

# Commentary

## ACIM® Manual for Teachers

### 5. *The Holy 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.

#### Overview

Unlike other chapters in the *Clarification of Terms*, this particular chapter focuses on a single term - the Holy Spirit - rather than comparing and contrasting two terms. It also does a better job of actually *defining* the term it is discussing. The primary role of the Holy Spirit is to serve as the communication link between us and God.

#### Paragraph 1

Jesus is the manifestation of the *Holy Spirit*, Whom he called down upon the earth after he “ascended into Heaven,”<sup>1</sup> or became completely identified with Christ, the Son of God as He created him. <sup>2</sup>The Holy Spirit, being a creation of the one Creator, creating with Him and in His likeness or Spirit, is eternal and has never changed. <sup>3</sup>He was “called down upon the earth” in the sense that it was now possible to accept Him and to hear His voice.<sup>2</sup> <sup>4</sup>His is the Voice for God, and has therefore taken form. <sup>5</sup>This form is not His reality, which God alone knows along with Christ, His real Son, Who is part of Him.<sup>3</sup>

In my experience, some traditional Christians rank the Trinity in order of importance: God the Father, followed by Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit. However, when we consider what the Course says about the idea of the Holy Spirit coming after Jesus, we encounter a

<sup>1</sup> In Christianity, the Ascension is the event in which, after his resurrection, Jesus was taken up into Heaven to assume his place at the right hand of God (see Acts 1:9 and Mark 16:19). Here, the Course equates Jesus' ascension with what it calls “the final step,” in which God lifts a person out of the separated condition and into Heaven—into complete identification with his true Self.

<sup>2</sup> “Called down upon the earth” refers to Jesus sending the Holy Spirit down on his followers. In Jesus' farewell discourse (John 14-17), he speaks of the Holy Spirit “whom I shall send to you from the Father” (John 15:26 [RSV]). This promise is often considered to have been fulfilled in the experience of Pentecost, when the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues” (Acts 2:4 [RSV]). In the above passage, the Course implies that the Holy Spirit has always been here, but that due to Jesus' awakening, people were now more able to “hear His voice.”

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit in this paragraph is said to have two aspects: 1) His eternal reality as a creation of God in Heaven and 2) the form He assumes of being a Voice in the dream. This form is ultimately illusory and will, as this section says later (5:8), pass away when the separation ends, leaving only His eternal reality.

problem. According to **(1:1)**, Jesus is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. So, even though the Father gives birth to the Son, who in turn imparts the Holy Spirit to his followers, there's a bit more to the story.

When Jesus was here on earth, he embodied the Holy Spirit. Chapter 4, paragraph 2, talks about Jesus seeing Christ in all his brothers and remembering God. The last sentence of that paragraph suggests that Jesus, in his human form, was necessary for the Christ to communicate with us, making him an embodiment of the Christ. So, in one sense, he embodied the Son of God; in another, he is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

I know that might sound confusing, but I think the key is paying attention to each statement's verb tense. When it says Jesus *is* the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, it's talking about what he is now that he's fully identified with the Christ. When he was on earth, he *was* the embodiment of the Christ. So, it's all about perspective and timing.

Regardless of how we interpret this, we know that God created both the Holy Spirit and Christ. Only God truly knows and understands the Holy Spirit's reality **(1:5)**. According to **(1:2)**, the Holy Spirit is eternal and unchanging. He spoke through Jesus while he was on earth, and now that Jesus has left his body, the Holy Spirit is available to us so we can hear his voice within us **(1:3)**.

Even though we can hear this voice inside us, it's important to remember that it's only a form the Holy Spirit has taken to communicate with us. His reality is beyond what we can comprehend **(1:4-5)**.

## Paragraph 2

2 The Holy Spirit is described throughout the course as giving us the answer to the separation and bringing the plan of the Atonement to us, establishing our particular part in it, and showing us exactly what it is.<sup>4</sup> 2He has established Jesus as the leader in carrying out this plan, since he was the first to complete his own part perfectly.<sup>5</sup> 3All power in Heaven and earth is therefore given him, and he will share it with you when you have completed yours.<sup>6</sup> 4The Atonement principle was given to the Holy Spirit long before Jesus set it in motion.

