

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 13, Section VIII

From Perception to Knowledge

Preview of this Section

Now that the sight of the real world has inspired us, the Course moves on to briefly discuss what lies beyond it, which is *Heaven*. Heaven is the realm of *knowledge* while the real world is *perfect perception*. As lofty as perception can become, it can never become knowledge. God must take the last step (T-13.VIII.3:2), which takes us from perfect perception to knowledge or from the real world to Heaven. Outside of time, where God is, the journey has already been completed, and nothing remains to be done.

We are engaged in a process of healing our minds. Heaven and perfect knowledge cannot be known in this world, and so need not be part of our individual concern. Even the real world is *the end of the journey* for us, and therefore not a realistic goal on a day-to-day basis, although it is the ultimate goal for all of us. In our daily life in this world, “be you content with healing” (7:1). Don’t beat yourself up for not being perfect. Instead, use each situation of your life as a means for healing. Our immediate goal is not to be without an ego, but to be without *guilt* about having an ego.

The Manual for Teachers discusses the end of the world, in which, for a moment, the real world is completely seen by every mind, and then dissolves in the knowledge of Heaven. Even in presenting that topic, it gives us the same advice about not being preoccupied with these final things, and tells us to be content to deal with the practical issues, the small healings, of our daily life¹ (see M-14.4:3–8).

A preoccupation with the final goal, a constant anxious tension because we have not yet arrived, is simply inappropriate. We have many intermediate lessons to learn, and our attention should be on those immediate lessons, not on the end of the journey. We are in school, learning to be *guiltless* and to see guiltlessness everywhere; the real world is the graduation ceremony. But how will we ever

¹ “The final lesson, which brings the ending of the world, cannot be grasped by those not yet prepared to leave the world and go beyond its tiny reach. What, then, is the function of the teacher of God in this concluding lesson? He need merely learn how to approach it; to be willing to go in its direction. He need merely trust that, if God’s Voice tells him it is a lesson he can learn, he can learn it. He does not judge it either as hard or easy. His Teacher points to it, and he trusts that He will show him how to learn it” (M-14.4:3-8).

learn the lesson of guiltlessness if we are constantly guilty about not having graduated yet? Our focus must be on learning how to approach that state of mind, on being willing, in one moment after another, to continue that process. Each miracle of forgiveness and healing is another piece of evidence telling us of the existence of our total innocence (10:6). It brings us closer to that final, irrevocable change of mind; it moves us in the right direction. And that is all we need be concerned about.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹All healing [therapy] is release from the past. ²That is why the Holy Spirit **is** the only Healer [therapist]. ³**He teaches that the past does not exist**, a fact which belongs to the sphere of knowledge, and which therefore no one in the world can know [*no-one in the world knows*]. ⁴It would indeed be impossible to **be** in the world with this knowledge. ⁵For the mind that knows this unequivocally knows also **that** it dwells in eternity, and utilizes no perception at all. ⁶It therefore does not consider **where** it is, because the concept “where” does not mean anything to it. ⁷It knows that it is **everywhere**, just as it has **everything**, and **forever**.

• Study Question •

1. *Why is it impossible, in this world, to know that the past does not exist?*

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We can understand, from our study of the earlier sections of this chapter, why sentence 1 must be true. If separation from God and one another is our apparent problem, and if “Only the past can separate” (T-13.VI.6:8), then healing our illusions of separation must involve freeing us from the past in which separation is rooted. Guilt, too, is tied to the past. If you saw yourself as freshly born in this instant, what would there be to be guilty of? If you saw your brother that way, what would there be for which to condemn him?

Those earlier sections have told us again and again to release the past, to let it go, to realize that it no longer exists and therefore cannot affect us. Yet it seems difficult for us to do that, and perhaps we feel a little guilty because we can't seem to grasp this idea that the past does not exist. This paragraph offers us a little appreciation of our difficulty. It points out that to actually *know* that the past does not exist is impossible in this world! With a little reordering of the words, sentence 3 says, “No one in the world can know” “that the past does not exist” (1:3). That lets us off the hook. We are not actually being asked to *know* it; we are simply asked to move toward that knowledge.

We are asked to act on what the Holy Spirit tells us is true (that there is no past) although we do not yet know that for ourselves, and each time we do, we will receive evidence that what He tells us is indeed a fact. To use the imagery of a college science course, to us the statement “The past does not exist” is still a theory, not yet a proven fact, and we are engaged in lab work, doing experiments that will prove the theory to us.

The ego thought system, with which we have all completely identified, is made up of guilt and fear. Belief in the reality of the past, as support for guilt and judgment, is an integral part of this thought system. And the ego thought system is what holds this world together. Therefore, believing in the past is what keeps us here (1:4). If we *knew* the past does not exist, we would no longer think we were egos; if we were no longer egos, the world would not exist for us. We wouldn't be here. If a mind possessed the sure knowledge that the past does not exist, it would not be in this world, because the world is built on a belief in the reality of the past.

We are not expected to know the truth about the past while we are living in this world; we are simply being asked to be willing to continue to open ourselves to that knowledge.

This is why we need the Holy Spirit (1:2). The knowledge that the past does not exist, the knowledge of Heaven and eternity, must come from outside of the ego thought system. It is part of "the sphere of knowledge" (1:3). In other words, this knowledge belongs to Heaven, not to the world.

A mind with this knowledge would be outside of time and space (1:5) without any awareness of where or when. Space would not be part of its conception (1:6). Nor would the concept "when" mean anything to a mind without the past (see also T-13.IV.7:7).

Now let's face it: that doesn't describe you or me, does it? "Where" and "when" are concepts that occupy most of our thinking and delineate how we perceive things. "When will I become enlightened?" is a question of vital importance to the spiritual seeker, yet it is totally without relevance to the enlightened mind.

