

A Better Way

A NEWSLETTER FOR STUDENTS OF A COURSE IN MIRACLES / THE CIRCLE OF ATONEMENT / JUNE 2005 / ISSUE 51

Medicine for Those Pangs of Guilt

by Robert Perry

Every day we do things for which we feel little—and sometimes not so little—pangs of guilt. How do we deal with that guilt? Once we have done something we regret and we feel those pangs, how do we get rid of them? There is a brilliant and unexpected answer to this in Lesson 133, “I will not value what is valueless.”

The lesson begins by telling us that every choice we make is really between two fundamental alternatives, and that, depending on which way we go, “each choice you make brings everything to you or nothing” (5:3).

The lesson then offers four “tests by which you can distinguish everything from nothing” (5:4). The first test is this: “If you choose a thing that will not last forever, what you chose is valueless” (6:1). Second, “If you choose to take a thing away from someone else, you will have nothing left” (7:1). Then comes the third test, which will be the focus of this article:

Your next consideration is the one on which the others rest. Why is the choice you make of value to you? What attracts your mind to it? What purpose does it serve? Here it is easiest of all to be deceived. For what the ego wants it fails to recognize. It does not even tell the truth as it perceives it, for it needs to keep the halo which it uses to protect its goals from tarnish and from rust, that you may see how “innocent” it is. (8:1-7)

The third test is about your motives. Why did that choice seem valuable to you? What about it seemed attractive? What purpose were you really trying to serve? Then it says, “Here it is easiest of all to be deceived”—implying, obviously, that we may lie to ourselves about our own motives.

This should not be a surprise, really. How often do you expect to get a straight answer to the question, “Why did you do that?” Covering up our motives is part of being human. Indeed, it’s part of being alive. I am always fascinated by those animals that have deception built into their very physical makeup—animals that look harmless but are really deadly, or that look deadly but are really harmless, or that look like plants but are really animals. If you’re alive, chances are that you’re fairly adept at hiding what you’re really up to.

We even hide our motives from ourselves. After all, some part of us is looking on ourselves with the same critical eye with which others look on us. Just as we fear their judgment, so we fear our own self-judgment. And just as we conceal our motives from them, so we hide our real intent from ourselves as well.

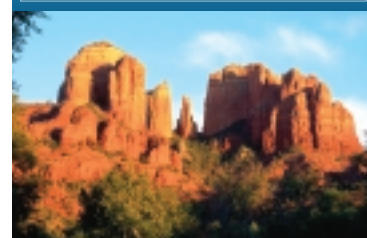
What kind of motives are we talking about? We are talking about motives that are not so innocent (note the word “innocent” in quotes in the final sentence). We are talking about motives in which we try to gain at another’s expense. Remember that second test, which is about trying “to take a thing away from someone else.” Yet what do we *say* when we have motives like this? We say, “I had the best intentions.” “I was only thinking of you.” “I meant well.” “I didn’t mean any harm.” “I did my best.” We all

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WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS

A Course in Miracles is a spiritual path. Its purpose is to train us to work miracles—to accept and extend to others the shifts in perception that awaken us to God. It consists of three volumes, which signify the three aspects of its program:

◆ *Text* : Through studying the teaching, the Course's thought system first enters our minds.

◆ *Workbook for Students*: Through doing the practice, the Course's thought system penetrates more and more deeply into our minds.

◆ *Manual for Teachers*: Through extending our healed perception to others, the Course's thought system receives its final reinforcement and becomes the only thing in our minds.

The Course's message is that the source of our suffering is not the world's mistreatment of us, but rather our egocentric attack on the world. This attack convinces us that we have defiled our nature beyond repair, that we are irredeemably guilty. Yet the Course says true reality cannot be defiled; it is a realm of pure, changeless, unified spirit. This realization allows us to forgive the world's apparent mistreatment of us by recognizing that it did not actually occur. And as we see this forgiveness come forth from us—see that we are capable of something genuinely loving and egoless—we gradually realize that we never defiled ourselves. Thus we awaken to the untouched innocence of our true nature.

