



A BETTER WAY

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A Course in Miracles and The Secret

by Greg Mackie

You, and only you, are the creator of your own reality. The world is at your beck and call—your wish is its command. Whatever you think and feel, you will draw to you from the world; this is the law of attraction. Therefore, all you need to do is use this law of attraction to manifest the things you want from the world, and you will be happy.

This, in a nutshell, is the title “secret” of *The Secret*, a popular video and book that was recently featured on *Oprah*. Much like the recent hit *What the Bleep Do We Know?*, the video features a collection of teachers, authors, philosophers, and scientists, all describing this “Secret” and how to use it in your own life. Also like *What the Bleep?* it has found a following among Course students. One student who visits a number of online Course discussion groups recently told me that in his estimation, about half of the people in those groups had a favorable view of *The Secret*. Clearly, there are many who regard it as compatible with the Course.

But is it? To answer this question, we need to take off the tinted glasses of our surrounding culture and look with fresh eyes. Within the New Age/alternative spiritual culture in which the Course community resides—a culture that, in turn, is part of a larger culture that glorifies conspicuous consumption—things like *The Secret* have a certain appeal. It sounds so exciting to be able to manifest all those things you always wanted. Being “empowered” in this way seems to have a ring of spiritual truth. But we have to realize that the Course, though currently immersed in this culture, is not influenced by it. The Course has its own agenda for us. So, if the Course is our path, our question must be: Regardless of whatever feelings *The Secret* might arouse in me, is it truly compatible with the path the Course itself is calling me to walk?

After watching the video, my answer is an emphatic no. True, it shares the Course’s view that our thoughts attract our life circumstances to us. There are also other minor similarities—for instance, the idea that our thoughts cause our feelings. However, *The Secret* applies the “law of attraction” (which is hardly a secret; metaphysical teachers and motivational speakers have been talking about it for years) in a way so diametrically opposed to the Course’s goals that, in my opinion, mixing it with the Course will muddy the waters and slow our progress on the Course’s path.

Calling *The Secret* “diametrically opposed” to the Course is a strong statement, and there will be more strong statements in this article, so let me offer a little disclaimer at the outset. I am not condemning the people involved in making *The Secret*. They are all, of course, holy Sons of God, and I have no doubt that they are sincere, good-hearted people who are offering something they believe is of great value. In this article, I’m simply giving my honest opinion of the ideas presented in *The Secret*, because a large number of Course students have recently asked for the Circle’s opinion of those ideas. I will be pretty blunt, but only

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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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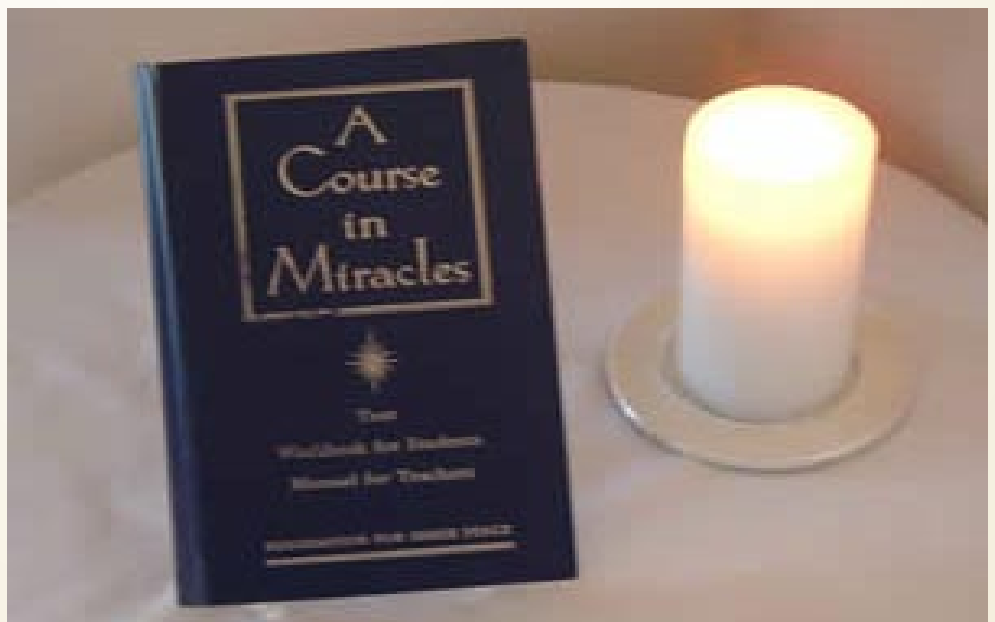
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because I believe these ideas are so contrary to the Course that they need to be addressed directly. (If you haven't seen *The Secret*, my descriptions may sound like caricature, but unfortunately they are all too accurate.) My goal is simply to present the thought systems of *The Secret* and the Course side by side, to help Course students discern the difference and thus walk their chosen path more effectively. I encourage you to read this article with this goal in mind.

