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need your help.  
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details.**

This uncomfortable predicament has spawned a profusion of perspectives on interpreting the Course. The following is a partial list of ones that I have heard or read:

- We need to affirm the validity of all interpretations. There is no one “right” interpretation. The Course means what it means to *you*.
- “The only authoritative voice for *A Course In Miracles* meaning is each person’s own connection to the Voice for God, the Holy Spirit, within their minds” (stated on the homepage of an ACIM website).
- The Course’s surface meaning is largely metaphorical, often saying the opposite of its real, underlying meaning. We need to reinterpret its statements—decode its metaphor—in light of its nondualistic metaphysics.
- Since there’s only one truth, we need to interpret the Course in a way that makes it consistent with the one truth expressed by all spiritual teachings.
- The right interpretation comes from listening to the right authority. The Course means whatever a particular someone who is “in touch” says it means—someone enlightened, in communication with higher beings, or close to the original story of the Course.
- Since other students and teachers seem to know what they are talking about, I will interpret the Course according to the things I hear repeatedly from them.
- The Course is meant to make no sense on the surface level. That way, it will tie up your brain in unsolvable riddles, so that it can then bypass your conscious mind and speak to a deeper part of you.
- Rigidly interpreting the Course according to the literal meaning of its words is fundamentalism. Even the Bible says “the letter killeth.”
- We *shouldn’t* interpret the Course. We should just feel it, know it, and live it.
- The Course is written on different levels in order to address people at different levels of development. Depending on the



## A BETTER WAY

Interpretation and the Future of the  
Course

by Robert Perry

*Though I do not mention boomeritis in this article, this is a sequel of sorts to the boomeritis discussion we have been having the last few months in the pages of this newsletter. It’s my concept of the antidote. For that reason, I would very much like to continue the discussion we have been having. Please write me about your thoughts on and reactions to this article. I’ll print and respond to them in the next issue.*

*Interpretation.* That thorny word. We *Course in Miracles* students tend to approach the Course as a revealed scripture brought to us from a pristine realm beyond the human. And yet, ironically, before we can understand it and put it to work in our lives, it has to pass through the very human filter of interpretation. This can feel like obtaining the purest mountain spring water on earth, and then pouring it into a dirty cup before drinking it.

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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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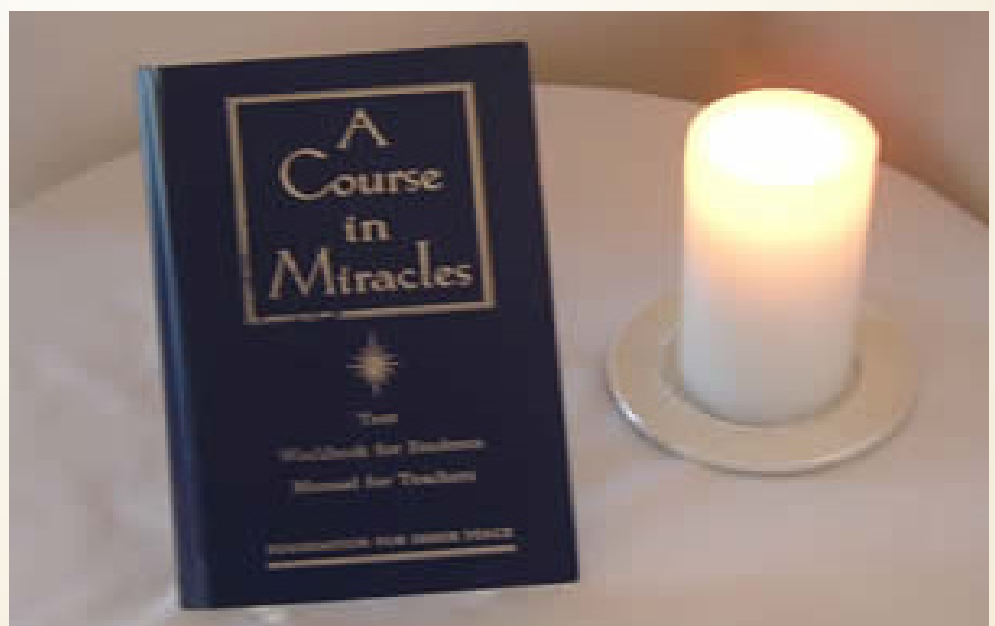
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level on which you are reading it at the time, you can legitimately take away very different meanings.

- Yes, we will have different interpretations, but we shouldn't discuss them or make them important. Only the ego thinks such differences *make* a difference. And only the ego talks about them. Taken seriously, interpretations just cause separation.
- When we interpret, we are interpreting *words*, and words are just symbols of symbols, twice removed from reality. We need to stop emphasizing words and go beyond them to experience.
- We can't really ever know what the Course means. Why emphasize interpretation when it is doomed from the start?

No wonder the Course community is so splintered! Each of the perspectives I list above represents a starting point for one's whole relationship with the Course. As a result, we may have the same book (although these days, even that's in question), but we relate to it in such vastly different ways.