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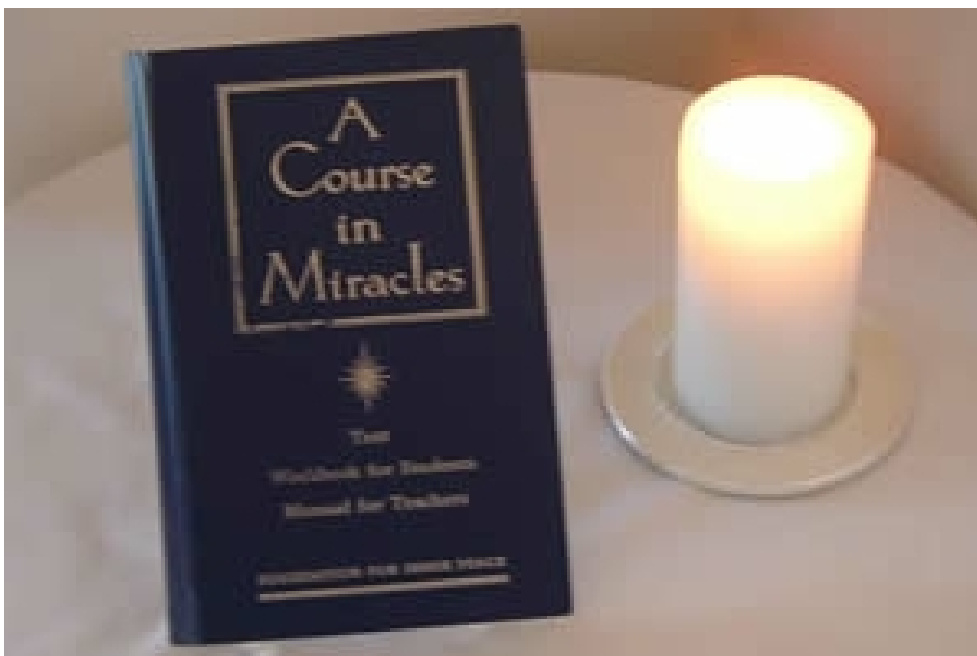
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OTHER EVENTS

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With Robert Perry
July 1-3, 2005
*Information: See ad on Page 6
of this newsletter*



know the lines, for we use them all the time. And we don't just say them to others; we say them to ourselves as well, to the point where we even think we believe them.

In all of this, our paragraph suggests, our ego is lying to us about *its* motives. It needs to “keep the halo” (8:7) we see hovering over it. As long as we see that halo, we will not question its counsel. The ego, after all, is a guide. When you are being led by a guide with a halo over his head, you will tend to not question his decisions. The ego knows this. It knows that as long as we see that halo there, we will willingly follow it wherever it leads.

Yet is its camouflage a thin veneer, which could deceive but those who are content to be deceived. Its goals are obvious to anyone who cares to look for them. Here is deception doubled, for the one who is deceived will not perceive that he has merely failed to gain. He will believe that he has served the ego's hidden goals. (9:1-4)

When you are looking from the outside, it can be so easy to see that the halo is just flimsy camouflage, which would fool only “those who are content to be deceived.” For example, have you ever known someone who naively believed in her boyfriend's good intentions even though everyone else in her life was telling her to stay away from this guy? His real intentions were there for everyone to see, so why didn't she see them? We all know the answer: She didn't want to. She was looking the other way. And that is how we are about *our* ego's intentions. We are looking the other way.

Now the paragraph adds a whole new dimension to the discussion. “Here,” it says, “is deception doubled.” What does that mean? We have already discussed the first layer of deception—believing in the goodness of our ego's motives. In fact, the opening word “here” refers to that first layer (since that's what was discussed in the preceding sentences). Thus, “Here is deception doubled” means that “here,” in our buying into the first layer, we are actually buying into *two* layers—our deception is doubled. We are getting a two-for-one deal.

What, then, is the additional layer? It comes in the next sentence: “He will believe that he has served the ego's hidden goals.” The deception is our belief that we have actually served the ego's goals. Apparently, we haven't, but we *believe* we have. All this will make more sense as we proceed.

Yet though he tries to keep its halo clear within his vision, still must he perceive its tarnished edges and its rusted core. His ineffectual mistakes appear as sins to him, because he looks upon the tarnish as his own; the rust a sign of deep unworthiness within himself. He who would still preserve the ego's goals and serve them as his own makes no mistakes, according to the dictates of his guide. This guidance teaches it is error to believe that sins are but mistakes, for who would suffer for his sins if this were so? (10:1-4)

Here we have a portrait of the person who is doubly deceived. He fooled himself into thinking his motives were pure, that it was an angel in him that prompted him to act. Yet he has to struggle to keep this “angel's” halo in sight. While he tries to stay focused on its halo, his eyes keep being pulled elsewhere, to its “tarnished edges and rusted core.” This “angel”—his ego—is not glowing with innocence. It's not shining like polished silver. It's tarnished and rusting. It's a thing of decay, a thing of corruption. It's rotten to the core.

And while he gazes on that pile of corruption, he thinks he is that pile. After all, he served the ego's goals “as his own.” He covered for the ego as he would for himself. Therefore, the ego's voice must not be some foreign agent in him; it must, he decides, be his own true voice. Now he thinks that *he* is rotten to the core.

Yet in all this, he is deceived. True, the second layer *is* opposite to the first, and this can make it appear to be a case of humble self-honesty. But the second layer is deception, too. He didn't sin by acting from impure motives, all he did was make a mistake (10:2). He didn't really gain at another's expense, he “merely failed to gain” (9:3). He didn't cause real harm, real destruction, he just made an “ineffectual” mistake (10:2), one that had no real effect. He didn't really serve the ego's goals (9:4), he actually did nothing. Remember what I said at the start: one either chooses everything or nothing. In this case, he chose nothing.

