

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 16, Section III

The Reward of Teaching

Legend:

- blue text** = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~strikethrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Overview of the Section

This section has what, to me, are two absolutely powerful statements: “He [the Holy Spirit] is both God and you, as you are God and Him together” (5:3), and “You are not two selves in conflict” (6:1). It is designed to forever banish from our thoughts any idea that we are something less than or other than “the exact imprint of God’s very being” (Hebrews 1:3, NRSV).

Paragraph 1

1. ¹We have already learned that everyone teaches, and teaches all the time [This first sentence appears to have been inserted by the editors, drawing from 6.In.2:2]. ²You ~~may~~ have taught well, and yet you ~~may not have~~ **have not** learned how to **accept** the comfort of your teaching. ³If you will consider **what** you have taught, and how alien it is to what you **thought** you knew, you will be **compelled** to realize that your Teacher came from **beyond** your thought system. ⁴Therefore He could look upon it fairly, and perceive it was untrue. ⁵ [And] He **must** have done so from the basis of a very different thought system, and one with **nothing in common with yours**. ⁶For certainly what He has taught, and what you have taught **through** Him, ~~have~~ [*has*] nothing in common with what you taught **before** He came. ⁷And the results have been to bring peace where there was pain, and suffering has disappeared to be replaced by joy.

• Study Question •

1. *What does this paragraph have to say to the common idea that we must fully realize something inside ourselves before we can give it to others?*
 - A. *It supports this idea. Since she hadn't let the Holy Spirit teach her, He could not reach through her to teach others.*
 - B. *It does not support this idea. She had allowed Him to teach through her, even though she hadn't allowed Him to teach herself.*

This entire section, which continues the thoughts of the previous section, was originally addressed to Helen, who had “learned to be a loving, wise, and very understanding therapist, except for yourself” (T-5.V.1:1). The definite statements in sentence #2 were applicable directly to Helen; the editors (wisely, in my opinion) inserted “may have” and “may not have” to generalize them for all readers. Some of us have not “taught well” at all, but we *may have*.

The point Jesus is making is that Helen (and perhaps Bill as well) had been successfully communicating the truths of the Course to other people (1:2). She had allowed the Holy Spirit to teach *through* her (1:3), and, he says, she would have realized that the teaching “came from *beyond* [her] thought system” if she had considered what she was teaching, and how contrary it was to what she had believed and taught previously (1:6). What was coming through Helen was a thought system that had “*nothing in common*” with her own thought system (1:5). As a result, what Helen taught brought “peace where there was pain, and suffering has disappeared to be replaced by joy” (1:7).

Today, thousands of people can attest to that!

The problem was that, although Helen was giving out these healing ideas, she herself had not learned how to accept the comfort of her own teaching!

The good news is that the Holy Spirit can use you to bring healing and comfort to others with thoughts that come from beyond your own thinking. I know that I have had that experience. Perhaps, if you have ever tried to offer wise counsel to a friend or acquaintance, you have uttered some wise words that came as a surprise to yourself and ended up thinking, “Wow! I don’t know where *that* came from!” Well, now you know where they came from—”from *beyond* your thought system,” from the Holy Spirit.

The cautionary message, however, is twofold. First, we must realize that speaking wise words does *not* necessarily mean that we have learned them! And second, that when surprising wisdom comes out of our mouths, we need to consider the ideas that have come through us and learn to apply them to ourselves. The latter message is really what Jesus is trying to communicate here.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹You ~~may have~~ [*have*] taught freedom, but you have **not** learned how to be free. ²~~I said earlier~~ [*We once said*], “By their fruits ye shall know them, and

they shall know themselves.”¹ ³For it is certain that you judge **yourself** according to your teaching. ⁴The ego’s teaching produces **immediate** results, because **its** decisions are immediately **accepted as your choice**. ⁵And this acceptance **means** that you are willing to judge yourself accordingly. ⁶Cause and effect are very clear in the ego’s thought system, because all your learning has been directed toward **establishing** the relationship between them. ⁷And would you **not** have faith in what you have so diligently taught yourself to believe? ⁸Yet remember how much care you have exerted in choosing its witnesses, and in **avoiding** those which spoke for the cause of truth and **its** effects.

