



# A Better Way

A NEWSLETTER FOR STUDENTS OF A COURSE IN MIRACLES®

Winter 2003

The Circle of Atonement

Issue #44

## Life Is but a Dream

by Robert Perry

What does it mean to say that life is a dream? If we tell people that we believe the world is a dream, what are we thinking when we say that? Obviously we mean that the world is not actually real. Yet I think we mean more than that. Most of us believe that dreams reflect deeper dynamics in the mind, that they spill out of unconscious forces. In this view of dreams, every figure and every image in the dream is symbolic of thought-patterns in the mind.

Hence, to say that life is a dream is to say that our own personal life is populated with figures and images that are put there by our minds as symbols of unconscious thought-patterns. Look around you. That chair is not a real chair. It is just a dream image, a symbol of hidden dynamics in your mind. That person is not a real person (at least as you see her). She is just a dream figure, a symbol of hidden dynamics in your mind. Everything you see was put there by your mind because it symbolically expresses something in your mind.

It certainly does not seem as if this is true, does it? You seem to be just one more player in some larger (rather chaotic) script. You definitely do not seem to be the scriptwriter, nor the director. Surely you are not the one controlling all those figures. You appear to be just one figure moving amongst a collection of many others, all possessing the same independent, unpredictable will that you have. This raises the question: Given how real and objective this world seems, how can we actually see it as nothing more than our own dream?

There is a fascinating section in *A Course in Miracles* that answers this question. It answers it within the perspective that dreams are symbolic expressions of thought-patterns within the mind. The direction it takes with this perspective, however, is completely unexpected. It is a picture that we never would have come up with on

our own. I think it is safe to say, in fact, that no one ever has come up with this picture. The section is called “The Forgiving Dream” (T-29.IX). It is not easy to decipher, but once deciphered it offers a vision of our lives here that is both disturbing and illuminating. After digesting this vision, we may well never see our lives the same again.

### A dream of judgment

The section opens by discussing idols. What is an idol?

The literal image, of course, is of a stone or wooden figurine to which we pray and which we hope will protect us from the ravages of the world, but which, being lifeless, can do nothing. The term, however, has taken on a much broader meaning in our culture. It refers to any object of extreme devotion. The Course takes this meaning and broadens it even further: idols are those things in the world which we look to for happiness, which we think will save us. In the end, they include all the things we value here. You name it—if we value it to fill the hole in us or to give us strength to face a hard world, it’s an idol.

The Course calls us a slave to our idols, and then asks a heartrending question: “What happened to the holy Son of God that this could be his wish; to let himself fall lower than the stones upon the ground, and look to idols that they raise him up?” (1:3; all references, unless otherwise indicated, are from “The Forgiving Dream”). Do you hear the poignancy in this question? How could this divine being, God’s Own Son, fall so far that he looks to cars, hamburgers, jewelry, and money to lift him out of the dirt?

The answer: “A dream of judgment came into the mind that God created perfect as Himself” (2:1). How is this the answer? How does having a *dream of judgment* lead us to become a *slave of idols*? The rest of the section explains

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**Everything you see was put there by your mind because it symbolically expresses something in your mind.**



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### **Mission Statement**

To discern the author's vision of *A Course in Miracles* and manifest that in our lives, in the lives of students, and in the world.

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Our financial policy is based on a line in *Psychotherapy*, a supplement to *A Course in Miracles*: "One rule should always be observed: No one should be turned away because he cannot pay" (P-3.III.6:1). Therefore, if you would like any of our materials or services and cannot afford them, simply let us know, and give what you are able.

The Circle is supported entirely by your purchases and gifts. Therefore, we ask you to look within to see if you might be led to support the Circle's vision financially with a donation above the list price of materials. We encourage you to give, not in payment for goods received, but in support of our present and future outreach. Please note that only amounts given over the list price are considered tax-deductible.

### **Mailing List Policy**

The Circle will share its mailing list upon request with other *A Course in Miracles* organizations, using our discretion and being as sensitive as we can to the Holy Spirit's guidance. If you do not want your name shared in this way, please let us know and we will make sure it is not.

The title of our newsletter comes from Bill Thetford's comment to Helen Schucman that "There must be another way" and from Jesus' comment in the Course that "Everyone eventually begins to recognize, however dimly, that there *must* be a better way" (T-2.111.3:6). We hope that this newsletter will be helpful to you on your journey to this "better way."

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## CIRCLE SERVICES

### *Support to Course Students*

In Sedona, Mary Anne Buchowski is available to work with individual Course students in a teacher-pupil relationship designed to help them along the path of the Course. We are also pleased to offer informal support and assistance, through correspondence or by phone, to both individuals and study groups. Contact Mary Anne at maryanne@circleofa.com, or call our office.

### *Course-Based Spiritual Healing*

If you are interested in having a healing session with Nicola, please contact her at nicola@circleofa.com.

### *Internet Services*

Our website is a useful tool for accessing Circle resources, programs, and services. The Workbook Commentaries by Allen Watson are available online. You will also find a huge variety of articles by other Circle teachers, including the popular "Course Q & A" page. New articles are added every week. There is also a shopping cart for simple online ordering of books and tapes. Visit the website at [www.circleofa.com](http://www.circleofa.com).

### *Service to People in Prison*

The Circle provides complimentary materials, as well as individual support through correspondence, to Course students in prison.

## For Your Consideration

In recent years, we have been blessed with bequests from people remembering us in their wills, and this has benefited us tremendously. We had no idea how helpful it could be until we started receiving these bequests.

As you plan for your estate, we invite you to consider naming the Circle of Atonement as a beneficiary. If you do decide to do this, please know that you have our deepest gratitude. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us (by phone: 928-282-0790; via e-mail: [info@circleofa.com](mailto:info@circleofa.com); or through regular mail: The Circle of Atonement, P.O. Box 4238, West Sedona, AZ 86340).

## CIRCLE EVENTS

### *Regular Classes in Sedona, Arizona*

#### **Daily Morning Workbook Class**

With Mary Anne Buchowski and Greg Mackie  
The focus for 2003 is "Walking with the Holy Spirit"  
Weekday mornings, 8:30 - 9:30 am

#### **Weekly Class**

With Robert Perry  
This class covers a variety of topics on the Course  
Tuesday evenings, 7:00 - 8:30 pm  
*Call our office for details*



### *Regular Classes in Portland, Oregon*

#### **Topical and Text Classes**

With Allen Watson  
Text study classes, plus a monthly topical class  
Tuesday evenings, 7:00 - 9:00 pm  
*Contact Allen Watson*  
*([allen@circleofa.com](mailto:allen@circleofa.com); (503) 284-3619)*

## Circle Treasures Unearthed

We were surprised recently to find copies of a few of our out-of-print titles stored in a distributor's warehouse. Now we are pleased to make these following titles—all written by Robert Perry—available to you:

***The Elder Brother:***  
***Jesus in 'A Course in Miracles'*** (\$9.00)

***Seeing the Face of Christ in All Our***  
***Brothers*** (\$5.00)

***The Workbook as a Spiritual Practice***  
(\$5.00)

Be sure to order early since numbers are limited. Please use the enclosed Mail Order List, call, or e-mail us with your order.

## Life Is but a Dream (continued from page 1)

that, and in the process unfolds a fascinating picture of how our lives are nothing but a dream, a dream of judgment.

This simple phrase “dream of judgment” provides a crucial piece of the whole puzzle. It implies that the thought-pattern that produces the dream symbols around us is none other than judgment. Dreams spill out of mental forces, and the dream of our lives spills out of the mental act of judging. What, then, is judgment? Judgment in spiritual circles is often identified more or less exclusively with condemnation. However, the word itself has many meanings, all of which share a single idea: that of measuring something against a standard, and selecting or rejecting it based on how well that thing measures up. The simple process of choosing a tomato to buy from the supermarket involves judgment. We have in mind the ideal tomato we want to buy—plump, ripe, unblemished. That is the standard. We then measure a particular tomato against that ideal. If it comes close enough we select it. If it does not, we reject it. The Course points out, however, that “judgment always involves rejection” (T-3.VI.2:4). We always have some slight regret about the tomatoes we select. They are never the perfect tomato.

This process of measuring against a standard, and selecting or rejecting based on that measurement, is the process by which we erect the complicated structure of our lives. We are always deciding what to include in our lives and what to leave out, whose calls we return and whose we don’t. Somehow, the Course is saying, this process not only builds our lives through guiding our behaviors, it also reaches out directly from our minds and literally dreams our lives into place. To understand how it does that, I have included a diagram that consists of three concentric circles (see the “Forgiving Dream” diagram inserted in this newsletter). At appropriate points I’ll invite you to fill in parts of this diagram so that you can see how this whole picture applies to your own life.

### You, the dreamer

In the center of the picture is you, the dreamer. In this perspective, you are more than just the central figure in your life. You are the one dreaming the whole thing up, and doing so, as we said, via your judgments. These judgments, of course, are quite often about weightier issues than what tomato to buy. They are about who to include in our lives and who to include in our heart—and who to *exclude*. We use the same process as with the tomato: we measure people against an ideal, we select or reject them accordingly, and even the selection is never completely wholehearted. Since no one measures up perfectly to all of our standards, there is always some element of rejection.

The toll this constant rejecting takes on our psyches is incalculable. We turn the weapon of our judgment on ourselves. We decide that we do not measure up to God’s standard, that we have made ourselves sinful, that we have put out the light within us (4:2). We condemn ourselves and become afraid to look within upon the terrible deformity that we assume is at the core of our being. As the section says, “Nor can he know the Self he has condemned” (2:8).

If you will, go ahead and write your name in the center circle. And under your name write “judgment,” to identify the dynamic in you that produces the dream.

