

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 23

The Escape from Conflict

Section III—Part 3 (III.9-15), Laws 4 & 5

The Laws of Chaos

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

Overview of Section III

This section is the longest single section in the Text, apart from “The Obstacles to Peace” in Chapter 19, which is sub-divided into multiple subsections. The two sections deal with the same topic, from different perspectives: the thought system of the ego. Both sections are extremely important toward gaining an overall understanding of the Course, so we are going to devote five or more commentaries to it, and at least that many weeks in the study group.

These are the laws that rule the world we have made:

1. The truth is different for everyone.
2. Each one *must* sin, and therefore deserves attack and death.
3. God, Who cannot be mistaken, must accept His Son's belief in what he is, and *hate* him for it.
4. The belief that you have what you have taken; another's loss is your gain.
5. There is a *substitute* for love.

The Section So Far

The purpose of these laws is to attack truth and render it meaningless. They are meaningless in themselves, since chaos has no laws, so it is not necessary to understand the laws, although it is essential for us to understand their purpose (see previous sentence). We need only to look at them, and then to simply go beyond them.

The first law is a denial that Truth is absolute, and the same for everyone. The Course asserts that only Truth is true, and nothing else is true. The first law assumes that we are all separate and different from one another, and leads to the competition of egos trying to validate their own reality by attacking the values of others. It also violates the first principle of miracles, that there is no order of difficulty in miracles; it makes it seem

that some illusions are more real, or more persistent, than others. We must realize that all illusions are equally untrue, and when we do, they will merely disappear.

The second law follows from the first because, if truth is different for everyone, we inevitably come into conflict with those whose “truth” differs from ours, competing to prove our truth is *the* truth. This leads to judgment of others and attack in both directions. We all end up feeling guilty because we feel we are forced into conflict and attack, validating ourselves by invalidating others. Because we have “sinned” we believe we deserve punishment, as does everyone.

The third law says that God must accept our judgment on ourselves, and hate us for it. This is the traditional Christian belief in original sin, which holds that we all deserve to die, and God has no choice but to send us to hell if we don't accept Christ as our Savior. It really ruins any possibility of having a good relationship with God.

Laws 4 & 5

Paragraph 9

9 The ego values only what it *takes*. ²This leads to **the fourth law of chaos** which, if the others are accepted, must be true. ³This seeming law is the belief you have what you have taken. ⁴By this, another's loss becomes your gain, and thus it fails entirely to recognize that you can never take away save from yourself. ⁵Yet all the other laws must lead to this. ⁶For enemies do not give willingly to one another, nor would they seek to share the things they value. ⁷And what your enemies would keep from you must be worth having, just because they keep it hidden from your sight.

• Study Question •

1. *Based on this fourth law, why do you attack another person?*
 - A. *In order to protect yourself.*
 - B. *In order to guilt him into doing your “will.”*
 - C. *In order to take something from him, to gain from his loss.*
 - D. *In order to set your boundaries and reverse your co-dependent tendencies.*
 - E. *Just because you take some kind of perverse delight in causing pain.*

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The first three laws paint a picture of a world of conflict and attack. In such a world, the only valuable things are what we *take* from others (9:1–3). This is why so many political campaigns degenerate into putting down the other guy, insulting them, making them look foolish, exposing their mistakes and weaknesses. One person gains in the polls by tearing down the other (9:4). What this “fails entirely to recognize” is that the one who

diminishes another is also diminishing himself. But, the first three laws, if accepted, “must lead to this” (9:5).

