



CONTENTS

What Is the Soul?	
by Robert Perry	1
Circle Mailbox	8
Circle News	12



A BETTER WAY

What Is the Soul?

by Robert Perry

The soul is getting a lot of attention these days. We have such popular books as *Care of the Soul* (Thomas Moore), *Journey of Souls* (Michael Newton), and of course the ubiquitous *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. A friend of mine, Barbara Harris Whitfield, has a new book titled *The Natural Soul* coming out next month.

But what is the soul? The word is used in a bewildering variety of ways. However, I think most of us use the word to refer to an individual spiritual nature we possess that is immortal and separable from the body. This spiritual entity is suspended in between Heaven and earth. It is not the body or the earthly personality, but it is also not the pure, unqualified spirit that many of us associate with Heaven. Rather, it is on a journey in the spaces in between, so to speak, a journey through the earth toward an ultimate destiny. In Christianity, it has fallen but can be redeemed and spend eternity in Heaven. In alternative spirituality, it has gone through some sort of fall (even if the word isn't used) and now is going through an educational process, learning lessons on its way to reaching a perfected state.

“Soul” does not seem to be a *Course in Miracles* term. In the Clarification of Terms, we find a direct statement to that effect:

The term “soul” is not used except in direct biblical quotations because of its highly controversial nature. It would, however, be an equivalent of “spirit,” with the understanding that, being of God, it is eternal and was never born. (C-1.3:2-3)

Perhaps the reason for this avoidance of the word “soul” is precisely because of its in-between nature. It is hard to imagine something like what we usually call the soul fitting into the Course’s system. In that system, there seems to be only limitless spirit having a dream of being a personality in a body. There doesn’t seem to be room for this in-between character, this individual soul that goes on a journey first away from, and then back to, God.

Yet this quotation from the Clarification of Terms does not tell the full story. It is true that in the final edit, the term is almost entirely absent, being used only ten times in Biblical quotes or allusions, or in references to popular concepts of the soul (there is a reference to men being willing to sell the devil “their souls”—T-3.VII.2:7—and a reference to what the “‘religiously’ ego-oriented” believe about the soul—T-4.II.9:5-6).

However, in the original dictation of the Course, “soul” was actually a major Course term. In the Urtext, it appears 167 times. As numerous as these references are, however, they gradually thin out until, by the equivalent of Chapter 13 in the Text, the term has disappeared entirely. Thus, long before the comment I quote from the Clarification of Terms, “soul” had dropped out of the Course’s vocabulary.

References to “soul” in the early dictation

Yet while it was being used, what did it mean? Was it used as “an equivalent of ‘spirit’”? Yes and no. On the “yes” side, most of the references make the soul sound like changeless, unqualified spirit. Here are a few:

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- ◆ 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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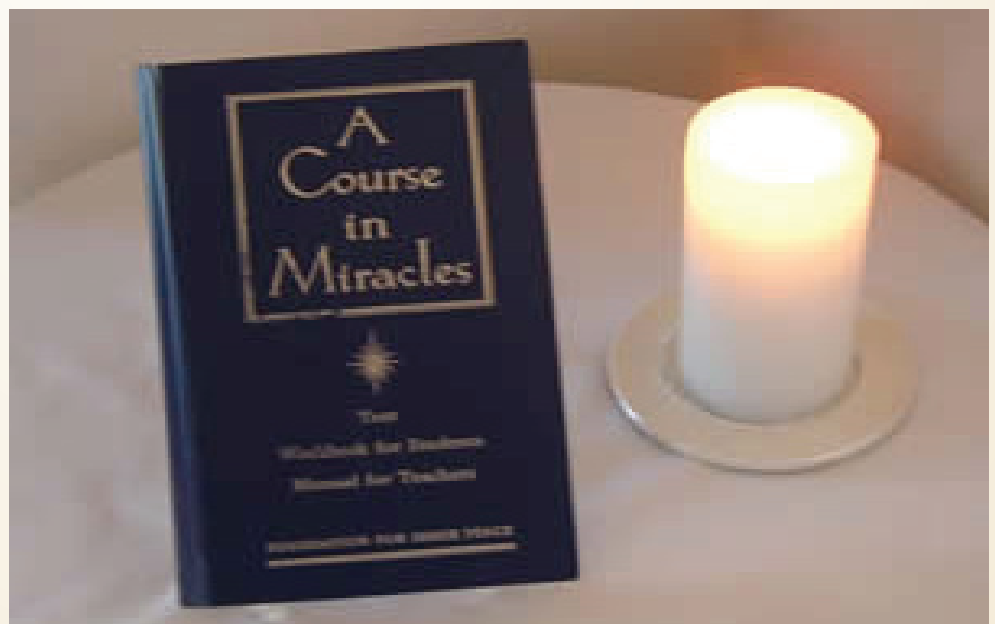
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The soul is in a state of grace forever.

