given the figure of a dozen or so. If it had said a hundred, I would have thought that to be a very generous estimate, but I would not have put the figure at thousand. And neither did ACIM. It didn’t stop at a thousand, but said “many thousands.”

The various ACIM students come from many different backgrounds, and some have studied numerous spiritual philosophies. Many though, when they discover ACIM, find it so different and enlightening that they stop right there and make it their one guide to spiritual living. They figure they don’t need thousands of books to draw from, over even a dozen, but just one as a point of focus, and that may be where the Holy Spirit guides them for this particular life.

On the other hand, other students are interested in the bigger, or more holistic picture, and realize that there are many truths not presented in ACIM and desire to seek them out, and the Course says nothing to discourage this. For those who are guided by ACIM, though, the choice as to which teachings to consume besides the Course are quite ambiguous. After all, it says there are “many thousands” that lead to the same

outcome as the Course. That is basically like telling you to pick any spiritual teaching out there, follow it, and it will take you toward awakening.

So, what about the guy who follows a half-crazy cult leader who scams him out of all his possessions? Does that lead him toward liberation?

Actually, such detours are steps that all of us take on the path to awakening. By giving up all his possessions, he lessened his attachment to the illusion. Yeah, the cult leader taught many things in error, but he did dangle the idea of a better reality in front of his followers, and that truth will remain embedded with them even after they realize what a fraud he was.

On the other hand, there are many spiritual teachings out there which were initiated and maintained by sincere leaders. Of course, some of them are closer to the truth than others.

These various paths fall into two main categories:

[1] The orthodox or mainstream religions. These would include Christianity, Islam, Judaism and various eastern religions. All of these teach the idea of taking focus away from the material world and placing it on the spiritual, which is also a prime focus of ACIM.

[2] Alternative spiritual movements of which ACIM is one.

For several generations now there has been an increasing number of alternative teachings emerging that have presented a challenge to mainstream religion. Some of them have an organized hierarchy and some do not. Many fall under the public's generic title of "New Age," but few of them identify themselves as such.

Many of those involved in alternative spiritual teaching do not identify themselves with any religion when polled, and this has caused significant concern with religious leaders.

According to Gallup, at the turn of the century 70% of the people in the United States belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque. Religious authorities are alarmed that by 2020 that figure had dropped to 47%. That is an unprecedented drop in identification with orthodox religion.

This doesn't mean that people are turning toward atheism in droves, as an increasing number of people identify themselves as "spiritual, but not religious." A Pew poll

taken in 2017 showed that a whopping 27% of Americans saw themselves in this light. The good news is that these people are still believers in a Higher Power, but just don't see any organized religion being a good fit for them.

Many ACIM students are in this category.

This breaking away from orthodox religion to exploring alternative thinking is good news for the future of ACIM and other solid teachings, as orthodoxy has a firm hold on the minds of its members, and few of them will consider something out of the mainstream.

The problem is that when students seek for truth out of the mainstream, they encounter the good, the bad and the ugly.

As previously noted, all of them can have some value to the sincere seeker, but some are definitely more helpful than others.

ACIM doesn't come out and blatantly tell us that its teachings are the best of the lot, as far as awakening goes, but it does tell us that it will be very helpful for those who make use of it.

Helen was told that the Course was introduced because of worsening world conditions and **“Because of the acute emergency, however, the usual slow, evolutionary process is being by-passed in what might best be described as a celestial speed-up.”** Journey Without Distance by Robert Skutch.

So, apparently most of the world's teachings take us through “the usual slow, evolutionary process,” but ACIM is different in that the Course speeds up the process.

We are told that the plan to have people teach the Course **“is to save time. Each one begins as a single light, but with the Call at its center it is a light that cannot be limited. And each one saves a thousand years of time as the world judges it.”**

M-1.2

On numerous occasions the Course stresses that it will save us much time. Here are a couple:

“Today we try to bring reality still closer to your mind. Each time you practice, awareness is brought a little nearer at least; sometimes a thousand years or more are saved.” W-pI.97.3

“If you achieve the faintest glimmering of what love means today, you have advanced in distance without measure and in time beyond the count of years to your release.” W-pI.127.7

So, we conclude that “many thousands” of teachings will be helpful in the evolutionary process but some, like the Course, can be a big timesaver. Those that stress “what love means” apparently save big time.

Major Approaches to Truth

Therefore, when looking at sources of light outside of ACIM, one wants to find those as close to the truth as possible, for they will save the most time on the path to awakening.

If the seeker follows the advice of the Course, he will do his best to be one with the mind of the Holy Spirit, which will give him power to discern truth from error and the real from the unreal. This is what I have done in my life. I have found that when true principles are presented to me, there is a vibration of recognition that stirs within my inner core wherein the Spirit can be felt.

From my efforts to discern through the Spirit I have seen some value in orthodox religion, but they are indeed part of that “slow evolutionary process” previously mentioned. However, if students will just bypass their religious authorities and study the world scriptures under the guidance of the Spirit, they can come to many truthful conclusions that will speed the journey.

For instance, I have found the words of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament to be very profound and inspiring. Never has there been so much said in such few words.

In addition, many other parts of the Bible and other world scriptures have thoughts and teachings worthy of contemplation.

In recent times a plethora of teachings have surfaced, often with the claim that they were transmitted from some higher or divine authority from God to all kinds of other entities.

These transmissions, often called channeling, fall into two general categories.

The first are unconscious transmissions. The most common of these occur when the subject goes into a trance and another entity speaks through his or her body, often

with a different voice or accent. Generally, when the medium awakens there will be no memory of what occurred, though some say they were somewhat conscious of what was received. Seth and The Law of One are two popular writings received this way.

Another in this category is reception through automatic writing. Here, some other worldly force or entity takes control of the hand and writes messages. The subject is unaware of what was written until he reads them himself. The popular “Conversations with God” was received this way.

The second category of transmission is by a fully conscious reception through what we might call mental telepathy. This was the method used by Helen Schucman in receiving *A Course in Miracles*.

Many esoteric students, including myself, consider the teachings received through conscious reception to be significantly superior to the unconscious ones. One reason is that many entities drawn to unconscious mediums are not very advanced along the path to awakening and do not have the ability to communicate with telepathy. Many of them are no more intelligent than those taking in their words.

The source of other direct voice channels can come from the mind of the medium, or even the combined minds of those participating.

There are two major problems with material delivered by unconscious mediums. The first is that almost all of them make predictions that do not come true. Unfortunately, this does not seem to discourage true believers, but it does raise a red flag to a dispassionate investigator.

The second problem is that most of their teachings will have points that disagree with each other. If two teachings disagree, then either one or both of them are false. They cannot both be true. ACIM puts forth a great teaching on this:

“The truth is true, and nothing else is true. This you have heard before, but may not yet accept both parts of it. Without the first, the second has no meaning. But without the second, is the first no longer true. Truth cannot have an opposite. This can not be too often said and thought about. For if what is not true is true as well as what is true, then part of truth is false. And truth has lost its meaning. Nothing but the truth is true, and what is false is false.” W-pl.152.3

Messages from conscious channeling comes from two sources. The first is from a person's own ego. These messages will contain contradictory teachings and often include false prophecies. They have flaws similar to the unconscious mediums and are usually created by the subtle desires of the receiver.

The second source is from a being of high intelligence who has mastered the art of mental telepathy. If the material produced far exceeds in quality anything the receiver has written, then it most probably came from an advanced entity, often referred to as a Master of Wisdom. These are mentioned in the Course:

“There are those who have reached God directly, retaining no trace of worldly limits and remembering their own Identity perfectly. These might be called the Teachers of teachers because, although they are no longer visible, their image can yet be called upon. And they will appear when and where it is helpful for them to do so. To those to whom such appearances would be frightening, they give their ideas. No one can call on them in vain. Nor is there anyone of whom they are unaware. All needs are known to them, and all mistakes are recognized and overlooked by them. The time will come when this is understood. And meanwhile, they give all their gifts to the teachers of God who look to them for help, asking all things in their name and in no other.” M-26.2

The Voice in ACIM identifies Itself as Jesus, but there are numerous other Masters besides him who work with humanity. Much of their work is not recognized by humanity, for they will often send impressions giving needed ideas and instructions to those dedicated to serving humanity. When the transmissions are received, they often think they came from their own minds.

Then there are significant times that a Master will transmit teachings to be given out to the general public, as was the case with *A Course in Miracles*.

In addition to the Course, numerous teachings of a high order have been transmitted in full consciousness to various teachers of the Ancient Wisdom often linked to Theosophy. These include Helena P. Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, Helena Roerich, Alice A. Bailey, and Lucille Cedercrans as significant conscious receivers. There are numerous others who claim contact with the masters, but these are significant ones.

Rudolf Steiner is another significant figure associated with Theosophy, but he received through his own meditations rather than mental telepathy from a Master.

It is interesting that when we include Helen Schucman we have three Helens receiving very influential teachings by conscious mental telepathy.

Even if a set of teachings is of a high order, no student should assume they are infallible. He or she should always run them by the Spirit within to make sure one's understanding is correct. Without assistance of the Holy Spirit, the drawback of language itself will cause some distortion.

My favorite receiver of the Ancient Wisdom is Alice A. Bailey. Like *A Course in Miracles*, I only had to read a few pages of her work to conclude that this was a transmission from an intelligence of a very high order. H. P. Blavatsky's teachings are also profound, as she is largely responsible for introducing the Ancient Wisdom tradition to the West.

Like Helen Schucman, Alice A. Bailey started consciously registering a voice from within and at first was reluctant to cooperate. Like Helen, after receiving a number of transmissions, she became convinced of their quality and became a willing scribe. Overall, Alice produced 24 books containing over 3,400,000 words.

The purpose of the two sets of writings is quite a bit different. The Course has the one main goal of waking up the seeker to his true reality. The Bailey and Blavatsky writings also deal with this but go into significant detail in a much wider range of teachings. Even though the Ancient Wisdom and ACIM are quite harmonious with each other, the style and presentation are so different, it is like they were written in two different languages. One could even say that ACIM has a language all in its own category. This is one reason that many of its students focus on it alone and do not see much in harmony from other teachings. Very few ACIM students study the Ancient Wisdom.

On the other hand, students of the Ancient Wisdom have the same problem as Course students. The writing style and focus seem so different that they do not give them a serious look and will often dismiss ACIM after reading a few pages. It is interesting though that Ancient Wisdom students will read a wide variety within their accepted philosophy. I would chalk this up to the fact that the various writings within the category of the Ancient Wisdom use a similar language, vocabulary and accepted sources. The problem is that ACIM seems to be in such a different category that similarities in teachings are difficult for them to see.

It is about time then that someone took a serious look at both teaching traditions and see how they line up. If both come from similarly high spiritual sources, then they should be a high level of agreement.

Fortunately, I have seriously studied both and have indeed found a high level of such agreement. To see this, one has to realize that both sides use quite a different vocabulary, define words and concepts differently, and have a different purpose and focus. But if one looks beyond the imperfection of reducing pure thought down to the symbols that create our writing and look at the ideas expressed one can find much harmony.

And that is what we will do next. We will examine the significant teachings of both and see how they line up with each other.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Translating into Oneness

Let us now examine some of the basic teachings of ACIM and the Ancient Wisdom and see how compatible they are with each other. In doing this we will focus on the writings of various books by Alice A. Bailey and the main work of Helena P. Blavatsky – The Secret Doctrine.

Let us start with God as the Source of all things. Here is a passage giving the ultimate description of God often quoted from the Course:

“Oneness is simply the idea God is. And in His Being, He encompasses all things. No mind holds anything but Him. We say ‘God is,’ and then we cease to speak, for in that knowledge words are meaningless.” W-pI.169.5

Then from the Bailey writings we have this:

“God is not this; God is not that; God is no-thing; God is neither time nor space; God is not feeling or thought; God is not form or substance. God simply IS. God IS—apart from all expression and manifestation as the Manipulator of energy.”
Glamour, A World Problem, Page 244

ACIM says that “God is an idea” and, concerning His relationship with this world, states:

“The world as you perceive it cannot have been created by the Father, for the world is not as you see it. God created only the eternal, and everything you see is perishable.” T-11.VII.1

H. P. Blavatsky said something very similar:

“Of tribal Gods there were many; the One Universal Deity is a principle, an abstract Root-Idea which has naught to do with the unclean work of finite Form. We do not worship the Gods, we only honour Them, as beings superior to ourselves.” Secret Doctrine, Vol 1, Page 492

She thus agrees that the “Universal Deity” (the Father in ACIM) is “Root-Idea which has naught to do with the unclean work of finite Form,” but there are advanced beings some call gods or masters that we honor.

Blavatsky also wrote this:

“The Monad (our divine self) is impersonal and a god per se, albeit unconscious on this plane... it can have no consciousness or perception of things on this earthly plane. “The highest sees through the eye of the lowest” in the manifested world; Purusha (Spirit) remains blind without the help of Prakrit (matter) in the material spheres.” Secret Doctrine, Vol 2, Page 123

This harmonizes with ACIM which says:

“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” T-13.VII.17

“Perception did not exist until the separation introduced degrees, aspects and intervals” T-3.IV.1

The basic teachings concerning the Trinity are in agreement. Both teach that all came from the initiating Father. Both teach that there are three parts to the Godhead: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Ancient Wisdom says the Son **“the second aspect of divinity, that which builds and holds the forms in coherent form, and which is the basis of the phenomenon we call time.”** Treatise on Cosmic Fire, Page 1032

This agrees with ACIM, which tells us the Son created (or made) the universe of time and Space.

The Ancient Wisdom identifies the Holy Spirit as the Third Aspect that represents intelligence in matter, providing a link between the material world and the spiritual.

ACIM says something similar:

“The Holy Spirit mediates higher to lower communication, keeping the direct channel from God to you open for revelation.” T-1.II.5

Most spiritual traditions present a teaching related to the fall of humanity from some high or spiritual estate to a fallen earthly one. The story of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis is well known to many in the West.

ACIM places quite a different twist on this than orthodox Christianity. It tells us that the fall was not Adam falling out of grace with the creator of the physical universe, but it was the Creator (or Maker of time and space) Itself who fell or separated Itself as being separate from the true Creator.

And who was this creator who fell? It was all of us who have taken incarnation. We are all a part of the Divine Son who separated ourselves from our true spiritual home. The purpose of ACIM is to lead us back to our Source.

The Course's view on this is quite close to ancient Gnosticism, which at one time was competing with the standard Christian view for dominance.

The Gnostics viewed the creator of the physical universe as an entity who rebelled against the true God and tried to create a kingdom for himself outside the boundaries of heaven. They called this being a Demiurge, a false God closely linked to the common view of Satan.

ACIM presents a softer view of this fallen deity. It tells us that the beloved Son (representing all of us) of the true Creator had fallen asleep and made an illusion into which he was trapped. The Beloved Son was not evil, but merely misled and will at one time awaken to his true nature and reality. God does not see his Son as being evil any more than a parent does a child having a bad dream.

The idea that we were Sons of God who were one with God who fell into illusion is harmonious with the Ancient Wisdom:

These fallen ones “separated themselves from their parent essence, or, in other words, after the unit had become a multiple, after differentiation and manifestation. ...They are not “demons commissioned to create and organize this visible universe,” but fashioners (the “architects”) of the worlds, and the progenitors of man. They are the Fallen angels, metaphorically -- “the true mirrors of the Eternal Wisdom.” Secret Doctrine, Vol 2, Page 516

“In ancient Accadian days, this sign Aries was called that ‘wherein the sacrifice of righteousness was made,’ or the sign of ‘the fallen angels.’ The sons of God, impelled by this basic urge, fell from their high estate, took form, and started

upon their individual round upon round of the Zodiac.” The Labours of Hercules, Page 33

“The history begins by the descent on Earth of the ‘Gods’ who incarnate in mankind, and this is the FALL.” Secret Doctrine, Vol 2, Page 483

The Book of Revelation describes war in heaven in which a third fell to the earth. The general interpretation is that these are the invisible Satan and his evil denizens who tempt us toward evil.

The Ancient Wisdom agrees with ACIM that it was us who fell to the earth and are incarnated into physical bodies:

“The ‘third part of the stars of heaven’ cast down to the earth -- refers to the divine Monads,... the human Egos destined to perform the whole cycle of incarnations.” Secret Doctrine, Vol 2, Page 485

ACIM tells us that the whole world we perceive with our physical senses is an illusion that is not real, but compared to something dreamed up by the mind.

The Ancient Wisdom says something similar:

“You will note that these words ‘in time and space’ have repeatedly recurred in this instruction. Why is this? Because it must constantly be remembered that we are living in the world of illusion—an illusion which is temporary and transient and which will some day disappear, taking with it the illusion of appearance, the illusion of evolutionary unfoldment, the illusion of separateness, and the illusion of distinctive identity—that illusion which makes us say ‘I am.’” Education in the New Age Pg 25

ACIM tells us that our physical bodies in which we seem to dwell is an illusion. The Ancient Wisdom says this:

“It must ever be remembered that from the point of view of Reality what we call the dense physical body, tangible and objective, is but an illusion. We are told again and again in the ancient writings that it is not a principle. Why is this so? Because it is only an appearance ... and this appearance is a fiction or a figment of the human mind. I speak not in parable.” A Treatise on White Magic, Page 550

ACIM places a lot of emphasis on forgiveness, love, peace, sharing and other virtues as essential to liberation. Almost every other spiritual tradition, including orthodox religion, does this also. The Course does, however, direct us in how to achieve these, especially centering on forgiveness. It tells us that we must understand that this world is an illusion and being such, there is nothing to forgive.

The Ancient Wisdom teaches something similar. It tells us that the world is an illusion and to neutralize its effect we should obtain the viewpoint of the observer. This entails looking at your life as if you are a character in a movie you are watching, but you are not affected because it is not true reality.

Here are a couple quotes on this principle:

“The essential attitude for you to cultivate is that of the One Who looks on, that of the Beholder, the Perceiver, and the Observer, leading—upon the Path of Discipleship—to that of the Interpreter.” Discipleship in the New Age: Vol I, Page 442

“The lower forms are constantly and ceaselessly active, endlessly assuming the forms of impulsive desires or dynamic mental thought forms, and it is only as this ‘form-taking’ is controlled and the tumult of the lower nature stilled that it becomes possible for the inner ruling entity to liberate himself from thralldom and impose his vibration upon the lower modifications.

“This is achieved through concentration - the concentrated effort of the soul to hold steadily the position of observer, or perceiver and of seer. When he can do this the lower ‘spectacle’ of the rapidly changing forms of thought and desire fades away, and the realm of the soul, the true field of soul knowledge, can be seen and contacted.” The Light of the Soul, Page 13

Another teaching where there is harmonious overlap is in the joining of minds which will give us greater insight into the kingdom of God and speed our journey to liberation.

This joining of minds is an important quality expected from spiritual teachers according to ACIM:

“What does it matter if they then appear in many forms? Their minds are one; their joining is complete. And God works through them now as one, for that is what they are.” M-12.2

“Alone they are nothing. But in their joining is the power of God.” M-26.1

This joining of minds principle applies to all:

“Each of us is the light of the world, and by joining our minds in this light we proclaim the Kingdom of God together and as one.” T-6.II.13

The Course places a lot of emphasis on the idea that we need to unite and share in consciousness.

“Alone we can do nothing, but together our minds fuse into something whose power is far beyond the power of its separate parts. By not being separate, the Mind of God is established in ours and as ours. This Mind is invincible because it is undivided.” T-8.V.1

“The Kingdom cannot be found alone, and you who are the Kingdom cannot find yourself alone.” T-8.III.6.

The Ancient Wisdom gives out similar teachings but with a little different terminology, placing emphasis on obtaining oneness within groups.

“Where true identity is achieved, there is no sense of this and that; where the merging is complete, there is no recognition of individual activity within the group, because the will of the merged soul is identical with that of the group and automatic in its working; where true unity is present, the individual applicant becomes only a channel for the group will and activity, and this with no effort of his own but simply as a spontaneous reaction.” Rays and Initiations, Page 168

“The energy of the unit is absorbed by the entire group and the group output in service is thereby increased. The group is then enabled to shift to a higher plane of service and of consciousness. Ponder on this.” Discipleship in the New Age, Vol 1, Page 578

“The interaction between the individualised Selves will result in the merging to perfection of the flame within each one, and a blending of the heat; this will proceed until there is “one flame with countless sparks” within it, until the heat is general and balanced. When this is the case and each Son of God is a perfected Sun, characterised by perfectly expressed light and heat, then the entire solar

system, the greater Son of God, will be the perfected Sun. The system will then be characterised by a “blaze of refulgent glory,” and by a radiation that will link it up with its cosmic centre, and thus effect the liberation of the Son, and His return to the far distant source from whence the primal impulse originated.”

Treatise on Cosmic Fire, Pages 228-229

We see then that both teachings tell us that there has to be a joining of minds to experience the kingdom of God. We cannot go home alone.

Both teachings give a similar account of our journey from our Source to this material world and then back again.

ACIM teaches that we began in a spiritual state beyond time and space called heaven. We lived there as part of a unity call the Sons of God. We decided to separate and descended to this illusion/dream state. When we awaken, we first become aware of the real world and finally we go back home.

The Ancient Wisdom teaches that we began as Monads, which it sometimes calls Sons of God. The Monads lived as one life in the unmanifest mind of God. Then many of them separated and descended into matter, which is the realm of illusion. We go through many lifetimes and finally awaken to the true reality sometimes called the kingdom of the soul, which is the same as the real world in ACIM. After this partial awakening we finally advance back to our true identity as Monads or Sons of God.

ACIM places a lot of emphasis on focusing within, sensing the Holy Spirit and following its guidance. It is our link with God and will guide us correctly until we return to our spiritual home.

The Ancient Wisdom teaches the same thing but with different language. Instead of using the term “Holy Spirit” it uses the word “soul”. Our souls are a higher part of ourselves that are connected to our Source through a spiritual link similar to the Holy Spirit of ACIM. When the seeker contacts and receives from the soul, he is said to receive “soul contact.” Often when ACIM uses the word soul it is referring to the monad of the Ancient Wisdom.

Both teachings support the doctrine of reincarnation. As discussed in a previous chapter, reincarnation is supported in the text of the Course as well as more personal communications to Helen.

Reincarnation is more of a core belief in the Ancient Wisdom and much is written about it.

Both teachings tell us that there is no eternal hell, and the main hell we have to deal with is right here on this earth. There is also no vicarious atonement, for we are saved by waking up to our true reality. We can, however, assist each other on the path back to Spirit.

Both sets of teachings view sin in a similar manner. They both see sin as merely errors that need to be corrected rather than there being a need to be punished through guilt. or other means.

What is interesting is that even the Bible, as it was originally written, does not offer the traditional view of Sin. That seems to have been added after Christianity became an established religion. As mentioned earlier, the word “sin” in the New Testament comes from the Greek word HAMARTANO which means “to miss the mark,” or simply to make a mistake. That Jesus saved us from our errors by revealing the path of correction is supported even in the Bible.

The two teachings give out a similar view of time. We have included in this volume a whole chapter dealing with ACIM and time. In a nutshell, these quotes summarize it:

“The present is the only time there is.” W-pI.164.1 “The only aspect of time that is eternal is now.” T-5.III.6 “there is no time.” T-27.VIII.6 and “Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion in which figures come and go as if by magic.” W-pI.158.3

Here are some quotes from the Bailey writings that are in alignment with the Course:

“To say that time is a succession of states of consciousness and that the present is lost in the past instantaneously, and merged in the future as it is experienced, is of small avail to the average student. To say that there is a time when sight is lost in vision, when the sum total of life anticipations are realized in a moment of accomplishment and that this persists for ever, and to point to a state of consciousness in which there is no sequence of events and no succession of realizations is to speak in a language of mystery. Yet so it is and will be. When the aspirant has reached his goal he knows the true significance of his immortality and the true nature of his liberation. Space and time become for him meaningless terms. The only true Reality is seen to be the great central life

force, remaining unchanged and unmoved at the centre of the changing evanescent temporal forms.” Light of the Soul, Pages 366-367

“From the standpoint of the Eternal Now, none is greater nor less than another, for the last shall be first, and the first last. Out of manifestation time is not, and freed from objectivity states of consciousness are not.” Treatise on Cosmic Fire, Page 60

“Therefore, past, present and future are seen as one; the recognition of the Eternal Now is gradually developed from incarnation to incarnation and during the continuous process of rebirth.” Esoteric Healing, Page 496

“Where no physical brain exists, what humanity understands by time is nonexistent. The removal of the barriers of the form, stage by stage, brings an increasing realisation of the Eternal Now. In the case of those who have passed through the door of death and who still continue to think in terms of time, it is due to glamour and to the persistence of a powerful thoughtform.” Esoteric Healing, Page 403

It is too bad that few students of the Ancient Wisdom study ACIM and few Course students study the Ancient Wisdom, especially when they are quite harmonious and both add to the complete picture of truth.