And so we come to the criterion for choice that is the hardest to believe, because its obviousness is overlaid with many levels of obscurity. If you feel any guilt about your choice, you have allowed the ego's goals to come between the real alternatives. And thus you do not realize there are but two, and the alternative you think you chose seems fearful, and too dangerous to be the nothingness it actually is. (11:1-3)

This paragraph lists the fourth and final test: Do you feel any guilt about your choice? If so, that is the sign that you've bought into the second layer of deception. You may protest your innocence. You may say that you had everyone's interests at heart. Yet you still feel those lingering pangs of guilt. They are the proof that underneath your claims of innocence you believe that you sinned in order to gratify your ego. In truth, the “real alternatives” are only two: nothing and everything. But you believe you chose a third—a guilty pleasure, a dangerous delight, a wicked triumph. You believe you served your dark master

and furthered his dark goals. And your guilt is the emotional proof of this hidden belief.

We now have all the raw material with which to assemble the whole picture. I'll do it in the form of a table:

Deception #1: My motives were pure.	Truth #1: I tried to gain at someone else's expense.
Deception #2: I sold my soul to the devil. I'm rotten to the core.	Truth #2: I did not sin. I merely failed to gain.

Let's start with the left-hand column. Ironically, we choose deception #1 in order to feel innocent, yet it's a package deal—by choosing deception #1 we automatically get deception #2. And this makes sense, does it not? Deception #1 is a cover over #2, and we only cover up what we believe is real. As the Course says, "Denial depends on the belief in what is denied for its own existence" (T-12.I.9:6). Thus, as we throw up those smokescreens that conceal our guilt and make us look innocent, something in our mind says, "You must *really* have something to hide. The lady doth protest too much indeed!"

Deceptions #1 and #2, then, are really two parts of a single system. In this system, deception #2 is what we believe deep down, and deception #1 is our attempt to deny that belief and escape its pain. The more we believe #2, the more impelled we are to deny it with #1. And the more we deny it, the more we demonstrate that we really *do* believe it. The two deceptions may look opposite, but they are two halves of a single symbiotic system. The more we embrace one, the more we feed the other. As a result, the people who protest their innocence the most vocally are the ones who believe in their guilt the most deeply.

I hope you can see that we can't escape our guilt through deception #1. It's what we all try to do. It's where we all go as soon as the you-know-what hits the fan. Everyone, from politicians to spiritual seekers to spiritual masters, says, "I only had the best intentions." But it doesn't work. How, then, *do* we escape our guilt? We need to head in the exact opposite direction from where we are tempted to head. We need to reverse our deceptions, starting with the top layer. That means admitting, first of all, that we had impure motives. To put this even more directly, we need to admit that we wanted to gain at someone else's expense. I realize this is very hard, but to undo the bottom layer, we need to peel off the top layer first.

Let's do this with an actual situation in our lives. Think of a situation about which you feel some guilt, some regret over what you did or how you handled it. Then say to yourself:

I was trying to gain at [name's] expense.

Say this to yourself a few times, until it really sinks in.

Saying this can feel just awful. It will probably leave you face to face with the belief that you have sinned, that you are the ego, that you are rotten to the core. It may, in other words, land you right where you didn't want to be, in the jaws of deception #2. Yet here is where you have the chance to undo that deception. You can't undo it until you expose it. As long as you deny it with deception #1, then to your conscious eyes there is nothing to undo. Now, however, you can see your belief in guilt, which was there all along. You can see the sickness, and so you have a chance to apply the remedy. So quietly affirm to yourself:

But I did not sin.

I merely failed to gain.

Again, repeat this to yourself until it really sinks in. Try to feel the liberation in these statements. All you did was make an ineffectual mistake. You sought to gain, but you failed to gain. You reached for something, but you found nothing. Let what you chose be the nothingness it really was, and let that nothingness free you from guilt. Try not to let yourself feel guilty for missing an opportunity, for such opportunities will return continually. It is the nature of time to constantly provide us with fresh chances to choose again. Try also to feel the humility in these statements. You thought you did real damage, yet that is part of the conceit of the ego. In your Father's creation, you don't have the power to do any actual damage. You were just a child playing a game. Only in the imagination of the children playing did anyone get hurt. In reality, their Father was watching over everyone involved, keeping them all safe in truth. Perhaps you think you won at this game, but that too was only in your imagination. In reality, nothing happened—you harmed no one and won nothing.

This is a much more effective medicine for our pangs of guilt than denying that we had any hurtful intent. Such denials ring hollow, even as they escape our lips. How refreshing it would be if we could just own up to the dark side of our intentions. And how liberating it would be if we could look our guilt straight in the face, and calmly negate the truth of it. We didn't do the terrible thing we thought we did. We did nothing at all. We merely failed to gain.



