

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 22

The Function of the Holy Relationship

Section IV

Seeing Past the Form of Error

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section IV

This section presents the most derogatory understanding of physical perception (“the body’s eyes”) in the Course, and perhaps in any spiritual teaching. It examines perception’s failure to see Truth, getting stuck at the physical level, declaring eyes were made *not* to see, and will *never* see. It invites us to see *beyond* forms to the spiritual reality. It continues the emphasis on the distinction between *sins* and *errors*, and highlights the holy relationship once again as the environment in which errors can be corrected.

Paragraph 1

The introduction of reason into the ego’s thought system is the beginning of its undoing. ²For reason and the ego are contradictory, nor is it possible for them to coexist in your awareness. ³And reason’s goal is to make plain and therefore obvious. ⁴You can *see* reason. ⁵This is not a play on words,¹ for here is the beginning of a vision that has meaning. ⁶Vision is sense, quite literally. ⁷If it is not the body’s sight it must be understood. ⁸For it is plain, and what is obvious is not ambiguous. ⁹It *can* be understood. ¹⁰And here do reason and the ego separate, to go their different ways.

¹. When we have a mental insight and say “I see,” we tend to think of this as a play on words. Yet we are told here that kind of sight is more worthy of being *called* sight. Whereas physical sight only shows us meaningless forms, to “*see* reason” is “the beginning of a vision that has meaning.”

• **Study Question** •

1. *Paragraph 1 says you can see reason, and then says this statement is literal, not a play on words. How do you think you can “see” reason?*
 - A. *You can see the word “reason” on the page.*
 - B. *You see reason with a mental seeing, as when you say “I see,” meaning, “I understand; that makes sense.”*
 - C. *We cannot yet understand how we can see reason, for we see it with Christ’s vision, which we do not yet experience.*

Reason is like the anti-venom to the ego’s snake poison (1:1). It works gradually to undo the falsehoods we have learned and integrated into our thinking and acting. We *unlearn* what the ego has taught us as reason introduces us to the truth:

It is the function of God's teachers to bring true learning to the world. Properly speaking it is unlearning that they bring, for that is “true learning” in the world (M-4.X.3:6-7).

Both Myrtle and Charles Fillmore spoke of the importance of spiritual understanding as the gateway to awakening. According the Neal Vahle, the biographer of both Fillmores: “Myrtle indicated that the faculty of spiritual understanding was pivotal, since it served as a catalyst for the development of all the other faculties.” And Charles wrote this delightful paragraph about the importance of understanding (that which reason brings us), and how to find it. The sentence I’ve underlined is saying exactly what 1:1 says in our text:

Never say, “I don’t know,” “I don’t understand.” Claim your Christ understanding at all times, and declare: **I am not under any spell of human ignorance. I am one with infinite understanding.** The accumulation of ignorance gathered through association with ignorant minds can be dissolved by using the word. You may know by simply holding the thought that you know. This is not egotism, but spiritual knowing. When you declare divine understanding, you sometimes meet your old line of thought and are disappointed. Right then continue to hold to your declaration for knowing. Judge not by appearances. Do not act until you get the assurance; if you keep close to Spirit by affirmation, the assurance will come. Will it come by voice? No! You will know through the faculty of intuition. Divine knowing is direct fusion of mind of God with mind of man. Sometimes we are taught by symbols, visions, and the like, but this is only one of the ways that Divine Mind has of expressing itself. When the mind deals with God ideals it asks for no symbols, visible or invisible, but rests on pure knowing. It was in this consciousness that Jesus said: “Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always.” (*Christian Healing*, P. 114, Charles Fillmore)

Reason is going to contradict the ego, and the reverse is also true. They cannot co-exist (1:2). As Fillmore says, when you begin to listen to Spirit’s reason, “you sometimes meet your old line of thought,” the ego. We need not become discouraged when that

happens, as it surely will. The entrance of reason begins to “dissolve” the ego thoughts, and the ego will fight back. Just keep on affirming the truth. Eventually, that “divine knowing” which “is a direct fusion of mind of God with mind of man” will arrive. You will simply, intuitively, know the truth. That inner revelation is the goal of reason. It takes you past the equivocating acceptance of truth to a consistent embracing of the truth *because* it is the truth.