What I find quite ironic is that the Bailey transmissions seem to predict *A Course in Miracles*. They speak of three groups of teachings that will lead people to greater light. The first it says was presented by Helena P. Blavatsky (1875-1890), the second through Alice A. Bailey (1919-1949) and then a third which it calls **“Revelatory, emerging after 1975.”** Rays and Initiations, Page 255

The perplexing thing for Bailey students is that no significant revelation in harmony with the Ancient Wisdom seemed to surface around that date.

It is interesting that when Bailey began giving out her transmissions, they were generally rejected by the Blavatsky students because they seemed to strike a different note. Now are the Bailey students are doing the same thing in rejecting *A Course in Miracles* for the same reason?

Indeed, *A Course in Miracles* strikes a different note than any teaching previously presented. But even though the style and language are much different than anything in the Ancient Wisdom, the harmony on many basic teachings is still there. As time

passes, we can expect to see more students exploring both sets of teachings and benefiting from the knowledge therein.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

Are We Replaying a Movie?

Who Wants to Relive a Nightmare?

The Course makes this important statement:

“The first step toward freedom involves a sorting out of the false from the true.”
T-2.VIII.4

Students get many opportunities to use their discerning powers as there are numerous teachings in the Course that are open to more than one interpretation. If two interpretations oppose each other they cannot both be true as noted by the Course:

“The truth is true, and nothing else is true... Truth cannot have an opposite. This can not be too often said and thought about. For if what is not true is true as well as what is true, then part of truth is false. And truth has lost its meaning. Nothing but the truth is true, and what is false is false.” W-pI.152.3

This is an important piece of knowledge for the student as he proceeds toward awakening. Although he may be sincere and devout in doing the lessons and studying the text, if he hasn't correctly sorted out the true from the false interpretations along the way then he has not taken this first step as mentioned by the Course.

Though there are many conflicting interpretations in need of discernment, perhaps the most glaring is the idea that all events in our life are predestined – that there is no free will to determine our future, contrasted with the idea that we have free will to choose which path our life will take.

The first says we are basically characters in a movie which has already been made and the next frame is set and cannot be altered.

The second says that we are indeed in a dream movie experience, but we have free will to make the movie turn out however we choose; however, our choices will eventually lead to our finishing the Course and awakening which is predetermined, for **“Only the time you take it is voluntary.”** T-in.1

I am going to make a case for the second idea by presenting a number of teachings from ACIM as well as the use of logic and reasoning.

Consider this quote:

“He has created the Holy Spirit as the Mediator between perception and knowledge. Without this link with God, perception would have replaced knowledge FOREVER IN YOUR MIND.” W-pI.43.1

This tells us that the stakes of dreaming are very high. In entering the dream, we risked being caught up in it forever. You wouldn't think that we would want to take that risk again.

The Course describes this dream experience as a nightmare compared to heaven. If we have already lived the nightmare and awakened from it, then why would we want to relive it again with no control over the character we play as some teach? Why would we again want to lose our memory of heaven and plunge into the bad movie and be deceived into thinking it is happening for the first time?

The Course itself agrees with this reasoning, for it says quite clearly that once would be enough in this dream world:

“When the Atonement is complete and the whole Sonship is healed THERE WILL BE NO CALL TO RETURN.” T-5.I.5

If there is no call to return then why have we returned?

Answer: We have not. We are here for the first time. The Prodigal Son left his father's house, returned and stayed there.

It makes no sense that the Prodigal would voluntarily lose his memory and replay his bad experience.

Does not Compute

When attempting to discern the truth, it is always helpful to see if a belief corresponds to reality.

Does then the idea that we are in a movie, where the next thing that happens is already set in a movie frame, correspond to a real movie?

Consider this. A movie is either recorded on film, frame by frame, or digitally on a DVD or hard drive. If you do not know what is going to happen next, you can fast forward and see. If you do not like the result, there is nothing you can do to change it.

If one's life was really a rerun of a movie, then we should be able to fast forward and see what is going to happen in the future. If you saw you were going to cut your finger tomorrow, then when the time came, you would have to cut your finger because that event is embedded solidly in that frame. Can you imagine such a situation? You know that you are going to cut your finger at 1:32 PM and you would like to not do this, but when the time comes your hands and knife move as scripted no matter what your will says. Sounds like a good idea for a horror movie.

The truth is the correspondence does not work. First, we cannot fast forward our life like a movie and see what is going to happen. If we could then someone could produce tomorrow's newspaper today, something which has never been done. Some basic parts of the future can be seen but not all the details as you would get in fast forwarding a movie.

Secondly, some do get premonitions of the future, but unlike a movie with set frames, one can change it. For instance, there are numerous stories of someone who received a warning to not board a plane that later crashed. When he saw the future, he was able to change it, unlike a movie with frames that cannot be changed.

Obviously, the idea that our life is set in stone like frames of a movie does not correspond.

Remembering the Forgotten

To believe that life here is like a movie, replaying an ancient life, with all future frames set in stone, here is what you would have to believe.

The dream is over and you are safely back in heaven enjoying the bliss, joy and creative endeavors. Even though the Course says that “**Nothing that you remember now (in the dream) will you remember.**” T-19.IV.D.6 you start to remember and you do the impossible and go “**backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering.**” M-2.3

So even though this recorded film is past the possibility of remembering, you suddenly remember each frame in perfection and decide to forget who you are a

second time (or maybe many times) and identify with a series of lives that you now see as nightmares from which you have been happy to conclude. All the pain and suffering are now yours for a second time, and what is worse, you decide to start the movie at the beginning where you are in total ignorance of your true identity.

Do you really think we could have been that crazy? Who wants to relive a pleasant life, let alone a painful one?

Not Feeling the Pain

We have covered three points illustrating how watching a movie rerun does not correspond to this dream which is the result of the separation. Now here is a fourth.

When you watch a movie, even one that is good enough to cause you to feel involved, you do not feel the actual pain of the characters involved.

If this life were like a movie rerun, then when one breaks a leg, the watcher may feel some empathy for the character, but he would feel no pain.

Even if the character suffered severe burns or torture, if this were a movie the watcher would feel no discomfort. Instead, he may have the thought, "I'm glad that is not happening to me."

When the dreamer asks, "Why is this happening to me?" he is acknowledging that he is having an actual experience, not at all like watching a movie for the second or third time.

Identification of Characters

Among the many reasons this life is not like a movie is this: A movie has many characters and when watching, you do not feel the pain of any of them though you may show some empathy for all of them.

In life you identify with only one person, but unlike watching a movie, you actually feel the pain of that person and go through the experiences of him or her. All the other people in life are seen as separate from you, so you do not feel their pain or live through their experiences as you do through your ego.

Thus, the movie has many characters that you watch, but do not fully identify with. Life also has many characters, but unlike a movie, there is one character with which

you fully identify and feel any pain or pleasure experienced. Unlike watching a movie, you fully accept your identity as this character and see this character as having an isolated experience from the others involved.

Stopping the Movie

Here is another way our life in the illusion is different than a movie.

You can stop watching a movie, leave the theater and resume normal life at any time if you do not like what is happening. In this world it is much different. Here we encounter numerous painful events in our life, and if we do not like them, we cannot just decide to leave the theater. True, one could kill himself, but the Course tells us that this would not wake us from the dream.

In addition, there is no way a character in a movie can wake up or choose how long the movie will run. In the movie, the script is indeed written and cannot be changed, whereas the Course tells us that in this world “the time you take it is voluntary.” In other words, you can decide whether to take a long or a short time to take the Course and awaken, for the script concerning the time factor is definitely not written. And if we decide to meander along and take twice the needed time playing in this world, then there would be many things happen that would not be foretold in any script.

The Observer

Since we are at point number seven, with more to come, it should become obvious that there are flaws in comparing this life to a movie that cannot be altered.

Here is another one:

The idea behind the life-is-a-scripted-movie idea is that this life is really over and we are safe in heaven. From that state of bliss, we decided to watch a rerun of our lives during the separation. While watching it we became so involved that we forgot the original movie script and thought that we are one of the characters in the movie rerun; and here we are living out the script without a clue as to what is going on in reality.

This idea falls far short of a correlation to watching a movie here.

First, if you are watching a rerun of a movie in our world you do not forget that you have seen it before and you recall the basics of what is going to happen. The script

idea tells us that we have completely forgotten the plot of our story and we do not therefore know what is going to happen next.

Secondly, when you are watching a movie, you never forget that you are the observer and not one of the characters. And remember, we are talking about ourselves as fully conscious Sons of God with much more awareness in heaven than we have in the illusion. If we have power here to maintain the vantage point of the observer, then surely, we had it in the eternal world. It makes no sense that a rerun of a movie would involve us so much that we would lose ourselves in it.

Thirdly, there had to be a time when we actually made the movie, and it would make no sense in talking about watching reruns of the movie in the middle of making it, and before the end is even known. Why would we say the script is written and the next frame is set before the next frames are even filmed?

A Dream, Not a Movie

It is interesting that a large percentage of ACIM students believe that life is like a movie with the next frame being an event that cannot be altered, yet not once does the Course even mention the word.

Yes, the Course does not once use the movie analogy, but it does specifically use something else. And what is that something else?

A dream.

Yes, the Course compares this world not to a movie, but a dream, and tells us of a script that is written to guide us to awaken from that dream of which *A Course in Miracles* is a guide.

We know for sure that the Course compares this life to a dream, so let us look at the difference between a dream and a movie.

[1] All the events in a movie are unalterably set even before you watch it.

A dream, however is not predictable, follows no script and is created by the ego, and not God. It is written:

“What can He (God) know of the ephemeral” W-pI.152.6 Your dark dreams are but the senseless, isolated scripts you write in sleep.” T-30.VII.6

This would include our dreams at night as well as our life in the world.

[2] We totally identify with the main character in the dream, but we see the movie from the vantage point of the observer. We watch a movie from a distance, but we participate in the dream.

[3] You cannot alter a movie by the power of your thought, but you can alter events in your dream.

[4] You can wake up from a dream and that is the end of it. On the other hand, none of the characters in a movie can wake up. And if you stop watching the movie, the frames of the movie are still there and can be watched again.

Conclusion: The Course compares this life and this world to a dream state, not a movie. There is a big difference between the two.

You are as Free as God

If life here in this world were merely a replay of a movie that cannot be altered, then there would be no such thing as free will. Here is what the life-is-a-replay-of-a-movie idea tells us. It says that the next decision, the next action or next words spoken are set like the next frame of a movie, and there is no way you can change it. Thus, if the next frame has you eating pancakes for breakfast, then you must choose pancakes – you cannot choose fruit or bacon and eggs.

Or, if the next frame has you getting out of bed at 8 AM sharp, this you must do. You cannot choose to sleep another 15 minutes. If this idea were true, then you would have absolutely no choices involved in your life. You couldn't even choose to procrastinate or to speed up taking the Course, as that would be set in future frames you must act out.

This runs contrary to many passages in the Course. For instance, it definitely tells us that **“the time you take it is voluntary.”** T-in.1, and **“You are free, however, to decide when you want to learn it.”** M-2.3

It does tell us that it is in the plan that we will awaken and return, but this does not violate free will because God knows that when enough time passes we will grow tired of the dream world and want to return home of our free will, like the story of the Prodigal Son.

The Course definitely tells us that we have free will – that we are doing more than being little robots going through predetermined motions. Indeed **“I am not the victim of the world I see. ... Remind yourself that you are making a declaration of independence in the name of your own freedom.”** W-pI.31.4

Instead of being controlled by the next frame we are told that **“No force except your own will is strong enough or worthy enough to guide you. In this you are as free as God, and must remain so forever.”** T-4.III.6

“You are not free to give up freedom, but only to deny it.” T-10.IV.5

However, we are warned that **“The mind can miscreate only when it believes it is not free. An ‘imprisoned’ mind is not free because it is possessed, or held back, by itself. It is therefore limited, and the will is not free to assert itself.** T-3.II.4

If we buy into the idea that we are not free but each action, word and thought we think is predetermined, then we are likely to misuse our God-given powers and miscreate.

We have miscreated enough without adding more fuel to the fire.

The Course and Predestination

The idea that our future in life here is fixed and cannot be changed, like the frames of a movie rerun is out of harmony with numerous passages from ACIM. The only thing truly predestined is our return home, and even this is determined by our free will, for every soul will eventually choose love over fear. **“It is only the end that is certain.”** M-22.2

Whereas God does have a script for our atonement and awakening, life within the illusion has no set script from God and is subject to our whims of thought.

The plans you make for safety all are laid within the future, where you cannot plan. No purpose has been given it as yet, and what will happen has as yet no cause. Who can predict effects without a cause? T-26.VIII.5

Here we are told that we cannot accurately plan for the future because it does not yet have a real or eternal cause. This world has unpredictable effects because of illusionary, or temporary causes.

In addition, we are told that unlike a movie, the future of our life can be changed:

“When you make a decision of purpose, then, you have made a decision about your future effort; a decision that will remain in effect unless you change your mind.” T-4.V.6

You can change your future by changing your mind, but if you are watching a movie, you cannot change the future frames and scenes.

Even our mundane daily occurrences are up to our decisions rather than the next frame in a movie script:

“Do not fight yourself. But think about the kind of day you want, and tell yourself there is a way in which this very day can happen just like that. Then try again to have the day you want.” T-30.I.1

If life is a replay of a movie, then it would be fruitless to plan the day we want.

Even though God has a script that is written that insures we return home, everything that happens in the mind of the ego has nothing to do with Him, and He has no interest in the unpredictable dream itself.

Here we see that the things that happen on the path of return cannot be predicted:

“The path becomes quite different as one goes along. Nor could all the magnificence, the grandeur of the scene and the enormous opening vistas that rise to meet one as the journey continues, be foretold from the outset.” M-19.2

Then we are told that what happens on this journey through life cannot be predicted because “What you made can always be changed.”

“Only what God creates is irreversible and unchangeable. What you made can always be changed because, when you do not think like God, you are not really thinking at all.” T-5.V.6

We can even change the dream and replace it with a different one:

“If you are the dreamer, you perceive this much at least: that you have caused the dream, and can accept another dream as well. But for this change in content of the dream, it must be realized that it is you who dreamed the dreaming that you do not like.” T-28.II.5

So, unlike a movie where the frames are set, the content of our life is not. Our free will can alter the dream and even replace a dream with another dream.

The Two Scripts

The Course doesn't mention the movie idea but it does tell us there is a script and implies that the end result of returning home is a sure thing. Even here, it stresses that there is free will, which will determine how long it takes. So, how can there be free will when the end is determined? An analogy may help us to understand.

Suppose you had a toothache that is getting progressively worse. You have the free will to not go to the dentist, but when the choice comes down to pain or no pain, you will eventually pick the latter.

We are in a similar situation. We are in a dream where lots of pain happens and when we learn there is a way to end the pain, then it is only a matter of time before we choose it of our own free will. God doesn't force any decision upon us.

Something else that is overlooked is that there are two scripts. The first is the script of return wherein the Holy Spirit is our guide. In this **“are all but aspects of the plan to change your dreams of fear to happy dreams, from which you waken easily to knowledge.”** T-18.V.1

The second is the “fearful script” of the ego concerning which, nothing is sure.

“Fear is a judgment never justified. Its presence has no meaning but to show you wrote a fearful script, and are afraid accordingly. ... Your dark dreams are but the senseless, isolated scripts you write in sleep.” T-30.VII.3&6.

“You add an element into the script you write for every minute in the day, and all that happens now means something else. You take away another element, and every meaning shifts accordingly. What do your scripts reflect except your plans for what the day should be? And thus you judge disaster and success, advance, retreat, and gain and loss.” T-30.VII.1-2

The script of God honors our free will, and God merely waits for our correct decision. The script of the ego is not predictable and leads to chaos and “dark dreams.”

Chapter Thirty

According to Plan

One can see why students are divided on whether or not life is all predestined like a movie because of what appears to be contradictory statements in the Course. Some passages seem to indicate the dream state is madness and chaos, and others sound like God planned it all, as in this passage:

“What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good? Perhaps you have misunderstood His plan, for He would never offer pain to you. But your defenses did not let you see His loving blessing shine in every step you ever took.” W-pI.135.18.

Then, other times the Course tells us that God has nothing to do with this world of things in time:

“Is it not strange that you believe to think you made the world you see is arrogance? God made it not. Of this you can be sure. What can He know of the ephemeral, the sinful and the guilty, the afraid, the suffering and lonely, and the mind that lives within a body that must die? You but accuse Him of insanity, to think He made a world where such things seem to have reality.” W-pI.152.6

“How could the Will of God be in the past, or yet to happen? What He wills is now, without a past and wholly futureless.” W-pI.131.6

The question is, why does the Course suggest that our dreamlife, composed of the past projected to the future, is planned by God when it also tells us the Father has no interest in it – that He created the Holy Spirit to help us out and is just waiting for our return? He is like the Father in the Prodigal Son, where He doesn’t involve Himself with the wayward son’s adventures, but just waits for him to come to his senses and return home.

Let us therefore seek an explanation as to why it sounds like God is involved in our life’s planning here. Let us look at this text again:

“What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good?” W-pI.135.18.

Who is the planner, or the **“One Whose only purpose is your good?”**

The casual reader just assumes it is God, or the Father, but that seems to conflict with other passages. For clarification, we need to understand what the Course considers to be the one life which is God.

The One God consists of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and Angels using their correct powers of creation in the waking state. Of the Four, the Sonship miscreated and produced a dream state called this “world.”

Now, even though we seem to have separated, there still exists a higher part of ourself in heaven, and this part of ourself is one with God. It would be technically correct to say that the Sonship has a high interest in successfully planning our return, whereas the Father focuses only on the eternal.

Thus, when the Course tells us that God is doing something in the world the act could be initiated by the Sonship with the assistance of the Holy Spirit or angels, but not directly by the Father, who pays no attention to this world, according to ACIM.

Thus, the one who is interested in planning our lives is really us. After all, is there anyone more interested in your life than you?

We are not talking about the you that is projected in the dream, but the dreamer who is one with God. This higher part of yourself is the real planner.

Evidence for this is found in the investigative research by Dr. Michael Newton, a psychologist who started as a non-believer, but discovered through hypnosis that his patients could not only recall past lives but their life between lives.

The life between lives particularly interested him, for very few had previously investigated this through hypnosis.

He regressed around three thousand individuals to their life between lives and the consistency of their accounts made a believer out of him. It is impressive when one works with unrelated individuals who relayed many details that agree.

Dr. Newton wound up writing three bestselling books that give many fascinating details of the life-between-life experience and the world there. I find it interesting that his writings are not only in harmony with *A Course in Miracles*, but add a lot of knowledge that clarifies some of the teachings that are not clear in the Course.

It is interesting that the descriptions given of the after-death world matches very closely to that of the real world given in the Course. ACIM tells us that the real world is a bridge between our true home and this world where form still exists yet we see with extra clarity.

Newton discovered that the afterlife world is indeed more real than this one, where the inhabitants can see the truth much more clearly than here. There we live in a much higher state of consciousness than here, and when we are born in a body, we project a portion of our consciousness into this world. During incarnation, entities in the spirit world usually have about 25-35% of their consciousness projected here on earth and the rest remains there until reunited after death.

Newton discovered many interesting details of our lives there, but I want to focus on one that should be of particular interest to Course students, and that is the planning of our earthly lives.

His clients revealed that shortly before birth it is revealed to us the situation of our future life. Usually, there is one definite set of parents, but sometimes there is a choice between two or more. We always keep our free will and can accept or reject the recommendation, but all his clients accepted theirs because they had great trust in the intelligence involved. It is also interesting that we were much more enthusiastic about taking on a difficult life than an easy one because our progression would be enhanced.

After we accept our assignment to our future life, we can enter a place something like the Holodeck on Star Trek. There we can see a projection of how our future life is expected to play out. It is pretty accurate, but not infallible due to free will. Our stubborn ego self always has the ability to get us off plan, but if it does, there seems to be a natural flow of events to guide us back on.

The Course speaks of triggering events similar to those covered by Newton **“of what seem to be very casual encounters; a “chance” meeting of two apparent strangers in an elevator, a child who is not looking where he is going running into an adult “by chance,” two students “happening” to walk home together. These are not chance encounters. Each of them has the potential for becoming**

a teaching-learning situation. Perhaps the seeming strangers in the elevator will smile to one another, perhaps the adult will not scold the child for bumping into him; perhaps the students will become friends.” M-3.2

The Course indicates that these supposed chance encounters are a part of a plan leading to our eventual awakening.

Newton discovered that this was correct, but our lives are not planned down to insignificant details; there are certain events in our lives that are important to occur, so we review the projection to establish them deep in our awareness. Then when we encounter the event in our lives, we will often have a feeling of déjà vu. This is a sign that we are moving ahead on schedule.

There are several encounters that are of great importance, such as finding the person you will marry or some other important person in your life. We place extra attention on this projection to make sure we get it right. When we review meeting our future spouse, we will take special note of something about him or her to establish what is called a “trigger.”

A trigger is something unique about one of your initial encounters. It could be the way the person smiles, the look in his or her eyes, a certain statement that is made, the smell of a perfume, a chance meeting at a bus stop or many other possibilities. In your future life preview you study this carefully and embed it in your consciousness to make sure you get the message when you meet on earth, for some events are much more important to materialize than others.

When I read about this in Newton’s writings, I knew exactly what my trigger was with my wife and could see how this made sense.

I have done some of the same work as Newton, but mostly focused on past life regression. The ones I have done with the life between lives reveal information that is in harmony with his.

Newton’s research also reveals why so many today accept the multiverse theory which states that each decision in life creates a new universe where both decisions are carried out. This always seemed wrong to me, but Newton discovered why many think we are living in many different alternate realities.

He discovered that we, as souls just live in one universe, but in this spiritual Holodeck we can experience what life would be like if we had made different choices.

For instance, if after your life was over and you took job A while living, but strongly considered taking job B, perhaps you wonder what life would have been like if you made a different choice. You can run a simulation and have it play out as if you are actually there and see how things would have turned out. You can also do this with your approaching life. This will give you an affirmation that the plan for your life is for the best.

So, according to Newton, we do have a script for important events that we, with highly evolved entities, helped to write. It is not set in stone like the frames of a movie, for we can always go off script, but overall, most of us play it out pretty close to the plan.

It only makes sense that we would use spiritually-advanced technical knowledge to plan our lives from the vantage point of higher consciousness. After all, we attempt to do that here on earth with our limited awareness. In our younger years most of us make some plans and some work out and others do not. Why wouldn't we also be interested in planning our life just before birth also?

Now, the point to consider is this. Is your life going according to plan? If it is, you will have a sense of peace about it. If it is not, you will feel very restless and out of sync. In this case it is time to listen to the inner voice for guidance so you can get back on track.

The Mysteries of A Course in Miracles,

Part II

ACIM Conversations

The following represents a realistic, but fictionalized discussion, between *A Course in Miracles* student and a more seasoned one we label “teacher,” designed to reveal the truth behind some of the more obscure teachings of ACIM.

ACIM Conversations, Part 1

The Key to Unity

Student: I have read through the text and most of the lessons and I still feel like a babe in the woods. I’ve been communicating with a number of other students, some of whom have studied the Course for decades. What I find confusing is that some of them come up with rather strange conclusions that do not make sense to me and many do not agree with each other. How am I to know what to believe when even dedicated students disagree with each other?

Teacher: Many look to others as a source of true interpretation of the Course. Do you know what the Course says you are choosing when you do this?

Student: Not sure.

Teacher: Idols.

Student: You mean idols like the golden calf in the days of Moses?

Teacher: The golden calf was a substitute for God, and anything that we accept as a source, above that which comes from God, is a substitute and therefore an idol, or a creation of the ego. Here, read this passage.

Student: (He reads): **“You will not make decisions by yourself whatever you decide. For they are made with idols or with God. And you ask help of anti-Christ or Christ, and which you choose will join with you and tell you what to do.”** T-30.I.14

Teacher: Note that we follow either idols or God or the Christ or the anti-Christ. Here’s a similar passage:

“The Holy Spirit and the ego are the only choices open to you.” T-5.V.6

And where is it that we find the true God, Christ or Holy Spirit?

Student: Within ourselves.

Teacher: And if two people look within, past the outward idols to the true God, will they get different answers and disagree or the same answer?

Student: You’d think they would get the same answer.

Teacher: And if they do not get the same answer, what does that tell us?

