

Commentary

ACIM[®] Manual for Teachers

5. *How Is Healing Accomplished?*

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

The Manual has focused on the teacher of God *as a teacher*. Now, it changes to focus on a teacher's function *as a healer*. First, it speaks about how healing is accomplished. It covers the topic in three short sections:

1. The Perceived Purpose of Sickness
1. The Shift in Perception
1. The Function of the Teacher of God

The first two sections speak about the nature of sickness and how our minds must change in their understanding of sickness. This teaching is foundational and requires careful consideration. The final section speaks about what role the teacher of God plays in bringing about healing. We will consider this last section in the next commentary.

In discussing these two sections I have chosen to expand my comments because the subject being discussed is so important and so central to the Course, and yet is quite difficult to grasp. I hope my thoughts help you to understand what Jesus is saying.

Paragraph 1

Healing involves an understanding of what the illusion of sickness is for.
²Healing is impossible without this.¹

This tiny paragraph sets us up for what follows: a discourse on the ego's purpose for sickness. Before you can understand healing, you must understand why we get sick in the first place (1:1). Notice at the outset that we are not talking just about "sickness" but "the illusion of sickness." Sickness is an illusion that seems to have a purpose. We'll understand this better as we proceed. The thing to be clear of as we start is just how crucial to healing it is that we understand sickness's seeming purpose: "Healing is impossible without this" (1:2).

¹ This section represents a shift away from the focus on the teacher of God as a teacher of pupils. The focus now is on the teacher of God as a *healer of patients*.

I. The Perceived Purpose of Sickness

Paragraph 1

Healing is accomplished the instant the sufferer no longer sees any value in pain. ²Who would choose to suffer unless he thought it brought him something, and something of value to him? ³He must think it is a small price to pay for something of greater worth. ⁴For sickness is an election, a decision. ⁵It is a choice of weakness in the mistaken conviction that it is strength. ⁶When this occurs, real strength is seen as threat and health as danger. ⁷Sickness is a method, conceived in madness, for placing God's Son on his Father's throne. ⁸God is seen as outside, fierce and powerful, eager to keep all power for Himself. ⁹Only by His death can He be conquered by His Son.

Right at the start, Jesus hits us in the face with something most of us are not willing to admit: We *choose* to be sick because we think there is something of value in suffering (I.1:1–2). Sickness is a choice! People choose different forms of suffering because they believe it will bring them something of value. Strenuous physical exercise, for example, can be painful, but people do it because they want to build muscle strength and endurance. Learning a foreign language often involves tedious and tiring repetition and memorization. So we endure suffering willingly to gain something of value, something “of greater worth” than the tedium or pain. Nobody would willingly suffer if there were no reward on the other side (I.1:2–3).

Sickness is like that: “an election, a decision” (I.1:4). This is a sticking point for most of us in accepting the Course's teaching about healing. We simply don't believe that we *choose* to be sick, that we *elect* to suffer. We can agree that nobody would choose to suffer unless there were commensurate gains on the other side of suffering. But we do not believe we choose to be sick; we think it comes on us from outside. A virus attacks us. Our body develops cancer against our wills. We certainly don't *want* it! So we think, in any case.

If we can understand the hidden, supposed benefit of sickness and suffering, we might begin to believe that we are subconsciously choosing it. What are our egos trying to accomplish by choosing sickness for us? We are choosing without knowing we are doing it and doing it for a reason we do not understand.

Can you start to see why the Course says that healing is impossible if we do not grasp the purpose of sickness? We must expose our egos and bring their insane reasoning into the light. We have to reject the supposed value the ego sees in sickness. We have to realize that there *is* no value in sickness before we can stop choosing it.

First of all, Jesus says, sickness is a choice to be *weak* (I.1:5). He says the ego mistakes weakness for strength. How can that be? The explanation comes more fully in the next paragraph, but I can summarize it like this: We think we are guilty and are punishing ourselves so that God won't bother to do so! Our insane minds are projecting blame for guilt onto the body and are punishing the body for it.