We are all at war with one another, in competition to prove ourselves superior to others, at war even with God. Nobody is going to freely give you *anything* (9:6). Therefore, all that you *have* is what you have *taken*—the fourth law. It’s “every man for himself,” or, “Look out for Number One—no one else will.” (It’s telling that these are popular sayings!) And if someone else is trying to keep something from you, “*it must be worth having*, just because they keep it hidden from your sight” (9:7, my italics). Most of us have seen two children playing, where one of them has a toy the other wants. It doesn’t matter what toys they already have; they want the toy the other child has. It must be better, just because they won’t give it to you! It isn’t only children that “play” this game; nearly all of us get caught up in it. We’re happy with our car until the neighbor gets a better one. We too easily slip into *ad hominem* arguments; when reasonable arguments fail us we attack the person with whom we’re arguing. Perhaps unconsciously, we think we can “win” if we can tear down the other person, even if we can’t counter his argumentative position.

Paragraph 10

10 All of the mechanisms of madness are seen emerging here: the “enemy” made strong by keeping hidden the valuable inheritance which should be yours, your justified possession and attack for what has been withheld, and the inevitable loss the enemy must suffer to save yourself. ²Thus do the guilty ones protest their innocence. ³Were they not forced into this foul attack by the unscrupulous behavior of the enemy, they would respond with only kindness. ⁴But in a savage world the kind cannot survive, so they must take or else be taken *from*.

• Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 10* describes the results of the fourth law. Let’s say you are getting a divorce and end up having to play hardball to get the things you deserve. Based on this paragraph, what rationale are you using to justify your attack (there may be more than one right answer)?
- A. *I had to do it; my enemy was withholding what was rightfully mine.*
 - B. *I was forced into this attack by the unscrupulous behavior of my enemy.*
 - C. *My attack was justified and so I am innocent.*
 - D. *If I had been kind I would have gotten taken to the cleaners. In a harsh world, I had to take the gloves off.*

Do you find it difficult to identify with this paragraph? Try not to take it just literally; maybe you’ve never had someone you considered an enemy who was hiding a valuable inheritance that belonged to you, but all of us have had more than one situation that

parallels that description. Maybe it was a job you thought you deserved that went to someone else. Or the teacher who praised another student and passed over you. The person who ended up marrying the one *you* wanted. And so on. Think about it. I think the majority of TV shows, both comedy and drama, contain elements of this kind of “justified” attack in order to get something someone feels they deserve. The situations can range from silly pranks to outright murder. The shows attract large audiences because, I believe, we identify with these “deprived” parties and take vicarious pleasure in watching them launch their attacks, especially if they succeed. *We* may be “too civilized” to actually carry out such attacks, but secretly, we wish we *could*. (10:1)

And, if and when we *do* act out our attacks—and we all do it—we still maintain our innocence (10:2). We were “forced into this foul attack by the unscrupulous behavior of” (insert name here) (10:3). Of course, we’d have preferred to be kind! But they made being kind impossible: It was “take or else be taken *from*” (10:4). It was a case of “Do unto others before they do unto you.” And *anyone* would have done the same thing—right?

The Course gives a more detailed account of this same “justifiable attack” syndrome later in the Text. I’ll just quote it without comment:

2 The concept of the self the world would teach is not the thing that it appears to be. 2For it is made to serve two purposes, but one of which the mind can recognize. 3The first presents the face of innocence, the aspect acted on. 4It is this face that smiles and charms and even seems to love. 5It searches for companions, and it looks at times with pity on the suffering, and sometimes offers solace. 6It believes that it is good within an evil world. 7This aspect can grow angry, for the world is wicked, and unable to provide the love and shelter innocence deserves. 8And so this face is often wet with tears at the injustices the world accords to those who would be generous and good.

3 This aspect never makes the first attack. 2But every day a hundred little things make small assaults upon its innocence, provoking it to irritation, and at last to open insult and abuse. 3The face of innocence the concept of the self so proudly wears can tolerate attack in self-defense, for is it not a well-known fact the world deals harshly with defenseless innocence? 4No one who makes a picture of himself omits this face, for he has need of it. (T-31.V.10:2:1-3:4 (CE))

Paragraph 11

11 And now there is a vague, unanswered question, not yet “explained.”
²What is this precious thing, this priceless pearl,¹ this hidden secret treasure to be wrested in righteous wrath from this most treacherous and cunning enemy? ³It must be what you want and never found. ⁴And now you “understand” the reason *why* you found it not. ⁵For it was taken from you by the enemy and hidden where you would not think to look. ⁶He hid it in his body, making it the cover for his guilt; the hiding place for what belongs to you. ⁷Now must his body be destroyed and sacrificed, that you may find that which belongs to you. ⁸His treachery demands his death, that you may live. ⁹And you attack only in self-defense.