Student: It would seem that one or both of them are not receiving from the true Source. Is it really possible for two different people to get the same answer?

Teacher: Let’s see what the Course says. Read this:

Student: **“The Holy Spirit’s goal gives one interpretation, meaningful to you and to your brother.” T-30.VII.6.**

Teacher: If two receive from the Holy Spirit, how many interpretations will they receive?

Student: It seems to say they would just receive one. I wonder if that is really possible when you consider all the disagreement among students.

Teacher: Is contact and reception from the Holy Spirit possible?

Student: I think so, but it appears that even the students who are disagreeing think they are in contact.

Teacher: Yet when this happens, one or both must be in error as you say. What causes this error?

Student: It would seem that the ego would play a big role.

Teacher: The Course agrees with you. Read this:

Student: **“The Holy Spirit is One, and anyone who listens is inevitably led to demonstrate His way for all... The ego is legion, but the Holy Spirit is One.” T-6.I.10**

Teacher: So, what would be the difference between those who receive from the Holy Spirit and the ego?

Student: Those who receive from the Holy Spirit would be united in thought, whereas there would be a legion of opinions among those in the ego. Does this mean that those in contact with the Holy Spirit will agree on everything, like the best flavor of ice cream or the best sports team?

Teacher: The Course says that **“The Holy Spirit will answer every specific problem.”** T-11.VIII.3 Notice that it uses the word “problem.” Something becomes a problem when it increases the feeling of separation. Do you see it as a problem that a friend would like a different flavor of ice cream than yourself?

Student: Not at all.

Teacher: Yet, have you found problems surfacing in group discussions among students who disagree on what the Course teaches?

Student: I have seen a number of problems, especially concerning negative judgments that surface; definitely some dislike and even demand offensive ones be thrown off the discussion group or at least censored.

Teacher: These and other disagreements can increase feelings of separation, and it is here that the Holy Spirit will come when invited and bring unity.

The Course gives us powerful guidance on this in this quote:

“Everything you behold without is a judgment of what you beheld within. If it is your judgment it will be wrong, for judgment is not your function. If it is the judgment of the Holy Spirit it will be right, for judgment is His function. You share His function only by judging as He does, reserving no judgment at all for yourself.” T-12.VII.12

So, what does it tell us about relying on our judgment, or we could say the ego’s judgment?

Student: It says we will be wrong. If we want to be right, we listen to the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: So, if two people disagree to the point of separation, then one or both of them are listening to the ego. Would you agree?

Student: Sounds right.

Teacher: Why are judgments of truth made without the Holy Spirit always wrong?

Student: I’m not sure.

Teacher: Suppose someone gives you a jigsaw puzzle and it lacks the finished picture. You pick up a couple pieces and look at them. Do you think that you can establish the truth of the whole picture this way?

Student: I doubt it.

Teacher: That is the disadvantage of judging from the ego. Even if you are sincere, you cannot see the whole picture, a little like the story of the three blind men and the elephant.

Student: Makes sense.

Teacher: On the other hand, the Holy Spirit sees the whole picture, and when we allow Him to share it with us, this gives us power to make correct judgments. If you and I see the same picture, we are not likely to disagree with what is in it.

Student: Good point. You make oneness sound easy, and it probably should be easy, but I keep wondering why there is so much disagreement and conflict between students, and even some teachers, and what we can do about it.

Teacher: Good thought my friend, and we'll talk about that when we continue this conversation.

ACIM Conversations, Part 2

The Ego and the Spirit

Student: In our last conversation we concluded we either follow the ego or the Holy Spirit, and if two disagree on teachings then one or both of them are in the ego. Let us suppose that one individual follows the ego and the other the Holy Spirit. How would you tell which is which?

Teacher: Tell me. What is the difference between the feelings generated by the two?

Student: The Course tells us that fear, hate, guilt, grievances, attack and lack of peace come from the ego. By contrast, feelings associated with the Holy Spirit are peace, love, joy, unity and probably more. I guess you could say negative feelings are associated with the ego and the positive ones with the Spirit.

Teacher: So, if you observe these two people for a while do you think it would become obvious as to which one has the peace of the Spirit and which has the negativity of the ego?

Student: One would think that would be the case.

Teacher: Here is another clue from the Course: **“The Holy Spirit uses logic as easily and as well as does the ego, except that His conclusions are not insane.”** T-14.in.1

This makes the interesting statement that both use logic. Therefore, a bystander who is listening may see the logic displayed on both sides and may not be able to conclude who is correct. But then the quote tells us a distinctive difference. What is that?

Student: The conclusions of the ego are insane and those of the Holy Spirit are not.

Teacher: Exactly. If one can identify with the pure reasoning of the Spirit, he will see the conclusions that make sense and know they are on the side of the Spirit. We could go into many differences between the Ego and the Spirit, but this will suffice for this discussion. So, what do we look for in those who are following the Holy Spirit?

Student: Positive feelings of peace and oneness as well as coming to sensible conclusions when using logic.

Teacher: Have you noticed that the one who is furthest from peace seems to come to the most illogical conclusions?

Student: Yes. They both may make logical presentations, but some pretty wild conclusions are reached, and the worst part is the separation between the conclusions is often great.

Teacher: A good example of this is the current rise in the belief that the earth is flat. There is a lot of discussion currently going on as to whether or not this is true. Now, the average person may not think the flat earth person has any logic at all in his thinking, but he would be wrong. If you watch their videos and discussions, you will see many logical and true points presented only to reach the insane conclusion that the earth is flat. Can you see that this is what the ego does on any subject that furthers its cause?

Student: Yes, I've seen it with Course students. Sometimes pretty wild and illogical conclusions are reached that are not in harmony with the Course.

Teacher: In a discussion of the Course where there is disagreement, what do you suppose is the most obvious giveaway of who is in the ego?

Student: An insane conclusion.

Teacher: That will occur, but I'm talking about what happens during the actual discussion.

Student: A lack of peace.

Teacher: Have you ever heard a serious ACIM student admit that he lacks peace?

Student: Rarely, if ever.

Teacher: Yes. Because of the Course's stress on peace, no serious student wants to admit that he lacks it, as that would be like admitting that the ego has control, but he does show his lack of peace in an obvious way. Any idea what it is?

Student: Perhaps it is anger.

Teacher: Again, this is something that the ego does not want to reveal, as it tells everyone that he is not one with the Holy Spirit. Think again. What do you see revealed in discussions where the ego is in control?

Student: I've noticed that the one with the weakest case seems to start attacking and judging the other person.

Teacher: Good. That is it exactly! Attacks and negative judgments are easy to justify. If questioned, the guy will just say that he was speaking the truth and there's nothing wrong with speaking the truth.

Student: Can you give me an example?

Teacher: The one in the Spirit makes his case to the point where the truth should be obvious. The one in the ego will not admit he is wrong, and instead, accuses the other guy of being in the ego, and, arguing from the ego, refusing to admit he is wrong.

Student: That's almost funny. The guy in the ego portrays the other as being in the ego.

Teacher: Yes. This often happens. The ego when cornered will reflect its own imperfections on to the other person. Can you recall other accusations you have heard?

Student: Sometimes they fly rather freely when an argument gets started. I've seen the main guy who is in the attack mode accuse the other guy of being the attacker.

Teacher: This is the mirroring of the ego I was talking about. Anything else?

Student: Accusations of hypocrisy and lying are common and occasionally there will be accusations of intolerance, hate, ignorance and so on.

Teacher: Yes, accusations of hypocrisy and lying are high on the list, but when the ego's superiority is challenged, it will attack to the maximum amount possible while trying not to expose itself.

Student: Anything else I should look for?

Teacher: The ego reveals itself in many subtle ways, but I'll point out one more that it often uses and that is playing the victim. It will complain of hurt feelings or being justly offended because of something said. The one in the Spirit is virtually impervious to being offended or hurt through a mere exchange of words. Then the crazy part is the one who is offended will often accuse the other guy of being the one who is offended.

Student: It sounds like the ego is a master of confusion and manipulation.

Teacher: Indeed, it is.

Student: So, what is the difference when two who are in the ego have a disagreement?

Teacher: When two egos have a disagreement there is great confusion for neither understands the other, and both wind up attacking in some manner and being offended. It is interesting to note, though, that one in the ego is often more offended at one in the Spirit than another in the ego. Darkness hates the light more than additional darkness.

Student: How about two who are listening to the Holy Spirit? Do they ever disagree?

Teacher: Normally, they will see eye to eye and understand each other. However, because of the imperfections of communicating with language and different backgrounds, there may seem to be surface disagreements at times, but when they get together and discuss them, they will do so in a friendly spirit without attacking each other, and in the end, see the other's point of view and understand it.

Student: Would you say that we are examples of two in the Spirit having a conversation?

Teacher: Yes. We both do our best to receive guidance from the Spirit but we have different degrees of investment in absorbing *A Course in Miracles*. But notice that we are resolving our differences of understanding and coming to agreement.

Student: Yes, and it feels good to the Spirit in my inner core.

Teacher: And if we both stay in contact with that Spirit, our conversations here will bear much fruit.

ACIM Conversations, Part 3

Resolving Disagreements

Student: I've noticed that when two have a heated disagreement about the meaning of the Course that no one ever admits to being in the ego. Almost all seem to think that their thinking is endorsed by the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: Yes, the ego never wants to reveal itself unless it furthers its cause.

Student: Is there anything that those who are in disagreement can do to bring oneness?

Teacher: They can prayerfully, or in meditation, present their disagreement together to the Holy Spirit and in silence wait for a response

Student: That sounds right but when a good argument gets going, the students do not seem to be in the mood for such a suggestion. Is there anything else they can do?

Teacher: When the emotions are not at peace during an argument, then the ego is in control and they will not consider resolving the problem through the peace of the Spirit. The Course asks: **“Do you prefer that you be right or happy?”** T-29.VII.1 Many do not want their feeling of being right disturbed by the peace of the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, there is something else they can do. What do most students feel that the Holy Spirit has verified to them?

Student: Probably the Course itself.

Teacher: And that makes the Course the second highest authority for them while they are in this world. But what should be their highest authority?

Student: I would suppose that would be their direct connection to God, the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: Exactly. But since many in disagreement are unwilling or unable to allow the Spirit to resolve their differences, the Course itself provides the next best course of action. Why do you suppose the Course is inferior to the Holy Spirit in resolving differences?

Student: The Holy Spirit gives us a complete picture that doesn't need interpretation, whereas the written word is subject to numerous interpretations.

Teacher: Exactly. The interference of the ego causes most of those who are both in the Spirit and the ego to resort to the written word, perception and interpretation in their discussions. But we must always remember this: having an inspired written word is much better than nothing at all. Just think of the millions who have read *A Course in Miracles* and have made a step or two toward greater enlightenment.

Student: That includes me. I know I have a ways to go yet, but it has definitely made me aware of the problems to awakening that we face.

Teacher: So, if our best immediate tool to solve differences is the Course, what is the best way to use it?

Student: If you believe the Course is in harmony with your belief then there should be passages that agree with you.

Teacher: This is true. I'm sure you have seen arguments between students who each quote passages supporting their view from the Course, yet cannot reach agreement. Why do you suppose that two knowledgeable students may not be able to reach unity?

Student: I'm sure that bias enters in, but I can see that many arguments are quite vague, so overcoming the bias becomes impossible.

Teacher: So, what do you see as some of the problems with the various presentations?

Student: A common one I see is that some will quote a large amount of material thinking that will prove their view to be correct. When I read that over, I can usually find nothing specific that even addresses the argument.

Teacher: Yes. This is the shotgun approach of the ego. Throw a lot of information out there and claim proof is in there somewhere. Anything else?

Student: Others give quotes that seem to have little or nothing to do with the subject of the disagreement. That doesn't seem productive.

Teacher: This and your last point illustrates the strategy of the ego: **"Its dictates, then, can be summed up simply as: 'Seek and do not find.' This is the one promise the ego holds out to you, and the one promise it will keep."** T-12.IV.1

Student: Could we say then that answers from the ego are designed to not find the truth?

Teacher: Indeed. One of the prime tactics of the ego is to avoid being specific. It loves to argue with generalities.

Student: One thing I see in that direction is students sometimes will just declare that “Love is the answer” when love has little to do with the subject at hand.

Teacher: Yes. That answer always sounds good but, in many cases, it supports the confusion endorsed by the ego. What else have you noticed about unresolved disagreements?

Student: Sometimes two knowledgeable students disagree and do quote specific passages on the subject, but continue to disagree because one text seems to disagree with another. For instance, one may believe there is only one Son of God and another believe there are many, yet both have quotes to back them up.

Teacher: You just pointed out a prime tactic of the ego as noted here: **“the ego attacks everything it perceives by breaking it into small, disconnected parts, without meaningful relationships and therefore without meaning. The ego will always substitute chaos for meaning, for if separation is salvation, harmony is threat.”** T-11.V.13

Instead of examining the text that seems to be contradictory and looking for the harmony, the ego breaks it down and picks a side. It figures that there is either one Son or many and chooses with black-and-white thinking. In the end, both students could be following the ego in this argument.

Here is what the Voice said about this problem:

“You may believe from time to time that I am misdirecting you. I have made every effort to use words that are almost impossible to distort, but it is always possible to twist symbols around if you wish.” T-3.I.3

Student: It does seem that a lot of students do twist the words around. What would one following the Holy Spirit do?

Teacher: He would figure that since ACIM is inspired, then there would be truth in both statements and study them in context. In this case, he would realize there is one Son but with many parts, and see that the one and the many is not a contradiction. He finds he does not have to pick a side.

Student: Then there are teachings that are almost impossible to distort, like your quote says.

Teacher: But never underestimate the ego’s determination to create confusion.

Student: So, is there any value then in two or more students discussing a disagreement in ACIM?

Teacher: Yes. Outside of the Holy Spirit this and pure reasoning are the only tools we have for students to reach oneness, which is one of the main goals of the Course.

A civil discussion of opposing views can have a number of benefits. Here are three:
[1] Generally, neither party will claim victory nor admit they were in error, but later in quiet moments one may sense the Holy Spirit confirming to him a truth in the other guy's presentation and come to change his mind.

[2] Sometimes a discussion will bring up a quote that one did not realize was even in the Course and this will alter his thinking. Most who read the text for a second or third time will be amazed at how much is in there that they did not see in their first reading. Some students see things that others miss, so sharing of any kind can be helpful if it is civil.

[3] Even if the two having the disagreement do not make any progress, the exchange may bring light to observers. Have you had that happen when observing a heated exchange in a discussion?

Student: Yes, I have. Often the two are of the same opinion still, but the dialog gave me a lot to think about.

Teacher: So, let us conclude with this statement. Doing something to take us to unity, however flawed, is better than doing nothing.

Student: Agreed. If we take no steps to fully understand the Course, we may be caught up in the illusion indefinitely.

ACIM Conversations, Part 4

Two Steps to Heaven

Student: I've encountered disagreement among students as to where or when heaven is entered. Some say we can be in heaven right here on the earth and others say we have to leave this earth behind to enter heaven.

Teacher: Do the ones who say heaven is here give any reference?

Student: They do. Here, I'll read two of them to you.

“Atonement might be equated with total escape from the past and total lack of interest in the future. Heaven is here. There is nowhere else. Heaven is now. There is no other time.” M-24.6

“Heaven has come to earth at last, from which the ego's rule has kept it out so long. Heaven has come because it found a home in your relationship on earth. And earth can hold no longer what has been given Heaven as its own.” T-21.IV.7

It does kind of sound like heaven is right here, but there are other passages that tell us we must leave the world behind. It's quite confusing.

Teacher: This highlights the point we discussed about the importance of looking at the whole rather than the part, as there are a number of times the Course does seem to say contradictory things, but when examined in context with other text, we can see what the Voice is trying to say, and that there is no conflict.

What we need to do here is list the things said about heaven and our return that are clearly stated, and not disputed, and see what adds up. The Course speaks of two major steps necessary to arrive home. Can you name the first?

Student: There seems to be a lot of things like overcoming guilt and fear as well as learning to forgive to name a few.

Teacher: But there is one major one we must achieve.

Student: Would that be the real world?

Teacher: That is correct. Before we fully enter heaven, we must overcome the hurdles you mention and more until we see the real world. And what is the real world?

Student: From what I have read it is a higher reality between heaven and earth – sort of a bridge.

Teacher: Yes. Here is what the Course specifically says: It describes it as **“a borderland of thought that stands between this world and Heaven. It is not a place, and when you reach it is apart from time. Here is the meeting place where thoughts are brought together; where conflicting values meet and all illusions are laid down beside the truth, where they are judged to be untrue. This borderland is just beyond the gate of Heaven.”** T-26.III.3

So, what is the real world according to this?

Student: A borderland between this world and heaven.

Teacher: Does this tell us that if we are in this world, or even the real world, we are not yet awakened and fully in heaven?

Student: Seems to. A bridge to a place is not the place itself.

Teacher: And what do we have to accomplish to enter the real world?

Student: According to that text we will see beyond illusions to the truth.

Teacher: And a part of this seeing is described here: **“You will begin to understand it when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now. That is the beginning of real vision. You can be certain that real vision will come quickly when this has occurred.”** W-pI.15.2

That real vision spoken of enables us to see the true light behind the illusion here and discern the real from the unreal.

If you become centered on the real world, are you then in heaven or still on earth?

Student: From what I have read, it seems we are still here on earth in our bodies, but we just see things clearly. Perhaps we are in that happy dream the Course speaks of.

Teacher: Yes, the Course tells us that **“the real world is the second part of the hallucination.”** (T-26.V.12) and this:

“The real world still is but a dream. Except the figures have been changed. They are not seen as idols which betray. It is a dream in which no one is used to substitute for something else, nor interposed between the thoughts the mind conceives and what it sees.” T-29.IX.7

So, are we still in the dream while in the real world?

Student: It appears so, but just the second stage before entering heaven.

Teacher: And what is the third and final stage?

Student: It is said that the Father will take the final step when we are ready.

Teacher: Yes, it is written that **“When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made. And then your Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.”** T-11.VIII.15

Would you say then that we are not fully out of the illusion and in heaven until this last step is taken?

Student: It would appear so. Why would we have to take two major steps to enter heaven if we are already there? But what I do not understand is why many think we are already in heaven when it clearly says we have two major steps to go to arrive there?

Teacher: That’s a great question which we shall deal with next.

ACIM Conversations, Part 5

Is Heaven on Earth?

Teacher: In our last discussion we established that there are two major steps given in the Course necessary to fully awaken and enter heaven. Step one is seeing the real world. Step two is when the Father takes us back home. What hurdles do you suppose we need overcome before we even enter the real world?

Student: Applying forgiveness is a big one. Also, we must overcome fear, grievances. We must be willing to see Christ within our brothers, as well as ourselves, and the oneness of all life. It seems that there are quite a few steps, or hurdles as you say.

Teacher: It seems you have missed the most important and first step. Can you tell me what it is?

Student: Can't think of anything more important than forgiveness which is stressed by the Course.

Teacher: But will you apply anything in the Course if you do not want to investigate the meaning of life?

Student: I think I see what you are getting at. The first step is asking questions about our true nature.

Teacher: Yes. We are told **“the purpose of this course is to help you remember what you are... the reason for the course is that you do not know what you are.”**
T-9.I.2

If we do not ask this question, then we will never get to the other steps or even take the Course.

Student: I'm confused over the idea that we need to take all these steps to get to heaven, if we are already there as some think.

Teacher: Have you noticed that there are two groups who think we are already in heaven – those who think we experience heaven on earth and those who say we never left?

Student: I have, and it hurts my brain considering some of the paradoxical discussions around these things.

Teacher: Let us explore the mystery and start with the first one. Why do you suppose that many think we can be in heaven right here on earth while still in bodies?

Student: The Course makes it sound that way in the passages previously quoted such as: **“Heaven is here. There is nowhere else. Heaven is now. There is no other time.”** M-24.6

Teacher: To resolve these passages that seem to contradict, the student must realize that sometimes the Voice speaks from the view of the eternal world, and other times, for the sake of communication, it speaks from our point of view on this world. Statements made from these two viewpoints can both be true, but appear to contradict. Concerning your quote, one may assume it is spoken from the eternal view of the true reality.

From this view, heaven is always here because only the real is here, and our world does not even exist. There is nowhere that is not real. Heaven is now because from the eternal view, there is no past or future but only now. There is no other time because the present is the only time there is.

Student: So heaven cannot be here on this earth because our world does not even exist in the true reality. Is that right?

Teacher: Yes and no.

Student: Now that’s the type of answer I was talking about that makes my brain hurt.

Teacher: I’ll try and go easy on your brain. While in this illusionary dream state, we will not find heaven in what appears to be outside of us anywhere on earth or in any object. That’s like trying to find God in an idol, like the golden calf. But while residing on earth, there is a place we can look to find heaven. Where do you suppose that would be?

Student: Jesus said the Kingdom of God is within. It is stated in the Bible and affirmed in the Course.

Teacher: The Course makes numerous statements to the effect that we have heaven and divinity within us, such as:

“The Christ in you inhabits not a body. Yet He is in you. And thus it must be that you are not within a body.” T-25.in.1

“Do not try to look beyond yourself for truth, for truth can only be within you. Say, therefore: Christ is in me, and where He is God must be, for Christ is part of Him.” T-9.I.14

So, the truth, Christ, God and the Holy Spirit are all found within, but it tells us they not within the body. Where are they?

Student: That's an interesting question because when one thinks of going within, the tendency is to focus within the body

Teacher: Indeed. But the body is merely a projection of our thought, so we do not want to go within the projected image, but we want the real thing instead. What is that?

Student: The real part of our self is one with Christ, so I guess it just means to focus on your divine mind and all is available.

Teacher: Technically, "within" may not be accurate, but it is probably the best word to use to direct our focus. In reality, our true self is one with all there is, and it may be more correct to say we need to look beyond this world to the true reality.

Student: So, when I look beyond the illusion to my true self, am I then in heaven?

Teacher: Have you tried to do this?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And did you find heaven?

Student: I'm not sure, but I found a really nice peace and sense of oneness.

Teacher: Did you feel that you had reached the ultimate state of existence?

Student: It felt heavenly, but I also felt there was more. Much more actually. It seems there is something beyond a normal consciousness.

Teacher: Now read this passage:

Student reads: **"It is impossible to see two worlds which have no overlap of any kind. Seek for the one; the other disappears. But one remains. They are the range of choice beyond which your decision cannot go. The real and the unreal are all there are to choose between, and nothing more than these."** W-pI.130.5

Teacher: There are two worlds. One is the world of illusion and the other is called heaven. Which do you see now?

Student: I see your body, which the Course says does not exist, so I suppose I am seeing the illusion.

Teacher: Yes, and I see your body so I am in the same situation. The Course says this: **"The body stands between the Father and the Heaven."** T-23.IV.7 As long

as we see our bodies, and this world instead of the heavenly, we are obviously not fully in heaven.

Student: You said “not fully.” Are you saying we are part way there?

Teacher: The honest seeker can catch a glimpse of heaven in his quiet moments when he takes his attention off this world, but then as he goes about his daily activities, he sees only this world, though he can also have a sense of the peace of heaven.

Student: Sounds like seekers are having experiences in both worlds.

Teacher: Yes, when we begin to wake up it is like going outside and being aware of the sun overhead and how powerful it is. But compare that to being the sun, which would be much more encompassing.

Student: So, you are saying we can get a sense of heaven while we live here and see this world, but it will be something else to leave this world and be fully awake.

Teacher: Yes. Here’s a quote verifying that thought: **“No one on earth can grasp what Heaven is, or what its one Creator really means.”** M-23.6

So, we can get a sense of heaven while here on earth, but we cannot fully grasp what it is until we return.

Student: That is kind of what I felt in my highest spiritual moments, or my holy instant.

ACIM Conversations, Part 6

Is Anything Happening?

Student: Another discussion I see a lot is something that sounds kind of silly to someone who is not a Course student. It is whether or not we are here. The idea is that this world never happened and we never left heaven and are still there. Others say something did happen and we are here but in an illusionary sense. What do you think?

Teacher: The big question is what does the Voice in ACIM say about it? This is another situation where various passages from the Course, taken in isolation, can support either side of the argument. For instance, quotes used by those who say nothing happened say the physical body is not eternal and **“does not exist.”** T-6.V.A.2 and **“The world you see does not exist.”** T-28.V.7. But what about you? Does it seem that you are here living on planet earth?

Student: Yes, it seems that way to me and everyone here.

Teacher: How could that be if you are not here?

Student: Here is a passage I’ve seen quoted. It says: **“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.”** T-13.VII.17

Teacher: Yes, the Course basically tells us we seem to be here because we **“travel but in dreams.”** In other words, it tells us that this world seems real because we dreamed it up, kind of like presented in some science fiction movies like the Matrix.