“The guiltless mind cannot suffer. Being sane, it heals the body because it has been healed. The sane mind cannot conceive of illness, because it cannot conceive of attacking anything or anyone. We said before that illness is a form of magic. It might be better to say it is a form of magical solution. The ego believes that by punishing itself, it will mitigate the punishment of God. Yet even in this it is arrogant. It attributes to God a punishing intent, and then takes over this intent as its own prerogative. It tries to usurp all the functions of God as it perceives them, because it recognizes that only total allegiance can be trusted” (T-5.VI.9 (CE). T-5.V.5 (FIP)).

When God offers us anything, particularly healing, the ego perceives it as a threat to its insane purposes. Health is dangerous (I.1:6). If God wants to heal me, but I can make myself sick, it *proves* (to my madness) that I am stronger than God, and my will is more powerful than His (I.1:7). God is the enemy for the ego, an enemy trying to keep all power to Himself and away from me. God must die! (I.1:8–9). Somehow, we believe our suffering can dislodge God from His throne. There are dark lessons in our minds, lessons of guilt buried in the dark and hidden secret places in our minds. The Course gently but firmly is trying to dislodge these twisted ideas. It wants us to become aware of them and question them:

“You do not want to suffer. You may think it buys you something, and may still believe a little that it buys you what you want. Yet this belief is surely shaken now, at least enough to let you question it, and to suspect it really makes no sense. It has not gone as yet, but lacks the roots that once secured it tightly to the dark and hidden secret places of your mind” (W—102.1:1–4).

Of course, we usually are not aware of any of this going on in our minds. Would you pursue this course of action if you *were* aware? Certainly not! But just that is why you must *become* aware of such thoughts.

Paragraph 2

2 And what, in this insane conviction, does healing stand for? ²It symbolizes the defeat of God's Son and the triumph of his Father over him. ³It represents the ultimate defiance in a direct form which the Son of God is forced to recognize. ⁴It stands for all that he would hide from himself to protect his life. ⁵If he is healed, he is responsible for his thoughts. ⁶And if he is responsible for his thoughts, he will be killed to prove to him how weak and pitiful he is.² ⁷But if he chooses death himself, his weakness is his strength. ⁸Now has he given himself what God would give to him, and thus entirely usurped the throne of his Creator.³

When we allow these dark thoughts to rule our minds, healing represents *defeat*. We make ourselves sick in defiance, and if God heals us, He triumphs over us! (I.2:1-2). To our egos, God is defying *us*, *forcing* us to recognize His power and authority (I.2:3). Healing seems to force us to recognize the truth that we are as God created us, not what we made of ourselves. In a nutshell, you are *not an ego*! (I.2:4)

The fifth sentence (I.2:5) is confusing. It says that if we allow God to heal us, it compels us to recognize that we are responsible for our thoughts, presumably the thoughts that caused the sickness. That's a difficult connection to make. Let me attempt to explain.

Most of us think that sickness comes upon us against our will. We think it comes from external forces: germs, the stress of living and paying bills, or other people's attacks. We believe that we are not responsible for our problems, nor are we responsible for the bitter, unkind thoughts that often result from such external pressures. We sometimes even suspect that *God* has brought this sickness upon us.

If God heals us, however, it throws all this into doubt. God isn't making us sick, and the healing comes *despite* all the external attacks. Therefore, if I have dark thoughts of being made sick by external forces, thoughts disproved by my healing, I must be responsible for those thoughts. That is the best explanation I can offer of how being healed makes me realize I am responsible for my dark thoughts.

² This sentence and the previous one together likely mean the following: "If he is healed" through a nonphysical cure—like spiritual healing—this implies that he was sick due to nonphysical causes, like his thoughts. He had hidden these dark thoughts "from himself to protect his life" (2:4), trying to convince himself they were irrelevant, but now they are revealed to be highly relevant. Given this, he will surely now be held responsible for them, accountable for them. And this means that surely God will punish him, even to the point of *capital* punishment.

