

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 20, Section VIII

The Vision of Sinlessness

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strike through sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

You can tell from the title of the section that it is a continuation of the preceding section, and concerns seeing one another as sinless being the means by which we recognize our own innocence. It emphasizes the need to abandon both judgment and our reliance on the body's perceptions. It makes some of the most negative statements in the Course concerning the body, including referring to the body as "the engine of destruction."

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Vision will come to you at first in glimpses, but they will be enough to show you what is given *you* who see your brother sinless. ²Truth is restored to you through your desire, as it was lost to you through your desire for something *else*. ³Open the holy place that you closed off by *valuing* the "something else," and what was never lost will quietly return. ⁴It has been saved for you. ⁵Vision would not be necessary had judgment not been made. ⁶Desire now its whole undoing, and it is done *for you*.

• Study Question •

1. (a) How would you describe what the first sentence refers to as "glimpses?"

- (b) What is meant by the term "something else?"
 - A. The body
 - B. The illusion of separation
 - C. All earthly goals

It's reassuring to be told that vision comes, at first, "in glimpses" (1:1). We don't suddenly perceive our brother or sister as a perfectly holy being. We get a *glimpse*. The dictionary calls a glimpse "a momentary or partial view." For a few minutes or a few seconds, we suddenly see our friend or partner in an entirely new way. We see a shining being of light, or at least we get a *flash* of that light, and we know something is hiding there, within the rough exterior, that is amazing and precious.

I expect you've had such glimpses and not quite known what they were, reality or hallucination. Rest assured they were reality. And when we have these glimpses, we realize that what we have seen is what we've been seeking all along, and what is now being offered to us if we trust the glimpse and open to the vision that brought it.

Desire is the key. We desired "something else," the illusion of autonomy or separateness, and gave in to judgment, and that desire cost us awareness of the truth, but now our desire for truth can bring it back (1:2). We simply need to "open the holy place" within us, and "what was never lost will quietly return" (1:3). It's still there. It was *never lost*; rather, "it has been saved for you: (1:4).

In a way, the Course has a version of the story of "the fall," but its version is so much gentler than the traditional one. We never left the garden. Nothing was ever lost. Nothing *really* changed. We do not need to do anything to "recover" something. We were never banished from God's presence—which is literally impossible, since we exist *in* God. The only fall was one we imagined.

And turn you to the stately calm within, where in holy stillness dwells the living God you never left, and Who never left you. The Holy Spirit takes you gently by the hand, and retraces with you your mad journey outside yourself, leading you gently back to the truth and safety within (T-18.I.8:2-3).

This is the Self That never sinned, nor made an image to replace reality. This is the Self That never left Its home in God to walk the world uncertainly (W-pI.94.3:6-7).

All we need is to *desire* the undoing of judgment "and it is done *for* you" (1:6).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Do you not *want* to know your own Identity? ²Would you not happily exchange your doubts for certainty? ³Would you not willingly be *free* of misery, and learn again of joy? ⁴Your holy relationship offers all this to you. ⁵As *it* [your holy relationship] was given you, so will be its *effects*. ⁶And as its holy purpose [goal] was not made by you, the means by which its happy end is yours is also not of you. ⁷Rejoice in what is yours but for the asking, and think not that you need make either means *or* end. ⁸All this is *given* you who would but *see* your brother sinless. ⁹All this is *given*, waiting on your desire but to *receive* it. ¹⁰Vision is freely given to those who ask to see.

• **Study Question** •

2. *Our holy relationships offer us the opportunity to know our Identity, exchange doubt for certainty, and to become free of misery and filled with joy (2:1–4). These things, plus the means to attain them, are given to us as a gift. What three things are asked of us to receive this gift?*
- A. *To desire to see our brothers sinless*
 - B. *To forgive our brothers*
 - C. *To desire to receive the gift*
 - D. *To ask to see*

Ask yourself the three questions that open the paragraph, and try to feel your positive answers. *Of course* you want to know your own identity. Of course you want to exchange all your doubts for certainty. *Of course* you want to be free of misery and learn again of joy. Who wouldn't? All of this is being offered to us in our holy relationships (2:4).