Student: I loved that movie.

Teacher: Tell me this. When Neo returned to the real world, did anyone there declare Neo’s experience fighting Mr. Smith never happened?

Student: Not that I recall.

Teacher: Did you have a dream last night?

Student: Yes. I dreamed I was romancing this beautiful lady. It was a pleasant dream, unlike Neo’s.

Teacher: Did you actually have a dream then?

Student: I guess I would say yes.

Teacher: So, in what sense did the dream never happen?

Student: It didn't happen in my waking world. I was kind of disappointed when I woke up and the lady was no longer by my side.

Teacher: So, it was as if the events of the dream never happened in this world, but it was a definite happening that you had the dream and the experience in the dream. Is that correct?

Student: I would have to agree.

Teacher: So, where is the true reality, and the dream according to the Course?

Student: The true reality is the eternal world that we came from before the dream began. The dream is this temporary world in time and space that we perceive with the physical eyes.

Teacher: Would you say it is literally correct to say that your dream last night as well as your dream of this world never happened?

Student: I think it is misleading to claim this without explaining the point of reference. Even though my dream did not happen in this world, it is true that I had a dream. I would also think that even though this temporary world does not exist in the eternal world, that it is still something that happened – just as my dream of the lady really happened here.

Teacher: Good point. So, even though your dream last night is not happening in this world, would you say it was a real experience?

Student: I'd have to say yes. It was an experience and I can still relive it in my mind.

Teacher: And how about your life here on earth? Discounting the fact that it is a dream, not existing in the waking state in heaven, how about your experience here? Have you had an experience or not?

Student: I'd have to say that I have had quite an experience and, dream or no dream, I've had a real experience. The problem is that the Course sometimes reads like nothing has happened, and other times like something has happened. Can you shed some light here?

Teacher: The answer is quite simple. When you awaken from a nightmare, you may have a sense of relief and exclaim, "Wow, I'm glad that never happened!" What are you really saying when you say this? Are you saying the dream never happened?

Student: No. I would be merely saying that the dream never happened in what we consider reality – our waking state.

Teacher: Does it make sense then that the Course is expressing a similar view when speaking of things in our world as not being real or never happening?

Student: That would make sense.

Teacher: The Course even speaks along these lines: **“You recognize from your own experience that what you see in dreams you think is real while you are asleep. Yet the instant you waken you realize that everything that seemed to happen in the dream did not happen at all.”** T-10.I.2

It didn’t happen at all in the waking state, but still a dream did happen.

Student: Have you found references from the Course that indicate something did happen concerning our world?

Teacher: Quite a few actually. The Course tells us the separation began with a mad idea and **“the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.”** T-27.VIII.6

Would you say that a mad idea capable of real effects is something that happened?

Student: One would think so.

Teacher: In addition, it says that **“the separation occurred over millions of years.”** T-2.VIII.2 To say something “occurred” is basically the same thing as saying something happened, is it not?

Student: I would think so.

Teacher: Then after this occurrence, or happening, God responded with a very significant creation. It is written that God created the **“Holy Spirit, Who was God's answer to the separation.”** T-17.IV.4 **“He has created the Holy Spirit as the Mediator between perception and knowledge.”** W-pI.43.1

Would God have created the Holy Spirit in response to something that never happened?

Student: That wouldn’t make sense.

Teacher: Finally, we are told that the separation **“shattered heaven.”** T-18.I.12 One would think then that the separation was not only a happening, but must have been a very significant event to create such a disturbance.

Student: Must have been to have shattered heaven.

Teacher: To sum it up, we can say that when the separation occurred a good portion of the Sonship entered a dream state, and when the Course speaks of things that are not real or didn't happen, it is speaking in relation to the eternal world.

Student: Yeah. Our conversation is happening in our world but is not seen as happening in heaven.

Teacher: The Course encapsulates our situation in this quote: **“What you believe is true for you. In this sense the separation has occurred, and to deny it is merely to use denial inappropriately.”** T-2.VII.5

Student: Sounds like we should not deny the separation, but understand it.

Teacher: Exactly.

ACIM Conversations, Part 7

The Mind Which is in Heaven

Student: I've been discussing some of the points of our discussions online and am getting some strange comments. Some simply maintain we are not here because the separation did not happen. Instead, we are all fully in heaven.

Teacher: Yes, a source of some ACIM humor centers around the idea we are not here, but some take this literally to the extreme.

Student: What do you say to a guy who is here enough to write or talk to me, but claims he is not here, but in heaven and even says there is no "here"?

Teacher: I think you'll find that many with this mindset are more interested in expressing with what they consider to be the correct phraseology than in really communicating.

For instance, if we literally go by what some passages in the Course says, we could say that there is no "here" anywhere, neither is there a "place". The problem is that, even if you accept this, it is impossible to communicate many things in language without using those two words, especially in relation to our world. Even the Course itself has to resort numerous times to referring to "here," "there" and "place" in relation to the illusion. Sometimes these students correct others in such details in an effort to demonstrate their superior knowledge.

Student: I've noticed. But what do you say to a guy who tells me I am wrong for using "here" and "place" by insisting we are not here but safe in heaven?

Teacher: You might tell him that he gets an A for being technically correct, but an F in effective communication. The important thing in discussions like these is not in being right, but in communicating so the two minds become as one, which is our natural state. This is what you and I have been doing.

Student: Yes, it is enjoyable having a discussion where we are just trying to figure out what the Course is really saying rather than proving who is right.

Teacher: That said, let us look at what the Course is really saying when it gives statements that seem to tell us we are in heaven now and not in the dream. The most common one quoted was one we referenced in our last session. Here it is again:

“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” T-13.VII.17

Have you encountered any comment on this quote?

Student: Yes. This is one of those used to support the idea we are not here. Instead, we are really in heaven.

Teacher: Yet, it says we travel in dreams. Who or what is traveling?

Student: Good question, as students just focus on the “not here” part. I guess part of the mind.

Teacher: Many times the Course compares our separation to our dreams here. By comparison, could you say that the you of this world travels in dreams when you sleep at night?

Student: I suppose.

Teacher: And when you travel in dreams at night and having a nightmare are you really in danger or are you safe in your bed?

Student: I’m safe in my bed.

Teacher: Is the you that is safe in your bed asleep or awake?

Student: Asleep.

Teacher: And correspondingly, is your real self in heaven asleep or awake?

Student: I believe the Course tells us we are asleep.

Teacher: The fact that we are in a dreamlike sleep is verified numerous places in the Course. For instance, concerning Adam, who represents the separated Sons, it says:

“Yet the Bible says that a deep sleep fell upon Adam, and nowhere is there reference to his waking up.” T-2.I.3

Then we have this:

“The special ones are all asleep, surrounded by a world of loveliness they do not see. Freedom and peace and joy stand there, beside the bier on which they sleep, and call them to come forth and waken from their dream of death. Yet they hear nothing. They are lost in dreams of specialness.” T-24.III.7

We are definitely in a dreamworld, but the question is, where is our real self?

Student: In a regular dream I am linked to a living body in the outer world, but the life of the body thinks it is in the dreamworld. So, if I use a correspondence, I need to ask what is still in the eternal world that I am connected to? I know there are no bodies there.

Teacher: Good thinking. In this world we appear to live in bodies. What is our dwelling place in heaven?

Student: There are no bodies, so it must be our minds.

Teacher: The Course agrees:

“What has been given you? The knowledge that you are a mind, in Mind and purely mind.” W-pI.158.1

Your **“mind is part of creation and part of its Creator.”** W-pI.52.5 What is the difference between your mind before and after the separation?

Student: We were awake before, and asleep afterwards.

Teacher: Yes, and what else?

Student: Let me see... The Course tells us our minds were split after the separation.

Teacher: Actually, it tells us that **“The separation is merely another term for a split mind.”** T-5.III.9

Into what did the mind split?

Student: I know there's a higher and lower mind. It seems like the Course calls them right and wrong mindedness.

Teacher: We are told that **“you have split your mind into what knows and does not know the truth.”** W-pI.139.5 and **“the mind is split between the ego and the Holy Spirit.”** T-3.VI.7

Then it makes this interesting statement:

“Any split in mind must involve a rejection of part of it, and this is the belief in separation.” T-6.II.1

Student: So, one part of our mind rejects the other part. That seems strange.

Teacher: But then we must consider this statement: **“It is impossible to see two worlds.”** W-pI.130.5

Which world are you seeing now?

Student: This world. I guess you could call it the dream world.

Teacher: And which world are you not seeing?

Student: Unfortunately, that would be the eternal world.

Teacher: And why do you not see heaven?

Student: Your quote says because one part of my mind rejects the other part.

Teacher: So, while part of your mind is dreaming of being an ego and making it seem real, what is the other part doing?

Student: Since we can only see one world, then the real part is rejected and must be asleep.

Teacher: Yes, it's safe at home but asleep, kind of like your body is safe in bed while you may be having what appears to be a dangerous nightmare.

Student: Would this be why the Course says that God is lonely without us? We see this world but not the world where God is and thus, He cannot communicate with us?

Teacher: Exactly it says that **“He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him.”** T-4.VII.6

Student: I just found a quote along that same line of thought: **“His completeness, is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him as one. So He thought, ‘My children sleep and must be awakened.’”** T-6.V.1

Teacher: Since our mind is split and we are just seeing this world, how can we become aware of the eternal world or the mind of God?

Student: That's the Holy Spirit's job. He can be our eyes to the true reality if we let him.

Teacher: Yes, it says, **“The Holy Spirit mediates higher to lower communication, keeping the direct channel from God to you open for revelation.”** T-1.II.5

What then do you conclude from this conversation? Are you really in heaven or not?

Student: Apparently my mind is split and the real part is in heaven, but is asleep and not in full communication with God. The ego part split off and sees this world of illusion and does not see the eternal world. Because the real self is asleep, the Holy Spirit was created and sent to assist us in receiving truth from heaven and waking up.

Teacher: Good summary.

Student: I have found, though, that this whole subject is very complex and has numerous branches that seem to add opposition to our conclusions today. If you settle on what the Course teaches on one point, someone will switch to other quotes that seem to disagree.

Teacher: Can you give me an example?

Student: Even after this dialog is presented, some will say that the separation was over ages ago and we are fully in heaven, but just doing something like watching a rerun of a movie of our lives. They will say we are not even here in the dream, for the dream was over long ago.

Teacher: The Course does give some subtle teachings on this that are subject to numerous interpretations. Again, we have to look at the whole rather than the part. We'll see what we can do to simplify in another encounter.

ACIM Conversations, Part 8

Is the Son One or Many?

Student: Another point of disagreement is over what the Son is. Some say the Son is completely non dual, embracing the idea that He is one life with no parts. The other side agrees He is one life but that you, I and all others are parts like cells in our body and are a part of the whole.

Teacher: Let us first look at the implications if we go with the idea that the Son is one life with no parts. How do they explain that there are billions of us Sons right here on planet Earth?

Student: A guy I was communicating with said that I am dreaming you and all the others. When I wake up there will just be me and all others will be no more, like when you dream and wake up and all the people you dreamed about are just gone.

Teacher: When you dreamed about that nice lady a while back and then woke up, who was the one who still existed in our world. You or the lady?

Student: It was me. It was such a nice dream that I was disappointed that she was no longer there.

Teacher: And when you wake up from this earthly dream, which one will be the true self or Son – you or me?

Student: Haha. I think I see where you are going. I would hope it would be me as I want to continue to exist.

Teacher: How about the guy you were talking with about this? Do you suppose he thinks he will be the one who continues existence?

Student: I would suppose he does.

Teacher: Now think of it for a moment. If this greater dream is an exact correlation to our night dreams, then there is only one entity that is real and the rest will literally disappear on waking. So, the question is – which one of the seven billion people on the planet is the real dreamer?

Student: Good question. I'm sure each ACIM student thinks it is him or herself.

Teacher: Does anyone give a reference from the Course to back up this idea?

Student: Yes. Here is the quote: **“What is the same can not be different, and what is one can not have separate parts.”** T-25.I.7

They say that the Son is one and therefore cannot have separate parts.

Teacher: Notice that the text says **“separate parts”** instead of parts. We seem to appear as separated parts in this dream state, but the Course says that in the true reality this is not the case. The Son is a unity but does have parts, but they are united parts. Here, read this:

Student: **“It should especially be noted that God has only one son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until all the parts of the Sonship have returned.”** T-2.VII.6

Teacher: Did you notice that “parts of the Sonship” are mentioned?

Student: Yes. It looks like this passage should resolve the dispute. It tells us that God has one Son, but mentions parts of the Sonship several times.

Teacher: Also, did you notice that even though it tells us God has one Son that it speaks of Sons plural in the next sentence?

Student: Yes. Interesting.

Teacher: Take a guess as to how many times the Course speaks of Sons plural rather than Son singular?

Student: Not sure. I do remember reading it written as Sons a number of times. I’d say at least a couple dozen.

Teacher: It is written “Sons” 82 times.

Student: Wow! You could explain away a couple instances as some transcribing or editing error, but not 82 times. The author is definitely telling us that there is more than one part.

Teacher: Do you remember the parable of the Prodigal son?

Student: Yes. The Course references it so it must represent a teaching that Jesus really gave his disciples.

Teacher: How many sons in the story?

Student: Two. One stayed home with the father and the other went into the world.
Teacher: Which one represented us in the dream?

Student: That would be the one who left the Father.
Teacher: And who is represented by the Son who stayed home?

Student: I do not know. Never thought about it. Are you going to tell me that not all the Sons left heaven?
Teacher: I don't have to. Read this from the original text of the Course:

Student: **“The Atonement actually began long before the Crucifixion. Many Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the Separated Ones but they could not withstand the strength of the attack, and had to be brought back. Angels came, too, but their protection was not enough, because the Separated ones were not interested in peace. They had already split themselves, and were bent on dividing rather than reintegrating.”** UR T 2 B 43

Teacher: There are two groups of Sons mentioned here. Which group corresponds to the Prodigal Son?

Student: This is interesting. Not sure that I noticed this before. Obviously, it would be the “Separated ones” who are the prodigal.

Teacher: And who corresponds to the Son who stayed with the Father?

Student: It says **“Souls offered their efforts on behalf of the Separated Ones but they could not withstand the strength of the attack, and had to be brought back.”** They must be Sons who never left the Father as mentioned in the parable.

Teacher: We have here two major parts to the Sonship. Those who stayed in heaven, and those who separated and came to this world of illusion. But notice that both groups are written as plural here.

Student: Yes. I see that. It speaks of “Souls” plural concerning those who never left and “Separated ones” for those who left.

Teacher: Is there any way this account could be true if the Sonship were one with no parts?

Student: Can't think of any. I'm surprised there is so much division on this teaching.

Teacher: So, how would you sum up the true concept of the Sonship based on what the Course actually says?

Student: There is one Son, but in the eternal realm, all the parts are united as one life, even the eternal parts of the sleeping Son.

Teacher: The Course clarifies this saying that **“God has but one son, knowing them all as One.”** T-9.VI.3 “them all” obviously refers to the parts.

Student: This discussion has caused something significant to dawn on me.

Teacher: And that would be...?

Student: A lot of students believe there is just one Son with no parts that is awake in heaven now because of numerous references to us being the one Son or the only Son. It is true that even though we are separated and, in the dream, we are still identified with the one Son who is still awake and in heaven. But what is overlooked is that not all the Sons left heaven. There has always been many Sons who never left who are fully awake and the eternal part of ourselves are still one with them.

Teacher: Good thinking. Now, on this subject we have one more point to clarify. Remember how we corresponded our night dreams to our dream here and they didn’t seem to match? What was the difference?

Student: When I wake up from a night dream all the characters are gone and there is just me left. When the Son sleeps, many real parts are involved.

Teacher: And what has to wake up for all the characters to disappear?

Student: I’m not sure. We know that Jesus woke up, but we are still here.

Teacher: So, to correspond to waking up in the morning, apparently more than one part has to awaken. What has to awaken to make the whole dream disappear?

Student: Okay, I think I get it. The Sonship is one but with many parts so the whole Sonship must awaken. Having a few parts awake would be like me in the morning being still asleep but being slightly aware that it is time to wake up.

Teacher: Exactly, and the Course agrees with you. **“Together is your joint inheritance remembered and accepted by you both. Alone it is denied to both of you. ... you may not fully understand as yet that you could never be released alone.”** T-31.II.11

Does our awakening fully happen alone or with others?

Student: So, according to this, I just cannot awaken alone, enter heaven and then you disappear. You must awaken with me.

Teacher: This previous quote clarifies this. Go ahead and read it again:

Student: **“It should especially be noted that God has only one Son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until ALL THE PARTS OF THE SONSHIP HAVE RETURNED. Only then can the meaning of wholeness in the true sense be understood.”** T-2.VII.6

Teacher: How many parts of the Sonship must awaken and return before the separation is healed?

Student: All of them.

Teacher: Would you say that all the parts awakening corresponds to you waking up in the morning no longer dreaming?

Student: That sounds right. But what about you, me and others? Do they disappear?

Teacher: Their egos disappear but the real part remains. You and I will be there as united parts sharing in the mind and life of the one Sonship.

Student: I’m glad to have this settled in harmony with the Course. This talk of me or others disappearing into nothingness sounded creepy and just wrong.

Teacher: Yes, the real truth always brings peace and a sense of joyousness.

ACIM Conversations, Part 9

Are We Watching a Movie?

Student: Perhaps the strangest teaching where there is not agreement is this. Some say that we are not even in the dream anymore, that it was over long ago, and we are just recalling or observing this life like we do a movie here that has been already made with all events unalterably set. It just seems like we are here because we are very involved in the movie.

Teacher: Yes, I have heard that idea before. There are two things you want to do when you hear a supposed teaching from the Course that seems odd. The first is to make sure you understand it as is actually taught in the Course and, secondly, ask yourself if the teaching makes any sense, especially in relation to the other teachings. Do these people think we are living the original dream all over again?

Student: Seems that way.

Teacher: So, this conversation would be a part of the original dream?

Student: Yes

Teacher: If our dialog here is a part of the original script then why would we be talking about watching a rerun before reruns even existed, or before the movie was ever watched?

Student: That is an interesting point. It would be like watching Star Wars and Yoda stops in the middle of training Luke and says, "You know this is a movie script and we are really in a movie theater watching a rerun."

Teacher: Good insight. Here we are supposedly repeating the original script as if it is not the original script. Does that make sense?

Student: Not at all

Student: I'm not sure if I understand the Course correctly on some statements about the separation, as sometimes it sounds like the separation is over and I'm in heaven just recalling it, and other times it tells me I'm dreaming right now in need of salvation and need to awaken.

Teacher: We'll get to that, but first let us use our right-thinking minds and look at this doctrine. Am I right that the belief is that the separation was over long ago and we are really in heaven fully awake?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And instead of being in the dream they say we are really in heaven reviewing old memories?

Student: Yes, they say it is comparable to us watching a film. Everything in the movie has already happened and we are just kind of watching it and identifying with the old memories and characters. Even this conversation would be in the movie and there is nothing you can do to change what you will say next.

Teacher: Sounds like I do not have free will then.

Student: It would seem that way.

Teacher: The Course definitely tells us we do have free will, so that has to be considered.

Student: They say we just have the illusion of free will.

Teacher: I see. The problem with the film analogy is that it doesn't correspond correctly.

Student: How's that?

Teacher: When you watch a guy being tortured or being shot in a movie, do you actually feel his pain?

Student: Not really.

Teacher: If you really felt the pain inflicted in some of these movies, would you pay to attend?

Student: I'd go out of my way to avoid them.

Teacher: You mean you wouldn't go to see the movie even if it was free?

Student: Not really, not if I had to experience their pain.

Teacher: How about your current life? Have you had painful experiences?

Student: Yes, I had one accident that gave me a lot of pain for over a year.

Teacher: Would you volunteer to relive it as if it were real so you feel the pain again?

Student: I'd have to be crazy to do such a thing.

Teacher: Yet, that is what some are saying we are doing. There we were in heaven enjoying peace, love and bliss and all of a sudden, we get the idea to relive all the

pain of our earth lives over again. Can you imagine that you would have decided to do that?

Student: Doesn't make sense.

Teacher: The Course calls this dream experience a nightmare a couple dozen times. Would you of your own free will ask to relive nightmares that last for many lifetimes reaching millions of years?

Student: You'd have to be beyond crazy to do that.

Teacher: So, after you healed up from your accident, did you have any desire to relive the pain as if you were going through it again?

Student: Heavens no. I was glad to have that in the past and just wanted to move on to new more enjoyable things

Teacher: It appears that neither you or I can think of any reason that we would want to relive nightmares. In fact, the Course tells us that when the veil is lifted and we awaken that **“Nothing that you remember now will you remember.”** T-19.IV.D.6 How could we relive this life if we have moved on, and it is not even in our memory in heaven, kind of like our dreams fade from our memory after we wake up here?

Student: You know... I don't think that the believers in this idea have thought this through. The more we examine this, the more insane it seems.

Teacher: Yes, the Course calls this separation insane. If life in the dream state is really insane, from heaven's view, it would be double insanity to decide to relive it and make it real.

Student: It certainly seems that way, but some of the wording in the Course seems contradictory.

Teacher: Do you have any examples?

Student: I have been studying this and have come up with some like this one:

“This world was over long ago. The thoughts that made it are no longer in the mind that thought of them and loved them for a little while. The miracle but shows the past is gone, and what has truly gone has no effects.” T-28.I.1

Then it talks about **“that one instant still called back, as if it could be made again in time. You keep an ancient memory before your eyes.”** T-26.V.5

This does make it sound like we have kept the memory of this world, contrary to the verse you just quoted about there being no memory in heaven and there is no problem of separation to deal with.

Teacher: Yet there are many passages that deal with this problem that isn't supposed to exist such as:

“Just as the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.” T-2.VIII.2

Doesn't that sound like we are in the middle of the problem rather than fully in heaven with no problem?

Student: Seems that way.

Teacher: And doesn't this world with its pain as well as enjoyments seem real to you and me as well as billions of others?

Student: Indeed.

Teacher: Is something causing this to be happening or nothing?

Student: Of course, it has to be something.

Teacher: And what would that be?

Student: I suppose it is our thoughts.

Teacher: Yes, the Course says this:

“The separation is a system of thought real enough in time, though not in eternity” T-3.VII.3

Would you say that we are in time?

Student: Seems that way.

Teacher: And we should not discount this experience in time as not happening, for it is written:

“It is a mistake to believe that a thought system based on lies is weak. Nothing made by a child of God is without power. It is essential to realize this, because otherwise you will be unable to escape from the prison you have made.” T-3.VII.1

Thus, what has happened is that we have made an illusion which is a prison from which we must escape. Does that sound like a different take than that you are fully in heaven with the separation behind you?

Where do you think you are now - on earth or in heaven?

Student: I certainly seem to be on earth. I can feel pain if I pinch myself.

Teacher: A lot of this confusion comes from how the Course defines its terms and applies them. We shall discuss this in greater depth later.

ACIM Conversations, Part 10

The Meaning Behind the Son

Student: I am interested in your thoughts concerning the seemingly contrary statements in the Course talking about how the separation is over, and then sounding as if it is not over. I haven't heard anyone come close to explaining that to my satisfaction.

Teacher: I have some thoughts on this that may shed some light. Allow me to ask a few questions. They may not seem related at first, but hopefully we'll tie them together.

Student: I'm game.

Teacher: How many Sons are there according to the Course?

Student: The Course tells us there is only one Son.

Teacher: And how many parts are there participating in this one Son?

Student: Billions here on earth alone. If we count all of them in the universe it would be beyond that which we can count.

Teacher: Did all the parts of the Son separate or just part of them?

Student: We learned earlier that part of them separated and part stayed home, as related in the parable of the Prodigal Son and Helen's writings. (See Part 8)

Teacher: And when the Course is talking about things that apply to the Sonship, or the Son, is it talking about an individual part or the whole Sonship?

Student: I would say it would be the whole Sonship unless indicated to be otherwise.

Teacher: And would the decisions of the Sonship be governed by the whole Sonship or just those who are awake and not separated in dreams?

Student: That is a very interesting question I have not seen asked before. That is a difficult one.

Teacher: Tell me this. If you have a business partner and he is asleep and you cannot wake him, can he participate in the enterprise?

Student: I suppose not.

Teacher: Then how about the Sonship which is asleep – like you and me? Are we even aware of what the Sonship is doing?

Student: I'd like to be, but I have no awareness of it.

Teacher: So, when the Course speaks to those who are asleep (you and me) about the Sonship, which is fully awake and in heaven, what must it really be saying?

