

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 5 Healing and Wholeness

Introduction and Section I

The Invitation to the Holy Spirit

Overview of the Section

This chapter contains more information about the Holy Spirit than any other part of the Course. He is mentioned twenty-seven times in the first three sections and sixteen times in the remaining four sections, or forty-three times in all. I often think of this as “the Holy Spirit chapter.”

The Holy Spirit, however, is peripheral to the main theme of the chapter, which is, as the title suggests, “Healing and Wholeness”: What it means to be healed, and what it means to become a healer, which are not two things but one: In giving and sharing healing we are healed. The Holy Spirit plays a central role in that entire process. Indeed, “The Holy Spirit is the idea of healing” (T-5.III.2:1), so naturally, in presenting healing, the Holy Spirit’s role must be discussed.

As I said at the start of Chapter 4 (Commentary #24), that chapter focused on the illusions of the ego thought system, while Chapter 5 focuses on the “Answer,” the healing of our mind and the role played by the Holy Spirit in that healing process. Chapter 6 will go on to discuss the three primary lessons taught to us by the Holy Spirit, which are the reversal of the ego’s thought system.

Introduction

This is the second chapter with an Introduction. Remember, the purpose of an Introduction is to set the tone for the chapter, so let us pay attention, try to extract the primary points of the Introduction, and then keep those points in mind as we continue on through the chapter.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹To heal is to make happy. ²I have told you to think how many opportunities you have had to gladden yourself, and how many you have refused. ³This is [Ur: exactly] the same as telling you that you have refused to heal yourself. ⁴The light that belongs to [Ur: in] you is the light of joy. ⁵Radiance is not associated with sorrow. [Ur: Depression is often contagious, but

although it may affect those who come in contact with it, they do not yield to its influence wholeheartedly. But] ⁶Joy calls forth an integrated willingness to share it, and promotes the mind's natural impulse to respond as one. ⁷Those who attempt to heal without being wholly joyous themselves call forth different kinds of responses at the same time, and thus deprive others of the joy of responding whole-heartedly.

• Study Question •

1. *Where has Jesus previously told us “to think how many opportunities you have had to gladden yourself, and how many you have refused” (1:2)? It was somewhere in the middle of Chapter 4.*

•

To say our function is to go about healing people sounds weighty and serious; to say our function is to make people happy sounds frothy and superficial. According to the Course, they are identical! (1:1).

For nothing God created is apart from happiness, and nothing God created but would extend happiness as its Creator did. Whatever does not fulfill this function cannot be real. (T-17.IV.1:6–7)

Our function is to extend happiness, and only by fulfilling our function can we be happy ourselves. Extending happiness is healing; healing is making happy.

When the Course says we have had many opportunities to make ourselves glad, it is the same as saying we have refused to heal ourselves (1:2–3). We have been told previously that the sons of God have an inner radiance (T-2.I.2:4; T-4.I.12:3). Healing us means releasing that inner light. That light, Jesus says, is “the light of joy” (1:4). Joy radiates; sorrow does not (1:5). Joy just naturally wants to be shared (1:6); that’s something we have all experienced to some degree. Thus, our own healing and happiness manifests in our extension of healing and happiness to others. Depression, by contrast, although it is “often contagious,” is yielded to reluctantly. Joy, when offered, is usually received joyously and willingly. A happy person heals.

The healing also “promotes the mind’s natural impulse to respond as one” (1:6). “Respond as one” seems to mean “responding wholeheartedly” (compare 1:6 with the latter part of 1:7). When we are wholly joyous, our extension to others elicits a whole-hearted, uncomplicated response—a joyous “yes” to what we offer. But when we attempt to heal without being fully healed ourselves, the response from others will be *mixed*, “different kinds of responses at the same time” (1:7), partly to our joy and partly to our egos. Our lack of wholeness will “thus deprive others” (1:7) of the chance to experience their own wholeness. Conversely, if we are whole-hearted, we will draw forth whole-heartedness in others.

Make a note of the phrase “wholly joyous.” It recurs four more times in this chapter and twice in Chapter 6. (The next time is in 2:4.) If you remember, “This Need Not Be” (T-4.IV) gave us a practice to use whenever we were *not* joyous (T-4.IV.2:2); this chapter shows what can happen when we *are*.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹To be whole-hearted you **must** be happy. ²If fear and love cannot coexist, and if it is impossible to be wholly fearful and remain alive, the only possible whole state **is** that of love. ³There is no difference between love and joy. ⁴Therefore, the only possible whole state **is** the wholly joyous. ⁵To heal or to make joyous is therefore the same as to integrate and to **make one**. ⁶That is why it makes no difference **to** what part or **by** what part of the Sonship the healing is offered. ⁷Every part benefits, and benefits equally.

• Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 2 discusses the connection between happiness and wholeness. It makes a logical argument as to why happiness is the only whole state possible. See if you can state this logical argument in your own words.*

If whole-heartedness is required of healers for maximum effectiveness, how can we become whole-hearted? There is only one way: We have to be *happy!* (2:1). This is so because happiness is the only possible whole state. Why? Fear and love are mutually exclusive because they are opposites. Therefore, to be *whole* in any sense we have to be either wholly fearful or wholly loving. If we were to become *wholly* fearful, however, we would die. So “the only possible whole state is that of love” (2:2).

In addition, love and joy are the same (2:3); therefore, it is also true that “the only possible whole state is the wholly joyous” (2:4). Note the recurrence of the phrase, “wholly joyous.” We practice mental vigilance to maintain this joyous state of mind.

It’s all quite logical. The only “flaw” we might find with the logic is in the premise that fear and love cannot coexist. To me, and probably to you, it seems as if they *do* coexist inside us. However, the Course repeatedly makes the point that the unstable dual existence cannot last. Eventually, love or fear must win out. It is also easy to see that such a divided state cannot be called a *whole* state. If we contain both fear and love, we are not whole. Embracing fear completely is impossible, since to do so would by definition end our existence. Therefore, the only possible whole state is love, and since to be loving is to be joyous, and vice versa, a whole state must also be joyous.

That being so, Jesus has successfully demonstrated that healing, making joyous, loving, integrating, and making one are all identical (2:5). The next two lines tell what his point is: “*That is why* it makes no difference to what part or by what part of the Sonship healing is offered. Every part benefits, and benefits equally” (2:6–7, my emphasis). In

other words, he is explaining *why* it is so that “‘How,’ ‘what’ and ‘to whom’ are irrelevant”, as was mentioned in the previous section:

Divine Abstraction takes joy in sharing. That is what creation means. "How," "what" and "to whom" are irrelevant, because real creation gives everything, since it can create only like itself (T-4.VII.5:4-6).

Healing is healing. There are no *separate* parts in the Sonship; what benefits one part benefits every part equally. If someone is made happy, everyone is healed. Every extension of love benefits every part.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹You are being blessed by every beneficent thought of any of your brothers anywhere. ²You should want to bless them in return, out of gratitude. ³You need not know them individually, or they you. ⁴The light is so strong that it radiates throughout the Sonship and returns thanks to the Father for radiating His joy upon it. ⁵Only God's [Ur: own] holy children are worthy channels of His beautiful joy, because only they are beautiful enough to hold it by sharing it. ⁶It is impossible for a child of God to love his neighbor except as himself. ⁷That is why the healer's prayer is:

⁸Let me know this brother as I know myself.

• Study Question •

3. Review what was said about gratitude in T-4.VI.7:1–5. What reason is given in paragraph 3 for us to be grateful to everyone, even people we have never met?
4. You may want to read Lesson 315, “All gifts my brothers give belong to me,” taking time to turn it into a personal prayer.

What a thought, that we are being actively blessed by every loving thought in the world, whether we know the person thinking it or whether they know us! (3:1,3). This puts a whole new dimension into our lives, doesn't it? Imagine how many loving thoughts are occurring throughout the world this very instant. Do you realize how many blessings you must be receiving in a day? In even a single minute? Thousands, millions of blessings.

Some part of us, I think, has always known this is true. When we hear a “good news” story about someone who gave a gift of love to a needy family, or a hero rescuing someone from a fire, something in our heart warms. We know, intuitively, that the pool of love for the world has just been increased, and we have benefited.

This is the “communication” that Jesus has been talking about. This is one way that creation is expressed in the world. When one child of God extends a loving thought or act

to another child of God, the light of that love is so strong that “it radiates throughout the Sonship and returns thanks to the Father for radiating His joy upon it” (3:4).

“Returns thanks” must be referring to the notion of praising God mentioned in T-4.VII.6–8; we praise God by extending beneficent thoughts to our brothers. The love and joy that we share is God’s love and joy, channeled through us (3:5). Doing so is our function, and we are worthy of it because we are “beautiful enough to hold [the joy] by sharing it” (3:5).

Jesus gives a new twist to another Gospel saying in this context. In the Gospels, he is reported to have said that the second greatest commandment (after loving God with all our heart) is, “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39, NIV). In the Course (3:6), he explains that loving our neighbor in any way *except* as ourselves is impossible! There *is* no other kind of love. Love recognizes that your neighbor *is* your Self; all living things are part of you. Recognizing all creation as part of your Self is what “love” means. And since loving equals healing, “the healer’s prayer is, let me know this brother as I know myself” (3:7–8).

Let us, each time we encounter anyone, however briefly, pray this prayer, asking to know this brother or this sister as we know ourselves.

We can watch for the main points of this Introduction in the chapter that follows:

- Healing
- Healing means to make one, and to make happy
- The collaborative nature of the healing process
- All our minds are joined, so what blesses one blesses all

I believe the *overall theme of the chapter* is stated in 3:6: “It is impossible for a child of God to love his neighbor except as himself.”