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 11* describes how you believe that what belongs to you, what you want but never found, was taken for you by your enemy and hidden in his body. Which ones of the following scenarios seem to be concrete examples of this idea?
- A. *My competitor beat me and thereby stole the money, power and status which were rightfully mine. This money, power and status reside in his body, for it is his body's behavior that controls and can transmit these things.*
 - B. *I am in love with Jack. If he would just give himself to me, I would be happy. I deserve his love but he will never offer me any gestures of affection. His behavior is so reserved around me.*
 - C. *I think that Guru Blabla is the holiest person alive. I have been following him now for twenty years but he has never shown me any special attention. If only he would show me that I am special to him, I would be whole.*

I've suggested some concrete examples of the valuable thing that an “enemy” is keeping from us, but actually the Course has been very vague about it. It called it “the valuable inheritance which should be yours” (10:1), but that's as clear as it got. I has not yet “explained” what it is. So—”What *is* this precious thing, this priceless pearl, this hidden secret treasure” (11:1–2). It's something another has, or you believe they have, wrongfully, because it should be yours, so now, because of their treachery and cunning in stealing this thing from you, you have to rip it away from them “in righteous wrath” (11:2). Huh? What could it be?

¹. Matthew 13:45-46 (KJV): “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”

Well, clearly, “it must be what you want and never found” (11:3). And *why couldn't you find it?* Aha! This other person *took it* and *hid it* in a place you'd never think to look (11:4–5). Where might that be? “He hid it in his body.”

What?

In his body?

What on earth...?

So, at this point, we know *where* it is, but not *what* it is. And the where makes no sense at all, at least at first. In his body? 😞 Confused? Not surprising. Before reading on, see if you can figure out what this means. What is “it,” and how is it in your brother's or sister's body? Read the next couple of paragraphs to get some help. That's what I do!

It says here that “he hid it in his body, making it [his body] the cover for his guilt [the guilt he has for stealing it from you], the hiding place for what belongs to *you*” (11:6). Okay. Still don't know what “it” is or how it gets hidden in his body, but I think if we just accept for the moment that that's where “it” is hidden, we can see why. His body is a cover for his guilt, the guilt that would be apparent if “it” were *not* hidden.

Since we know the hiding place, if we want to get “it” back, we have to break into that hiding place. That means that “his body [must] be destroyed and sacrificed” (11:7). He's gotta die, that we can live (11:8). It's just self-defense (11:9).

Now wait a flippin' minute! I don't know what “it” is nor why I want it, and I'm supposed to commit murder and human sacrifice to get it? Having “it” is supposed to save my life, and without “it” I'm going to die, so killing “him” is justified? Just self-defense”? Sell that one to the judge! How can I even *imagine* doing anything like this if I don't know what “it” is? Come on!

On the surface of it, this sounds like the rationalizations of a rapist/murderer, who can't understand why women withhold the treasure they have in their bodies, so they take it from them by force, even if it means their death. That may be a depraved version of what Jesus is talking about here, but he can't mean we are all closet rapists, can he?

Jesus is very good at building suspense, isn't he? On to the next paragraph.

Paragraph 12 (12:1–7 (FIP))

12 But what is it you want that needs his death? ²Can you be sure your murderous attack is justified unless you know what it is for? ³And here a final principle of chaos comes to the “rescue”: It holds there is a *substitute* for love.² ⁴This is the “magic” that will cure all of your pain, the missing factor in your madness that makes it sane. ⁵This is the reason why you must attack. ⁶Here is what makes your vengeance justified.

