

### **Benediction**

*Let us ascend in peace together to the Father,  
by giving Him ascendance in our minds.  
We will gain everything by giving Him the power and the glory,  
and keeping no illusions of where they are.  
They are in us, through His ascendance.  
What He has given is His.  
It shines in every part of Him, as in the whole.  
The whole reality of your relationship with Him  
lies in our relationship to one another.  
The holy instant shines alike on all relationships,  
for in it they “are” one.  
For here is only healing, already complete and perfect.  
For here is God, and where He is  
only the perfect and complete can be.  
T-17.IV.10:2-10*

## **Chapter 17**

### **Forgiveness and the Holy Relationship**

Whereas Chapters 15 and 16 centered on Special Relationships  
Chapter 17 now turns to a focus on Holy Relationships.

#### **Let’s Review Briefly**

According to the Course, a special relationship is a stratagem of the ego for limiting ourselves and others to a body. It is, the Course says, *a strange and unnatural ego device for joining hell and Heaven*. No special relationship is ever experienced in the present as we are always looking at what we think someone else has done to us in the past. Thus, special relationships are riddled with guilt.

**A special relationship** is any and all relationships in which we place expectations and anticipations about the way another person is supposed to behave in relationship to us. When that fails to live up to our expectations (projections), we get to be upset with them either internally (by doing a slow burn) or by projecting our own insanity directly on to them.

1. We may do this behind their back by gossiping about them.
2. We may do this through a direct verbal confrontation or attack.
3. Or, we may attack physically.

The history of this planet is not one of peace.

In the twentieth century alone 203 million people were killed in wars either as soldiers or “collaterally.”

**A Holy Relationship** The title of this Chapter, *Forgiveness and the Holy Relationship*, reflects the “process” by which anyone we see as separate, joins with us in the “Mind” through the Vision of Christ, which sees beyond the body (and the whole of the “outside”) to the Spirit that is our True Identity. The vision of forgiveness and sinlessness enables us to see “The Real World.” This occurs internally as we *acknowledge* our brothers and sisters as children of God, which they are, rather than *judging* them by projecting on to them our perception of their short-comings.

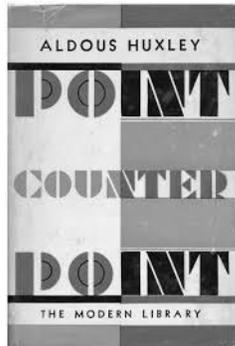
Done correctly, this can induce a shift in awareness by which the body is no more used for specialness – for attack, for pleasure and/or for pride – farther through the process of forgiveness, the body becomes a learning device, which helps us find our way back Home.



### Restoration of the Kingdom

Ken once described the process of the Course as one of “point, counterpoint,” and he thought it would be a good subtitle for Chapter 17. *Point Counter Point* refers to the flow of arguments in a debate, or a chess game when one person makes a move and then the other makes a move in response to that move, and so on.

This is a good way for us to understand the basic metaphysics of the Course. This process is also reflective of the back and forth dialogue and storyline in Aldous Huxley’s book, *Point Counter Point*. First published in 1928, it is a parody on the sexual mores of England during the early part of the twentieth century. We see this “point counter point” in the following sentence from Chapter 17, Section IV called “The Two Pictures,” i.e. the picture which the ego holds up for us and the picture the Holy Spirit offers in exchange for that of the ego.



*In a sense, the special relationship was the ego's answer  
to the creation of the Holy Spirit,  
Who was God's Answer to the separation.*

T-17.IV.4:1

### There Is Nothing Outside of You

1. **In the beginning, God. That is it!** Only God – ineffable, without form, free of space and time and all of what might be called – *the outside*.

*There is nothing outside you.  
That is what you must ultimately learn,  
for it is the realization that the  
Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you.*

T-18.IV.1:1-2

Most folks who talk about near-death experiences speak of it as being “real” – thousands of times more real than what we call reality.