• Study Question •

2. Which of the following statements **do not reflect** this paragraph's comments about the idea that you judge yourself according to your effect on others (there may be more than one)?
- A. There can be a time lag in between producing fruits of the **spirit** and judging yourself according to those fruits.
 - B. There is no time lag between producing fruits of the **ego** and judging yourself according to those fruits.
 - C. You taught ego--you chose its witnesses, produced its effects--for the purpose of convincing yourself that it was the truth about you.
 - D. When you produce the fruits of the spirit you will immediately free yourself of the ego.
 - E. If you believe this nonsense, you are a fruit.

Sentence 1 simply sums up the thought of the previous paragraph: Helen has taught freedom but has not learned it for herself. Sentence 2 refers to a comment made in Chapter 9: "By their fruits ye shall know them, and *they* shall know *themselves*," the first part of which is a quote from the Bible². The meaning of the quotation is that you judge yourself according to your effect on others.

There are two teachings referred to in this paragraph, that of your ego, and that of the Holy Spirit. We definitely judge ourselves according to what the ego teaches us, and we do so *immediately*, because we are so identified with our egos that we believe that what the ego says is *what we ourselves believe* (2:3,4). Whether you are listening to your ego’s judgment of another person or of yourself hardly matters. If you accept the ego’s thinking, you have expressed willingness to apply that thinking to yourself (2:5).

What “cause and effect” is he referring to here, in 2:6? It seems to refer to 2:2, where we determine what *we must be* (the cause) to have resulted in our effect on others, the

1 Refers to T-9.V.9:6, part of which quotes Matthew 7:20, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

2 Refers to T-9.V.9:6, part of which quotes Matthew 7:20, “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

“fruits” of our words and actions. We see the effects, and that informs our opinion of ourselves. With ego-based words and actions the feedback connection is immediate! We instantly judge ourselves for them. And why wouldn't we? “All your learning has been directed toward *establishing* the relationship between them” (2:6–7).

But, Jesus says, we *choose our witnesses*. We focus on the witnesses to the ego and we *avoid* the witnesses “who speak for the Cause of truth and *Its* effects” (2:8). That's why Helen was failing to make the connection between her effect on other people and the Truth about Who she was (and is). She was deliberately (albeit unconsciously) blinding herself to the witnesses to the Truth. And we all do the same thing whenever we think we are unworthy, or that we have somehow corrupted ourselves or made ourselves anything other than the effect of God.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Does not the fact that you have **not** learned what you **have** taught show you that you do **not** perceive the Sonship as one? ²And does it not also show you that you do not regard *yourself* as one? ³For it is impossible to teach successfully **wholly** without conviction, and it is equally impossible that conviction be **outside** of you. ⁴You could never have taught freedom unless you **did** believe in it. ⁵And it **must** be that what you taught **came from yourself**. ⁶Yet this Self you clearly **do not know**, and do not recognize It **even though It functions**. ⁷What functions must be **there**. ⁸And it is **only** if you deny **what It has done** that you could possibly deny Its presence.

• Study Question •

3. *If you have not learned what you taught, that implies certain things. Which of the following statements are implications of the fact that you have not learned what you taught to others?*
- A. *You do not see other people as being at one with yourself.*
 - B. *You do not see yourself as being united, since you feel split off from the part of you that was the source of your teaching.*
 - C. *You have denied the Self in you that taught others.*
 - D. *You have denied what this Self did through you.*

If I can teach something to another person successfully, but have not yet learned it for myself, three things are fairly clear: 1) I see the other person as distinct from myself, because if they have learned a lesson and I have not, we *must* be different—or at least, I must *perceive* us as different; 2) since it is impossible to truly teach without conviction as to the truth of what is being taught, there *must* be something in me that believes the Truth; 3) if there is something in me that believes the Truth, yet I have not consciously learned the lesson (freedom), I must not regard myself as one, that is, I must perceive my mind as split (3:1–4).

What I teach must come from me, from my Self (4:5). Yet, although this Self functions and teaches others, I do not know It (4:6). I know by the results that It must be there (4:7). The only way I can deny the Presence of this Self is to deny the results! (4:8)

Don't push past this simple paragraph too quickly. It's fairly clear. It does not need much explanation. But let it sink in; apply it to yourself. Have you ever made light of the healing that has come through you? Were you perhaps afraid to recognize the Self, *your* Self, that has to be there for the healing to have occurred? Stop for a moment and consider: Am I repressing my awareness of the Christ within me? Am I willing to acknowledge that my Self is Christ?