Robert Perry has authored, or co-authored with Allen Watson, nineteen books on A Course in Miracles. He is an internationally recognized authority on the Course, and has traveled extensively.

The Many-Faceted Diamond of *A Course in Miracles*

by Greg Mackie

There is a passage in the introduction to Lessons 181-200 that has always fascinated me. Speaking of those lessons, it says:

Each contains the whole curriculum if understood, practiced, accepted, and applied to all the seeming happenings throughout the day. One is enough. But from that one, there must be no exceptions made. And so we need to use them all and let them blend as one, as each contributes to the whole we learn.
(W-pI.rVI.In.2:2-5)

This passage, I believe, gives us a picture of how Jesus wants us to use the entire Course. It also suggests to my mind a visual metaphor for the Course: a many-faceted diamond in which each facet reflects the single light of truth in its own distinct way, each contributing to the radiant jewel that shines away the darkness of the world. In the points that follow, I will flesh out the picture I see suggested by this passage.

Each lesson contains the whole curriculum—we *could* get salvation from just one lesson

I've often heard Course students say that if you totally got any one lesson you would get the whole Course. This passage certainly supports that view: "Each [lesson] contains the whole curriculum" (2:2; all references in this article that contain only a paragraph and sentence number refer to this passage) and "One is enough" (2:3). (I believe the principle here can be applied to the whole Course, not just to Lessons 181-200.) The Course offers us "a unified thought system" (W-pI.42.7:2) in which every idea is connected with every other. Each idea implies the others, and so every idea *contains* the others—each part contains the whole. This idea that each part contains the whole is said to be basic to the way God thinks:

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.3:3)

This sentence refers to the nature of ultimate reality, but the principle it expresses also applies to the Course. And if the whole curriculum of the Course is in every part, it follows that learning any part perfectly would give us the whole curriculum. Grasping any one lesson fully would give us salvation.

But to get salvation from just one lesson, we would have to understand it, practice it, accept it, and apply it to every aspect of our lives *without exception*

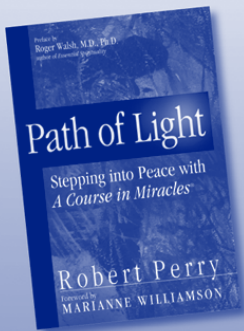
In other words, we must immerse ourselves in that one lesson so deeply that it becomes a part of our very being. It must be allowed to shine into every corner of our lives. Absolutely nothing must be hidden from its healing light; "there must be no exceptions made" (2:4). This "no exceptions" rule is one of the two basic rules of Workbook practice given in the Workbook's introduction. After telling us that "one exception held apart from true perception makes its accomplishments anywhere impossible" (W-In.5:3), it says:

Be sure that you do not decide for yourself that there are some people, situations or things to which the ideas are inapplicable. This will interfere with transfer of training.
(W-In.6:3-4)

We aren't likely to apply any single lesson to everything without exception; therefore, to help us make no exceptions, we need to use all of the lessons

Though we *could* in theory apply one lesson to everything without exception, in practice this is a daunting task. For instance, if the one and only lesson I have at my disposal is "Sickness is a defense against the truth" (Lesson 136), how does that apply to my situation if I'm getting mugged? All by itself, that sentence doesn't give me much help. It is very useful when I'm physically ill, but what good does it do me when someone's pointing a gun at my

WALKING THE PATH OF LIGHT



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head? Now, I'm sure there's a way this lesson does apply to my situation, but the connection is extremely difficult to see, which means I would be tempted to make my situation an exception. "And so we need to use them all" (2:5).

How does using all of the lessons help us to stop making exceptions? I think the answer is rooted in the Course idea that just as the separation was a single mistake that splintered into many different forms, the Holy Spirit's answer was a single correction that took many different forms (see T-26.V.3:5). From this idea, it follows that since the ego's thought system takes a variety of specific forms in our lives, we need a variety of specific *lessons* to deal with those specific forms. Indeed, practicing with "great specificity" is the other basic rule of Workbook practice given in the Workbook's introduction:

The exercises [should] be practiced with great specificity, as will be indicated. This will help you to generalize the ideas involved to every situation in which you find yourself, and to everyone and everything in it. (W-In.6:1-2)

I think that in this passage, "great specificity" means applying the lessons to our specific life situations. Having a variety of specific lessons helps us in this process. The key point I want to make here, though, is that practicing with great specificity allows us to generalize the lessons to everyone and everything. In other words, this basic rule of practice helps us to follow the other basic rule: *practicing with great specificity helps us to make no exceptions*.