³ This same basic view is explained more plainly in the Text: "We said before that illness is a form of magic. It might be better to say it is a form of magical *solution*. The ego believes that by punishing itself, it will mitigate the punishment of God. Yet even in this it is arrogant. It attributes to God a punishing intent, and then takes over this intent as its *own* prerogative. It tries to usurp *all* the functions of God as it perceives them, because it recognizes that only total allegiance can be trusted" (T-5.VI.9:4-9).

Remember what Jesus told us is the only thing we need to do to find complete release? Just say this, with perfect conviction:

“I am responsible for what I see. I chose the feelings I experience, and I decided on the goal I would achieve. And everything that seems to happen to me I asked for and received as I had asked.” (T-21.II.2:3–5 (CE))

And:

“The truth is that you are responsible for what you think, because it is only at this level that you can exercise choice.” (T-2.IX.3:5 (CE))

Of course, I am afraid that if I'm responsible for my thoughts, God will kill me for having them (I.2:6). I have “sinned” and therefore must die. But if I kill myself first (attacking my body with sickness, for instance), I've usurped God's power (I.2:7). I gave myself what God wanted to give me; I've dethroned God and made my ego happy (I.2:8)!

This sort of reasoning calls to my mind some puzzling lines from the Text:

“You have handled this wish to kill yourself by not knowing who you are, and identifying with something else. You have projected guilt blindly and indiscriminately, but you have not uncovered its source. For the ego does want to kill you, and if you identify with it, you must believe its goal is yours.” (T-13.II.5:4–6 (CE))

The ego wants to kill me. Do I understand that yet? No, honestly, it doesn't make sense. I know, I know; “The ego makes no sense” (T-9.III.3:3 (CE)). But somehow, learning that my ego wants to kill me helps me cope. It has something to do with my ego's inherent war with God.

“Under the dusty edge of its distorted world, the ego would lay the Son of God, slain by its orders, proof in his decay that God Himself is powerless before the ego's might, unable to protect the life that He created against the ego's savage wish to kill” (T-19.IV.8:1 (FIP), T-19.IV(C).8:4 (CE)).

At least it makes me realize that I have not yet comprehended the depths of my insanity! And I can say, “Okay. This all seems quite confusing to me, but the thing I do understand is that, for some insane reason, when I get sick, *I chose to be sick*.” This, I think, is the primary take-away from this section, and it is the focus of the following section.

II. The Shift in Perception

Healing must occur in exact proportion in which the valuelessness of sickness is recognized. ²One need but say “There is no gain at all to me in this,” and he is healed. ³But to say this, one must first recognize certain facts. ⁴First, it is obvious that decisions are of the mind, not of the body. ⁵If sickness is but a faulty problem-solving approach, it is a decision. ⁶And if it is a decision, it is the mind and not the body that makes it. ⁷The resistance to recognizing this is enormous, because the existence of the world as we perceive it depends on the body being the decision-maker. ⁸Terms like “instincts,” “reflexes,” and the like represent attempts to endow the body with nonmental motivators. ⁹Actually, such terms merely state or describe the problem. ¹⁰They do not answer it.

As I said earlier, we need to focus on the fact that sickness has no value (see I.1:1 and my comments). The *instant* that we completely see its lack of value to us it disappears! And to whatever degree we recognize the valuelessness of sickness, healing occurs. Partial recognition = partial healing; complete recognition = complete healing (II.1:1). If we can say (with full acceptance) that there is no gain to us in sickness, we are healed then and there (II.1:2).

We cannot say that and mean it unless we have recognized “certain facts” (II.1:3):

1. Decisions are made by the mind, not by the body (II.1:4).
1. Sickness is a decision, a faulty problem-solving approach (II.1:5).
1. Therefore, the mind makes sickness, not the body (II.1:6).

If we have recognized those facts, we can genuinely declare we see no value in sickness and experience healing. However, we have deep-seated resistance to recognizing those facts. Jesus says we resist so strongly “because the existence of the world as we perceive it depends on the body being the decision-maker” (II.1:7). To explain that, we need to understand what he means by the body as a decision-maker.