The thought system of *The Secret*—it's all about you

What struck me most about *The Secret* was the complete absence of anything that is truly greater than *you*. It is a hymn to what Robert has recently called the “unfettered self”—a self that doesn't answer to God, to others, to anything except its own desires. We can see this in all of the following points, which form a succinct summary of the thought system of *The Secret*.

You are God; you create your own reality

One of the commentators on the video, Esther Hicks, sums up this aspect of *The Secret* perfectly: “You are that which you call God,” and “You are the only one who creates your reality.” You are an energy field in a universe of energy, in complete control of your life and destiny. You answer to nothing and no one.

The world is your genie; your wish is its command

This metaphor is one *The Secret* itself uses. It equates us with Aladdin, who rubbed his magic lamp and produced a genie who said what all good genies say: “Your wish is my command.” This genie is the world, and it doesn't just give us three wishes: It gives us *unlimited* wishes. Joe Vitale, another of the commentators, offers another metaphor: The universe is a “catalog” from which we order whatever we want. Whatever the metaphor used, though, the basic idea is the same: The world exists to serve the needs of the god that is you.

Your job is to command the universe to give you the things you want

Given the scenario described in the last two points, the next point logically follows: What you need to do is put that genie to work, to start “placing your order with the universe,” as Vitale says. If you will just do this—through positive thinking, through cultivating good feelings, through vividly visualizing what you desire, etc.—“the universe will start to re-arrange itself to make it happen for you.”

Presumably one *could* use aspects of this system (especially techniques like gratitude) for spiritual goals, but every example given in *The Secret*, without exception, depicts using the law of attraction to achieve worldly goals. Jack Canfield (of *Chicken Soup for the Soul* fame) describes how he set a goal of making one hundred thousand dollars in a year, visualizing this goal by (among other things) placing a faux one hundred thousand dollar bill on his bedroom ceiling, where he would see it when he woke up each morning. He says, “My life has become magical, what everyone dreams about,” and then describes his 4.5 million dollar mansion, his “wife to die for,” and his vacations all over the world (as we see snapshots of all these things). There's also an account of a man who visualized and finally attained his goal of dating three different women each week (though eventually he tired of this and decided to go for one woman). Then there are accounts of people who used the Secret to recover from major health issues, including severe injuries from a plane crash and breast cancer. I did find these more appealing—you'd have to have a heart of stone not to be happy that these people's suffering was alleviated. But even here, I felt a disturbing undertone of “I used this magical power to serve my needs.”

You have no function that transcends your self-interest; you're here to serve yourself

Virtually absent from all this is the idea of a larger mission that transcends personal goals. Neale Donald Walsh, the well-known author of the *Conversations with God* series, makes this lack of mission explicit in his contribution to *The Secret*. He says we're all looking for a “blackboard” on which God has written the mission He wants us to fulfill, but no such blackboard exists, because He has no purpose or mission for your

life. Instead, “Your purpose is what you say it is. Your mission is what you give yourself.” Now, of course, you could choose to give yourself a goal that transcends personal needs. Many people, even many who don’t believe in God, do just that. But *you* determine it, and as we’ve seen, self-transcending goals are not evident in *The Secret*.

A subcategory of this lack of a self-transcending mission is lack of any real notion of helping others—again, it is all about serving personal goals. I’m not saying that the people in *The Secret* are personally selfish. I’m sure many of them are quite generous and do see themselves as serving a goal larger than their immediate needs. It’s simply that none of the examples given in *The Secret* reflect this.

In fact, it seems that the main way of helping others in *The Secret* (indeed, the main reason for the video itself) is to give the Secret to others—we help others by teaching them how to get what they want to meet their personal needs, just as we do. I have to give the makers of *The Secret* credit here for their good intentions; if one believes that the Secret is the key to everything, then it is a kind and altruistic thing to want to give it away. That being said, it’s an altruism that amounts to teaching others how to be self-centered, which if you think about it is a strange brand of altruism.