Section I, The Invitation to the Holy Spirit

This section begins by continuing to discuss the connection between healing, oneness and happiness.

Paragraph 1:1–5

1. ¹Healing is a [Ur: an act of] thought by which two minds perceive their oneness and become glad. ²This gladness calls to every part of the Sonship to rejoice with them, and lets [Ur: let] God go out into them and through them. ³Only the healed mind can experience revelation with lasting effect, because revelation is an experience of pure joy. ⁴If you do not choose to be wholly joyous, your mind cannot **have** what it does not choose to **be**. ⁵Remember that spirit [Ur: the Soul] knows no difference between *having* and *being*.

• Study Question •

5. *Why, according to these sentences, can you not have revelation if you do not choose to be wholly joyous?*

Notice how healing, oneness, and joy (being glad) are all linked together by the first sentence (1:1). Notice, also, that healing is clearly identified as something that involves *two* minds, not just one. The shared nature of healing is implicit in everything the Course says about it. Recognizing my oneness with (at least) one other mind, as that mind recognizes its oneness with me, is an integral part of healing. Joy is the fruit of that shared recognition. The *mutuality* of healing is further emphasized by the second sentence, which says that the joy of minds who recognize their oneness “calls to every part of the Sonship to rejoice with *them*,” plural (1:2, my emphasis). It does not say that the joy calls to every part to rejoice with *it*. Clearly, it is talking about the joy of more than a single mind.

Does this mean that a single mind cannot experience healing by itself? I don't think so. I think that what we might call “individual healing” is certainly possible, and desirable. One of the people involved in a relationship can experience healing without the other. Perhaps such “individual healing” is even the necessary *prerequisite* to the fuller healing of the relationship in which *both* minds recognize their oneness and rejoice. One partner is “saner at the time” (T-18.V.7:1) and turns to God for healing.

The goal, however, is never just individual healing; the goal is that *shared recognition* of oneness, followed by a burst of divine joy in both minds. Often, when one mind recognizes the need and turns, it opens the way for the other mind to join them in the healing. But not always. Sometimes, the partner is not ready to accept the healing at that time. In such cases, the Holy Spirit in their mind receives the healing for them and holds it until they are ready to accept it (T-25.IX.2:4; M-6.2.1–9; P-3.II.10:9). From all I can understand about the Course, an individual can choose to be healed on his or her own and then may offer healing to others, who may or may not be ready to accept it at the time. That *is* true healing, but the Course would not consider the healing to be *complete* until it is shared by all minds concerned, just as a gift is not fully given until the receiver has accepted it.

Furthermore, healing affects *revelation*. Sentence 3 seems to be saying that, although you may experience revelation without first having your mind healed, you will not be able to hold on to the effect of that revelation unless your mind *is* healed. Revelation, as well as healing, is an experience of pure joy. If your mind is unhealed it cannot hold on to the joy. I think I've experienced that!

Notice again the emphasis on “wholly joyous” as the desired state of mind (1:4), the wholeness we are seeking (In.2:4). Having and being are identical, as we were told twice before in T-4.III.9:7 and T-4.VII.5:7. Therefore, in order to *have* joy we must choose to *be* joyous, and to be pure joy is to experience revelation. Pure joy *is* revelation (1:3).

Paragraph 1:6–14

⁶The higher mind thinks according to the laws spirit [Ur: which the Soul] obeys, and therefore honors only the laws of God. ⁷To spirit [Ur: To Him,] getting is meaningless and giving is all. ⁸Having everything, spirit [Ur: the Soul] holds everything by giving it, and thus creates as the Father created. ⁹[Ur: If you think about it, you will see that,] While this kind of thinking is totally alien to having things, even to the lower mind it is quite comprehensible in connection with ideas. ¹⁰If you share a physical possession, you do divide its ownership. ¹¹If you share an idea, however, you do not lessen it. ¹²All of it is still yours although all of it has been given away. ¹³Further, if the one to whom you give it accepts it as his, he reinforces it in your mind and thus increases it. ¹⁴If you can accept the concept that the world is one of ideas, the whole belief in the false association the ego makes between giving and losing is gone.

• Study Question •

6. *Based on this passage, what happens on both a form level and a thought level when you give a friend a toaster oven as an expression of the thought of love?*

Our “higher mind” (1:6) thinks according to the laws of spirit; therefore, to this mind giving is everything and getting is meaningless (1:7). This is how we think as our mind is healed. The Course has already linked together healing, communication, creation, oneness and joy; now it adds *giving* to the list of things that are part of the same package. We create as God creates by giving everything we have, and we have everything (1:8). Giving it is how we hold it.

If we are honest, the idea that giving something is how to hold it doesn't make a lot of sense. We all know that if we give something away, *we don't have it any more*. That's the facts; that's how things work. This is how our “normal” mind, that is, our *lower mind*, thinks. It's a very pragmatic point of view. I hold a book in my hand. I give it to you. I don't have the book anymore. What other viewpoint is possible?