He goes on to explain. He says that terms like “instincts” and “reflexes” are “attempts to endow the body with nonmental motivators” (II.1:8). In other words, we do bad things, flare up in anger, act defensively, and even get sick due to factors beyond the control of our minds. Such terms, he says, don’t solve the problem; they just *describe* the problem (II.1:9–10). Our minds, attempting to endow the body with power over us, have programmed our bodies with instincts and reflexes. The problem is our thinking that anything external to our minds, even our bodies, can control or affect us. As Lesson 338 declares, “I am affected only by my thoughts.” I constantly need to remind myself about this. *Nothing outside of my mind affects me. Only my thoughts affect me.* We try to make the body into some kind of “nonmental motivator.” We believe we can be driven by our appetites, by instinctual reactions to things. All motivation is *mental*.

Paragraph 2

² The acceptance of sickness as a decision of the mind, for a purpose for which it alone would use the body, is the basis of healing. ²And this is so for healing in all forms. ³A patient decides that this is so, and he recovers. ⁴If he decides against recovery, he will not be healed. ⁵Who is the physician? ⁶Only the mind of the patient himself. ⁷The outcome is what he decides that it is. ⁸Special agents seem to be ministering to him, yet they but give form to his own choice. ⁹He chooses them to bring tangible form to his desires. ⁴ ¹⁰And it is this they do, and nothing else. ¹¹They are not actually needed at all. ¹²The patient could merely rise up without their aid and say, “I have no use for this.” ¹³There is no form of sickness that would not be cured at once.

⁴ In other words, the patient has made an unconscious decision that a particular sickness of his be healed. To carry out this decision, he unconsciously brings to himself the medicines, doctors, and surgeries that his worldview says he needs in order to be healed. These “special agents,” however, are not actually doing the healing. They just “bring tangible form to” the real healing agent: “his desires.”

When applied to sickness, the realization that we are affected only by our thoughts is the fundamental basis for healing. (II.2:1). The basis of healing is accepting one idea: that our minds choose to make our bodies sick due to some perverse purpose of our egos (II.2:1). The Course wants us to realize just how dark the ego's perverse purpose is. It is trying to usurp the throne of God. Is that anything any of us consciously want to do? I don't think so. We must realize that sickness has no value to us—none at all—thus distancing ourselves from the ego's agenda. We become healed when we consciously choose to see no value in sickness. There is no punishing God and no need to punish ourselves before He does. There is no need to steal His power because He has already shared it with us.

The following sentence is the real shocker: “This is so for healing in all forms” (II.2:2). In other words, healing, like sickness, is always a decision of our minds; that is true even when the healing mechanism *appears* to be external: medicine, a doctor, an operation. When a patient in a hospital recovers, they do so when they decide that their sickness is a decision of their mind (II.2:3). If they remain convinced that the cause is external to their mind, they won't stay healed (II.2:4).

The actual physician is *always* the patient's mind (II.2:5–6). Whatever the outcome, it is always “what he [the patient] decides that it is” (II.2:7). The doctors, the machines, and the medications *seem* to bring about the healing, but they only give form to the patient's choice (II.2:8). The patient chooses these special agents, calling on them to give form to their desires (II.2:9). The patient's belief system is limited to the laws of science, to physical forms, so he calls on them to cure him. His mind brings them into his experience to effect the healing his mind has chosen. All such agents ever do is to give form to the mind's choice (II.2:10). Thus, the mind can continue to work within the laws of the world. The physical means “work” because his mind has given that power to them.

Usually, such healing is not complete. Perhaps the particular illness will be “cured,” but the body will likely develop another disease or malfunction. As was said above, complete healing only comes when the mind finally decides it has no further desire to usurp God's throne, which is the purpose that underlies all sickness.

When that total change of mind occurs, there is no actual need for any external healing agents (II.2:11). I believe this is how the healings of Jesus took place. His presence was enough to awaken such a change of mind that, for instance, the lame man could simply rise up, take up his mat, and walk (II.2:12; see Matthew 9:6). Such a change of mind will instantly cure any form of sickness (II.2:13).