Ah! He knows. He realizes we still do not know “what is it you want that needs his death?” (12:1). He understands that we cannot possibly be sure that “murderous attack is justified” unless we know what we are attacking *for* (12:2). This is what leads to the first law!

The fifth and final law of chaos: There is a substitute for love. This thing is called a “secret ingredient,” a “secret gift,” which will grant you meaning and happiness and sanity in the midst of the ego’s madness. You don’t need real love to make you happy. This substitute for love will do for you what love would do, yet without changing how you think or perceive at all. In fact, it will make the ego’s system sane and workable. Wow! That sounds great! I won’t have to struggle with this enlightenment thing any longer because this marvelous missing factor will make the ego’s system *sane* (12:4). What is it? It’s “a substitute for love” (12:3), but that does not tell us what it *is*, just what it does, what purpose it serves. It must serve the same purpose as love. Maybe it somehow *looks like* love, although it’s not. It’s magic! It will cure all our pain! (12:4) Sounds a little like snake oil.

We still don’t know what it is.

But, whatever it is, we somehow have been convinced that this mysterious, magical elixir is so valuable to us that we *have to attack* to get it, and we can do so knowing our vengeance is fully justified (12:5–6). As we read, we’re probably unconvinced that this is something that really applies to us, particularly because we have no idea what it is talking about! Robert’s footnote to 12:3 states that “the precise identity of the ‘substitute for love’ is beside the point.” I disagree! I think it is difficult to apply this teaching to myself if I have no idea what the “substitute” is. Robert speculates that it is enough to know we believe that “*something* other than love really can fill the emptiness we feel inside.” That’s on the right track, but seems too general to me. The Course here is very clear that

². The precise identity of the “substitute for love” is beside the point. It probably includes all those forms of ego-gratification that we value more than love. The point is that we falsely believe that *something* other than love really can fill the emptiness we feel inside. The spirit of this final law of chaos, then, is captured by this prayer from the Workbook: “*What can I seek for, Father, but Your love? Perhaps I think I seek for something else [a substitute], a something I have called by many names. Yet is Your love the only thing I seek, or ever sought. For there is nothing else that I could ever really want to find*” (W-231.1:1-4).

this something is hidden in my brother's (or sister's) body, and that seriously limits what "something" might be referring to.

There are words in paragraph 16 that, to me, identify this "substitute for love" more specifically. Still quite general, but clear enough, I think. We'll discuss it when we get to that point at the end of this commentary.

Paragraph 13 (12:8–13:3 (FIP))

13 Behold, unveiled, the ego's secret gift, torn from your brother's body, hidden there in malice and in hatred for the one to whom the gift belonged. ²He would deprive you of the secret ingredient which would give meaning to your life. ³The substitute for love, born of your enmity to one another, must be salvation. ⁴*It* has no substitute, and there is only one. ⁵And all relationships have but the purpose of seizing it and making it your own. ⁶Never is your possession made complete. ⁷And never will your brother cease his own attack on you for what you stole. ⁸Nor will God end His vengeance upon both, for in His madness *He* must have this substitute for love, and kill you both.

• Study Question •

4. *Law 5: There is a substitute for love. According to the last two paragraphs, what are all your relationships dedicated to?*
- A. *Finding salvation.*
 - B. *Gaining possession of this substitute for love.*
 - C. *Becoming holy.*
 - D. *Being special.*

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"Behold, unveiled..." (13:1) — well, unveiled in the sense of having its *existence* exposed, if not its precise *nature*. This line tells us that our brother has stolen "the ego's secret gift" that was meant for us, and has hidden it in his body, motivated by his malice and hatred for us. This "brother," according to the Course, wants to deprive us of "the secret ingredient which would give meaning to your life" (13:2). This is a terribly ugly portrayal of our special relationships. Have you ever imagined that this level of malice lies under the surface of *any* of your relationships, much less *all* of your relationships? I do think that is more than implied here. In 13:5 we are told, "*all* relationships have but the purpose of seizing it and making it your own."³ The Course even emphasizes the word "all"! So if we intend to apply this Course to ourselves, we must examine all of our relationships to see if we can detect this level of ego malice in them. It's hiding in there, somewhere, and we need to become aware of it so we can let it go.