This is why we need all of the lessons. Applying a variety of different lessons and practices with great specificity to a variety of different situations helps us see the relevance and universality of the Course's ideas much more effectively than applying only one lesson would do. Using many different lessons builds the connections in our minds that help to make each specific lesson more meaningful and impactful. The Course often emphasizes the importance of seeing how all its ideas fit together, as in this statement in Review I about Lessons 1-50: "We are now emphasizing the relationships among the first fifty of the ideas we have covered, and the cohesiveness of the thought system to which they are leading you" (W-pI.rI.In.6:4).

Having all of the lessons at our disposal also helps us to develop a “problem-solving repertoire” (W-pI.194.6:2): a repertoire of Course lessons and practices that enables us to counter our specific problems with practices that specifically address those problems. For instance, if my problem is fear of a future event, I might counter it with a repetition of Lesson 194, “I place the future in the hands of God.” In fact, the Course says that the twenty lessons to be reviewed in Review VI are intended to deal with specific problems; they are “direct approaches to the special blocks” (W-pI.In.181-200.2:1) that keep us from salvation.

Using a variety of lessons, then, helps us to make no exceptions. It enables us to deal with our problems very specifically using a variety of lessons, practices, and ideas. It is this that will ultimately enable us to apply what we learn to *everything*.

If we use all of the lessons, they will blend into one, and we will learn the whole curriculum

This is where everything comes together. Our problem is that while each idea contains the whole curriculum, we don’t see how this can be so. In our state of insanity, we are blind to the Course’s interconnectedness. We don’t see how the idea of forgiveness contains the idea of asking the Holy Spirit for guidance. We don’t see how the idea of being unaffected by outer happenings contains the idea of caring about our brothers. We don’t see how the idea of the world’s unreality contains the idea of having a special function in the world. So, what we must do is first learn the ideas separately, and then slowly see how they connect. As we build up this network of connections, we see more and more how each idea is connected to every other. Finally, we reach a point where we see with perfect clarity that each idea really *contains* all the rest. Every part really does contain the whole.

The very goal of the Workbook, and by extension the entire Course, is “to increase your ability to extend the ideas you will be practicing to include everything” (W-In.7:1). Our only job in this is to study the various lessons Jesus offers us and “apply [them] as you are directed to do” (W-In.8:3). If we do this, the lessons will “blend as one, as each contributes to the whole we learn” (2:5). We will learn the whole curriculum. We will find salvation.

The many-faceted diamond of *A Course in Miracles*

As I mentioned at the beginning, I think the passage we’ve just explored gives us a picture of how Jesus wants us to use the entire Course, a picture that counters the way many students use it. There is a tendency in Course circles to boil down the Course into one or two simple ideas and practices. Just choose love instead of fear. Just look at the ego with Jesus. Just turn everything over to the Holy Spirit. Just remember that you need do nothing. The idea that you could get the whole Course from one lesson is often used to support simplifications like this. If one lesson is all it takes, why bother studying all that dense verbiage? Why work so hard at practicing all those different lessons? I once had someone ask me, “Why does it take the Course hundreds of pages to say what it could have said in only one?”

I think we’ve seen the answer in our passage. Yes, we could theoretically get the entire Course from just one lesson. Yes, it is ultimately very simple. But because our minds have turned the single idea of separation into a vast and complicated ego thought system that takes a dizzying variety of forms, the author of the Course needed to give us a thought system equal to the task of undoing it. So, he gave us the Course, which communicates the single idea of salvation through a comprehensive, systematic, multifaceted teaching and program. In this teaching and program, each form of ego deception is answered with the corresponding form of truth. Jesus clearly expects us to use everything he has given us; he reminds us that we “are studying a unified thought system in which nothing is lacking that is needed, and nothing is included that is contradictory or irrelevant” (W-pI.42.7:2). We need it all. We need those hundreds of pages in order to fully embrace the message given to us on each one. Ironically, it is only through understanding, practicing, accepting, and applying the Course in all of its seeming complexity that we come to recognize its ultimate simplicity.

This is why I find it helpful to view the Course as a many-faceted diamond. The light shining into the diamond is the light of truth. This light is simple, clear, and unambiguous. The facets of the diamond are all of the different aspects of the Course: its great diversity of ideas, topics, lessons, and practices. All of these facets reflect the light of truth into our minds, but not in a uniform way. Rather, through them the light is reflected from many different angles, each giving us a distinct window into truth, each shining into a particular dark corner of our lives. But though each facet is distinct, it does not stand apart from the rest. All of the facets blend as one, each contributing to the

whole: a radiant jewel with the power to turn our gaze from the ugliness of the ego's darkness to the beauty of God's holy light.