None of this is conscious, of course. It all occurs at a profound level of mind, the level that brought the body itself into existence.

Paragraph 3

3 What is the single requisite for this shift in perception? ²It is simply this: the recognition that sickness is of the mind and has nothing to do with the body. ³What does this recognition “cost”? ⁴It costs the world we see, for the world will never again appear to rule the mind.⁵ ⁵For with this recognition is responsibility placed where it belongs: not with the world, but on him who looks on the world and sees it as it is not. ⁶He looks on what he chooses to see—no more and no less. ⁷The world does nothing to him. ⁸He only thought it did. ⁹Nor does he do anything to the world, because he was mistaken about what it is. ¹⁰Herein is the release from guilt and sickness both, for they are one. ¹¹Yet to accept this release, the insignificance of the body must be an acceptable idea.

So what must happen to bring about such a complete mental shift (II.3:1)? The Course's view on this subject is radical and unbending: It takes a complete “recognition that sickness is of the mind and has nothing to do with the body” (II.3:2).

Why is that so difficult for us to accept? Because face it, for most of us, this seems like an outrageous claim, and believing that sickness has nothing to do with the body seems absurd. The difficulty comes because accepting that both sickness and healing come purely from the mind brings the realization that we have to give up the idea of an external world! “It costs the world we see” (II.3:3–4).⁶ As if it isn't scary enough to accept that our mind is responsible for the condition of our body, it inevitably leads to the realization that our minds are responsible for *everything we see* (II.3:5).

We see what we choose to see, “no more and no less” (II.3:6). We see the world as it is, not because we see it as causing us pain and distress. The world does not do anything to us (II.3:7)! We *think* it does, but it does not (II.3:8). Realizing that our mind is responsible for sickness forces us to come to this realization.

There is more. Not only does the world not affect you, but also that you do not affect the world (II.3:9)! You do not affect the world because you have been mistaken about what the world is (II.3:9). I believe what the Course is getting at here is that the world is not real. We think it is real. It is not. Remember those lines from the Workbook:

“There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach” (W-132.6:1-2 (CE)).

The same assertion about the world occurs five other times in the Course:

⁵. The logic here is that if the physical *body* is powerless to impose suffering on the mind (through sickness), then by extension the entire physical *world* is also powerless to impose suffering on the mind.

⁶. You may wish to read over T-2.VII (CE) (T-2.IV (FIP)). That section expands on the connection between bodily healing and the world. There, it says:

“Illness, which is really “not-right-mindedness,” is the result of level confusion in the sense that it always entails the belief that what is amiss in one level can adversely affect another.”

Illness is just one manifestation of the idea that the material level can adversely affect the spiritual level. A physical healing “costs” the world in that the same mistaken belief is the cause of both illness and the world.

[Everyone who identifies with the ego] “always perceives this world as outside himself, for this is crucial to his adjustment. He does not realize that he makes this world, for there is no world outside him” (T-12.VI.12:6-7 (CE)).

“There is no world apart from what you wish, and herein lies your ultimate release” (W-132.4:6 (CE)).

“But healing is the gift of those who are prepared to learn there is no world, and can accept the lesson now” (W-132.7:1 (CE)).

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

“There is no world because it is a thought apart from God, and made to separate the Father and the Son and break away a part of God Himself, and thus destroy His wholeness.” (W-132.13:1 (CE))

“Without the idea of death there is no world. All dreams will end with this one. This is salvation's final goal; the end of all illusions.” (M-27.6:3-5 (CE))

The concept that the world is not real, and the way the Course states it so plainly, make it difficult to misunderstand. I believe it literally means that the world does not exist outside of our minds. Some may denounce the thought as “gnostic,” as if that label were a naughty word. I do not believe the gnostic view, which was that the world was evil, created by a false god, and to be shunned entirely, treated with disdain. The Course is saying that the world is an illusion, but as long as we are in that illusion, we must love it, bless it, and forgive it, rather than blaming something external to us (There is no such thing.) for our troubles.