To me, that is what the Course means when it says, “You can *see* reason” (1:4). This intuitive knowing *is* spiritual vision (1:5). We see past outer forms to the real *meaning* of things. What we see is “plain,” “obvious,” and “not ambiguous” (1:3, 1:8). He *repeats* the words “plain” and “obvious” to make sure we get the point. (On first reading, I totally missed the fact that they were repeated!) This is counter to the world’s way of seeing things. We often are told, or tell ourselves, “There’s more than one way to see this.” The Course disagrees! Meaning is *not ambiguous*—the very meaning of the word is “open to more than one interpretation; having a double meaning.”

We also often say, “It’s all matter of perception.” But the whole thrust of this entire section is that it’s *not* a matter of perception, but of *vision*. That does not come from perception, from “the body’s sight” (1:7). Perception is unreliable; we can, and all too often do, misunderstand what we see and hear. We assign the wrong meaning to it. Someone turns down our invitation to dinner, and we make the false assumption that they don’t like us and don’t want to spend time with us. But vision does not depend on perceptions, and therefore it “*must* be understood” (1:7). There is only one plain, obvious, and unambiguous meaning (1:8); we can’t miss what it tells us (1:9). The ego and reason “see” different things and lead us in different directions (1:10). Vision always sees love or a call for love; the ego almost always perceives attack and sin.

Paragraph 2

2 The ego’s whole continuance depends on its belief you cannot learn this course. ²Share this belief, and reason will be unable to see your errors and make way for their correction. ³For reason *sees through* errors, telling you what you thought was real is not. ⁴Reason can see the difference between sin and mistakes, because it wants correction. ⁵Therefore, it tells you what you thought was uncorrectable can be corrected, and therefore must have been an error. ⁶The ego’s opposition to correction leads to its fixed belief in sin and disregard of errors. ⁷It looks on *nothing* that can be corrected.

• **Study Question** •

2. *If you believe that you cannot learn this Course, then reason will not be able to see through your errors, and you will instead see them as sins. Why is this?*
 - A. *Because reason must come from forgiveness. If you think you cannot learn this Course—meaning, cannot forgive—you will not forgive yourself.*
 - B. *Because only by learning the Course will you acquire reason, and only reason can see through your errors.*
 - C. *Because thinking that you cannot learn the Course is the same thing as believing your errors are uncorrectable. An error that cannot be corrected is the definition of a sin.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

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A Course in Miracles is a disastrous threat to your ego. Therefore, to survive, the ego *must* convince you that you cannot learn the course (2:1). If you harbor any doubt that you *can* learn the course, with its lesson of total, radical forgiveness of others, reason won't be able to give you the vision that sees past your *own* errors and allows them to be corrected (2:2). What does reason do? It “sees *through* errors, telling you what you thought was real is not” (2:3). In other words, its message depends on forgiveness. And if you suspect that you can't forgive someone or some things, you are rejecting the message of reason. You are believing that what you think is real *is* real. You cannot see the difference between sin and mistakes, you believe what you see is uncorrectable (and thus, sin), and the reason is that your ego does not *want* what it sees to be corrected and forgiven (2:4–7). Reason, on the other hand, *wants* to see things as mistakes because they are *correctable* (2:4). That is what its vision shows you. But the ego “look on *nothing* that can be corrected” (2:7).

We all come up against forgiveness problems. At least I know *I* do. Shall we then despair of ever truly waking up? Of being able to forgive totally? Or of being totally forgiven? Of course not. As Charles Fillmore said above, when “the old line of thought” pops up, that's not the time to give up; it's the time to fight back! It's the time to declare that you *do* want to see things differently, you want to truly forgive, to see no more than correctable errors, and never sins.

Declare: I am not under any spell of human ignorance. I am one with infinite understanding. I am one with the reason of God and the vision of the Holy Spirit. This vision is my vision; this language of the Course is my native tongue, and I will perfectly express it.

