

Metamorphosis: A Journey in Seven Parts

Dedicated with gratitude to A Course in Miracles and A Course of Love

Christina Strutt, 28th March 2016

The Introduction

I love the Bible. I love A Course in Miracles (ACIM). I love A Course of Love (ACOL). Each arrived and delivered its gifts at the precise time in my life when I needed them and was ready to receive them. Each one I carry in highest regard, eternally. And each one I laid aside with great respect and deep gratitude owed a precious friend, teacher, and mentor who has lovingly prepared me for life's next adventure. When I discovered [A Course in Miracles](#), I laid the Bible gently aside to rest on my bookshelf of treasured volumes to be dipped into on occasion. When I discovered [A Course of Love](#), I laid ACIM gently aside right next to the Bible. Now, along with many of you, I am opening my heart to ACOL, fully engaged in living its message of Love, of giving and receiving as one, of relationship and union, of individuation within wholeness, of human being within the divinity of Oneness. Yet always remaining open to new discoveries – what might I love next that loves me even more fiercely into being who I truly am? 😊

Living Oneness means enfolding ALL of our brothers and sisters in love's embrace. No one is left out, for not a single one of us is truly home until each and every last one of us is home. Relationship with each one and all of everything is the truth of who we are. And this includes the precious relationship between the Bible and ACIM, and the equally precious relationship between ACIM and ACOL, both of which Jesus has made abundantly clear. For me, living Oneness literally means living in relationship and union with all – nothing and no one left out – not ever – simply because there is no 'outside' in Oneness. Relationship is everything! And it is in this inclusive relationship with all that we begin truly to trust ourselves — trusting our own knowing with certainty, trusting the ever-unfolding process of coming to know the unknown, and together cocreating the new — a new world.

"A Course in Miracles and A Course of Love work hand-in-hand because the change of thinking taught within A Course in Miracles was a change of thinking about yourself. It attempted to dislodge the ego-mind that has provided you with an identity that you but think you are. A Course of Love then followed in order to reveal to you who you truly are. While you continue to act within the world as who you think you are rather than as who you are, you have not integrated these two pieces of learning ... This Treatise is attempting to show you how to live as who you are, how to act within the world as the new Self you have identified. Just like learning how to swim, it is a new way of movement." – T2:4.3-4

In this paper, I share my experience of how ACIM and ACOL have worked hand-in-hand in my life. ACOL, The Dialogues, Day 24 offers metamorphosis as a vivid allegory for the transformation we are called to.

“You are the caterpillar, the cocoon, and the butterfly. This is the way that you are many Selves as well as one Self. You are a Self with many forms. The form you occupy contains all of your potential manifestations as the form of the caterpillar contains all of its potential manifestations.

To struggle against your nature is what you have spent a lifetime doing. Stop. If you allow your potential to be released, your true nature in all its wholeness will be revealed.

You might think of the caterpillar as the unaltered self with which you began your journey. You might think of your body as the cocoon, the carrier of your potential. You might think of the butterfly as your spirit, revealed only after the potential has matured and been released. There is, in other words, a necessity for each step in the accomplishment of wholeness, even while wholeness has always existed as potential. Do not forget, however, that wholeness has always existed, that potential is that which exists, or that potential does not await.

To attempt to remain within the cocoon of the body, to attempt to contain the spirit within that cocoon, is to attempt the impossible. It is the nature of spirit to become. Its wings poke and prod from within as its potential is triggered. Only with release from its container can it become.

Yet the body is not left behind. The caterpillar, the cocoon, and the butterfly have always been one and remain one. Each form is but a different stage in the becoming of the spirit. Without release, it must die to its present form in order to begin again. Thus spirit is always becoming, even when it must die to begin again.” – D:Day 24.1, 4-7

And so it seems that the stages of metamorphosis of the Monarch Butterfly provide the perfect framework to begin to make sense of the essence of my on-going journey; the ‘stages’ I feel I have more or less willingly lurched through, and back around, and onward again, these past several years. There is so much more my heart wants to share – each sentence could have been paragraphs or pages! But I have taken the time to distill and share only the key sign-posts as they have been appearing along the way. Your journey will no doubt be different, and yet, the same – different in form and same in content. I share with heartfelt intention that I’ll let A Course of Love express for me. May you recognize yourself in my story, and may the recognition bring you comfort.

