

# Commentary

## ACIM® Clarification of Terms

### 1. *Mind - Spirit*

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

#### Special Note:

As an experiment this time, I've made all footnotes into *endnotes*, found at the very end, after the Legend. Robert's footnotes are numbered with small Roman numerals such as "iii."

#### Overview

This section does much what you'd expect; it defines the two terms, mind, and spirit. It also attempts to clarify the inter-relationship of these two terms while avoiding any description of them as parts of "individual consciousness." It's a potentially confusing section because it overlaps the realms of reality and illusion. I have tried to clarify things as I go along. I hope you find it helpful and that you are less confused when you finish reading, rather than *more* confused.

#### Paragraph 1

The term *mind* is used to represent the activating agent of spirit, supplying its creative energy.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>When the term is capitalized it refers to God or to Christ (i.e., the Mind of God or the Mind of Christ). <sup>3</sup>*Spirit* is the thought of God which He created like Himself. <sup>4</sup>The unified spirit is God's one Son, or Christ.

What does "activating agent" mean? The rest of the sentence says, "supplying its [the spirit's] creative energy." That seems to modify or clarify (1;1) the notion of agency. In Robert's footnote, he concludes that "it is through mind that spirit becomes an active agent" and that spirit "creates...through the energy of mind." But early in the Text (as Robert quotes), the Course seems to take the opposite view, that mind serves the spirit. It says we should place "the mind in the service of the spirit."

I find this paragraph a bit difficult. I think Robert does, too, because, in his notes on this section on the Circle Course Companions website, he takes a different point of view, stating his belief that this paragraph applies only to Mind in Heaven, God's Mind. What

makes it confusing is that the first sentence does not capitalize “mind” and then goes on to say that if the term refers to God or Christ, as in “the Mind of God,” the word *is* capitalized. That would imply that the first sentence must refer to the mind in this world—your mind and mine, for instance.

So, if we understand the first sentence as applying to *our* minds, what could it mean? I believe that, given that supposition, Robert's footnote gives the most likely interpretation. When spirit acts in this world, it does so through the agency of our minds. When spirit moves to create, it uses our minds' energy to do so. But I don't believe that that can be entirely correct either! I'll explain in a moment.

There is further confusion here, it seems to me. The Course flatly states that creation is not possible in this world (**T-17.IV.2:1**). Perhaps we could use the phrase “creative energy” in the unusual sense (for the Course) of what we typically think of as creative work in this world. On the other hand, nothing in that first sentence identifies whether it is talking about this world or the realm of Heaven. If it is talking about Heaven, the sentence could mean that God's Mind is the agent that activates spirit; it thinks spirit into being and supplies spirit with its creative energy, an energy that operates only in Heaven. The Course does say our function in Heaven is creation: “As your function in Heaven is creation, so your function on earth is healing” (T-12.VII.4:7 (FIP), T-12.X.5:2 (CE)).

As we've already mentioned, Mind capitalized *should* refer only to the Mind of God (**1:2**). (**1:3**) makes it clear that when this paragraph speaks of “spirit,” it is referring (“the thought of God”) to spirit as the creation of God's Mind (thus, *not* “the Spirit of God,” and in (**1:4**), it tells us that spirit in its Oneness is “God's one Son, or Christ.” As it seems to me, then, although (**1:1**) does not capitalize the word “mind,” it must refer to God's Mind that “activates” spirit.

Thus, to paraphrase the first sentence in the way I understand it: God's Mind is what activates our unified spirit, which is his creation, and supplies that spirit in us with its creative energy. There is no mind other than God's: “My mind is part of God's. I am very holy” (**W-35**). Our individual minds are illusions.

If I've just confused you in this discussion or left you bored to tears, please forgive me. Perhaps I got trapped in the “endless speculation” that Jesus is concerned about when we try to arrive at precise terminology!

## Paragraph 2

**2** In this world, because the mind is split, the Sons of God appear to be separate.<sup>ii</sup> <sup>2</sup>Nor do their minds seem to be joined. <sup>3</sup>In this illusory state, the concept of an “individual mind” seems to be meaningful. <sup>4</sup>It is therefore described *as if* it has two parts: spirit and ego.

Here, as in dozens of other passages, Jesus tells us “the mind is split” (**2:1**). Yet in at least one place, he denies that mind *can be* split: “If you are as God created you, then there has been no separation of your mind from His, no split between your mind and other minds, and only unity within your own” (**W-110.4:2**). Here's another example of the seeming inconsistency of the Course. I explain this one by saying that the mind

cannot be split, but we can *believe* it is split between spirit and ego, and that belief has disastrous results, including the result given here: “the Sons of God appear to be separate” (2:1). Our “personal” mind seems split between ego and spirit, and it also seems to be separate from (not joined with) other individual “Sons of God” (2:2).