Sentence **(2:1)** hardly needs any comment; it's very straightforward. But it says a lot. We don't want to miss all that's said here. It summarizes all that the Holy Spirit does:

The Course describes the Holy Spirit as:

1. giving us the answer to the separation and
2. bringing the plan of the Atonement to us,

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<sup>4</sup>“Our particular part in it” refers to our part in the plan of Atonement—our special function in the salvation of the world.

<sup>5</sup>Jesus is said here to be the leader in the plan of Atonement because “he was the first to complete his own part [in the plan] perfectly.” In other words, because he was able to perfectly complete a *part* of the plan, he was made leader of the *whole* plan.

<sup>6</sup>Matthew 28:18 (KJV): “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” According to the above reference, this power is not an exclusive possession of Jesus; he will share it with us when we have completed our own part in the plan.

3. establishing our particular part in the plan, and
4. showing us precisely what it is.

First, He gives us the overall answer to the separation. Do you know immediately what that answer is? Workbook lessons 79 and 80 address this question: “Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved,” and “Let me recognize my problems have been solved.” You'd think these lessons would state the answer clearly, but they don't. Instead, the lessons tell us, in effect, that if we recognize the problem, the answer will be obvious. In fact, we already *have* the answer, but failing to recognize the one problem, we fail to recognize its answer. “If you could recognize that your only problem is separation, no matter what form it takes, you could accept the answer because you would not lose sight of its relevance.” (W-79.6:2 (CE))

If the only problem is separation, what is the obvious answer? It must be a realization of oneness, a certainty that there has never been any separation, so it *cannot* be a problem. We must recognize that no matter what form our apparent problems seem to take, they all manifest our belief in separation. The Holy Spirit's first job is to give us that answer. It says,

“We will try to realize that we have only one problem, which we have failed to recognize. We will ask what it is, and wait for the answer. We will be told. Then we will ask for the solution to it. And we will be told.” **(W-79.7:4–8 (CE))**

It's the job of the Holy Spirit to help us recognize the one problem when we ask Him to and to supply the answer when we ask. That's #1.

Now #2: if we know the answer, why do we need a *plan of the Atonement*? We've seen recently that the plan of the Atonement is the same thing as the plan of the teachers. We learned that the plan of the teachers is an “each one teach one” kind of thing. I give the Atonement to another person by forgiving them, seeing them as innocent, and seeing the Christ in them. As I give it to them, I also receive it; the actions seem as if they are two separate things, but they are one. That is also a description of how the Atonement proliferates and extends, eventually extending to everyone and everything. That is the plan the Course is teaching us, and the Holy Spirit is bringing it to us in the Course and our daily lives.

That leads to #3: The Holy Spirit establishes our particular part in the plan. We've read about this, too, in the Text.

“The answer is to never perform a miracle without asking me if you should. <sup>2</sup>This spares you from exhaustion. <sup>3</sup>Just because miracles are expressions of love, it does not follow that they will always be effective. <sup>4</sup>I am the only one who can perform miracles indiscriminately, because I am the Atonement. <sup>5</sup>You have a role in the Atonement, which I will dictate to you.” **(CE T-1.35.5)**

Thus, the Holy Spirit is the one Who establishes our part in the plan and tells us who to talk with and what we are to say. This is what is meant by point #4: He shows us exactly what our part is. He tells us to ask Him at the start of the day:

“What would You have me do

Where would You have me go?

What would You have me say, and to whom?” **(T-31.IX.9:3-5 (CE))**.

It is the Holy Spirit Who has established Jesus as the leader of the Atonement because **(2:2)**, as Jesus states in the Text: “I am in charge of the process of Atonement, which I undertook to begin.” **(CE T-1.24.2:1)** It's somewhat confusing. Is it Jesus or the Holy Spirit who gives us our instructions? It isn't a difficult question. Jesus is the leader established by the Holy Spirit. Anything Jesus communicates to us comes from the Holy Spirit, Who is the Voice for God. The Spirit speaks for God. Whether that is directly or through Jesus doesn't really matter. I sometimes ask Jesus and sometimes the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit as a Voice is just a form taken by the formless Spirit; so is Jesus. My advice would be, “Whatever works for you best.”