We need an injection from a thought system outside of the closed system of the ego, and that is the function of the Holy Spirit. He is the only Healer because He bridges time and eternity, Heaven and earth. He is the communication link between us and a thought system so alien to us it is inconceivable. Yet by opening to Him, listening to His Voice, and doing as He says, we can validate the truth of what He tells us. If we struggle to achieve inner peace from within the ego thought system we will always fail. Opening ourselves to the Holy Spirit, or to "a higher Power," is an essential part of the process.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The very real difference between perception and knowledge becomes quite apparent if you consider this: There is **nothing** partial about knowledge. ²Every aspect is whole, and therefore **no aspect is separate**. ³**You** are an aspect of knowledge, being in the Mind of God, Who **knows** you. ⁴All knowledge **must** be yours, for in you **is** all knowledge. ⁵Perception, at its loftiest, is **never** complete. ⁶Even the perception of the Holy Spirit, as perfect as perception **can** be, is without meaning in Heaven. ⁷Perception can reach **everywhere** under His guidance, for the vision of Christ beholds **everything** in light. ⁸Yet no perception, however holy, will last **forever**.

• **Study Question** •

2. (a) *Contrast the descriptions given in this paragraph of perception and knowledge.*
- (b) *Though the Course says separation is unreal, we nevertheless continue to see separation or duality, and feel imperfect because we do. How can the understanding that our journey is "from perception to knowledge" help us accept this apparent imperfection?*

Now we're getting to the central thought of this section, "the very real difference between perception and knowledge" (2:1). Understanding this can help us understand the apparent discrepancies between what the Course says is true of us, on the one hand, and what we experience here in the world, on the other. We live in a realm of perception, moving towards the realm of knowledge, and everything along the way is never complete until we reach the end, in which we have accepted our completeness.

Perception is our only means of 'knowing' anything in this world. It is tied to the senses. Perception gives us an *interpretation* of reality; it does not reveal reality itself:

You can see in many ways because perception involves interpretation, and this means that it is not whole or consistent (T-3.III.2:3).

If anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact, it is never justified. (M-17.8:6).

Perception is a representation of reality similar to a reflection in a mirror. It always has an aspect of separation in it, because perception always involves two, the perceiver and the perceived.

Knowledge is total. It arises from identity and being. The only thing I can truly *know* is my Self, which is what I am. Knowledge exists only in unity and oneness; there is no aspect of separation in it. In the realm of knowledge I am not a separate being, I am "an aspect of knowledge" (2:3). Because I am part of knowledge Itself, which is Being, which is God, all knowledge must be in me (2:4). Whatever I *am*, I *know*. Perception isn't involved in knowledge, because nothing exists outside me to be perceived as a separate object.

We're talking very high stuff here. We're talking about where we are headed, fully aware that we don't know we're already there, and that we think we are something other than this. This is a description of how the Holy Spirit sees us, and it is strange and alien to us, almost inconceivable. Yet all we need to do is to allow it in, to choose to think, "Maybe so. Maybe I'm not what I think I am." And gradually, the Transformer of Perceptions will train our mind to think with Him.

We are caught in a world made up of our misperceptions. The Holy Spirit begins with us where we are, and gradually transforms our perceptions, so that where we previously perceived guilt and attack, we now perceive innocence and love. Our perception shifts slowly, situation by situation, and each time we find the thought of the Holy Spirit validated in our experience we are drawing nearer to a total and radical shift of our minds. Yet all of this, even the Holy Spirit's

version of perception, is still short of knowledge itself (2:5–6). But that is OK; gradually perfecting our perception is an essential part of the process.

Throughout the entire process of having our perceptions transformed by the Holy Spirit, there will always be this lingering sense of incompleteness. Dimly aware that reality is Absolute Oneness, we continually are seeing duality and apparent separation, even in the Holy Spirit's perception. This section is telling us that the sense of incompleteness is okay. Knowledge, or awareness of perfect oneness, is not possible in this world. To achieve knowledge we will have to leave the world; but we aren't prepared to leave it yet! We have to go through the preparation process, which consists of transforming our perceptions to the point at which the renewed perception has reached everywhere and touched on everything. Once that has happened, we are completely willing to let go of the world entirely.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Perfect perception, then, has many elements **in common** with knowledge, making transfer **to** it possible. ²Yet the last step must be taken by God, because the last step in your redemption, which **seems** to be in the future, **was** accomplished by God in your creation. ³The separation has **not** interrupted it. ⁴Creation cannot **be** interrupted. ⁵The separation is merely a faulty formulation of reality, **with no effect at all**. ⁶The miracle, without a function in Heaven, **is** needful here. ⁷**Aspects** of reality can still be seen, and they will replace aspects of **unreality**. ⁸Aspects of reality can be seen **in everything and everywhere**. ⁹Yet only God can gather them together, by crowning them as one with the final gift of eternity.

• Study Question •

3. (a) *What is the connection between perfecting our perception and knowledge? (b) In a miracle, an aspect of reality replaces an aspect of unreality in our perception. Explain what you think is meant by an "aspect of reality." (See also 4:6.)*

“Perfect perception” is like seeing a perfect *reflection of reality in the world*. Like knowledge, it extends everywhere and encompasses everything.

Imagine that you have been looking at everything in a dirty mirror, cracked and warped, so that everything you have been seeing is distorted. Now, you've cleaned all the dirt off the mirror. You've rebuilt the mirror and made it perfect, with no flaws that distort what it reflects. But you are still seeing just the reflection, and not the thing itself. That cleaned-up reflection is like the real world.