The Soul never loses its communion with God.

The Soul is therefore unalterable because it is *already* perfect.

The Soul always remains changeless, because it never leaves the sight of God.

Souls are perfect creations.

The Soul does not need healing.

The Soul is already illuminated.

In each of the above references, you could replace “soul” with “spirit” without changing the meaning one bit. However, a number of references fall on the “no” side, with “soul” coming off as something lower than spirit, something in between Heaven and earth. I will go walk you through those references now, two at a time:

Souls cannot rest until everyone has found salvation.

Strong wills can do this *now*. And you *will* find rest for your Souls.

Both of these passages suggest that souls are not at rest now but will find rest at some future time. Yet why do souls need to *find* rest? Spirit does not need to do so. Spirit is already resting in God, always has been and always will be. Yet in these quotes, that is not true of the soul.

Your mind is *not* serving your Soul. This literally starves the Soul by denying its daily bread.

The miracle restores the Soul to its fullness.

In the first passage, the soul has “literally” been starved of its nourishment by the choices of the mind. You mean the soul can actually be *starved*? In the second passage, this condition is reversed by the miracle. Because of the miracle, the soul is restored “to its fullness,” which clearly implies that it had somehow lost, or lost touch with, that fullness. Yet neither *starving* nor *restoring* applies to spirit. This is shown by the fact that the final edit of the Course did not replace “soul” with “spirit” in either of these passages, but rather with “you” and “mind.” The first says, “This starves you” (T-2. III.5:10) and the second says “The miracle restores the mind” (T-1.I.34:1).

When the Soul is finally in the original state of direct communication, neither the body nor the miracle serves any purpose.

By doing this, the mind awakens from its sleep, and the Soul remembers its Creator.

In both of these passages, the soul is returning to its original state of direct communication with God. The soul is *remembering* God. Both times this is characterized as a future occurrence, suggesting that at this time the soul is *not* in direct communication with God. In fact, the first says, “When the Soul is *finally* in the original state,” suggesting that returning to this original state has taken quite a long time.

The miracle worker can only bless, and this undoes the curse and frees the soul from prison.

His slip [Bill’s Freudian slip about “rivet”] was an expression of a Soul gaining enough strength to request freedom from prison. It will ultimately *demand* it.

These two passages speak of the soul being freed from prison. The second is particularly evocative. It speaks of a soul regaining its strength and using that strength to get out of prison. As it gains a little strength, it requests freedom from prison. This takes the form of a seemingly trivial Freudian slip. This slip, when properly analyzed, would show

itself to be the bubbling up of an unconscious yearning for freedom from the ego's prison. This, however, is only the first step. When this soul gains even more strength, it will no longer *request* freedom; it will *demand* it. To make sense of this picture, we have to posit that the soul *has* been weakened (or how could it gain strength?) and *is* in prison—two things that are definitely not true of the spirit.

Altogether, then, we have a soul that has been starved, weakened, and is in prison. Yet this soul will regain its strength, be restored to fullness, demand freedom from prison, and then return to its original state of direct communication with God, where it will find its rest. None of these things are true of spirit. Yet they do fit the usual understanding of the soul. This soul, in other words, has that very in-between quality that we typically associate with the term. It is not in the heavenly state. It started out in that state, but has somehow lost that state, and is on a journey back there.

How do we square this with the references to “soul” that do sound equivalent to “spirit”? For instance, how do we square “The Soul never loses its communion with God” with “the Soul remembers its Creator”? I think we have to posit, to put it very simply, a big Soul and a little soul. The big Soul is what the Course calls spirit or our true Self. It is beyond all limitation and truly “never loses its communion with God.” However, when we choose to separate, a part of this Soul is dragged down toward the earth. This “little soul” is what then goes on a journey and eventually “remembers its Creator.”

This same concept elsewhere in the Course

The term “soul” does drop out of the Course vocabulary after Chapter 12 in the Text. Yet, interestingly, the *concept* does not. There are a number of references to what is clearly the exact same concept throughout the rest of the Course. The first one I have found is in Chapter 22 in the Text. It is about an unnamed “other part” of your mind:

The Holy Spirit's purpose was accepted by the part of your mind the ego knows not of. No more did you. And yet this part, with which you now identify, is not afraid to look upon itself. It knows no sin. How, otherwise, could it have been willing to see the Holy Spirit's purpose as its own?