The reason Jesus is our leader is simple: He *began* the whole Atonement process. He is the first human who perfectly completed his part in the Atonement. **(2:2)**. Accordingly, all power in Heaven and Earth was given to him. That refers to a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: “And Jesus came and said to them, ”All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations... “(Matthew 28:18-19, NRSV). He shares the power that God gave to him with us *when we have completed our part in the Atonement* **(2:3)**. He received power because he had learned to use it responsibly, to heal instead of harm. We will share it when we have learned that same lesson.

Some interpret the instruction in Matthew to go into the world and preach the gospel as commanding us to proselytize, to convert people to Christianity, and usually to a particular form of Christianity. But ”gospel“ doesn't refer to any particular doctrine. It just means ”good news.“ We are part of the plan of the Atonement, sharing the good news with those to whom Jesus directs us, the good news that there is no separation, that God isn't out to punish them, and that Heaven is still their home and always has been.

The final line of the paragraph, **(2:4)**, tells us that the *principle* of Atonement was in effect from the instant the mad idea of separation entered the mind of God's Son. There was not one second of delay. God answered the problem immediately. Here are several passages that explain the process implied here:”

“The Atonement principle was in effect long before the Atonement itself was begun. The principle was love, and the Atonement itself was an act of love.” **(CE T-2.V.1:2-4)**

“The Atonement actually began long before the resurrection.” **(T-2.V.3:1 (CE))**

“The Holy Spirit is the Christ Mind aware of the knowledge beyond perception. He came into being with the separation as a protection and inspired the beginning of the Atonement at the same time.” **(CE T-5.II.4:1-2)**

“The crucifixion did not establish the Atonement; the resurrection did.” **(T-3.III.1:1-2 (CE))**

And then, as we see in 2:4, Jesus' awakening (resurrection) set the principle in motion, enabling him to share God's love with us all and to show us how to access it.

For a complete understanding of the Course, it's crucial to grasp the priority of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, He was, and is, God's answer to the separation. He was created instantly “with the separation” and was ready and waiting for one of us to listen to His Voice. Jesus did that, and it set the whole process in motion, manifesting as the plan of the teachers: Each one who begins to wake up completes their personal awakening by sharing God's love with everyone to whom the Spirit sends them. Although I say this concept is crucial to a complete understanding of the Course, I also must emphasize that I don't think such a complete understanding is necessary to fully experience the Atonement and awaken. It isn't necessary to understand every detail. All we need is to recognize the separation as our only problem, and the answer will be self-evident. Knowing when or how that happens isn't a prerequisite.

### Paragraph 3

**3** The Holy Spirit is described as the remaining communication link between God and His separated Sons. <sup>2</sup>In order to fulfill this special function, the Holy Spirit has assumed a dual function: He knows because He is part of God; He perceives because He was sent to save humanity. <sup>3</sup>He is the great correction principle, the bringer of true perception, the inherent power of the vision of Christ. <sup>4</sup>He is the light in which the forgiven world is perceived; in which the face of Christ alone is seen. <sup>5</sup>He never forgets the Creator or His creation. <sup>6</sup>He never forgets the Son of God. <sup>7</sup>He never forgets you. <sup>8</sup>And He brings the love of your Father to you in an eternal shining that will never be obliterated because God has put it there.

In saying the Holy Spirit is “the remaining communication link between God and His separated Sons” (3:1), the word “remaining” stands out to me. In the creation, communication between God and His creations was total. Once the idea of separation entered our mind, however, that communication was broken; God instantly created the Holy Spirit, a communication *link* within us to Himself.

“Unless you take your part in the creation, God's joy is not complete because yours is incomplete. And this He does know. He knows it in His Own being and its experience of His Sons' experience. The constant going out of His love is blocked when His channels are closed, and He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him.” (T-4.X.8:4-7)

At that realization, God created the Holy Spirit, Who is in full communication with God, and placed Him in our minds, always speaking the truth to us. Jesus heard that Voice and awoke.