There is something else I see in the list above. I see a general shying away from interpretation as conventionally understood. Normally, you have a block of words on a page, and you simply ask, "What do those words say? What was the author trying to convey with them?" To me, all the perspectives I list above seem to subtly avoid that more usual, straightforward approach to interpretation. They either say that there is another way to approach interpretation—a deeper or more personal way—or they say that we should downplay interpretation altogether.

Personally, I think downplaying interpretation represents a kind of profound denial. I say that because whatever the Course is *in itself*, interpretation utterly determines what it is *for us*. Interpretation, and only interpretation, takes the Course from being a series of strange markings on paper to being something meaningful and something alive for us. If, for instance, we interpret the Course as mainly being about hating the world (which some have done), that's what it will become for us. Indeed, if (to use a ludicrous example) we were to interpret it as being about strangling kittens, that's what it would become for us. Whatever the Course is for us, it was made that by how we interpreted it.

So rather than trying to shy away in embarrassment from interpretation, we need to face it full on. Once we do, I think the first thing we need to ask is, "What did *Jesus* think about interpretation?" After all, he is the author. It is *his* course. Thankfully, he did not leave us without indicators of what his approach is. Indeed, there are so many that there isn't space here for a truly adequate treatment. However, the following quotes, drawn from the Course as well as the Urtext (the Course's original typescript), reveal clearly the general outlines of his approach:

The reason why this [section] is so short, despite its extreme importance, is because it is not symbolic. This means that it is not open to more than one interpretation. (Urtext)

You have surely begun to realize that this is a very practical course, and one that means exactly what it says. (T-8.IX.8:1)

I have made every effort to use words which are *almost* impossible to distort, but man is very inventive when it comes to twisting symbols around. (Urtext version of T-3.I.3:11)

This course is perfectly clear. If you do not see it clearly, it is because you are interpreting against it. (T-11.VI.3:1-2)

I...have made it clear... (T-2.II.1:2) I have also made it clear... (T-3.V.1:3) I have made it perfectly clear... (T-6.I. 5:1) I have been careful to clarify... (T-1.VII.5:4)

I meant it literally (T-7.III.1:7). The word is used quite literally here (Urtext). The sense is very literal (T-10.V.1:6). Think not that this is merely allegorical (T-18.VIII.1:4).

*Be very careful* in interpreting this. (Urtext)

Do not read this hastily or wrongly. (M-29.7:3)

Just re-read them and their truth will come to you (Urtext). Refer to point 1 and re-read *now* (Urtext). Re-read the actual quote (Urtext). Read these lessons carefully (T-4.In.3:11).

The section on psychic energy should be re-read very carefully, because it is particularly likely to be

misinterpreted until this section is complete. (Urtext)

I could include many more passages along these same lines, but from just this brief list, a clear pattern emerges. We can summarize this pattern in four points:

1. The Course is not meant to be “open to more than one interpretation.” Jesus has a particular meaning that he is trying to convey.
2. He is trying to express that meaning in the clearest way he can, making “every effort to use words which are *almost* impossible to distort.”
3. The lack of clarity, then, doesn’t come from *him*, but from *us*. We are prone to “twisting” his words, “interpreting against” them, almost willfully misinterpreting what he says.
4. To correct for this, we must be willing to “*be very careful* in interpreting.” We must resist the temptation to “read this hastily or wrongly,” and instead read and “re-read very carefully.”

In short, we have to counteract our tendency to turn Jesus’ clarity into our confusion *by approaching the interpretive act with the utmost care*.

This entire picture is contained in a particularly interesting passage in which Jesus was reviewing Helen and Bill’s mistaken thoughts over the course of a day. As part of that review, here is what he said:

[Bill] *was* discourteous when he told you that *he* wanted to keep the original copy of the notes, having decided to have them Xeroxed on his *own* will, and then justifying it by a very slight misinterpretation of what I said about “useful for others.” In fact, if he will re-read the actual quote, he will see that it *really* means “useful for *him*.” *You* had interpreted that way, and frankly this was pretty clear to me at the time. But this sort of thing happens all the time. (Urtext)

Bill had decided on his own that he (not Helen) needed to keep the original copy of Helen’s Course dictation (“the notes”), because he needed to photocopy it. This was actually a discourtesy to Helen, but Bill justified it by misinterpreting Jesus’ comment about the notes being “useful for others.” To correct his misinterpretation, Jesus suggests that Bill “re-read the actual quote” and see what “it *really* means.” In fact, “useful for others” actually meant “useful for Bill.” Helen had interpreted it correctly, and Jesus himself was “frankly...pretty clear” on what he meant by it (is Jesus actually using sarcasm here?). The irony in this story is that Jesus really meant that Bill was supposed to apply the notes to *himself*, rather than be discourteous to Helen by seizing them for his photocopying crusade. And this is not an isolated incident. Rather, it is a typical example of a general tendency. As Jesus says in concluding, “But this sort of thing happens all the time.”

What a parable of Course interpretation! There is some fundamental discourtesy in us that wants to misinterpret the Course in the way this discourtesy wants—basically, to justify itself. Instead, we need to go back and “re-read the actual quote,” so that we can see what “it *really* means.” For there *is* something it really means; it does not have multiple valid interpretations. Its real interpretation would be perfectly clear to a less biased observer (such as Helen in this case), because it was “frankly...pretty clear” to the author.