Paragraph 4

4. ¹This is a course in how to **know** yourself. ²You have **taught** what you are, but have **not** let what you are teach **you**. ³You have been **very** careful to avoid the obvious, and **not** to see the **real** cause and effect relationship that is **perfectly** apparent. ⁴Yet within you is **everything** you taught. ⁵What can it be that has **not** learned it? ⁶It must be this **part** that is **really** outside yourself, **not** by your own projection, **but in truth**. ⁷And it is this part that you have **taken in** that is **not** you. ⁸What **you** accept into your mind does not **really** change it. ⁹Illusions are but beliefs in **what is not there**. ¹⁰And the seeming conflict between truth and illusion can **only** be resolved by **separating yourself from the illusion** and **not** from truth.

• Study Question •

4. *You have let your Self teach through you, but have not let this teaching teach you--or at least teach the part that is not really you (4:7). This paragraph refers to you carefully avoiding "the real cause and effect relationship" (4:3). If, instead, you were to pay attention to this real cause and effect relationship, what would that mean--what cause would have what effect? You may find it helpful to read over the second paragraph carefully before answering this.*

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It's interesting when the Course speaks about itself, and about what its purpose and its goal are. This is one such place, but there are several:

This is a course in how to *know* yourself.

This is a course in mind training.

This is a course on love, because it is about you.

This is a course in cause and not effect.

This course is a beginning, not an end.

The motivation for this course is the attainment and the keeping of the state of peace.

The whole purpose of this course is to teach you that the ego is unbelievable and will forever be unbelievable.

The purpose of this course is to help you remember what you are.

What is striking to me, when you list all these together, is how consistent they are. It's about remembering what we are, about knowing myself, recognizing my Self as love, about focusing on cause (the mind) and not effect (what I perceive), training my mind to recognize that the ego with which I have identified is completely and forever unbelievable.

Of how many of you is it true, as it is of me, that you have taught this truth to others but have not let your Self teach *you* as much as you could have (4:2)?

Have you ever been inspired, for however brief a time, and have said or done something really amazing? If so, and someone else tried to acknowledge it, you have probably said something like this: “Oh, that didn’t come from me; it was the Spirit.” Or, “Thank God, not me.” The point Jesus is making here is that *it was you*. That holy impulse, that loving act or word, came from your real Self. The self you think isn’t capable of such high behavior is your ego—and your ego *isn’t* you. The part that has *not* learned the lesson is not really you! “It must be this that is *really* outside yourself...*in truth*” (4:5–6).

Your mind, and mine, has accepted lies and illusions, but they are not you (4:7). Those things have not changed the reality of our minds (4:8). They are nothing more than false beliefs in *what is not there* (4:9). Rather than refusing to identify with our loving Self, we need to refuse to identify with these lies and illusions (4:10). We need to step away from our egos and disown them!

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Your teaching has already **done** this, for the Holy Spirit is **part of you**. ²Created by God, He left neither God nor His creation. ³He is both God and you, as you are God and Him together. ⁴For God’s Answer to the separation added more to you than you tried to **take away**. ⁵He protected both your creations **and** you together, keeping one with you what you would **exclude**. ⁶And they will **take the place** of what **you** took in to replace **them**. ⁷They are **quite** real, as part of the Self you do not know. ⁸They communicate to you through the Holy Spirit, and their power and gratitude to you for **their** creation they offer gladly to your teaching of yourself, who is their home. ⁹You who are host to God are also host to **them**. ¹⁰For nothing real has ever left the mind of its creator. ¹¹And what is **not** real was **never** there.

• Study Question •

5. *The latter part of this paragraph refers over and over to "them." "They" will replace your ego, are part of your real Self, and communicate to you through the Holy Spirit. Who are "they"?*
- A. *Our brothers.*
 - B. *Our creations.*
 - C. *God and the Holy Spirit together.*
 - D. *The people who come out with all those things we quote when we say, "Well, you know, they say that..."*

“Your teaching has already *done* this” (5:1). Done *what*? Separated yourself from the illusion and not from the truth! (4:10) In other words, in order to have taught the way you

have taught (speaking of Helen, but also to some extent to each of us), you *must* have stepped away from your ego and disowned it. What Jesus was telling Helen was to pay attention to what she had taught, to the work of the Holy Spirit in her and through her. And that applies to us all. Instead of lamenting over all our failures, focus on God's work in yourself. Nurture *that*, not the ego, because what you focus on, you will reproduce.