So the Holy Spirit has a dual function: “He knows because He is part of God; He perceives because He was sent to save humanity” (3:2). The Holy Spirit has to link God and humanity. He *perceives* the illusions we perceive while *knowing* they are only illusions. That is what enables Him to correct our illusions. He brings us true perception,

the vision of Christ. With Him, we too can perceive the unreality of illusions (3:3). He does not simply give light to us; He *is* “the light in which the forgiven world is perceived; in which the face of Christ alone is seen” (3:4). He is in perfect communication with God and, because He is in us, so are we. He never forgets God; He never forgets us, God's creation (3:5–6). *He never forgets you* (3:7). He **is** the love of God, shining within you for all eternity because God put Him there (3:8).

He is there, within your mind and mine, calling, teaching, encouraging, and waiting patiently for us to wake up.

“You whose mind is darkened by doubt and guilt, remember this: God gave the Holy Spirit to you, and gave Him the mission to remove all doubt and every trace of guilt that His dear Son has laid upon himself. It is impossible that this mission fail. Nothing can prevent what God would have accomplished from accomplishment. Whatever your reactions to the Holy Spirit's voice may be, whatever voice you choose to listen to, whatever strange thoughts may occur to you, God's will is done. You will find the peace in which He has established you, because He does not change His Mind. He is invariable as the peace in which you dwell, and of which the Holy Spirit reminds you.” **(CE T-13.XII.3)**

Knowing that “this mission cannot fail” is a powerful reassurance. Nothing can prevent it. Not even our current reaction matters, not even the times we choose to listen to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. *Whatever* our reaction, “God's will is done.” We *will* find the peace the Course is telling us about. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our minds guarantees it. What great news!

## Paragraph 4

**4** The Holy Spirit abides in the part of your mind that is part of the Christ Mind. <sup>2</sup>He represents your Self and your Creator, Who are one. <sup>3</sup>He speaks for God and also for you, being joined with both. <sup>4</sup>And therefore it is He Who proves them one. <sup>5</sup>He seems to be a Voice, for in that form He speaks God's Word to you. <sup>6</sup>He seems to be a Guide through a far country,<sup>7</sup> for you need that form of help. <sup>7</sup>He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have. <sup>8</sup>But He is not deceived when you perceive yourself entrapped in needs you do not have. <sup>9</sup>It is from these He would deliver you. <sup>10</sup>It is from these that He would make you safe.

There is a part of your mind that is part of the Christ Mind, God's creation, God's Son. In that part of your mind, the Holy Spirit dwells (4:1). Not that our mind has parts; it is really and eternally one, un-split, undivided. But we imagine our minds are split, that at least part of our mind is no longer one with God. We experience our minds that way. There seem to be two inner voices in conflict with each other. That is, we imagine

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<sup>7</sup>Luke 15:13 (KJV): “And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” The statement that the Holy Spirit “seems to be a Guide through a far country” likens all of us to the prodigal son. In our case, though, we are traveling through an *illusory* far country, and so the Holy Spirit takes on the *appearance* of being a Guide. That appearance is not His true reality, but that is the form we need Him in for now.

separation has occurred. The Course speaks of a “part” of our mind here because it speaks in our terms. The voice we hear calling us home to God, calling us to be love in every situation, is that of the Holy Spirit in our minds. That Voice represents both God and our true Self (4:2). It is God's Voice, and it is our own voice (4:3). This is why the Course says, “You will awaken to your own call, for the call to awaken is within you.” (T-11.VII.10:1-2 (CE)) When we realize that our authentic voice is *identical* to God's Voice, we realize that we are one with God (4:4).

Healing “is a recognition that you have no needs that mean that something must be done.” (T-28.I.3:2 (CE))

## Paragraph 5

5 You are His manifestation in this world. <sup>2</sup>Your brother calls to you to be His voice along with him. <sup>8</sup>Alone he cannot be the helper of God's Son, for he alone is functionless. <sup>4</sup>But joined with you he is the shining savior of the world, whose part in its redemption you have made complete. <sup>5</sup>He<sup>9</sup> offers thanks to you as well as him, for you arose with him when he began to save the world. <sup>6</sup>And you will be with him when time is over and no trace remains of dreams of spite in which you dance to death's thin melody. <sup>7</sup>For in its place the hymn to God is heard a little while. <sup>8</sup>And then the Voice is gone, no longer to take form but to return to the eternal formlessness of God.<sup>10</sup>

It seems as if the Holy Spirit is like an invisible energy that can take on any shape to meet any situation's needs. In (5:1), it says *we* are His manifestation in this world! In us, He takes the form of whatever need someone else thinks they have!