Notice the assumption here that a holy relationship is something that is *given to us* (2:5). Jesus uses that fact to illustrate how totally the *effects* of the holy relationship—awareness of our identity, doubt-free certainty, and joy—are also free gifts, not something *we* have to achieve on our own. To me, viewing the holy relationship as a gift puts an end to any need to search for or create a holy relationship. A holy relationship is not something we manufacture; it is something we *receive*. That's a relief!

The same kind of comparison of two gifts is made (not for the first time) between the goal of the holy relationship and the means of reaching that goal. Neither one is made by us (2:6). It's a package deal: the holy relationship, the goal or purpose, the means of reaching the goal, and all the effects of reaching it are a free gift. All we have to do is *ask for it* (2:7). As the Bible says:

For it is by grace you are saved through faith; it is not your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done. There is nothing for anyone to boast of; we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the life of good deeds which God designed for us. (Ephesians 2:8–10 REB)

It's all given to us *if we are willing to see our brother sinless* (2:8). We simply need to desire to *receive* it (2:9). Just ask to see your brother sinless, and “vision is freely given” (2:9). Open the Workbook and leaf through the first 50 lessons, and you will be astonished at how many of them refer to seeing and to vision. They include lessons titled, “I am determined to see,” “I am determined to see things differently,” “Above all else I want to see,” and “Above all else I want to see things differently.” So...*just ask to see your brother or sister sinless!*

If I ask, I will be given vision. I will actually see him or her as sinless. Since this is the *means* for reaching the goal of a holy relationship, I *will* reach that goal. I will regain knowledge of the truth, including knowledge of my identity, perfect certainty, and fullness of joy.

Wow! This really motivates me to ask, ask and ask to see those around me as sinless!

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Your brother's sinlessness is given you in shining light, to look on with the Holy Spirit's vision and to rejoice in along with Him. ²For peace will come to all who ask for it with real desire and sincerity of purpose, *shared* with the Holy Spirit and at one with Him on what salvation *is*. ³Be willing, then, to see your brother sinless, that Christ may rise before your vision and give you joy. ⁴And place *no* value on your brother's body, which holds him to illusions of what he is. ⁵It is *his* desire to see his sinlessness, as it is *yours*. ⁶And bless the Son of God in your relationship, nor see in him what you have *made* of him.

• Study Question •

3. *This paragraph gives both a general statement of what is required to receive peace, and also gives three (or four) very specific ways that general statement is to be carried out by us.*
- (a) *What is the general statement of what we need to do to have peace? (Select from list below.)*
- (b) *What are four ways we can act out that general requirement? (Select from list.)*
- A. *Be willing to see my brother as sinless*
 - B. *Look with the vision of the Holy Spirit*
 - C. *Ask for peace with real desire and sincerity of a purpose we share with the Holy Spirit, in complete agreement with Him about what salvation is*
 - D. *Place no value on my brother's body*
 - E. *Bless the Son of God in my relationship*
 - F. *Do not see in him/her what I have made of him/her*

The first two sentences really go well with the preceding paragraph. They sum up what that paragraph said: That the vision of another's sinlessness is a gift of God to us, shared with the Holy Spirit; all we need to do to have that gift is to ask for it "with real desire and sincerity of purpose" (3:1–2). This is a purpose that we *share* with the Holy Spirit, in total agreement with Him "on what salvation *is*" (3:2).

What *is* salvation? What are we called to agree with completely?

Salvation is a lesson in giving, as the Holy Spirit interprets it. It is the reawakening of the laws of God in minds that have established other laws, and given them power to enforce what God created not (T-20.IV.2:9-10).