Here we have no less than a new vision of Course interpretation. To be quite honest, it doesn’t fit with any of those perspectives I listed above. I regret to say that it goes against the majority of what I see students doing with the Course. Where we want to expand the range of what a passage might mean, affirming all possibilities, Jesus wants to collapse that range down to one. Where we want to bypass the surface meaning and have the real meaning unlocked by inner guidance, personal preference, or nondualistic metaphysics, he sees no need for this, as his words were already clear and plain. Where we want to use his words loosely as our initial takeoff point, liberally mixing in our own experience, learning, and inspiration, he wants to drag us back to those words and have us read and re-read, cranking out a careful interpretation the old-fashioned way.

And yet, however different is his approach, its benefits are almost beyond belief. Let me go through those benefits as I see them:

First, this really can be done. If we truly carefully read and interpret, we can come very close to hitting the bull’s-eye of what Jesus really meant. Yes, interpretation is a tricky and subjective business. I don’t think it’s ever perfect. Yet any given Course passage is surrounded by a whole host of clues about the meaning of that passage. And to the extent that we are willing to fully submit our interpretations to the verdict of those clues, to that same extent our interpretations can get increasingly more accurate. In the end, I believe that we can get extremely clear about what Jesus meant.



Second, as a result of this, we can to a significant degree actually contact Jesus' thought, rather than our own expectations. This, to me, is what is exciting about good Course interpretation. My own thoughts and expectations are honestly pretty boring. Yet when I pay close attention to what is on the page of the Course, I contact a thought that is not my own, that I never would have generated on my own, because it frankly towers above my own. That is exciting.

Third, when we contact Jesus' thought, what we find is immeasurably more rich, original, thought-provoking, practical, and transformative than what our own expectations would project onto that passage. The feeling I often get from students is that we don't want to be confined to the literal meaning of the Course. That would be thin, dull, restrictive. But if we can treat its words as evocative symbols that enigmatically point to a myriad of possible meanings, then we can have a real richness of meaning. This may be true of other texts, but my experience of the Course could not be more opposite. When I stick to Jesus' actual words, when I drag myself back to read, reread, and carefully interpret, I find an endless gold mine of original wisdom, which sees me exactly as I am now, yet which then lifts my mind into new perspectives, perspectives that have never been voiced anywhere else.

Fourth, in this scenario, we have only one final authority for how we understand the Course, the authority of what Jesus put there on the page. In the current scenario, we have countless authorities. We have the authority of our own feelings and inner guidance, the authority of what works for us or fits with our experience. We have the authority of Course lore—things that everyone “knows” about the Course—and the authority of general spiritual wisdom. We have the authority of particular teachers who claim enlightenment, or channel Jesus, or talk to higher beings, or were present at the Course's beginning. In my opinion, we have too many chiefs, too many cooks. As a result, the real authority, Jesus himself, has to take his place in the crowd, as one tiny voice among many. Wouldn't it be nice to say to all these other authorities, whatever their status, “Thank you very much for that. Now let's test it against what's on the page”?

Fifth, this way would actually allow for broad agreement among us about the Course. Wouldn't that be wonderful? I believe that we are all hurting over the distressing lack of agreement about what the Course says and what the Course is. We may never actually feel so alone as when we are in a room full of other Course students. Yet there is a potential basis for broad and substantial agreement: We all have the same words on the page in front of us (with minor exceptions), and those words, read very carefully, really do point to one particular meaning. Wouldn't it be great if we collectively had our eyes on that page, so that we could collectively see—and agree on—that one meaning?

Sixth, identifying that one meaning, to an ever more full and accurate degree, could become a community-wide collaboration. The fact is that understanding the Course is far too big a job for any one person. We really need to pool our talents in a project that would span generations. Such collaboration would be possible because we would all be playing by the same rules—*his* rules. In this collaboration, countless individuals would contribute different pieces of a gigantic puzzle. No one's interpretations would be privileged just because they were *that* person's interpretations. Everyone's contributions would stand or fall by the simple yardstick of what's on the page. Can you imagine the Course community pervaded by this collegial, cooperative spirit? Isn't this vision of everyone contributing to an ongoing “collaborative venture” more attractive than the fragmented collection of little kingdoms that we have now?

I said earlier that one's approach to interpretation is the starting point for one's whole relationship with the Course. The same thing is true of *Jesus'* approach to interpretation. It could become a whole new starting point for us, individually and collectively. It could become the beginning of a whole new future for the Course. Everything we did with the Course, all the effects it had on us, all the effects it had on the world through us, could be different. *Everything* could be different.

Unfortunately, in its first thirty years, the Course has started off on a very different track. And once momentum has built down a certain track, it is not easy to switch tracks. Could our loose-knit Course community ever jump over to this new track? The choice, as always, is up to us.



E-mail your comments to the author at: [robert@circleofa.org](mailto:robert@circleofa.org)

**Robert Perry.** *He is the author or co-author of twenty books and booklets, including Path of Light: Stepping into Peace with 'A Course in Miracles'.*

## Responses to Boomeritis Questionnaire

*In the last issue of A Better Way, we included a “Miracles Boomeritis Questionnaire,” a little test that people could take to get a rough idea of just how infected they are with boomeritis. The questionnaires were scored on the following scale:*

*0 -10: boomeritis-free*

*11-124: mild case*

*125-248: severe case*

*We invited people to send their comments and scores, which Robert would compile and add into an overall average. (The average includes the scores of people who did not want their scores published.) The following is what we received.*

From Amy Speech:

I just completed the questionnaire in *A Better Way*, and, at your request, wanted to share my scores and realizations with you in the hopes they will be helpful.