“It is the relationship inherent in meeting another's need that makes the meeting of the need a thing of lasting value. It is your willingness to say, “Brother, you are not alone” that is the benefit of such situations, not only to your brother but also to you. It is in saying, “Sister, you are not alone” that spiritual hunger and thirst is met with the fullness of unity. It is in realizing that you are not alone that you realize your unity with me and begin to turn from fear toward love.” – C:9.27

The Sound Bite

First, for those in a hurry, here's the sound bite ☺ -

I am the caterpillar, the chrysalis, and the butterfly. Twenty-four years ago, ACIM showed up and triggered my transformation from caterpillar to chrysalis. Seventeen years later, ACOL showed up and triggered my transformation (a work in process ☺) from chrysalis to butterfly. Each sacred text entered my life in exquisitely precise timing, each doing its job to perfection.

The Headlines

Next, here are the headlines of each 'stage' –

Part One: The Hungry Caterpillar

Full scale engagement with the world, building an upwardly mobile life.

Part Two: The Caterpillar-Chrysalis Hanging Upside-Down

Unseating the ego-self, awakening to choice, and descending into the time of undoing.

Part Three: The Chrysalis Hanging Secure

A leap of faith, replacing belief in the ego-self with tender new belief in the Christ-self.

Part Four: The Chrysalis Dissolving

Descending deeper, total dissolving of the ego-self, a time surrender, pain, grief and isolation.

Part Five: The Primordial Soup

An in-between time of no-identity, great vulnerability, and deepest excavation.

Part Six: The Butterfly Emerging

Dawning of a new way of being present, joining in union and relationship, in dialogue, of knowing without words, of enfolding all of everything, of informing and being informed by the intent of creation.

Part Seven: The Butterfly - Yet to be experienced in sufficient, sustained depth to write about! ☺

“Go forth not as completed works of art but as permeable energy, ever changing, ever creating, ever new. Go forth with openness for revelation to happen through you and through all you encounter. Go forth joyously on this adventure of discovery. Be ever new, ever one, ever the beloved.”

- ACOL, Addendum: Learning in the Time of Christ, A.48

The Story

And for those who enjoy a good read, here's the 'full' story!

Part One: The Hungry Caterpillar

The tiny, hungry, oh-so-hungry caterpillar is hatched from an egg. It is the ultimate consumer, proceeding to eat and eat and eat, growing larger and larger, and in the process molting – shedding its skin to keep up with its size – precisely five times.

I am that hungry caterpillar.

Born from an egg, hungry for life, shedding my skin and reinventing myself five times – first moving from Malaysia to England, then to Singapore, then back to University in England, then starting my career there with a leading computer company, and finally in 1980, moving to their headquarters in the U.S.

For the first eighteen years of my life, the Bible was the central guiding text in my family. My father was a devout Anglican who insisted upon regular, intensive bible study and memorization. Though I was a very reluctant church-goer, I loved the New Testament and always felt a strangely personal connection to Jesus. As a quiet, serious child it was horribly painful to be teased mercilessly and to feel used and invisible, as I did my best to live as Jesus did – simply being loving and kind. My mother was a Christian Scientist, and I found her ‘Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures’ rather intriguing, sneaking peeks when my father – who called it a cult – wasn’t looking. Then I left home for University in 1970, deliberately turning my back on all forms of religion for the next twenty-two years; and pretty much immersing myself in the delights of the world, eager to learn, do, and accomplish.