*You think you hold against your brother what he has done to you.  
But what you really blame him for is what “you” did to “him.”  
It is not his past but yours you hold against him.  
And you lack faith in him because of what you were.  
Yet you are as innocent of what you were as he is.  
What never was is causeless, and is not there to interfere with truth.  
There is no cause for faithlessness, but there “is” Cause for faith.  
That Cause has entered any situation that shares Its purpose.*

T-17.VII.8:1-8

The Course perpetually asks us to “reverse the way we see.” Look inside, not outside. Remember, projection makes perception and the three main uses of the body for the ego are *attack, pleasure, and pride*. The first of these is *attack*. The ego body is always ready to attack. Lesson 134, “Let me perceive forgiveness as it is.” Asks that we choose one brother, catalogue his “sins,” one by one, briefly consider all the evil things we have thought of him, and each time ask ourselves, “Would I condemn myself for doing this?”

### VIII. The Condition of Peace

*This simple courtesy is all the Holy Spirit asks of you.  
Let truth be what it is. Do not intrude upon it, do not attack it,  
do not interrupt its coming.  
Let it encompass every situation and bring you peace.  
Not even faith is asked of you, for truth asks nothing.*

T-17.VIII.2:1-5

*Twenty-four years ago, when I quit drinking, an old-timer  
in recovery asked, How are you treating the world today, Paulie?  
I responded, “Don’t you mean ‘How’s the world treating me?’”  
He answered quickly, “No, I mean exactly what I said.  
No matter how the world is treating you, if you are caring,  
loving, and kind in the way you treat the world,  
your journey will be easier.*

Paul Williams (1940—present)

award-winning composer, coauthor of *Gratitude and Trust*

## VI. Setting the Goal

*Without a clear-cut, positive goal, set at the outset, the situation just seems to happen, and makes no sense until it has already happened.*

*Then you look back at it, and try to piece together what it must have meant. And you will be wrong.*

*Not only is your judgment in the past, but you have no idea what should happen.*

**No goal was set with which to bring the means in line.**

*And now the only judgment left to make is whether or not the ego likes it; is it acceptable, or does it call for vengeance.*

*The absence of a criterion for outcome, set in advance, makes understanding doubtful and evaluation impossible.*

T-17.VI.3:1-7

*The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to “make” it happen.*

**You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective,**

*and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.*

*It is quite noticeable that this approach has brought you closer to the Holy Spirit's sorting out of truth and falsity.*

*The true becomes what can be used to meet the goal.*

*The false becomes the useless from this point of view.*

*The situation now has meaning,*

*but only because the goal has made it meaningful.*

*The goal of truth has further practical advantages.*

*If the situation is used for truth and sanity, its outcome must be peace.*

*And this is quite apart from what the outcome “is.”*

*If peace is the condition of truth and sanity, and cannot be without them, where peace is they must be. Truth comes of itself.*

T-17.VI.5:1-5

## VII. The Call for Faith

*Is it not possible that all your problems have been solved, but you have removed yourself from the solution?*

T-17.VII.2:4

*The power set in you in whom the Holy Spirit's goal has been established is so far beyond your little conception of the infinite that you have no idea how great the strength that goes with you.*

T-17.VII.7:1

When the Course says, “there is nothing outside you;” we understand it to mean there is nothing outside of the Mind – your mind – All Mind – the Mind we share with the Universe. The Kingdom of Heaven is restored to us as we awaken and remember that we never left Home (Heaven).

*It is hard to understand what*

*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you “really” means.*

*This is because it is not understandable to the ego, which interprets it as if something outside is inside, and this does not mean anything.*

**The word “within” is unnecessary.**

**The Kingdom of Heaven “is” you.**

*What else “but” you did the Creator create,*

*and what else “but” you is His Kingdom?*

*This is the whole message of the Atonement;*

*a message which in its totality transcends the sum of its parts.*

T-4.III.1:1-6

### 2. Suddenly there is a “tiny mad idea” and a big bang.

Now we have space and what looks like a progression, we call time; i.e. it looks like there is now an outside world where there is no God.