A little disclaimer: I tried to be honest with myself in this, but was aware of trying to guess at what the “right” answer would be, and I know I carried within me some sense of wanting to please the teacher (that would be you!).

That considered, my total score ended up being 71. I’m not sure how accurate that really is, but I’m sure of one thing: My ideas about what the Course means and what my responsibility is to it are changing.

For example: I put stars next to two statements (45: The Course is a self-study course, etc.; and 50: Looking for my ego is a negative focus), because I strongly disagree with them *now*, but would definitely have agreed just a few months ago. I also jotted a note next to 53 (the reason for doing the Course is to change my inner state, not to contribute to the lives of others). The note says: “changing as we speak.” That is, this is another concept that was until recently a big part of my understanding, but I am moving away from it.

When you first mentioned miracles boomeritis and asked us to comment on it, my first thought was that it didn’t have anything to do with me. Then, when you published others’ responses, and commented on them, I asked myself: Why is this important to Robert? What is he concerned about? And because I respect your work and am grateful for its impact on my understanding of the Course, I realized that the simple fact that this matters to you was a good enough reason to look at it more closely.

So I spent a Saturday afternoon trying to formulate my own response to your questions about miracles boomeritis by doing a free-write to these questions: Do I believe in a universal truth and an ultimate authority, what is my responsibility to that truth and authority, and am I misunderstanding and misapplying the Course to serve my personal agenda?

The answers I came up with all had a common theme that boiled down to this: My basic understanding about my responsibility as a Course student is undergoing a transformation. This isn’t about getting to a state of inner peace so I can go around being blissful in the midst of all the suffering. (What’s the point of achieving a joyful state, anyway, if there is no one to play with when you get there?!) There *is* a universal truth and an ultimate authority (thank God!), they are lovingly laid out for me in this Course, and my responsibility to them is total.

But also this: If I hadn’t originally seen the Course as a self-study course whose main purpose was my own happiness, I wouldn’t have been so powerfully attracted to it. I had to go through that phase of my understanding before I could get to where I am now—at what feels like a new, true beginning—this place of really wanting to know and fulfill my part in God’s plan, and of being able to at least *imagine* a time when that will be the *only* thing I want. (So amazing, even to think of my life in these terms, honestly.)

And although I suspect I would have eventually gotten here without the Circle of Atonement and the Circle Course Community, I believe it would have taken me much, much longer, with a lot more stops and starts and detours along the way.

The other thing I think I am beginning to get is why you are so concerned about this idea of miracles boomeritis: If a bunch of us are wandering around calling ourselves Course students, and we are coming across in our communities and cultures and society as self-absorbed, flakey, and out-of-touch (all of which I would call myself in

recent years), if we are withdrawing from the suffering of our loved ones and the world's problems in the name of the Course, then we not only don't come close to succeeding at all the Course asks us to do, we actually serve as barriers to it. We *add* to the problem, in ways that could be devastating, if we aren't aware of them.

I personally regret many of the things I've said to friends about the Course in the past (all in the name of wanting to share it because I love it) that were absolute betrayals of what I'm learning now!

As always, Robert, my thanks to you and Greg and everyone at the Circle of Atonement. Anything I can do to help you in this work, I'm happy to!

So...do I get an A, or what? ;)

*You get an A+! Your honesty and your willingness are truly an inspiration.*

— Robert

...

From Doug Fogle:

Have a question regarding boomeritis in the recent issue of *A Better Way*. My question is about question #2, the area within parenthesis ("and usually drop the 'the' before the 'Holy Spirit'"). My intentional prayer is always addressed to God (actually Father is the term I normally use). However at other times I may ask for help such as "Holy Spirit help me see this differently" or "Holy Spirit set straight my mind." Since all desire is prayer then would not my desire to see this differently be interpreted as prayer to the Holy Spirit? But then isn't all prayer directed internally, i.e., to change my own mind? Is the issue of dropping "the" indicative of making the Holy Spirit First Cause? I think I'm missing the point here.

Scored below 10 on the questionnaire. I attribute this *solely* to being a student of the Circle of Atonement. If I was to turn the clock back four or more years ago I would probably have scored in the triple digits. In almost every question I could hear the explanation of either you, Greg, or Allen leading to a different view a view that makes a lot more sense of it all. Thank you.

*The only significance I see in dropping the "the" in front of the Holy Spirit is, as I see it, a desire to get away from traditional terminology and its overtones of traditional authority. It's as if we are saying, "I won't focus on God much, and if I do, I won't call Him 'Father.' Instead, I'll focus on the Holy Spirit, but I won't call Him 'the' Holy Spirit, because that makes Him sound like that Christian one, with all the authoritarian connotations that are part of that." I think it's part of an effort to get away from authority-laden traditional Persons of the Trinity and traditional terms, which is why it smacks of boomeritis to me.*

— Robert

...