Salvation is the end of separation, the undoing of all illusions, and the recognition of the perfect innocence of the Son of God in every being. Share that purpose and vision is yours. As the paragraph continues: "Be willing, then, to see your brother sinless..." (3:3). The "then" cements the meaning of salvation for me. If we are one with the Holy Spirit on what salvation is, we *will* be willing to see one another as sinless. As we do, the

resulting sight of Christ will fill us with joy (3:3). Forget any value you may have attributed to the other's body; it's a boat anchor, holding them back from seeing past their own illusions (3:4). Everyone wants to see themselves as sinless. Devaluing their body and exalting their spirit will help everyone you interact with to realize that desire (3:5). "I behold you as the Christ." Let go of "what you have *made* of him" (your judgments), and see the Son of God instead.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The Holy Spirit *guarantees* that what God willed and gave you shall be yours. ²This is *your purpose* [goal] now, and the vision that makes it [the goal] yours is ready to be given. ³You have the vision that enables you to see the body not. ⁴And as you look upon your brother, you will see an altar to your Father, holy as Heaven, glowing with radiant purity and sparkling with the shining lilies you laid upon it. ⁵What can you value more than this? ⁶Why do you think the body is a better home, a safer shelter for God's Son? ⁷Why would you rather look on *it* than on the truth? ⁸How can the engine of destruction be *preferred*, and chosen to *replace* the holy home the Holy Spirit offers, where He will dwell *with* you?

• Study Question •

4. *We, in our relationships, have been given the purpose of holiness; vision, which is the means to make this goal ours, is ready to be given. We already have it if we are willing to make use of it. The paragraph gives several examples of what we will see with vision, compared to what we see without that vision. List at least two such pairs.*

It still seems daunting, doesn't it? Seeing everyone as sinless?

We need reassurance, and we've got it. All of this is God's will for us, and that guarantees that we will have it (4:1). Eric Butterworth defined God's will as "the ceaseless longing of the creator to fulfill Himself in and through and as that which He has created."¹ It is the upward drive of all creation toward perfection and completion, and despite any and all appearances to the contrary, it cannot be forestalled.

We have joined our will with this purpose, and the vision that makes it possible "is ready to be given" (4:2). We already have it! We are capable of seeing past the body (4:3).

Imagine looking at "that person" you've been thinking about all through these discussions of holy relationships, and seeing him or her as an altar to God, "holy as Heaven, glowing with radiant purity and sparkling with the lilies [of forgiveness] you laid upon it" (4:4). How could you *not* want that experience? Try to imagine what it would be

¹ Butterworth, Eric (2010-05-15). *Discover the Power Within You: A Guide to the Unexplored Depths Within* (Plus) (Kindle Locations 921-922). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

like; try to *feel* it. Then, ask yourself, what makes you think seeing them as a body is somehow better? (5:5–6). Do you really want to go back to seeing them as a body, as “the engine of destruction” (5:7–8)?

That is such a vivid phrase I can't help reflecting on it: engine of destruction. The word “engine” means the agent or instrument of a particular process, according to one dictionary. So the phrase could be rendered, “the agent or instrument of destruction.” As a tool of the ego, that is what our bodies are. They can block our vision of another's holiness if our eyes get stopped at the body level (T-8.VII.10:5-6; T-22.III.8:3), thus “destroying” vision.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The body is the sign of weakness, vulnerability and *loss* of power. ²Can such a savior *help* you? ³Would you turn in your distress and need for help unto the helpless? ⁴Is the pitifully *little* the perfect choice to call upon for strength? ⁵Judgment *will* seem to make your savior weak. ⁶Yet it is *you* who need his strength. ⁷There is no problem, no event or situation, no perplexity that vision will not solve. ⁸All is redeemed when looked upon with vision. ⁹For this is not *your* sight, and brings with it the laws beloved of Him Whose sight it *is*.

• Study Question •

5. *Seeing our brother as a body actually deprives ourselves. How?*
- A. *We become perplexed or confused about who he is*
 - B. *We see ourselves as we see him*
 - C. *We are “making” our savior into something weak, vulnerable, helpless, powerless, and pitifully little; such a savior cannot help us*

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Bodies truly are fragile things. They are amazing, true. I'm at a loss to understand how the digestive system turns all kinds of food into useful fuel and body parts. I cannot imagine how the nervous system functions in all its complexity, or how the senses communicate with the brain, or even how muscles work. I am dazzled by even “simple” things like the way a scratch or cut will heal, seamlessly replacing skin and other tissue, usually without any evidence left of the injury. How do the cells know what kind of cell to be, and where? *I* certainly don't know!