Cleaning away the dirt and reforming the mirror of our mind is the work we must do, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit to show us how to do it. At the start we aren't even aware that the mirror is twisted, cracked and covered with dirt; we think what we are seeing is part of reality and not something projected

from our own minds. So the work begins with showing us the dirt, showing us the severe distortion that fear has introduced into our perceptions of things.

As long as we are looking at the dirty, twisted mirror and thinking what it shows us is real, we will remain terrified of the ugly picture. If at that point someone suggested that what we are seeing is just a reflection of reality, and that we could turn and see the reality itself, we would immediately reject the thought because to us, the reality must be something ugly and terrible. We don't want to see it! That's why we have to go through the process of first cleaning up the mirror. When that is done, when perception has been clarified, what we see in the mirror will be so attractive we will have no desire to remain any longer staring at the reflection, and we will turn to Reality Itself.

That is the way that correcting our perceptions will lead us to knowledge. True perception "has many elements in common with knowledge" (3:1); that is, in true perception what we perceive is an accurate reflection of knowledge, and therefore it facilitates our transition to knowledge. As much as we might like to jump straight into knowledge, the transfer to knowledge isn't even possible until perception has been purified (3:1).

And yet, taking us from perception to knowledge is God's responsibility (3:2). We don't have any part in it. The Course seems to be saying here, "Forget about attaining perfect knowledge and just get on with the business of cleaning up your perceptions. Don't think of knowledge as something you must attain; that's God's business."

Why is that? Jesus "explains" the reason here, but it is another one of those passages that twists your mind inside out because it is coming from that alien perspective that is completely outside of time and space. So don't be upset if you don't quite understand it; we aren't really expected to.

What He says is that God must take the last step because He's already taken it! You and I cannot possibly do something that has already been done, nor are we expected to!

The instant you were created, you were complete. God cannot create anything incomplete. So there is nothing for you to do about making it so; it's a done deal. As a matter of fact, I'll let you in on a secret; that's what you will see in the mirror once you've got it all cleaned up: your own completion, your own perfection as God's creation. It has always been there since God created it, but the dirt on the mirror has kept you from seeing it.

Reality has never changed. You've just been looking at a twisted image of it in the mirror (3:5). Only the image in the mirror is distorted; the reality has not been affected at all. Separation is just the image in the mirror, as if your mirror were cracked so that the one person looking into it sees dozens of copies of himself. When we repair the mirror of perception, what will be reflected is the One Self that has always been there.

It isn't easy to accept that our entire experience in this separated world is nothing more than "a faulty formulation" (3:5) that has left Heaven's reality totally unchanged. That's why learning the Course is a gradual process, cleaning up first this spot on the mirror, then that, then another, until gradually the entire,

unified picture begins to appear to us. At first we may get fascinated with the mirror—"Oh! Isn't it wonderful how the Holy Spirit fixed this situation, healed this relationship, transformed that individual!" That's okay as long as it keeps us cleaning up the mirror. But as the whole picture starts to appear, our sights will begin to lift to what it is showing us. We'll begin to realize that there is nothing to fix; in each experience of a miracle, all that changes is our perceptions, and what they show us is an eternal reality that has *always* existed behind the distorted perceptions, even when they were at their worst.

The miracle is cleaning a spot on the mirror, but in Heaven there are no spots that need cleaning because it is already perfect (3:6). There are no distortions in Heaven—indeed, no mirror! (That is, no perception. (1:5)) This course is about miracles, not about Heaven. It is a course in cleaning up the spots on the mirror, a course in transforming our perceptions here, in this world. "The miracle...is needful here" in this world, in this mess in which we have perceived ourselves to be (3:6). Our purpose in the world is not to be spotless, but to notice the spots and clean them up.

As we go through this cleanup, this mind training, we are still going to see "aspects of reality" (3:7): little fractured images in the cracked and dirty mirror of perception. We'll still see separate individuals, people walking around in bodies doing things to each other and being done to by each other. Yet as we let aspects of reality replace the aspects of unreality we have manufactured, in each small aspect we will see an image of the Whole, like a hologram, or like the Face of Christ reflected in that little fragment of the mirror.

We begin to discover that when we clean up any part of the mirror, we keep seeing the same Face! "In everything and everywhere" we see the face of the Son of God (3:8). And we begin to realize that it isn't the face that is cracked, it is the mirror. It isn't the Son of God who exists in separate parts; it is just our perception that is cracked, seeing separate parts where there is only One.

We can cooperate in correcting our perception, but only God can effect the transformation of the perception of separate selves into the knowledge of the one Son of God (3:9) In my mind I envision myself looking into this mirror, all clean now but still cracked. Everywhere I am seeing the Face of Christ reflected in everything and everyone, and I realize that all the little images are reflecting just one Reality. And suddenly, God fuses the mirror! The lines of demarcation between all the aspects of reality disappear, and there is only one image remaining, One Son, One Self, One Christ. And it is Myself, whole as ever. And with gratitude, with unbroken love, I turn from the mirror and forget it, lost in the Unity of God.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Apart from the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has no function. ²He is not separate from either, being in the Mind of Both, and knowing that Mind is one. ³He is a Thought of God, and God has **given** Him to you because He has **no** Thoughts He does not share. ⁴His message speaks of timelessness in time, and that is why Christ's vision looks on

everything with love. ⁵Yet even Christ's vision is not His reality. ⁶The golden **aspects** of reality that spring to light under His loving gaze are partial glimpses of the Heaven that lies beyond them.