Student: You've guided me to something which should have been obvious, but I had never before considered. There has always been a large number of the Sonship who have either returned to heaven or never left. These would be fully awake.

Teacher: And for these parts of the Sonship who are as one and fully awake, would it be as if the separation never happened?

Student: I suppose it would. That would explain the "never happened" comments of the Course which seem to disagree with others indicating something did happen.

Teacher: The Course speaks of those who have maintained the unity of the Son:

"The Son of God, who sleepeth not, has kept faith with his Father for you." T-13.I.7

This tells us that there has always been united Sons who did not, or are not sleeping, and are in heaven supporting the Oneness.

Then there is this:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him." T-18.VI.1

What does this tell us?

Student: Here it seems to be talking about the whole and not the part. It seems to be saying that the Son as a whole has always had many parts that are awake and thus the Son, as a whole, has never left the Father.

Teacher: Would that be true even if parts did fall asleep and not participate?

Student: I've never thought of it that way before, but it would seem so.

Teacher: We use this same type of wording for things we do on earth. Let us suppose you placed an order for 1000 widgets from the AAA Manufacturing company with two shifts – one in the day and the other at night. In reality your order was put together by the day shift while the night shift was inactive and slept. When someone

asks you who made the widgets, do you explain that it was the day shift or just say it was AAA Manufacturing?

Student: It would be silly to break it down. I'd just say AAA Manufacturing.

Teacher: Would it be correct to say that AAA Manufacturing never sleeps or never ceases to do their job, even though half of the are not at the job at any given moment?

Student: I think I see where you are going with this. Even though part of the Sonship is "traveling in dreams," part is still awake fulfilling the function of the united Son.

Teacher: Does this then solve your dilemma over the seeming contradiction in the Course, at one time talking as if nothing has happened to the Sonship, but other times as if something did happen?

Student: I suppose it is like AAA Manufacturing. Nothing happened to interfere with their life and purpose, but at the same time there were those who were asleep who would soon need to wake up and do their job.

Teacher: Yes. Each person in the company has a part, and is needed, and the time will come that those who are sleeping in this world will need to wake up as indicated here.

"God's extending outward, though not His completeness, is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him as one. So He thought, 'My children sleep and must be awakened.'" T-6.V.1

Student: Interesting. I guess God needs us back at our posts and we are approaching the time we must wake up.

Teacher: Indeed. We cannot play around in dreamland forever.

ACIM Conversations, Part 11

The Four Groups of Sons

Student: We have dispelled the idea that we are just watching a rerun of our lives (See Part 9) and discussed the Course's meaning when it refers to the one Son or Sonship. But in connection with this, many believe that the Course teaches that every move we make is predestined like every frame in a movie projector is already filmed and nothing can change the next scene to be projected.

Teacher: What do you think of that idea?

Student: It just doesn't sound right to me, especially considering that the Course teaches we will not have memories of this illusion when we return, and it will be to us as if this dream never happened just like our dreams at night. Why would we recall to memory that which is no longer remembered?

Teacher: Good question. Why do you suppose that many think we are reliving memories when we are told we will have no memories?

Student: From my studies, the Course appears to teach it both ways. It says we will have no memories, yet it also says we are here reliving memories.

Teacher: Let us take a look at a passage that talks about reliving the past. Here is one:

“Time really, then, goes backward to an instant so ancient that it is beyond all memory, and past even the possibility of remembering. Yet because it is an instant that is relived again and again and still again, it seems to be now. ... The world of time is the world of illusion. What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach.” M-2.3 & 4

This does sound like we are reliving a very ancient instant **“again and again and still again.”**

Student: Yeah, it makes it sound like we are in the movie Groundhog Day. In our past discussion we talked about how illogical it would be to relieve a nightmare once, but here it makes it sound like we are reliving the same one, not once but many times.

As for me, I want to move on from my painful past experiences, not relive them endlessly.

Teacher: Can you conceive of how this quote we gave about reliving the past could be in harmony with your instinct about not choosing to relive a painful past?

Student: Sorry. I can't. It sounds insane that any Son would voluntarily choose to relive a nightmare "**again and again and still again.**"

Teacher: Yes, it would be insane. Who wants to relive even a good day over and over?

Student: Good point. I'm all ears regarding your explanation.

Teacher: To understand this conundrum we have to recall the meaning of the Son or Sonship that we discussed earlier. You will recall that we agreed that the Son represents one great life, but with many parts called the "Sons of God."

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And did all the Sons enter the illusion?

Student: No. Part stayed in heaven.

Teacher: Have you noticed that when the Course talks about something that part of the Sonship does, it speaks as if the whole Sonship is doing it?

Student: Yes. Sometimes it seems to be speaking to just me, or maybe to Helen, but I could see that it applied to the whole Sonship.

Teacher: Would you say that it makes sense that the action or thought of the part affects the whole?

Student: Seems to. After all, the Course tells us that the separation "shattered heaven."

Teacher: Did you realize that there are four groups of Sons within the Sonship? We previously discussed two, which were the Sons who never left heaven and the Sons who separated. Do you remember a third?

Student: Apparently, there are some who separated and then awakened and are fully in heaven. You say there is a fourth group? Who would that be?

Teacher: New Sons, or Sons created after the initial separation.

Student: Wow! That is an interesting statement, but I do not recall reading about new Sons.

Teacher: You have to take what the Course says and add 2+2 to equal 4. Tell me, what does the Course say the purpose of the Sonship is?

Student: I guess to be one and live in joy and peace.

Teacher: It's more than that. Here read these two quotes:

Student: **"You were created only to create" T-14.I.4 "His joy lay in creating you, and He extends His Fatherhood to you so that you can extend yourself AS HE DID. You do not understand this because you do not understand Him." T-8.VI.6**

Teacher: So, what is the purpose of the Sonship?

Student: To create like the Father.

Teacher: Yes and even the Bible in John, chapter one, we are told that Christ, another name for the Sonship, created all things. Now tell me this. What is it that the Son creates as the Father did?

Student: The Universe

Teacher: Now read this:

Student: **"There is no end to God and His Son, for we are the universe... See His creations as His Son" T-11.I.5**

Teacher: Here we see that the Son is synonymous with the universe itself. It says, **"The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God, who calls upon his Father."** W-pI.183.10 Again I ask what is it that the Son creates as the Father did?

Student: More Sons.

Teacher: Exactly. Now read this:

Student: **"A co-creator with the Father must have a Son. Yet must this Son have been created like Himself." T-24.III.6 "You are part of God, as your sons are part of His Sons." T-7.I.3**

Teacher: So when the Son creates, what does he produce?

Student: More Sons just like the Father.

Teacher: In fact, the Course tells us that we will attain to the position of fatherhood. Read this:

Student: **"Without your Father you will not know your fatherhood. The Kingdom of God includes all His Sons AND THEIR CHILDREN, who are as like the Sons as they are like the Father." T-7.XI.7**

Wow. This is quite a teaching. How did I miss this?

Teacher: We tend to remember what fits in with our current belief system. Now is the time to add 2+2 and see what we come up with. We are told that the initial separation occurred in a past so ancient that it is beyond memory, but Sons still want to access this dreamworld and relive it. We concluded that Sons who have awakened would have no desire to do this since they view it as a nightmare compared to heaven. But there is a fourth group of Sons in heaven who may be curious as to what it would be like to enter the dream. And who might they be?

Student: The Sons who were created after the initial separation. This is fascinating. I think I see where you are going.

Teacher: And kids are always curious, aren't they? Since everything is accessible to all Sons, the newly created Sons would become aware of the separation that the parents experienced. Even if the parents told them that it was a nightmare, their curiosity would still remain. What do you think? Does adding 2+2 tell you that some of them decided to relive the dream, but on their own terms?

Student: That does make a lot of sense when you think about it.

Teacher: Since creation is eternal, then the new Sons would have additional Sons. They also would be curious and some of these would want to experience the dream.

Student: A light just went off in my head! I can see what the passage means that says the Sonship is reliving the separation “**again and again and still again.**” It is not individual Sons who have awakened who are doing this, but newly created Sons and later their Sons and then their Sons and so on.

Teacher: So on for how long?

Student: Who knows? Maybe eternity.

Teacher: After all, it is written that “**What God and His Sons create is eternal**” T-8.VI.3 and “**The circle of creation has no end.**” T-28.II.1

Student: I'll tell you this. You have certainly given me a lot to think about today.

Teacher: There is more to come. Prepare yourself.

ACIM Conversations, Part 12

The Eternal Idea

Student: Last time we talked about the fascinating teaching calling the separation **“an instant that is relived again and again and still again.”** M-2.3 & 4 We concluded that it is not the same Sons who are doing this, but it fulfilled the desire of the newly created Sons wanting to have the experience. Does this mean that the separation will never be completely healed?

Teacher: Yes and no.

Student: Why am I not surprised that the answer is not simple?

Teacher: It is simple once it is understood. Let us first review an important principle taught in the Course. Do you recall that it teaches that the purpose of the Son is to create?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And that which the Son creates are more Sons which expands the real universe itself?

Student: Yes, I found that an interesting teaching that the Course plainly teaches but went over my head.

Teacher: And here is the crucial question. How long do the creations of the Son last?

Student: I believe it is eternity.

Teacher: Correct. Read again the passage we ended with in our last discussion.

Student: **“What God and His Sons create is eternal”** T-8.VI.3 and **“The circle of creation has no end.”** T-28.II.1 **Nothing the Son of God believes can be destroyed.** T-26.III.4

Teacher: On the other hand, all things in this world of form, time and space are not eternal but will have an end. Read this:

Student: **“The stars will disappear, and night and day will be no more. All things that come and go, the tides, the seasons and the lives of men; all things that change with time and bloom and fade will not return. Where time has set an end is not where the eternal is.”** T-29.VI.2

Teacher: So, even the sun and the stars which last billions of years will someday have an end. All things will eventually end in this world, even the universe itself. If this is the case, how could it be created by the Son when all that the Son creates is eternal?

Student: Good question. I guess we are to believe the Son went temporarily insane, split his mind and in his wrong mind created this world of illusion.

Teacher: And what is the difference between the world of illusion and the eternal world?

Student: Everything in this world has a beginning and an end while everything in heaven is eternal.

Teacher: And because everything in time and space will have an end, and be as if it never was, the Course sometimes refers to this world as something that does not exist, but even a temporary dream has an existence, just not an existence in the waking world. Read these quotes:

Student: **“Here the world of idols has been set by the idea this power and place and time are given form, and shape the world where the impossible has happened.” T-29.VIII.6 “Truth and illusions both are equal now, for both have happened. The impossible becomes the thing you need forgiveness for, salvation from.” W-pI.99.2**

Teacher: So what happened?

Student: The impossible.

Teacher: And what is that?

Student: I suppose it is the creation or making of this temporary world of illusion.

Teacher: And why is it called impossible?

Student: Because what the Son creates is supposed to be eternal and all things in this world are not eternal and will have an end.

Teacher: Since it is impossible for the Son, who is like the Father, to create anything that is not eternal, then how could that which is temporary also be eternal?

Student: You got me there. That doesn't sound possible.

Teacher: Yet it is possible. Do you remember what the Course called the separation in the beginning?

Student: It called it “a mad idea.”

Teacher: And can an idea be destroyed?

Student: I suppose it can be put aside, but I would have to say that you cannot destroy it.

Teacher: And the Course affirms this. It says, **“my words make perfect sense because they come from God. They are as sensible now as they ever were, because they speak of ideas that are eternal.”** T-9.IV.4

We are told that this mad idea first surfaced in a past so ancient that it is beyond the reach of any memory, but here we are still talking about it. Is this not proof that even a mad idea is eternal?

Student: It would seem so.

Teacher: So the Son, who can only create the eternal, gets the mad idea to create that which is not eternal. Again, I ask how can that which is not eternal be eternal?

Student: You tell me.

Teacher: No. You tell me after you read again the quote from the beginning of our conversation.

Student: (He reads that the mad idea is) **“an instant that is relived again and again and still again.”** M-2.3 & 4

Teacher: So how can that which is not eternal be eternal?

Student: I think I finally see it. All ideas of the Son are eternal and the idea to create the temporary is also eternal if the temporary is created **“again and again and still again.”**

Teacher: And who is it that would desire to enter into the dreamworld again?

Student: The newly created Sons.

Teacher: The time will come when all the stars and the whole universe will be no more. Does this mean that the idea behind the universe of time and space is no more?

Student: The idea would still be there.

Teacher: And would there be anything stopping a group of all powerful Sons from manifesting it again, if they desired?

Student: I suppose not.

Teacher: And on a miniature scale, let me ask you this. Do you just have one dream during one night or do you have many dreams over many nights?

Student: Many dreams.

Teacher: And correspondingly, would the Sons of God just have one dream and wake up with no sons ever having a dream again?

Student: What you're saying does make sense. Various Sons create a dream like this world "**again and again and still again,**" for an idea is eternal and cannot be destroyed.

Teacher: So that which is temporary can be eternal if it repeats forever - as the Course says "**The circle of creation has no end.**" T-28.II.1

Student: I can see now that all things the Son creates is eternal just as the Course says. It is like an eternal round or circle of creation. This is fascinating to contemplate.

ACIM Conversations, Part 13

Should I Support Improving the World?

Student: There has been a lot of conversation among students lately about the disturbing things in the world such as war, starvation, viruses and other world problems. Some of them seem to want to ignore problems in the world, and sometimes even their personal lives, saying that the world is an illusion and has not even happened so just be at peace and see the situation as unreal as if it is not even there. That sounds a little cold to me. What is your take on this?

Teacher: Let us suppose that you were driving down the road and a child runs out into the street in front of you. Do you put on the brakes to avoid killing the kid or do you just say to yourself, “This is a dream that is not happening. I need do nothing.”

Student: I would think you would have to be insane to not put on the brakes.

Teacher: Yet, perhaps you have encountered those who think we are insane for thinking to do anything in the world to make it better.

Student: Yes, I have encountered some who seem to think this way. I find it disturbing.

Teacher: Yet, you cannot blame those who see in black and white, for the Course does say that **“Nothing that you see means anything.”** W-pl.7.1 and the world **“is not there at all.”** T-20.III.5

Student: Yes, and if you take that plus the “nothing has happened” idea too far, then one would have no motivation to do anything to prevent harm.

Teacher: Let us be real here. Do you know any hard-core literalists who would not apply the brakes to avoid hitting a child, or to assuage themselves with peace and do nothing if a loved one was being raped in front of their eyes?

Student: I think that those people would be supporting a more common view in situations like that.

Teacher: So, why do you suppose the Course places such emphasis on the nonreality of this world?

Student: I guess the idea is to present the final solution of the separation to us so students will be focused on seeking the spiritual rather than the material world of illusion.

Teacher: Good conclusion, but we must ask this question. What is the final state that we are asked to achieve?

Student: First, we are to change our thinking so we will see the real world, or this world correctly perceived, so that we finally awaken, and this world disappears.

Teacher: And what did Jesus say to Helen happened to his body when he awakened?

Student: I'm not sure.

Teacher: Read this quote:

Student: **"My body disappeared because I had no illusion about it. The last one had gone. It was laid in the tomb, but there was nothing left to bury."** From "Special Messages", by Jesus through Helen Schuchman.

Teacher: Again, what happened to his body when he awakened?

Student: His body disappeared.

Teacher: Then if you read the rest of the text, you'll see that he was able to make his body appear and disappear at will. It would be cool to have that kind of power, wouldn't it?

Student: Indeed. I can see why one would be fearless if one did.

Teacher: Do any of your fellow students who keep proclaiming that nothing matters because nothing we see is real have this power to make their bodies disappear and reappear at will?

Student: Definitely not.

Teacher: Why not, since they say that our bodies are not even here? Why cannot they not demonstrate that which they claim to be a reality?

Student: I'm not sure. Maybe they do not believe strongly enough.

Teacher: It goes deeper than that. Consider this from the Course: **"It is impossible to see two worlds which have no overlap of any kind. Seek for the one; the other disappears. But one remains."** W-pI.130.5

Which world are you seeing at this moment?

Student: I suppose I am seeing the world of the dream.

Teacher: And what would happen if you saw the spiritual world instead?

Student: This one would disappear according to your quote.

Teacher: Kind of like what happened to the body of Jesus when he was fully awake?

Student: That seems to be the teaching.

Teacher: Have any of your friends who say they and the world are not here had their bodies disappear and have left behind all perception of the world?

Student: Definitely not. They still perceive me and our bodies.

Teacher: As we mentioned, the Course was given to us to guide us back to Spirit. How long do you think this journey will take?

Student: I'm not sure, but I do know that I am not there yet.

Teacher: Read this passage which may shed some light:

Student: **“the separation occurred over millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps an even longer one.”** T-2.VIII.2

Teacher: So how long did it take us to get here at this point?

Student: Millions of years.

Teacher: Actually, Helen's original notes said “many millions.” And how long will the return process take?

Student: As long or longer than it did to get here. I can see now why there has to be reincarnation as Helen believed.

Teacher: Yes, it will take a while, for even though individuals may awaken, the Course tells us the whole Sonship will not be fully in heaven until all awaken and return. Consider this passage: **“As long as a single "slave" remains to walk the earth, your release is not complete. Complete restoration of the Sonship is the only goal of the miracle-minded.”** T-1.VII.3

The purpose of the Course is to speed up the process of return. Now let me ask you this. Let us say that instead of looking at many millions of years for your return to happen that you could achieve it in a dozen more lifetimes spanning just a couple thousand years. Would you say it is worthwhile to make an effort to improve the conditions of those lifetimes so you and others could have the “happy dream” rather than one that resembles a nightmare?

Student: I'd say it would be worthwhile effort for even one lifetime.

Teacher: Perhaps the greatest example given to us as to how to handle the pain of the world was illustrated by Jesus himself, as related in the New Testament. The scriptures tell us plainly that Jesus worked tirelessly to relieve the pain of the people.

He caused the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see and cured many diseases. When he approached a suffering soul did he ever tell them their problem was not happening, and because nothing was happening he did nothing?

Student: No. He worked actively to assist them.

Teacher: Did he ever tell them to not worry about their problem because they were not even there?

Student: Ha ha. Now you're being funny, but it didn't seem funny when I heard Course students say such things.

Teacher: Do you recall the first miracle performed by Jesus?

Student: Yes. That was when he turned the water into wine. That was one of my favorites.

Teacher: They were having a large wedding feast at Cana and unexpectedly ran out of wine. Everyone was in a great mood and they expected the wine to continue to flow. If it did not, the mood would have been spoiled, and what was supposed to be a great memory would have been tarnished. Would you say that this miracle improved the quality of the experience for the wedding guests?

Student: Definitely.

Teacher: Now let us use a correspondence here and imagine this group as representative of the world as a whole. If students could make the lives of the world as a whole a happier experience - as did Jesus with a group – would that be a good thing?

Student: I would think so.

Teacher: It is indeed true that when any experience in time ends, whether it be an hour or a million years, it may just seem like an instant when it is over, but when we are in the dream even a few years of pain seems like forever. Because we are obviously seeing this world of illusion that is subject to time, does it not make sense to do what we can to make life here a pleasant experience for ourselves and others?

Student: Yes. That reminds me of the story by Jesus of the Good Samaritan. A man was attacked by thieves and left for dead. Two pious religious ones ignored him and felt spiritually justified in doing so, but a third, a Samaritan, who was generally considered an enemy by the Jews, stopped to help. This was an example that we are supposed to follow.

Teacher: Yes, it would be funny if one of those who didn't help thought to himself, "This is a dream and that man is not even there."

Student: Yeah, it would be funny, but not funny. So, if we follow the example of Jesus and do what we can to relieve pain and make the world a better place, how then do we handle the injunctions from the Course about seeing the world as if it does not exist?

Teacher: This quotation by the Course from Jesus reveals a lot:

“I must understand uncertainty and pain, although I know they have no meaning. Yet a savior must remain with those he teaches, seeing what they see, but still retaining in his mind the way that led him out, and now will lead you out with him. God's Son is crucified until you walk along the road with me.”
W-pI.rV.in.6

So, what does this verse tell us should be the attitude of those who want to be teachers or saviors of others?

Student: It says they **“must understand uncertainty and pain”** of others who are in the dream.

Teacher: And if he understands, will he tell the afflicted to get over it because it is not happening?

Student: That wouldn't be helpful.

Teacher: But even though a teacher may understand the pain, he can see the world as an illusion and escape the pain for himself and eventually lead others to the place of peace. In the process, this can happen:

“His Word assures us that He loves the world. God's Word has promised that peace is possible here, and what He promises can hardly be impossible.” M-11.1

Then this passage is beautifully written:

“Peace now belongs here, because a Thought of God has entered. What else but a Thought of God turns hell to Heaven merely by being what it is? The earth bows down before its gracious Presence, and it leans down in answer, to raise it up again. Now is the question different. It is no longer, ‘Can peace be possible in this world?’ but instead, ‘Is it not impossible that peace be absent here?’” M-11.4

Student: I love that and I love the idea of making the earth a better place, whether it be for a few years, a lifetime or many lifetimes.

Teacher: Yes, we all have dreams, but good dreams are so much more pleasant than nightmares. Since we have free will, let us go with the good dreams while we are here.

ACIM Conversations, Part 14

Where Did God Come From?

Student: I've got a question I'll bet you can't answer. Where did God come from?

Teacher: That is the great mystery, but another question just as intriguing is how is it that anything exists, including God?

Student: I recall the Course stating merely that "God Is," but that doesn't tell us why or how God is.

Teacher: But the Course tells us more than you might suppose. Read this:

Student: **"God is an idea, and so your faith in Him is strengthened by sharing. What you find difficult to accept is the fact that, like your Father, you are an idea."** T-15.VI.4

Teacher: So, what does this tell us about God?

Student: It says that God is an idea. Seems like an odd statement.

Teacher: And what does it say about us?

Student: It says that we are also ideas, like our Father, God.

Teacher: Now read what the Course says about ideas:

Student: **"Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them. Ideas are of the mind."** T-26.VII.4 **"He created you as part of Him, and this must still be true because ideas leave not their source."** T-26.VII.13

Teacher: We are told that we are ideas and ideas do not leave their source. What is our source?

Student: That would be God, for he created us as the verse says.

Teacher: And God is also an idea, so the big question is... what is His source?

Student: Are you saying that God has a source of creation as we do?

Teacher: I'm just going by what the Course says. But it does seem to say God was created.

Student: This I've got to see. Where is that reference?

Teacher: Read this:

Student: **“Your will to create was given you by your Creator, Who was expressing the same Will IN HIS CREATION.”** T-2.VIII.1

Teacher: Who’s creation is the verse talking about?

Student: Our Creator.

Teacher: And who is our creator?

Student: God

Teacher: And God is an idea with a creation and a source. What is that source of ideas?

Student: You got me.

Teacher: You were told in the verse we just read. Here, read it again:

Student: **“Ideas are of the mind.”** T-26.VII.4

Teacher: Let us summarize what we have gathered so far. You are an idea who has not left its source, which is God. But God is also similarly a creation and an idea who has not left His source. Finally, the source of all ideas is “the mind.” Is it possible that some type of universal mind created the idea that we call God?

Student: If God is a creation and an idea, then something had to create Him.

Teacher: To shed further light, we must ask this question. What is God?

Student: I’ve always just thought He was the creator of all things, but since the Course says He had a creation – now I am not sure.

Teacher: In an earlier discussion we talked about the purpose of the Son. What was that?

Student: To create like the Father.

Teacher: And what does he create?

Student: More Sons.

Teacher: And when a Son creates a Son, what relationship does he have to his creation?

Student: I suppose he becomes a father to the new Son.

Teacher: And read again what your Father does for you.

Student: “**He extends His Fatherhood to you so that you can extend yourself AS HE DID. You do not understand this because you do not understand Him.**” T-8.VI.6

Teacher: So when you extend yourself as your Father did, what do you do?

Student: Fulfill my function of creating additional Sons.

Teacher: Think on this. Your Sons will call you Father. Is it not logical that your Father, who created Sons, also has a Father and is himself a Son?

Student: That would seem to be a logical conclusion. So, is God just a created Son, then?

Teacher: Remember God is an idea. So, what is the idea we are talking about here?

Student: It seems to be an eternal chain of Fathers and Sons.

Teacher: Yes, and that eternal chain of Fathers and Sons is the idea that we call God. And what is the source of that idea?

Student: We are told it is Mind.

Teacher: Therefore, if we follow the Course’s teachings, the closest we can come to the origin of all things is Mind, for the Course does speak of “**the Mind which caused all minds to be,**” T-28.I.11 or perhaps intelligence would be a good alternative word.