And yet, “the body is the sign of weakness, vulnerability and *loss* of power” (5:1). They are easily destroyed by weapons, by natural disasters, by disease, or by relatively short periods without food or water. Our homes, our clothing, our medicines, our concern with cleanliness, all testify to the vulnerability of the body. “Can such a savior *help* you” (5:2)? Can you truly believe that? Bodies are, in the end, helpless to end our distress (5:3). There is no such thing as safe. We all know it. Planes crash. Trees fall. Lightning strikes—or cancer, or heart attacks. We read of a seemingly healthy person, an athlete,

ran five miles a day, never had any problems, suddenly dying, and we may act shocked but in reality we know it can happen to anyone at any time. Bodies are not safe homes.

And they are “pitifully *little*” in comparison to the world at large, and insignificantly small in contrast to the galaxy around us. This is not the source of strength we all want and need (5:4).

If we are looking on someone as a body, with our judgments in place, they will seem hopelessly weak to us, of no help whatsoever in finding rest and peace (5:5). But we *really need* one another’s strength (5:6). Given *vision*, there is “no problem, no event or situation, no perplexity” that cannot be solved (5:7). Judgment shows us weakness; vision shows us strength. Vision redeems everything (5:8). Vision is *the Holy Spirit’s sight*, and bring God’s laws into play in place of the laws of the world (5:9).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Everything looked upon with vision falls gently into place, according to the laws brought *to* it by His calm and certain sight. ²The end for everything *He* looks upon is *always* sure. ³For it will meet His purpose [His end], seen in *unadjusted* form and suited perfectly to meet it [His purpose]. ⁴Destructiveness becomes benign, and sin is turned to blessing under His gentle gaze. ⁵What can the body’s eyes perceive, with power to *correct*? ⁶Its eyes *adjust* to sin, unable to overlook it in *any* form and seeing it *everywhere*, in *everything*. ⁷Look through *its* eyes, and *everything* will stand condemned before you. ⁸All that could *save* you, you will never see. ⁹Your holy relationship, the *source* of your salvation, will be *deprived* of meaning, and its most holy purpose bereft of means for its accomplishment.

• Study Question •

6. (Include 5:7–9 in this question.) What is promised if we receive vision from the Holy Spirit?
- A. All problems will be solved by vision
 - B. Everything we see is redeemed
 - C. Everything falls gently into place
 - D. Everything looked upon will meet the purpose of the Holy Spirit
 - E. Everything we see will be perfectly suited for His purposes
 - F. All of the above

This paragraph contrasts what we see and experience when we look with vision versus what we see when we look with judgment (the two opposite “means”). The references to “adjustment” in this paragraph call to mind T-20.III, “Sin as an Adjustment.” The theme of adjustment really runs through this entire chapter. That earlier section spoke of both the way we make the world as an adjustment to our belief in sin and guilt, and then how we believe we must adjust ourselves to the world we made. If we let the body’s eyes govern our perception, we will see sin everywhere, and “All that could

save you, you will never see” (6:8). But if we see with vision, “everything...falls gently into place” (6:1).

When looked upon with the Holy Spirit, “the end” (that is, the goal) for everything “is *always* sure” (6:2). Vision is “calm and certain” (6:1). Everything becomes a blessing, even sin (6:4). It reminds me of the saying of Emma Curtis Hopkins:

This, too, is good. This, too, is God, I demand to see the blessing in it.

The body’s eyes cannot do that; they cannot *correct* what they see. But vision can (6:5). On the contrary, the body’s eyes adjust to sin. They see it everywhere and in everything, unable to overlook it in any form (6:6). If we rely on the body’s eyes we will see condemnation everywhere, and we will be *unable* to see that which *could* save us, if we looked with vision (6:7–8). That refers especially to our holy relationship, which can be the *source* of our salvation. If we refuse vision we are robbing our relationship of the means for accomplishing its holy purpose (6:9).