*That is why Atonement centers on the past,*

*which is the source of separation, and where it must be undone.*

*For separation must be corrected where it was made.*

T-17.III.5:8-9

If God created us sinless, then God also created all of our brothers and sisters sinless – regardless of what we think they have done. This was one of the advantages of teaching in a maximum security prison. Some of my students had done some things the world would say were horrific sins.

*Not however, knowing, the “sin.”*

*It was easier to see the Christ within.*

3. **The Course counters with the Atonement principle, which says that the separation never happened.** It is impossible to be separated from God who is the Source of All Life. That could only happen within an illusion but an illusion is an illusion and not reality. The Kingdom of Heaven, which is inside you (not your body but your mind), is all there is.

#### 4. The ego counters in an attempt to invalidate the principle of the Atonement

First it emphasizes the reality of sin, guilt, and fear.

Then, it projects this insane thought onto the world,

which is now manifested in all of our special relationships.

“Look at all the cruelty in the world!” The ego cries, “Is this not proof enough that I, “the ego,” am alive and well? There is a world; there is a body; there are all these special relationships. The special relationship then stands in opposition to the principle of the Atonement – making separation, sin, guilt and fear all look quite real and very serious.

**5. The Holy Spirit counters with the holy relationship, which proclaims the reality of love and the eradication of fear.** A holy relationship is *the expression of the Holy Instant in this world*. The Holy Instant is *a moment of complete sanity – a moment in which our mind is host to God rather than hostage to the ego*. Rather than looking for guilty sinners out there in the world, we recognize our insanity as inside rather than outside. Rather than separating ourselves from others, we now join in one-mindedness.

There is a very simple principle, which undoes all illusion, called a *miracle*. A miracle is *a change of mind that shifts perception from the ego's world of sin, guilt, and fear to the Holy Spirit's world of forgiveness*. The miracle of forgiveness, thus, undoes all *illusion* and all of the *seeming insanity* of the world.

*Those who see themselves as whole make no demands.*

W-37.2:7

*Let him be what he is, and seek not to make of love an enemy.*

T-19.IV.D.13:8

**6. The ego counters in an attempt to transform holy relationships into special relationships.** For example, when we fall in love, we drop some of our defenses and we willingly see the innocence in our beloved; otherwise, we could not fall in love. Plato spoke of Romantic Love as “divine madness.” Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) once said, “He who travels alone can leave today. He who travels with another must wait for the other to be ready.” When we decide to walk down a road with another, we must be willing to do so lovingly; otherwise, there will be no walking.

#### V. The Healed Relationship

***The holy relationship is the expression of the holy instant in living in this world.***

*Like everything about salvation, the holy instant is a practical device, witnessed to by its results. The holy instant never fails.*

***The experience of it is always felt.***

***Yet without expression it is not remembered.***

***The holy relationship is a constant reminder of the experience in which the relationship became what it is.***

***And as the unholy relationship is a continuing hymn of hate in praise of its maker, so is the holy relationship a happy song of praise to the Redeemer of relationships.***

T-17.V.1:1-7

A holy relationship is a relationship in which Love really does prevail. Often a “romantic relationship” looks like a holy relationship and it is, insofar as love does indeed prevail. But, we all know, the ego is very subtle and has a way of sneaking in the back door and what was holy has a way of turning into something unholy.

**A special relationship is a substitute for God's Will.**

**A holy relationship shares God's purpose.**

***Whenever any form of special relationship tempts you to seek for love in ritual, remember love is content, and not form of any kind.***

*The special relationship is a ritual of form, aimed at raising the form at the expense of content.*

***There is no meaning in the form, and there will never be.***

*The special relationship must be recognized for what it is; a senseless ritual in which form has triumphed over content, and love has lost its meaning*

T-16.V.12:1-4

***If Heaven were outside you, you could not share in its gladness.***

***Yet because it is within, the gladness, too, is yours.***

T-17.V.14:5-6

Sharing is something which happens within. Gladness always happens precisely because we share – “Divine Abstraction” (God) takes joy in sharing.