As I have pointed out before, the Course does not encourage *neglect* of the world while we continue to experience ourselves as in the world. It speaks of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven down to earth (W-193.15:5). Heaven comes to earth when it finds a home in your relationships (T-21.IV.6:3-4). The goal of the Course's curriculum is that we should experience the “real world,” which we attain through complete forgiveness of the old world we see (T-17.II.5:1). Until forgiveness is complete, which means everyone has forgiven everything, “the world does have a purpose,” i.e., forgiveness (M-14.2:1). We are to bless all things and unite lovingly with the entire world (W-283.2:2). T-1.46.19:4 (CE) quotes Jesus as saying, “Jeane Dixon's description is perhaps a better statement of my position: Because my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven, I can bring down the glories of Heaven to my brothers on earth.”

“*The end of the world is not its destruction, but its translation into Heaven.*” (T-11.8.6:8 (CE)).

Once we accept that nothing external to us exists, it does not mean we can dismiss the world. Instead, it means we recognize it as part of ourselves! We welcome it, embrace it, forgive it, and love it. It does nothing to us (we cease blaming it and forgive it), and we do nothing to it (we forgive ourselves). With that recognition, we are released from both guilt (by the inner forgiveness) and sickness (by forgiveness directed outward). “They are one” (II.3:10).

Full acceptance of this release from guilt and sickness depends on our acceptance of one crucial idea: “the insignificance of the body” (II.3:11). That statement profoundly challenges our concept of ourselves. It has probably never entered your mind that you are not your body, and your body is not you. Insignificant? So it means nothing if you step on my toes, nothing if I lose a limb, nothing if I am crucified? That is all insignificant? Yes. That is what the Course is saying. “The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life.” (T-6.VII.1:4 (CE)) The following passage gives an idea of what it means to view the body as insignificant:

Assault can ultimately be made only on the body. There is little doubt that one body can assault another and can even destroy it. But if destruction itself is impossible, then anything that is destructible cannot be real. Therefore, its destruction does not justify anger. To the extent to which you believe it does, you must be accepting false premises and teaching them to others.

The message which the crucifixion was intended to teach was that it is not necessary to perceive any form of assault as persecution, because you cannot be persecuted. If you respond with anger, you must be equating yourself with the destructible, and are therefore regarding yourself insanely. (T-6.I.8:1-9:2 (CE))

It seems clear to me that to view the body as insignificant I must cease to equate myself with my body. I must realize that my total reality is indestructible spirit.

Paragraph 4

4 With this idea is pain forever gone. ²But with this idea goes also all confusion about creation. ³Does not this follow of necessity? ⁴Place cause and effect in their true sequence in one respect, and the learning will generalize and transform the world. ⁵The transfer value of one true idea has no end or limit. ⁶The final outcome of this lesson is the remembrance of God. ⁷What do guilt and sickness, pain, disaster, and all suffering mean now? ⁸Having no purpose, they are gone. ⁹And with them also go all the effects they seemed to cause. ¹⁰Cause and effect but replicate creation. ¹¹Seen in their proper perspective, without distortion and without fear, they reestablish Heaven.

“This idea” refers to the insignificance of the body. Once that idea is welcomed into our minds, “pain [is] forever gone” (II.4:1). I’m not certain exactly how to interpret this statement. If we believe that Jesus was a fully realized being, which would include accepting the insignificance of his body, should we then conclude that he felt no pain while being crucified? Some Christian groups down through the centuries have held that he did not feel pain. Others insist that if he did not suffer pain, how could we say that he suffered for our sins? Perhaps a full acceptance of this idea does not come fully until we leave our bodies behind, and then pain is forever gone? I’m not certain. However, the connection between pain and our identification with the body is clear. That isn’t really the point here; there is more.