Part Two: The Caterpillar-Chrysalis Hanging Upside-Down

Right on cue, the fat caterpillar ceases to be a voracious consumer. It stops eating leaves, and begins to spin a silk pad attached to a sturdy twig. Then it grabs the silk pad with the curved larval hooks on its two hind legs, flips a 180, and hangs upside down. Now it begins its final molt. Hanging upside down, the caterpillar splits its skin and slowly wriggles it up and up and up, revealing the soft chrysalis inside. Hanging upside down, this caterpillar-chrysalis twists and turns and struggles vigorously to be totally rid of the dead skin. This it must do, lest the skin stick to the surface of the chrysalis and cause the emerging butterfly to be deformed.

I am that caterpillar-chrysalis hanging upside-down, wriggling to shed its final skin.

In 1992 I was one of only three women Consulting Engineers in the Networks division of a largely male-dominated multi-national high-tech company, hungrily enjoying the fruits of almost twenty years hard labor. I was super-mom breaking new ground in flex-time, flex-place working – my children essentially having a stay-at-home mum. And I was also super-wife, super-woman, super-daughter, super-friend, super-neighbor, and super-anything-else-you-might care-to-name. Hardly ever having the time to watch TV, it was by sheer chance that I caught the last twenty minutes of Marianne Williamson on the Oprah show. I had never seen Oprah so excited before. It was the first time ever that she gave away a copy of a book to every member of her audience, and I was intrigued. Needless to say, the next day I went out and purchased ‘A Return to Love’, read it in a few days, and ‘A Course in Miracles’ came into my life.

My first reading of The Text took me fifteen months and my first pass through The Workbook – almost four years! Studying ACIM began transforming me almost immediately, from a hungry engineer surviving in a masculine dog-eat-dog world, into a newly awakening professional, keenly aware of her choices, and struggling to see newly in each moment everything unfolding as either an expression of love or a call for love. Continuing with my high-powered systems engineering work, looking no different on the outside, yet all the while working to secure my inner knowing, my world turned upside down, I practiced my daily ACIM lesson (written on a tiny scrap of paper secreted in my bra) each time I escaped to the restroom! ☺ Already, unwittingly merging in me the human experience with the divine ☺! And this is how it went for the next seventeen years and a dozen times through the ACIM Workbook. I was splitting open my false identity, wrinkling it up, and getting ready to let it go.

Opening to guidance each moment from the Holy Spirit, it was just five years into my study of ACIM that I quit the corporate world to strike out on my own. There followed seven intense years of travelling, consulting, and researching the power of [Collective Intelligence](#), until exhausted and in total burnout, I woke up one morning in 2003 with the message “Quit or die!” reverberating through my being. So I did. Quit that is. The message – more like a directive – was unmistakable. It was clearly time for this caterpillar to totally cease its voracious consumption. ☺ And so I quit everything – my corporate work, my research work, my volunteer work – though not my mothering and homemaking work, as I had a son still in high school, another in college, and a husband to care for. People were constantly asking me “So what are you doing now?” and I’d say “Actually it’s a time of undoing, and it’s the hardest work I’ve ever done.” They’d look at me like I had two heads and slip away as quickly as they could. I was in uncharted territory. Depressed, alone, unable to express what was happening, it was a tough time for me and for all around me. No doubt many of you reading these words totally recognize this place.

I no longer knew who I was. Eleven years of ACIM study meant I knew I wasn’t my ego self and I knew who I was in my heavenly sense. But who was I in an earth-bound pragmatic sense? I no longer had an identity. I was ready for something. But what? I was left twisting and turning in the wind – exhausted, stuck, the way forward obscured. My brain hurt! At times unable to read ACIM or anything else, I survived by knitting zillions of scarves – everyone I knew and their dog got a scarf! I planted hybrid roses, and giant dahlias whose abundant blooms I gave away. And I went to the gym three times a week. Colors soothed my troubled heart, and the exertions of yoga and spinning brought me back into my body. And all that while, moving as if in a dream, I was travelling and facing family situations that exposed deeply entrenched wounds left by a traumatic childhood. My mind took a vacation. Brain fog forced me to move from reliance on my mind alone, downwards and begin paying attention to my heart’s knowing, and to my body’s movement and experience. Along with this came a deep desire for solitude. In 2007, I finally acquired a room of my own in my home, and in 2008 almost in desperation, I picked up the ACIM Workbook and devoted myself to the 365 lessons one final time. Though I never made it through the entire workbook that year, my sincere intention and my heart’s impassioned call for love was heard.