The thought system is a system of delusion insofar as it will always be looking for a solution to its own insanity, which will never be found because the ego looks at solutions on the outside instead of the inside where the problem originated.

*It is essential to realize that all defenses “do”  
what they would defend.  
T-17.IV.7:1*

One of the most obvious manifestations of this is that the pointing out of error as an attack is, of course, an error. Attacking another, we inevitably attack ourselves; thereby, we feel all the more guilty, because we have hurt the whole of which we are a part.

***Because your attack thoughts will be projected,  
you will fear attack. And if you fear attack,  
you must believe that you are not invulnerable.  
Attack thoughts therefore make you vulnerable  
in your own mind, which is where the attack thoughts are.  
Attack thoughts and invulnerability cannot be accepted together.  
They contradict each other.  
W-26.2:1-5***

*The holy instant is a miniature of Heaven,  
sent you “from” Heaven.  
T-17.IV.11:1*

*The holy instant is a miniature of eternity.  
It is a picture of timelessness in a frame of time.  
T-17.IV.11:4*

We have discussed a Holy Instant as a mystical experience. It is a moment out of time in which the world seems to stop. In Heaven, time “really” has stopped, as time is part of the illusion.

***The whole of Heaven lies in this instant,  
borrowed from eternity and set in time for you.  
T-17.IV.11:8***

***The picture of Heaven and eternity  
grows more convincing as you look at it.  
T-17.IV.14:3***

When some of the *divine madness* begins to wear off and the ego kicks back into gear, marriages, which began as sincere romances and truly loving relationships, can become very special, special relationships. Thus, in the United States, 50% of all first marriages, 60% of all 2<sup>nd</sup> marriages, and 73% of all third marriages end in divorce. By that time, many folks give up and become curmudgeons when it comes to the topic of marriage. Or better, they look for happiness in other ways of sharing.

**7. Finally, the Holy Spirit counters by affirming the truth of the holy relationship** (at heart, we really do love each other) and the validity of miracles (forgiveness) which undoes unforgiveness and thus, leads us back to the real world which brings us back to Heaven. This whole senseless flabdoodle of an excursion through space/time is a foolish journey without distance to a place we never left.

*Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea,  
at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh.  
In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea,  
and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.*

***Together, we can laugh them both away,  
and understand that time cannot intrude upon eternity.  
It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity,  
which “means” there is no time.  
T-28.VIII.6:2-5***

We can now laugh at the absurdity of the idea that separation from God was ever possible in the first place. Our task then is one of bringing fantasy to truth.

### **I. Bringing Fantasy to Truth**

*The betrayal of the Son of God lies only in illusions,  
and all his “sins” are but his own imagining.  
His reality is forever sinless.*

**He need not be forgiven but awakened.**

***In his dreams he has betrayed himself, his brothers and his God.  
Yet what is done in dreams has not been really done.  
T-17.I:1-5***

If the betrayal of the Son of God lies only in illusion, then the Son of God cannot be betrayed. Earlier in Chapter 6, Jesus says,

*I could not have said,  
"Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"  
unless I believed in betrayal.*

*The whole message of the crucifixion was simply that I did not. . . .  
Judas was my brother and a Son of God, as much a part of the Sonship  
as myself. Was it likely that I would condemn him when  
I was ready to demonstrate that condemnation is impossible?  
T-66.I.15:5-6&8*

**All our sins are of our imagining.** *We can only make ourselves sick. God has not and cannot condemn us. God does not believe in retribution. His Mind does not create that way (T-3.2:4). Ultimately, we can only bring condemnation and guilt upon ourselves and that's temporary. Our reality being only sinless, our main task, therefore, is a matter of awakening to the truth of our reality and the knowledge of who we already are.*