Just as a diamond's beauty is only fully revealed by looking upon it as a whole, so it is with the Course. Boiling the Course down to one or two ideas or practices is like looking at only one or two facets of a diamond—interesting, perhaps, but far short of the vision of beauty a diamond is meant to give us. By instead letting the many-faceted diamond of the Course shine upon us in all its splendor, we will see the vision of beauty it promises us. It will reveal to us the real world; each of us will see “beyond all ugliness into beauty that will enchant you, and will never cease to cause you wonderment at its perfection” (T-17.II.2:6). And in the end, we will leave even this beatific vision behind and lose ourselves forever in the glorious light of God.



Greg Mackie is the author of How Can We Forgive Murderers? And Other Answers to Questions about 'A Course in Miracles.' He has been a student of A Course in Miracles since 1991, and a teacher for the Circle of Atonement since 1999. He writes Course Q & A's and a popular blog on the Circle of Atonement's website, and teaches the Circle's weekday Workbook class in Sedona, Arizona (along with Robert Perry). He sees his primary function as helping to develop a tradition of Course scholarship.

Confused about Level Confusion

by Robert Perry

You have probably heard the term “level confusion,” but I’m guessing that you would have difficulty in telling me what it is. The vast majority of Course students, in fact, seem to be *confused about level confusion*. This article will hopefully serve to clear that up, at least for those who read it.

Level confusion is a term that occurs only in the first two chapters of the Text (see especially T-2.IV.2-3, 2.V.1, and 2.VI.1-4), which means that everyone encounters it almost as soon as they open the book. It also means that, as a term, it does not have relevance beyond those beginning chapters. The ideas behind the term, however, definitely do.

Most students I’ve asked seem to think that level confusion refers to confusing Level One and Level Two as taught by Ken Wapnick. In this teaching, Level One is the level of Heaven or knowledge, and Level Two is the level of perception (both false perception and true perception). This, however, is Ken’s own terminology and has nothing to do with the Course’s use of the term “level confusion.”

Instead, level confusion concerns the Course’s own version of the familiar triad of body, mind, and spirit; those are the three levels referred to by the term. As conventionally understood, body, mind, and spirit are three aspects of a unified whole. And that whole can only be truly healthy if all three levels are healthy. Problems on one level will invariably affect the whole system. Therefore, we need to keep the body healthy, the mind healthy, and the spirit healthy. What could seem more sensible or wise?

From the Course’s standpoint, however, that viewpoint is an example of level confusion. Let’s look at how the Course sees the levels:

Spirit is already perfect. This perfection cannot be changed in any way. Nothing can go wrong on this level.

Mind: The mind does make mistakes, which are errors in thinking and perception. These errors seem to adversely affect all three levels. They seem to make the spirit impure, make the mind sinful, and make the body sick. But those errors have no real effect and therefore have not actually occurred.

Body: The body seems to go wrong on its own initiative, in two ways. First, it seems to get sick on its own—meaning, it gets sick for purely physical reasons. Second, it seems to motivate behavior on its own, through its drives, instincts, and reflexes. However, the whole body is nothing more than a symptom, a symptom of the mind. The body, along with its various problems, is a projection of the mind, and projections cannot introduce their own errors.

This has very practical implications. Quite simply, it tells us what to fix. It says that the only thing we need to fix is the mind’s mistaken thinking. If we do that, then the body’s errors—its sicknesses and misbehaviors—will automatically be corrected, and the spirit never needed fixing in the first place.

Let’s look at this more closely. If we have a health problem, the Course does say that it’s perfectly all right to take medicine. It adds, however, that medicine deals only with the symptom level. Therefore, “the cause remains, and will not lack effects”

(S-3.II.1:5). Healing the sickness by healing the cause—our mistaken thinking—is simply more practical. Likewise, when we have a behavior problem, the solution is not to merely force our behavior to change. The Course calls that “controlling the outcome of misthought” (T-2.VI.3:1). Instead, it says, “You must change your mind, not your behavior” (T-2.VI.3:4). Once you do that, the behavior will automatically change. Of course, just as with the bodily illness, you might want to work on the behavior directly as well, but in doing so you need to realize that you are dealing with the symptom, not the cause.

How do we change the cause, the thinking? The whole Course is about that. However, an important part of changing our mind is the realization that the mind’s errors haven’t done any real damage. They didn’t harm the spirit because it can’t be changed. They did hurt the body, but the body is not real; it’s just a shadow of the mind. So again, the mind’s errors didn’t do any real damage. Think how much easier it is to free yourself from thoughts that you recognize had no real effect, as opposed to thoughts that you believe caused permanent damage and therefore should go on your permanent record.

So, then, what *is* level confusion? The Course defines it as “the belief that what is amiss on one level can adversely affect another” (T-2.IV.2:2). Combine this with the idea that the mind is the only level on which things go amiss, and you get the notion that the mind’s mistakes cannot spill over onto other levels and become problems that need fixing *there*. The mind, therefore, is the only level that needs correcting. When you think the spirit or the body need their own correcting, you are confusing the levels.