Paragraph 3

3 Thus does the ego damn and reason save. ²Reason is not salvation in itself, but it makes way for peace and brings you to a state of mind in which salvation can be given you. ³Sin is a block, set like a heavy gate, locked and without a key, across the road to peace. ⁴No one who looks on it without the help of reason would try to pass it. ⁵The body's eyes behold it as solid granite, so thick it would be madness to *attempt* to pass it. ⁶Yet reason sees through it easily, *because* it is an error. ⁷The form it takes cannot conceal its emptiness from reason's eyes.

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 3 opens by saying that reason is not salvation but makes way for salvation. How, according to this paragraph, does it do that?*
- A. *The sections before this one have emphasized that how something leads us to salvation is not our business.*
 - B. *This paragraph does not specify how.*
 - C. *By seeing through the granite block of sin, which blocks the way to salvation.*
 - D. *By poking out our body's eyes.*

The ego sees sins and damns us; reason see mistakes and saves us from them (3:1). Reason tells us the truth, and accepting it opens the way to full salvation, “a state of mind in which salvation can be given you” (3:2). Reason brings us *understanding*, and, as Myrtle said, understanding is “pivotal,” a “catalyst” for the development of every other spiritual faculty such as faith, love, wisdom, and power. Acceptance of reason is not the end, but it is the doorway *in*.

The concept of sin is like massive gate, locked with no key, blocking the way to peace. Whether you see guilt in yourself or in another, how can you be at peace? Without the vision given by reason, the block is insurmountable. Peace is simply out of reach, a pipe dream (3:3–4). If we are identified with our egos and seeing with the body's eyes, this barrier looks like a block of solid granite, “so thick it would be madness to *attempt* to pass it” (3:4). Has it ever seemed to you that even *attempting* to be at peace in the face of what you see in the world would just drive you crazy? That's what this is talking about.

But “reason sees through it easily, *because* it is an error” (3:5). *Easily*. No big effort. That is the effect of the miracle. This shift from sight to vision is exactly what the Course means by a miracle. Miraculously, there is no more block to peace.

Remember the phrase we've seen several times already: “*because* it is the truth”? We were asked to recognize what we have denied *because* it is the truth. Well, here, we are enabled by reason to see *through* the block (the belief in sin) “*because* it is an error.”

That's the flip side. It may *look like* an insurmountable barrier, but reason sees past the form to discern "its emptiness" (3:6).

This business of seeing past the *form* now becomes the dominant theme of the section.

Paragraph 4

4 Only the form of error attracts the ego. ²Meaning it does not recognize, and it does not know if it is there or not. ³Everything that the body's eyes can see is a mistake, an error in perception, a distorted fragment of the whole without the meaning that the whole would give. ⁴And yet mistakes, regardless of their form, can be corrected. ⁵Sin is but error in a special form the ego venerates. ⁶It would preserve all errors and make them sins. ⁷For here is its *own* stability, its heavy anchor in the shifting world it made, the rock on which its church is built,² and where its worshippers are bound to bodies and believe the body's freedom is their own.

Have you ever heard anyone struggling with forgiveness say something like, "I just can't get past what they did! It was so *mean!*"? They get stuck on the form; that is what attracts the ego (4:1). The ego cannot get past the form to see the meaning, the call for love behind it (4:2). The ego does not even know if there *is* anything beyond the form (4:2)! Our eyes can't show us meaning; all they see is forms. And, because our eyes get stuck on the outward appearance, they can never give us the whole picture: "Everything the body's eyes can see is a mistake, an error in perception, a distorted fragment of the whole without...meaning" (4:3). Without spiritual vision we are not seeing the whole, only distorted fragments, and therefore, we cannot see "the meaning that the whole would give."

One for instance: The whole, I think, could be referring to our shared Being; we are literally One. If, with vision, I see that, it gives a whole new meaning to every interaction with another human being. We see that person not as a separate being but as a part of ourself—perhaps I should say, our Self. I realize that I cannot judge him or her without judging myself. When we see the Wholeness of all things, everything changes.

We get stuck on forms. The form, says the Course, makes no difference: "mistakes, *regardless* of their form, can be corrected" (4:4).