This part has seen your brother, and recognized him perfectly since time began. And it desired nothing but to join with him and to be free again, as once it was. It has been waiting for the birth of freedom; the acceptance of release to come to you. And now you recognize that it was not the ego that joined the Holy Spirit's purpose, and so there must be something else. Think not that this is madness. For this your reason tells you, and it follows perfectly from what you have already learned....

And now the ego *is* afraid. Yet what it hears in terror, the other part hears as the sweetest music; the song it longed to hear since first the ego came into your mind. The ego's weakness is its strength. The song of freedom, which sings the praises of another world, brings to it hope of peace. For it remembers Heaven, and now it sees that Heaven has come to earth at last, from which the ego's rule has kept it out so long. (T-22. IV:4:5-5:6, 7:1-5)

Isn't this fascinating? There is this mysterious “other part” that is actually playing a role in the lives of Helen and Bill, thus proving itself to be real. The Course's story began when Helen and Bill “joined the Holy Spirit's purpose” (to use this passage's phrase) of living out a better way. This set them on a new journey, and however difficult this journey was, they surely knew that it wasn't the ego that joined in this holy purpose. Further, their conscious minds proved ambivalent enough about this purpose that those minds couldn't have been what impelled them to commit to it. Therefore, there must be another part of their minds that was the real force in them joining the Holy Spirit's purpose. Even though they had been unaware of this part, reason tells them that it must be there. After all, it is acting, it is causing effects. And in fact they are beginning more and more to identify with it, to embrace it on a conscious level (“this part, with which you now identify”).

What are we told about this other part? Basically, three things. First, this part is absolutely *innocent*. It is uncorrupted by the ego. It is still pure. We are explicitly told that it “is not afraid to look upon itself” because “it knows no sin.” This purity is reflected in the fact that it has recognized your brother “perfectly since time began,” and “desired nothing but to join with him.” Because of this same purity, it welcomes the song of freedom that is beginning to sound again. “For it remembers Heaven” and hears in this song the promise of return to Heaven.

Yet, and here is the second thing, this part is *imprisoned*. This sentence says it clearly: “And it desired nothing but to join with him and to be free again, as once it was.” This is why the song of freedom “brings to it hope”—because it has longed to be free since time began.

This brings us to the third thing: It is imprisoned by *your* choices, not by its own. Notice this line: “the song it longed to hear since first the ego came into your mind.” It was the ego coming into *your* mind that imprisoned it.

Clearly, this “other part” is the soul, which, as we saw, is in prison but longs to be free.

Let’s look at another passage. This one is also about Helen and Bill’s holy relationship. It says, “When brothers join in purpose in the world of fear, they stand already at the edge of the real world.... For when they joined their hands it was Christ’s hand they took” (T-30.V.7:1, 4). Then, in the following paragraph, we find this:

His [Christ’s] gratitude to you is past your understanding, for you have enabled Him to rise from chains and go with you, together, to His Father’s house. (T-30.V.8:6)

Christ in chains? This should certainly make us sit up and take notice. In the Course’s system, Christ is the Self we all share, the Self that is beyond all limitations. This Self is not in chains. Yet here we have a clear statement of Christ being in chains.

This passage, in fact, looks a great deal like the previous one. In both, we have some spiritual element in us (the “other part,” Christ), that has been imprisoned, but that is now being freed due to Helen and Bill’s decision to join.

Our next passage comes from the Workbook. It speaks of the effects of doing your hourly five-minute meditation:

The joy your Self experiences It will save for you, and it will yet be yours in full awareness. Every time you spend five minutes of the hour seeking Him Who joins your mind and Self, you offer Him another treasure to be kept for you. (W-pI.96.11:4-5)

This is part of a string of lessons that pour on the motivation for you to do five minutes of practice per hour. This passage is part of that. Its message is that even if your hourly meditation seems unsuccessful, it wasn’t. It caused your Self—the Christ—to experience joy. It added a treasure to Its store. And your Self will then save that treasure and offer it to you at some point in the future, presumably when you are open.

In the previous passage, we had your choice to join with someone allowing Christ to rise and go to His Father’s house, taking you with Him. In this passage, we have your choice to meditate allowing Christ to experience joy and then offer it to you. The two are clearly describing the same basic pattern.

We find elements of both of these passages in our final passage, from Workbook Lesson 182, “I will be still an instant and go home.” This lesson has an extended teaching about the Christ Child in you, Who has been dragged down into the stifling atmosphere of this world yet longs to “return to breathe again the holy air that fills His Father’s house,” which He does when you meditate. Here are some relevant paragraphs from that lesson:

Yet there is a Child in you Who seeks His Father’s house, and knows that He is alien here. This childhood is eternal, with an innocence that will endure forever....