CIRCLE MAILBOX

This article was very helpful for me (“Helen and Bill’s Joining: A Window onto the Heart of *A Course in Miracles, A Better Way* #49, March 2005). You tell the story well, and relate it masterfully to the central ethos of the Course. The diagram, too, is excellent.

In particular, I liked the way you reminded me of the way in which the Holy Spirit is continually “calling” to us, although this all may be buried in our unconscious minds.

I thought your last two paragraphs were brilliant. The idea of discovering the equivalent of Helen and Bill’s psychology department in my own life was a very powerful image for me.

Bless you and thank you for your teaching and dedication to us.

Clive Bayne

Via e-mail

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I just finished reading the April issue of *A Better Way* (#50), and I couldn’t put it down without letting you know how grateful I am to you for your writings. The stories of holy encounters reached a deep place and left me inspired. I have renewed my focus on what’s important in this life. Thank you again. You are my teachers.

Sharon Edwards

Via e-mail

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The teaching about false empathy was probably the hardest of anything in the Course for me to understand and accept, but over the years I have come to realize the truth in it. As I understand and practice it, it shifts our perception from projecting weakness and vulnerability to perceiving the intrinsic strength in the supposed “victim.” That intrinsic strength and health is Spirit. The lesson of the crucifixion was that the true Self, the Spirit, survives and transcends anything the “world” can seem to inflict.

Right now I am making music with two older people with “very serious conditions.” Instead of relating to them in terms of their physical conditions, I relate to them in terms of the music that is in them. Last Sunday one of them, Roy, accompanied me for the prelude and postlude in church. Instead of walking out during the postlude (as is customary) the congregation remained in their pews and actually applauded Roy. They were not applauding a “sick old man” but a joy-filled musician. Indeed, I believe that, whether they knew it or not, they were applauding the Holy Spirit. And I believe that experience reminded Roy of who he truly is.

My other friend is receiving radiation treatments, and she and I will be playing piano and accordion duets together. But making music together doesn't require a piano or accordion. Making music together can be any encounter (and all encounters are holy encounters) in which we remember to address ourselves to the Holy Spirit in "others."

Milli Gravel

Via e-mail

P.S. Yesterday at the supermarket checkout counter I lapsed into negative thoughts about what a mean, unpleasant face the cashier had. Then she turned and smiled an absolutely beatific smile at me. Now there's an example of the Holy Spirit at work!

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I want to share with you a holy instant that I experienced this morning. It may not sound big, but I truly felt God's perfect peace and joy, and still do some hours later.

The background: I picked up *A Course in Miracles* several months ago when my daughter was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. I had been a Course student many years ago, but gave it up to pursue the ego's goals.

This time, as you may imagine, I have surrendered to the Course, first as a means to heal my daughter, then as a means to accept my own healing and my place in the salvation of the Sonship.

During one of the Circle's tapes on healing, you (Robert) offered a prayer, part of which says:

You are the perfect child of God.

There is no gap between your mind and mine.

I pray that prayer every day as part of my meditation. Recently, Greg explained to me that everything that exists in this illusion does so through choosing separation, including animals (who, he pointed out, certainly have egos).

Finally, to the point. This morning my eight-year-old dog became frightened, probably some boom or bang I couldn't hear. She started to shiver, as she always does when she is scared. Normally, I cannot comfort her when she gets like this. The best I can do is give her a tranquilizer. This morning, I knelt down next to her, put my forehead to hers and my hand on her back. I prayed silently, *You are the perfect, peaceful child of God. There is no gap between your mind and mine.* I repeated this three times, during which time, I could feel her body calming down. By the time I was finished, she was totally calm. In fact, she was so recovered that she wolfed down a treat that I had placed in front of her right before she started to tremble.

Well, that's my story. It may sound insignificant, but I must tell you that my experience of it was, and still is, profound. There certainly is no order of difficulty in miracles, is there?

Jo Chandler

Via e-mail

CIRCLE NEWS

THE CIRCLE MOVES TO A NEW HOME IN SEDONA

On Wednesday, June 8, the Circle of Atonement moved to its new location in Sedona, a spacious house purchased by Robert Perry and Nicola Harvey. This is the first place the Circle has operated from that isn't rented from someone else.

The Circle has been looking for a new location for about a year, based on guidance we received last year. Our guidance was to find a place that could be the Circle's home as well as Robert and Nicola's family home. This was especially difficult, for it meant the house had to be quite large, and given Sedona's real estate prices, this at times seemed impossible. However, this spring, the impossible happened. We came upon a beautiful home in Sedona that was being offered at well under the appraised value, and that fit our needs, as well as our guidance, perfectly.

Because of the move, the Circle's regular classes have also been relocated. The weekday morning Workbook class is now held at Course Community House, 2044 Upper Red Rock Loop Rd. in Sedona. Robert's Tuesday night topical class is now held in the chapel at the Sedona Creative Life Center, 333 Schnebly Hill Rd. in Sedona. (The Circle's mailing address remains the same: PO Box 4238, West Sedona, AZ 86340.)