Student: So where does Mind come from?

Teacher: The Course doesn’t give us a hint on this, but it does say “**If I did not think I would not exist, because life is thought.**” W-pI.54.2.

Therefore, without Mind neither God nor the Sons could even exist. To go further in understanding you must tap into Universal Mind yourself, wherein lies the answer to all things.

ACIM Conversations, Part 15

Is There Duality in Heaven?

Student: I've been discussing duality with some students and they insist that the teachings in the Course on oneness prove that there is no duality in heaven.

Teacher: So, if there is no duality, this would mean that there would be no such thing as more than one of anything. What do they say about the teaching that in heaven you have the Father, the Son, The Holy Spirit and angels? They add up to four, not one.

Student: They say that anything that seems to be dual is just presented that way for teaching purposes – that language cannot convey the truth.

Teacher: Sounds like they think that Jesus wasted a lot of time in transmitting the Course containing a half million words. Read this:

Student: **“I have made every effort to use words that are almost impossible to distort, but it is always possible to twist symbols around if you wish.” T-3.I.3**

Teacher: Note that Jesus said he made every attempt to communicate so clearly that it would be almost impossible to distort his words. We need to examine then, what his words really said. Suppose heaven had no parts within it but just one lonely life. Would presenting heaven as consisting of the four lives – the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and angels represent an attempt at clarity?

Student: I'd say that would add to the confusion. If heaven had no duality and he wanted to be clear, as he says, then he should not have talked about the life of God as consisting of the four divisions.

Teacher: And we have already discussed how the Course teaches that the Sonship is composed of many parts.

Student: Yeah, if he were really trying to be clear, then why would he speak of the Sons of God in the plural many times, if there is not more than one?

Teacher: Actually, proving duality to your friends should be quite easy, for the evidence is overwhelming. First consider this. A complete non-dual state would be one of nothingness and no existence at all. That is pretty much the view of the after-death state by the atheist. As long as there is life, there is mind, and mind has the power of decision as expressed here:

“The power of decision is our own. And we accept of Him that which we are, and humbly recognize the Son of God.” W-pI.152.10

So, how did we use the power of decision in a negative way, according to the Course?

Student: We decided to create a world where we could be separate from each other.

Teacher: Yes. Read this quote for additional light:

Student: **“And what can think has choice, and can be shown that different thoughts have different consequence.” T-31.V.14**

Teacher: Our thinking of separation certainly had a consequence, didn't it?

Student: It indeed seems to have.

Teacher: If we have perfect freedom, as the Course teaches, and we think, and choice is always allowed, then there must be more than one thing to choose from. Does that make sense?

Student: Yes. I understand we have the freedom to follow the will of God or not follow as we did in the separation.

Teacher: We have established that there can be no such thing as choice without duality. Have you considered the Law of Cause and Effect which exists in heaven?

Student: Never thought about that, but cause and effect are two things and could only exist in duality.

Teacher: Read what the Course says about it.

Student: **“If I intervened between your thoughts and their results, I would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect; the most fundamental law there is.” T-2.VII.1**

Teacher: This is the most fundamental law of all. We are told that God is the great cause in the universe, but what is the main effect He produces?

Student: The universe, I suppose.

Teacher: Close. Consider this quote: **"Cause" is a term properly belonging to God, and His 'Effect' is His Son. This entails a set of Cause and Effect T-2.VII.3**

Is a set one or two things?

Student: Two.

Teacher: And I said you were close when saying the effect of God is the universe. Read this quote:

Student: **“The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God,”** W-pI.183.10

Wow. So, saying the effect of God is the universe and the Son is saying the same thing.

Teacher: Would you say cause and effect are one thing or two?

Student: The Course seems to call them a set or two.

Teacher: In a non-dual universe there could not be more than one life or parts, but there also could be no differences. But to the contrary, the Course tells us that there are differences between the four types of lives in heaven. Check out this passage:

Student: **“I and my Father are one, but there are two parts to the statement in recognition that the Father is greater.”** T-1.II.4

Teacher: In a non-dual universe could one life be greater than another?

Student: No.

Teacher: Now check out this verse:

Student: **“You were created ABOVE the angels because your role involves creation as well as protection. You who are in the image of the Father need bow only to HIM, before whom I kneel with you.”** UR T 1 B 30y

Interesting. Just as the Father is greater than the Son, the Son is above the angels with a different function.

Teacher: Yes, the Son’s function is to create, and that of the angels is for protection. In a non-dual universe would the two have different jobs?

Student: That wouldn’t be possible.

Teacher: The fourth life is the Holy Spirit who also has a job. Read it here:

Student: **“The Holy Spirit mediates higher to lower communication, keeping the direct channel from God to you open for revelation.”** T-1.II.5

Teacher: Would you say that is a different job than held by the Father, the Son or angels?

Student: Yes. This definitely shows there is some dualism in heaven.

Teacher: In addition, we are told that there are three tools used by the Father and the Son. The first is ideas. The Course says **“Ideas are of the mind.”** and **“every idea begins in the mind of the thinker.”** T-26.VII.4 & T-6.III.1

Obviously, there exists more than one idea in the mind of God. What do you suppose the second is?

Student: Your quote mentions Mind.

Teacher: Good. And the third is Spirit. This passage speaks of them both.

Student: **“Only the mind is capable of error.” T-2.IV.2 “It is essential to remember that only the mind can create, and that correction belongs at the thought level. To amplify an earlier statement, spirit is already perfect and therefore does not require correction.” T-2.V.1**

Teacher: We are told the mind is capable of error. Would this be possible if all reality were pure non dualistic?

Student: I wouldn't think so.

Teacher: And what is the function of the mind?

Student: To create

Teacher: And how is Spirit different from Mind?

Student: It is perfect – apparently incapable of error.

Teacher: In addition, we are told that **“Spirit makes use of mind as means to find its Self expression.” W-pI.96.3.**

So, what do you think? Do these three tools that God uses illustrate dualism or non-dualism?

Student: The three with different functions definitely show us dualism is involved.

Teacher: We've already discussed the idea that there are many parts to the Son, but we are also told that each has a unique place in the plan. Read this:

Student: **“You are altogether irreplaceable in the Mind of God. No one else can fill your part in it, and while you leave your part of it empty your eternal place merely waits for your return.” T-9.VIII.10**

Teacher: It plainly states that each of us has a part to play in our heavenly home that “no one else can fill.” Does that uniqueness sound like no duality to you?

Student: Hardly. It sounds like billions of us have a unique contribution to make.

Teacher: Why do you suppose that so many ACIM students believe there is no dualism in heaven?

Student: I suppose that it is because the Course places such emphasis on the oneness of God and all life.

Teacher: Yet, you believe in dualism in heaven, but you also believe in the oneness of life. How is your thinking different from the non-dualism group?

Student: They think that oneness means one life only with no parts, whereas I see oneness as many unified parts joined together participating in the life of the whole.

Teacher: Would you think the life of God is a little like the life of our body, which is one but composed of trillions of cells, each having their own life?

Student: Yeah, maybe the creation of the body is a shadow reflection of the life of God. In fact, Paul in the Bible compares God and Christ to a body.

Teacher: Read this next passage telling us what our function is:

Student: **“Be happy, for your only function here is happiness.”** W-pI.102.5
“God's world is happy. Those who look on it can only add their joy to it, and bless it as a cause of further joy in them.” W-pII.301.2

Teacher: Now tell me this. Which version of God would be happier: one that is all alone or one who shares with billions of unified lives, or Sons?

Student: I can't imagine God being happy being all alone.

Teacher: Neither can He. Read this:

Student: **“God is lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him.”** T-2.III.5 **“He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him.”** T-4.VII.6

Wow. That pretty much says it.

Teacher: Now visualize yourself being God, creator of all there is, but you have no one with which to share. Can you imagine being happy?

Student: Not really. That would be the greatest of all hells. I cannot imagine being in a state of happiness without sharing.

Teacher: Neither can God.

ACIM Conversations, Part 16

Managing Feelings About Conflict

Student: Many Course students have been in a quandary lately about how to handle the bad guys of the world. On one hand, they think they are not there and conflict is not happening, yet they cannot get beyond their feelings that they hate the guys and are greatly disturbed about the plight of the victims. I'd be interested in your views on the situation.

Teacher: What are your feelings about the current situation that has caused distress to the world?

Student: In the world we live in, something is happening and my heart goes out to not only the victims who are suffering, but I'm sure many of the ones who carry out harmful actions are caught up in such activities against their will. I have very negative feelings toward some leaders for what they have done.

Teacher: It is good that you are honestly facing your feelings, for honesty is a key factor in obtaining liberation from the illusion. To pretend you are not affected by war or conflict when you are is not being true to yourself and can take you further into the illusion. Consider this quote:

“The dreamer who doubts the reality of his dream while he is still dreaming is not really healing his split mind. You dream of a separated ego and believe in a world that rests upon it. This is very real to you. You cannot undo it by not changing your mind about it.” T-4.I.4

Student: So, how can I change my mind and stay at peace, as taught in the Course, with so many disturbing things happening in the world?

Teacher: There are two things I use to help me stay at peace during tempestuous times caused by out-of-control individuals. The first is something I call the Lion Principle.

Student: What in the world is that?

Teacher: We'll get to that. Tell me, my friend, do you hate lions?

Student: Of course not.

Teacher: What do you think of them?

Student: They are powerful and respected. They are kind of like the royalty of the animal kingdom.

Teacher: Don't you realize that if you were in the presence of one that is hungry you could be eaten alive?

Student: Of course.

Teacher: And are you aware that lions stalk innocent and weaker animals and eat them?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Then why do you not hate them?

Student: I guess it is because that is just the nature of a lion, and there's nothing I can do about it.

Teacher: But the supposed bad guys are just following their nature as it exists in this world. How are they different from lions following their nature?

Student: Interesting comparison. So if I view a tyrant as a provoked lion, I should just accept him as he is, for that is his nature in this world and there is nothing I can do about it?

Teacher: Correct. There are many people we meet in life with undesirable characteristics that we could allow to disturb our peace, but if we use the Lion Principle, we realize that is just who they are, and if we merely accept that, as we do lions, then they no longer have power to disturb us.

Student: That may not be easy with some people I know.

Teacher: It is also helpful to not provoke the lions in your life and stay out of their way like you would a lion. Treat them like lions and they will have no more power to take away your peace than real lions.

Student: Sounds like good advice. What is the second method you use?

Teacher: The second is the Principle of the Observer. Consider this famous quote from Shakespeare:

“All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts.”

How do you see this relating to the teachings in the Course about this world being a dream?

Student: The Course calls this life a dream, which means the mind is kind of acting out a drama for us that is not a part of real life – like a play.

Teacher: And if you acted in or just observed a play where people were suffering, does this cause you to suffer?

Student: No. I might imagine what it would feel like, but I would not actually suffer.

Teacher: Why not?

Student: Because I would just be an observer, not a participant.

Teacher: And here in this life, which is like a play unfolding in the dream state, could you also be an observer and thus not allow events to disturb your peace?

Student: I would suppose so but it is easier said than done.

Teacher: It helps to change our minds about the dream to make what the Course calls “a happy dream.” We are given this advice:

“It is not difficult to change a dream when once the dreamer has been recognized. Rest in the Holy Spirit, and allow His gentle dreams to take the place of those you dreamed in terror and in fear of death.” T-27.VII.14

Until we can make all our dreams happy ones, taking the vantage point of the observer is a big help. It works for me.

Student: Does this mean I should take the attitude that nothing is happening as do some students?

Teacher: Not quite. Read this:

Student: “The body is merely part of your experience in the physical world. Its abilities can be and frequently are overevaluated. However, it is almost impossible to deny its existence in this world. Those who do so are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial.” T-2.IV.3

Teacher: Now, this idea would apply to the world as well as the body. What is “a particularly unworthy form of denial?”

Student: To deny the existence of that which feels like it has a real existence. I would think it would also mean we should not deny the truth of how our bodies or this world affects us.

Teacher: Or maybe that we should not deny that the dreamlike play we are in is happening on some level. As the director of a play, you can be the observer, but still realize that the play is happening and you want to make the best of it. You cannot enjoy a play or movie with your eyes closed and ears plugged. You have to be aware

of it, but keep the attitude of the observer so the negative events will not disturb your peace.

Student: Good advice. I'll work on incorporating the two principles.

ACIM Conversations, Part 17

What is Forgiveness?

Student: I've been involved with some ACIM students over the subject of forgiveness and find their thoughts on it are all over the place. In your studies of the Course have you come across a definition that pins it down?

Teacher: First, let me ask you this. What is the definition of forgiveness as defined by the world?

Student: I'll check with an online dictionary to see what it says. The Oxford Dictionary seems to offer a concise definition as is commonly understood. It says it is when we **“stop feeling angry or resentful toward someone for an offense, flaw, or mistake.”**

Teacher: That seems to sum up the way most people perceive it. How are the students you are involved with seeing it different from this?

Student: Some really expand unrealistically on the idea. Like if I stub my toe on a rock, then I am supposed to forgive the rock for the discomfort, or if there is bad weather, I'm supposed to forgive it also. They say I'm supposed to forgive all kinds of inorganic things. That seems silly as I cannot see anything to forgive toward a rock or things that just get in the way.

Teacher: The problem is that the Course has expanded the meaning of forgiveness much beyond the standard definition. Since this is a core teaching in the Course, it would have been helpful if it had given us a concise, easy-to-understand definition at the beginning of the text, but, as it is, one has to plow through the entire course to get a true impression of what it is really trying to say about the subject.

Student: You've studied it more than I have. What have you come up with?

Teacher: The Course just seems to assume that we know what forgiveness is, as if the standard definition would apply, but then it takes us into new territory without any redefining.

Student: You mean that you can't find a definition of the word throughout the whole Course?

Teacher: There are all kinds of effects described that forgiveness is to produce, but the closest specific definition is this passage:

“To forgive is merely to remember only the loving thoughts you gave in the past, and those that were given you. All the rest must be forgotten.” T-17.III.1

Student: That is pretty much in harmony with the dictionary definition. If you have only loving thoughts, you will not be taking offense over what someone does. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to apply to forgiving a rock for being in the way of my toe. I have no feelings positive or negative toward a rock in my path.

Teacher: But stubbing your toe may make you angry, and that is not a loving thought.

Student: Yes, and this is where the Course seems to go beyond the regular meaning of the word.

Teacher: Yes, in normal understanding, forgiveness only applies to offenses created by other human beings, but the Course has it applying to painful circumstances where individual humans are not involved. It even tells us we are to forgive the world. What do you suppose that means?

Student: I'm not sure. The world is not some entity that insults you. The regular definition does not apply there.

Teacher: But if we apply that definition I quoted from the Course, one could say that a lot of things seem to happen in the world that produce unloving thoughts.

Student: So, if you are facing a disaster like a hurricane, one would find it pretty difficult to focus on only loving thoughts.

Teacher: It would, but perhaps that is what you would do at that time if you are successful in forgiving the world, for the hurricane is a product of the world we made.

Student: In fact, most of my thoughts that are not loving are not caused by other people but by circumstances that just happen. I got a flat tire the other day and was late to an important meeting. That made me very angry. Who was I supposed to forgive – the tire?

Teacher: That may be part of what it means by forgiving the world, for that was an event manifested in it.

Student: But a flat tire out of the blue is much different than someone who attacks you with intent to do harm. I can't find anything to forgive with the flat tire, but I admit that some people's actions do affect me, and I can see where forgiveness in the traditional sense may be in order there.

Teacher: Forgiveness as taught in ACIM is definitely not the traditional one, though it includes that.

Student: So, from your study of the Course, how would you define the meaning of forgiveness as intended by its Author?

Teacher: The ACIM definition would include the dictionary definition you gave earlier, and it appears that is what it is often talking about.

Student: How about summing up the ACIM non-dictionary definition?

Teacher: The Course tells us that this world of time and space is an illusion and does not even exist in the true reality. It also says that we cannot see two worlds, but we see either this world of illusion or the real one. So, putting all this together the Course seems to be telling us that true forgiveness is the application of true vision. To forgive the world, and all that is in it, one must see it as not existing and as having no real effect. When one does this, he will begin waking up.

Student: I must still be asleep then because I would certainly attempt to get out of the way if a hurricane was headed my direction. I do not think I could just tell myself that it was an illusion that would have no effect.

Teacher: I have to admit that I probably would also, but do you recall how Jesus reacted when the ship he was on was threatened by a storm and his disciples thought they were going to die?

Student: He commanded the storm to be still and it went away.

Teacher: In ACIM language he forgave the storm. In other words, he saw it as something that did not exist in his waking reality, so it did not exist. Do you recall another instance where his life seemed to be threatened?

Student: I'm not sure.

Teacher: Another time a mob from his home town tried to throw him off a cliff and he merely disappeared out of their midst. (See Luke 4:29-30)

Student: That would be so cool to have power like that.

Teacher: Indeed. The Course tells us that we will be invulnerable with a simple change of mind. We understand the theory behind the forgiveness as taught by the Course, but applying it is something else. Do you know any of your fellow students who have forgiven the world to the extent that they have achieved invulnerability or have power to heal like Jesus did?

Student: Not really.

Teacher: We all have to work where we are, not where we are not. For most students, it is a challenge just to forgive in the normal sense of the word so they can cast out all grievances and be at peace within themselves.

Student: So, is there a wrong way to forgive?

Teacher: Read this:

Student: **“Forgiveness is not pity, which but seeks to pardon what it thinks to be the truth. Good cannot be returned for evil, for forgiveness does not first establish sin and then forgive it. Who can say and mean, 'My brother, you have injured me, and yet, because I am the better of the two, I pardon you my hurt.' His pardon and your hurt cannot exist together. One denies the other and must make it false.”** T-27.II.2

Teacher: So, what is the wrong approach according to that text?

Student: It appears that we need to avoid the attitude of superiority.

Teacher: Read this to discover the correct approach.

Student: **“Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in that view are all your sins forgiven.”** W-pII.1.1

Teacher: So, what is the difference between the incorrect and the correct approach?

Student: The wrong-headed approach is the one used by most religious people in that they see the sin in a brother and forgive because of their moral superiority. When the student has the right approach, he will see his brother as a Son of God as himself and see the mistake as an illusion that does not even exist in the true reality, so there is nothing to forgive.

Teacher: I think we can assume that we must take this step, which is something we can believe we can achieve in this life, and, when this happens, the door to greater miracles can then manifest.

Student: Good advice that reminds me of one of my favorite sayings of Jesus. Let me read it to you:

“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” John 14:12

Teacher: The promise of doing even greater works than Jesus is quite profound. It should provide encouragement for all seekers of truth. Applying forgiveness to the best of our ability is a significant step in the right direction.

ACIM Conversations, Part 18

Understanding the Ego

Student: Another term that gets used in a wide variety of ways is the ego. Some seem to think that when the ego is gone, there will be no self or even parts, instead we will be just one lone life. Then others use the ego to dismiss any statement with which they disagree.

Teacher: How do they do that?

Student: When I say something that runs contrary to their mindset, they tell me I am speaking from the ego – as if they have risen above it and taking the superior position that is beyond challenge.

Teacher: That dismissive attitude is not unique to ACIM students, but found in every belief system. For instance, a fundamentalist Christian may tell his questioning friend to not consider certain teachings or read certain books, as God would be offended as they are entering the devil's domain.

Student: Yeah, I get that feeling sometimes with Course students when I think out of the box – that Jesus would be offended with the wrong questions.

Teacher: We have the same problem with talking about the ego as we did forgiveness in our last discussion. The Course does not start us out with a clear and concise definition. I personally had to go through it three or four times before I had a clear idea of what the Course actually meant when talking about it.

Student: I've only gone through it once so I am still a little confused on the subject myself. I'll be interested in hearing your thoughts.

Teacher: First let us again check with the standard definition. Care to look it up?

Student: I'll use the Oxford dictionary again. It says the ego is that part of the mind **“responsible for reality testing and a sense of personal identity.”**

Teacher: The sense of personal identity is the key phrase there, but in ACIM there are two entities that tell us what reality is. And what would they be?

Student: The ego certainly does, though incorrectly.

Teacher: And what source reveals it correctly?

Student: That would be the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: The general sense of personal identity, or self, is the common feeling of what the ego is to those just beginning the Course. That doesn't seem like such a bad thing to most people.

Student: Yeah, I remember that as I got into the Course, I was surprised at how negatively the ego was presented, as if it were the devil himself.

Teacher: The Course does associate it with the devil, (M-25.6) and beyond that, it flat out states that **"The ego is insane."** W-pII.12.2 and speaks of its insane direction numerous times.

Student: Yes, that is a lot more of a negative view than commonly held, as society only sees a handful of egos as being insane. It considers normalcy to be sane.

Teacher: So, as an earnest student, how would you define the ego as presented by the Course?

Student: It is clear that the ego in the Course includes our identification with our lower nature, but what is not clear is how far up it goes. Does it mean that we have no identity as a higher self either, and is there even a self in the eternal world?

Teacher: You have struck a note at the core of the problem. Most spiritual traditions see the self in the lower nature as a problem and at odds with the Spirit, but most do recognize that there is a higher self that is eternal.

Student: But what is not clear about ACIM is whether there is an eternal self, united with other selves, or do we just merge into one lonely isolated entity which is called God?

Teacher: Sounds like you do not like the idea of merging into one life with no parts.

Student: I cringe when I think about it as it sounds like nonexistence to me. I would think that there would have to be interplay with other lives to make living enjoyable, but maybe that is just my ego talking.

Teacher: Maybe not, for the Course tells us that God agrees with you. Read these quotes:

Student: **"God is lonely without His Sons, and they are lonely without Him."** T-2.III.5 **"His joy is not complete because yours is incomplete. And this He does know. He knows it in His Own Being and its experience of His Son's experience. The constant going out of His Love is blocked when His channels are closed, and He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him."** T-4.VII.6 **"They are part of you, as you are part of God. You are as lonely**

without understanding this as God Himself is lonely when His Sons do not know Him.” T-7.VII.10

Sounds like the idea of being one lone life in the universe is not an idea that even God embraces.

Teacher: This takes us back to our earlier discussion of duality, that there is a big difference between one life with no parts and one united life with many parts.

Student: Yes, with many there can be unlimited sharing, but with pure non duality there could be no sharing.

Teacher: Sharing and communication are important ingredients that brings joy in heaven: **“Communication, unambiguous and plain as day, remains unlimited for all eternity.” W-pI.129.3 “all talents will be shared by all the Sons of God.” T-1.V.3**

Student: It seems then that the One Life consists of many Sons or parts who share, but do we still have a self, and if so, how is that different from the ego which the Course says is insane?

Teacher: You actually have two selves. One is real and the other is an illusion. When we speak of self we normally think of the ego, but read this:

Student: **“You are what God created or what you made. One Self is true; the other is not there. Try to experience the unity of your one Self. Try to appreciate Its Holiness and the love from which It was created.” W-pI.93.9**

Teacher: What are the two selves mentioned here?

Student: One is our true self that God created and the other is an illusion that we made.

Teacher: And what does the Course call that illusionary self we made?

Student: The ego

Teacher: Here is another passage for you to read:

Student: **“There is another vision and another Voice in which your freedom lies, awaiting but your choice. And if you place your faith in Them, you will perceive another self in you. This other self sees miracles as natural.” T-21.V.3**

Teacher: This tells us that there is **“another self in you.”** What do you suppose that is?

Student: That would be our true self which is united with the Sonship.

Teacher: Yes, this is called **“the Self you do not know.”** T-16.III.5 Would you say then that you still have a self when the ego vanishes?

Student: That’s what the Course seems to say.

Teacher: Not only that but it is something we must understand, for **“in ideas minds can communicate. If you would give yourself as your Father gives His Self, you will learn to understand Selfhood.”** T-15.VI.7

So, selfhood not only exists apart from the ego, but must be understood, and to deny its reality is a problem. Read this:

Student: **“All real pleasure comes from doing God’s Will. This is because not doing it is a denial of Self. Denial of Self results in illusions, while correction of the error brings release from it.”** T-1.VII.1

Teacher: What happens when the self is denied?

Student: Illusion. I would presume that we would then be dominated by the false self.

Teacher: And because the ego is created by illusion, the Course goes so far as to say that **“the ego is not the Self.”** T-4.II.4

Student: Wow. That is a lot different than comments I’ve heard from students who claim that all ideas of self belong to the ego.

Teacher: This misunderstanding illustrates the importance of looking at the whole of what the Course is trying to say rather than the part. In fact, it tells us that one of the tricks the ego plays is to segregate a part and present it as if it is the whole.

Student: So, it looks like we have two parts to ourselves. Is this the same thing as the higher and lower self as taught by various spiritual traditions?