From Steven Lanigan:

My score was a "9," which I see is desirable.

After (earlier, uncritical) flirtations in my two and a half years with the Course, with influences such as Gary Renard's first book; with consistently unsatisfying, clarification-seeking e-mail chats with acquaintances who declare themselves passionate followers of Ken Wapnick's interpretations...and with my mostly "rote reading, no discussion," (and dying out, attrition-wise) *study group's* constant (magic talismans/Eckhart Tolle/*The Secret*/"It's all 'good,' so let's don't 'judge'!") proselytizing to chronically confused, soon-disappearing Course newcomers....I believe that my "score" (*then*—while fearful of "discriminating")—would have been dramatically different.

And I credit that "9" almost solely to the Circle's weekly articles, and archives, that I've eagerly pored over this last year—to y'all's consistent "Well, that (common idea) 'sounds' good, but, hey, let's see what the *Course* says about that."

And I thank you so very much.

From Marcella Morris:

My score was a 41. I have to say to you that I strongly support your teaching of the concept of boomeritis, though my score was not that great. I know I have a lot to learn but I am always grateful to have such generous teachers in you and Greg.

I just want to say that I know I have a lot to learn in terms of really understanding what the Course teaches, but without a doubt I know one thing is true. Our behavior towards each other really does matter. God wants us to be good to each other...it's just something I know and it's hard to explain how I know it. Still, it keeps me going. I am so thankful this is an idea that you weave into your teachings consistently.

• • •

From Ronald Smith:

Here is my boomeritis score: 53.

Thank you for this. It has brought things into my awareness *now* that might have remained painfully buried for a long time. For this, as in all things, I am truly grateful!

God blesses you, and all those whose lives you touch, Robert.

• • •

From MJG:

I scored a 35 on your quiz, and most of my challenges were all in one area...so I know just what to focus on...thank you for the quiz—it was very helpful!

• • •

From Joan Morson:

My score for the questionnaire was 59. Very low, I know, but I've been an avid reader of the Circle's many publications over the years and I guess much of it has sunk in.

• • •

*Other scores:*

Ken Obermeyer: 10

Charlie Record: 14

Dee Doyle: 1

**Average score of all respondents: 30 (mild case of boomeritis)**



### More Reader Responses to “A Conversation with Readers about Miracles Boomeritis”

*Three issues ago in A Better Way, I [Robert] wrote an article entitled “Miracles Boomeritis.” Boomeritis is a term coined by Integral philosopher Ken Wilber to describe an intellectual virus that he sees spreading through academia, the humanities, liberal politics, and “every form of religion and spirituality in today’s world.” Boomeritis starts with the idea that “Viewpoints other than mine have validity,” goes from there to “Since all viewpoints are valid, there is no absolute truth,” and ends up with “Since there is no absolute truth, nothing can impose its truth on me. Nobody tells me what to do!” I claimed that the influence of boomeritis is pervasive among students of A Course in Miracles and then asked to have a conversation with readers, asking in particular for their thoughts on the following questions:*

*Is there such a thing as boomeritis? What are your thoughts and feelings about it? Should we try to distinguish the Course from boomeritis? Is that a useful exercise? Is boomeritis compatible with the Course? Do you think that you have been influenced by it, that you are a carrier? What do you think we should do about the whole thing? Please write and let me know. And we will take it from there.*

*I received a number of responses, and printed them (with my replies) in the last two issues of A Better Way. What follows are more responses I received to that conversation, with some replies (including one from Greg).*

— Robert

...

From Gerald Emerald:

When I read your April 2008 newsletter and the responses to it, I felt more stirred up than I have in a long while! Almost certainly it is because the issue dovetails with some of what I have been thinking for several years. However, by writing about it, you put it in a more articulate, coherent framework than I had managed. Got it out in the open, so to speak. Thank you—and Ken Wilbur! (I’m halfway through a second reading of *Integral Spirituality*.)

Of course ACIM students are affected by “boomeritis.” How could they avoid it when it is so pervasive in our culture? After reading the newsletter, my first thought was that it might be helpful to present the roots of the boomeritis phenomenon for those who may doubt its existence and prevalence. This brings in a cognitive element to what can all too easily become a denial trip stuck at the emotional level....

“Boomeritis” is a phenomenon which arose right after WWII. It emerged in the US and is largely an American movement because the US grew up with a built-in pioneer/frontier spirit. Unlike other major nations with long histories of tradition to inhibit their populations, the US is fertile ground for new psycho-social trends. World War II provided a singular impetus which helped facilitate a change from modernism to postmodernism in much of our society. For the first time women entered the work force in large numbers. Though many went back to more traditional “homebody” routines after the war, the die was cast, and women became more a force with which to be reckoned.

The war led to rapid technological advances and the GI Bill. This had at least two major effects: (1) For the first time in history mass education became the norm. (2) Technological improvements brought increased leisure and financial prosperity, giving large numbers of people a sense of having a measure of control over their lives for the first time ever. Life seemed to offer more freedom to more people than ever before. It was a heady time, and people such as Ayn Rand led our society away from the old sense of community in the direction of extreme individualism. “Boomeritis” describes the results of these movements over several decades. We may have to please our boss and perhaps our spouse, but beyond that “I” am the only authority in my life, so don’t tell me what to think, say, or do! Even religion lost a great deal of its former ability to tell people what to believe and how to live.... Cultural relativ-

ism became the norm for large numbers of people, especially the better educated who could no longer subscribe to the old beliefs and practices and who could not envision a higher reality.