What *is* a "sin"? Just "an error in a special form the ego venerates" (4:5). What special form? A form that can't be corrected; a mistake that is permanent, which makes it a sin, deserving punishment because correction is impossible. Of course, the ego would just as soon perceive *all* mistakes as sins (4:6) because, as we've seen, "the ego's whole continuance" depends on our believing in uncorrectable errors (4:7). This is the ego's anchor in the chaotic world it has made, its one unshakeable verity upon which it stands,

². Matthew 16:18 (KJV): "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

upon which “its church is built” (4:7).³ Worshipers of this church of the ego, based on perception of forms, are bound to the forms they see: bodies.

I'm not sure exactly what the phrase, “believing the *body's* freedom is their own,” means. I think it probably means that, because they believe they *are* the body, their freedom is limited to what they can experience as the body. If their body is limited in some way, *they* are limited in that way. If the body is sick, *they* are sick. If the body dies, *they* die. Of course, none of this is the truth. But, based on the bedrock of uncorrectable errors and sin's reality, identification with the body is inevitable. It goes along with limiting oneself to physical perception and refusing to accept spiritual vision.

Paragraph 5

5 Reason will tell you that the form of error is not what makes it a mistake. ²If what the form conceals is a mistake, the form cannot prevent correction. ³The body's eyes see only form. ⁴They cannot see beyond what they were made to see. ⁵And they were made to look on error and not see past it. ⁶Theirs is indeed a strange perception, for they can see only illusions, unable to look beyond the granite block of sin, and stopping at the outside form of nothing. ⁷To this distorted form of vision, the outside of everything, the wall that stands between you and the truth, is wholly true.

• Study Question •

4. *Paragraphs 4 and 5 make some extreme statements about the body's eyes. To bring this point home more, think of one of the loveliest things you ever saw with your eyes—a sunset, a mountain, a supermodel, etc. Now make a list. According to these two paragraphs, what were you really looking on when you saw this beautiful thing?*

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What makes an error a mistake or a sin? I believe we can all understand what reason teaches, that the distinction is not in the outward form (5:1), but in the hidden motivation. This is why the Course tells us that all things can be perceived, not as attack, but as either an expression of love or a call for love. Those are always the choice of motivations because what we all are is a being of love. The Course insists that minds cannot attack.⁴ If our eyes stop at form, which so often *looks like* attack, we will believe the error is a sin, not just a mistaken, faulty call for love. But if we have the vision to perceive the truth of being in others and ourselves, looking past the outward forms, we will always see things as love or a call for it.

Once we realize that *concealed* underneath every appearance of attack in form lies a mistake, we will realize that correction is possible (5:2). But if we depend only on the

³ There is a fairly clear implication here that churches that emphasize sin, that teach “original sin,” and that hold the threat of hell over all unbelievers, are churches of the ego. I believe that is so.

⁴ “To fragment is to break into pieces, and mind cannot attack or be attacked” (T-7.VIII.4:3).

body's eyes, without spiritual vision that sees past form, *all we can see is form*. That was the purpose given to our body's eyes by the ego that made them (5:3–4). In order to support the ego's vision of separation, eyes were made to *see* separation, and to see no further than the outward form of error (5:5).

Thus, says the Course, what our eyes show us is “only illusions.” Without vision we are “unable to look beyond the granite block of sin” that blocks our entry into peace. Eyes stop “at the outside form of nothing” (5:6). Since that outside form, the block of sin, is all that eyes can see, we end up believing that what we see “is wholly true,” when in fact what we see is a “wall that stands between you and the truth” (5:7).

Without *inner* vision we are blind to truth. The Bible says, “No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18, NRSV). Eyes do not operate on that wave length. We know, for instance, that visible light is the same thing as infrared and ultraviolet light, but we cannot see those kinds of light. The same is true of radio waves and X-rays. They are very real but we cannot see them. We need special instruments to detect them.

Likewise, we need a special “instrument” to detect spirit. We are all *capable* of this spiritual vision but, having bought into the ego's fear of divine wrath, we have suppressed it. We must once again turn within to *activate* this inner vision. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to grant it to us, to awaken it within us. The Course teaches that, “Vision is His gift” to us,⁵ and promises us that we *will* see if we look *with Christ*.