It is this Child in you your Father knows as His Own Son. It is this Child Who knows His Father. He desires to go home so deeply, so unceasingly, His voice cries unto you to let Him rest a while. He does not ask for more than just a few instants of respite; just an interval in which He can return to breathe again the holy air that fills His Father’s house. You are His home as well. He will return. But give Him just a little time to be Himself, within the peace that is His home, resting in silence and in peace and love.

This Child needs your protection. He is far from home. He is so little that He seems so easily shut out, His tiny voice so readily obscured, His call for help almost unheard amid the grating sounds and harsh and rasping noises of the world. Yet does He know that in you still abides His sure protection. You will fail Him not. He will go home, and you along with Him....

When you are still an instant, when the world recedes from you, when valueless ideas cease to have value in your restless mind, then will you hear His Voice. So poignantly He calls to you that you will not resist Him longer. In that instant He will take you to His home, and you will stay with Him in perfect stillness, silent and at peace, beyond all words, untouched by fear and doubt, sublimely certain that you are at home....

Christ is reborn as but a little Child each time a wanderer would leave his home. For he must learn that what he would protect is but this Child, Who comes defenseless and Who is protected by defenselessness. Go home with Him from time to time today. You are as much an alien here as He. (W-pI.182.4:3-4, 5:1-6:6, 8:1-3, 10:1-4)

This lesson echoes many of the themes we have already seen. It is, in fact, our most fully developed portrait of the soul.

This lesson's teaching is that we all have a memory that haunts us, a persistent voice that calls to us. This voice says that we are not at home here, we do not belong, we are an alien. It says that there is another place where we do belong, where we are at home, a place that constantly calls us to return.

We think this voice is perhaps calling us back to our childhood home, or forward to some dream home we will build. But it is actually the voice of the Christ Child in us, calling us to return to Heaven. When we wandered from that home into this inhospitable world, our limitless Self was reborn as a tiny Child that came with us (this parallels my earlier idea of the big Soul and little soul). This Child is still innocent, "with an innocence that will endure forever." But He is stuck in an alien land far from home, surrounded by "the grating sounds and harsh and rasping noises of the world." He needs our protection here. He needs our help in returning home. He longs to return to His Father's house, even if only for brief furloughs. These furloughs come "when you are still an instant, when the world recedes from you"—when you meditate. In those times, He not only will briefly return, He will also take you with Him. "In that instant He will take you to His home, and you will stay with Him in perfect stillness, silent and at peace, beyond all words, untouched by fear and doubt, sublimely certain that you are at home."

We have now seen four passages whose thought is strikingly parallel to the early references to the soul. From these, a consistent picture emerges. We have some "other part" of our mind, usually labeled as Christ (3 passages). This part has retained its innocence, but has been "in chains," not "free," in "exile," ever since you left home. Throughout this time, it has yearned for release. It has "longed" to hear the song of freedom. It has desired to go home "deeply" and "unceasingly." This, however, is dependent on you. Just as its imprisonment was a result of your choices, so its release must come from your choices. When you choose to join with a brother, it feels a surge of hope, for it hears the song of freedom. It begins to rise from its chains. When you meditate, something similar happens. It experiences joy, for it is allowed to go home for a little while. In both cases—joining and meditating—your choices allow it to return to its "Father's house" (two passages).

This other part is generally outside consciousness. You usually do not even know that it exists. But this does not mean that its effects are not felt. It ceaselessly calls to you, in the form of that little whisper of nostalgia that says, "You are out of place here, but there was a time when you were home, and that home waits for your return." It can even impel you to join with another in a life-changing commitment, as happened with Helen and Bill. When your choices release it, it will share with you the bounty of that release. When your meditations bring it joy (two passages), it will save that joy and give it to you. And when you allow it to return to its Father's house, it will take you with it (two passages). Indeed, the more you release it, the more its effects will wash over into your conscious experience, so that increasingly, you will identify with it. You will regard it not as a thing apart, but as your own Self.

Helen's priestess vision

Having assembled this picture, we are now in a position to see that Helen's very first inner vision, in the time following her joining with Bill and preceding the dictation of the Course, was a vision of her soul:

The first of the series began with a picture of an unrecognized female figure, heavily draped and kneeling with bowed head. Thick chains were twisted around her wrists and ankles. A fire rose high above her head from a large metal brazier standing near her on a low tripod. She seemed to be some sort of priestess, and the fire appeared to be associated with an ancient religious rite. This figure came to me almost daily for several weeks, each time with a noticeable change. The chains began to drop away and she started to raise her head. At last she stood up very slowly, with only a short, unconnected length of chain still tied to her left wrist. The fire blazed with unaccustomed brightness as she rose.