### The dream

The colossal guilt we feel over our judgments is almost entirely unconscious, yet this guilt is the key to how our judgments produce the dream of our lives. Under the sway of our guilt we lay a penalty on ourselves (see 3:5, 3:6, 3:7, 10:6)—the punishment we think we deserve for being so judgmental. This penalty is more than just internal; we cannot keep it safely confined within the walls of our minds. It overflows into the dream. Ask yourself: If your mind was consumed with guilt, filled with the conviction that you deserved to be punished, and if this very mind was what was dreaming your life, what sort of life would it dream?

Wouldn’t you dream a life in which everything was constantly punishing you? Wouldn’t you dream a world full of disease and earthquakes and auto accidents and fires? Wouldn’t you dream an existence in which you were always looking over your shoulder, ceaselessly building dikes against the flood, always wondering when danger would catch up with you? And wouldn’t you dream a life story in which, in the end, you inevitably received the death penalty?

According to the Course, that is exactly what we have done. It calls this world “a dream of punishment” (T-27.VII.1:3). It claims the world is “the delusional system of those made mad by guilt” (T-13.In.2:2). The reason the world always seems to be punishing us is because, quite simply, we dreamt it out of a massive guilt-complex.

Thus, the outer circle of the diagram is filled with all the horrible things that we fear will happen to us and that we spend our lives trying to stave off. If you will, then, please spend a minute writing in that outer circle those disastrous things that you try to make sure never happen to you. Lesson 14 in the Workbook asks you to list “your personal repertory of horrors” (W-pI.14.6:1) and mentions wars, airplane crashes, cancer, and heart attacks as possible examples. What I’m asking you to do is write down this personal repertory in the outer circle labeled “the dream.”

Once you have written these horrors down, look at them and realize that these are all the things that you

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act of judging.**

secretly believe you deserve because of how judgmental you are. That is why they are part of your dream. That is why you have to expend so much energy pushing them away, because you are unconsciously drawing them to you as your presumed just deserts.

## The idols

This is where the idols come in. They are the middle circle, the buffer zone between you and that repertory of horrors. Their purpose is to protect you from those horrors.

I said earlier that the idols are all the things we look to in this world for satisfaction, pleasure, and security. In this section, however, idols are primarily *people*. This is especially clear in paragraph 7. It says that when we see the idols differently, they will be “perceived as brothers” (7:8), and that at this point, “no one is used” (this phrase occurs twice, in 7:4 and 7:5) to meet our ego needs. “No one” refers to the idols, and this implies that an idol is *someone* rather than *something*.

### *Function #1: to protect us from the dream*

In this context, then, idols are the people we surround ourselves with to protect us from the army that is constantly threatening to invade the peaceful sanctuary of our lives. Isn't that exactly what we hope that the people around us will do—protect us from life's travesties? Our doctor is there to protect us from disease. Our mechanic is there to protect us from our car not working. Our spouse is there to protect us from a life of loneliness. Our friends are there to defend us when our character is attacked. Our therapist is there to protect us against falling apart. Our employer is there to protect us against having no paycheck. Our local police force is there to protect us against criminals. And our parents (if still alive) are there to protect us when all the other systems of protection fail.

These people are essential, aren't they? Just imagine what our lives would be like without either them or their equivalent. All the threats the world holds would come crashing down on us. We would be alone, sick, homeless and destitute, prey to anyone and anything that came along.

Take a moment now, if you will, and write down in the middle circle the people you have collected to yourself to protect you from all the terrible things that could happen to you if you didn't have the help of others. While you are writing down their names, you might think about what, in your eyes, each one is there to protect you from. It may be a positive danger, such as disease, or simply a lack—a lack of companionship, a lack of money, a lack of pleasure, etc.

What does it mean to say that these people are idols? It means that, in our minds, we have turned them into mute pieces of stone who have no life of their own, whose only purpose is to magically protect us from the dream. We

might imagine ourselves surrounded by a ring of stone idols. As we look closer, we see that each one closely resembles some person in our lives. He has been stripped of personhood; all he is now is a mere brick in the wall that keeps the dark unknown from overrunning our lives.

This section uses another image which conveys much the same content. It says that we have made these people into our toys:

You do but dream, and idols are the toys you dream you play with. Who has need of toys but children? They pretend they rule the world, and give their toys the power to move about, and talk and think and feel and speak for them. Yet everything their toys appear to do is in the minds of those who play with them. (4:4–7)

Have you ever felt as if you were other people's toy? That your only job was to “talk and think and feel and speak for them,” to be the instrument of their will in their private war with the world? If you have, you know what the Course is getting at here. Only it is applying this not to others, but to ourselves. It is saying that we have made our friends and family and colleagues into our toy soldiers, whose job is to fight our battles for us exactly as we order them to.

Now we can see the answer to the question I asked near the beginning: How does having a *dream of judgment* lead to us becoming a *slave of idols*? The answer seems so obvious now.

Because your dream spills out of guilt over being judgmental, you are desperate for idols to protect you from the punishment you lay upon yourself. As the section says, “Idols [middle circle]...are interposed between your judgment [center circle] and the penalty it brings [outer circle]” (3:7).

This, however, is just the first of the functions we assign to our idols. We have given them two additional, more hidden and perverse functions.

### *Function #2: to protect us from our own judgments*

The toy soldier discussion leads right into the second function of our idols. As we saw, our idols are there to fight on our behalf. They are the instruments of our goal of keeping the undesirables out of our life, to keep our enemies outside the gate. This, of course, is a function of judgment. As we saw earlier, judgment rejects. It measures things against a standard and then rejects those things—and those people—that don't measure up.

In other words, we have hired our idols to carry out our judgments on our behalf. We have hired them as implements of rejection, making sure the undesirable

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people and things are shut out of our lives. That is how they protect us. Yet it is these very judgments that are the whole problem. Our guilt over them is what causes us to dream into place that outer circle, whose horrors are always pressing against our outer wall.

Rather than giving up our judgments, what we have done is to hand them over to our team of hired thugs. We are like a Mafia godfather. Not only do we surround ourselves with underlings as protection, we order hits that never get traced back to us. The hit man goes to jail, while we stay free, even though he was just carrying out our will. Can we not see this principle in our own lives? Our spouse is supposed to refute attacks on our character so that we don't have to. Our lawyer is supposed to play dirty, and when he does we can say, "That wasn't me. That was just my lawyer being a lawyer." The people in our lives are supposed to side with us against our enemies, and even fight those enemies off, while all the time we stand in the middle, looking innocent.

I saw a great example of this recently. A TV news magazine was investigating the questionable financial dealings of a famous televangelist. They were unable to get a response from him, and so they finally approached him on the street, only to be roughly pushed away by his bodyguards. Somehow, though, they managed to speak to him there, and he was surprisingly agreeable and cooperative. He promised to talk to them later, but when "later" came, he again refused to talk. There on the street, he appeared so innocent. The bodyguards, in their hostility, clearly did not understand him. Yet in the end, they were shown to be the pure instruments of his will. They were his own judgments moving about in the world, masquerading as independent people.

This is the second function of our idols: to make it appear that our judgments are not our own, that they belong to our supporters instead. This serves the crucial purpose of preserving our innocence, not only in the public eye, but in our own eyes. Now we can say to our troubled conscience, "That wasn't my attack. My husband was just sticking up for me." The section puts it this way:

The child...fears his thoughts and gives them to the toys instead. And their reality becomes his own, because they seem to save him from his thoughts. (5:5-6)

We can easily picture a scenario that fits the literal sense of this passage. Imagine a child who has murderous thoughts toward her parents. Just think of how frightening such thoughts would be for her. Thus, to maintain her stability, she gives her thoughts to her doll. Now it is the doll who talks about murdering Mommy and Daddy. The child is innocent; it is her doll that is evil. Of course, in this metaphor, we are the child, and all of our protectors are the doll. While they carry our evil thoughts for us, we appear

to be innocent. That is how frightened we are of our judgments.

Our idols, then, serve the dual function of saving us from all the dangerous things outside us and from our own dangerous thoughts within. As the middle circle, they protect us from the outer circle *and* the inner circle.

### *Function #3: to betray us*

The final function of our idols is to betray us. That is what they end up doing, isn't it? We ask them to protect us, and they seem to consent, but then they stab us in the back. In fact, when it is all said and done, they are the ones we need protection *from*. We buy a handgun to keep out intruders, and then we are shot with it by a member of our own family.

This betrayal is such a basic part of the human experience that it hardly needs pointing out. However, the point will be driven home more fully if you will go to your

diagram. Look at each one of the names you listed in the idols circle. With each one, ask yourself, "Do I feel that this person in some way betrayed me?" Perhaps he failed to carry out his function of protecting you. Worse yet, perhaps he ended up doing to you the exact thing he was supposed to protect you from. If you feel that this person betrayed you, then draw an arrow, a line of attack, from his or her name to the inner circle, to you. (At this point in classes I often ask students to take their Course hats off, which means: don't try to answer according to Course theory; answer according to how you actually feel

**Rather than giving up our judgments, what we have done is to hand them over to our team of hired thugs.**

inside.)

It is remarkable how betrayed we all feel. It is as if we hired a team of bodyguards, paid them lavishly, gave them bonuses, only to have them all come after us. We all know how this feels, but do we know why it happens?

According to this section, the idols simply carry out our wishes. True, they are people with their own mind and will, but our life is *our* dream. We are the scriptwriter. If they want to be in our play, they have to read our lines. They have to play the role we have written for them, or they will have to leave and take part in someone else's play. And the role we write for them requires them, sooner or later, to betray us. Yet why would we write this into the script? The section gives this subtle explanation:

Whenever you feel fear in any form...be sure you made an idol, and believe it will betray you. For beneath your hope that it will save you lie the guilt and pain of self-betrayal.