Part Three: The Chrysalis Hanging Secure

Twisting and turning, the struggling caterpillar-chrysalis sticks the newly exposed cremaster post on its rear-end, into the silk pad. The post, outfitted with dozens of microscopic barbed hooks that grab onto the silk pad with each twist and turn, secures the chrysalis firmly in place for the duration of this phase. Only then can it dislodge the curved larval hooks on its hind legs, which it's been temporarily hanging on with, and with one last valiant twist, is able to completely cast off its rumples larval skin. Scientists have no idea how this creature – this in-between-caterpillar-and-chrysalis creature – actually does this. It makes a leap of faith trusting the new – the cremaster post – to hold it safe. A totally strenuous and altogether miraculous process which you can view in this [time-lapse video](#). The soft new skin of the chrysalis now thickens and hardens into a firm cocoon, a safe resting place, and the chrysalis hangs securely in stillness.

I am that chrysalis finally hanging secure.

That December I read [Mari Perron's](#) article in Jon Mundy's 'Miracles Magazine' in which she introduced ACOL, and also mentioned in passing, her deep need for solitude. On 29th January 2009 I wrote Mari an email asking her about her experience of balancing solitude with the demands of life, and A Course of Love came into my life – courtesy of A Course in Miracles! How sweet is that?

But it was a bumpy start! One more twisty turn was needed. Just a couple of months into my first reading of ACOL, I found myself flinging the book across my patio one day, overcome by a tidal wave of rage and frustration. Did I really have to start over? After all the years of work I've done? WTF?! ☹️ With 20-20 hindsight, I now see that this was my final valiant struggle to throw off the useless rumples ego-self, and open my heart to the newly dawning awareness of my Christ-self!

"... replacing belief in an ego-self with belief in a Christ-Self. Total replacement. As long as you hang on to both identities the world will not change and you will not know who you are. You may think you know, and you may waste much time in perceived battles, valiantly fighting for good to win out over evil. But this is not the new way and the lack of value from this type of effort can surely now be seen." - T2: 11.16

Taking a leap of faith, I stuck myself well and truly into ACOL and surrendered to the stillness. In just nine months, I devoured all three volumes of ACOL – A Course of Love, The Treatises, and The Dialogues. The words flew off each page and into my waiting heart. At last everything I'd sensed and felt and struggled to understand made perfect sense. My mind and my heart were joining in relationship. I could feel the tender bloom of my wholeheartedness – the place of compassionate mind and wise heart, seamlessly joining in perfect harmony. I'd always felt there was more, and here it was. Trusting the Holy Spirit, and practicing forgiveness as ACIM taught me had brought me to this moment, ready for the next step. With deepest gratitude I gently laid aside my ACIM – this well-loved, well-worn book falling apart at the seams as it was – on my shelf next to the Bible. I felt secure with Jesus as my companion, safe within the cocoon of ACOL's embrace. Breathing a sigh of gratitude, I figured I could enjoy a well-deserved rest. Little did I know what was in store!

Part Four: The Chrysalis Dissolving

That chrysalis now literally digests itself dissolving every bit of caterpillar material into a rich primordial soup, leaving only the imaginal cells (also known as imaginal discs) intact. Yes! Imaginal cells! It's the scientific term! Trust me! And if you don't, read what Scientific American says about [Imaginal cells](#) here. These cells vibrate at a different frequency to regular caterpillar cells which is why they survive the dissolving process. Rather like human stem cells, these imaginal cells contain the intelligence, the blueprints, from which all the butterfly parts are created.

I am that chrysalis dissolving all I thought I was.