There *is* another way of looking at this, a way *even our lower mind* can understand (1:9). If we are talking about *ideas* rather than physical *objects*, it makes sense to say that giving something away does not diminish what we have, but actually increases it. An idea is planted in another mind and thus reinforced in our own (1:10–13). If I share an idea with you, and you accept the idea, the idea grows stronger in my mind as well as being spread to your mind. It has increased by having been given away.

If we can go further to “accept the concept that the world is one of ideas” (1:14), then the whole point the Course is making about giving is validated, and “the false association that the ego makes between giving and losing is gone” (1:14). To say that everything is an

idea is not a small leap, though. It was the foundation of the philosophy called Idealism (Hegel, Schelling, and Emerson); it is shared, also, by some schools of Hinduism (Vedanta) and Buddhism, but it is by no means universally accepted. Many thinkers today would discount it. *A Course in Miracles*, by its statement here and in 2:4, clearly declares that “Everything is an idea.” The concept is made explicit in Paragraph 2.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Let us start our process of reawakening with just a few simple concepts:

²Thoughts increase by being given away.

³The more who believe in them the stronger they become.

⁴Everything is an idea.

⁵How, then, can giving and losing be associated? [Ur: How, then, is it possible that giving and losing can be meaningfully associated?]

This paragraph is a perfect example of a logical syllogism, which summarizes the argument of the preceding paragraph. It offers three premises, and then a single conclusion based on those three premises. If you accept the premises, the conclusion is inevitable. The way we should interact with such a passage is simple. For each premise, ask yourself, “Do I believe this? Can I accept this as true?” If the answer for each is, “Yes,” then you can tell yourself that, based on the premises, you must also accept the conclusion. The premises are:

- Thoughts increase by being given away.
- The more who believe in them, the stronger they become.
- Everything is an idea. (2:2–4)

The conclusion is simple: Giving and losing cannot be associated. Giving is gain.

As I said above, the third premise is likely to give some of us problems. When I hold two \$10 bills in my hand and place one into your hand, it is hard to avoid feeling that I have lost something, and now have only half of what I had. This is because I am thinking of the money purely in physical terms. In those terms, I *have* divided the ownership (see 1:10). If I can bring myself to think of money as an idea, however, I can see this differently. Money *is* an idea. It is a thought of value. The piece of paper I give you has no intrinsic value, or very little, but by agreement of ideas in society, we attribute value to it. We give it what meaning it has. Money is an idea of abundance. If I can think of it as an idea, then I can see that in giving it to you, I have increased it.

Money could also be an expression of love. I can accept that giving love to you increases love within me.

Some lines in Workbook Lesson 187 make it clear that, while the form of what we have may change when we give it away, it must return to us *in some form*:

Perhaps the form in which the thought seems to appear is changed in giving. Yet it must return to him who gives. Nor can the form it takes be less acceptable. It must be more. (W-pI.187.2:5-8)

We need to work on these levels, I believe, seeing material things as expressions of non-physical qualities like love or abundance, before attempting to go so far as to realize that physical things really are *nothing* but manifested ideas, and that the physical universe exists only within our mind; there is nothing outside of our mind:

"There is nothing outside you. That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is the realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you" (T-18.VI.1:1-2).

"There is no world apart from your ideas because ideas leave not their source, and you maintain the world within your mind in thought" (W-pI.132.10:3).

Ultimately we must arrive at that realization, but we need not struggle to believe it if we find it difficult to do so.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹This is the invitation to the Holy Spirit. ²I have said already that I can reach up and bring the Holy Spirit down to you, but I can bring Him to you only at your own invitation. ³The Holy Spirit is in [Ur: is nothing more than] your right mind, as He was in [Ur: was also] mine. ⁴The Bible says, "May the mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus," and uses this as a blessing. ⁵It is the blessing of miracle-mindedness. ⁶It asks that you may think as I thought, joining with me in Christ thinking.

• Study Question •

7. *Paragraph 3 begins with the words, "This is the invitation to the Holy Spirit." What is the invitation to the Holy Spirit?*

From this point until the end of Section III, the Text will be discussing the way that the Holy Spirit assists in the healing process. In the previous four chapters, the Holy Spirit has been mentioned only seventeen times (in the original dictation, only six times; the other eleven were later editing changes). In Sections I through III of this chapter, He is mentioned fifty-nine times! These sections explain, more than any other portion of the Course, what the Holy Spirit is and what purpose He serves in the Atonement process.

Those with a traditional Christian background need to be careful not to interpret what is said here in the light of their past understanding of the Holy Spirit. Those who are

unfamiliar with traditional Christian theology will find clarification here of why the Course considers the Holy Spirit a key element in its curriculum. You will notice, of course, that the Course refers to the Holy Spirit as “He,” a personal pronoun, rather than the neutral “It.” English really has no neutral pronoun that includes a sense of personhood and intelligence.¹

I think we need to realize that terms such as Holy Spirit, Father, and Christ are only imperfect symbols intended to represent certain aspects of the reality of the One God. The Course tells us that, ultimately, we will recognize that the Voice of the Holy Spirit is our own voice: “Now hear God speak to you, through Him Who is His Voice and yours as well” (T-30.II.3:3). The Holy Spirit seems to be a separate Voice speaking to us, but in truth there is no separation, no two; only One.