Try to get a feel for what it means to use vision. It means putting an end to believing what our eyes show us, denying the evidence of our eyes. It means opening to an inner, non-physical vision, a vision that will be given to us *if we really want it and ask for it*.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Judgment is but a toy, a whim, the senseless means to play the idle game of death in your imagination. ²But vision sets all things right, bringing them gently within the kindly sway of Heaven’s laws. ³What if you recognized this world is an hallucination? ⁴What if you *really* understood you made it up? ⁵What if you realized that those who *seem* to walk about in it, to sin and die, attack and murder and destroy themselves, are *wholly unreal*? ⁶Could you have *faith* in what you see, if you *accepted* this? ⁷*And would you see it?*

• Study Question •

7. *We are being asked to give up judgment as a means to anything; it is the means to the ego’s goal and incompatible with the goal of the Holy Spirit. Write your personal responses to the “What if...” questions in this paragraph.*

Physical sight adjusts to sin; it panders to judgment. But our judgments, he says, are “a toy, a whim” (7:1), something used to “play the idle game of death” by our imagination. Our ego mind *wants* to condemn, and it manipulates our senses and our perceptions to facilitate that desire. Jesus makes light of judgment, calling it a toy or a whim, something we use to play an idle game, but then he drops in a bomb, a loaded word: death. This is a game *of death*, which suddenly makes it sound quite serious.

Vision, rather than twisting reality to some perverse game of the imagination, “sets all things right” (7:2). It shifts things with soft finesse out of the realm of the world’s laws (which include death) into that of Heaven’s laws.

Then come three thought-provoking questions. They become startling, almost unbelievable, if you turn them into positive assertions:

This world is an hallucination (7:3).

You made up the world (7:4).

The people who walk in the world, seeming to sin and die, attack and murder and destroy themselves, are *wholly* unreal (7:5).

Perhaps you feel these statements *are* unbelievable. Some believe the Course means them absolutely: The entire physical universe is an hallucination made up by our ego minds, and everyone that seems to exist in this world is nothing more than dreams in our sleeping mind. Others believe in a milder interpretation, in which what these statements refer to are our *perceptions* of the world and its inhabitants. For instance, when I meet you, *you* are real, but *how I see you* is totally an artifact of my tortured mind, and has nothing whatsoever to do with reality. To be honest, I am not sure which interpretation I believe. I go back and forth. I tend to lean to the first interpretation, believing that all that really exists is mind or spirit, and that the material universe is something our minds have made up. But there are times my belief in that wavers.

Regardless of which interpretation we choose, the rest of the paragraph applies. If we truly accepted that what we are seeing is being made up by our own mind (literally, or even just perceptually), how could we possibly have faith in it (7:6)? Clearly, then, the lesson is that we cannot trust what our physical senses seem to show us.

The final question, “*And would you see it?*”, pushes us in the direction of the *second* interpretation, at least for me. I don’t think Jesus means that if we truly accept what he is saying the entire physical world will disappear from our awareness. But clearly, *how* we see it, the way we judge and condemn it, would become impossible if we believed that what we are seeing is an hallucination.

I am reminded of a movie, *A Beautiful Mind*, about John Nash, a brilliant mathematician who suffered from schizophrenia. He literally heard voices in his head and saw things that were not real. Somehow, he learned to distinguish these from reality, and managed to function in the world even though his delusions continued. He simply reminded himself they were not real. I believe that what we are being asked to do is very much like that. The world around us is an hallucination. We need to continually remind ourselves that it is not real, that people really are the offspring of God and not the “distressing disguises” they seem to be wearing in the world. Judgment becomes impossible.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Hallucinations disappear when they are *recognized* for what they are. ²This *is* the healing and the remedy. ³Believe them not and they *are* gone. ⁴And all *you* need to do is recognize that you *did this*. ⁵Once you *accept* this simple fact and take unto *yourself* the power you gave them, *you* are released from them. ⁶One thing is sure; hallucinations serve a purpose, and when that *purpose* is no longer held *they* disappear. ⁷Therefore, the question never is whether you want *them*, but *always*, do you want the purpose that they serve? ⁸This world *seems* to hold out many purposes, each different and with different values. ⁹Yet they are all the same. ¹⁰Again there is no order; only a *seeming* hierarchy of values.