And the makers of *The Secret* do regard the Secret as the key to everything, the overarching explanation for all that transpires in the world. For example, one of the commentators, Jack Proctor, makes the stunning statement that the reason one percent of the population controls ninety percent of the wealth is simply because those unfortunate ninety-nine percent don’t know the Secret. Though I’m sure Proctor doesn’t intend this, this idea would seem to be the proverbial “license to steal.” If I gain at someone else’s expense, the problem isn’t my selfish attack on her; rather, the problem is that she doesn’t know the Secret. The implications of this are truly staggering. This idea can be used to provide a “spiritual” rationale for oppression and injustice of all kinds. You could say the reason for slavery in the American South was that the masters knew the Secret and the slaves didn’t. You could say the reason for the Holocaust was that the Nazis knew the Secret and the Jews didn’t. The oppressors are in tune with the laws of the universe; the oppressed just don’t get it. With one wave of a magic wand, earthly injustice becomes cosmic justice. Is this a world any of us wants to live in?

The only solution to injustice offered in *The Secret* is to democratize the Secret, to give it to everyone. The basic idea behind this seems to be a version of Adam Smith’s famous economic theory, which says that if people just pursue their self-interest, the “invisible hand” of the market will somehow make sure everyone ultimately benefits. In the new version, if people just take hold of the Secret and use it to serve their self-interest, the invisible hand of the universe will somehow make sure that everyone benefits. Looking at our world today, it appears that the invisible hand is quite invisible indeed.

Serving yourself and getting the things you want will make you happy

The end result of getting all this stuff from your genie is that you will “feel good” (the words that end *The Secret*). Feeling good in any way you can is what happiness is all about; as Canfield says, “If it ain’t fun, don’t do it.” Feeling good is, in fact, both means and end. You train yourself to feel good by imagining that all the good things you want in your life are already there—this is the means. This imagining activates the law of attraction, which brings all those good things into your life, so you’ll feel good—this is the end. Life consists of doing this over and over again so you’ll feel better and better as you hone your skills and thus get better and better things. Joe Vitale puts it this way: “When you turn that fantasy [the thing you want] into a fact, you’re in the position to build bigger and better fantasies.” And the bigger and better the fantasies, the happier you’ll be.

The thought system of *A Course in Miracles*—it’s all about God

It’s about you as well, of course, but it’s about you as a creation and extension of God, not as a petty king who is the sole master of his tiny domain, answerable to nothing and no one. The entire journey of the Course is a journey away from the unfettered self of *The Secret*—a self that is not truly unfettered, but is actually chained to its own insatiable desires—and toward the loving Father Who is our only Source, our only

desire, our only goal, our only joy, our only Love. The following points, which follow from this foundation, are counterpoints to the thought system of *The Secret*.

You are not God; you are the loving creation of a loving Father

In the Course, you are not God—you *have* a God Who is the sole Creator of all reality, including your own. The desire to play God and create our own reality is the very desire that began the separation, the core belief of the ego, the sole source of all our misery. The Course wants to show us how much misery our futile attempts to create our own reality have brought us, and slowly but surely bring us to the realization that “You are as God created you, not what you made of yourself” (W-pl.93.7:1). This realization that we are *not* really in control of our life and destiny is the best news we could hear, because it means our misery has no real cause. Our loving Father remains our Cause, and our loving reality as He created us is wholly unchanged. Awakening to our God-given eternal reality, not persisting in the delusion that we author reality, is the goal of the Course.

The world is not a genie at your command; it is a vehicle for God’s plan for salvation

Of course, the ego tells you that the world is that genie in *The Secret*: It exists to serve the needs of the god that is you—to give you what you want. It is there to provide all the goodies you need to sustain the false self you made: “pills, money, ‘protective’ clothing, influence, prestige, being liked, knowing the ‘right’ people, and an endless list of forms of nothingness that you endow with magical powers” (W-pl.50.1:3). But seeing ourselves as Aladdin commanding the world-genie to indulge our every whim has disastrous consequences. Again, what it really gives us is misery. The self-centeredness inherent in this view of ourselves is the source of all our loneliness and guilt. And the never-ending search for things outside ourselves to satisfy our desires puts us on the wearying hamster wheel of seeking but never finding.