Since you believe that you are separate, Heaven presents itself to you as separate, too. Not that it is in truth, but that the link that has been given you to join the truth may reach to you through what you understand (T-25.I.5:1-2).

Until we have lost all sense of separateness, we can comfortably operate *as if* the Holy Spirit is a divine emanation within our minds, speaking to us and instructing us. We can ask Him for guidance, and it will be given.

When the paragraph begins with the words, “This is...” (3:1), we need to ask ourselves, “*What* is?” It has to be referring to what came right before it, which Jesus calls the start of “our process of reawakening” (2:1). Giving does not mean losing; things given away actually increase. The Course attributes a lot to this simple idea because it cuts at the root of the ego’s thought system; in Chapter 6, it forms the first of the lessons of the Holy Spirit (T-6.V(A)). When we allow these “few simple concepts” to enter our minds, accepting and embracing them, *that* is “the invitation to the Holy Spirit” (3:1). The way we invite the Holy Spirit is by opening our minds to giving to one another.

This constitutes one of the major themes or threads that tie together the entire Course: *We heal or restore our vertical relationship with God by healing our relationship with our brothers and sisters.* “Salvation is a collaborative venture” (T-4.VI.8:2). God is “approached through the appreciation of His Son” (T-11.IV.7:2). In the understanding presented by the Course, the way to God is through our brothers:

¹ The Course follows the convention of traditional Christianity by referring to the Holy Spirit with the pronoun, “He.” This implies nothing whatsoever about gender; a bodiless spirit cannot have any sexual characteristics. The pronoun we use to stand for the Holy Spirit must be personal, because the Holy Spirit displays aspects of personhood and intelligence. There are only two choices of personal pronoun in English, “He” or “She.” Of the two, “He” is the more neutral. To use “She” for the Holy Spirit would put a definite focus on sexuality, appearing to emphasize the “feminine side” of God. There is a long history of usage for “He” as a neutral pronoun referring to a person of indeterminate gender. It is an imperfect choice, but there is no perfect choice.

I cannot come to You without my brother. And to know my Source, I first must recognize what You created one with me. My brother's is the hand that leads me on the way to You. (W-pII.288.1:2-4)

Your holy Son is pointed out to me, first in my brother; then in me.... And as I look upon Your Son today, I hear Your Voice instructing me to find the way to You, as You appointed that the way shall be: "Behold his sinlessness, and be you healed." (W-pII.357.1:2, 4-5)

Would you remember the Father? Accept His Son and you will remember Him. (T-11.V.17:1-2)

Sentence 2 is the eleventh time in the Text that Jesus says "I have said" or something close to it. We should pay attention to these occurrences for at least two reasons. First, the mere repetition of an idea signals that it is somehow important. Second, often we can come to a more complete understanding by comparing the several repetitions.

Here, the idea being repeated is that Jesus can reach "up" and bring the Holy Spirit "down" to us. The earlier statement to that effect was this:

Revelations are indirectly inspired by me because I am close to the Holy Spirit, and alert to the revelation-readiness of my brothers. I can thus bring down to them more than they can draw down to themselves. (T-1.II.5:1-2)

When we remember that Jesus was just speaking about revelation in 1:3, we can begin to see another connecting idea. To "bring the Holy Spirit down" is to give us an experience of revelation. Jesus can bring revelation experiences to us; he can help us open to the Holy Spirit in ways we could not, or would not, do without his help. Yet, although he has this ability, he cannot bring the Holy Spirit to us *unless we invite Him* (3:2), which we do by accepting and practicing the idea that giving is receiving.

The practical lesson here is, if we want revelation experiences, we must learn to give freely to our brothers. We must join with Jesus "in Christ thinking" (3:6), allowing the mind of Christ which was in him to also be in us (3:3-5). (The biblical quotation here is from Philippians 2:5, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (NRSV).) To think as Jesus thought, letting the mind of Christ be in us, is identical to having the Holy Spirit in our minds. From this paragraph, then, we can learn that the Holy Spirit *is* the mind of Christ, and that He is in our "right mind" (3:3). We invite Him into our conscious mind by choosing to extend love and gratitude to our brothers, because this is to share the kind of thinking Jesus manifested while on earth.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The Holy Spirit is the only part of the Holy Trinity that has a symbolic function [Ur: which is symbolic]. ²He is referred to as the Healer, the Comforter and the Guide. ³He is also described as something "separate," apart from the Father and from the Son. ⁴I myself said, "If I go I will send you another Comforter and He will abide with you." ⁵His symbolic function makes the Holy