• Study Question •

8. Note that “the power you gave them” (8:5) is probably a reference to T-20.IV.1.
- (a) What one thing do we need to do to recognize illusions for what they are, and have them disappear?
- A. Recognize that we made them
 - B. See them as illusions
 - C. Strongly tell ourselves they are not real
- (b) What is the central issue in letting go of illusions?
- D. Realizing we do not want the illusions
 - E. Realizing all illusions are the same
 - F. Realizing we do not want the purpose the illusions serve

8:1 is another way of saying what was said in Chapter 11:

And how else can one dispel illusions except by looking at them directly, without protecting them (T-11.V.2:2).

Seeing that the illusion *is* an illusion, or recognizing that the hallucination *is* an hallucination, is the key—“the healing and the remedy” (8:2). Unlike John Nash’s schizophrenic delusions, these hallucinations *disappear* once recognized. Again, that seems to indicate that the hallucination is not, for instance, your brother or sister, or even their particular actions or words, but rather *how you see them*, and the meaning you give to them. “Believe them not and they *are* gone” (8:3) can’t refer to your brother’s body, but it makes sense when you apply it to your *perceptions and judgments* about him.²

² As I said above, I tend to believe that the entire physical universe is an hallucination, but with statement such as the ones in this paragraph, I have to admit that the alternate interpretation—that the hallucination refers to our perception of the world rather than to the material universe itself—appears to fit better. Possibly both views are correct. The Course does say that its central lesson is that there is no world (W-pI.132.6:2-3). It’s hard to make that apply only to perception. Recognizing our perceptions as hallucinations may be the first step to a more far-reaching realization of the unreality of the physical universe.

To see our hallucinations as such requires the realization that “you *did this*” (8:4). If what I am seeing is only a projection of my mind, then *I* am the one doing it. “I am responsible for what I see” (T-21.II.2:3). While this may seem to be an alarming thought with the potential of generating enormous guilt, in fact it is an empowering statement! When I accept the fact that I am the author of all that I see, I am reaffirming the power of my mind; I am *taking back* the power I have foolishly given to the hallucinations. And in doing so, I have broken the chains by which my illusions have imprisoned me. I have reclaimed my own power (8:5). (Read T-2.VI, paragraph 9, for further thoughts along this line.)

The reason the ego urges us to deny our responsibility for the hallucinations is so that it can entice us into judgment and condemnation, projecting the responsibility for the evils of the world onto things outside of ourselves. Once we let go of the purpose of judgment, the hallucinations disappear (8:6). We no longer see sin everywhere.

The question, then, is not, “Do I want my perceptions of the world to be right?” Rather, it is, “Do I want to judge? Do I want the sin I see to be real?” (8:7) All purposes the world seems to offer boil down to this. “There are all the same. Again there is no order; only a *seeming* hierarchy of values” (8:8–10). Anything that is *not* the vision of holiness is a preference for sin.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Only two purposes are possible. ²And one is sin, the other holiness. ³Nothing is in between, and which you choose determines what you see. ⁴For what you see is merely *how* you elect to meet your goal. ⁵Hallucinations serve to meet the goal of madness. ⁶They are the means by which the *outside* world, projected from within, *adjusts* to sin and *seems* to witness to its reality. ⁷It still is true that nothing *is* without. ⁸Yet upon nothing are *all* projections made. ⁹For it is the projection that gives the “nothing” *all* the meaning that it holds.