THE CIRCLE WELCOMES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PAUL NELSON



Paul Nelson

We are pleased to announce that Paul Nelson recently accepted the position of Executive Director for the Circle of Atonement and has relocated to Sedona to begin his work.

This is a major step forward for us—we've never had an Executive Director before. We originally put out a call for an Office Manager to replace Dwight Bartlett, who was moving to Oregon. However, when Paul Nelson responded, we realized that this was an opportunity for us to acquire much more than an Office Manager. Paul's background in the corporate world, along with his experience in the nonprofit arena, made him an ideal person to not only pull our office into shape, but also to get our message out into the world. We had strong guidance that he was the person we were looking for, and now that he's here, we feel that a whole range of things are possible that were never possible before.

Paul brings a wealth of experience in several areas critical to our future, including experience in business administration, marketing, and fundraising. Among his assignments, Paul has served as a senior marketing executive with National Medical Enterprises, as corporate director of marketing for a national provider of brain injury rehab services, and as director of marketing for the startup of an eighty-bed hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Paul also has more than ten years of experience in marketing communications and fundraising, working primarily with socially responsible organizations such as colleges, hospitals, and human service agencies. Among his clients are Defenders of Wildlife, Guideposts Ministries, Girl Scouts USA, Dexter College, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Boston Museum of Science, Show Up for Democracy, and Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

In 1993 Paul founded Keepers of the Lore, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and served as Executive Director for seven years. Keepers of the Lore sponsored an ongoing series of educational and cultural events bringing together teachers, authors, elders, and performers from all around the world to share their wisdom-lore. Among its activities, the group sponsored a national conference and the annual Joseph Campbell Festival of Myth, Folklore & Story—a popular multicultural performing arts festival named in honor of the late scholar of world mythology.

Paul holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Massachusetts and a M.Ed. in Clinical Psychology from Harvard Graduate School of Education. (He also took classes at the Harvard Divinity School.) He also holds diplomas from Montserrat College of Art and U.S. Navy School of Photography. Paul is a long-term student of transpersonal psychology and a practitioner of vipassana meditation.

While he only recently came to the Course, Paul says, "I have always felt a close personal relationship with Jesus, but struggled with the mainstream interpretations of his life and work. I have primarily been drawn to the writings of people like Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, and the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages. When I came across the Course, I finally found an interpretation that was both sophisticated and practical enough to bring Jesus' original message back to our contemporary society in a way that would really help people connect with the teachings of Jesus while changing their lives for the better. I feel truly blessed to be here at the Circle of Atonement and to be able to help bring *A Course of Miracles* into the lives of more people, especially at this difficult time in world history. I remain very grateful for the blessings in my life and for those holy instants I've been granted to help make a difference."

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ANDRÉ GENDRON AND RICK BAKER JOIN THE CIRCLE'S BOARD



André Gendron



Rick Baker

We are delighted to welcome two new board members, André Gendron and Rick Baker, onto the Circle of Atonement's Board of Directors.

André Gendron relocated to Sedona from Canada in 1998 to help the Circle with its mission. Since then, he has volunteered huge amounts of time in a number of capacities, most recently in doing the marketing for Circle Publishing. His tremendous commitment and work in this area has led to record sales of Circle Publishing's first official book, *Path of Light: Stepping into Peace with 'A Course in Miracles.'* Andre has been an unofficial board member for a long time and we

are very happy to finally make it official.

Rick Baker has been playing the role of the Circle's organizational advisor for the last three years. His counsel has played a major role in steering the Circle in the new directions it has taken. Rick has somehow managed the delicate feat of helping us adopt sound business practices and reach out more into the world, while at the same time helping us preserve our guidance-based foundation.

Rick and André are both dedicated to the Circle and its mission, and will bring valuable business expertise to the Board.

CIRCLE PUBLISHING TO RELEASE REVISED AND EXPANDED COURSE GLOSSARY

Circle Publishing is proud to announce the upcoming release of a newly revised and expanded version of Robert Perry's popular Course glossary. Its new title is *Glossary of Terms from 'A Course in Miracles': Nearly 200 Definitions to Help You Take an Active Role in Your Study of the Course*.

A Course in Miracles uses language in a unique way, filling familiar terms with new meaning. This makes its language initially confusing, yet eventually transformative. This glossary clears up the confusion and helps the reader experience the full effect of the Course's language and teaching. Intended for both new and experienced students and for individual and group study.

Benefits of this glossary include the following:

1. This new edition includes twenty-seven new terms that were not covered in the first edition.
2. Many old definitions have been revised and expanded.
3. We have given the book a new layout, making it easier to consult.
4. For many definitions, Robert gives root, conventional, and Christian meanings, in addition to ACIM meanings.