The Holy Spirit is *part of you*, not some separate, alien Being (5:1). We get the idea that the Holy Spirit is some kind of invisible, but external, Teacher. Something *outside of* us. The Course often speaks of "Him" in that way, and we could easily make the mistake of thinking that the Holy Spirit is separate from us. It uses the language of duality because that is how we think (at least at first); it is a compromise approach to get us to listen and wake up. As it says in the Manual for Teachers:

His is the Voice for God, and has therefore taken form. This form is not His reality, which God alone knows along with Christ, His real Son, Who is part of Him (C-6..Int.1:4-5).

The Holy Spirit abides in the part of your mind that is part of the Christ Mind. He represents your Self and your Creator, Who are one. He speaks for God and also for you, being joined with Both. And therefore it is He Who proves Them one. He seems to be a Voice, for in that form He speaks God's Word to you. He seems to be a Guide through a far country, for you need that form of help. He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have (C-6..Int.4:1-7).

The recurring term "seems" is a clear signal that says *in reality* the Holy Spirit is *not* a Voice or a Guide or Something that meets our imaginary needs. All those things are outside of us, but "the Holy Spirit is *part of you*" (5:1). He has "taken form," forms that seem to be something apart from us, but the "form is not His reality." The next sentence clearly *does* make a difference between the Creator God and the Holy Spirit, because it says the Holy Spirit was "created by God" (5:2). So this is a different understanding of the Holy Spirit than is held in traditional Christianity, which teaches that the Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father God and is not a creation of God. The Nicene Creed says:

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son],
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

The Athanasian Creed is even more definite:

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Spirit.

But the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit have one divinity, equal glory, and coeternal majesty.

What the Father is, the Son is, and the Holy Spirit is.

The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, and the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

Here, the Course significantly diverges from traditional, trinitarian theology: The Holy Spirit is created by God. And yet He is still part of God and of God's creation (5:2). We are encountering limitations of language here. To me, what it boils down to is that there is only One. God creates by extending Himself, so that what is created is still part of God. That would include the Holy Spirit and us as well.

God created His Sons by extending His Thought, and retaining the extensions of His Thought in His Mind. All His Thoughts are thus perfectly united within themselves and with each other (T-6.II.8:1-2).

It's all One. God is all there is. Is the Holy Spirit God? In the sense that It is a creation of God, no; but since everything is God, ultimately the answer is "yes." The Course states that plainly in the next sentence, but it adds in a real kicker: The Holy Spirit is "both God and you" and you are God and the Holy Spirit together (5:3)! Wow! Let me repeat: Wow! *I am God and the Holy Spirit together?* Wow! Try saying that to yourself a few times and see how it feels: *I am God and the Holy Spirit together.*

When we "fell" in the separation, and tried to distance ourselves from our Creator and our own creations, God responded with the Holy Spirit. He "added more to you than you tried to *take away*" (5:4). He kept us one with God, one with the Holy Spirit, and one with our creations; He did not allow the separation to take on reality (5:5). In its usual paradoxical fashion, the Course makes it clear that the separation never happened:

The instant the idea of separation entered the mind of God's Son, in that same instant was God's Answer given. In time this happened very long ago. In reality it never happened at all (M-2.2:6-8).

So All is still One. In the remainder of the paragraph, "they," "their," and "them" all refer to our creations. But keep in mind that whatever our creations are, they are *not* separate from us or from God! All is One. We tried to "take in" the ego in place of our creations, but *they* will take the place of the ego within us (5:6)! Our creations, he tells us, are "quite real" and "part of the Self you do not know" (5:7). This makes it clear to me that the Self, with a capital "S," is a corporate Self. It is not "me" on steroids, or "me" somehow made pure and holy and sanctified; it is *way more* than that. My Self *includes my creations*, just as God includes His creations.

Then Jesus goes on to speak about how these creations "communicate" to us "through the Holy Spirit" (5:8). I have to admit, he's losing me here. He says they offer me their power and gratitude for their creation—but no, it does not say they offer gratitude to *me* but to "your teaching of yourself, who is their home." I think that last part means one of two things: one, that my creations offer gratitude to the part of me that is teaching me the Truth; or two, that my creations are grateful to me for teaching myself the truth. And since the Holy Spirit (my Teacher) is part of me, maybe those are both the same thing. Like I said, we're running up against the limitations of our language here.