• Study Question •

9. *The things we see are not the problem; the goal we choose is the problem. Why, then, do we see the world as sinful, dangerous, and frightening?*
- A. *Because of the goal we chose, sin*
 - B. *Because we see whatever we need to meet our goal*
 - C. *Because of projection*
 - D. *All of the above*

There are only two possible purposes for life in this world: “one is sin, the other holiness” (9:1–2). Any purpose that is *not* holiness is a purpose for sin. “Nothing is in between” (9:3). There are no neutral purposes or idle thoughts. When the Course affirms that, “All thinking produces form at some level” (T-2.VI.9:14), it means that we are always fulfilling one of those two purposes. We are perceiving sin or perceiving holiness

in the world of form. The opening lines of the next chapter (which follows right after this section) speak directly of the same theme: "Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that" (T-21.Int.1:1-2). What we see depends on the choice we make between these two purposes (9:2). We see whatever we need to achieve the purpose we have chose (9:4)

When we see hallucinations (and remember, in the moment we don't think we are hallucinating, we think we are perceiving what is really so) our goal is "madness" (9:5), in which the entire outside world takes whatever form that "*seems* to witness to its [sin's] reality" (9:6). We speak of the "outside world," and yet, "It is still true that nothing *is* without" (9:7), that "there is no world" (W-pI.132.6:2-3). We are projecting "upon nothing," like a movie reflecting off an invisible, transparent screen (9:8). There is nothing there in reality, but we perceive our projections, and that *seems* to give "the 'nothing' all the meaning that it holds" (9:9).

Once again I'd like to call attention to the early lessons in the Workbook. They are practices that will bring the teaching of the Text into application in our lives. "What I see is a form of vengeance" (Lesson 22). "I have given everything I see all the meaning that it has for me" (Lesson 2). "I am upset because I see something that is not there" (Lesson 6). So many of the lessons apply these ideas to our lives, and help us bring them into actualization.

Calling the world we see "nothing" seems to support the first interpretation we've mentioned above, that the entire physical universe is unreal and does not exist, and the only reason it appears to exist at all is to fulfill the ego's insane purpose of sin. Everything I see is an hallucination, a projection from my mind which I see only because I believe it is real. The implication of all this is that if I abandon the purpose of sin, I will no longer see a physical world at all. I will wake up from the cosmic dream.

If you find that hard to swallow, my advice is not to throw out the entire notion, but to work with the more limited understanding that what abandoning the purpose of sin will produce is no longer perceiving sin in anyone or anything. That entire perceptive world will disappear, and you will perceive the holiness of God everywhere and in everyone.

As far as I am concerned, I'm willing to work with that more limited understanding, because if, eventually, I finally do relinquish the ego's purpose entirely, then one of two things will happen: either the physical world will vanish from my perception, or it will become transformed into a vision of holiness. Either way, I will know which interpretation is correct. Until then, the point is moot. My goal is the same either way: the relinquishment of judgment, the denial of the ego.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹What has *no* meaning cannot *be* perceived. ²And meaning *always* looks within to find itself, and *then* looks out. ³All meaning that you give the world outside must thus reflect the sight you saw *within*; or better, *if* you saw at all or merely judged *against*. ⁴Vision is the means by which the Holy Spirit translates your nightmares into happy dreams; your wild hallucinations that show you all the fearful outcomes of imagined sin into the calm and reassuring sights with which He would replace them. ⁵These gentle sights and sounds are looked on happily, and heard with joy. ⁶They are *His* substitutes for all the terrifying sights and screaming sounds the ego's purpose brought to your horrified awareness. ⁷They step away from sin, reminding you that it is *not* reality which frightens you, and that the errors which you made can be corrected.

• Study Question •

10. What key factor, which determines what we see in the world, is identified in this paragraph?
- A. Whether we see our Self or judge against it
 - B. Whether we believe our hallucinations are real
 - C. The reality of what we look upon
 - D. Whether or not we have 20/20 vision

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According to 10:1, if I refrain from giving *any* meaning to what I see, I *cannot* any longer perceive it. If I want to see a holy world, I must *give* it that meaning.