Spirit difficult to understand, because symbolism is open to different interpretations [Ur: The Holy Spirit is a difficult concept to grasp, precisely because it *is* symbolic, and therefore open to many different interpretations]. ⁶As a man and also one of God's creations, my right thinking, which came from the Holy Spirit or the Universal Inspiration [the Universal Inspiration which *is* the Holy Spirit], taught me first and foremost that this Inspiration is for **all**. ⁷I could not have It myself without knowing this. ⁸The word "know" is proper in this context, because the Holy Spirit [the Holy Inspiration] is so close to knowledge that He calls it forth; or better, allows it to come. ⁹I have spoken before of the higher or "true" perception, which is so near to truth that God Himself can flow across the little gap. ¹⁰Knowledge is always ready to flow everywhere, but it cannot oppose. ¹¹Therefore you can obstruct it, although you can never lose it.

• Study Question •

8. *The Holy Spirit is in some way distinct from the Father and Son in that only He has "a symbolic function" (4:1). Comparing this with T-3.VI.1:3, T-5.I.6:4 and T-5.III.7:1-4, what do you think is meant by "symbolic function"?*

Although the Course has referred to the Holy Spirit frequently, until now it has not really tried to explain what the Holy Spirit *is*. There will be a lot of explanation in what follows.

The Holy Spirit, a "part of the Holy Trinity," "has a symbolic function" (4:1). The use of the phrase "Holy Trinity" is a nod to traditional Christian theology, which teaches that God exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Course acknowledges the general idea, but radically redefines both Son and Holy Spirit.

Symbolism is associated with the Holy Spirit in a number of ways (Some of these concepts are taken from later paragraphs of this section.):

- He is, Himself, a symbol of the Christ mind, standing for an alternative thought system.
- He manipulates symbols such as words, and deals with the realm of duality and perception.
- He operates in response to the separation, and symbolizes the Atonement or God's Answer to the problem of separation.
- He fills numerous symbolic *roles*, such as Healer, Comforter and Guide.

The three symbolic roles are meant to be representative only; this is not a definitive list of the roles of the Holy Spirit. Who refers to the Holy Spirit by these names? Jesus is referring mostly to Christian teachings other than the Bible. "Comforter" is used several times in the Gospel of John, and once John's Gospel says the Holy Spirit will guide us into truth, but the terms Healer and Guide are applied to Him only in later teaching. These symbolic roles represent divine care for us and divine involvement with our lives. The Holy Spirit symbolizes the fact that Something or Someone *is* watching over us. In

truth the Something is our own higher consciousness and not a divine Being Who is separate from us.

And yet, the Holy Spirit is “also described as something ‘separate,’ apart from the Father and the Son” (4:3). It is primarily later Christian theology that describes Him thus. Jesus clearly is comfortable with this description of the Holy Spirit as a separate Being because he quotes one of his sayings from the Gospels to the same effect (4:4). And yet by putting the word *separate* in quotation marks, he implies that this description is not entirely accurate or complete, which of course it is not; *nothing* about God is truly “separate.” We *experience* the Holy Spirit as a separate Being, interacting with us, communicating with us. We are meant to experience Him so. As we will learn in this chapter, however, He is actually *part of us and part of God*:

He is in communion with God always, and He is part of you (T-5.III.11:8).

He is part of the Holy Trinity, because His Mind is partly yours and also partly God's (T-5.III.1:4).

...the Holy Spirit is part of you. Created by God, He left neither God nor His creation. He is both God and you, as you are God and Him together (T-16.III.5:1-3).

In the “Clarification of Terms” at the back of the *Manual for Teachers*, we are told that He represents *both* the Father-Creator and our true Self. “He speaks for God and also for you” (C-6.4:2-4). He speaks for the Self we have disowned and dissociated. We do not recognize His Voice as our own for a long time; at first, He seems “separate” from ourselves, and only after much learning do we realize that He is not separate at all.

Jesus admits that the Holy Spirit is “difficult to understand” (4:5). One thing he is certain of, because he learned it both as a man and as one of God’s creations, is that the Universal Inspiration which is the Holy Spirit “is for all” (4:6). It is not a private thing; in fact, you cannot know this Inspiration for yourself if you do not know it is for everyone (4:7). The Holy Spirit operating in us brings us to the higher perception that is so close to knowledge that God can flow across the remaining “little gap” (4:8–10).

In a nutshell, that is the function of the Holy Spirit. He works within our mind, seemingly separate, purifying our perception and attuning it to knowledge, until knowledge can flow across that gap and reach our minds once more, bringing them back to unity, a unity in which we come to recognize that seemingly separate Voice as our Self.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The Holy Spirit is the Christ Mind which is aware of [Ur: that senses] the knowledge that lies beyond perception. ²He came into being with the separation as a protection, inspiring the Atonement principle [Ur: the beginning of the Atonement] at the same time. ³Before that there was no need for healing, for [Ur: and] no one was comfortless. ⁴The Voice of the Holy Spirit is the Call to Atonement, or the restoration of the integrity of the mind. ⁵When the Atonement is complete and the whole Sonship is healed there will be no call to return. ⁶But

what God creates is eternal. ⁷The Holy Spirit will remain with the Sons of God, to bless their creations and keep them in the light of joy.