Paragraph 6

6 Yet how can sight which stops at nothingness as if it were a solid wall see truly? ²It is held back by form, having been made to guarantee that nothing else *but* form will be perceived. ³These eyes, made not to see, will *never* see. ⁴For the idea they represent left not its maker, and it is their maker that sees through them. ⁵What was its maker's goal but not to see? ⁶For *this* the body's eyes are perfect means, but not for seeing. ⁷See how the body's eyes rest on externals and cannot go beyond. ⁸Watch how they stop at nothingness, unable to go beyond the form to meaning.

⁵ "Christ's vision is His gift to you" (T-13.IX.6:6, T-13.VIII.6:6 (FIP)). "And this *you* will see as you look with Him, for His vision is His gift of love to you, given Him of the Father for you" (T-13.V.11:6–7, T-13.V.10:6 (FIP)). "You will see because it is the Will of God. It is His strength, not your own, that gives you power. And it is His gift, rather than your own, that offers vision to you" (W-pl.42.1:3-5). I recommend reading over Workbook Lessons 42, 43, and 44, which all deal with vision.

• **Study Question** •

5. *According to this paragraph, we made the two eyeballs in our physical head, and we did so for a very specific reason. What was this reason (there may be more than one correct answer)?*
- A. *To represent the ego.*
 - B. *To not see.*
 - C. *To see nothingness.*
 - D. *To not see meaning, but to see form instead.*

Clearly, sight that cannot see past physical form is incapable of seeing anything that is not physical (6:1). Materialism would tell us that there *is* nothing that isn't physical. Materialism is wrong, and even science is now proving that. Nearly a century ago, Charles Fillmore wrote an essay titled, *The Unreality of Matter*. Clearly, a man before his time. But he was saying very much the same thing the Course is teaching here.

Not only is our physical sight incapable of seeing reality, it was *made for that purpose*; that is, it was “made to guarantee that nothing else *but* form will be perceived” (6:2). That was their purpose, so they “will *never* see” (6:3). Our mind conceived them, and “the idea they represent left not its maker” (6:4). Our minds are powerful, and what they conceive and make holds true to the purpose given it. We all know that trying to see the internal organs of a body with nothing but our eyes is useless; we need X-rays to do that. You cannot make them do something they were not made to do. Physical sight is equally useless in perceiving the Christ in a brother. It was deliberately made “not to see” (6:5). And they are perfectly fit for doing that (6:6)!

If we reflect on how our physical sight works, we'll see that this is so. They can show us form; they cannot show us *meaning*. They are incapable of going past externals (6:6–7). That requires a higher vision. Meaning is not in the forms; it is something your mind gives to things. As Lesson 2 says, “I have given everything I see...all the meaning that it has for me.”

Paragraph 7

7 Nothing is so blinding as perception of form. ²For sight of form means understanding has been obscured. ³Only mistakes have different forms, and so they can deceive. ⁴You can change form *because* it is not true. ⁵It could not be reality *because* it can be changed. ⁶Reason will tell you that if form is not reality, it must be an illusion and is not *there* to see. ⁷And if you see it, you must be mistaken, for you are seeing what cannot be real as if it were. ⁸What cannot see beyond what is not there must be distorted perception, and must perceive illusions as the truth. ⁹Could it, then, *recognize* the truth?

• **Study Question** •

6. *If you are seeing form, which of the following things are true?*
- A. *You are seeing what is not there to see.*
 - B. *You are mistaken.*
 - C. *You are seeing an illusion as if it were the truth.*
 - D. *You are not recognizing the truth.*

When we limit our sight to external forms we are truly blind; nothing is more blind (7:1). If that's all you see, you have obscured any real understanding of what you perceive (7:2). The next line is startling: "Only *mistakes* have different forms, and so they can deceive" (7:3). The implication is that *real* things do *not* have different forms, but are all the same. Forms can change *because* they are not true (7:4), but real things *don't ever change* (7:5); therefore, forms *are not real*. Things that change, that differ from one another, are *not real*.