Teacher: The Course does not use the terminology of higher and lower self but it does say something similar. Read this:

Student: **“I do work with your higher mind, the home of the Holy Spirit, whether you are asleep or awake, just as your ego does with your lower mind, which is its home.”** T-4.IV.11

Teacher: So, the Christ works with your higher mind. What does your ego work with?

Student: The lower mind. I'd say that is about the same thing as saying the lower and higher self.

Teacher: I think you are correct. Do you think we have gathered enough information to understand the ego as presented in ACIM?

Student: I'm not sure, but why do I have the feeling that you are going to tell me there is more?

Teacher: Because you have good instincts, and we shall discuss more on this in our next encounter.

ACIM Conversations, Part 19

The Ego and the True Self

Student: In our last conversation we established that the Course teaches that the self exists independent of the ego, but it seems that this self is merely interpreted differently here on earth, under the domain of the ego, than it is in heaven.

Teacher: Indeed. And what do you perceive that difference to be?

Student: Under the ego, the self is seen as a separate life living in isolation from other lives. In heaven, the self is seen as a part of a greater whole and identifies with that whole which we call the Sonship.

Teacher: You are in harmony with the Course here which states this about the self of the ego: **“The ego's goal is quite explicitly ego autonomy. From the beginning, then, its purpose is to be separate, sufficient unto itself and independent of any power except its own. This is why it is the symbol of separation.”** T-11.V.4

Now read what the Course says about differences between the two selves:

Student: **“The one created by his Father is wholly Self-encompassing and Self-extending. The one he made is wholly self-destructive and self-limiting.”** T-20.VI.1

Teacher: Here's another difference:

Student: **“To be egocentric is to be dis-spirited, but to be Self-centered in the right sense is to be inspired or in spirit.”** T-4.in.1

Sounds like our true self just realizes he is not alone and understands who he is.

Teacher: Yes, and when this happens, we are told that **“you would be, gaining, not losing, a sense of Self.”** T-18.VI.13

Student: I like that, as all that is in me recoils from the idea that my self will be no more after I wake up.

Teacher: The beauty of waking up is that you do not discover that your self does not exist, but that your true self is much greater than you realized, because you, as a unique part of the Sonship, identify with the whole:

“You are one Self, united with your Creator, at one with every aspect of creation, and limitless in power and in peace.” W-pI.95.10

Instead of seeing ourselves this way, we are told that we had a misguided **“plan to lose your Self.”** W-pI.166.10

Student: It sounds like the real problem is not that of having a self, but that we lost the knowledge of what the real self is.

Teacher: Yes, we are told that the ego is **“A concept of the self is made by you. It bears no likeness to yourself at all.”** T-31.V.2 Instead, **“Christ is God's Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well.”** W-pII.6.1

Student: So when I wake up, I will not find that my self does not exist, but that it is much greater than I realized. That sounds much better than waking up to nonexistence and non-duality, which doesn't even make sense.

Teacher: To understand, think of how you feel when you wake up from a dream. Do you feel like your self in the dream has vanished?

Student: No. I still feel like I am the same self that was in the dream.

Teacher: And what is the difference between your dream self and waking self?

Student: The waking self is more aware. There seems to be a conscious part of my mind missing in the dream.

Teacher: And here in the greater dream, what seems to be missing?

Student: I would say it would be the spiritual or real part of the mind.

Teacher: And when you wake up, do you think you will feel you lost something?

Student: If it is like waking up from a night dream, I would have to think it would feel like a gain, not a loss.

Teacher: Does that understanding help dispel the fear of loss when you return to your true home?

Student: It certainly sounds better than myself going into oblivion, as believed by the atheist.

Teacher: Indeed, for many, going into non existence is a more frightening thought than going to an eternal hell. Just consider that if you woke up and found that you were God existing in pure non duality all alone - not having anything or anyone to

love and you had to be alone for all eternity. Would not that be the greatest hell one can imagine?

Student: I cringe at that thought. So how do I use the correct understanding of the ego to deal with students who accuse me of being in the ego when I try to think out of the box?

Teacher: You could cite the example of Jesus. Do you think they would agree that he was not controlled by the ego?

Student: Definitely.

Teacher: And would most agree that both his teachings and actions were out of the box in his time?

Student: Don't think there would be any argument there.

Teacher: You'll recall the Course compared the ego to the Devil. Do you realize the authorities of the day made that same comparison toward Jesus?

Student: I know they were certainly threatened by him.

Teacher: When they saw him performing miracles, they accused him of working **"through Beelzebub the chief of the devils."** Luke 11:15

Student: So that was like saying he was working though the chief of egos. Now I don't feel so bad about the accusations toward me.

Teacher: So when they saw the devil in Jesus, what did they really see?

Student: I suppose it was the devil in themselves projected toward Jesus. But what can I say to those accusing students to make them realize that I am not speaking from the ego, but I see myself speaking in agreement with the Holy Spirit?

Teacher: Is the problem that they seem to think it is your ego making you seek for answers outside the box?

Student: That seems to be the way it is.

Teacher: Here are some quotes that should set them straight, but I wouldn't bet your mom's operation money on it.

"Its (the ego) dictates, then, can be summed up simply as: 'Seek and do not find.' This is the one promise the ego holds out to you, and the one promise it will keep." T-12.IV.1

The ego does not want you to seek and find because **"The ego cannot afford to know anything."** T-7.VI.4

“True perception, a state of clarity which the ego, fearful of being judged truly, MUST avoid.” UR T 4 F 13

Student: I like that statement about true clarity, for it seems that when I seek to clarify some teachings, I am told that it is my ego speaking and I should cease asking questions. That attitude reminds me of my religious teachers when I was young, telling me that I lacked faith for questioning things.

Teacher: Yes. That “Seek and do not find” thinking of the ego manifests itself in every belief system, even in one as pure as ACIM.

Perhaps it would be helpful to list some differences between the approaches of the Holy Spirit and the ego. First, what does the Course tell us about the ego?

Student: Like you just said; it says to seek and not find so everything questionable remains a mystery.

Teacher: Now read this to see the approach of the Holy Spirit:

Student: “To seek and not to find is hardly joyous. Is this the promise you would keep? The Holy Spirit offers you another promise, and one that will lead to joy. For His promise is always, ‘Seek and you will find,’ and under His guidance you cannot be defeated.” T-12.IV.4

Sounds like the ego wants to avoid the truth but the Holy Spirit wants to help us find it. I think some of my fellow students must have missed this.

Teacher: And what would you say another difference would be?

Student: Some students do not agree with me, but I would say that the Holy Spirit supports logic and reason, and the ego does not, though it tries to make you think it does.

Teacher: The Course agrees with you. Read this about the ego:

Student: “Consider what the ego wants defenses for. Always to justify what goes against the truth, flies in the face of reason and makes no sense.” T-22.V.2

Teacher: Now read this concerning the Holy Spirit and reason:

Student: “What reason points to you can see, because the witnesses on its behalf are clear. Only the totally insane can disregard them, and you have gone past

this. Reason is a means that serves the Holy Spirit's purpose in its own right.”
T-21.V.7

Teacher: Would you say that seeking truth and using reason is endorsed by the Course?

Student: It certainly seems so.

Teacher: There are many other differences, such as the ego separates and the Spirit unites. The ego condemns, the Spirit forgives. The ego encourages negative feelings, whereas the Spirit focuses on love and inclusion. The ego judges harshly, but the Spirit sees the Christ in us. The ego leads to fear, but the Spirit takes us to peace.

So, when a fellow student accuses you of being in the ego, just go through the contrasts in your mind, and if you see that you are on the side of the Holy Spirit, ask them to justify their accusation.

Student: The other day I was asking some students how they would define what love is and one acted insulted and said that question was from the ego. How should I respond?

Teacher: First, realize that the ego does ask questions, but it doesn't want true answers as you obviously did. Rather than offering him a long explanation, just ask him to explain why he thinks this way. When someone attacks unjustly, they can never explain themselves without revealing flaws in their reasoning. Accusers are generally projecting their own flaws and are afraid to face them. Just make your case and let it go, for accusers rarely change their minds.

Student: I appreciate your comments.

ACIM Conversations, Part 20

Time in Heaven

Student: I've been thinking about the Course's teachings on time and having difficulty in understanding it.

Teacher: What's the problem?

Student: It seems to teach that time does not exist in the eternal world, for it is just an illusion.

Teacher: You're only partly right, for time does exist in heaven. There are, however, two ingredients of time that exist only here in this world. What do you suppose they are?

Student: If I recall correctly, it says the past and the future do not exist in heaven.

Teacher: But it does say that an aspect of time does exist in heaven. What would that be?

Student: Would that be the present?

Teacher: Yes. the Course makes this definite statement: **"The present is the only time there is."** W-pI.164.1 Here, read a couple more quotes:

Student: **"The present is before time was, and will be when time is no more. In it are all things that are eternal, and they are one."** T-13.VI.6

"The only aspect of time that is eternal is now." T-5.III.6

Teacher: So what aspect of time exists in the eternal reality?

Student: Now, or the present.

Teacher: So time does exist in heaven and it is called the present. Here is what it says about the past and the future: **"Fear is not of the present, but only of the past and future, which do not exist."** T-15.I.8

Then it makes this interesting statement: **"time itself involves intervals that do not exist."** T-2.VII.5

Student: Wow. No past or future and no intervals between them – that’s what I have a hard time getting my mind around. I’m glad you pointed out that the aspect of present time will still exist in the eternal world, but still have difficulty understanding what that would be like.

Teacher: First let us examine what creates time as we know it here. The Course gives a very interesting clue when it tells us that our time is made from intervals. In other words, it is always measured in an apparent movement from the past to the future. This movement is measured in seconds, minutes, weeks, years etc. So, time as we know it, consists of a conscious registration of short intervals, like seconds, merged into greater intervals. This creation of the passing of time is called a trick or an illusion by the Course.

Student: Why would our time be called a trick?

Teacher: Because real time is in the present, and an interval of consciousness skips over it so we never see the real now. Instead, we register the interval which is a leap from the past to the future which only exists in the dream.

Student: That’s pretty deep. So, what would happen if we could see the true present?

Teacher: This world of form would disappear, for everything here is created by motion through time. In the present we would see the eternal world, which the Course says is something that cannot be put into words.

Student: So, what would be the difference between living in this world of time and the eternal present which I believe the Course calls timelessness?

Teacher: One of the main differences is this. Everything created in time has a beginning and an end. Everything dies here. Everything created in the present time is eternal because no intervals between past and future exist.

Student: What I do not understand is this. It is said God created me. So, wasn’t there a past time before my creation and another one afterwards?

Teacher: There was not an interval between the past and the future because you were created in present time which was all the time there is.

Student: I do not understand the difference between before and after in heaven and before and after creating something here.

Teacher: Read these two quotes that should be helpful:

Student: **“Time (past and future) does not really exist. The statement is more meaningful in terms of a vertical rather than a horizontal axis.” T-1.II.4**

“The miracle entails a sudden shift from horizontal to vertical perception. This introduces an interval from which the giver and receiver both emerge farther along in time than they would otherwise have been. The miracle thus has the unique property of abolishing time to the extent that it renders the interval of time it spans unnecessary.” T-1.II.6

Teacher: Time in this world corresponds to the horizontal where you travel from the past to the future. To what does the vertical correspond?

Student: I guess that would be heavenly time, the present.

Teacher: Yes, the present, vertical time of the holy instant has no forward and backward or past and future, so switching to this abolishes time as we know it, as mentioned in the quote. In vertical time there is no past and future as we understand them.

Student: So there is just up and down, but no forward and backward.

Teacher: There is just up, speaking symbolically here. In this world we think of time moving forward but in the eternal world there is not movement as we understand it, but something the Course calls extension. As we enter vertical time creation happens by extending upward in an eternal present with no horizontal past or future. So, when you were created in the present, you were created with no past or future, and it was as if you had always been and always will be, except there is no “as if” in heaven but only IS.

Student: That is interesting but still difficult to understand.

Teacher: We are told that there are many things we can question and receive and then understand here, but this one is said to be beyond our understanding unless we experience it. I will give this illustration that may help. Picture God and the universe as a circular balloon that has always existed that is being blown up and expanding. There are always new molecules of air (Sons) being created and added so the balloon is always expanding. See this as never contracting or changing shape but always creating and adding new molecules that identify with the whole and each other. The only thing that changes is expansion for it says, **“the present saved to quietly extend into a timeless future.”** W-pI.110.4 You might want to read this quote next:

Student: **“What is timeless is always there, because its being is eternally changeless. It does not change by increase, because it was forever created to increase.”** T-7.I.7

Teacher: So, why is heaven called changeless, even though there is expansion or extension?

Student: That is interesting. It says **“because it was forever created to increase.”**

Teacher: So it appears there is change, but because the change is always occurring through expansion, one could say that the process is changeless.

Student: Reminds me of the statement that the more things change the more they stay the same.

Teacher: Yes, you could say that the more the universe expands, the more it stays the same because the process does not change, for real creation **“extends the present rather than the past.”** T-13.IV.9

Student: So instead of moving from the past to the future, as we do here, in heaven we move from a present to an extended present, but we are always in the real present. Is that correct?

Teacher: Yes. Here we are never in the real present except in those times we enter what the Course calls the holy instant. In the eternal world the present is all there is. It calls this state “timelessness.”

Student: You’ve helped me get a sense of real time, but I also sense that I do not grasp it completely.

Teacher: No one in this world does. Have you noticed that when you sleep at night that time seems to flow differently?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: And do you also notice that your awareness of this world and what it is like does not exist there?

Student: Yes again.

Teacher: And do you also notice that some of your thoughts and experiences in the waking world are imperfectly reflected in your dream world?

Student: Yes, sometimes almost insanely.

Teacher: And finally, do you notice that your dream self has no awareness of the difference between its reality and your waking reality?

Student: Yes. I think one would wake up as soon as that awareness came.

Teacher: You are correct sir! And the fact that we are still here in this world tells us that we are not yet reached full awareness, but because we are talking about it and trying to understand tells us something. What would that be?

Student: I would say that our rough understanding that we are in a dream, and that there is another world indicates we are on the verge of awakening.

Teacher: Yes. That may still be sometime ahead, as we measure it, but most of the dream is behind us, which the Course said took millions of years to materialize.

Student: I can see that I may not be ready to awaken because there are still things I want to do with my life.

Teacher: And sometimes you have a dream that you want to continue and not wake up for a while.

ACIM Conversations, Part 21

The Key to Health

Student: Another teaching where there is strong disagreement is over how a Course student should handle health problems. Some think we should just get our mind right, and we'll always have good health and not need doctors, medicines or needles, and others think that orthodox medicine is fine and in harmony with the teachings. What are your thoughts on this?

Teacher: To understand how to put the teachings to the best use, you have to understand a core approach that is used by the Course, which is this. It always presents the ideal, and even though that ideal may be lifetimes beyond the reach of the average student and difficult from our view, it presents it as if it is easy to attain. For instance, have you noticed that the path to waking up is talked about like it is the easiest thing in the universe?

Student: Yes indeed. Sometimes I feel like I must be missing a lot or I would be completely awake by now.

Teacher: In fact, the Course makes it sound like it is beyond easy. Read this:

Student: **“When the light comes at last into the mind given to contemplation; or when the goal is finally achieved by anyone, it always comes with just one happy realization; ‘I need do nothing.’”** T-18.VII.5

Teacher: So, how easy is it to do nothing?

Student: It should be a piece of cake.

Teacher: Yet many thousands have devoutly studied the course. Do you know any who have fully awakened and returned to heaven?

Student: Some may think they are awake, but I haven't seen any disappear into heaven the way Jesus did. I also do not see anyone performing miracles as he did.

Teacher: What does that tell you about the presentation by the Course and the reality of attainment?

Student: It presents the ideal as if it is easy, but for us who are asleep, waking up seems difficult.

Teacher: And the strange thing is that when all is said and done, it is easy. Have you ever jumped out of a plane before?

Student: No.

Teacher: Imagine that you are in a situation where you have a parachute on and are all ready to jump for the first time. You are told that it will be easy. All you have to do is to jump out of the plane and pull the chord when you are part way down. How easy would it be to jump that first time?

Student: I think I'd be really frightened. Even though the mechanics are easy, the fear is difficult to overcome.

Teacher: And that fear is amplified for those seeking to wake up. We have seen many parachute safely out of planes, but we can't find one associate who has fully awakened.

Student: Good point. So, what does this have to do with handling modern medicine?

Teacher: The point is that the Course presents the ideal before us concerning health, but achieving this for the student is easier said than done. And what do you suppose the main obstacle would be?

Student: Perhaps it is the same as jumping out of a plane – fear.

Teacher: Exactly right. Read these words given to Helen:

“I am repeating here a Biblical injunction of my own, already mentioned elsewhere, that if my followers eat any deadly thing it shall not hurt them. This is what Cayce could NOT believe, because he could not see that, as a Son of God, he WAS invulnerable.” UR T 3 C 39

Here Jesus was referring to this scripture concerning believers:

“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Mark 16:18

Now, if someone offered you a drink you knew was poisoned, what would prevent you from drinking it even if you were familiar with these words from Jesus?

Student: I admit that I would be afraid that my faith was not strong enough.

Teacher: And why do students not refuse modern medicine when the Course says you do not need it if you are in your right mind?

Student: I guess many are afraid they are not in their right mind.

Teacher: Correct, and the Course repeatedly teaches that illness is caused by misguided thinking from the mind and has nothing to do with the body. Read this:

Student: **“Only the mind is capable of error. The body can act wrongly only when it is responding to misthought. The body cannot create, and the belief that it can, a fundamental error, produces all physical symptoms. Physical illness represents a belief in magic. The whole distortion that made magic rests on the belief that there is a creative ability in matter which the mind cannot control.”**
T-2.IV.2

Teacher: The Course repeatedly refers to all healing treatments that deal directly with the body as magic. What does it say that this mistaken magic rests upon?

Student: It says it **“rests on the belief that there is a creative ability in matter which the mind cannot control.”**

Teacher: And what does that mean?

Student: It means that there is a mistaken belief that the body can create an illness or be subject to healing that is independent of mind.

Teacher: And does modern medicine have anything to do with treating the mind?

Student: No. It just treats the body with physical agents as if the body is only subject to them and not Mind.

Teacher: For those who are afraid they are not centered enough in Mind to heal the body, the Course offers this advice:

“If you are afraid to use the mind to heal, you should not attempt to do so. The very fact that you are afraid makes your mind vulnerable to miscreation. You are therefore likely to misunderstand any healing that might occur, and because egocentricity and fear usually occur together, you may be unable to accept the real Source of the healing. Under these conditions, it is safer for you to rely temporarily on physical healing devices, because you cannot misperceive them as your own creations. As long as your sense of vulnerability persists, you should not attempt to perform miracles.” T-2.V.2

Who does it say should rely on orthodox medicine?

Student: It says those who **“are afraid to use the mind to heal.”**

Teacher: Yes, those who are afraid and have a **“sense of vulnerability.”** Can you give me an example of someone in this situation?

Student: I'd say just about everyone including myself. I got the Covid virus a while back and I'll admit that I didn't have enough faith to just rely on my right mind to take care of it.

Teacher: The Course almost makes fun of those who do depend on orthodox medicine. Read this:

Student: **“Think of the freedom in the recognition that you are not bound by all the strange and twisted laws you have set up to save you...You really think a small round pellet or some fluid pushed into your veins through a sharpened needle will ward off disease and death.”** W-pI.76.3

Wow. I do not know of anyone who never takes pills or gets shots.

Teacher: And why do we rely on these outward remedies? Read this next passage for the answer:

Student: **“If you are afraid of healing, then it cannot come through you. The only thing that is required for a healing is a lack of fear. The fearful are not healed, and cannot heal.”** T-27.V.1

So, it appears that we take orthodox treatments because, if we do not, we become afraid and the fearful cannot be healed.

Teacher: Now read this next one that tells us why we resist healing:

Student: **“Lack of faith in the power that heals all pain arises from your wish to retain some aspects of reality for fantasy.”** T-17.I.3

Teacher: A while back you mentioned that there are things you want to accomplish with your life. Just about all have aspects of life here that we are attached to and this can interfere with healing. Like I said, the Course presents the ideal and the path seems simple as stated here:

“Healing is accomplished the instant the sufferer no longer sees any value in pain.” M-5.I.1

Student: Yes, it would seem easy to let go of one's value of pain but I've heard it said that there are subtle values we attach to sickness.

Teacher: The Course seems to support that idea, for it tells us this:

“Sickness is a decision. It is not a thing that happens to you, quite unsought, which makes you weak and brings you suffering. It is a choice you make, a plan you lay,” W-pI.136.7

Student: The choice has to be subtle indeed, for I do not recall choosing to get Covid.

Teacher: We'll end this discussion with a quote that leads us to universal healing.

Read this:

Student: **“Love cannot suffer, because it cannot attack. The remembrance of love therefore brings invulnerability with it.”** T-10.III.3

Sounds like the Beatles were right. All you need is love.

Teacher: Love takes us to the ideal and eventually the ideal becomes the reality. The time will come that each of us will awaken to our invulnerability and let go of our fears concerning the body. Then we will have no need for the magic treatments that the dreamers think they need for the body, which is really controlled by the mind.

ACIM Conversations, Part 22

Is Anyone Awake?

Student: I keep coming across fellow students who tell me that they have awakened from the dream, yet see no evidence they are any more awake than I am. How should I respond to such people?

Teacher: First, you need to decide whether or not a response would be helpful.

Student: And how do I do that?

Teacher: What does the Course tell you to do as far as decision making goes?

Student: I suppose you are telling me I need to check with the Holy Spirit.

Teacher: Exactly. And do you suppose the Holy Spirit will give you the same answer for each individual?

Student: I would think there would be different answers, as some may be open to discussion and others not so much.

Teacher: Yes. Some interpret any questioning of their belief system as an attack, and any attempt to correct errors in them is fruitless. On the other hand, there are some who are open to discussions that reveal greater light and the Holy Spirit will give you a favorable nudge for them.

Student: I think there may be a third category, like the authorities who tried to entrap Jesus. He responded and put them in their place. Some people just seem to be asking for it.

Teacher: And even here you need to listen to the inner voice. Sometimes it will prompt you to respond and other times not.

The first thing you need to be aware of as a student is all that would transpire if you were to be fully awake. Who is it that we can look to as the greatest example of enlightenment?

Student: I'm sure that would be Jesus.

Teacher: And are you aware that even he is not fully in heaven?

Student: No I was not. Do you have a reference on that?

Teacher: Read this:

Student: **“Because my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven, I can bring down the glories of Heaven to my brothers on earth.”** UR T 1 B 40ab

Teacher: Now, why is it that he can still assist us?

Student: Apparently his consciousness extends to both heaven and earth for his feet are on the earth and hands in heaven. Interesting.

Teacher: The Course tells us why he must yet stay linked to us here on earth. Read this:

Student: **“Yet a savior must remain with those he teaches, seeing what they see, but still retaining in his mind the way that led him out, and now will lead you out with him.”** W-pI.rV.in.6

Teacher: Why must a savior remain with us?

Student: So he can lead us out with him.

Teacher: This harmonizes with a promise he made to his disciples. He said: **“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”** Matt 28:20

Now read these two quotes that reveal why he is committed to stay and work with us.

Student: **“The reawakening of every Son of God is necessary to enable the Sonship to know its Wholeness.”** T-6.I.12 **“Souls cannot rest until everyone has found salvation.”** UR T 1 B 24a. 24

It looks like even Jesus, or others who are awake, will not be able to rest until all are awake.

Teacher: And this thought is reinforced in this next quote:

Student: **If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its Oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until ALL THE PARTS OF THE SONSHIP HAVE RETURNED. Only then can the meaning of wholeness in the true sense be understood.”** T-2.VII.6

Teacher: Here we see that we are all integral parts of the Sonship, and we must all return before we can completely comprehend the meaning of its wholeness.

Student: That is quite a statement. It appears then that no one can claim to be fully awake for the whole Sonship must return before complete wholeness is realized.

Teacher: But we can make great strides toward the Eternal World. The first major step is to attain the real world. Do you have a grasp of what that is?

Student: I understand it is some type of bridge between heaven and earth.

Teacher: Yes. The Course describes it as **“a borderland of thought that stands between this world and Heaven.”** T-26.III.2

It says **“The real world is the second part of the hallucination time and death are real, and have existence that can be perceived.”** T-26.V.12 **“The real world can actually be perceived. All that is necessary is a willingness to perceive nothing else.”** T-11.VII.2

Student: It appears then that anyone who claims to be awake has first learned to see the real world.

Teacher: And how many do you suppose there are who perceive it?