"You who are host to God are also host to *them*" (5:9). We are their home; our creations are part of my Self, because "nothing real has ever left the mind of its

creator” (5:10), so neither we nor our creations have ever left the mind of God. Everything, it seems, is part of everything else—or perhaps there *is* no “else.”

Paragraph 6

6. ¹You are **not** two selves in conflict. ²What is **beyond God**? ³If you who hold Him and whom He holds **are** the universe, all else must be **outside**, where **nothing** is. ⁴**You** have taught this, and from far off in the universe, yet **not** beyond yourself, the witnesses to your teaching have gathered to help you learn. ⁵Their gratitude has joined with yours and God's to strengthen your faith in what you taught. ⁶**For what you taught is true.** ⁷Alone, you stand **outside** your teaching and **apart** from it. ⁸But **with** them you **must** learn that you but taught **yourself**, and **learned** from the conviction you **shared** with them.

• Study Question •

6. *Your "witnesses" have gathered from far off in the universe to teach you this. Who do you think these witnesses are?*
- A. *Your creations, since these witnesses are said to (in paragraph 5), like your creations, be within you and offer strength and gratitude to your teaching of yourself.*
 - B. *Those you help, since the word "witnesses" goes back to 2:8 and refers to the visible effects of your teaching in this world.*
 - C. *Your Self and the Holy Spirit, Who witness your teaching and seek to bring its effects to you.*
 - D. *It is not clear and was perhaps a personal reference to something in Helen's life.*

Recall the general topic of the section: that we perceive ourselves as *not* having learned the very things we have taught to others. We are supposing a self that is other than God's creation, a self that is separate, that is less than perfect. What all this metaphysical teaching is trying to get across to us, I think, is that this “self” that we think we are, that has not learned nor has been comforted by the Truth, is simply not real. It is not you, it is not me. Even more simply: it *is not*. It does not exist. Everything, including us, is still in the mind of God.

Thus, this paragraph starts off by saying, “You are *not* two selves in conflict” (6:1). Our experience seems to contradict that. We seem to be separate egos, with another “higher” part that is trying to teach us something. Our minds seem split. This sensation of a split mind, two selves in conflict, is illusory:

When you perceive correction is the **same** as pardon, then you also know the Holy Spirit's Mind and yours are one. And so your **own** Identity is found. Yet must He work with what is **given** Him, and you allow Him only *half* your mind. And thus He represents the *other* half, and seems to have a **different** purpose

from the one you cherish, and you **think** is yours. Thus does your function seem **divided**, with a half in *opposition* to a half. And these two halves appear to represent a split within a self perceived as two (T-27.II.12:2-7).

How *could* there be such a thing as a split mind? If we hold God and are held by God, if together God and we “*are* the universe,” then *nothing* could be outside of that Oneness, something “beyond God” (6:2–3).

Helen had taught this Oneness, and the witnesses to her teaching “have gathered to help [her] learn” (6:4). The same is true for each of us, to whatever extent we have expressed and extended the Oneness with others. These “witnesses” are, most likely, the brothers and sisters we have healed—our creations. It says the witnesses have gathered “from far off in the universe, yet *not* beyond yourself” (6:4). Another paradoxical and somewhat confusing description. It seems to mean that even distance is an illusion. If we and God are all the universe, then it must be that “far off” is not beyond our Self.

I believe that there are spirits supporting me, encouraging me, reminding me of things I tend to forget, strengthening my faith in what I have taught (6:5) because it is true (6:6). In reality, these “other beings” are part of my Self, so actually, in teaching others I have been teaching *myself*, and their learning is *my* learning (6:7–8). *You*, dear reader, are part of my Self, and I am part of your Self, because they are one Self.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹This year you will begin to learn, and make learning **commensurate** with teaching. ²You have **chosen** this by your own willingness to teach. ³Though you seemed to suffer for it, the joy of teaching will yet be yours. ⁴For the joy of teaching is **in the learner**, who offers it to the teacher in gratitude, and shares it **with** him. ⁵As you learn, your gratitude to your **Self**, Who teaches you what He **is**, will grow and help you honor Him. ⁶And you will learn His power and strength and purity, and love Him as His Father does. ⁷His Kingdom has no limits and no end³, and there is nothing in Him that is not perfect and eternal. ⁸All this is *you*, and nothing **outside** of this *is* you.