I would like to add a couple of titles to the list of books cited by Margaret Stuart and Mary Benton as indicative of postmodern anti-intellectualism: *The Closing of the American Mind* by Alan Bloom and a very recent publication, *The Dumbest Generation* by Professor Mark Bauerlein of Emory University.

Yes, boomeritis is alive and well, a virus that has infected virtually everyone in our society to a degree, and that does *not* exclude Course students! Denial is no inoculation against the phenomenon; awareness is the antidote! Dissociation merely pushes boomeritis into the repressed or shadow side of the psyche from where it continues to haunt us. The only cure is to recognize its existence in oneself, become aware of its insidious pervasiveness, own whatever “boomeritis” lurks in us, and ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse us. Not always as easy as it sounds, perhaps, but it does work!

That, of course, does not answer the problem of how to overcome boomeritis in Course circles. You state a belief that the problem of readiness for the Course might be resolved if it were stripped of its association with boomeritis. But how do you accomplish that when the problem is an individual one involving those great tools of the ego, denial and rationalization? It seems to be the old adage at work: “You can lead a horse to water but can’t make him drink.” As we all know, readiness cannot be forced. Perhaps just bringing the issue to light is what will start the ball rolling, give Spirit an arena in which to work....

Charmaine and I both enjoy your thought provoking articles. Keep up the good work.

• • •

From Ken Obermeyer:

I’m playing catch up on my reading and have just read through all the articles you’ve published recently on boomeritis. I’d like to weigh in on this topic if only to encourage you to keep on keeping on with your “speaking out.”

Now, let’s answer a question you ask in your first article on boomeritis with a quote from the Course. You ask, “Is boomeritis compatible with the Course?” Here is how Jesus answers that question in the Workbook. He leaves no room for boomeritis.

In Lesson 152, paragraphs 3-5, Jesus says:

Salvation is the recognition that 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.

This is the simplest of distinctions, yet the most obscure. But not because it is a difficult distinction to perceive. It is concealed behind a vast array of choices that do not appear to be entirely your own. And thus the truth appears to have some aspects that belie consistency, but do not seem to be but contradictions introduced by you.

As God created you, you must remain unchangeable, with transitory states by definition false. And that includes all shifts in feeling, alterations in conditions of the body and the mind; in all awareness and in all response. This is the all-inclusiveness which sets the truth apart from falsehood, and the false kept separate from the truth, as what it is.

If Jesus’ statement doesn’t put the final nail in the coffin that boomeritis is *not* compatible with the Course, what will?

When we confuse our interpretations, viewpoints, beliefs, or perceptions with Truth, we set ourselves up for confusion and conflict, and open ourselves to being infected with boomeritis. Since when does perception (interpretation) *necessarily* equal Truth? To me, this “automatic equating,” a symptom of boomeritis, is the problem. We equate our perception, our interpretation, our viewpoint with Truth. If we *do* equate our interpretation with the Truth, without checking in with Mission Control, then to quote Edgar Mitchell from Apollo 13, “Houston, we have a problem”....

To me, the issue is simple. It's a given that I'm going to interpret what Jesus teaches in the Course. What I have to do is let Jesus teach me about Truth rather than my twisting what Jesus teaches to harmonize with my preconceived ideas about Truth.

I let Jesus teach me by approaching the Course with an open mind, ready and willing to let go of my preconceived ideas about the nature of Truth. This allows Jesus to fill my empty bowl with the Absolute Truth he's teaching.

But if I approach the Course with a bowl already filled with preconceived ideas that I value more than what Jesus has to say, then I'm going to filter his teachings through these ideas. I'll then interpret the Course to match up to what I want it to be teaching....

I, for one, would prefer to sit at his feet and not question what he's saying or try to twist his words into something they aren't meant to say. How many times does Jesus, in some way, tell us his Course means exactly what it says? If he says that often, why would any student or teacher *not* take his teachings at face value? If we don't, aren't we saying, albeit unconsciously, that Jesus doesn't really mean what he appears to be saying? And by twisting his teachings or to constantly change them to metaphoric statements, are we saying we know Truth better than he does? It doesn't make sense to me to do that if I'm the one dreaming and he's the awakened one....

It shouldn't surprise us that the Course community has boomeritis. Should it surprise us the Course is already going through the same kind of "splintering into factions" that took place within Christianity and other religions? Today we have some three hundred to four hundred denominations of Christianity. So what's new when the Course goes through this? We're not ego-free students and teachers of the Course. All we can do is approach the Course with as open a mind as possible and allow *it* to teach us without our fighting it, attempting to revamp its meaning, etc.

So, Robert, at the end of your last article, you say, "I want to know what my part is. He needs my voice, for an unheard message will not save the world." I answer you with this: Keep on keeping on. Let your voice be heard, even if it does conflict with other interpretations. Spread your understanding and as you do, do what you do so well—keep one eye focused on what the Course teaches.