According to the Course, the world is not a genie at our command. The purpose of life is not to choose what we want from the “infinite field of unfolding possibility,” to use Esther Hicks’s phrase in *The Secret*. In the Holy Spirit’s eyes, the real purpose of the world is to serve God’s plan for salvation *from* the endless search for idols that will never satisfy. This “is the only purpose that gives this world, and the long journey through this world, whatever meaning lies in them” (T-19.IV(D).21:4). This is the only purpose the Course would have us see in the world.

Your job is not to command the universe to give you the things you want; it is to forget all you think you want and seek only God

As I mentioned, in *The Secret* your job is to put that genie to work, to command him to get the specific things you want from the catalog of the universe. The author of the Course, however, has a dim view of asking for specific things. This view is consistent throughout the Course, but here I will focus on material from before and after the dictation of the Course itself.

Before the scribing of the Course began, Helen Schucman had an experience in which she used her psychic ability to manifest a gold pin. Here is the story, from Ken Wapnick’s *Absence from Felicity*:

When he [Bill Thetford] was away on vacation in the Virgin Islands I sent him a “mental message” in which I described a pin I would like him to bring me, a gold pin with a Florentine finish. I happened to notice that it was almost ten o’clock in the morning when the thought occurred to me. Bill handed me the pin on his return. He had been walking down a shopping street around ten o’clock after his arrival with a friend who also knew me. They were passing a jewelry store. Bill did not want to go in, but his friend practically insisted. The friend also picked out a Florentine gold pin, urging Bill to buy it for me and tell him it was just what I wanted.

(Absence from Felicity, 1st ed., p. 119)

This is much like the manifestation stories told with giddy excitement in *The Secret*—wow, look what Helen attracted to her! It actually reminds me of a scene in *The Secret* where a woman gazes longingly at

a necklace, and then her partner gives it to her. However, this kind of thing was actually a barrier to what Jesus was trying to accomplish through Helen. It was part of what she called her “magic phase,” something she needed to outgrow before she could scribe the Course. This “magic phase” concluded with her well-known scroll vision, where she saw a scroll which gave her the ability to read the past and future, but she chose instead to focus on the center panel, which said simply, “God is.” When she made that choice, she heard the Voice say to her, with immense gratitude and relief: “Thank you. You made it that time. Thank you” (*Absence from Felicity*, p. 125) Only then did the Course begin coming through her. Think about that. If she had stuck with using her psychic abilities to manifest gold pins and read the past and future, we would not have the Course today.

Several years after the Course was complete, Helen scribed *The Song of Prayer*, which has an extended discussion of praying for specifics. Prayer per se is not mentioned in *The Secret*, but this discussion is totally relevant because Jesus makes the point that simply *desiring* something is a prayer (see S-1.III.6). Jesus’ message in *The Song of Prayer* is that praying for specific worldly things is nothing but a way of imprisoning ourselves by pushing our only real goal—God—away from us:

Prayers for things, for status, for human love, for external “gifts” of any kind, are always made to set up jailers and to hide from guilt. These things are used for goals that substitute for God, and therefore distort the purpose of prayer....The goal of God is lost in the quest for lesser goals of any kind. (S-1.III.6:1-2, 5)

To pray truly, then, we need to set aside those lesser goals and put all of our focus on the goal of God. Letting go of our desire for specific earthly things instead of trying to attract them to us is the *real* “secret”:

The secret of true prayer is to forget the things you think you need....In prayer you overlook your specific needs as you see them, and let them go into God’s Hands. There they become your gifts to Him, for they tell Him that you would have no gods before Him; no Love but His. What could His answer be but your remembrance of Him? (S-1.I.4:1, 3-5)

In short, we are to ask only for God, and He answers by giving us Himself. Note the stark contrast between the “secret of true prayer” and the Secret. With the Secret, you attract the things you think you need, in order to serve the god that is you. With the secret of true prayer, you *forget* the things you think you need, in order to experience the infinite Love of the God Who is your true Father. The two “secrets” could hardly be more different. And doesn’t the secret of true prayer deliver us something far more satisfying? As Lesson 258 puts it:

Shall we continue to allow God’s grace to shine in unawareness, while the toys and trinkets of the world are sought instead? God is our only goal, our only Love. We have no aim but to remember Him. (W-pII.258.1:3-5)

Your life is not about serving your self-interest; you have a function in God’s plan for salvation—selflessly extending miracles to all your brothers

In the Course’s view there really is a “blackboard” on which God has written a mission for you. This mission is what the Course calls our special function in God’s plan for salvation, a plan that is not complete until everyone “finds his special function, and fulfills the part assigned to him” (T-25.VI.4:3). Your life is not really about serving your personal interests—in fact, the Course says “you have no personal interests” (W-pl.25.3:2). Your life is really about serving God’s plan for salvation. Until you choose to do this, you are “the slave of time and human destiny” (W-pII.317.1:3) The only way out of this bondage is to willingly turn your life over to the One Who knows what your real function is.