**Dreams are what they are "because" of their illusion of reality.**

*Only in waking is the full release from them,  
for only then does it become perfectly apparent  
that they had no effect upon reality at all,  
and did not change it.*

**Fantasies change reality. That is their purpose.**  
*They cannot do so in reality, but they "can" do so  
in the mind that would have reality be different.  
T-17.I.1:1-10*

We live in a "fantastic" world and with the aid of Hollywood and widescreen HD 3D it's getting more fantastic all the time. Many of the ads at the last Super Bowl were ads for gaming devices based on war games. Dolores and I went to the movies. With the exception of two movies for children and one other "possible interesting film," the majority of the movies were all about shooting and war with lots of things being blown up.

Only in a fantasy or only in a dream could we possibly believe that we are separate from God. Dreams are not reality; yet, we believe in the "illusion" of reality and the whole of our projection of an "outside world." What God created cannot be changed no matter how much we may try to distort reality. No matter how much we seek to justify the unjustifiable, the reality of Heaven remains forever unchangeable.

man sitting directly across from me with a cup of coffee in front of him, talking to himself. There were few people around at the time and he was talking so loudly that by leaning forward and listening carefully, I was able to make out much of what he said. Most people keep their thoughts to themselves. Street folks, however, sometimes let the thoughts go all the way to the tongue and the lips finding utterance through the mouth. I could not make out everything he was saying but I got enough of it to know that he was practicing a speech he was going to give to someone in authority – a judge, or a brother, or a sister perhaps or just someone in his imagination. It was clear that he was building a case and defending himself. Did you ever drive around in your car building a case for yourself, practicing a speech? A mind, thus, preoccupied cannot hear the Voice for God being drowned out by the justifications coming from the ego.

The special relationship is designed specifically to "drown out" the relationship we have with God. For this reason monks go into cells, in order to be quiet long enough to be able to hear the call of God in their lives. The world can easily "become too much for us." George Burns once joked that "Happiness is having a large, close-knit family who live in a different cities."

Our special relationships can become so overwhelming that they become special mechanisms for shutting God out. This does not mean we should not have close relationships. Our deepest spiritual learning comes in discovering how, through forgiveness, we can turn these "special relationships" into holy relationships.

The special relationship is the ego's mechanism for keeping the separation alive by making "the problem" unsolvable. Thus, even though one problem may, in fact, be solved, the ego will quickly find another problem to take its place. For this reason, many folks can never settle down in a relationship as they will always be looking for difficulties within each new relationship.

***The insane protect their thought systems,  
but they do so insanely.  
T-17.IV.5:4***

***The thought system the special relationship protects  
is but a system of delusion.  
T-17.IV.6:1***

the level of Knowledge. *Creation* does not mean, *creativity* as *originality of thought and or expression*. We're not seeking for originality of thought. We're seeking to realign the mind with the Mind of God. Twenty-nine times the Course speaks of "your creations," without telling us what they are; though clearly, it has something to do with Love.

*Every special relationship you have made  
is a substitute for God's Will,  
and glorifies yours instead of His  
because of the illusion that they are different.*

T-17.IV.2:7

A special relationship is any and every relationship in which we have troubles. That could cover almost every relationship we have in this world. Even our most loving relationships are often tinged with specialness, especially the relationship we have with our parents, our mates, and our children. The special relationship is designed as a distraction, and a replacement for our relationship with God. It is a "diversion," in which we lose our focus on God.

***You have made very real relationships even in this world.  
Yet you do not recognize them because you have raised their  
substitutes to such predominance that, when truth calls to you,  
as it does constantly, you answer with a substitute.***

***Every special relationship you have made has,  
as its fundamental purpose, the aim of occupying your mind  
so completely that you will not hear the call of truth.***

T-17.IV.3:3

There are some folks in this world that we are able to relate to easily and often quickly, as though we have just met once again a long lost friend. Yet, the Course asks us to be aware. If we are not careful, we can allow our relationships with our closest brothers to become distorted. God's Will is perfect Unity in which there are no differences. Special relationships tell us that there are very real differences and these differences do matter.