• **Study Question** •

4. *When this paragraph speaks of the "vision" of Christ it is speaking of perfect perception; when it speaks of His "reality" it is talking about knowledge. In that light, explain the function of the Holy Spirit in regard to perception and knowledge.*

Elsewhere the Course says the Holy Spirit is a *communication link* (T-6.I.19:1). Think of a telephone. A telephone is just a means for two people, separated by distance, to communicate. Without the people on both ends, it has no function. Likewise, the Spirit's only function (4:1) is to continually join the Son, who believes he is separate, with the Father. He is the constant reminder of our oneness with God, which we have never lost, although we believe we have.

The Holy Spirit unites our mind with God's; He knows all Mind is one. The part of Mind that thinks it is "me," a separate individual, is continually joined to the One Mind by this link called the Holy Spirit (4:2). Because our mind is one with God's, and because God shares all His thoughts, anything in His Mind must be in ours; therefore, the Holy Spirit dwells in us all (4:3).

Within my mind, and yours, there is this Thought of wholeness, this awareness of perfect knowledge and oneness, this memory of the truth. When we take our dark thoughts of separation and attack, and we turn to the Holy Spirit, it is to this Thought of God within our own mind that we turn. Looking at things in the Light of that Thought, our perception is changed; we see things differently; we see Love everywhere.

The moment when our thoughts mesh with the Thought of the Holy Spirit is what the Course calls a *holy instant*. The holy instant is not a very short piece of time; it is a moment of *timelessness*, a moment outside of time entirely:

Start now to practice your little part in separating out the holy instant... To learn to separate out this single second, and to experience it as timeless, is to begin to experience yourself as not separate (T-15.II.6:1, 3).

In the holy instant we are free from past and future. We see only that which always is, that which is eternal, that which is unalterable and unchanging.

Christ sees what is eternal, unchanging, and true; quite naturally, therefore, Christ loves everything He sees (4:4). The holy instant is a moment when you or I share that vision; we perceive that the thoughts of separation in others, and in ourselves, have not changed the essential nature of what we are as God's creation. We understand, in a flash and perhaps only for a brief moment, that our perception of separation is a mistake, and nothing has really changed (3:5).

In the holy instant we are seeing Christ with Christ's vision. And yet, Jesus tells us here, even that vision of Christ is not the *reality* of Christ (4:5). Perhaps I see my brother and myself as whole and complete in God, but I am still seeing separated *aspects* of God—glorious, wonderful, and precious—but still not the

whole picture. These visions are still only “partial glimpses” of the ultimate reality (4:6).

This is really the same thought we encountered in the previous section of the Text, in discussing the term *real world*. Ultimately the world is not real at all. But in this world, we can see various parts of it, people and events in our lives, through the vision of Christ. We will see them as manifesting some facet of God, or of the Christ Who is God's creation. What we see is in accord with reality but it is not the Reality itself; that is something beyond perception, something that lies behind the aspects we see, in the realm of Heaven or eternity, outside of time entirely.

While we are in this world, seeing with the vision of Christ or seeing the real world is the highest aspiration we can have.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹This is the miracle of creation; *that it is one forever*. ²Every miracle you offer to the Son of God is but the true perception of one **aspect** of the whole. ³Though every aspect is the whole, you cannot **know** this until you **see** that every aspect **is the same**, perceived in the **same** light and **therefore** one. ⁴Everyone seen **without** the past thus brings you nearer to the end of time by bringing healed and healing sight into the darkness, and **enabling the world to see**. ⁵For light must come into the darkened world to make Christ's vision possible even here. ⁶Help Him to give His gift of light to all who think they wander in the darkness, and let Him gather them into His quiet sight that makes them one.

• Study Question •

5. (a) *Can you find a fairly good description or definition of a miracle in this paragraph?*
(b) *"Every aspect is the whole" (5:3), but what is necessary before we can know this?*
(c) *What seems to be the way that the world will be brought from perception to knowledge, based on this paragraph?*

Jesus here uses the word *miracle* in two senses: in the first sentence, it is in the common sense of a wonder or a marvel; in the second sentence, He uses it in the sense specific to the Course, a shift in perception of the world. He says first that the wonder or marvel of creation is that it is one forever (5:1); that is something we can't fully comprehend from our separated point of view. By contrast, the miracle as we experience it here is simply correctly seeing one part of the unity of creation or, in simple terms, perceiving one person as the holy Son of God they are. The word “aspect” here refers to an individual or person.

In this sense you could define a miracle as a moment of true perception or a moment in which we perceive the Christ in another or ourselves.

Jesus is not trying to make light of our experiences of miracles. He is not trying to make us feel small by telling us we are still not experiencing the reality

of Christ, that it is “just a partial glimpse.” Indeed, His intent is exactly the opposite; He wants us to see that our progression through partial glimpses, which gradually grow longer and longer, more and more frequent, is an essential part of the process. He goes on to show us just that in what follows.

We have to go through the process of seeing one person in the light, and then another, and another, until we begin to realize that “every aspect is the same” (5:3). Every little fragment of the cracked mirror of perception is showing us the same holy face. Only as we come to see the same Christ in everyone will we begin to realize that we’re really seeing only one Person.

And so with each miracle we experience, we see a brother “without the past” and thus bring everyone nearer to the end of time (5:4). That is our entire function in this world. This is our part in helping Christ to enlighten mankind. Each time we forgive a brother, or forgive ourselves, we are bringing the final healing of the world that much closer. Every person we interact with gives us this opportunity:

Whenever two Sons of God meet, they are given another chance at salvation. Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself. (T-8.III.4:6-7).