A football coach wrote a book that danced around this main admonition: *All you can do is all you can do, but all you can do is enough*. So do all you can do, and let that be enough.

...

From MJG:

I've been an intermittent student of Ken Wilber's writings since the early 80s and a Course student since the mid-80s. I've been enjoying the ongoing discussions on boomeritis.

Three years ago I read Wilber's book by that title and was certain he was describing for me what I'd spent a long time struggling to name. To discover the application of it to Course students' misapprehension of Course teaching is like watching a puzzle piece slide into place. Thank *you*!

I'm most certainly a Boomer, and finding my way to the Course was a blessing and a remedy for the culturally induced spiritual nausea of the 80s. Boomer and Yuppie culture had this "Recovering Catholic" in a black hole.

*Then*, I had to actually look at the Course teaching and apply it to myself...what a shock...I discovered I knew *nothing* about the ego, and could only spend years dedicated to informing and discerning and healing the split in my own mind. No matter how I tried, I could not make it mean what I wanted it to mean....and that drove me nuts. No "Wiggle Room" to label or judgmentally react to the Yuppies, Boomers or any one else. It was all *on* me, not "All About Me." (A point not often enough stated is the specialness of making the Course as "a path" into something Special.)

It's a misuse of developmental and transpersonal psychology to be "judgmental" of narcissism, but also a misuse of "skillful means" to forego judgment of narcissistic behaviors.

In the 1950s, my grandmother's interpretation of faith was far more culturally limited than current pluralism, but she got one thing right. Correct bad behavior, but show the error as a mistake to correct, so the children can learn and grow without guilt. Judge the "sin never the sinner."

Boomeritis in the culture and boomeritis in the Course share the same root—not enough wise grannies who can discern and yet not blame, judge and be judgmental! Teachers are most needed to teach people *how* to think, to show the very process of thinking and the cultural framework that holds the thoughts...without that we are in the boomeritis darkness where *what* people think is considered as overly important, even when they've yet to do any genu-

ine discerning. We are required to treat the offering as if it has real merit...as if all opinions are equally valid, just because each is entitled to have one's own.

Thank you for sharing what my grandmother would have called your *good mind* with your fellow travelers. Please keep this topic as ongoing discussion.

...

From Diane Judge:

I continue to read and reread *A Better Way*, to great benefit.

I was so impressed with the boomeritis article and the symposium that followed and, like so many readers, had no problem envisioning its clear effects on others. However, I had second thoughts about it recently after considering Greg's admonition that we students consider how boomeritis effects our own lives as Course students.

Confession: I haven't been at all enthusiastic about Greg's proposition that we need a *Miracles* church, and yet, for years I've "used" my ancestral Catholic Church to fill in the spiritual and community gaps I experience as an ACIM student.

Although I wandered from the Church in the mid-70s, in later years I've been perfectly at home accompanying my elderly parents to Mass, soaking up everything that coincides with Course teaching, listening with a trained ear to gospels and homilies, loving and giving in to the music and ceremony, "taking what I need and leaving the rest." Mass hours, spent in prayer and celebration with my mother as her life winds down, are precious and nourishing. The Holy Week Tridium binds me with my own past and that of my faithful forebears for hundreds of years and actually carries me back to the time of Moses. Attending a Catholic funeral, I confront death and rejoice in the shared belief in resurrection.

So often I mentally thank the priests and nuns who lovingly imparted on me a living faith and heritage. Even more often I thank and bless you far away at COA who so wondrously interpret ACIM.

My thoughts and experience with my local study group, however, are less than wondrous.

To any priest or highly principled Catholic, I'm not a tribute to that faith, for I pick and choose among its tenets, "acting as if" while keeping big (are they dark?) secrets. So, to the best of my ability, I prioritize ACIM study and do my best to heed its Author's recommendations, warnings, and commands. I do take His Word for things literally and value COA's interpretations. Time in Church is a "time out" and a "time in" to pause, reflect, meditate, process, and join with others.

I don't think my ACIM study is contaminated by boomeritis, but I wonder about the compromises made with the other faith, my mother faith. It doesn't feel like a conflict now while my mother is alive and while there are virtually no local, regional supports. However, this has been worth examining and sharing. Thank you.

I will watch and work and listen for the call, and when it comes, I hope to say, as in the hymn I sang at Mass yesterday, and as Robert suggested for Open Mind Meditation, "Here I am, Lord."

*Response from Greg: I appreciate your thoughts, Diane. I do want to clarify one thing: I do not believe that we need a "Miracles church." Robert and I both believe that we need to develop an ACIM **tradition**, but we see this as a loose-knit, decentralized tradition that takes many forms: ACIM churches, teaching centers, study groups, scholars, one-to-one teacher-pupil relationships, Course-based psychotherapists, healers, and more. We don't envision one big Church with a formal structure or hierarchy that dictates what the tradition should be; rather this tradition would be made up of people who have freely joined in the single goal of following the Course's path as the author intended.*

— Greg

...

From Joyce Bunton:

Just getting around to reading *A Better Way* #76, as I was in hospital suffering heart failure—I had fallen out of love with the "world" and quite frankly just wanted to go home. I must have changed my mind as I'm seeming-

ly manifesting away here with the aid of medication.