What comes next is very enlightening: Where do we find the meaning we project onto the world? We find it by *looking within*, and after we have seen what is within, we project that outward. Did we truly see the light within us, or have we judged against it? It is our perception of *ourselves* that we project onto the world (10:2–3)! "Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward" (W-pII.304.1:3-4).

To free the world from every kind of pain is but to change your mind about yourself. There is no world apart from your ideas because ideas leave not their source, and you maintain the world within your mind in thought (W-pI.132.10:2-3).

The Holy Spirit's gift of vision is the key, the means for transforming everything you see from sights of terror and sin into "gentle sights and sounds" (10:4–6). Reality is not what frightens us; it is the errors in our mind that cause terror—and errors can be corrected (10:7). "To free the world from every kind of pain is but to *change your mind about yourself*" (W-pI.132.10:2, my emphasis). Recognize your own sinlessness and you will see the world's.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹When you have looked on what seemed terrifying, and *seen* it change to sights of loveliness and peace; when you have looked on scenes of violence and death, and *watched* them change to quiet views of gardens under open skies, with clear, life-giving water running happily beside them in dancing brooks that never waste away; who need *persuade* you to accept the gift of vision? ²And *after* vision, who is there who *could* refuse what *must* come after? ³Think but an instant just on this; *you* can behold the holiness God gave His Son. ⁴And *never* need you think that there *is* something else for you to see.

• Study Question •

11. *As we begin to get “glimpses” of the vision of the Holy Spirit, and all that it shows us, what effects will it have upon us?*

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When we experience the sudden shift of perception, from seeing with judgment to seeing with the eyes of love, it is such a powerful, positive experience that it increases our motivation to use our spiritual vision more and more (11:1). We no longer need to be *persuaded* to change our minds; we *want* to. And having seen what vision shows us, we will no longer fear the transition from perception to knowledge, from the world of sight to the heaven of direct union with God (11:2). We will be ready!

This is possible! Think on this: You can do it. “You can behold the holiness God gave His Son” (11:3). This is a worthy subject for meditation. And there is nothing else. Don’t even go there.

The sight of Christ is all there is to see.

The song of Christ is all there is to hear.

The hand of Christ is all there is to hold.

There is no journey but to walk with Him (T-24.V.7:7-10).

• Study Question •

12. *Personal application (need not be handed in, but writing your answer for yourself will be helpful). Think about a relationship you are in. How will you apply the teaching of these two sections to that relationship?*

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Lesson 312

I see all things as I would have them be.

Perception follows judgment. Having judged, we therefore see what we would look upon. For sight can merely serve to offer us what we would have. It is impossible to overlook what we would see, and fail to see what we have chosen to behold. How surely, therefore, must the real world come to greet the holy sight of anyone who takes the Holy Spirit's purpose as his goal for seeing. And he cannot fail to look upon what Christ would have him see, and share Christ's Love for what he looks upon.

I have no purpose for today except to look upon a liberated world, set free from all the judgments I have made. Father, this is Your Will for me today, and therefore it must be my goal as well." (W-pII.312.2:1-2).

Answer Key

1. **(a)** Brief, holy instants of awareness of our brother's sinlessness **(b)** B
2. A, C, and D
3. **(a)** C **(b)** A,D,E,F
4. An altar to the Father versus the body; the truth versus the body; the engine of destruction (the body) versus the holy home offered by the Holy Spirit (the holy relationship)
5. C
6. F
7. (Lots of latitude here; these are personal responses.) If I recognized the world as an hallucination, the frightening way I see it would disappear. I would be free of guilt, free of all sense of loss and anxiety. If I really understood that I made it up, I would realize it has no power over me at all, and cannot tell me how to feel or what I am. If I realized that the "people" I see walking around in the world are wholly unreal, I would not see them as I now do; I would see the Son of God. I would be ready to leave the world entirely.
8. **(a)** A **(b)** C
9. D
10. A
11. It will make us want vision more and more, and it will make us ready for the final step, which is the end of all perception.