(9:1-2)

What does this mean? Remember that we give our idols our thoughts of judgment to carry out for us. Yet these are

the very thoughts that lead us to feel guilty and to encircle ourselves with a dream of punishment. These thoughts, then, are an act of self-betrayal. To hand them over to our idols is to subtly hire those idols to betray us. Think of the girl with the doll. Her thoughts of wanting to murder her parents are thoughts that so attack her sense of stability that she has to offload them onto the doll. But now the doll is expressing thoughts that attack the girl. To act out these thoughts the doll *has* to attack her. Given this, how could the girl not secretly fear that the doll will turn on her? And if the girl was in fact in a dream, in which all the events were puppeted by her own mind, isn't this exactly what the doll would do? The section mentions this very thing:

Nightmares are childish dreams. The toys have turned against the child who thought he made them real. (5:1-2)

This all may sound a bit weird, but it makes perfect sense if we reflect on the following:

1. Images and figures in our dreams symbolize thoughts in the mind.
2. Our idols are figures in our dream. They, therefore, must symbolize thoughts in our minds.
3. These dream figures symbolize our judgments. Our judgments keep unwanted people and things out of our lives, and that is precisely the function of these dream figures.
4. Our judgments betray us. They purport to serve us, but they instead make us appear guilty and deserving of punishment in our own eyes.

Thus, if these dream figures are our judgments personified, their *behavior* will actually be the behavior of our *judgments*. Therefore, they, like our judgments, will betray us.

This has power to change our perspective on all the betrayal we have experienced over the course of our lives. It says that all those people who turned on us were just reading the lines we gave them, just playing their role in our dream. With this in mind, look at your diagram. Look at all the arrows of betrayal going from your idols to you. Try to realize that those betrayals were just a case of those people playing the part you assigned them. As dream figures, they symbolize thoughts in you. They symbolize your judgments. Your judgments police the borders of your life, keeping out the undesirables, which is exactly the function of these particular dream figures. As your protectors and defenders, they are your judgments personified. And just as your judgments betray you, so do these dream figures. Just as your judgments bring punishment to you, so do these dream figures. That is the

role you hired them to play in your dream of judgment. All they did was read their lines well.

## A vision of our lives as a dream

This is a disturbing vision, to say the least. It offers a powerful explanation for how life is but a dream. But rather than picturing us rowing our boat merrily down the stream, it seems to show us being up the creek without a paddle. There are immense benefits to this view, however. To really appreciate those, let us first review it on two different levels, a more superficial level and a deeper level.

On the first level, even though it looks as if we are just trying to make the best of a tough life, we are really playing the role of king. We stand in the center of a grand drama, a drama that is all about us and our interests. We keep at a distance all those who might compromise our safety. We exclude all those whose low status would sully our highness. And we surround ourselves with all those who can help in this enterprise. Consequently, the buffer zone between us and the rest of the world is filled with bodyguards, ministers, attendants, servants, and armies. They are nothing more than pawns in our chess game. If they play their role well and keep the king protected, we reward them. If not, we toss them out on the street. All of this excluding and including based on the standard of our personal interests is one continuous game of judgment. We are in essence playing god:

The dream of judgment is a children's game, in which the child becomes the father, powerful, but with the little wisdom of a child.

What hurts him is destroyed; what helps him, blessed. Except he judges this as does a child, who does not know what hurts and what will heal. And bad things seem to happen, and he is afraid of all the chaos in a world he thinks is governed by the laws he made. (6:4-7)

After all of our vigilant managing of our world through judgment, we can't understand why everything goes wrong, why our generals attempt a coup, why our bodyguards abandon us in our hour of need, and why our lover stabs us in the middle of the night.

To explain this we have to go to the next level down. On this deeper level, we are not a king or a god at all. We are just a child playing a game, having a dream. All the figures in this dream appear to be animated by their own independent will, but in fact they are all just toys, just dream symbols. We are the ones pulling their strings. "You do not realize that you are making them act out for you" (T-18.II.5:6). Because the central dynamic of the dream is judgment, we, the child, are filled with guilt. And out of this guilt comes a dream in which everything turns against us. We lose control, not because it's not our dream, but

**This has power to change our perspective on all the betrayal we have experienced over the course of our lives.**

because we are using the dream to pay ourselves back for our sins. As the above passage said, the dream is governed by the laws we made—the laws of crime and punishment.

What I love about this vision is that it deals with the nitty-gritty of human life, things that we often avoid talking about in spiritual circles. It deals with the calamities and brutalities we spend our lives trying to escape. It deals with the pervasive fact of betrayal. It deals with our act of playing god through judgment, by which we choose friends and enemies, and then use our friends against our enemies. While looking all this ugliness straight in the face, it then offers a logical explanation for how this could really be our own dream. What makes it so hard to see this life as our dream is that so many things seem to happen outside of our will, so many cruel and senseless things that we cannot imagine actually choosing. According to this vision, the very dynamic of judgment that stands at the heart of this dream leads inexorably to a dream full of pain that seems to be thrust on us from the outside.

- It leads to a life in which punishment for our judgments is always looming on the horizon, threatening to rain catastrophe down upon us.
- It leads us to enslave ourselves to idols, who become our protectors against this looming catastrophe.
- It leads us to have these idols act out our judgments for us, so that we no longer seem to be the owner of those judgments.
- And it leads our idols to betray us, for they are simply acting out the judgments that betray us.

In light of this, look around you, look at your diagram—could it be true that this life quite literally is just a dream, a dream of judgment, a dream of punishment *for* your judgments? Could this life be your own private passion play, in which a divine mind wraps itself in the imaginary drama of paying for its sins against love?

If we can see this life as just a dream, however dark a dream it may be, then we have in our hand a great gift. We don't have to take it all so seriously. After all, we are not really here. This is just our dream. We dream that we are judgmental. And so we dream a world that punishes us. And so we dream that we have protectors. And we dream that they betray us. None of it is really happening. It's all in our mind. We are just perceiving certain thoughts as if they were outside our mind. We take our thoughts of deserving punishment, externalize them, and see them as enemies and disasters. We take our thoughts of wanting to keep the enemies and disasters away, externalize them, and

see them as friends and protectors. We are so invested in disowning our thoughts that we convince ourselves that all the dream symbols we look upon are truly external to us, and that we are “but a part” (5:9) of their world. Given the way those dream symbols behave, however, we can thank God that life is but a dream.

## The way out

What a mess this dream is! How do we get out? The answer is elegantly simple:

How can God's Son awaken from the dream?  
It is a dream of judgment. So must he judge  
not, and he will waken. (2:3–5)

It sounds simple, and it is, yet judgment is not some minor detail in the dream; it is the engine that drives the dream. That engine is running all the time. Judgment is the constant act of measuring everything against our standards, and the constant reaction of displeasure when things do not measure up. Let's face it, virtually nothing measures up completely. We never find that perfect tomato—or partner, or house, or job, or life. We never even find the perfect traffic conditions. The amount of displeasure that can result from a quick drive to the supermarket is amazing, and unsettling. Giving up judgment means training ourselves to turn off that steady reaction of displeasure to the daily stream of events.

To the extent we can actually turn it off, our guilt will drop away, and hence our fear will, too. Now we will no longer fear those catastrophes, for with our newly cleansed conscience, we will no longer see them as our just deserts. “Forgiving dreams remind you that you live in safety....So do your childish terrors melt away” (10:1–2). And as our fear level goes down, there will be an added benefit: we will no longer need to use our friends as toy soldiers to defend the castle. Simply put, we will stop using people. We will awaken from our game of being the lonely king surrounded by toys, pawns, and idols, and find that we are surrounded by *brothers*:

No one is used for something he is not, for childish things have all been put away....And the forms that enter in the dream are now perceived as brothers, not in judgment, but in love. (7:5,8)

All we have to do is give up judgment and the whole painful structure of human life is solved. The enemies who punish, the friends who betray, the self we condemn—all of it is gone. “And what was once a dream of judgment now has changed into a dream where all is joy” (7:6). All it requires is giving up judgment. Do you think it is worth it? 🌱

**All we have to do is give up judgment and the whole painful structure of human life is solved.**

# The Problem Is a Grievance; the Solution Is a Miracle

by Greg Mackie

Recently, my wife Margery and I completed a U-Haul move from Portland, Oregon to Sedona, Arizona. It went smoothly as moves go, and much of the experience was quite pleasant, even joyful at times. Yet various problems came up as they always do on such moves, and I was shocked to see just how easily those problems could wreck my peace of mind. It seemed that the smallest thing would spark a flash of irritation. I got snippy with Margery at times. Even petty things like drivers not using their turn signals got my goat.

I realized that, as the Course puts it, I was holding grievances, and this was making me miserable. I applied Course practices to many of them as they arose, and this was helpful. But my propensity for grievances disturbed me, and so after Margery and I arrived safely in Sedona, I resolved to look more closely at what the Course says on this topic. I focused on the Workbook lessons that have “grievances” as a central theme (Lessons 68-69, 71-73, 78, and review lessons 84-86 and 89-90). Fresh off of a disturbing experience of just how thin-skinned I could be, I wanted to learn all I could about the Course’s view of grievances, so I would be more effective in letting them go.

In this article, I would like to share what I learned. What exactly is a grievance? What are the consequences of holding grievances? Most importantly, how can we let grievances go? The answers I found to these questions have helped me become more effective in letting go of my grievances, and experiencing the happiness that lies beyond them. I hope what I share here will be equally helpful for you.

## What exactly is a grievance?

We all have a general idea of what the word “grievance” means. We speak of holding a grievance against someone, and everyone knows what we’re talking about. Yet with words the Course uses, it can sometimes be helpful to examine the definition more closely. The *Funk & Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary* defines the word “grievance” as follows:

1. a real or imaginary wrong regarded as cause for complaint or resentment.
2. a feeling of resentment or hostility arising from a sense of having been wronged.

We see two aspects of the word “grievance” here. First, a grievance is a perceived *wrong* (note that it may be

imaginary), committed against you by someone or something outside you, a wrong that in your mind justifies your complaint and resentment. Second, a grievance is the *feeling* of resentment that arises from that perceived wrong. In short, a grievance is some external event (definition #1) about which you feel aggrieved (definition #2). A grievance says to the world, “You did something wrong to me, and I’m rightfully upset about it.” (It says this especially to other people—the Course’s material on grievances focuses almost exclusively on grievances against other people.)