Our willingness to do this opens the door to the Course’s way of meeting our specific needs. That way is to ask the Holy Spirit for what *He* wants to give us. The main thing He wants to give us, of course, is true perception, but He does give us earthly things as well. The big difference between His provision and the

manifestation program of *The Secret* is that He gives us things to serve *His* agenda, not ours. Once we commit to our special function in God's plan for salvation, He will provide everything we need—not to gratify ourselves, but to accomplish our special function. That is the essence of this well-known quote from the Text:

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. Not one seeming difficulty but will melt away before you reach it. You need take thought for nothing, careless of everything except the only purpose that you would fulfill. (T-20.IV.8:4-8)

The heart of God's plan and our role in it is not manifesting things we want for ourselves, but selfless service to others—extending miracles. The Course instructs us to be “truly helpful” (T-2.V(A).18:2); the *Psychotherapy* supplement tells us that “nothing in the world is holier than helping one who asks for help” (P-2.V.4:2). And we don't help people by giving them a magical “Secret” so they can get all the goodies they want. On the contrary, in material that preceded the scribing of *The Song of Prayer*, Jesus told Helen that when you pray for others, one of the things you want to do is help them purify their own asking: “You can, and indeed you must, help [the one you pray for] by offering your love and support that his asking be holy and his true need recognized” (*Absence from Felicity*, p. 464). Giving them their own genie will set our brothers back; extending to them the recognition that the only goal worth shooting for is God will truly help them.

Prayer for others, of course, is only one form our selfless service to others can take. It can take the form of teaching. It can take the form of psychotherapy (the subject of the *Psychotherapy* supplement). Most often, it takes the form of simple human kindness, as when Helen and Bill helped a distraught young woman named Charlotte put her life back together (see *Absence from Felicity*, pp. 120-124). The key, though, is that the content behind our help (if we are really doing our part in God's plan for salvation) is the recognition that the ones we help are *not* desperately lacking little creatures who need a genie to bring worldly things to them. Instead, the content is the recognition that they are holy Sons of God, free of any need except the need for God, a need that is already eternally fulfilled. Rather than giving them the “Secret” to maintaining the false self they think they are, we give them the “secret of true prayer”: We help them forget the things they think they need, so they can discover Who they *really* are. We help them to receive God's answer: the remembrance of Him.

Serving yourself and getting the things you think you want will not make you happy; only fulfilling your function in God's plan for salvation and remembering your loving Father will make you happy

Does the Course want us to feel good? Yes, of course; in fact, it wants us to experience a radiant joy unlike any we have ever experienced in this world. But we'll never feel this kind of joy if our focus is on getting juicy stuff from the world. The Course tells us many times that in our current deluded state, we don't even know the difference between pain and joy, and therefore, “You...are likely to decide that you need precisely what would hurt you most” (T-4.II.5:4). So, as we reach for “feeling good” in worldly terms, we're reaching for pain without knowing it—exactly what the ego wants us to do. That genie thus has a dark agenda, like in those stories where you get your wishes granted but the wishes have terrible unintended consequences. The ultimate outcome of getting our self-centered wishes granted is loneliness, guilt, and the realization that no matter how many worldly wishes are granted, they'll never make us happy.