I tell the following story in *Living A Course in Miracles*

Early one Sunday morning while going over my notes for that day's service at a coffee shop in New York City, I noticed a homeless

*You cannot be faithful to two masters  
who ask conflicting things of you.*

T-17.I.2:4

This is an often repeated theme in the Course and in the Bible.

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one,  
and love the other; or else he will hold to the one,  
and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Matthew 6:24

*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

James 1:8

Though the word "mammon" is often translated as "money," it actually means *riches, wealth* or *materiality*, all forms of outward appearances or ego extravagance. One characteristic of the special relationship is its emphasis on form over content. If it looks good on the outside, that is the most important thing to the ego. As a minister, I have seen brides spend hundreds of dollars on a dress they will wear for only a few hours and many thousands more on a wedding. There is nothing wrong in dressing well or in having things like a nice car but extravagances can easily be overdone and debt becomes a great burden. It is who we are that matters, not what we own. Remember, we cannot serve God and mammon. For the ego, our physical and psychological needs easily outdo the need we all have to remember the Love that created us.

When Jesus says, "It is harder for a 'rich man' to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle," he means, it is impossible for someone who thinks his own worth is greater than others to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Only in equality are we also One. Egos can't get into Heaven, there is no room for fantasy there and the ego is itself a fantasy.

*The Kingdom is perfectly united and perfectly protected,  
and the ego will not prevail against it.*

T-4.III.1:12

Mastering the Course requires dedication and devotion. The ego wants to do it – "my way," but God's way and only God's way brings us Home. We must choose to believe the Holy Spirit, the teacher of Truth, and ignore the ego – the teacher of fantasy. Fantasize all you want, you cannot make a fantasy into reality.

*Very simply,  
your lack of faith in the power that heals all pain arises  
from your wish to retain some aspects of reality for fantasy.*

T-17.I.3:3

Rather than just loving and letting other people be who they are, we would rather hold out for the reality of a “fantasy” we create as part of this insane world.

## II. The Forgiven World

*Can you imagine how beautiful those you forgive will look to you?  
In no fantasy have you ever seen anything so lovely.*

*Nothing you see here, sleeping or waking,  
comes near to such loveliness.*

*And nothing will you value like unto this, nor hold so dear.  
Nothing that you remember that made your heart sing with joy  
has ever brought you even a little part of the happiness  
this sight will bring you. For you will see the Son of God.*

T-17.II.1:1-6

The above passage is truly beautiful and is reflective of a passage from Chapter 26, Section IV called, *The Forgiven World*.

**The real world is a place where the idea of sin is no more.**

It is a state-of-mind in which, through total forgiveness, the illusory world of perception is released from our projections of guilt onto the world. Folks sometimes get upset when I say there is “no body” in Heaven. Remember, however, it is eternal life in the other that we love, and love does not “require” a body. True love never dies – how could it? Bodies seemingly die and separate us from one another. Mind is eternal and unites us all through the power of Love.

***Perception will be meaningless when it has been perfected,  
for everything that has been used for learning  
will have no function.***

T-17.II.4:2

Perception is a learning tool. Like a pencil or a computer. It is something we use to learn with so that we might one day transcend all learning in exchange for pure Knowledge. Once we are free of our erroneous perceptions, we can know Heaven. The Kingdom is perfectly

## Reversing the Big Bang

The purpose of the Course might be said to be the undoing of the original error, “the tiny mad” idea, which led to the creation of the outside world. The whole of the big bang can be undone by the realization that – what someone might have done to us does not mean one iota in Heaven – and it does not mean one iota in space/time. So it is in holding a grievance, we only hurt ourselves.