This state of things is “wholly illusory,” and only in this illusion can the concept of an “individual mind” seem meaningful (2:3). This illusory mind, which seems to be separate from other minds and restricted to one individual, is described (often) by the Course “as if it has two parts: spirit and ego” (2:4). Although the truth is that we *are* spirit, we've invented and identified with “another part of mind” called “ego.” We probably start out aware of nothing but the ego; we think that's what “me” means. Your mind and mine are not separate minds; they are joined with all minds and God's. Nor do you have an ego. As the Workbook says, none of us are alone in experiencing the effects of our thoughts. We *all* experience the effects of our thoughts and everyone's thoughts.

The next paragraph, considering our belief in a split mind, proceeds to speak about this individual, split mind as if it were real. It speaks in terms of our experience more than in truth. All the many references to our mind as if it is split describe our illusion of individual minds. The Course deliberately does this because it begins by dealing with us where *we think* we are. That's what Jesus meant earlier by saying the Course remains “in the ego framework.”

### Paragraph 3

3 Spirit is the part that is still in contact with God through the Holy Spirit, Who abides in this part but sees the other part as well. <sup>2</sup>The other part is entirely illusory, and makes only illusions. <sup>3</sup>Spirit retains the potential for creating, but its will, which is God's, seems to be imprisoned while the mind is not unified. <sup>4</sup>The term *soul* is not used extensively because of its highly controversial nature.<sup>iii</sup> <sup>5</sup>It would, however, be an equivalent of “spirit,” with the understanding that, being of God, it is eternal and was never born.

Speaking now of our illusion of individual minds, split between ego and spirit, there is a “part” of our mind “that is still in contact with God through the Holy Spirit,” and this “part” is termed our “spirit.” It's really the only part of us that is real, and beyond mere “contact with God through the Holy Spirit, ”it is part of God's Mind, extended in creation (3:1). “The other 'part'” (I put the small quotations around the word “part,” because there are no parts to mind in reality; it is unified) “is entirely illusory, and makes only illusions” (3:2). The so-called “other part” does not even exist. The Course says the same about the ego: “This is the one fact which means that the ego does not exist, and which therefore makes it profoundly afraid.” (T-4.V.16:2 (CE), T-4.III.9:3 (FIP)).

Our spirit, which is our total mind, is the “voice” we are listening to when we listen to the Holy Spirit, the Voice that speaks for God. Sometimes we have trouble understanding what Jesus says in the Course because it speaks, at times, as if there were two parts to our minds, as it does here. Even speaking of “minds” in the plural is a concession to our

illusion of separateness. We should not attempt to always be 100% “correct” in speaking of these things. Jesus doesn't because it is helpful to us who believe in our illusions. It's helpful to think of the Holy Spirit as a separate Voice, guiding, teaching, and helping us, while we find it difficult, even impossible, to realize the ego does not exist!

“He seems to be a Voice, for in that form He speaks God's Word to you. He seems to be a Guide through a far country, for you need that form of help. He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have.”  
**(CT-4:5-7 (CE)).**

The Holy Spirit “mediates between illusions and the truth” **(W-WI.7.1:1)**.

Spirit is unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable. It has the potential for creating, but it can't exercise that potential because its will “seems to be imprisoned while the mind is [seemingly] not unified” **(3:3)**. We don't believe our minds are part of God with the power to create, and we cannot choose to exercise our creative power because we don't believe that.

Much of the Course seems confusing because we believe in illusions. When we abandon our illusions and “let truth be true,” everything becomes much simpler! *Our* confusion makes the Course seem confusing. As we read just a bit ago, “The Course is simple.”

People have often wondered why the Course does not use the term “soul,” which is so much a part of Christian theology. Jesus explains only briefly: The term “soul” isn't used much because it is “highly controversial” **(3:4)**. When it does use it, the Course refers either to a Bible quotation or to the way the word appears outside the Course in phrases like “sell your soul.” The controversies he mentions probably refer to theological attempts to define the word. Many thought systems teach that we are composed of “body, soul, and spirit,” with soul and spirit as separate parts. If the Course were to use the word (and it does not<sup>iv</sup>), it would be equivalent to “spirit” **(3:5)**. Spirit is of God, eternal, and was never born.