If you’re thinking that sounds an awful lot like the ego, you’re absolutely right. According to the Course, “the ego’s plan for salvation centers around holding grievances” (W-pI.71.2:1):

[This plan] maintains that, if someone else spoke or acted differently, if some external circumstance or event were changed, you would be saved. Thus, the source of salvation is constantly perceived as outside yourself. (W-pI.71.2:2-3)

In the very next sentence of the passage just quoted, the Course captures the essence of what we are saying when we hold a grievance: “‘If this were different, I would be saved’” (W-pI.71.2:4). This sentence echoes both of the dictionary definitions above. Wishing that an event were different

indicates that we regard that event as a wrong committed against us, a cause for complaint—the first definition of “grievance.” Believing that a different event would “save” us indicates that we believe a different event would not have caused us to feel resentful—the second definition of “grievance.” We don’t normally think of external events as “saving” us, but they seem to do so in the sense of making us feel happy, or at least making us feel better. Thus, a good thumbnail definition of “grievance” might be this: anything that causes us to say, “If this were different, I would feel better.”

I can easily see how this definition applies to the grievances I wrestled with during my move. I definitely thought that if certain external events went the way I wanted, I would have felt better. I was upset when a precarious stack of tightly packed items tumbled out of the back of the truck during loading, when Margery’s parking directions didn’t work, when our cat Chloe disappeared under the motel bed as we were preparing to leave, and when our other cat Alimar urinated on my lap as I held him in the passenger seat. I definitely believed, though I didn’t

A grievance is anything that causes us to say, “If this were different, I would feel better.”

express it this way, that my salvation depended on changing these externals, that my happiness depended on changing something besides my own mind.

Of course, when do we *not* think that different external events would make us feel better? Given this definition of grievances, it should be clear that they are not an occasional thing. Rather, they are the very fabric of life in this world. We spend our lives contending with external problems large and small, trying desperately to solve them all. If only we can get all our ducks in a row, we think, we will at last find happiness. But even when things are going relatively smoothly, we are not totally satisfied—even the most pleasant events in our lives come with their own attendant problems. No matter how good we feel, we can virtually always think of things that, if they were changed, would make us feel even better.

What this boils down to is that we spend virtually our entire lives holding grievances. Indeed, the Course says that literally every problem we encounter, at its core, is a grievance (see W-pI.90.1:2), and that we hold grievances against literally everyone (see W-pI.68.5:4). Our earthly lives, in its view, are little more than a long chain of grievances. Sadly, the consequences of holding grievances are devastating, as we will see.

Our earthly lives, in the Course's view, are little more than a long chain of grievances.

## The consequences of holding grievances

Holding grievances is the ego's way of self-preservation. We hold grievances—as the Course says, we “cherish” them—because we have identified with our egos, and therefore want desperately to fend off the light that would undo them. At one point, the Course calls grievances “a dark shield of hate” (W-pI.78.1:2) that we hold up to block the glorious light that would shine the ego away once and for all. Obviously, going through life cowering behind a dark shield of hate is not a recipe for happiness. Below, we will see some of the painful consequences that come from cherishing grievances.

*Holding grievances limits our brothers to their bodies, which limits us to our bodies as well.*

Many of the grievances that came up during my move centered on Margery. It's not that she did anything terribly wrong; she just had the misfortune of being a convenient target when something didn't go my way. When I reflect on my grievances against her, I have to admit that the following description rings true for them:

Are they not always associated with something a body does? A person says something you do not like. He does

## From the Editor

There are a number of exciting things happening at the Circle these days, three of which I'll mention here. First, we have just formed Circle Publishing, a division of the Circle of Atonement. We are in the process of turning Circle Publishing into a genuine small publishing house, with the help of our old friend André Gendron. The books we have produced in the past will now be under Circle Publishing, and the books we produce in the future will be consistent with the standards of “real world” publishing. We have just signed a contract with Midpoint Trade Books, an innovative distributor in the book industry. Their job is to get our books into the bookstore chains.

The first book that Circle Publishing is producing is the introductory book that I have written, which is tentatively titled *Path of Light: The Transformative Experience of A Course in Miracles* (though we will almost certainly change that title). Marianne Williamson is writing the foreword, Roger Walsh is writing the preface, and we have received some glowing endorsements from other authors and teachers. Patrick Miller, the founder of Fearless Books and author of *The Complete Story of the Course*, is serving as a consultant on the project. We at the Circle are pouring a huge amount of time and energy into this project right

now and have high hopes for it. It was because of the promise of this book, in fact, that Midpoint offered us a contract. We really hope it can increase awareness of the Course while simultaneously helping to give it a new public face.

We are also in the process of improving our website. Over the years we have produced so many writings that we value, yet a great many of these are not very accessible to the public, and many were produced for in-house purposes and have never seen the light of day. We have decided to take our past writings—booklets, articles, class notes, studies on particular concepts, etc.—and put as many of them as we can on our website. Much of this material will be free, but we will also be offering many items for download for a modest fee. These downloads will be a wonderful way to support the Circle and receive helpful material as well. All of this material will be archived online in a searchable database, allowing visitors to search for material on whatever topic they are interested in. If you are online, keep an eye on our website, as we plan to start uploading material on or shortly before December 1.



something that displeases you. He “betrays” his hostile thoughts in his behavior.

(W-pI.72.3:3-6)

This passage makes the point that every grievance, without exception, is focused on a body—especially the body of another person. Even when the grievance is against something like the weather, we’re casting about for someone to blame it on. Things we can’t pin on other people we pin on God, Whom we imagine as having a body of some sort (see T-18.VIII.1:7). This focus on bodies has the unfortunate effect of chaining our brothers and ourselves alike to a bodily identity. Holding grievances thus (seemingly) reduces us all from boundless, eternal Sons of God to limited, mortal bodies. What can this be but painful?

*Holding grievances makes the body our savior, which is an attack on God’s plan for salvation.*

If we see ourselves as bodies, then the purpose of our lives naturally becomes the care and feeding of our bodies. The grievances that came up for me during my move were all about the care of my body; specifically, the moving of my body and all the other bodies associated with it from Portland to Sedona. In my mind, if only I could accomplish this movement of bodies without incident, I would be happy.

When we see the body as the source of our happiness, we implicitly declare that the body is our savior. This puts us in direct conflict with God’s plan for salvation, a plan that says happiness can only be found *beyond* the body. God’s plan, we believe, would deprive us of happiness by taking away all the physical goodies that we see as the source of happiness. Since holding grievances is an expression of our commitment to the body as our source of salvation, holding grievances amounts to a declaration of war against God and His plan:

While the body stands at the center of your concept of yourself, you are attacking God’s plan for salvation, and holding your grievances against Him and His creation....Your chosen savior takes His place instead. It is your friend; He is your enemy.

(W-pI.72.7:4-6)

How can we find any sort of happiness when we begrudge creation itself, and see God as our mortal enemy? As long as our lives are devoted to attacking God and everything He created, we cannot be anything but miserable.

*Holding grievances maintains the fearful, attacking world we see.*

Lesson 73 presents us with a fascinating description of how holding grievances maintains our insane world:

Idle wishes and grievances are partners or co-makers in picturing the world you see. The wishes of the ego gave rise to it, and the ego’s need for grievances, which are necessary to maintain it, peoples it with figures that seem to attack you and call for “righteous” judgment. These figures become the middlemen the ego employs to traffic in grievances....

Your will is lost to you in this strange bartering, in which guilt is traded back and forth, and grievances increase with each exchange.

(W-pI.73.2:1-3, 3:1)

This applies to all of us, of course, but a stark example of this scenario is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Each side holds long-standing grievances against the other, and sees people on the other side as despicable attackers whose

attacks call for righteous anger and vengeance. A Palestinian suicide bomber blows up a bus in Israel, and Israel now has a new grievance. So Israel retaliates with a military assault on a Palestinian city, and now the Palestinians have a new grievance, which leads to more suicide bombers, and so on...

The import of this passage is that in the ego’s view, the real prize in this conflict is not a secure Israel or an independent Palestine, but *grievances*. Underneath their surface motivations, everyone involved has a hidden need for grievances. So, everyone involved uses the actions of those on the other side as justifications for grievances. The result of all this is the nightmarish situation we see every day on the evening news: a war that never ends, a constantly escalating series of attacks and counterattacks, all justified by

“righteous” anger at the “crimes” of the hated enemy.

But the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is just an obvious, extreme example of the dynamic that runs our world every day. As I contemplate my move, I can see the exact same escalating war in the arguments I sometimes had with Margery along the way. We may read about the Middle East crisis in the news and think “those people” are crazy. But if we hold grievances of any kind, however “minor,” we are doing the exact same thing they are. Our grievances are contributing to the maintenance of this insane world of fear and attack. As long as we hold grievances, finding peace in our own lives will be every bit as difficult as finding peace in the Middle East.

*Holding grievances hides the light of the world in us.*

This is the theme of Lesson 69. Our function is to be the light of the world—to be beacons of forgiveness who shine the light of salvation on everyone we meet. But how can we do this when we are blocking the light with the dark shield of our grievances? How can we bless the world with

As long as we hold grievances, finding peace in our own lives will be every bit as difficult as finding peace in the Middle East.

forgiveness and love when we are stewing with resentment against everyone? Quite simply, we cannot. We cannot be saviors of the world as long as we hide our light under the bushel of our grievances: “Because your grievances are hiding the light of the world in you, everyone stands in darkness, and you beside him” (W-pI.69.1:2).