What struck me about your last sentence in your message—“He needs my voice, for an unheard message will not save the world”—was that it seems that you need to say something so that others will hear it. I understand that sentence quite differently. I understand that I need to listen to my own voice so that I might hear it. Or, I need to open my ears to the Voice for God so that I will realize that I am already “saved.” There is no world to be saved. I am not an erudite scholar of anything, but I am a lover of God and the entire Sonship. When I first picked up ACIM almost thirty years ago I was so delighted to read that the world was mad, or born out of a mad idea. It resonated with the Truth within me. It wasn’t something I had read or been told by another boomer. In fact, for most of my life I have been quite baffled by my peers’ need to blame everything externally (not that I haven’t joined in from time to time). There is nothing outside my belief system. When I’m totally at Peace, even in this world, I experience a Peace which is not of this world. I don’t need a brain or a body for that. My lack of ability to use my brain during my recent heart episode (lack of oxygen, which is required for what we call life) did not detract from my Peace.

The way I see things is that boomeritis is a case of mistaken identity born out of a need to prove individuality. This is exactly what this Course is training us to recognize as the cause of all of our problems, i.e., the making of this world which we are perceiving. If we just do what the Course asks us to do, without trying to interpret it or give it our own slant, then we will eventually understand what the Course is teaching us. It takes courage to give up everything you’ve heard and been conditioned to believe is true, but this is what the Course asks us to do. It asks us to look at what we think, and then forgive our thoughts. It asks us to forgive the thoughts of others—not the actions. The actions are simply the result of the thoughts. As we forgive others we emphasize that Peace is our goal.

I’m not suggesting that folks need to do the Course all at once or indeed that they will understand it immediately, but in order to get to where the Course wants to lead us, we have to *just do it*. Regardless of what I or anyone else thinks, the Course has a function and because of its source, it cannot fail. It doesn’t need my interference, just my cooperation. If I step back and let Holy Spirit lead the way, I will know what to do and what to say, and to whom. And if I think later that I’ve made a mistake, then I can forgive myself—I’m only ever talking to myself.

Thank you for listening.

*Thank you for your response, Joyce. You mentioned the line I quoted, “An unheard message will not save the world,” and gave an alternative interpretation of it. I wanted to respond to that, because, actually, the original context of that line makes its meaning unequivocal. The very next sentence says the following: “Thanks be to you who heard, for you become the messenger who brings His Voice with you, and lets It echo round and round the world” (W-pI.123.6:1). So yes, we need to hear that message ourselves, but once we do, we need to bring it with us and let it echo around the world.*

— Robert

## RECENT WEBSITE POSTINGS

Here are some of the articles we have recently posted on our website:

**The World as a Dream** by Robert Perry. [Read more.](#)

**Course Meets World Commentary** by Greg Mackie. This month Greg has posted a commentary relating *A Course in Miracles* to a topic “in the news”: “Jill Bolte Taylor: A Stroke of Insight?” [Read more.](#)

**Questions and Answers** by Robert Perry and Greg Mackie. Robert and Greg posted answers to two questions this month: “How can my judgments be real if my mind is factually blank?” and “Do we really manifest *all* of our life events, as Lesson 152 seems to suggest?” [Read more.](#)



## CIRCLE NEWS

In the past several months, the Circle has hit a significant drop in donations. As a result, we first mailed a [letter](#) to 700 supporters, in which we shared openly our financial condition and asked for help. The responses, which are still coming in, have been amazing, and deeply touching. More recently, we posted an appeal on the homepage of our website.

You can read the original letter by clicking on the link above. The letter on the homepage is included below. To all who have given, we extend our most heartfelt gratitude. If you haven't, please take a moment and consider prayerfully what your part might be.

Dear Friend,

If you are someone who values our website, we need to let you know that, along with many other non-profit organizations, the Circle has experienced a dramatic drop in donations this year.

We are currently facing the prospect of cutting the hours of our webmaster and writing staff, which will obviously affect this website. We have sent out a [letter to our closest supporters](#) and their response has been truly amazing. But we still have a ways to go. Therefore, we are asking everyone who benefits from the Circle's work and cares about its welfare to give as generously as they can.

There are thousands who visit this website regularly, people whose names we may not even know. Currently, each month we average over 15,000 visitor sessions, accessing nearly 60,000 pages. We now have over 1,000 articles and commentaries, and are always adding more. One of our readers recently called it "the premier Course study site in the world."

Our guidance has been to rely on the caring of those who benefit from our work, who are really part of us even if we don't know their names. If you fit that description, please consider giving. **If all who benefit from this website gave just \$10, we would easily reach our goal.** Of course, we can't expect that all will give, so we hope that those who do will give [\\$20](#), [\\$50](#), or [more](#), as their situations allow. Please take a moment to ask within and see what your part in this is meant to be.

Thank you,



Robert Perry  
Founder, Circle of Atonement

P.S. Aside from giving online, you can also give by phone or mail:

1. **Phone** us toll-free at: **888-357-7520**  
Our international supporters can use: 928-282-0790

2. Send a **check** to: Circle of Atonement  
P.O. Box 4238  
Sedona, AZ 86340

*Thank you for your support!*