Fulfilling our role in God's plan for salvation is the only way to be happy. And the happiness we experience in doing God's Will teaches everyone that their happiness, too, lies not in building bigger and better fantasies, but in fulfilling *their* function in that same plan:

God's Will for you is perfect happiness. Why should you choose to go against His Will? The part

that He has saved for you to take in working out His plan is given you that you might be restored to what He wills. This part is as essential to His plan as to your happiness. Your joy must be complete to let His plan be understood by those to whom He sends you. They will see their function in your shining face, and hear God calling to them in your happy laugh. (W-pl.100.2:1-6)

Let us follow One Who knows the way

Given what we've seen, why are some Course students attracted to *The Secret*? I can only guess that it's because of the reasons I referred to at the beginning: superficial similarities with the Course, looked upon through the tinted glasses of a culture that glorifies the unfettered self. Yet when looked upon without those glasses, *The Secret* is about as far from the Course as you can get. It presents nothing less than the ego's plan for salvation, a plan that says, "If some external circumstance or event were changed, you would be saved" (W-pl.71.2:2). Yes, *The Secret* seems to be about changing the mind, but you only change your mind as a means of changing external circumstances. Just command your genie to acquire for you the things you want from the world, and you'll be happy.

The Secret presents this as if it were some mind-blowing new paradigm. But it's really just another version of the same old paradigm that has ruled the world from the beginning: the paradigm of egocentric self-interest. The following quote from the *Psychotherapy* supplement, which speaks of the patient's misguided goal for psychotherapy, expresses perfectly the underlying rationale of *The Secret*:

The patient hopes to learn how to get the changes he wants without changing his self-concept to any significant extent. He hopes, in fact, to stabilize it sufficiently to include within it the magical powers he seeks in psychotherapy. [Through making use of these magical powers] He wants to make the vulnerable invulnerable and the finite limitless. The self he sees is his god, and he seeks only to serve it better. (P-2.In.3:3-6)

The Secret, as a kind of self-help "therapy," fits this description to a tee. It says, in effect: "You are an autonomous ego that needs (and deserves!) to have the world provide for you. So far, this hasn't worked very well—your life has been disappointing, because the world has been very stingy. But you don't have to change that basic self-concept that says you're an ego that needs to be provided for. You just need to access the *magical power* of the Secret. With this power, you can tap into a world that is an 'infinite field of unfolding possibility' and turn that unsatisfying, cruelly limited life of yours into a glorious masterpiece of your own creation. Thus will you celebrate and serve the god that is you."

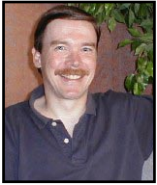
As Course students, is this what we really want? Why wander off the path we have chosen and lose ourselves in something that has a central message totally contrary to the Course, just because it has a very few things in common with the Course? To use an intentionally over-the-top analogy to make my point, that's like watching an Al-Qaeda terrorist training video because, like the Course, it stresses the importance of doing God's Will. Instead of using the law of attraction to attract misery disguised in a "feel good" form, why not let the Course lead us to what the Urtext calls the "irresistible attraction": our home in God?

I know this article has been pretty strong medicine, so I want to end on a note of assurance. All of us, myself most definitely included, wander off the path of the Course in one way or another. Such wandering is probably inevitable, given the intense investment we have in our egos. We can lose ourselves in all sorts of thorny byways. But this is just a mistake, not a sin, and the Course promises us that the mistake is temporary. We will always find our way back. So, my plea is simply this: Let's do everything we can to put our trust in the path Jesus has given us. Let's affirm our commitment to God's plan for salvation, the only one that can make us happy. To help firm up this commitment, I leave you with this prayer from Lesson 324, which I encourage you to say to God right now:

Father, You are the One Who gave the plan for my salvation to me. You have set the way I am to go, the role to take, and every step in my appointed path. I cannot lose the way. I can but choose to wander off a while, and then return. Your loving Voice will always call me back, and guide my feet aright. My brothers all can follow in the way I lead them. Yet I merely follow in the way to

You, as You direct me and would have me go.

So let us follow One Who knows the way. We need not tarry, and we cannot stray except an instant from His loving Hand. We walk together, for we follow Him. And it is He Who makes the ending sure, and guarantees a safe returning home. (W-pII.324.1:1-2:4)



E-mail your comments to the author at: greg@circleofa.org

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.

Circle Mailbox

I've just now read Sally McKirgan's moving description and poem of her experience in 1987. ("The Greatest Gift" in *A Better Way* #61) It so much reminds me of many, many similar stories I read in the magazine 'Share International' which you quite likely have heard of already. I think that it is quite possible that Sally looked into the eyes of Jesus himself... To conclude I would also like to emphasise that I really love your website and visit it often.

Yours sincerely,
Elisabeth Reinhard

What We've Been Reading & Watching

Robert:

Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary by Marcus Borg. Borg is my favorite Jesus scholar and this is the first major new book he has written about Jesus in twenty years. He seemingly covers the full spectrum of issues about the historical Jesus, yet manages to write to a popular audience. You can pick this up without any background in New Testament scholarship. Highly recommended.