We've seen this before when the Course told us that God creates only the eternal (unchanging), and that anything that isn't eternal isn't real. But the implications are much closer to home here, because this understanding can turn the whole of our interaction with the physical world upside down. If we depend only on our physical senses we are perceiving and reacting *only* to things that do not really exist! That would mean, unless we have activated our spiritual vision, that all of us are seriously schizophrenic. Read some of those words again (I'm condensing for effect):

"Form...is not true. Form is not reality; it must be an illusion. Form is not *there* to see." *Not there to see!* Jesus then drives the nail home: "And if you see it, you must be mistaken, for you are seeing what cannot be real as if it were" (7:7).

So, does this mean that if we are truly enlightened we will completely stop seeing bodies and all matter? I don't think so. He goes on to say that if we "cannot see beyond what is not there," our perception is distorted (7:8). I think that implies that if we *can* see beyond the physical, our perception is *not* distorted. It's only if we allow the physical to *block* our vision of the spiritual that we are "seeing what cannot be real as if it were." This is borne out, I believe, in the following passage:

In terms of concepts, it is thus you see him more than just a body, for the good is never what the body seems to be. The actions of the body are perceived as coming from the "baser" part of you, and thus of him as well. By focusing upon the good in him, the body grows decreasingly persistent in your sight, and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good.

And this will be your concept of yourself when you have reached the world beyond the sight your eyes alone can offer you to see. For you will not interpret what you see without the Aid that God has given you, and in His sight there is another world (T-31.VII.3:4-4:2, (T-31.VII.3:1-6 (FIP))

Because our physical sight sees the illusions as if they were the truth, it cannot possibly *recognize* the truth (7:8-9). There must be something more.

Paragraph 8

8 Let not the form of his mistakes keep you from him whose holiness is yours. ²Let not the vision of his holiness, the sight of which would show you *your* forgiveness, be kept from you by what the body's eyes can see. ³Let your awareness of your brother not be blocked by your perception of his sins and of his body. ⁴What is there in him that you would attack except what you associate with his body, which you believe can sin? ⁵Beyond his errors is his holiness and *your* salvation. ⁶You gave him not his holiness, but tried to see your sins in him to save yourself. ⁷And yet his holiness is your forgiveness. ⁸Can you be saved by making sinful the one whose holiness is your salvation?

• Study Question •

7. *What shows you your brother's sinfulness, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *Your eyes looking on the behavior of your brother's body.*
 - B. *Your judgments.*
 - C. *Your ego which is attracted to guilt.*

Paragraph 8 is a plea to see your brother's holiness, which is your forgiveness and your own salvation.

It begins asking us not to allow “the form of his mistakes” to block us from the vision of his holiness—the same holiness we share with him (8:1). Now, I admit that I find it more difficult to do this with some people than with others. There are megalomaniacs, corrupt politicians, and mass murderers who challenge our ability and, indeed, our *willingness* to see past “the form of his mistakes.” To see such beings as holy may be beyond us for some time, although I do believe that when we are fully enlightened we will do just that. I am reminded of Sister Helen Prejean, in *Dead Man Walking*, who was able to see the holy child in a brutal rapist on death row. It *can* be done.

But we are concerned primarily with the person or persons with whom you are in relationship *now*. Are you willing and able to see past what the body's eyes can see to behold “the vision of his [or her] holiness”? Because if you are, when you are, it will “show you *your* forgiveness” (8:2).

Don't allow your awareness of a person to be “blocked by your perception of his sins and of his body” (8:3). If you stop to think about it, you will realize that, for most of us, we believe that our awareness of other people *is* our perception of their body and behavior. For us, awareness equals perception. Increasing our awareness of a person just means paying more attention to our perceptions! But Jesus says that *is blocking* our awareness. So, the awareness must be something entirely different from normal perception. It must be something “beyond his errors,” where “his holiness” abides (8:5).