This is a very liberating notion. Many religions try to mold us into some fixed image of what they think the perfect person is, often promoting uniformity and conformity. But the Holy Spirit has no fixed form. He adapts to whatever need we think we have. If we are to manifest Him in the world, we need to be as flexible as He is. Sometimes comforting; sometimes stern; sometimes noisy (even *nosy*), sometimes quiet. He may lead us to give materially to someone without expecting any return. Other times we may loan something, yet other times, we do not give anything. Sometimes we offer advice; other times, we keep our mouths shut. The need for flexibility is why we must stay in touch with the Holy Spirit and always ask, “What would you have me do? Where would you have me go? What would you have me say, and to whom?”

Sentences 5:2-6 contain several repetitions of “he” and “him.” They seem, at first, to be speaking about your human brother or sister, some person you should help. But

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<sup>8</sup> “Your brother” in this paragraph refers to Jesus. Just as Jesus at the beginning of this section is called “the manifestation of the Holy Spirit” (see also T-12.X.7:1), so now Jesus calls us to be the Holy Spirit's manifestation *along with him*.

<sup>9</sup> “He” seems to refer to the Holy Spirit.

<sup>10</sup> This means that when the separation is over, the Holy Spirit will shed the guise He has assumed of being a Voice, a Guide, as there will be no more need for that. This will leave only His formless reality as an eternal creation of God.

several of those sentences seem hard to understand in that way, and sentence 5 makes it clear that all of them refer to Jesus. It speaks of us *arising with him* when he began to save the world. That has to be talking about Jesus.

So, Jesus is calling to us to be the voice of the Holy Spirit along with him **(5:2)** (Notice the capitalization of “His.” I think all these pronouns should be capitalized!). Just as Jesus has become God's Voice to us, we can be God's voice to others as the Holy Spirit leads us. By himself, Jesus “cannot be the helper of God's Son, for he (Jesus) alone is functionless” **(5:3)**. This is why he declares in Review 5 of the Workbook:

**“You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands, through which I save the world.” (CE W- Re.5.In.9:2-3)**

As he has us say in Lesson 100, “My part is essential to God's plan of salvation.” The plan of the Atonement works *through us*, and without us, the plan cannot reach completion. Jesus becomes the savior of the world “joined with you.” We complete his part in redemption **(5:4)**! The Holy Spirit offers thanks to us as well as to Jesus. When Jesus rose from the dead and began to save the world (note, he *began* it), we rose with him **(5:5)**, so we share the thanks of the Holy Spirit. There is some sense in which we resurrected with Jesus. When he awakened, we awakened. If we think of it in terms of time, perhaps it means that once Jesus arose, our resurrection was certain. Yet time is an illusion, “Heaven is now. There is no other time.” **(CE M-24.6:5- 7)** Looked at from timelessness, our resurrection is already complete.

We will be with Jesus in God when time is over, when our “dreams of spite in which [we](#) dance to death's thin melody” have vanished **(5:6)**. What a spine-chilling image that is: victims dancing to the melody of death, like concentration camp prisoners dancing on the way to the gas chamber! Thank God those dreams of spite will vanish!

That is how we look to one who sees the real world. “Does one whose vision has already glimpsed the face of Christ look back with longing on a slaughterhouse?” **(M-1.4:1-4 (CE))** He then contrasts death's thin melody to “the hymn to God,” heard for a little while before it disappears, all semblance of separation wiped out **(5:7)**. No longer needed in that form, the Voice for God is gone as well. The Holy Spirit has returned “to the eternal formlessness of God” **(5:8)**.

The picture I get of our ultimate union with God is that all memory of separation will end. Our existence as separate individuals will end in Oneness. Perhaps you think now that some of our relationships with one another are wonderful and not something we want to disappear or end. I believe our union in Oneness will be so much more wonderful that we won't have any remaining desire for the kind of partial unions we can achieve in this world. Just as the Holy Spirit will return to the eternal formlessness of God, so shall we. And it will be unimaginably blissful!



### 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.*