The form this takes can range from giving a kindly smile to an in-depth encounter. It doesn’t mean we have to preach the “gospel” of ACIM to everyone we meet, at least not in words. It *does* mean that we learn to continually open our minds to the true perception of the Holy Spirit, to choose for that moment to let go of past and future, to relinquish judgment, and simply to allow the love of God to be present in ourselves, in that situation.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹They are all the same; all beautiful and equal in their holiness. ²And He will offer them unto His Father as they were offered unto Him. ³There is **one** miracle, as there is **one** reality. ⁴And every miracle you do contains them all, as every aspect of reality you see blends quietly into the one Reality of God. ⁵The only miracle that ever was is God’s most holy Son, created in the one Reality that is his Father. ⁶Christ’s vision is His gift to you. ⁷His Being is His Father’s gift to Him.

• Study Question •

6. *Explain what you think is meant by "Christ's vision" as contrasted to "His Being." Include the sense in which both of these things are "gifts."*

“They are all the same” (6:1). He is referring here to the persons mentioned in the last sentence of paragraph 5, the unenlightened masses “who think they wander in the darkness” (5:6). He is referring to the very person you think he cannot possibly be referring to, the person you would never think of as “holy.” When you see with the vision of Christ, everyone you meet is “beautiful and equal in their holiness” (6:1). That perception of people is the vision of Christ, and

anything less than that contains some measure of the ego's judgment, some perception of difference and therefore of separation.

The miracle of Christ's vision occurs when I am willing to take my perceptions of difference and separation and to bring them, within my mind, to the Holy Spirit. There, I acknowledge these perceptions as something of my own making; this is only my interpretation of the person. I decide to be willing to let that perception go. I allow the Holy Spirit to remind me that this person is a perfectly holy part of God's creation. That moment of willingness to perceive differently—a moment of *undoing*—opens the way to the miracle, in which my grip on my distorted perceptions loosens enough to allow the Holy Spirit's vision, however briefly, to take their place.

In that instant, that holy perception in my mind becomes an offering to God (6:2). Just as in creation the Father offered every aspect of the Sonship to Christ, now Christ offers that Sonship back to the Father. In that moment, in the one Mind of the Son, there is a joining together in wholeness, or really, an awareness or experience of the wholeness that is always present. It is a reflection of Heaven, a little glimpse of oneness that is Heaven's reality:

Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within (T-18.VI.1:5-6).

“There is one miracle” (6:3), and only one: it is “God's most holy Son” (6:5). You are the miracle (T-3.V.10:9); your true Self is the single Son of God who is our true Identity. Every miracle we experience in this world is a reflection of that one miracle. Every miracle is an experience of myself, or of another, or of both, as aspects of God's Son (6:5).

Therefore, every single miracle contains all miracles within it (6:4). They are all the same thing, seen in different situations and different forms. Your “little miracle” or my “little miracle” is not little at all; it is the whole thing, each one contains the original miracle, the holy Son of God, my true Self, your true Self.

It is not as though we are laboring along here, piling up one little miracle after another, trying to piece together the Son of God out of billions of broken fragments. Each miracle is an experience that tells us that the Whole *already* exists. The miracle changes nothing; it is a recognition of what is always so:

A miracle can make no change at all. But it can make what always has been true be recognized by those who know it not; and by this little gift of truth but let to be itself, the Son of God allowed to be himself, and all creation freed to call upon the Name of God as one (T-26.VII.20:4-5).

A miracle is a realization that the appearance of separation and difference is just an illusion hiding the Reality of God.

God gave Christ His *Being* (6:7). It exists, now and always, unchanged, unchanging and unchangeable. God gave this gift in creation and will never rescind it.

Christ gives us the *vision* of that Being, here in this world (6:6). It enables us to see beyond our perceptions of separation, difference, judgment and attack to

perceive the unblemished purity of our Being, in ourselves and in others. It is a glimpse of that unchanging Reality. It is an awareness of our sameness, our oneness, and our holiness.

Transition

The rest of the section deals with a reaction we may possibly have to this call to true perception: discouragement, or despair of achieving what it calls for.

Sometimes we get tired of being continually *in the process* of recovery and healing. The deeper we go in the Course, the more we become aware of how all-pervading the ego thought system is. How often do we see everyone *only* with love, in the present, without reference to past or future? How often do we perceive Christ in them? How often do we look upon anyone as beautiful and equal in his or her holiness to the holiest person we can imagine, even to Jesus?

We begin to get discouraged. Oh, perhaps we have these moments, these holy instants, when for a brief moment the vision of Christ breaks through, but they seem few and far between compared to the amount of time we spend locked into the ego's perception of things. We're tired of this long process of healing our perceptions; we want to break through to the final knowledge of Heaven. We want all this to be over with. We grow discontent with the process of healing. Jesus replies directly now to this discontent; it is really the central theme of this entire section.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Be you content with healing, for Christ's gift you **can** bestow, and your Father's gift you **cannot** lose. ²Offer Christ's gift to everyone and everywhere, for miracles, offered the Son of God through the Holy Spirit, attune **you** to reality. ³The Holy Spirit knows your part in the redemption, and who are seeking you and where to find them. ⁴Knowledge is far beyond your individual concern. ⁵You who are part of it and all of it need only realize that it is of the Father, **not** of you. ⁶Your role in the redemption **leads** you to it by re-establishing its oneness in your mind [**minds**].

• Study Question •

7. (a) *How are the facts that we cannot lose our Being and that we are able to bestow vision to others reasons for being "content with healing?"*
- (b) *While we are in time, rather than wasting our time longing for the perfection of Heaven, to what should we devote our energy?*

Our dissatisfaction with the healing process usually results in one of two things: Either we judge ourselves harshly for making so little progress, or we judge God for not healing us faster. As we are going through the process of healing, which at times seems interminable, He urges us to "be...content" (7:1).

We cannot just leap to the end of the journey; we cannot experience knowledge until our misperceptions have been healed. Since we have wrong perceptions, we belong in the healing process. Going through the undoing of our misperceptions is the ideal place for us.