ACOL is the trigger that is completing my undoing. The 'honeymoon' phase lasted less than a year. Then my unlearning, my undoing, my dissolving began in earnest. Almost immediately the past began parading into my life like a zombie chorus. I lurched along reading and re-reading the three volumes of a Course of Love, feeling my way delicately, tenderly, over and over again into 'The Forty Days and Forty Nights'. My body – hips and back – were suddenly in so much pain that I had to quit yoga, spinning and my beloved gardening! Nothing helped for long – not physical therapy, not acupuncture, not rest – nothing. I had no choice but to be patient and gentle with myself, accepting how I felt, and paying close attention to these new physical sensations. My body was talking to me. Everything was an effort. Everything hurt.

Being in solitude as much as I could get away with, I found myself walking into life's fray, at first barely able to carry the stillness with me. With all the open-hearted willingness and devotion I could muster, I began facing unfinished business I thought was behind me. Each came up to be experienced again; this time to be felt and lovingly welcomed back into the embrace of my spacious self. Yes, there were many periods of lightness and joy – a son's wedding, a new granddaughter. Yet it seemed that every time I tentatively stuck my head above ground out of my precious solitude, something would bonk me right back in again – like someone was playing 'whack-a-mole', with me as mole! Each time I thought I was 'done', each time I made big plans – like launching my new ACOL-inspired practice '[CoCreating Clarity](#)', or booking a long-awaited first-time cruise – something would blow up in my face! Things would go well for a while – weeks, maybe months – and then Boom! I was back to square one again, or so it felt.

Yet deep down through all of this, I knew beyond doubt that everything was unfolding exactly as needed for my highest good, as well to serve the highest good of all around me. And I continue to know this with increasing certainty. All IS well. ACOL is the catalyst, harnessing my impatience, awakening my total willingness to cease the struggle, to surrender completely to what must happen. And I'm getting better at this – being willing, paying attention, surrendering and yet owning my part in this ultimate collaboration, and acting as propelled – like writing this article today. I trust that this process is indeed dissolving all that is not needed anymore, returning me to the rich primordial ooze of creation, in readiness for my true butterfly nature in all its wholeness to be revealed.

Part Five: The Primordial Soup

At the point of complete breakdown within the chrysalis, the imaginal cells spring into life. They resonate at the same frequency, clumping together, and busily passing information to each other. Using the protein-rich soup they're floating in to fuel rapid cell division, these imaginal cells now proceed co-creating each of the new butterfly parts needed – wings, antennae, legs, eyes etc. Now the butterfly knows that it is a butterfly. There is nothing left in the intelligent soup that struggles against the butterfly's true nature. All that remains is for it to manifest in form. The caterpillar-chrysalis-soup is slowly but surely transforming into a butterfly.

I am that primordial soup teeming with divine intelligence.

It's now a little over seven years that I've been opening to, receiving, and living deeply into the message of ACOL. It has been a time of extreme vulnerability, of feeling a tenderness and love for all, to a depth and breadth I have never known before. It feels like my heart is expanding, making more and more space to gently hold and enfold, with understanding and compassion, everyone I encounter or who comes to mind – all without exception, regardless of how or even whether they respond – beginning with myself. That alone is a priceless gift of this time. I know I am transmogrifying (I love that word!) even as I write this. I feel the beginnings of the birthing of my Elevated Self of Form – human AND divine, in unity AND relationship, individuated WITHIN wholeness, unique WITHIN Oneness. These aren't just words anymore. They are felt and sensed experiences.

I am learning to trust the innate knowing of my body – my self of form. I listen to my feelings, knowing that they are my awareness of truth in the present moment; and that complete within this moment lies the infinite Joy that fuels my enjoyment of every little everyday thing, needing nothing ever to be added on. Are there imaginal cells kicking into action? Vibrating at a higher frequency? The frequency of light? Perhaps. I don't know, and yet I do! Many of you reading this have experienced such knowing without words, a knowing without logic or data, a knowing that we absolutely trust and yet cannot explain. We simply allow the process, because we trust in the collective power and wisdom of us all joined as one – flowing, coursing, cascading – forever giving and receiving in loving relationship and union with each other. And I/we know that I/we are willing, and my/our willingness is all that is needed.