Integral Spirituality: A Startling New Role for Religion in the Modern and Postmodern World by Ken Wilber. It is very hard to describe this remarkable book. Renowned philosopher Ken Wilber is attempting to synthesize every aspect of human knowledge and endeavor—including science, arts, morals, spirituality, and various kinds of personal development—into a single system. There is much here that I don't agree with (especially what he calls Integral post-metaphysics), but I am still enthused by the attempt to grapple with the thorny issues that he does. You may be seeing some articles inspired by discussions in this book on our website in the future.

The Death of the Mythic God: The Rise of Evolutionary Spirituality by Jim Marion. Jim Marion, Christian mystic, former monk, and public policy lawyer in Washington, D.C., claims that the God of traditional religion is dead because that God was always a product of the mythic level of development, a level that small children pass through and outgrow, and that humanity itself has to a large extent outgrown. But Marion says that this is not the death of the real God, but the rise of higher forms of spirituality that reflect more mature levels of development.

Greg:

Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary by Marcus Borg. In this fascinating book, renowned Jesus scholar Marcus Borg presents a comprehensive portrait of the Jesus of history, based on a lifetime of research. There is much in this portrait that reminds me of the Jesus of the Course—for instance, Borg’s contention that when Jesus called us to “repent,” he was calling us to “a new way of seeing and thinking,” a way centered in God.

Dee (webmaster):

blink The Power of Thinking Without Thinking by Malcolm Gladwell. This book about those choices that we make in the blink of an eye. It discusses both the successes and the failures of those choices. In a particularly interesting segment, he discusses taking a test designed to uncover some of our unconscious attitudes. The test revealed him to have biases against black people. This surprised Malcolm because his mother is Jamaican. This led him to conclude that our unconscious attitudes may be utterly incompatible with our stated conscious values. As a Course student, it helps explain why my conscious belief that what the Course is saying is true does not also automatically bring my unconscious attitudes in line with the Course.

Big Fish. William Bloom (Billy Crudup) tries to learn more about his dying father, Edward (Albert Finney), by piecing together the facts out of the various fantastic tales and legends of epic proportions he’s been told over the years. The movie was a real treat to watch.

CIRCLE NEWS

Materials recently posted on our website

Many of you know this, but for those who don’t, we post new material on the web site every week. Here is a list of recently posted articles and blog entries:

How Literally Do We Take the Course? by Robert Perry. It is common to read the Course as mostly metaphorical. Yet is that how the Course expects us to read it? [Read more.](#)

Feelings in A Course in Miracles by Robert Perry. The Course’s perspective on feelings is quite different from popular psychological views in our culture. This article attempts to clarify the differences. [Read more.](#)

The Strange Taboo Against Disagreeing by Robert Perry. Robert addresses the point of view, common in spiritual circles, which says that it is never OK to express disagreement. [Read more.](#)

Bringing conviction a little nearer and **A dream of attack** are Greg Mackie’s most recent blog entries. [Read more.](#)

How Do We Find a Teacher? by Robert Perry. If we are in fact meant to have a human teacher of *A Course in Miracles*, how do we find this person? [Read more.](#)

Practicing Nonjudgment: 129 Ideas to Repeat by Robert Perry. Robert has taken a long list of Course quotes about nonjudgment and turned each one into a first person statement to repeat as a Workbook-like practice. [Read more.](#)

Course Meets World Commentary by Greg Mackie. We have introduced a new section on our web site in which Greg posts a short weekly commentary relating *A Course in Miracles* to a topic “in the news”. This month he discussed “The Holiest Spot on Earth”, “The Meaning of Repentance”, “Jesus Loves Osama”, “The Resurrection of Sigmund Freud” and “Happiness Through Mind Training”. [Read more.](#)

Question and Answers by Robert Perry and Greg Mackie. Robert and Greg posted answers to several questions this month. “The World an Illusion?”, “Discerning the Holy Spirit’s Guidance?”, “Is There Only One Ego?” and “What is the Atonement?” [Read more.](#)

Valerie Monk and **Patricia Besada** of *Milagros en Red* in Argentina have translated quite a few articles for us. Visit our [Spanish Articles](#) page to read them. We are very grateful to Valerie and Patricia for providing us with these translations.