Jesus speaks again of “Christ’s gift” and “your Father’s gift.” The first gift, remember, is the *vision* of our true Being, while the latter is that Being Itself (6:6–7). He says we can be content because even here, in this healing process, we cannot lose the reality of our Being. “Nothing real can be threatened” (T-In.2:2). We already are everything we need to be. There is nothing to be anxious about, nothing to fret about; we eternally have the gift of our Being. There is no risk that it can be lost: “Your spirit is never at stake because [God created it]” (T-4.I.7:9). (

Furthermore, while here in this healing process, we can give Christ’s vision to others. When I see a brother as a beautiful and equally holy Son of God, I have “bestowed” or given that vision to him or to her. The Holy Spirit in that person’s mind recognizes and receives the gift I give, even if the conscious mind of that person does not recognize it:

The idea of the Holy Spirit shares the property of other ideas because it follows the laws of the Universe of which it is a part. It is strengthened by being given away. It increases in you as you give it to your brother. Your brother does not have to be aware of the Holy Spirit in himself or in you for this miracle to occur. He may have dissociated the Call for God, just as you have. This dissociation is healed in both of you as you become aware of the Call for God in him, and thus acknowledge its being (T-5.III.2:5-10).

This is our true calling— to offer the perception of our most holy Self to everyone, everywhere (7:2). Every brother or sister is a part of us, probably not yet awakened. We have the joyful function of going around, spreading light, bestowing the vision of Christ on everyone we meet. We really are the light of the world, as Jesus said in the Gospels! (Matthew 5:14). Every miracle we offer in this way shifts us that much closer to the truth (7:2), bringing the thoughts of our minds into line with God’s Thought. The reality is always there, never at risk, never threatened by any of our mistaken perceptions.

There are people out there “seeking you,” needing the light you bring to open their minds to God. You have a very important part to play in redemption. The Holy Spirit provides each of us with individual guidance on how to play that part, where to carry it out, and with whom (7:3); we don’t have to worry about it, just let Him take care of it.

“Knowledge is far beyond your individual concern” (7:4). In being discontent and longing for knowledge we are still looking for it as *individuals*, and knowledge is something possible only in the *whole*, the one, united Son of God. Knowledge is completely out of reach to an individual. As long as I experience myself as an individual, I am limited to the realm of perception. That is exactly why this experience of perceiving the same Self in myself and in my brothers is necessary; it re-establishes the oneness of knowledge in my mind (7:6). Knowledge is not something I can possess as an individual; it can only be experienced together with all the aspects of my Self.

My individual role in the redemption is leading me back to knowledge (7:6), back to the awareness of perfect oneness, through glimpses of that oneness here and now, in time. True, my experience is imperfect. I am in recovery, in the process of healing, and I therefore do not experience myself as yet whole. Yet looking for wholeness within my individual self is the ego's solution, not God's. The startling fact is this: as an individual I cannot be saved. Other passages from the Text clarify this; you may wish to read some of them, listed below, in this light.

T-5.III.4:1-7: *Sharing* is an absolutely essential part of the process of healing. You will not find the Holy Spirit in yourself alone because his nature is a shared reality.

T-5.III.8:1-5: My real Self is not alone. When I open to the Holy Spirit to see my true Self, what I see is the Sonship, not some little part of It.

T-8.III.5:5-7: My reality is a *shared* reality, and that is why sharing and giving is an essential part of the process. If I look for wholeness in my separated self I will never find it, because a separated self is not what I really am.

The feeling of being discontent with my level of growth or my spiritual progress is really a subtle ego attempt to outdo my brothers and sisters, to leave them in the dust and make it to Heaven on my own. The Holy Spirit opens my heart to include the entire world in my desire for healing. I no longer want to be healed "in myself alone" because I have begun to realize that that little self is not who I am anyhow. Their healing *is* my healing. I come to see each miracle in which I let go of my judgment on a brother as part of my own healing. It ceases to be a chore to "put up with" all these unenlightened people around me, and becomes instead a joyful opportunity in which I can recognize my Self. It becomes something I do, not for my brother, but for myself.

Here are several more quotes from Chapter 8, Section III, that emphasize the shared nature of reality:

Never forget your responsibility to him, because it is your responsibility to yourself. Give him his place in the Kingdom and you will have yours (T-8.III.5:11-12).

The Kingdom cannot be found alone, and you who are the Kingdom cannot find yourself alone (T-8.III.6:1).

You can encounter only part of yourself because you are part of God, Who is everything (T-8.III.7:1).

Giving of yourself is the function He gave you. Fulfilling it perfectly will let you remember what you *have* of Him, and by this you will remember also what you *are* in Him. You cannot be powerless to do this, because this is your power. Glory is God's gift to you, because that is what He is. See this glory everywhere to remember what you are (T-8.III.8:4-8).

Notice the parallel in the last passage to the two gifts of vision (last sentence) and Being (next-to-last sentence) mentioned here in Chapter 13.

Giving of myself, sharing the Vision of Christ, being the Light of the world—that is my function because that is what I am: Like God my nature is to share. It is

in giving the gift of Christ—His vision—that I remember the gift of God—my own true Being.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹When you have seen your brothers as yourself you will be **released** to knowledge, having learned to **free** yourself through Him Who knows of freedom. ²Unite with me under the holy banner of His teaching, and as we grow in strength the power of God's Son will move in us, and we will leave no one untouched and no one left alone. ³And suddenly time will be over, and we will all unite in the eternity of God the Father. ⁴The holy light you saw **outside** yourself, in every miracle you offered to your brothers, will be **returned** to you. ⁵And **knowing** that the light is **in** you, **your** creations will be there with you, as you are in your Father.