## Paragraph 4

**4** Creation continues unabated, because that is the will of God. <sup>2</sup>This will is always unified and therefore has no meaning in this world. <sup>3</sup>It has no opposite and no degrees. <sup>4</sup>The mind can be right or wrong, depending on the voice it listens to. <sup>5</sup>*Right-mindedness* listens to the Holy Spirit, forgives the world, and through Christ's vision sees the real world in its place. <sup>6</sup>This is the final vision, the last perception, the condition in which God can take the final step Himself. <sup>7</sup>Here time and illusions end together. <sup>8</sup>*Wrong-mindedness* listens to the ego and makes illusions, perceiving sin and justifying anger, and seeing guilt, disease, and death as real. <sup>9</sup>Both this world and the real world are illusions, because right-mindedness merely overlooks, or forgives, what never happened. <sup>10</sup>Therefore, it is not the *one-mindedness* of the Christ Mind, Whose will is one with God's.

God creates and creates continually, without interruption (4:1). Our fall is only imaginary, a dream, and has never interfered with God's will. Since God created us to create, this means that *we*, too, continue to create without interruption, as hard as that is to grasp. "You, too, have a Kingdom which your spirit has created. It has not ceased to create because your ego has set you on the road of perception." (T-4.V.2:3-4).

(4:2) is difficult to understand. It says that God's will has no meaning in this world because it [God's will] is always unified. Remember: "this world" usually refers to the physical world of illusion. Our mind is creative and is still creating, but it cannot create in "this world" of separation and duplicity. God's will is *unified*. "It has no opposite and no degrees" (4:3). It operates in the realm of Heaven, of Oneness. And so does our mind. We cannot listen to the ego and create, but we can listen to the Holy Spirit, forgiving "this world," and when we do, we are in our right mind ("right-mindedness"), and we can and do create. The real part of your mind is creating with God in Heaven. When you are right-minded, your will has begun uniting with God's will to "extend the Allness and the Unity of God" (W-pI.95.12:2).

As we continue to do this, we stabilize in right-mindedness. We see the real world. We experience the "final vision, the last perception, the condition in which God can take the final step Himself" (4:6-7). In this world, we begin with wrong-mindedness. We listen to the ego and make (not create) illusions. We perceive sin, and we justify anger. We see guilt, disease, and death as real (4:8). We are gradually shifting from the illusion of split-mindedness into right-mindedness, in which we realize the union of our mind with the Holy Spirit and God's Mind. We see the real world. Both "this world" and the real world are illusions (4:9), which may seem puzzling. How can the world be "real" while still an illusion? Jesus explains that right-mindedness is not a complete transition to one-mindedness. In our right mind, we still seem to exist in "this world," but we have learned to forgive, which is to overlook the illusions, realizing that what has seemed to be so real has never happened (4:9). It isn't quite yet "the one-mindedness of the Christ Mind, Whose will is one with God's" (4:10). That complete union can only be restored to our mind when God takes the final step Himself (4:6).<sup>v</sup>

## Paragraph 5

5 In this world the only remaining freedom is freedom of choice, always between two choices or two voices. <sup>2</sup>Will is not involved in perception at any level and has nothing to do with choice.<sup>vi</sup> <sup>3</sup>In this world there are only wishes, desires, and hopes. <sup>4</sup>*Consciousness* is the receptive mechanism, receiving messages from above or below; from the Holy Spirit or the ego.<sup>vii</sup> <sup>5</sup>Consciousness has levels and awareness can shift quite dramatically, but it cannot transcend the perceptual realm. <sup>6</sup>At its highest it becomes aware of the real world, and can be trained to do so increasingly. <sup>7</sup>Yet the very fact that it has levels and can be trained demonstrates that consciousness cannot reach knowledge.<sup>viii</sup>

The only freedom we have in “this world” is freedom of choice (5:1). We have no other freedom; we are servants of our egos. Our choice is between the two voices (5:1), ego or spirit. We think we can choose whatever we will to choose, for instance, to attack or to forgive, to go to sleep or stay up watching TV. But in (5:2), Jesus says that will has nothing to do with choice or what we perceive. The only *choice* is which voice we listen to; that determines what we do and see. The word “will” is sometimes used more loosely in the Course, e.g., “If you tell me what to do, I will do it.” As used in this section, however, the word has the strict sense of an undivided quality of mind. We do not choose our will; will, in this sense, is an inherent part of our nature. In our spirit, there is only one will. In the split mind, the will can be divided. In a split mind, we can only wish or choose. In the will of our spirit, there is only one outcome and no choice.