I was quite unprepared for the intensity of my emotional reaction to her. When she first raised her eyes and looked at me I was terribly afraid. I was sure she would be angry and expected that her eyes would be filled with condemnation and disdain. I kept my head turned away the first few times I saw her after she stood up, but finally made up my mind to look straight at her face. When I did, I burst into tears. Her face was gentle and full of compassion, and her eyes were beyond description. The best word I could find in describing them to Bill was "innocent." She had never seen what I was afraid she would find in me. She knew nothing about me that warranted condemnation. Yet she did know many things I had never known, or at least had entirely forgotten. I loved her so much that I literally fell on my knees in front of her. Then I tried unsuccessfully to unite with her as she stood facing me, either by slipping over to her side or drawing her to mine. I noticed that she still had a few links of chain around her wrists. That, I felt, was probably the problem.

My next reactions were even stranger. I was suddenly swept away by a sense of joy so intense I could hardly breathe. Aloud I asked, “Does this mean I can have my function back?” The answer, silent but perfectly clear, was, “Of course!” At that I began to dance around the room in an intense surge of happiness I had never felt before. I would not have believed it was possible to experience such happiness as that answer brought with it, and for a little while I kept repeating, “How wonderful! Oh, how wonderful!” There seemed to be no doubt that there was a part of me I did not know, but which understood exactly what all this meant. It was a strangely split awareness, of a kind which was to become increasingly familiar. (*Absence from Felicity*, pp. 97-98)

It is quite remarkable how the same themes we have been seeing throughout come through here. We have some other part of Helen, some ancient, spiritual version of her, that is completely innocent, but that is also in chains. Yet this part is rising from her chains because of Helen’s choice to join with Bill. The parallels with the passages we have explored are unmistakable.

Yet we also have a new twist—the connection with Helen’s function. Given that the freeing of the priestess will lead to Helen doing her function, and given that Jesus told her that her function was to *be* a priestess, it seems that Helen doing her function really meant allowing her soul—that priestess inside of her—to rise from chains and operate through her. I think it is safe to assume that this is exactly what happened in her scribing of the Course.

Could this be true of us as well? Could doing our assigned function in the world really be a case of letting our soul operate through us? If my function is to be a teacher, for example, could it be that my soul is an ancient teacher, which I am (hopefully) allowing to work through me? If your function is to be a healer, for another example, could it be that your soul is an ancient healer, which is waiting to rise up and work through you? Could the key decision we make in relation to our function be the decision to *unchain our soul*?

Conclusion

We have examined three sources here: the references to the “soul” in the early dictation, later Course references to the imprisoned Christ or “other part,” and Helen’s priestess vision. From these three sources, a single concept of the soul has emerged. I find it to be a very intriguing portrayal of the soul. It is a portrait of a hidden part of us that is *co-conscious* with us, that has its own awareness, just as we have ours. From our standpoint, it is in our unconscious. But from *its* standpoint, it is fully conscious. This soul is not making bad choices and thereby corrupting itself. Rather, it is tethered to *our* choices. It is like a helium balloon that we are holding onto. Our choice to separate from God didn’t corrupt the balloon. It remains as pure and buoyant as ever. Its natural inclinations are still only to rise to Heaven. But our choices did drag it down to earth, where it has to endure all of this world’s smog, wind, rain, searing heat and freezing cold. It longs to sail up to Heaven again, but that is dependent on us. We are the ones holding the string. When we free it to float Heavenward, even if only for brief intervals, it is restored. It grows in strength and eventually becomes strong enough to lift us up and take us with it.

Could this actually be true? I remember once about twenty years ago, I was driving in my car and became overwhelmed with the thought that Jesus had actually called me to perform a function for him. My automatic reaction was to start saying things about my shortcomings in regard to this function. To my surprise, I began to get little shots of intuition coming back in response, that felt both realistic and reassuring at the same time. For instance, I complained that I had taken so long to realize this and had been so uncommitted along the way, and the response I got was, “You’ve been doing it all along.” The sense was that there was a hidden engine in me that had been doing its work the whole time, getting its job done in the midst of all my conscious meandering. I then rattled off a series of my flaws, which would seem to disqualify me, and the response was “That’s not why I hired you,” as if there was another me, with other characteristics, and I was hired because of *those*. Each response was a different slant on the same idea, which was that, yes, those negative things are true about me, but they are not what is relevant here, because there is this other me, which is both fully qualified and fully committed. This other me is the partner that Jesus can and does rely on, and it has been operating all along, welling up through the cracks of my surface failings. Now, all these years later, I have a term for that other me: my soul.