When we depend on our perception of the body and its “sinful” behavior, our response tends toward attack (8:4). But using vision to become aware of the holiness within another person brings salvation to *us* (8:5). Our egos lead us to project *our* sins (or

really, our perceived guilt, since there *is* no sin) onto the other person, and in that sense to offload them from ourselves (8:6). We're impeding our own salvation by seeing other people as sinful instead of holy, because their holiness *is* forgiveness and our salvation (8:7–8)

Paragraph 9

9 A holy relationship, however newly born, must value holiness above all else. ²Unholy values will produce confusion, and in awareness.⁶ ³In an unholy relationship, each one is valued because he seems to justify the other's sin. ⁴He sees within the other what impels him to sin against his will. ⁵And thus he lays his sins upon the other, and is attracted to him to perpetuate his sins. ⁶And so it must become impossible for each to see himself as causing sin by his desire to have sin real. ⁷Yet reason sees a holy relationship as what it is: a common state of mind, where both give errors gladly to correction, that both may happily be healed as one.

• Study Question •

8. *This paragraph gives an interesting theory of projection of guilt or blame. According to this, how do I try to project my guilt onto you?*
- A. *I see you as doing the things that I secretly feel guilty for.*
 - B. *I see you as the guilty criminal, doing things that I would never dream of.*
 - C. *I see you as causing me to do sinful things.*

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This is why a holy relationship is so important, and why it is imperative that in such a relationship, we “value holiness above all else” (9:1). This is where we get to practice the kind of vision that we eventually must extend to the entire world.

What does it mean to value holiness about all else? The obvious meaning is that we make perceiving one another's holiness the top priority, above any personal perceived needs. We put our ego needs and physical needs aside, and elevate holiness to first place. This is what the final sentence of the section portrays. “...a holy relationship...is...a common state of mind, where both give errors gladly to correction, that both may happily be healed as one” (9:7). You can't do that if you value anything else above holiness.

When you retain “unholy values,” you become confused, not only in your subconscious (where you have established values that conflict with one another), but also in your conscious awareness (9:2). If you value holiness above all else, when your partner misbehaves and his or her ego flares up, your top priority will be to find the holiness hiding behind the appearance of the ego. You will gladly overlook the appearance of attack, and seek to recognize the call for love that is always there. But if you *fail to* value holiness above all else, your top priority is some “unholy value,” such as your injured

⁶ This means that unholy values will not just produce unconscious confusion, but will produce confusion that we are *aware* of.

pride, your need to be right, and so on. Your perception of your partner will stop at the external, and their error will be seen as a sin.

This is how an *unholy* relationship works: “each one is valued *because* he seems to justify the other’s sin” (9:3). The truth is that *you* are the cause of your ego misbehavior, perpetrated *because* you “*desire* to have sin real” (9:6). You desire it because you identify with your ego, and sin proves that your ego exists and is right: It has, indeed, separated from God and established a will different from His. Your ego definitely wants to hide your responsibility from you, so you find yourself “*attracted to*” someone “*to perpetuate your sins*” (9:5), someone you can lay guilt on because they impel you to “sin against your will” (9:4), as in, “You make me so angry! I don’t *want* to be angry with you, but when you do *that*, or say that, I just can’t help myself.” Locked into that frame of mind, you *cannot* see *yourself* as the cause of your own misbehavior.

The message of this paragraph concerning projection and responsibility was summed up perfectly by this line from Chapter 7:

“When you are willing to accept sole responsibility for the ego’s existence *yourself*, you will have laid aside all anger and all attack, because they *come* from the attempt to *project the responsibility for your own errors*.” (T-7.VII.6:4; T-7.VIII.5:4 (FIP)).

In other words, if you were not listening to your own ego’s need to justify its sin and anger, you would *have no reason* to be angry or to attack your partner when their ego flares up! Instead, you would “give errors gladly to correction” (9:7), putting the value of healing, holiness, and happiness above any imagined needs of your ego.

• Study Question •

9. *Summary: Please summarize the main themes of this section, or the themes that struck you most, in a paragraph.*

•

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement’s Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the “CE” for “Complete Edition” or “Circle Edition”). Please be aware that, even when the wording is exactly the same as the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often quite different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. C
4. Form, error, illusions, the granite block of sin, the outside form of nothing, outside of everything, the wall that stands between you and truth, nothingness seen as a solid wall, form, form.
5. A,B,C,D
6. A,B,C,D
7. A
8. C
9. My summary: The body's eyes see only form. They see sin as a solid block across the road to peace. But reason sees "sin" as correctable error. See your brother's holiness, not his body's "sinful" acts.