Jesus then throws in another term, “consciousness.” Typically, most of us equate this term with “mind.” Jesus seems to see consciousness as something *between* our mind and our spirit. Perhaps we might equate consciousness with “individual mind,” which exists (or seems to) only in the perceptual realm. The Text says consciousness is the domain of the ego:

“Consciousness was the first split that you introduced into yourself. You became a perceiver rather than a creator in the true sense. Consciousness is correctly identified as the domain of the ego.”  
**(T-3.VI.4:1-3 (CE), T-3.IV.2:1-2 )(FIP)**

Consciousness has levels (it can be right-minded or wrong-minded, for instance). If you have even minimal self-awareness, you know this about yourself. You can shift drastically from one level to another, but consciousness always exists in “the perceptual level” (5:4-5). It is a “receptive mechanism.” It hears the voice of the ego or the voice of the Holy Spirit (5:4). When consciousness is listening to the Holy Spirit, it becomes aware of the real world (which is still at the perceptual level) and “can be trained to do so increasingly” (5:6). As people living in this world of illusion, we can be right-minded or wrong-minded. We cannot be one-minded and still “be here.” Consciousness (as used by the Course) “cannot reach knowledge” because it has levels and needs to be trained (5:7).

I'm beginning to understand why Jesus was reluctant to get into defining terms! I'll end this commentary with a few important highlights:

1. “Mind” capitalized in ACIM always refers to the mind of God.
2. Our mind is God's creation or extension, and as such is always one with God.
3. In our illusion of separation we have imagined a separate mind with a separate will. There is no separation, and therefore no separate minds or separate wills.
4. In our dream of being a separate mind, we have imagined we have a consciousness that is somehow independent of God, with the ability to choose between listening to ego or to the Holy Spirit.

5. Our true will exists in Heaven and has the function of creating as God creates. We only imagine we have a separate will.
6. Because we believe we are egos, in the ego framework, the Course must deal with us on that basis in order to reach us. Therefore, it speaks of our mind as if it has the power to choose between ego and the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>i</sup> Typically in the Course, mind is framed as the vehicle through which spirit works, so that we should place “the mind in the service of the spirit” (T-1.32.2:3). Perhaps what the above definition means, then, is that it is through mind that spirit becomes an active agent. In other words, when spirit creates, it does so through the energy of the mind.

<sup>ii</sup> The mind is currently split between spirit and ego, primarily identifying with ego and dissociating itself from spirit. Since spirit is unified, this means that the mind is dissociated from the unity it shares with all minds.

<sup>iii</sup> Why is the term “soul” too “controversial”? The other references to controversy in the Course suggest that reincarnation (M-24.3:5, 4:3) and theological concepts (C-In.2:4) contribute little to the practical work of salvation and instead draw the mind into fruitless controversy. Since the term “soul” is of the same basic genre as reincarnation and theological concepts, perhaps a similar thing is being implied here about it—that the term tends to be associated with theological issues concerning the existence and precise nature of the soul, and it therefore draws attention away from the practical change of mind that is the real thrust of the Course.

<sup>iv</sup> The original dictation of the Course used the word “soul” a lot. It appears in an early edition of the Course known as “the Hugh Lynne Cayce” version. That edition was later re-published as the “Original Edition.” When Helen and Ken edited the Course for the Foundation of Inner Peace, “soul” was replaced with words like spirit, mind, or Son. We don't know why. The controversial nature may have been the reason; the word might have raised needless questions for readers. Probably the final sentence here, which says that “soul” is equivalent of “spirit” it is talking about its earlier use of the term “soul.”

<sup>v</sup> See also another explanation from the Text, Chapter 26: “This is the journey's end. 2We have referred to it as the “real world.” 3And yet there is a contradiction here, in that these words imply a limited reality, a partial truth, a segment of the universe made true.<sup>1</sup> 4This is because knowledge makes no attack upon perception. 5They are brought together, and only one continues past the gate where oneness is. 6Salvation is a borderland where place and time and choice have meaning still, and yet it can be seen that they are temporary, out of place, and every choice has been already made.” (T-26.III.3:1–6 (CE))

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, the term “real world” appears to be a contradiction in that it implies some segment of this world—which is by definition limited, partial, and illusory—that is somehow true and real.

<sup>vi</sup> What is said here applies to “will” in the strictest sense of the term, as an undivided, unqualified force in the mind. In this sense, “will” only exists in Heaven. The Course, however, often uses “will” in a softer sense, as simply a strong force of mind in this world. See, for instance, T-1.46.9:3 (“If you will tell me what to do, I will to do it”) and W-73.Heading (“I will there be light”).

<sup>vii</sup> This model of the mind is somewhat similar to the one early in the Text in which consciousness is sandwiched in between the subconscious below and superconscious above, receiving impulses from both: “The conscious level is in between, and reacts to either subconscious or superconscious impulses in varying ratios” (T-1.28.2:3). In the current model, what is above consciousness is the Holy Spirit (He is not identified in the previous model, since that model is described before the Holy Spirit becomes a consistent part of the Course's teaching).

<sup>viii</sup> Consciousness cannot reach knowledge because, while consciousness changes and can be trained to climb to higher and higher levels, knowledge is changeless and has no levels.



### Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size.

Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

### Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE Text restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

*FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.*

*CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.*