• **Study Question** •

9. *This paragraph gives a capsule “history” of the Holy Spirit. (a) Did the Holy Spirit exist before the separation? (b) Does His current function extend beyond the separation? (c) Will He exist after the separation? (d) Will there be another separation?*

If the Father and the Son exist only in the pure realm of knowledge, the unique characteristic of the Holy Spirit is that He bridges the gap of separation we have imagined. Before the separation there was no need of anything to function as a bridge; there was no gap. Now, after the separation seemed to happen, the Holy Spirit fills a real need. He retains full awareness of knowledge (5:1), and yet He works in the world of perception and illusion. He came into being as the Answer to the separation, initiating the Atonement principle (5:2). His function is protective (5:2), healing (5:3), and restorative (5:4); prior to the separation, there was no need for anything like that (5:3). He seems to be a special creation, created by God in response to the separation, in order to correct and undo it (C-6.1:2, C-6.2:1 and T-5.II.2:5). He is the “Call to return” (5:5).

Once that correcting work is done there will be no need for a Call to return, but that does not mean the Holy Spirit will cease to exist. “What God creates is eternal” (5:6); therefore, being a creation of God, the Holy Spirit will continue, but with a new function. “And then the Voice is gone, no longer to take form but to return to the eternal Formlessness of God” (C-6.5:8). He will remain with us “to bless [our] creations and keep them in the light of joy” (5:7). He will, in effect, prevent the separation from happening again. Keeping us in the “light of joy” means keeping our minds continually open to God and to the flow of His love to us and through us. He keeps “them,” which may refer to the Sons, to the creations of the Sons, or (as I believe) to both.

Once again, I’d like to call attention to how Jesus characterizes the eternal state as one of *joy and light*. This differs from some other spiritual traditions, that portray the ultimate state as one of nothingness. As Deepak Chopra expresses it in *How to Know God*, “... there is no joy, compassion, light, or truth” in “Stage Seven,” while the Course says we are kept “in the light of joy.”

Paragraph 6

6. ¹God honored even the miscreations of His children because they had made them. ²But He also blessed His children with a way of thinking [about them] that could raise their perceptions so high [Ur: until they became so lofty that] they could reach almost back to Him. ³The Holy Spirit is the Mind of the Atonement. ⁴He represents a state of mind close enough to One-mindedness that transfer to it is at last possible. [Ur: As you well know, transfer depends on

common elements in the old learning and the new situation to which it is transferred.] ⁵Perception is not knowledge, but it can be transferred to knowledge, or cross over into it. ⁶It might even be more helpful here to use the literal meaning of transferred or “carried over,” since the last step is taken by God.

• Study Question •

10. *What are the two parts of God's response to the separation?*

God honored even our miscreations, which is another word for our projected illusions; miscreation and projection are synonymous (T-2.I.3:8; T-2.II.2:5). He honored them just because *we* made them (6:1). He does not attack or annihilate our miscreations. Yet, He did not leave us lost in those illusions. In the Holy Spirit, God also gave us “a way of thinking [about those miscreations] that could raise their perceptions so high they could reach almost back to Him” (6:2–3). He represents that way of thinking, that “state of mind close enough to One-mindedness that transfer to it is at last possible” (6:4). There are enough “common elements” or areas of overlap between true perception and knowledge that God can gently lift us beyond perception to full knowledge. The Holy Spirit represents, or stands for, that state of mind; He speaks for it and acts in its place until our minds are ready to take over that role. When our minds have been gently coerced into alignment with His, God takes the last step and carries us over from perception into knowledge (6:6).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The Holy Spirit, the shared Inspiration of all the Sonship, induces a kind of perception in which many elements are like those in the Kingdom of Heaven itself:

²First, its universality is perfectly clear, and no one who attains [Ur: receives] it could believe for one instant that sharing it involves anything but gain.

³Second, it is incapable of attack and is therefore truly open. ⁴This means that although it does not engender knowledge, it does not obstruct it in any way. [Ur: There is a point at which sufficient quantitative changes produce real qualitative differences. The next point requires real understanding, because it is the point at which the shift occurs.]

⁵Finally, it points the way beyond the healing that it brings, and leads the mind beyond its own integration toward the paths of creation. ⁶It is at this point that sufficient quantitative change occurs to produce a real qualitative shift.

• Study Question •

11. In sentence 6, what do you think is meant by "quantitative change," and what do you think is meant by a "qualitative shift"?