I can certainly see this when contemplating the grievances I cherished during my move. I felt like anything but the light of the world in those moments, and I certainly wasn't inspiring Margery with my radiant love. I *did* feel like I was in darkness. I knew I wasn't fulfilling my function—I certainly wasn't being a good Course teacher—and it felt awful. The pain of unfulfilled function is the price we pay for holding grievances. As long as we cherish grievances, we will not assume our role as saviors of the world, the only role that can truly make us happy.

*Holding grievances prevents our brothers from saving us.*

According to the Course, when we shine the light of salvation on our brothers, it frees them to fulfill their function of saving us. Forgiving them reveals the Christ in them, Who then shines our forgiveness back into our own minds. This process of saving our savior is fundamental to the plan of salvation the Course lays out.

But for this process to work, we need to get it started. Obviously, we'll never get it started as long as we hold grievances, since grievances are what prevent us from freeing our brothers to save us. I know that when I was holding grievances during my move, Margery and the other people (and cats) I encountered looked like anything but my saviors. On the contrary, it seemed like I needed to be saved from them. In my mind, they were the problem, not the solution.

Therefore, the Course implores us to let go of any grievances that arise in the course of our day, so that each brother we encounter will be free to save us. It appeals to us to “let him be savior unto you today” (W-pI.78.5:5), and “refuse to hide his light behind [your] grievances” (W-pI.78.10:2). If we do not do this, we will remain stuck in darkness. Every time we shield the saving light of our brothers from our eyes, we throw away a precious opportunity for our own salvation.

*Holding grievances reverses our entire view of reality, replacing the truth of pure love with illusions of fear and hate.*

Perhaps the Course's best description of the painful consequences of holding grievances is in the first three paragraphs of Lesson 68. I invite you to read those paragraphs yourself, to get an idea of just how destructive grievances really are. The gist is that holding grievances brings about a dramatic reversal in our minds, in which the

glorious truth of God's creation is replaced by nightmarish illusions woven by the ego.

The truth is that “love holds no grievances” (W-pI.68.Heading). Grievances and love are polar opposites. Love, which is God, makes no demands of any kind, and does not contain even the slightest tinge of fear or hate. Moreover, love created us like itself (W-pI.67.Heading, W-pI.68.1:1). Therefore, our true Self holds no grievances either. It is an eternal, purely loving extension of a purely loving Father. It is one with its loving Source, and does nothing but radiate love to everyone and everything without reservation, just as God does.

When we hold grievances, though, the truth is replaced in our minds by bitter illusions. Grievances set off a chain of inexorable logic that turns our entire view of reality upside-down. Since grievances and love are opposites, holding grievances is a declaration that we are opposed to love; it is a denial that love created us like itself. This denial blocks our awareness of our true, loving Self that

holds no grievances. We now think we are the kind of self that *does* hold grievances: a vicious, hateful, guilty little ego in a frail body doomed to die. This self-perception is then projected onto God, which blocks our awareness of our true Source, the God of love. We now think that God is a fearful, hateful God Who holds grievances, just as we do; indeed, He holds grievances against us and punishes us with pain and death precisely *because* we are vicious, hateful, guilty little egos that hold grievances. In our minds, the truth of pure love has been replaced entirely with

horrifying illusions of fear and hate.

We may find it hard to believe that such cataclysmic consequences can arise from something as seemingly innocuous as, say, getting upset at a cat who urinates on our lap. But the Course makes it crystal clear that the consequences it describes are not mere hyperbole: “Can all this arise from holding grievances? Oh, yes!” (W-pI.68.2:2-3). Holding grievances facilitates nothing less than the shift from love to fear that is the essence of the separation. Holding grievances keeps the entire ego thought system in place. No wonder holding grievances is the ego's plan for salvation!

### **How to let go of grievances**

Ultimately, the way to let go of grievances is simply to let go of grievances. We need to lay down that dark shield of hate. Grievances are not caused in any way by the outside world; they are a decision in our minds, and our minds have the power to unmake that decision at any time. The reason we have such difficulty giving up grievances is not that it is truly difficult, but that we cherish them so much. Identifying with the ego, we believe they get us something we want—in particular, all those external things we think will make us feel better—and this seems to make grievances worth holding onto.

Therefore, the primary means the Course uses to help us let go of grievances is by increasing our *motivation* to do so. It does this in two main ways. One way is by showing us the negative consequences of holding onto grievances, as we've just seen. At the end of Lesson 68's grim litany of the horrors of grievances, it asks the pointed question, "Would you not be willing to relinquish your grievances if you believed all this were so?" (W-pI.68.4:1). Lesson 73 speaks in a similar vein, saying that "the barrier of grievances is easily passed....[and] the reason is very simple. Do you really want to be in hell?" (W-pI.73.5:5-7). If we see the true cost of holding grievances, giving them up will be no problem. Once we look at the pain of our grievances honestly, giving them up will be no harder than giving up banging ourselves on the head with a hammer.

The other way the Course motivates us is by showing us the positive benefits of letting go of grievances. As part of this positive approach, the Course gives us practices aimed at facilitating brief experiences of the joy that comes from giving up grievances. Jesus understands that giving up grievances seems like a tall order for us, but he assures us that seeing the benefits will make the task easy. If we catch even the briefest glimpse of the radiant happiness that lies on the other side of grievances, he promises that "there will never be a problem in motivation ever again" (W-pI.68.4:5).

Here are a few of the Course's positive ways of letting go of grievances—ways in which we can experience the joyous, liberating truth that lies beyond the prison of resentment.

### *We let go of grievances by seeking and finding the light of the world in us.*

This is Lesson 69's antidote to the problem of hiding our light under the bushel of our grievances. If the problem is hiding our light, the obvious solution is seeking and finding it again. Once we find it, the light of the world in us can shine forth for all to see—and we will be happy, because we will be fulfilling our true function at last.

This is exactly what Lesson 69 helps us do. It presents a picture of the mind as a great circle of radiant light deep within us. This light would save the world if we let it shine forth from us. However, we cannot see the light, because it is obscured by the "clouds" of our grievances. To remedy this situation, the lesson gives us a meditation practice in which we sink past the clouds of grievances and reconnect with the light at the heart of our being. We are also given a practice line to be used throughout the day, to help us keep that light in awareness:

*My grievances hide the light of the world in me. I cannot see what I have hidden. Yet I want to let it be revealed to me, for my salvation and the salvation of the world.*  
(W-pI.69.9:4-6)

### *We let go of grievances by forgiving our brothers—by letting our grievances be replaced by miracles.*

"Grievance" is just another word for unforgiveness, and forgiveness is the obvious remedy for unforgiveness. The Course offers us countless forgiveness practices to choose from. Indeed, two of the "grievances" lessons, Lessons 68 and 78, offer us practices for forgiving specific people. It is forgiveness that lifts the clouds of grievances from our minds, and allows us to see the sunlight of God's Love shining upon the world once more: "Forgiveness lifts the darkness [of grievances], reasserts your will, and lets you look upon a world of light" (W-pI.73.5:4).

The choice to forgive our brothers reveals to us the Course's alternative to grievances: *miracles*. This is the theme of Lesson 78, the lesson where that reference to the dark shield occurs. We are told that miracles await us in the light of truth, but that they are currently obscured by our grievances: "Each grievance stands like a dark shield of hate before the miracle it would conceal" (W-pI.78.1:2). We are then given a practice in which we set our grievances aside to reveal the miracles that were obscured by them.

As I already mentioned, Lesson 78's practice is a practice in forgiving a specific person. The way we reveal the miracles obscured by our grievances is to "lay [the shield of hate] down and gently lift our eyes in silence to behold the Son of God" (W-pI.78.2:3). We seek a vision of the Son of God in this person against whom we are holding grievances, a vision which will allow her to be our savior.

Forgiveness is *the* way to let go of grievances. It is the shining path to the boundless happiness that lies beyond. Through forgiveness of the grievances we hold against our brothers, literally all of the problems we face in our lives are shined away by the limitless power of the miracle:

The problem is a grievance; the solution is a miracle. And I invite the solution to come to me through my forgiveness of the grievance, and my welcome of the miracle that takes its place.  
(W-pI.90.1:5-6)

### *How can we live life without grievances?*

Virtually everything we do in life involves manipulating external things to bring about a more pleasant, comfortable, and positive state of affairs. Certainly that was my primary activity during my move to Sedona. Given the pervasiveness of this activity, how can we possibly give up grievances completely? Does giving up all grievances mean never doing anything to make ourselves more comfortable, or make the world a more livable place? Does it mean that we should never turn on the air conditioner when we're hot, ask someone to turn

the Led Zeppelin down when we're trying to meditate, or vote for the presidential candidate we believe will be best for our country and the world?

I don't think so. The Course isn't asking us to give up doing things that improve external situations. Rather, it is asking us not to see improved external situations as *salvation*, as the source of our happiness. Grievances arise only when we rely on externals for our happiness instead of relying on God. Trying to give up the outward behavior of improving externals without changing our minds about the source of our happiness is actually another form of trying to find salvation in externals. Giving up grievances isn't about giving up particular behaviors. It is about a change of mind.

How, then, can we live life without grievances? The Course's prescription for our daily lives is to turn them over to the Holy Spirit. He will guide us in how to perceive the events, situations, and people in our lives, and He will

also give us detailed instructions about what to do. Under His guidance, we will still undoubtedly do all sorts of things that improve external situations, but we will also recognize that these improvements are not the real source of our happiness. Under His tutelage, we will see our lives in a whole new way. Rather than "How can I rearrange external things so I can feel better?" the focus of our lives will become "How can I perceive what happens to me through the Holy Spirit's eyes, and act in a way that will best serve His plan?" We can live life without grievances to the degree that we devote ourselves to the Holy Spirit's plan for salvation.

### An exercise in letting go of grievances

I want to conclude with the following exercise, which is based mainly on the practices of Lessons 68 and 78. (I sure wish I'd had this exercise during my move!) 