Not only pain disappears. As the insignificance of our bodies dawns on us, our confusion about all of creation, that is, everything else, also disappears (II.4:2). What is

being corrected here is our complete misapprehension of what cause and effect really are. We think we are the effect of the world, the product of our parents physically and forever affected by forces external to ourselves. We think the world is cause and our mental reactions are the effects. The reverse is true. Our minds are the cause, the external world is the effect. Recognizing we are not bodies means realizing we are the creations of God, spirit not flesh. So we have begun to acknowledge God as the Creator, a realization that will generalize to all of reality.

Place cause and effect in their true sequence in one respect, and the learning will generalize and transform the world. The transfer value of one true idea has no end or limit. (M-5.II.4:4-5)

If you have read the Text carefully you will have already encountered the notion that our disbelief that we are the cause of the world is the result of rejecting God as our cause (our Creator), and are two different forms of one mistake:

It is as needful that you recognize you made the world you see, as that you recognize that you did not create yourself. *They are the same mistake* (T-21.II.11:1-2).

The Text says a bit later that the way to heal our relationship with our Creator begins by recognizing we make the world we see (see T-28.II.8-9). The two are the same mistake: confusing effect and cause, and believing that an effect can become separate from its cause, and become a cause that affects its source. We begin by correctly seeing ourselves as cause, as makers of the world, and then we are able to see God as Cause, our Creator. "The final outcome of this lesson is the remembrance of God" (II.4:6).

The ego has made an external world that has become for us the cause of guilt, sickness, pain, disaster, and suffering. Once we embrace our role as maker of this world, rather than its effect, all those dreadful things lose their meaning (II.4:7). "Having no purpose, they are gone" (II.4:8). With their disappearance, everything that seemed to be their effect is also gone (II.4:9). We no longer see ourselves as victims of the world, of circumstance, of our bodies, or of those we once believed were separate from us.

The final two sentences in this paragraph, 4:10 and 4:11, are a terse summary of this section. Cause and effect in our relation to the world and sickness "replicate creation"; that is, "seen in their proper perspective [our minds make the world, just as God created us], without distortion and without fear [as we see them now, in reverse of their real relationship], they reestablish Heaven."

I'd like to expand a bit more on this by referring to material from Chapter 28 of the Text, Section II, "Reversing Cause and Effect." I'll quote both the Text and some of my commentary on it. It's worth your while to read over that entire section. Its relevance to what we've discussed here is obvious. For instance:

"Yet must all healing come about because the mind is recognized as not within the body, and its innocence is quite apart from it, and where all healing is. Where, then, is healing? Only where its cause is given its effects. For sickness is a meaningless attempt to give effects to causelessness and make it be a cause" (T-28.II.2:8-10).

References from Chapter 28 here are all from the CE.

So then, “where is healing?” (T-28.II.2:8). It occurs only when we attribute all the “effects,” which as we’ve seen includes our sickness and suffering, to their actual cause, namely, our mind (T-28.II.2:9). Sickness is our attempt to make the body into a cause, as if it just “got sick” on its own and our mind has no responsibility for that, but is at the mercy of the body, while the reality is that our bodies are the effects of our minds (T-28.II.2:10).

A mind within a body and a world of other bodies, each with separate minds, are your “creations”; you the “other” mind, creating with effects unlike yourself. (T-28.II.3:6)

The moment we recognize that God is the only Cause, with only one Effect, we simultaneously recognize that “causelessness,” our mad idea, had zero effects. When our mind grasps that we stop seeing effects to our madness (T-28.II.3:5). We stop seeing the world attacking us. We stop seeing sickness. We stop seeing “other” people as separate. We stop seeing “a world of other bodies, each with “separate minds” (T-28.II.3:6). We recognize we made all this up, believing we are a mind other than God’s, capable of creating effects unlike ourselves. Our effects are these separate bodies, bodies that get sick. Since we created them (or think we did), we must be like them: a separate mind locked in a separate body, subject to sickness (T-28.II.3:7). Healing lies in our recognition of the one true Cause.