As we've been told before, the Holy Spirit generates a new kind of perception in our minds that closely resembles the knowledge of Heaven (7:1). Jesus emphasizes again (see 4:6) that the Holy Spirit transforms perception for *everyone* by calling Him "the shared Inspiration of all the Sonship" (7:1). Whether or not we personalize this shared Inspiration as a Person in the Holy Trinity is, I believe, optional. For me, with my fairly traditional Christian background, thinking of this Power that works in our minds as the Holy Spirit, Whom I refer to as "He" (a Person), seems very natural. I believe, however, that in calling the Holy Spirit "the shared Inspiration of all the Sonship," Jesus is pulling our conceptions away from the anthropomorphic notions held by many Christians, and pulling them toward a more abstract conception of the Holy Spirit as a Divine Source of Inspiration within our minds. I will sometimes follow the example of the Course, and refer to the Holy Spirit as "He"; at other times, I may refer to this activity of Divine Mind as "It."

How does the perception induced by the Holy Spirit resemble Heaven's knowledge? Three points of resemblance are presented:

- First, the perception is *clearly universal*. No one who attains this perception can doubt that sharing it is gain, not loss (7:2). It is a "shared Inspiration." When you truly see any person or situation with the vision of the Holy Spirit, you automatically recognize that what you are seeing applies equally to everyone and everything.
- Second, this perception *cannot attack*, and therefore is truly open to the influx of knowledge; that is, it does not present any obstacle to knowledge (7:3-4). In this kind of perception, you see that there is only one Power, one Life; there are no enemies, no opposing power of any kind. Attack is impossible because there is no "other" to attack or be attacked by.
- Third, this perception *draws the mind beyond individual healing into creation*. This is the crucial point, "the point at which the shift occurs." Our mind has accumulated a sufficient quantity of examples or instances of perceived wholeness resulting in *healing* that something clicks into place in our minds; a *real shift* occurs, and the mind locks in to true perception and opens to the realm of knowledge.

These three points are marvelous touchstones for testing the validity of any new perceptions we may gain in our spiritual seeking. Is it universal? Is it free from attack? Does it draw us past our own healing into extension to others? If any apparently "spiritual" teaching does not meet these three criteria, the odds are high that the perception is coming from the ego, masquerading as a source of spiritual wisdom.

Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

When our perceptions have shifted to this extent, moving from wrong-mindedness to right-mindedness, our mind is open to “a real qualitative shift” (7:6), a move beyond perception to true knowledge.

The practical application of all this is that, in situation after situation, we need to remember to turn within, to practice mental vigilance. We need to listen for the Voice of the Holy Spirit, teaching us to perceive from the point of view of oneness and freedom from all attack. We need to entrain our minds in one instance after another of healing and wholeness and, as we allow Him to teach us to heal, we too shall be healed.

Answer Key

1. It was in T-4.IV.8:1: "Have you really considered how many opportunities you have had to gladden yourself, and how many of them you have refused?"
2. Fear and love cannot coexist (they cannot be part of the same whole state).
You cannot be wholly fearful and live (fear cannot be a whole state).
Therefore, the only whole state is love.

The only whole state is love.

Love and joy are the same thing.

Therefore, the only whole state is joy.

3. "Every beneficent thought" of every brother in every place is blessing *me*. Therefore, I should feel gratitude and want to bless them in return.
4. No written answer is expected.
5. That we cannot **have** revelation if we do not choose to **be** wholly joyous is explained by the following logical sequence of statements:
There is no difference between having and being.
Therefore, you cannot have what you do not choose to be.
Revelation is an experience of pure joy.
Therefore, you cannot have revelation unless you choose to be wholly joyous.
6. On a form level you "lose" the toaster oven. On a thought level you gave away love (symbolized physically by the toaster oven). Therefore, the idea of love became *reinforced* in you.
7. Based on the preceding paragraph, we invite the Holy Spirit when we realize that giving is not loss but gain. In a word, generosity is the invitation to the Holy Spirit. We invite Him by giving to others; that is, by recognizing their true nature as creations of God.
8. The Father and the Son deal with creation and oneness. They have nothing to do with the realm of error and duality. The Holy Spirit deals with the realm of symbols and images, i.e., with the realm of perception. Therefore, He judges, because judgment is necessary to the realm of perception. The Holy Spirit also symbolizes (stands for, represents) our right mind or the Christ mind. It is as if the Holy Spirit is a "stand-in" for our true Self until we are able to recognize that Self as our own Identity.
9. (a) No (b) No (c) Yes (d) No, not if He does His job, since His job is to keep us in the light of joy, to keep us in the state of revelation.
10. God's dual response to the separation:
Part 1: He honored our miscreations—He didn't abolish, destroy, overpower what we had done.
Part 2: He gave us a way of thinking—the Holy Spirit's—that could raise our perceptions high enough to once again receive knowledge.

Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

11. A *quantitative change* refers to a change within the realm of perception, from less healed perception to more healed perception. A *qualitative shift* refers to a more fundamental shift from perception to knowledge.