## Letting Go of Grievances

Bring to mind a person against whom you currently hold a grievance—someone other than yourself. Hold the person and the grievance in your mind. Review the situation in which the grievance arose: how it got started, what happened, the aftermath, and anything else that comes to mind. Get in touch with everything associated with this grievance, as clearly as you can.

How does this situation make you feel? Underneath whatever surface feelings of triumph or satisfied self-righteousness you may have, does holding this grievance really make you happy? See if you can get in touch with the pain this grievance is causing you. "Do you really want to be in hell?" (W-pI.73.5:7). Hell is the actual consequence of holding this grievance, however much you may think it gets you something you want.

The only way out of hell is to let go of your grievance against this person, your brother. You must lay down the dark shield of hate you are holding up to block the light of Christ in him from your sight. So, with the Holy Spirit's help, open your mind and be willing to lay down your shield. Be willing to see this brother as something other than an enemy who has unfairly wronged you. Say to your brother:

*I would see you as my friend, that I may remember  
you are part of me and come to know myself.*  
(W-pI.68.6:3)

If you are tempted to hold on to the grievance and continue to see your brother as your enemy, remind yourself that grievances prevent you from seeing the holy, loving Self that is your true Identity. Say:

*Love holds no grievances. Let me not betray  
my Self.* (W-pI.68.7:2-3)

Remembering that your only hope of happiness is to extend love from the purely loving Self that you and your brother share,

determine now to see the miracle that was concealed by the dark shield of hate. Determine now to let the miracle of forgiveness shine away the grievance you are holding against your brother. Say to him:

*Let our grievances be replaced by miracles,  
[name].* (W-pI.89.4:3)

Allow the miracle of forgiveness to gently transform your perception of your brother, so that where before you saw a guilty sinner who unfairly wronged you, you now see the holy Son of God. You thought you needed to be saved from him, but in truth he is your savior. This is all you really want to see in him. Say, then, to the Holy Spirit:

*Let me behold my savior in this one  
You have appointed as the one for me  
to ask to lead me to the holy light  
in which he stands, that I may join with him.*  
(W-pI.78.7:3)

Join with your brother in the holy light. Rejoice in the vision of your brother as your savior. "He who was enemy is [now] more than friend" (W-pI.78.5:5) to you. As you bask in this beatific vision of your holy brother, let yourself experience the limitless peace, freedom, safety, and happiness this vision offers. Feel the boundless love streaming from you to your brother, and from him to you. No pain can beset you in this holy light. No harm can come to you here. Only happiness is here. This is what it feels like to be free of grievances. This is how every moment of your life can be. To conclude, remind yourself once more of the peace and happiness that is yours when you let go of your grievances:

*Love holds no grievances. When I let all my  
grievances go I will know I am perfectly safe.*  
(W-pI.68.6:8-9)

# COPYRIGHT DECISION: WHAT DOES THE VERDICT MEAN?

by Robert Perry

On October 24, 2003, the copyright on *A Course in Miracles* was dismissed. On that day, a verdict was issued in the copyright case between Endeavor Academy and FACIM (the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles*) and FIP (the Foundation for Inner Peace). Judge Robert W. Sweet of the Southern District Court of New York found that the Course was distributed prior to publication and, as a result, its copyright is invalid.

What does this mean? Does it mean that anyone can quote from, or even publish *A Course in Miracles*? For now, it means nothing; it's business as usual for everyone, including the Circle. Most observers believe that FACIM will appeal, and if they do, the judge will most likely stay the order until the appeal is resolved. The first step is for the draft of the Order of Entry of Judgment to be completed by Endeavor and then signed by the judge (it is not clear how long this might take, but I have the impression it will be done shortly). From the time that order is signed, FACIM has thirty days in which to file a Notice of Intent to Appeal, and six months in which to actually prepare and file the appeal.

The point on which everything turns is whether or not FACIM decides to appeal. If they decide not to appeal, the copyright will be ended as soon as that thirty-day period expires—which would probably be sometime near the first of next year. If they decide to appeal and the appeal is accepted, the issue could drag on for many more years.

Interestingly, Endeavor is stating in the draft of the Order of Entry of Judgment that the copyright should also be dismissed on the Hugh Lynn Cayce version and the Urtext—two earlier versions of *A Course in Miracles* that have been released over the Internet in the last four years. The reason is that FACIM has consistently argued that these earlier versions were “encompassed” in the copyright on the Course itself.

Given that, for now, the copyright is still in effect, perhaps the most relevant thing to do is to examine the judge's verdict. Why did he decide what he did? Endeavor had originally mounted a number of defenses, the key one perhaps being the claim that the Course could not be copyrighted since it had no human author. In July of 2000, however, Judge Sweet rejected all of Endeavor's defenses (including the authorship defense) except one: the issue of prepublication distribution. Consequently, the whole point of the trial, which took place in May and June of this year, was to decide if there was sufficient distribution of the Course prior to it being copyrighted to place the Course in the public domain.

Endeavor clearly established that a number of copies had been distributed without a copyright notice affixed to them. This was pivotal, for it shifted the burden of proof to FACIM/FIP. In order for the copyright to stand, FACIM/FIP now had to prove that this distribution was “limited” rather than “general.” To be limited, it had to be shown that “the publication was (1) to a definitely select group, (2) for a limited purpose, and (3) without the right of diffusion, reproduction distribution or sale” (unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from the judge's opinion, which can be read at

<http://www.circleofa.com/pdfs/CopyrightVerdict.pdf>).

FACIM/FIP had to prove all three points, or the publication would be deemed “general,” and the copyright would be invalidated. According to the judge, however, they were not able to prove even one of these points.

On the first point, the judge ruled that the distribution was not to a select group. To begin with, Helen and Bill were in the habit of giving the Course to individuals whom they deemed “worthy or ready for the Course”—a “completely subjective” criterion. Further, the judge ruled that extensive Xeroxing of the uncopyrighted manuscript did occur in the Bay Area in 1975, thus shattering the possibility that the distribution was to any sort of select group.

On the second point, FACIM/FIP needed to prove that the copies were distributed for a strictly limited purpose, “such as to seek commentary or criticism.” The judge, however, saw two pieces of evidence that there was no such limitation: first, that so many unknown individuals received Xeroxed manuscripts, and second, that so many known individuals who received copies were strangers or virtual strangers to Helen Schucman. Citing case law, Judge Sweet stated that “an author's lack of personal knowledge or friendship with persons that receive the work is indicative that a distribution was not limited as to the group or the purpose.”

On the third point, the judge ruled that the way in which copies of the Course were distributed did not “preclude recipients from reproducing, distributing or selling any copies.” He decided that the facts were consistent with the following scenario: “(i) Schucman and Thetford did not object to the Course's distribution in California; (ii) that 100's of people acquired copies in California; and (iii) people were running off copies as fast as possible.” He concluded that by the summer of 1975, Helen Schucman, Bill Thetford, Ken Wapnick, and Judith Skutch “intended to make the Work as available as possible without limitation.”

In the process of deciding all these issues, Judge Sweet has,

**In the process of deciding all these issues, Judge Sweet has, perhaps inadvertently, given us all a badly needed official history of the publication of *A Course in Miracles*.**

perhaps inadvertently, given us all a badly needed official history of the publication of *A Course in Miracles*. Until recently, there has always been essentially one version of the events that led up to the Course's publication, the version that has inspired so many thousands of Course students. However, at the May trial, the surviving principal players in that story gave a significantly different account, raising the question, "What really *did* happen?"

The judge categorically sided with the *original* version of the story. According to him, this is what happened: Helen "Schucman was embarrassed by her scribing and considered it her 'guilty secret.'" Fearing for their professional reputations at Columbia University, she and Bill Thetford originally "chose to keep [the Course] a secret." That is why they didn't put a copyright notice on it, even though they were accustomed to copyrighting their professional articles. Then, "as the work began to take shape, Schucman and Thetford revealed the work to individuals who they believed would be interested in the intersection of the psychological and the spiritual." These included Hugh Lynn Cayce, Father Benedict Groeschel, Calvin Hatcher, Jon Mundy, Ken Wapnick, Douglas Dean, and Judy Skutch Whitson.

Shortly after receiving the manuscript, Judy then took the Course to California, in two key trips that took place in June and July of 1975. During these trips she gave some or all of the Course to various people, including Jerry Jampolsky, Jim Bolen, Edgar Mitchell, Zelda Suplee (who gave a copy to Reed Erickson, who, months later, would fund the first printing of the Course), Paul Steinberg, and Saul Steinberg. This was also when a large number of Xeroxed copies of the manuscript, perhaps hundreds, found their way into the hands of "a number of unknown people" in the Bay Area. The judge states:

From all the evidence, it is a fair inference that, as Skutch Whitson stated, on her second trip to California she permitted xeroxing "and it seemed very right that people would pass it along, copy it over and copy it over, until finally people's copies were getting so light, that they couldn't see them anymore, and a few of us got together and recognized the need to put it in some kind of a form that was easier to read. And out of that came very small little paperbacks that the print was so small you needed a magnifying glass" [the quote is from a transcript of a past talk given by Judy].

This spread of uncopyrighted manuscripts in the Bay Area was crucial, for it was the driving force that set in motion the rest of the story. First, it caused Helen and Bill to reverse their "secrecy policy" regarding the Course and decide instead to copyright and distribute it:

However, after Skutch Whitson's California trips, the appeal of the Course to a wider audience became apparent, and...a decision was made...to copyright the work so that it might be distributed

more broadly...The decision to copyright and thereby to control and profit by the distribution of the Course was made after the distribution of the xerox copies described above.

Second, the sheer cost of the Xeroxed manuscripts—\$75 per copy—led the early Course family to decide to print what has been called the Criswell edition, in which they simply had the typewritten manuscript (the one everyone had been Xeroxing) photographically reduced and printed through a process called "photo offset":

However, it is fair to infer from the description of the July meeting that a number of xeroxes were made and that the cost of the xeroxing was a motivating factor in developing the Criswell editions.