Student: I encountered a number who claim they are in heaven, but haven't heard any of them talk about seeing the real world which must come first.

Teacher: Read this - it gives interesting evidence that one is beginning to see the real world:

Student: **“You will begin to understand it when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now. That is the beginning of real vision. You can be certain that real vision will come quickly when this has occurred.”** W-pI.15.2

Teacher: So what happens when you obtain real vision?

Student: You see edges of light around familiar objects.

Teacher: Take a look at that chair over there. Do you see light around its edges?

Student: No. I guess I do not have real vision yet.

Teacher: Now take another look. Tune out the chair and focus for about a minute. on the empty space at its edges.

Student: (A minute passes) I think I did see some light but it's gone now. Maybe it was my imagination.

Teacher: It will seem that way at first but keep practicing and you can see the light from the real world everywhere. It says: **“The Great Light always surrounds you and shines out from you.”** T-11.III.4

Student: Wow. That’s cool. I haven’t heard anyone talk about this before.

Teacher: And there is much more to see beyond that light at the edges, which anyone who claims to be at least half awake should be able to register. And this is just part of a first step in the awakening process.

Student: What else should I look for in one who claims to be awake?

Teacher: First let me say that there are degrees of wakefulness, for even Jesus will not be fully awake in heaven until you and I join with him. The first major hurdle is the realization that we are asleep in a world of illusion and need to wake up. The next step is to see the real world so we can at least perceive truth from error while we are in the dream. From then on it is a step-by-step process until we arrive at the wakefulness demonstrated by Jesus when he was here. Do you recall the story of John the Baptist when he was in prison and was not sure if Jesus was the Christ?

Student: Yes. He sent some friends to Jesus to ask him if he was the one who was to come.

Teacher: Perhaps if John had been *A Course in Miracles* student he might have asked if Jesus was the one who was to demonstrate being awake. When the friends approached Jesus, he told them to spend some time with him and tell John what they saw which was: **“The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”** Matt 11:5

Student: That should have been enough to convince anyone. If I recall, John went to his death comforted that a true messenger had arrived. So, should I expect similar things from anyone who claims to be enlightened or awake?

Teacher: First let me say that any declaration of being awake is a sign of the ego at work. Did you notice in reading the gospel account that Jesus never declared himself as the Christ, or even a Christ?

Student: Now that you mention it, I think that is true.

Teacher: What made people think he was the Christ?

Student: His works as well as his enlightened teachings

Teacher: Yes, and this is the only way a true messenger will announce himself. It will be through his words and works. Do you know of anyone in this age who has announced himself in this way?

Student: Can't say that I do, but have encountered several who have announced themselves using the ego's method by just declaring themselves awake or enlightened. If you are correct, all students I know have a long way to go, for I do not see any of them performing great miracles as did Jesus.

Teacher: And do not forget the greatest miracle of all – overcoming death itself. Even after they destroyed his body, Jesus was able to bring it back to apparent life.

Student: It's kind of amusing that many think that some Course luminaries have overcome death even though there have been no bodies missing from their tombs or appearing to friends afterwards.

Teacher: This idea of placing high-profile teachers in the same league as Jesus overcoming death is quite common. Many spiritual movements have declared, with no evidence, that their founders or significant teachers were ascended after they were dead and buried. The truth is that they were overtaken by death just like everyone else.

Student: Is Jesus the only one in history then who has overcome death?

Teacher: No. There are a few, but not many of their works are known to history. The Course mentions them once here:

“There are those who have reached God directly, retaining no trace of worldly limits and remembering their own Identity perfectly. These might be called the Teachers of teachers because, although they are no longer visible, their image can yet be called upon. And they will appear when and where it is helpful for them to do so. To those to whom such appearances would be frightening, they give their ideas. No one can call on them in vain.” M-26.2

Student: I must have read this but not registered it correctly. These individuals can appear to people after their death just as Jesus was reported as doing.

Teacher: Yes, and miracles also followed them but they didn't receive the recognition as did Jesus, for Jesus had a mission to demonstrate power over death in a dramatic way so others could see beyond the illusion.

Student: That is encouraging that there are others besides Jesus. I can see, though, that I still have a ways to go as I have never been able to make the blind see or the deaf hear, let alone raise the dead.

Teacher: But you are much further along the path than others who believe themselves to be awake while they are yet in a deep sleep.

Look at it this way. Imagine a path going from point A to point B. The first person thinks he is just a couple steps from his destination, but in reality, he has taken a wrong turn and does not know where he is. The other person is 75% there, knows his true location, and how far he has yet to travel. Which one has the advantage?

Student: The second, of course.

Teacher: Is the belief of the first guy that he is almost there helpful at all?

Student: No. His delusion is a great hinderance.

Teacher: Even so, it is with students who believe they are a step away from heaven but do not realize where they really are. Such an illusion will delay the awakening.

Student: I can see that I need to monitor my own progress so my ego does not lead me into that trap. I appreciate your counsel.

ACIM Conversations, Part 23

Steps to Awakening

Student: I've come across students who seem to think there are no steps to awakening. They seem to think there is just one leap and that is it. They quote these passages:

“What difference does the content of a dream make in reality? One either sleeps or wakens. There is nothing in between.” W-pI.140.2

“You cannot dream some dreams and wake from some, for you are either sleeping or awake.” T-29.IV.1

Teacher: And I suppose that those who use this quote think they are on the awake side.

Student: That seems to be the case.

Teacher: You might point out that the Course tells us that **“It is impossible to see two worlds which have no overlap of any kind. Seek for the one; the other disappears. But one remains.”** W-pI.130.5

Tell me, my friend, which world are you seeing right now, the dream of earth or the formless and eternal heaven?

Student: I'd have to admit that I am seeing this world.

Teacher: And do your friends see the words you type, their electronic devices, their homes, or do they see their heavenly abode?

Student: I know they see the words I type, for they answer me in kind.

Teacher: Then they are obviously seeing this world and if they are seeing this world, they cannot see the eternal world, for the Course tells us we can see only one of them at the exclusion of the other.

Student: That is powerful reasoning, but I'm sure they will come up with some argument that they are seeing the true reality.

Teacher: Now let us examine those verses you quoted. They say that we are either asleep or awake, which makes sense when we compare it to our sleep in this world.

You cannot be asleep and awake at the same time. On the other hand, assuming there is no alarm clock, do you wake up suddenly or is there a process?

Student: I usually wake up gradually over a period of ten minutes or so. Then, other times I drift in and out of sleep. But you're right. I am either asleep or awake, though the line may be a little blurred for a short time.

Teacher: Would you rather be awakened gently over a period of time or suddenly?

Student: I prefer a gentle awakening.

Teacher: God agrees with you and tells us the plan is to gently awaken us:

“How can you wake children in a more kindly way than by a gentle Voice that will not frighten them, but will merely remind them that the night is over and the light has come? You do not inform them that the nightmares that frightened them so badly are not real, because children believe in magic. You merely reassure them that they are safe now. Then you train them to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking, so they will understand they need not be afraid of dreams. And so when bad dreams come, they will themselves call on the light to dispel them.” T-6.V.2

Student: It says we will be trained **“to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking.”**

Teacher: Indeed, for it says of this problem that **“The dreamer of a dream is not awake, but does not know he sleeps.”** T-28.II.6 And how long do you think this training to tell the difference between being asleep and awake will last?

Student: Well, I'm kind of dense sometimes so I wouldn't be surprised if God has been working on me for several lifetimes.

Teacher: Do you suppose there are other steps?

Student: I would guess that the answer is yes and you are going to tell me one.

Teacher: Good answer; let us give one mentioned by the Course:

“So fearful is the dream, so seeming real, he could not waken to reality without the sweat of terror and a scream of mortal fear, unless a gentler dream preceded his awaking, and allowed his calmer mind to welcome, not to fear, the Voice that calls with love to waken him.” T-27.VII.13

What is another step mentioned in this quote?

Student: Dreams of terror will be replaced by more gentle dreams.

Teacher: Yes. Since fear is the big obstacle to waking up, we are given more gentle dreams, or lifetimes, so fear is reduced.

Student: I'm not sure if my current lifetime is a gentle dream or not as I have certainly had my share of problems.

Teacher: And you are certainly not alone, my friend. Overcoming fear is definitely one of the steps toward awakening, and this is done in two stages as stated here:

“The escape from darkness involves two stages: First, the recognition that darkness cannot hide. This step usually entails fear. Second, the recognition that there is nothing you want to hide even if you could. This step brings escape from fear.” T-1.IV.1

There are many steps that are taken that lead to awakening. Read this one:

Student: **“The first step toward freedom involves a sorting out of the false from the true.”** T-2.VIII.4

Teacher: This is obviously important, for if you cannot sort out the false from the true, you may wind up thinking you are awake when you are really asleep.

Student: It's kind of funny when you think of it. If a guy thinks he is awake when he is really asleep then he will not take any steps to awaken.

Teacher: That's why we need training to recognize whether we are asleep or awake.

Actually, the Course mentions many other steps to waking up such as learning to forgive, letting go of grievances, letting go of ego judgments, realizing our true nature and numerous others, but there is one major step we all must take. Do you recall what that is?

Student: That must be seeing the real world.

Teacher: Indeed, here are two references on that for you to read:

Student: **“The awakening of His Son begins with his investment in the real world, and by this he will learn to re-invest in himself.”** T-12.VI.4

“The real world is the symbol that the dream of sin and guilt is over, and God's Son no longer sleeps.” W-pII.8.4

Teacher: The Course describes the seeing of the real world as an awakening, but it also says there is one more step after this. You might call it the step that transcends awakening.

“When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made. And then your Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.” T-11.VIII.15.

Student: Then we will be back home with God, fully awake

Teacher: Can you see now that the Course clearly teaches that there are numerous steps to the waking up process and entering the eternal world?

Student: Yes, and I can see that it is easy to get the wrong idea from the passage that says we are either asleep or awake. It’s not a matter of just snapping our fingers and being awake in heaven, but there is a process that involves numerous steps that must be taken.

Teacher: And now that we realize that we are not fully awake, what do we need to do?

Student: Find our next step and take it. I kinda feel bad for those students who think they are awake when they are still asleep, for they will not be looking for their next step, because they think they do not need it.

Teacher: That inertia happens in all spiritual belief systems. Let me end this discussion by emphasizing this important point mentioned earlier. An essential beginning step is **“to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking.”** T-6.V.2 If a student is asleep and thinks he is awake he could be trapped in illusion indefinitely.

Student: And that is a trap we want to avoid. Thank you for these conversations. They have been helpful.

ACIM Conversations, Part 24

The Historical Jesus

Student: I've been coming across some unusual beliefs by students about Jesus who is said to be the author of *A Course in Miracles*.

Teacher: Why am I not surprised? Okay, I can pretty much guess what they are but hit me with something.

Student: The Voice in ACIM pretty solidly identifies himself as the historical Jesus, but many students reject this. I think the statement of greatest error is that "We are all Jesus."

Teacher: Why do you think they say that?

Student: I suppose it is because the Course teaches that there is one Son, so they assume that what one has done, all have done.

Teacher: Yes, the idea of oneness is confusing to many, especially if they see all life as being one with no parts as we discussed earlier.

Student: Oneness indeed makes much more sense and is in harmony with the Course when you see it as many parts that are united as one.

Teacher: Now if a student accepts the strange idea of oneness so all can claim to be Jesus, one would also have to say he is Hitler as well.

Student: Yeah, don't hear anyone making that claim.

Teacher: There are many statements made by the Voice in the Course that tell us that though we are all one with God, we are individual lives and what Jesus accomplished is different from what students of the Course have accomplished. Read this text:

Student: **"I bridge the distance as an elder brother to you on the one hand, and as a Son of God on the other. My devotion to my brothers has placed me in charge of the Sonship, which I render complete because I share it. This may appear to contradict the statement "I and my Father are one," but there are two parts to the statement in recognition that the Father is greater."** T-1.II.4

Teacher: What does Jesus call himself here?

Student: Our elder brother.

Teacher: Can you be an elder brother to yourself?

Student: That would be as difficult as creating ourselves, which the Course tells us we cannot do.

Teacher: Good point. And who does it say is in charge of the Sonship, you or Jesus.

Student: Jesus

Teacher: And where do we come in?

Student: It says that Jesus shares the sonship with us.

Teacher: So, does it make sense that instead of being Jesus, we are one, or united with our elder brother by accepting the shared sonship?

Student: Seems obvious to me.

Teacher: There are many passages which tell us that Jesus is a distinct individual from ourselves. Here's another one.

Student: **“There is nothing about me that you cannot attain. I have nothing that does not come from God. The difference between us now is that I have nothing else. This leaves me in a state which is only potential in you. T-1.II.3**

Teacher: So, what is the difference between Course students and Jesus?

Student: Jesus has nothing but what comes from God. I suppose we rely on the ego instead.

Teacher: And what is the promise to us?

Student: We can attain the same things he did.

Teacher: Here's another passage to read giving encouragement in that direction:

Student: **“I have enjoined you to behave as I behaved, but we must respond to the same Mind to do this. This Mind is the Holy Spirit, Whose Will is for God always. He teaches you how to keep me as the model for your thought, and to behave like me as a result.” T-5.II.12**

Teacher: How then is the student supposed to view Jesus – as himself or something else?

Student: It says we are to see him as a model from which to pattern our behavior.

Teacher: I suppose it may be tempting to be able to claim the works of Jesus without making the effort to attain to his stature, but obviously there are steps that each of us must take to attain as he did.

Student: You would think that would be obvious. There's another point that some students bring up. Some say that the Jesus in the Course is not the historical Jesus from the New Testament.

Teacher: And why do they say that?

Student: Some come from an atheist or agnostic background and never accepted the story of his life. Others believe the identification is just symbolic.

Teacher: If one doubts the perfection of the Course script, then doubting whether or not the Voice is Jesus makes sense. But if one accepts that the Course is a divine revelation without major errors, then one would have to accept that the Voice is that of the historical Jesus.

Student: Can that be proven from the Course?

Teacher: The proof is pretty solid, for the Voice specifically identified with the Jesus of history numerous times. Here he verifies the garden experience, his crucifixion and relationship with the apostles:

“My brothers slept during the so-called ‘agony in the garden,’ but I could not be angry with them because I knew I could not be abandoned.” T-6.I.7

“The Apostles often misunderstood it (the crucifixion), and for the same reason that anyone misunderstands it. Their own imperfect love made them vulnerable to projection, and out of their own fear they spoke of the “wrath of God” as His retaliatory weapon.” T-6.I.14

“As you read the teachings of the Apostles, remember that I told them myself that there was much they would understand later, because they were not wholly ready to follow me at the time. I do not want you to allow any fear to enter into the thought system toward which I am guiding you.” T-6.I.16

And here he specifically identified with “Christ Jesus.”

“The Bible says, ‘May the mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus,’ and uses this as a blessing. It is the blessing of miracle-mindedness. It asks that you may think as I thought, joining with me in Christ thinking.” T-5.I.3

Student: That is pretty strong evidence. Didn't he specifically mention Judas?

Teacher: Yes, here it is:

“Judas was my brother and a Son of God, as much a part of the Sonship as myself. Was it likely that I would condemn him when I was ready to demonstrate that condemnation is impossible?” T-6.I.14-15

Student: That sounds like the entity who is Jesus recalling what happened.

Teacher: Now read this as he is even more specific:

Student: “My body disappeared because I had no illusion about it. The last one had gone. It was laid in the tomb, but there was nothing left to bury. It did not disintegrate because the unreal cannot die. It merely became what it always was. And that is what “rolling the stone away” means. The body disappears, and no longer hides what lies beyond. It merely ceases to interfere with vision. To roll the stone away is to see beyond the tomb, beyond death, and to understand the body’s nothingness. What is understood as nothing must disappear.

“I did assume a human form with human attributes afterwards, to speak to those who were to prove the body’s worthlessness to the world. This has been much misunderstood. I came to tell them that death is illusion, and the mind that made the body can make another since form itself is an illusion. They did not understand. But now I talk to you and give you the same message. The death of an illusion means nothing. It disappears when you awaken and decide to dream no more. And you still do have the power to make this decision as I did.”

From “Special Messages”, by Jesus...Additional material through Helen Schuchman. Also quoted in Absence From Felicity by Ken Wapnick

Wow! That is pretty specific

Teacher: But perhaps the coup de grâce is the many quotes the Voice of ACIM uses that are attributed to the historical Jesus of the New Testament. The Voice often indicates that he is quoting himself. I’ve compiled a list. Go ahead and read them off.

Student: **“No man cometh unto the Father but by me”**

“I and my Father are one,”

“Heaven and earth shall pass away”

“Lead us not into temptation”

“Except ye become as little children”

“the meek shall inherit the earth.”

“Father forgive them for they know not what they do”

“Do this in remembrance of me”

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”

“Before Abraham was I am.”

“Many are called but few are chosen” should be, “All are called but few choose to listen.”

“Judge not that ye be not judged,”

“Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven”

“The Kingdom of Heaven is within you”

“Seek and ye shall find”

“turning the other cheek.”

“thine is the Kingdom,”

“I am come as a light into the world,”

“I am with you always,”

When I said, “My peace I give unto you,” I meant it.

“Who is my father?”

That is what I meant when I said, “Blessed are ye who have not seen and still believe,”

“Seek and you will find,”

I said earlier, “By their fruits ye shall know them, and they shall know themselves.”

“Thy Will be done,”

“Let me not wander into temptation.”

“This is my beloved Son

“Of myself I can do nothing” is to gain all power

“praying for one’s enemies.”

Wow. That’s quite a list. Obviously, the Voice identifies with the Jesus of the New Testament.

Teacher: Like I said. If one doubts the perfection of the Course, then one may be justified in considering that the Voice may be merely symbolic, but if one accepts it as a real Divine revelation, then one should conclude the Voice is the historical Jesus, or, at least, claims to be so..

ACIM Conversations, Part 25

Creation vs Made

Student: I've been getting a lot of grief among students over my use of the word "creation." If I use it referring to anything in this world, they correct me and tell me that everything here is "made," not created.

Teacher: Yes, I know, some who are very black and white will correct you even though your English is correct, and it is obvious what you are saying. Can you give me an example of a correction?

Student: I could give you several. The other day I mentioned something about the creation of the universe we see about us, and I was jumped upon with a correction telling me that this world was "made," not "created," and this isn't even the real universe. Then I was talking about the creation of some new offerings by Apple and was corrected again telling me that all Apple products are "made," not created.

Teacher: Do you think the students understood what you were saying?

Student: I'm sure they did.

Teacher: Then they need to take the Course's advice: **"To communicate is to join and to attack is to separate."** T-8.VII.12 Are you familiar with the Course's differentiation between "create" and "made?"

Student: I think so, but will be interested in your comments.

Teacher: Why do you suppose they corrected you?

Student: I felt like they were just trying to demonstrate a superior knowledge of the Course.

Teacher: Yes, and it is a problem that some are more determined to be technically correct than in understanding each other with real communication. Read this extract, as it is perhaps the most common one to stress the difference in the two words:

Student: **"A clear distinction between what is created and what is made is essential. All forms of healing rest on this fundamental correction in level perception."** T-2.V.A.12

Teacher: Here it seems to stress the importance of understanding the difference in the two words, but now read the same text before it was edited:

Student: **“Clear distinction between what has been created and what is being created is essential. All forms of correction (or healing) rest on this fundamental correction in level perception.”** OE Tx:3.5

Wow! In the original edition the word “made” is not even used. When it talks about “what has been created,” what does it mean?

Teacher: It is referring to miscreations of the past here in this world that cause our problems. They need to be replaced with correct creation the Course refers to as the “miracle.”

Student: So, instead of “made,” Jesus himself in his original dictation used the word “created” in referring to what has been made in this world. I wonder if those critical students are upset at Jesus when they read the original.

Teacher: I wouldn’t bet on it, but one can see where they have made the distinction because the Course often uses “creation” in reference to eternal things, and the word “made” in relation to the temporary things of this world, but just as you may use the word “create” sometimes in reference to this world, so does the Voice in the Course. In fact, there are 27 times the Course refers to things made in this world as “miscreation.” Here is one for you to read.

Student: **“The fundamental conflict in this world, then, is between creation and miscreation. All fear is implicit in the second, and all love in the first. The conflict is therefore one between love and fear.”** T-2.VII.3

Teacher: It is interesting that “miscreation,” or things made in this world, has the word “creation” in it. If nothing else, this illustrates the impracticality of insisting that creation must only refer to what God directly makes. Read this quote in the original text:

Student: **“The acceptance of the Atonement by everyone is only a matter of time. In fact, both time and matter were created for this purpose.”** OE Tx:2.47

Teacher: Time and matter belong to the world, not heaven, and here it says they were originally created. Time and matter are a part of the dream, also indicating the original dream state was an idea created by the Godlike powers of the Son, for an idea is eternal and cannot be destroyed.

Student: Now I do not feel so bad for using “create” in reference to some things in this world.

Teacher: This problem just illustrates the importance of looking at the context of what is said and seeking to understand rather than insisting on some literal accuracy being always applied.

That said, it is helpful for Course students to understand the general distinction it makes between “creation” and “made.” First, can you tell me the difference as seen by the general public using dictionary definitions?

Student: I’d say that when you create something, you are putting together something new, like Edison did with the light bulb. Since then, many have made light bulbs. We make things by duplicating the original idea.

Teacher: Is this how your student friends used these words when they corrected you?

Student: No. They tell me that “create” is to only be used in relation to something eternal that God makes, and is not to be used in reference to anything in the world.

Teacher: So, using this definition, then, we would have to say that Edison made the light bulb.

Student: Yes, with this definition there would be no differentiation between what Edison did and what a manufacturer does in copying it, for they are both done in the world.

Teacher: And this points us to an important key in understanding the Course. It sometimes uses a definition of terms peculiar to itself, and if the student is not aware of this, he may not fully understand what is being said. For instance, we talked earlier about forgiveness and how its meaning in the Course differs from the dictionary.

Student: So exactly what would be the definition of creation according to ACIM?

Teacher: The Course tells us that true creation involves extending that which is eternal; basically, anything that has an end is considered being made, not created. God creates by extending Himself in creating additional sons through sharing. The idea of sharing is an essential ingredient in the process as noted here:

“You cannot separate your Self from your Creator, Who created you by sharing His Being with you.” T-7.V.6

Basically, true creation, according to ACIM, is the complete sharing of everything that is eternal. We are told that we cannot fully understand this until we return to our eternal state.

Are there any other areas where you are receiving correction?

Student: Yes. This one concerns the body. When I mention something that seems to indicate that I am in this world functioning in a body, someone pops up and lectures me, telling me that I am not a body.

Teacher: Do you believe you are a body?

Student: Of course not. ACIM makes that very clear

Teacher: Then why do they accuse you of thinking you are a body?

Student: The problem comes when I mention any experience that involves a body. They somehow twist that into my believing that I am a body. In reality, it is almost impossible to have a conversation about any experience in this world without involving the body.

Teacher: Indeed. ACIM tells us that there is no form or bodies in heaven, but here in dreamland they are almost impossible to ignore. I would just tell them that you are also not your car, which, like your body, is a tool you use to navigate in this dream. To talk of driving your car doesn't mean you think you are a car.

Student: Sounds good. Another thing they accuse me of is thinking that I am in my body.

Teacher: And why do they say that is not correct?

Student: They say I cannot be in my body because the body does not exist and is just projected by my mind.

Teacher: The problem is that the Course only accords true reality to things that are eternal. Anything that exists in time and space that will someday have an end is regarded as not real or part of the dream. But it does say this:

“What you believe is true for you. In this sense the separation has occurred, and to deny it is merely to use denial inappropriately.” T-2.VII.5

So, does the fact that this world is not real mean that it should be denied?

Student: Not according to that quote.

Teacher: Let me put it this way. When you wake up from a dream, would it be an honest thing to do to tell me that you had no dream?

Student: No. That would be a lie and go against being honest, as taught in the Course.

Teacher: But the dream wasn't real.

Student: It didn't happen in my waking reality, but it still happened, and I had an experience.

Teacher: Is it possible to even talk about the dream without relating your experience in it?

Student: Not really.

Teacher: And is it possible to talk about this greater dream without talking about your experience in it?

Student: I do not think so.

Teacher: And when you talk about an experience you had in your dream body at night, does this mean that you believe you were actually in a real body?

Student: No. That would be a silly belief.

Teacher: And when you talk about the body here, which is an illusion in a dream, does this mean you think you are in a body?

Student: No more than being in a dream body at night.

Teacher: It would appear then that the needed correction is on your accusers who are trying to correct your views, which need no correction.

Student: That's the way I look at it. Thanks.