Nothing at all has happened but that you have put yourself to sleep and dreamed a dream in which you were an alien to yourself, and but a part of someone else’s dream. The miracle does not awaken you, but merely shows you who the dreamer is. It teaches you there is a choice of dreams while you are still asleep, depending on the purpose of your dreaming. Do you wish for dreams of healing or for dreams of death? A dream is like a memory, in that it pictures what you wanted shown to you. (T-28.II.4)

Whenever we believe what we are, feel, or experience is the result of someone or something outside of us, we are seeing ourselves a part of a dream we didn’t dream up, and “someone else” must have dreamed it: another person, the world at large, or God... it doesn’t matter. Just not me.

This is what the miracle shows us: who the dreamer is, which is me. It doesn’t wake us up (T-28.II.4:2). We are still dreaming, but it has become lucid dreaming. We know we are the dreamer, and what we see and experience as the world is our dream. Because we know we are the dreamers, we also know we have a choice about what we are dreaming! It all depends on the purpose we give to the dreaming (T-28.II.4:3). Do we want “dreams of healing or dreams of death” (T-28.II.4:4)? We can see whichever we want, because just as in the last section we saw that memory shows us what we choose to see, a dream “pictures what you wanted shown to you” (T-28.II.4:5).

This isn’t going to occur overnight. We are unlearning a mindset that we’ve had all our lives, and perhaps for multiple lifetimes. I think our ego minds are going to continue throwing out evidence that what the Course is saying isn’t true. We’re going to have to continue to affirm that it is true, that there is only One Cause of all that is, that bodies are not the reality of us, and that we are making it all up. It’s a long learning process and will take a lot of time.

The miracle does nothing but to show him that *he* has done nothing. What he fears is cause without the consequences which would *make* it cause. And so it never was. The separation started with the dream the Father was deprived of His effects, and powerless to keep them since He was no longer their Creator. In the dream, the dreamer made himself, but what he made had turned *against* him, taking on the role of its creator as the dreamer had. And as he hated *his* Creator, so the figures in the dream have hated *him*. His body is their slave, which they abuse because the motives he has given it have *they* adopted as their own, and hate it for the vengeance it would offer them. (T-28.II.8)

So Jesus summarizes the steps of our “fall from grace” (T-28.II.8:5–7):

1. The Father was deprived of His effects; He was no longer their creator.
2. The dreamer made himself (and the world).
3. The effects of his dream turned against him, taking on the role of creator as the dreamer had done.
4. As the dreamer hated the Father, the figures in his dream hated him.
5. In the dream, he gave his body the motives of attack on God, so the figures in his dream adopt the same motives and abuse his body and hate it out of vengeance.

It's important to keep these steps clearly in mind, because the way down is the way back. We are going to retrace our steps, in reverse order, and really the first step back is the only one we must do ourselves, as will become clear as we go on .

It is their vengeance on the body which appears to prove the dreamer could not be the maker of the dream. Effect and cause are first split off and then reversed, so that effect becomes a cause; the cause, effect. This is the separation's final step, with which salvation, which proceeds to go the other way, begins. This final step is an effect of what has gone before, appearing as a cause. The miracle is the first step in **giving back to cause the function of causation, not effect**. For this confusion has produced the dream, and while it lasts will wakening be feared. Nor will the Call to wakening be heard, because it seems to be the call of fear.

That's what “The Shift in Perception” is all about: “giving back to cause the function of causation, not effect.” First we recognize that mind is the cause, not the effect, and the body is the effect of mind, not the cause. Then at triggers the deeper realization that God is our cause, and we are His effect. And when that is fully recognized we are at the gate of Heaven, almost home.

One final thought: Notice that the primary focus here is *not* on physical healing, but on the shift in perception that healing can precipitate. Quoting again from T-28:

Thus is the body healed by miracles because they show the mind made sickness, and employed the body to be victim, or effect, of what it made. But half the lesson will not teach the whole. The miracle is useless if you learn but that the *body* can be healed, for this is not the lesson it was sent to teach. The lesson is the *mind* was sick that thought the body *could* be sick; projecting out its guilt caused nothing and had no effects. (T-28.II.11:3–6)

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.