The Criswell edition is what then led to the publishing of the First Edition of the Course in June of 1976, both because its three hundred copies sold out quickly and because it brought offers from several publishers to publish the Course.

This account fits with the story that has always been told, and, according to the judge, it fits the evidence. However, it stands in marked contrast to the story presented at the trial, principally by Judith Skutch Whitson. According to her testimony, Helen and Bill "always knew that some day we

would probably have to publish it or have it published" (from the trial transcript, which can be read at

[http://www.unitingthesonship.com/Background/trial\\_August%20Update.htm](http://www.unitingthesonship.com/Background/trial_August%20Update.htm)).

In this version, Judy did take the manuscript with her to California, but she cautiously shared it with just two people, Jim Bolen and Jerry Jampolsky, and not for their personal benefit, but strictly to seek their professional feedback on the quality of the manuscript. Rather than there being hundreds of Xeroxed copies, there was a grand total of *five*, all kept very close to home and under strict instruction that they not be reproduced. As a result, the decision to print the Criswell edition was not, in this version of the story, sparked by the cost and popularity of the Xeroxed manuscripts. Instead, Helen, Bill, and company already planned to publish the Course, and Dr. Criswell simply made a suggestion to Judy for how that might occur in an initial form, leading them to conclude that this "might be a temporary solution until we found out what was our next step" (from the trial transcript).

Of course, what is really strange about this new version is that it was told by the same people who gave us the original version. In seeking to explain this, Judy claimed at the trial that the story she had previously told for more than twenty-five years was "embellished," essentially in order to generate enthusiasm for the Course. In point of fact, she said, there was no spontaneous Xeroxing of the manuscript. The Course was not available for whoever wanted it. It truly was, in other words, a limited distribution. Other witnesses for FACIM/FIP lined up behind this same story. Yet the judge clearly did not believe them. He pointed out that the evidence for a limited distribution

**Ironically, it is the judge who has converted the story of the Course's publication back into a "mystical experience."**

lay solely in the oral testimony of “interested witnesses,” witnesses who receive enormous financial benefit from the Course’s copyright. The judge returned repeatedly to the theme of a mystical book being transformed into a lucrative property:

Although it was Schucman’s directive that only a nonprofit foundation was to publish the Course, FIP assigned it to a for-profit company, Penguin, for \$2.5 million dollars. Skutch Whitson and her family receive salaries, perks and benefits from FIP.

The mystical experience [the scribing of the Course] reported by Wapnick and Skutch Whitson was converted by Skutch Whitson into a property right.

Ironically, it is the judge who has converted the story of the Course’s publication back into a “mystical experience.” For the story told by FACIM/FIP at trial is a rather flat, ordinary tale: Helen, Bill, Ken, and Judy had the intent to publish the Course and, step by step, they found a way to do it. The original version is far more inspirational and conveys the feeling that there was something greater at work than the human players involved. In this version, the group had no plans to publish the Course; it was a carefully guarded secret. Yet they did consider it a gift from above, and so they passed it on to anyone who seemed meant to have it. And as they did, it escaped their grasp and spread like wildfire, compelling them to finally realize that their “guilty secret” was actually meant for the world. How ironic that it took a federal judge to restore to us this timeless tale. 🌸

# Why Do We Judge People?

by Allen Watson

Have you ever wondered why you are so fond of judging people?

We all do it. We tell ourselves that we don’t want to judge or criticize others, but then someone does something that is—well, downright *awful*, such as the atrocity of 9/11, and we just can’t help voicing our indignation. We don’t want to judge people close to us, but when they keep on doing the same annoying thing day after day after day, how can *anyone* refrain from pointing out their faults?

There is a lesson in the Workbook of *A Course in Miracles* titled “Today I will judge nothing that occurs” (W-pII.243.Heading). Anyone who has ever tried to put that into practice, and has honestly monitored their mind, knows how difficult, nay, seemingly impossible it is to keep that vow. What is it about judgment that makes it so hard to let go of?

“It is curious,” Jesus says, “that an ability so debilitating would be so deeply cherished” (T-3.VI.5:7). Judgment is debilitating, isn’t it? It makes us tired, physically tired, because it is stressful (T-3.VI.5:1-6). We feel compelled to pronounce our judgment and to correct the errors of the world around us, an onerous, even distasteful task that drains our energy. Yet, ironically, as the above quote says, we *do* cherish it. We constantly choose to judge, and we find the idea of giving up judgment to be personally insulting. Why? Why is it that we *want* to judge others when the effect on ourselves is so negative?

## The Source of Judgment

The Course says our love of judgment grows out of our conflict with God about who created us:

If you wish to be the author of reality, you will insist on holding on to judgment. (T-3.VI.5:8)

The Course is fond of drawing our attention to the many ways in which the details of our life, so seemingly mundane, all reflect a larger reality. Things we believe to have no spiritual significance actually quite clearly indicate what is going on at the spiritual level. For instance, the Course points out that all of our relationships reflect our relationship with God in one way or

another. In particular, the way we relate to persons who stand in places of authority is a picture of how we relate to God. And, the Course claims, our conflict with authority is the source of all our judgments. Let’s see how that works.

Think for a moment about the various kinds of authority figures in your life. How do you feel about them and how do you relate to them? Some typical examples of authority figures include:

- your boss
- parents
- police
- teachers
- political figures
- religious leaders and teachers

Can you think of some more?

Actually, *anyone* can be an authority figure to us. All they need to do is to express an opinion that seems to affect us and to carry some weight with us.

How would you describe your feelings and your thoughts in relation to authority figures, both in general and in relation to particular authority figures? As I thought of various figures in my life, I made a list of various reactions I have to them. Is your response in my list, given below? If not, how would you describe it?

- I resent the authority figure.
- I respect...
- I am afraid of...
- I admire...
- I resist...
- I am critical of...
- I think most authorities are bad or unnecessary.
- I believe authorities are helpful and essential.

As you consider how you react to various authorities, consider how your reactions in some way reflect your reactions to God’s authority. As you make these comparisons, it may help to understand something more about how the Course views our

relationship to God’s authority, and how that is connected to our love affair with judging. Let’s explore that in more depth.

### *The Authority Problem*

The first section of Chapter Two of the Text (“The Origins of Separation”) discusses the process by which we misused our ability to extend or create like God and projected an illusion instead. That illusion primarily consisted of a belief that we can change what God created and, in effect, become our own creators. One way of describing our fundamental error is: We believe we have replaced God as our own creator or “author.” We do not want to recognize God as our Author (the ultimate Authority) because doing so would be an admission that we have not and cannot create ourselves. The ego cannot tolerate that notion because, if it is true, it means that the ego does not really exist.

The Course’s teaching on authority figures grows out of its understanding concerning the ego’s fundamental aversion toward God’s authority. It maintains that every problem we have on earth with any authority, of any kind, is just a reflection of this basic and fundamental authority problem that we all have with God. In the Course, the phrase “authority problem” is synonymous with our belief that we have usurped God’s creative power, and replaced Him as our own creator (see T-3.VII.4:1; T-5.V.3:3; T-11.In.2:2-8).

How does this lead to our daily act of judging? In two ways. First, and very simply, we judge because that makes us “the author of reality” (T-3.VI.5:8). In judging, we are deciding what things are. Isn’t that how we feel when we are judging? We feel that when we issue our proclamation, we are determining the true nature of reality. Judgment is innately, and fairly obviously, an act of playing God. When we don our robe, take up our gavel, and sit in the judgment seat, we have taken God’s place. Reality is now up to us.

But once we have appointed ourselves as judge, what happens when other judges walk into our courtroom and begin pounding *their* gavels, and issuing *their* judgments? They become competing judges, who threaten to undermine our whole role. So, second, we judge because to maintain our place as the ultimate authority, *we must judge against all these competitors*. We must evaluate them and find them all wanting, to justify choosing our own autonomy. Our rule must be better than all the others. The Course says that we all make up our own truth and our own value system, and adds, “Each one establishes this for himself, and makes it true by his attack on what another values” (T-23.II.2:4).

According to the Course, we unconsciously see these earthly authority figures as if they were God dressed up in disguise. If *their* authority can determine us then it is as if *God* has defeated us. His Authority has caught up with us and thrown us off of the judge’s bench. We have lost our battle with God, and have become His pawn again. Thus, to win our battle with God’s authority, we have to defeat these other judges. It is as if we are campaigning against them for our office. We have to establish that they have a bad record and a questionable character. We have to show that they do not deserve the office of judge—we do. And so, we judge against them.

When you find yourself thinking critical thoughts about another person or resenting an earthly authority, it probably never occurs to you to think, “There I go again, rebelling against God’s authority and rejecting Him as my Creator!” But your judgments about other people are symptomatic of just such a rejection of God as Creator. We judge others because *we want to*. It establishes us as superior; it validates our independent authority. (So we think, anyway.) In a nutshell, it builds up our ego and “defends” us against God.

To prop up our egos, *we want* to perceive differences. When we judge, we have *chosen* not to know the true worth of our brothers and sisters. We imagine that when we judge someone, we are judging because we perceive some real wrong in them. The reverse is true. We perceive wrong in them *because* we have chosen to judge. We see what we want to see (T-25.III.1:3-4). Remember: *mind is the cause; the world of perception is the effect*. We have taught ourselves the complete opposite: that what we perceive causes our judgment. In truth, it is our choice of judgment that causes our perception, and our refusal of God’s Authorship that causes us to choose judgment.

What effect might it have on you if, when you catch yourself judging someone, you reminded yourself, “I am choosing not to know him”? Because that *is* what you are doing. “[Your brother’s] meaning is lost to you precisely *because* you are judging [him]” (T-3.VI.3:3).