If this soul is really there, its presence would explain things in our lives that are difficult to explain otherwise. Its voice might well be what is behind those feelings that call us to a higher place. Its influence might well be what impelled us to do some of the more wonderful yet unexpected things we have done. Further, if it is there, we have a responsibility toward it. As Lesson 182 said, “This Child needs your protection. He is far from home” (W-pI.182.6:1-2). This Child is depending on our choices to free Him. Finally, if this soul is there, then we can avail ourselves of its gifts. I have mentioned some of those gifts already, but one I haven’t mentioned is that we can claim its innocence. Lesson 182

speaks of the eternal innocence of the Christ Child and then, in its concluding paragraph, says that we have not lost our innocence *because* that Child is still with us:

You have not lost your innocence. It is for this you yearn. This is your heart's desire. This is the voice you hear, and this the call which cannot be denied. The holy Child remains with you.(W-p1.182.12:1-5)

Let's try to genuinely open ourselves, then, to the possibility that this soul is there, that there is an older, more divine version of us that is absolutely pure and innocent, yet is currently in chains, shackled by our choices, longing to be set free, and eager to return to us the release we offer it.

To really open yourself to this, I want to recommend that you set aside some time, perhaps about ten minutes. Close your eyes and take yourself through a guided visualization. Quiet your mind and then come to a doorway, realizing that past this doorway is your soul. Push the door open. Now look at your soul. What does it look like? Does it take the form of a priestess, as in Helen's vision, or does it take some other form? Is it in chains or is it free, or somewhere in between? What is it doing? How does it look upon you? Ask yourself what you would like to say to your soul, and then go ahead and say it. And finally ask your soul, "What would you like to say to me?"



E-mail your comments to the author at: 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'.*

CIRCLE MAILBOX

Here is some of the feedback we've received about Robert's article in A Better Way #91, "A New Vision of the Miracle Based on Fourteen Real-Life Examples from the Original Notes of Helen Schucman."

I think that this month's *A Better Way* is one of your more exceptional pieces. I really liked the discussion of those examples of miracles in Helen's life.

Since I first started studying the Course thirty years ago, I have felt that it was about *doing* miracles, not just changing perceptions. People often seemed to be directed to me where I could help them in small ways. It happened too often to be coincidence and I felt that Jesus was doing this to affirm my work with the Course, since I knew no one else who was a student.

It also fit into the extremely strong ethic of doing for others in which I was raised. The ethic was part of normal Sunday School sort of teachings, but it lived apart from that in my family. That was just one of many ways that the Course worked for me.

— Ken Huggins

...

Thank you so much for this article. I just finished reading the "A New Vision of the Miracle Based on Fourteen Real-Life Examples from the Original Notes of Helen Schucman" article in *A Better Way* #91. Firstly, I have to say how wonderful I think it is that you were able to use Helen's original notes for this article. Are these available anywhere for others to view?

Secondly, I had to tell you reading this absolutely made my day!!! I cannot begin to say how much this has helped me. This article was literally the answer to my prayers. In the years since I completed the Course I have often had difficulty recognizing the miracle (as asked of me) for what it is. I'd get these impulses to do things for another that seemed unnecessary or insignificant and I would dismiss them as something getting in the way of me being *available* for Jesus.

I found myself inundated by events/people/circumstances requesting my assistance and that pulled me in a thousand directions. I was always juggling. And always exhausted. I too mostly thought the only miracle was of the *raise the dead and heal the sick* sort....I often mistakenly thought my “earthly life” was in the way of continuing toward that goal. I was constantly trying to make room for miracle working, never realizing that these seemingly unrelated situations were exactly chances for that. These situations showed up in more guises than I can possibly list here but in many of the forms you listed. Basically, what I saw as being *in the way* of miracle work was likely *the* miracle work. Even if they did not make sense to me, they made perfect sense to God. The cloudiness of this perception caused intense distress sometimes that I could not comprehend fully. Then today I read your article after I prayed for clarity about this topic.

Now I see years of miracle impulses behind me that I have suppressed since I completed the Course because I mistakenly believed they were small or unimportant occurrences. Now I see that miracle work is not something I have to search *for* but it is what I carry *with* me, all the time and everywhere, at the ready to extend the way Jesus directs in both small and mighty ways. I am so grateful to you for helping me to see that. Many blessings to you.