• Study Question •

8. (a) *We long to be "released to knowledge," but what must come first (8:1)?*
(b) *Instead of being preoccupied with the end of the journey, what are we asked to do, and what will be the results?*

How do I arrive at perfect knowledge? Through the process of allowing the Holy Spirit to correct all my false perceptions and to replace them with His vision, in which I will see all my brothers *as myself*, as part of this larger Person that I am (8:1). It is my perception of myself as apart from my brothers, different from them, separated, and alone, that needs healing. The path to that healing is through giving or sharing this vision with everyone, through opening to the understanding that they are part of me, and not something separate at all.

Jesus goes on to share an almost mystical vision of what this process can be like, and where it leads (8:2–5).

This process of awakening we are in is a marvelous process with a marvelous outcome. As you and I unite with Jesus in our minds, aligning ourselves with His message as delivered to us by the Holy Spirit, we are engaged in a kind of holy crusade². We are carrying Love to the world, stretching forth our hands to offer miracles wherever we go. This wave of Love will grow in strength, carrying us forward, the Love reaching out in ever-widening circles until eventually no one is untouched, no one is left alone (8:2).

Then comes the last step, when “time will be over.” In that instant, we will know our oneness with God (8:3). Suddenly all the light that we till now have seen in separate glimpses, shining first in one brother, then another, will unite in one glorious, shining whole (8:5).

² "As you share my unwillingness to accept error in yourself and others, you must join the great crusade to correct it; listen to my voice, learn to undo error and act to correct it" (T-1.III.1:6).

This is the Course's vision of the end of time, the end of the world as we know it. It's a very happy vision, a very inspiring one. Jesus refers to it again in the Manual for Teachers, and with the same intent: to inspire us to get down to the business for which we are here, which is forgiveness, saving the world, and bringing all creation to this happy ending³.

The function of God's teachers, and therefore your function and my function, is "to turn hell into Heaven" (M-14.5:9). We do that simply by letting go of our silly discontent with our own imperfections as individuals and starting to give the gift, to share the vision, to extend forgiveness to everyone, everywhere. We are part of the process of bringing the world to an end, an end that will be one of joy, peace, laughter and blessing. What greater purpose could we have?

Paragraph 9

9. ¹As miracles in this world join you to your brothers, so do your creations establish your fatherhood in Heaven. ²**You** are the witness to the Fatherhood of God, and He has given you the power to create the witnesses to **yours**, which is as **His**. ³Deny a brother here, and you deny the witnesses to your fatherhood in Heaven. ⁴The miracle that God created is perfect, as are the miracles that **you** established [created] in His Name. ⁵They need no healing, nor do you, when you accept them [know them].

• Study Question •

9. *What action, on earth, reflects a denial of our creations in Heaven (see 9:1-3)?*

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Several times the Course talks about our *creations*. They were mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph, and in this one (sentences 1 and 2).

What are our *creations*? The Course is not particularly clear about this, not through any lack, but more because creations are not part of this world at all; they belong to the realm of Heaven. This very passage implies that when it says first that our creations establish our fatherhood in Heaven, and then that our creating them occurs in Heaven. Because they exist in Heaven, creations belong

³ The world will end in joy, because it is a place of sorrow. When joy has come, the purpose of the world has gone. The world will end in peace, because it is a place of war. When peace has come, what is the purpose of the world? The world will end in laughter, because it is a place of tears. Where there is laughter, who can longer weep? And only complete forgiveness brings all this to bless the world. In blessing it departs, for it will not end as it began. To turn hell into Heaven is the function of God's teachers, for what they teach are lessons in which Heaven is reflected. And now sit down in true humility, and realize that all God would have you do you can do. Do not be arrogant and say you cannot learn His Own curriculum. His Word says otherwise. His Will be done. It cannot be otherwise. And be you thankful it is so. (M-14.5:1-15).

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to the realm of knowledge rather than the realm of perception. Therefore, while we dwell in this world of perception, we necessarily have difficulty understanding what our creations are, just as we have difficulty wrapping our minds around an idea like *eternity*. I think we can clarify things a little, but it is important to realize that when the Course speaks of creations and our power to create, it is not talking about anything we do in the world.

In the Workbook there is a discussion titled “What is Creation?” (W-pII.11, just before Lesson 321) that can help us understand a bit more. Let’s take these three statements from that discussion and put them together:

Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts, in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit (W-pI.pII.11.1:1).

Creation is the holy Son of God, for in creation is His Will complete in every aspect, making every part container of the Whole (W-pI.pII.11.3:2).

We are creation; we the Sons of God (W-pI.pII.11.4:1).

From these statements, we can see that the process of creation is the process by which God’s Love extended Itself, bringing the Sonship into Being.

When God creates, He creates what is like Himself (T-2.I.2:3). The creation of God, the Sonship, therefore shares the power of extension and creation that is God’s, in an endless, infinite replication of Love. As God’s creation we are witness to (that is, evidence of) His fatherhood, and our creations are witnesses to (or evidence of) the fact that we share God’s nature and share His fatherhood. We create as God creates. Because God’s creation is perfect, the Sonship is therefore constantly extending Itself, creating more of Its own being. That is going on whether or not we are aware of it. When we finally awaken in Heaven, where we have always been, our creations will be there to welcome us.