All our judgment can be traced back to the desire to create ourselves or to usurp the creative power of God. We want to be independent of God, to be our own authority. The ego wants to be autonomous. That is the original authority problem; it is the origin of all the authority problems in our lives—the constant strife with the boss, with parents,

with children, with the government, with organizations, leaders, churches, gurus, and even with Jesus. All of our judgments come from trying to maintain our autonomy, our independence. We judge authority figures because we are trying to believe in our independence. We resist acknowledging anyone’s authority over us, in any form. We find fault with our friends and family. We feel a polluted pleasure when we learn of a public figure involved in scandal. We take any opportunity to view ourselves as right, as superior to others, as more competent, as self-sufficient and independent. We take this attitude toward one another because we are attempting to be independent from God. The ego insists that it is independent and the source of its own existence; it cannot accept that God is the Source of all things.

The question I raised at the beginning was: Knowing that judgment brings us pain, why do we still hold on to it? And the answer is: the authority problem. The root cause of judgment is our dispute with God about authority. The authority problem is “the root of all evil” (T-3.VI.7:2-3), which is a reference to the Bible verse which says that love of *money* is the root of all evil (or “*all kinds of evil*,” according to the New International Version.) All our problems, including our love of judgment, stem from this one problem, which is just another way of describing the belief in separation, or independence, from God. It has many symptoms, it takes many forms, but they are all the same thing. Learning the Course often means learning to recognize this one problem at the root of what we thought were unrelated problems.

**Why is it that we want to judge others when the effect on ourselves is so negative?**

Wanting to be independent, the ego sees God and everyone else as a competitor, fighting it for our authorship. In order to reject these competing claims we must judge. We can reject God's Will for us only if we judge against it. If we completely accepted God's Will for us, we would be granting Him the right to run our lives and dictate who we are, an idea the ego simply cannot tolerate.

We end up projecting our problem with God's authority onto everyone around us. We have a problem with *their* authority, or we see them as flouting *our* authority. We see these things only because we are projecting them. Our mental belief about ourselves causes us to misinterpret what is happening. No one is competing for our authorship, not really. Our Authorship is undisputed and cannot be disputed; we are God's creation. But, we reject that idea.

We reject God's creation. We separate from God (or choose to think we can). In seeking to become *autonomous* we become *anonymous* (T-3.VI.8:7), that is, a person without a creator. We become "Creations Anonymous." Having rejected God's Authorship, the job of author is vacant and it seems reasonable to believe that somehow *we* are our own author. But we are surrounded by competitive "authors," other egos trying to make the world over in their image. That is why we are fearful. That is why we see threats coming at us from "authority figures" in the world.

### The Way Out

How can we become free of this competition? Is there a way?

There is. We experience stress and loss of peace because we judge. We judge because we are in competition with God for our authorship, and project that competition onto the world. Through judgment, we try to play the author of reality, and to disqualify the other potential authors. The way out, therefore, is to undo all that. It boils down to two simple steps:

1. Realize that when you judge you are trying to be the author of reality, the arbiter of what is real. You are trying to play God. "Judgment is a children's game, in which the child becomes the father, powerful, but with the little wisdom of a child" (T-29.IX.6:4). But reality already is the way it is. Nothing you can do can change it. You might say to yourself,

*I am not the author of reality. God is.*

Or, as the Course puts it,

*Let me not be Your critic, Lord, today, and judge against You.* (W-pI.268.1:1)

2. When others' opinions of you or actions in relation to you seem to have power over who you are, realize that they cannot do that because God is your Author. Their arms are too short to box with God. They can't do anything to affect who you are one way or the other, because God has already set your reality for all eternity. You might say to yourself,

*My brother is not the author of my reality. God is.  
I am as God created me, not as [name] made me.*

Accept God as your Author, and recognize the fact that, as the Bible says, "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3). Recognize that God's Will and yours are the same. Doing so ends all conflict and thought of threat. If your

being is created by God, nothing can threaten it; therefore, judgment is not necessary. When you relinquish the reins, so to speak, you free yourself from the need to defend your identity and autonomy. You are no longer the shepherd warding off the wolves; God is your Shepherd, and you are simply a sheep, safe in His care.

It's easy to say "Accept God as your Author" but it is difficult to truly *do* it. That's why the Course gives us a training program. It provides literally hundreds of exercises in both the Text and the Workbook that we can use to retrain our minds into acceptance of God's Authorship of our being. The Workbook emphasizes the truth that God created us, and that our Self continues unchanged, in exactly the form in which He created it; the idea is featured in several lessons (94, 110, 162), referred to in many other lessons (W-pI.93.7:1,2,6; W-pI.132.9:1-2; W-pI.139.11:3; W-pI.191.4:2; W-pI.197.8:2-3; W-pI.201-220 (theme of Review VI for twenty days), and is also mentioned in the Text (T-23.I.7:2; T-31.VIII.5:2). The idea is such a prominent part of the Course that no one can doubt the importance of this idea in the Course's program to restructure our thoughts.

When you catch yourself judging another person, let it remind you of this truth as the antidote to judgment. Say to yourself, "I am as God created me; he (or she) is as God created him (or her)." Let the temptation to judge turn, instead, into a response to a call for help. By reminding yourself of who you really are, and of the security that resides in being God's handiwork rather than your own, you can free yourself from the craving to bolster your ego by judging those around you.

Remind yourself, too, of what judgment costs you: it robs your peace of mind and saps your energy. And inevitably, your judgment rebounds onto yourself (T-3.VI.1:4; T-12.VII.13:1). Tell yourself, "When I condemn my brother I am condemning myself," or "I will receive what I am giving." Make judgment something undesirable, something you want to get rid of.

When you have accepted God as your Creator, instead of trying to be your own creator, you will find that "Peace is a natural heritage of spirit" (T-3.VI.10:1). You can be at peace, without conflicts with authority figures or people around you who seem to be trying to manipulate you. You can have that peace *simply by knowing who you are*, and you will know who you are when you are willing to accept God's Authorship of your life. When you know that "I am as God created me" (W-pI.110.Heading), you know that nothing anyone can do, including yourself, can change that. Decide the authorship question, and fear will be gone. Accept God's Authority over your life, and peace will be your inheritance.

To accept God's Authority is not a loss of free will. I can never be free if I spend my existence trying to be something I am not—which is what all of us have been doing! Judgment imprisons us by making us into something we are not. Accepting true Authority or Authorship is true freedom of will; it is the freedom of total acceptance of myself just as I am, and as I am in reality.

True freedom is not the ability to do whatever you wish; it is the capacity to choose to be all that you are in truth. It is the liberty to be your Self as God created you. 🌸

**Judgment is  
innately, and  
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playing God.**

## The Circle of Atonement Mission Statement

**To discern the author's vision of *A Course in Miracles* and manifest that in our lives, in the lives of students, and in the world.**

**1. To faithfully discern the author's vision of *A Course in Miracles*.**

In interpreting the Course we strive for total fidelity to its words and the meanings they express. We thereby seek to discover the Course as the author saw it.

**2. To be an instrument in Jesus' plan to manifest his vision of the Course in the lives of students and in the world.**

We consider this to be Jesus' organization and therefore we attempt to follow his guidance in all we do. Our goal is to help students understand, as well as discern for themselves, the Course's thought system as he intended, and use it as he meant it to be used—as a literal program in spiritual awakening. Through doing so we hope to help ground in the world the intended way of doing the Course, here at the beginning of its history.

**3. To help spark an enduring tradition based entirely on students joining together in doing the Course as the author envisioned.**

We have a vision of local Course support systems composed of teachers, students, healers, and groups, all there to support one another in making full use of the Course. These support systems, as they continue and multiply, will together comprise an enduring spiritual tradition, dedicated solely to doing the Course as the author intended. Our goal is to help spark this tradition, and to assist others in doing the same.

**4. To become an embodiment, a birthplace of this enduring spiritual tradition.**

To help spark this tradition we must first become a model for it ourselves. This requires that we at the Circle follow the Course as our individual path; that we ourselves learn forgiveness through its program. It requires that we join each other in a group holy relationship dedicated to the common goal of awakening through the Course. It also requires that we cultivate a local support system here in Sedona, and that we have a facility where others could join with us in learning this approach to the Course. Through all of this we hope to become a seed for an ongoing spiritual tradition based on *A Course in Miracles*.

## Friends of the Circle

### An Invitation to Join with Us

If you have benefited from the materials, programs, and services of the Circle of Atonement and would like to help us fulfill our role with *A Course in Miracles*, we invite you to consider joining the Friends of the Circle. Over the years, the Friends' financial assistance, spiritual support, words of appreciation and encouragement, as well as the relationships we have developed, have brought us many blessings and much joy, and have been instrumental in our fulfilling our vision and mission statement (see opposite).

### Benefits

In addition to offering you the opportunity to join with us in our vision, contribute to our work, and experience being an active part of our Circle family, your annual membership of \$180 includes:

- **Four issues of our quarterly newsletter, *A Better Way*;**
- **20% off Circle books, tapes, workshops, and retreats;**
- **\$90 tax-deductible donation;**
- ***Friends of the Circle* newsletter and updates**, keeping you up to date with the life and work of the Circle;
- **Support** in your study, practice, and extension of the Course's teachings;
- **Special materials** from workshops and classes;
- **Feedback forms** for sharing your ideas and concerns.

### To Join

- Tell us about yourself and why you want to join the Friends;
- Take a few moments to silently join with us in purpose;
- Send us your initial contribution for a full year (\$180 U.S.) *or* for the first quarter (\$45 U.S.).

#### You may join:

- 1) through our website** ([www.circleofa.com](http://www.circleofa.com) - "About the Circle")
- 2) via e-mail** to: [info@circleofa.com](mailto:info@circleofa.com) (please include your credit card number and its expiry date)
- 3) by regular mail;** send your request, along with payment, to:  
The Circle of Atonement, P.O. Box 4238, West Sedona, AZ 86340.

*Donations: Contributions above the annual membership fee are gratefully received, both for our general operating fund, as well as for special projects as they arise.*