• Study Question •

7. *This year your learning will catch up with your teaching and teach you the power, strength and purity of your Self. Which of the following statements best captures the meaning of sentences 3 and 4?*
- A. *The joy of teaching is inside the learner, but this learner is actually the teacher. Until you start learning from your own teaching, you will suffer.*
 - B. *The teacher eventually tires of teaching. When this happens he can be revitalized by his students, because when they start to teach,*

³ Cf. Luke 1:33, where it is said that Jesus' kingdom will have no end; here, it refers to your Self, that is, the Christ.

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they will be enthused about it, thus reminding the teacher of the joy he used to feel.

- C. *Teaching seems like a sacrifice, but the joy of it resides in the learner, who receives the teaching and returns the joy of it to the teacher.*
- D. *To feel the joy of teaching you must relinquish your attachment to always being the teacher. Instead, you must realize that your students know as much as you, and then become their student--so that you can now feel the joy of teaching.*



Wouldn't it be wonderful to learn as much from your teaching as others do? That's what Jesus promises here to Helen, and to us (7:1). As the Manual for Teachers says, teaching is much more than giving lectures or writing books:

"The course, on the other hand, emphasizes that to teach *is* to learn, so that teacher and learner are the same. It also emphasizes that teaching is a constant process; it goes on every moment of the day, and continues into sleeping thoughts as well.

To teach is to demonstrate. There are only two thought systems, and you demonstrate that you believe one or the other is true all the time. From your demonstration others learn, and so do you. The question is not whether you will teach, for in that there is no choice. The purpose of the course might be said to provide you with a means of choosing what you want to teach on the basis of what you want to learn" (M-Int.1:5-2:5).

So often, as we teach by demonstrating, offering love to those around us, it seems to *drain our energy*. Perhaps, like Helen, you have *chosen* to be an instrument of love. But being a living expression of love does not always seem to bring us joy, as Jesus promises (7:3). For me, at least, the joy begins to come when I recognize *and accept* the gratitude of those I have taught. According to Jesus here, *that* is where the joy lies (7:4).

It speaks here of our gratitude to our Self, "Who teaches you what He *is*" (7:5), saying that this gratitude will increase as we learn. It tells us that we will learn "His power and strength and purity, and love Him as His Father does" (7:6). This speaks of our Self in the 2nd person, "He," "His," and "Him," because that is how it seems to us as we begin to emerge from our illusion of being a separate self. We experience gratitude as if to an external teacher, a Being other than us, greater than us, wiser than us. But this seeming Other is none other than our own Self! You are "God and Him together" (5:3). The more we learn, the more we begin to become grateful *to ourselves*, or more correctly, *to our Self*. That's what is behind this enigmatic statement we saw earlier in the Text: "Give thanks to every part of you that you have taught how to remember you" (T-13.VII.17:8).

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Of this Self, Jesus says, “His Kingdom has no limits and no end, and there is nothing in Him that is not perfect and eternal” (7:7). And then, just to nail it home, he adds this dramatic statement:

All this is you, and nothing outside of this is you (7:8)

Try that thought on for size! Try saying, “My Kingdom has no limits and no end, and there is nothing in me that is not perfect and eternal. Nothing that is not perfect and eternal *is* me.” When I encounter teaching like this is when I realize my consciousness still has a long way to expand! And how does that occur? By choosing to extend myself, my love, to others, and opening to receive their gratitude.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹To your most holy Self all praise is due for what you are, and for what He is Who created you **as** you are. ²Sooner or later must everyone bridge the gap he imagines exists between his selves. ³Each one builds this bridge, which **carries him across the gap** as soon as he is willing to expend some little effort on behalf of bridging it. ⁴His little efforts are powerfully supplemented by the strength of Heaven, and by the united will of all who make Heaven what it is, being joined within it. ⁵And so the one who would cross over is literally transported there.