***The tiny tick of time in which the first mistake was made,  
and all of them within that one mistake,  
held also the Correction for that one,  
and all of them that came within the first.  
And in that tiny instant time was gone,  
for that was all it ever was.***

***What God gave answer to is answered and is gone.***

T-26.V.3:5-7

We have to go back to the beginning, back to the “tiny mad idea” in which we thought it was possible to be separate from God. Fortunately, we do not have to literally go backward in time in order to undo what seems to have been done, as no time at all is required to remember the truth. It is not possible to be separate from God and it is only by turning our will fully over to His Will that we can remember truth unencumbered.

***The ego seeks to “resolve” its problems,  
not at their source, but where they were not made.***

T-17.III.6:1

The first sentence to the preamble to UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is “Wars begin in the minds of men.” Obviously, if wars begin in the mind of men, wars also end in the minds of men. The “source of our problems” originates in the mind that decides there is a problem.

## IV. The Two Pictures

*In this world it is impossible to create.  
Yet it “is” possible to make happy.*

T-17.IV.2:1

The word “create” is used differently in the Course than it is in everyday parlance. *Creation*, as it is used in the Course, exists only at

forgetting it. That's all I remember."

***Be willing to forgive the Son of God for what he did not do.  
The shadow figures are the witnesses you bring with you  
to demonstrate he did what he did not.***

T-17.III.1:5-6

When we do something which is not really "becoming" of our Self, we are acting from ego and the ego is not who we are. Thus, the Course is trying to retrain our Minds so that we think and see correctly. Thus, Lesson 34 says "I could see peace instead of this," and Lesson 35 says, "My mind is part of God's. I am very holy." When we act from ego, we truly are insane.

We carry judgments into each and every situation. All of these judgments mean that we are not seeing with the eyes of Christ and the ego does not know how to see anything correctly. Anyone who "ruffles our feathers" even a little becomes a suitable object for our projections. The ego is forever seeking to make sin real by amplifying it. A woman called me saying she was mad as hell at her husband, spilling out an immense amount of vitriol, bitterness, and hate. All I could do was listen. Yes indeed, her situation sounded horrible. I felt so sorry for her in her unhappiness. I wanted to assure her there was a way to get above this battleground but I knew that helping her to change her perspective would take a "miracle," and far more time than was possible in one phone conversation.

"What he did was wrong," she said, and "I'm going to see to it that he gets what he deserves." So says the ego. Nowhere was there any attempt to see that despite all this junk on the surface, underneath, there remained a hurt, guilty, unhappy man. Speaking of our neighbors, the Course says,

***They represent the evil that you think was done to you.  
You bring them with you only that you may return evil for evil,  
hoping that their witness will enable you  
to think guiltily of another and not harm yourself.***

T-17.III.5:3

united and perfectly protected, and the ego will not prevail against it. Life and death, light and darkness, knowledge and perception, are irreconcilable (T-3.VII.6:6). Yet, there is a kind of "perfect perception," which can be wholly shared, thus, making a transference to Knowledge and thus, to a perception of Heaven possible.

**Perception** is the process by which we give meaning and value to what we see, hear, or think. It is a reflection of our own thinking. Perception is *a mirror – not a fact* (W-304.1:3). God – Truth and Love are changeless. Perception, however, is *a process* of accepting and rejecting, shifting and changing. The ego limits perception to our brothers' and sisters' bodies and to the things of the world. It defines or concretizes the world.

**Perception is also a choice.** Practicing the Course *purifies* perception by helping us remove the blocks (the teachings of fear) opening us to an awareness of Love's presence.

***For eyes and ears are senses without sense,  
and what they see and hear they but report.  
It is not they that hear and see,  
but you, who put together every jagged piece,  
each senseless scrap and shred of evidence,  
and make a witness to the world you want.***

T-5.V.6-7

**Knowledge**, which comes from our True Mind (the Mind of God), is eternal, impersonal, beyond subject and object, and the result of revelation (T-3.III.5:10). It is a direct contact with God that transcends time and abolishes fear. It is the experience of Oneness; the experience of essence or being. It is "illumination," and insight into essence. It is stable, unchanging, and conflict free.