— Nadja Hicks

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I am absolutely astounded with excitement with your recent revelations about miracles. I am now starting to feel like I can actually be a miracle worker constantly, as a way of being. Like I can really relate better now to being a student of *A Course in Miracles*. Who can't be kind and loving and caring regularly?? I can do those miracles! “These miracles I can do!” as you said towards the end of your *Better Way* article. Thank you for this mass-scale paradigm shifting research. What would we do without you?? Miracle received on this end, Robert.

— Greg Idasz

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I am very impressed with the research and thought that went into writing the article “A New Vision of the Miracle.” I feel that I am reading about humans and their extraordinary experience with living and scribing the Course, but still human like me and those I know. Reading this article has solidified my interpretation of the shifts I have been experiencing in myself and in people around me....

Bottom line. I now believe, after reading your article, that I am experiencing miracles every day. I feel like I can better embrace this process for me. I have to remember not to have any expectations or to be attached to what I am doing. To be a channel for this would be a wonderful life function. My thoughts almost always turn towards extending this to the whole of human consciousness, when I do this it is like seeing the whole of us as the Son of God and each physical person as a point of light extending from the Source of Sonship. So, we can heal the Sonship because we heal ourselves.

— Michelle Rosenfeld

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Basically, I've never seen getting a parking space as a miracle. I like the idea of extending miracles to others. As you say in *Return to the Heart of God*: “the word ‘miracle’ refer[s] to an extension of healed perception from one person to another.” This does suggest that the miracle starts with me, with my healing my perception, seeing the other person differently and I then extend that to another with, possibly, some action, a demonstration, kindness, or doing something for them. The quote you give from the Urtext describes this: “A true miracle cannot occur on a false basis. Sometimes the undoing must precede.” Thus, the undoing is in my mind and this provides a “real” basis for extending it to you. So, in summary, it is as you say: “By seeing people differently, we can become a continual channel of kindness and helpfulness to them, and the peace we give we will receive.”

As a brief example of this, in the past few days I fell out with a friend over a momentary failure of tact, which resulted in something being said and much bad feeling. Someone reminded me of the prayer in “The Happy Dream,” section V of Chapter 18 (really, it's good to read from paragraph 6). I practiced that prayer, felt totally different about our relationship afterwards, sent my friend a message, received a lovely response, then extended love to her by taking her out to dinner. The whole process seemed to strengthen our relationship.

In a slight area of disagreement with you, as I've said previously, I wonder if some references in the Course that talk

about doing, or actions, in the context of miracles might be referring to changes of perception. After all, changing my mind is something I *do*. Forgiveness is something I *do*, albeit “only” in thought.

— Ian Patrick

Ian,

In the examples I gave, of course, the doing was unambiguously behavioral. In terms of other passages in the Course, I think we just have to pay attention to immediate context. For instance, here is one reference to action (from the Urtext): “All actions which stem from reverse thinking are literally the behavioral expressions of those who know not what they do.” Given that these actions are labeled “behavioral expressions,” we are clearly talking about behavior. On the other hand, the Urtext refers to an “act of will” twice, and even tells us “Healing is an act of thought.” These actions, then, definitely seem to be internal acts. So I don’t think it’s particularly hard to tell whether the action referred to is physical or mental. That being said, when we do look to the context in this way, almost all of the actions and doing in the Course are behavioral.

— Robert

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I can hardly contain my excitement over your recent discoveries about miracles. It seems now that everything about the Course has fallen into place for me. This is changing my way of seeing and being. It’s changing the way I’m reading and practicing. It’s changing the way I approach my teaching. It’s infusing me with a stronger desire to be that miracle worker Jesus is talking about and also to share these radical teachings with others!

I devoted my Sunday evening gathering to your discoveries and everyone was amazed—by the Shorthand Notebooks, by the significance of Jesus’ teachings about miracles and miracle working, and by all that you are doing on behalf of Jesus, his Course, and every Course student everywhere.

This just may be the most important teaching you have to share about the Course!

Thank you; thank you; thank you!

— Mary Anne Buchowski

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A few brief comments. I haven’t seen Helen’s notebooks (originally in shorthand) but do recognize most of the examples you cite, which means I have seen this material either in my copy of the Urtext or in *Absence from Felicity*. Therefore many of these concrete illustrations have been available for quite some time.

Having read and re-read the early chapters of the Urtext, *Absence from Felicity*, and the rest of *A Course in Miracles* over many years, I have rarely seen a conflict between these concrete examples and the teaching we receive throughout. To me they are specific examples of the principles the Course teaches.