That process of creation is *mirrored* in this world by our extension of miracles to our brothers. As I have said already, using the word “true” in the absolute sense in which the Course uses it, miracles and extensions of love in this world are not true creation—but they are a true *reflection* of creation. I believe that each time we forgive, each time we extend love, each time we welcome another brother or sister back into the Sonship, it is the reflection of an act of creation by the Sonship in Heaven. Here we see only the reflection, and that by itself is wonderful enough. When we have fully remembered, we will become aware of these miracles we have performed as the true creations of Love they are in Heaven. In our experience, perhaps, it will seem as if the miracles we do on earth are lifted up to Heaven and there become our creations(10:5); in fact, the reality of our creations already is in Heaven and the miracles are only their reflection on earth. Miracles don’t “become” our creations; what changes is that our perception of miracles changes to knowledge of creation.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Yet in this world your perfection is unwitnessed. ²God knows it, but **you** do not, and so you do not **share** His witness **to** it. ³Nor do you witness unto Him, for reality is witnessed to as one. ⁴God waits your

witness to His Son and to Himself. ⁵The miracles you do on earth are lifted up to Heaven and to Him. ⁶They witness to what you do not know, and as they reach the gates of Heaven, God will open them. ⁷For never would He leave His Own beloved Son outside them, and beyond Himself.

• **Study Question** •

10. How do the miracles we offer here, extending love and acceptance of the reality of Christ in one another, open our own way to Heaven?

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The Sonship is perfect in Heaven, as God created it. Sharing God's attribute of fatherhood, the Sonship is endlessly creating as He does. But on earth we don't see that, we do not "witness" to it (10:1-3). Love is constantly extending itself, but we may not be aware of it.

In other words, all that is lacking, if anything can be said to be lacking, is our recognition and awareness of the perfection of God and His creation, His Son; that is what God is waiting for (10:4). I think God is waiting in the sense that He refrains from unveiling His full glory, and our own, knowing that until we have truly recognized that His glory is our own, it would terrify us. When I forgive a brother and recognize Christ in him (or in myself), I am witnessing to God's Son and to God Himself. I am reflecting reality as God knows it. I am acknowledging that "only truth is true" (W-pI.152.11:1), only love is real ((T-12.I.10:1). That is a miracle, and each miracle establishes a witness to our creations in Heaven (10:5-6).

The miracles we perform give us a glimpse of what we do not yet know, but which we will one day know perfectly. Each miracle attunes us a bit more closely to the reality we cannot know until we know it all, as a whole.

Here on earth we are in the process of healing. Here, we perceive only fragments of reality, a reality that cannot be known until it is seen as a united whole. We are moving "from perception to knowledge," and the process is not over until it is over, until *all* aspects of reality are perceived as one. Let us, therefore, be content with healing. It is all we need concern ourselves with (7:4).

Let us be like cells in a body, concerned with our proper function as cells and not with the overall care of the body. Let us relate to the cells around us, communicating with them, sharing our function with them and sharing the knowledge of our function as cells. Let us be content to be God's witnesses in this world. Let us be content only to make every encounter a holy encounter, to leave no one without giving and receiving salvation (T-8.III.4:7) make the most of every opportunity to share Christ's gift of love by witnessing Him or seeing Him in everyone we meet.

• **Study Question** •

11. In one or two short paragraphs, describe what seems to you to be the main message of this section. What spoke to you?

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Answer Key

1. This is a world of perception, but a mind that knew there is no past would dwell in eternity where there is no perception. "There is no past" is a part of knowledge, and knowledge cannot exist in a sphere of perception.
2. (a) Knowledge is complete; perception is always partial. Knowledge is unified and non-dual; perception is fragmented and dualistic. Knowledge is eternal; perception is temporary.
(b) Since all perception is temporary and partial, we should not expect to experience perfection in the sphere of perception. Transforming our perception is only the preparation for knowledge.
3. (a) Perfect perception makes the transfer to knowledge possible.
(b) An aspect of reality is the Christ seen in a particular brother or sister, or in a particular situation. We are still seeing separate people but we are seeing them as reflections of the Christ, partial glimpses of Heaven.
4. The Holy Spirit, being part of God's Mind and ours, shares God's knowledge, and also shares our perceptions. He brings us, in our perception, partial glimpses of knowledge. He bridges the gap between perception and knowledge, giving us perceptions that lead to knowledge instead of away from it.
5. (a) A miracle is the true perception of one aspect of creation (5:2).
(b) We must come to recognize that the same Christ lives in everyone, which happens as we forgive each other, one person at a time (5:3).
(c) As we accept the vision of Christ for someone in our lives, it opens the way for that vision to be shared with others. Our transformed perception will contribute to the transformation of all minds, and the eventual ending of time itself (5:4–6).
6. Christ's vision refers to true perception, to the seeing of an aspect of reality within this world. His Being refers to the Reality of Christ, the whole, of which miracles offer only a partial glimpse. Christ's Being is a gift given to Him by God. Christ's vision is His gift to us in this world, enabling us to move from false to true perception, readying us to acknowledge the wholeness of Christ's Being.
7. (a) If we cannot lose our Being, there is no reason to be concerned that we do not yet experience it fully; it's not at risk. If we are able to bestow the vision of Christ, we can bring the whole world closer to its final healing. Therefore, we can be content with the process of healing, knowing that it will surely lead us to knowledge.
(b) We should devote our time to miracles, offering vision to everyone and everywhere; we should find our part in redemption and fulfill it, knowing that this is how the oneness of knowledge will be restored to our minds.

8. (a) We must learn to see (perceive) our brothers as ourselves; to recognize all the aspects of the Sonship as the same, equally holy, and therefore one.
(b) Join with Jesus in extending Christ's vision to everyone. The result will be the end of time, and the union of all beings in God.
9. Denying the Christ in a brother.
10. The miracles I offer here are a witness to God's Son. I do not yet have direct knowledge of the Son, but miracles, in which I see a brother as sinless, show me at least a part of the truth. God uses this miracle of true perception to open the way to Heaven for me.
11. **Summary.** For my summary, see the "Preview to this section" above.