***The perception of the real world will be so short  
that you will barely have time to thank God for it.  
For God will take the last step swiftly, when you have reached  
the real world and have been made ready for Him.***

T-17.II.4:4-5

***The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness  
of the old, the world you see without forgiveness.***

T-17.II.5:1

## **The Real World and Forgiving Eyes**

The old world is the dream world, the fantasy world. We make the world of specialness very real, so real that we do not realize that it is our own projection.

*The real world* is a place where the idea of sin is no more. It is a state-of-mind in which, through total forgiveness, the illusory world of perception is released from our projections of guilt on to the world.

*All this beauty will rise to bless your sight  
as you look upon the world with forgiving eyes.*

**For forgiveness literally transforms vision,**  
*and lets you see the real world reaching quietly and gently across  
chaos, removing all illusions that had twisted your perception  
and fixed it on the past.*

*The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder,  
and a blade of grass a sign of God's perfection.*

T-17.II.6:1-3

*Everything's incredible, if you can skin off  
the crust of obviousness our habits put on it.*

*Every object and event contains within itself  
an infinity of depths within depths.*

*Nothing's in the least what it seems  
or rather it's like several million other things at the same time.*

From Point Counter Point by  
English author, Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)

I once experienced a sign of God's perfection not in looking at a blade of grass but rather at a moth on a porch light on the side of a cabin in the mountains. It was my first experience with LSD, back before it was illegal. The detail of that moth's wings left me amazed and speechless. The world to a baby is in all ways a marvel and a fascination as it is to a kitten or a puppy or a fully grown cat or a dog. It can be a fascination as well for you and me when we very simply "see."

One of the things I loved so much about Helen was that she was so profoundly visionary. Indeed, our first meeting occurred when she and Bill came to a talk I was giving on mystical experiences. Long before that first experience with LSD, I knew, as we all do, that the whole of Life is a miracle. Stop projecting and Life is found on the inside of

everything. I was fortunate to grow up on a farm in Missouri in the 40s and 50s when there were no electronic distractions – there was just the immediacy in working with the animals in the gardens, the fields and the woods – in just "being" in nature.

In the movie *Babies*, there are no words or dialogue other than that of natural sounds of the world, people talking, music playing, cars passing – that sort of thing. The producers of the documentary followed the development of four babies, one girl and three boys during the first 18 months of their lives. One was an American baby in San Francisco, a Japanese baby in Tokyo, a native African baby in a rural village, and a Mongolian baby growing up in a Yurt on the plains of Mongolia.

The lives of the American and the Japanese babies were filled with stimulation from books, toys, Ipads, computers and computer games. The African boy's life was filled with playing with other children, with animals, sticks, rocks and plants. Women in the African culture took turns taking care of the children, even nursing each other's babies, so it was not always obvious whose parent any one particular child belonged to. The Mongolian boy was often left alone in the yurt with goats and dogs walking in and out of the yurt, all of them seeming to be guarding the baby.

Though enriched by the world, it was not at all clear that the American and the Japanese baby were in any way more mature than the African and the Mongolian babies. Each of their lives were very rich in their own way.

## **III. Shadows of the Past**

***To forgive is merely to remember only the loving thoughts  
you gave in the past, and those that were given you.***

***All the rest must be forgotten.***

**Forgiveness is a selective remembering,  
*based not on your selection.***

T-17.III.1:1-3

There is a wonderful story told about Clara Barton (1821-1914), the founder of the Red Cross. One time a friend reminded her of a cruel thing another "friend" had done to her some years previous, but Clara seemed not to remember the incident. "Don't you remember the wrong that was done to you?" the friend asked. "No," said Clara, "I remember