The past year has been like a 'review' year, filled with opportunities to re-experience difficult situations as my newly forming wholehearted Christ-self. My responses are different. I feel the difference. I am different. Dedicating all thought to union, I am complete, knowing that I am enough exactly as I am right here, right now. Resting in the truth and certainty of the present moment, I can trust myself again!

Part Six: The Butterfly Emerging

Eventually, the butterfly is ready to be birthed. Its wings and legs poke and prod from within the cocoon, until trusting in its own knowing, the new butterfly makes its way out – sturdy, strong, and ready to fly off into the world. You can view a Monarch in this birthing process in this [time-lapse video](#). The butterfly is a completely new creature, yet containing within it, all of who and what it has been. Caterpillars live in trees, butterflies fly through the air; caterpillars eat leaves, butterflies drink nectar. So stunningly different from each other, that were we not able to watch the transformation with our own eyes, we would never believe it. Distinct and yet forever linked in the relationship of shared experience, one with each other, with nature, and with all of creation.

I am that emerging butterfly!

Am I ready to emerge? Am I ready to fly? I do not know. And yet I trust that I am as ready as I'll ever be. But more than that I trust myself to know – that I will feel my way into it, I will sense it, and I will know it with a certainty I am newly becoming accustomed to. And when I am ready I will emerge and I will fly. I am emerging. My new wings and legs prod and poke at me. I feel the growing pains. I experience myself [Coming to Voice](#), expressing all of who I am, and cocreating the new.

I devote my attention and all of my being in gratitude, giving and receiving as one in the present moment. I trust that in each moment, whatever is needed lands – in perfect timing – and I know whether to be still, whether to act, and what I am to do. It reminds me of a vintage process from my engineering days called JIT – Just-In-Time manufacturing – a technique developed by Toyota in Japan to optimize flow-time from suppliers, through manufacturing, to customers. I am fine-tuning my JIT process, diligently taking the inner action “of joining in union and relationship ... the act of informing and being informed ... where creation of the new can begin because it is the intent of creation, rather than the intent of the observer, that is the creative force, the animator and informer ... allowing for the channeling of creation through the one Self.” – D:Day 19.15

When unclear I simply remain in stillness, as present and as attentive as I can be. When propelled, I take action, with growing trust in my wholehearted self and the collective wisdom of us all together – One Heart, One Mind – in Oneness. Much as Sonny in ‘The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel’ trusts in the face of adversity, saying “Everything will be all right in the end. And if it’s not all right, then it’s not yet the end.”

Enfolding all I meet or who come to mind within my spacious self, within the infinite and inclusive embrace of love, I know that I am enough. No comparisons needed, no-thing and no-one left out, nothing to protect, and nothing to defend. All is complete in this moment. All is Love. And I know beyond doubt that – “We, all of us together, are the heartbeat of the world.” - ACOL, C:30.3

Part Seven: The Butterfly

Yet to be experienced in sufficient, sustained depth to write about!

To Be Continued ... 😊

“Go forth not as completed works of art but as permeable energy, ever changing, ever creating, ever new. Go forth with openness for revelation to happen through you and through all you encounter. Go forth joyously on this adventure of discovery. Be ever new, ever one, ever the beloved.

Bring your voice to this continuing dialogue. This is all that is asked of you. This is the gift you have been given and the gift you bring the world: your own voice, the voice of Who You Are. This is not a voice of separation or of the separated self but a voice of union and of the One Self. It is how union is expressed and made recognizable in form. It is what will usher in the new and change the world. It cannot be accomplished without you—without your ability to stand in unity and relationship as The Accomplished.

Beloved brothers and sisters, You are The Accomplished.”

– ACOL, Addendum: Learning in the Time of Christ, A.48-50

How wonderfully exciting and inspiring is that?

Join with me as I am forever joining with each of you, and we'll have a blast!

I welcome all questions, musings and comments – email Christina@CoCreatingClarity.org

All is well  

With so much gratitude, and with love,

Christina Strutt

<http://cocreatingclarity.com/>