Any supposed dichotomy between changing our minds/finding peace/seeing people differently, on the one hand, and extension on the other, is false. From start to finish these are inextricably connected in the teaching. It is never one or the other, it is always both. They are all of a piece. Together they form the core of the Course.

— Mary Benton

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I read your article, “A New Vision of the Miracle” with great joy. The real-life examples of Helen, with accompanying explanations provided by Jesus on miracles performed, helped me grasp what I thought was too lofty to reach in my everyday life—perhaps in this lifetime. To see miracles expressed through a pun, a helpful message, rewriting a report, and refraining from blaming someone, among some of the examples of miracle working, I am left feeling inspired, hopeful, and grateful; that miracles are not only in my reach but I feel that I probably have given many miracles already.

This article brought miracles down to earth; or, shall I say filled ordinary acts with heaven’s love. Of course, I must

continually work with my mind, to purify, but overall I don't have to look in the far-off future when I am sufficiently prepared to perform miracles (Helen was even resentful in one example of giving a miracle). I can give miracles this very day! In fact, this changes how I approach the events in the course of a day.

I was also quite impressed how the miracle principles tied into the examples given. These examples of miracles have helped illuminate the Principles of Miracles so much! I will not brush by them again in haste.

Robert, thank you for helping in the understanding of miracles. I never really felt that inspired by the idea that miracles are solely a "shift in perception." But giving miracles to others not only feels right but moves me to extend them to others. Also, the miracle coming back to bless me even makes it twice a blessing. I know I will reread this article again and again to remind me that miracles are as natural as a heartfelt smile to a dear brother.

— Ken Froessel

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Reading that article before going on a trip to see my brother facilitated a new experience and awareness of miracles. My brother has heart failure and is trying an experimental drug before going on the heart transplant list. I was able to visit with him in a miracle-readiness state more than I would have been before reading your article. It helped me understand just what I could do for my brother and how the inner miracle and extension of miracles works to heal both. I then happened to sit next to a young woman on the plane who has a severe case of fibromyalgia and is in chronic pain 24/7 and quite debilitated from it. As she talked I found myself referring back to your article about the extension of miracles and sat back and opened my mind up to a miracle-readiness place and allowed the spirit to extend through me. I have no idea of any outcome either with my brother or with this young woman, but I was in a complete state of peace in the midst of stories of seemingly tragedy. Your article put my presence during the trip in a whole new light. Thank you for being open and willingly to dive in deeper to the Course's meaning so that we can learn, heal, and extend as we go about our daily life.

— Patti Fields

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I'm pretty much blown away after reading this month's article. Where do I begin?...

First, this teaching has renewed my perception of the purpose and practice of the Course. The heights we must climb now conveniently possess a rope which lies dangling at our feet, asking us only to grab hold and start from where we are. How certain I am that my own studies will continue to gain in a balanced and healthy manner in deference to what I have learned today.

This vignette of living examples has also expanded my perspective of Jesus and the personal way that He is connected with each and every one of us. There is no boundary or qualification that restricts the miracle worker in this view of things. It dissolves all the artificial divisions that we cherish and have erected between ourselves and others. This thought alone allows us to embrace the whole of the human community with an inclusiveness well beyond the common mark.

It's my sincere hope that you won't let this knowledge fade into the background. I'm convinced that this lies at the core of how the Course is to be expressed in the world. I want to participate in that—I'm hoping others are feeling this way too. Thank you, for the miracle you have offered this community and far beyond.

— Michael Little

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Just received #91, and am most interested in the content. Last week I shared excerpts from #88 with your views about the Course being a guide to behavior with our Sunday ACIM study group.

The group agreed to participate in a class project: beginning each day of the coming week by restating our intention to be miracle workers and declaring our willingness to be guided by Jesus as to which miracles to perform. I'll let you know about our experiences.

— Stephen Anthony

Integrated ACIM!

Check out our online copy of the entire text of *A Course in Miracles*. Now, each section and paragraph contains links to all the articles and commentaries of ours that reference that section or paragraph. In all, it contains over 6,700 such links. Therefore, if you need clarity on a particular statement in the Course, you can just go to that place and click on the "related articles" link. If you want clarity on a certain section or lesson, you can go there and click on the "commentary" link. Links in green are available to everyone. Links in red are to commentaries and articles available in our various reading programs and the Circle Course Community. You must be subscribed to the program to access the links in red.

We think this can prove a fantastic study aid. Please check it out at: http://www.circleofa.org/course_miracles/ACourseInMiracles.php. Spend some time playing with it. Click on some of the links. If you like it, bookmark it and tell your study group about it.