• Study Question •

8. *Paragraph 8* says that our little efforts combined with the strength of Heaven transports us across the bridge that goes from our false self to our true Self. What do you think it means by "little effort"?
- A. The effort required is little compared to all the effort we put into crossing the bridge from our true Self to our false self.
 - B. The effort is little because effort is antithetical to spiritual awakening. If it were a lot of effort, then, it wouldn't work.
 - C. The effort is little only compared to the total amount of effort we expend--it will seem to us to be a lot of effort.
 - D. The effort is something we would consider little by normal standards, which usually means effort that does not feel difficult nor take up enormous amounts of time.
 - E. A and C
 - F. B and D

This sentence (8:1) seems to belong to the end of the preceding paragraph Jesus spoke of *honoring* our Self (7:5), and here he tells us our Self is due all praise for what we are (8:1). Praise is also due to Him "Who created you *as* you are", meaning God (8:1).

We all have to learn this eventually, and we all will. *Everyone* will "bridge the gap he imagines exists between his selves" (8:2). That comes back to the realm of our experience. We seem to be two selves, and never the twain shall meet. We are naughty and nice, angel and devil, Jekyll and Hyde. We have high aspirations and live on a far lower plane. We feel like the Apostle Paul in Romans Chapter 7, who wrote the definitive description of the two-self experience:

"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I

do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

(Romans 7:15–24 NRSV)

Paul here was, apparently, blaming his body for his “inability” to do “the good I want.” He felt there was a “law of sin that dwells in my members.” Many Christian commentators believe, as I do, that Paul was describing here an earlier experience. That is, he was speaking from an unenlightened point of view to make a point of what it is like when we think we have two selves that are in conflict.

The Course tells us that everyone will bridge the gap between these two selves and will recognize that we are One Self, united with our Creator (Workbook Lesson 95), and we will do so as soon as we are willing to “expend some little effort on behalf of bridging it” (8:3). Just a “little effort,” but still an effort. It won’t happen until you finally *try* to bridge that gap. When you do, you will be aided and augmented “by the strength of Heaven, and by the united will of all who make Heaven what it is, being joined within it” (8:4). Every one, every enlightened being through all time, is pulling for you! This reminds me of another old Christian hymn that I love. The words are not quite perfect, but for me, they express my thanks for that “cloud of witnesses”⁴ who aid and augment my progress on the spiritual path:

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confess,
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

O blest communion, fellowship divine,
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
Yet all are one in Thee, for all are Thine.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Because of this heavenly host backing us up and empowering us, we will be “literally transported” across the imagined gap to our home in the One Self (8:5).

⁴ Hebrews 12:1. The biblical writer has just run through a litany of names of those who were heroes of faith in ages gone by. They comprise the cloud of witnesses.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Your bridge is builded stronger than you think, and your foot is planted firmly on it. ²Have no fear that the attraction of those who stand on the other side and wait for you will not draw you safely across. ³For you **will** come where you would be, and where your Self awaits you.

• Study Question •

9. *you have already built a strong bridge to your Self, your foot is firmly on it and you will be drawn to the other side. Who are the ones that "stand on the other side and wait for you"?*
- A. *Our brothers.*
 - B. *Our creations.*
 - C. *Those we have taught--our learners.*
 - D. *Allen and Robert.*

The section ends on an encouraging note. We are doing better than we realize. The bridge from our ego to our Self is “builded stronger than you think,” and we have firmly embarked on crossing that bridge (9:1), whether or not we realize it. After telling us that we have not learned to be free, and that we don’t regard ourselves as one self, Jesus eases up and cheers us up with some inspiring words. He tells us not to worry that we will not be drawn across the bridge by the attraction of “those who stand on the other side and wait for you” (9:2). We *will* be drawn across. We *will* “come to where your Self awaits you” (9:3).

Think for a moment about the strange location data here: Your Self is waiting on the other side of the bridge for *you*, who are on this side—or think you are. If your Self is on the other side, obviously *you* must be on the other side; who are you but your Self? Where would you be but where your Self is? So the experience of being separated from your Self is an illusion. It is a “real illusion”; that separation is your and my experience, but it is nonetheless an illusion. As we are told elsewhere in the Course, “You are at home in God, dreaming of exile” (T-10.I.2:1).

• Study Question •

10. *Please summarize in about a paragraph the main message of this section, or the main theme that personally struck you (trying to capture a good chunk of the overall message as possible in the process).*

Answer Key

1. B
2. D and E
3. A,B,C,D
4. You would let the cause of your teaching of others, produce the effect of changing your judgment of yourself.
5. B
6. A
7. C
8. E
9. B
10. My brief summary: You have taught joy from your Self, but have not learned it, having ignored the witnesses to your teaching. Yet they have gathered to teach you through their gratitude the joy you taught them..