³ I do think we could legitimately insert the word "special" in there: "*all* special relationships have but the purpose of seizing it." A holy relationship does not share that purpose.

It occurs to me that this “substitute for love” may be totally a scam. Certainly, there *is* no actual substitute for love⁴. The whole thing is a smoke screen, an illusion, a horrible disinformation campaign run by the ego. Our egos cause us to *think* that “there is a substitute for love.” We don’t know exactly what it is, but we are certain it exists, and that our brothers and sisters are withholding it from us, whatever it is. This is what must be our salvation (13:3), and there is no substitute for this substitute for love (13:4). This is the *only substitute* there is; therefore we *must* have it or we will be forever miserable. That’s how it seems to us.

So, we go for it in every relationship. To meet our imagined need, we do all kinds of things to “seize” this thing, take it from our partner, and make it our own (13:5), although we never actually manage to completely possess it (13:6). Meanwhile, our partner is doing the same thing *to us* (13:7).

This is beginning to sound familiar to me. It sounds a lot like another description of special relationships that was given earlier in the Text.

For an unholy relationship is based on differences, where each one thinks the other has what he has not. They come together, each to complete himself and rob the other. They stay until they think that there is nothing left to steal, and then move on (T-22.Int.2:5-7 (FIP)).

The thing we are trying to steal from one another differs from person to person, from relationship to relationship, but however we conceive of it, it represents our completion. We believe that, somehow, the other person has the ability to complete us, to give us some kind of magical gift that will make us whole and happy. If we are not getting it from them, they must be *withholding* it. The longer this state of incompleteness goes on, the more certain we become that they are *deliberately* withholding it. We thought they loved us, but in fact, they hate us, and are purposely making us miserable. If we’re smart (but not smart enough), we move on, and try the same game with another person.

The thing we never seem to get is that *we* are the ones withholding the gift, the *true* gift, of love. We’re withholding it from ourselves, but we are projecting the blame for that on our partners. *We are* love; we are perfectly innocent; we are wholly lovable and wholly loving. But we don’t know it, we doubt it, we deny it, and we want others to somehow give that to us. We want to be told how loved we are, we want to be cared for, taken care of, visited when we’re sick. We want recognition, promotions at work, higher grades in school. We want to know we are *special* somehow. The treasure seems to be hidden in some of the billions of bodies around us, maybe in one particular one, maybe in thousands or millions if we crave fame and public adulation. Some people will even kill for it, claiming they are doing it for love. (Am I watching too many true crime episodes of Dateline or 48 Hours Mysteries?)

The last sentence of 13 is a bit of a puzzler. It says that *God* craves this substitute for love as well, and will kill us both to get it! This crazy belief in God’s attack on us, is repeated in Chapter 26:

⁴ T-13.V.6:2 (CE): “There is no substitute for love.”

"Sin is not error, for it goes beyond correction to impossibility. Yet the belief that it is real has made some errors seem forever past the hope of healing, and the lasting grounds for hell. If this were so, would Heaven be opposed by its own opposite, as real as it. Then would God's Will be split in two, and all creation be subjected to the laws of two opposing powers, until God becomes impatient, splits the world apart, and relegates attack unto Himself. Thus has He lost His Mind, proclaiming sin has taken His reality from Him and brought His Love at last to vengeance's heels." (T-26.VII.7:1-5 (FIP)).

As I understand it, what we each believe we have lost is our innocence, our wholeness or holiness. Everyone else seems to be more “whole” than we are, and so it seems as if they have taken wholeness or innocence from us. By attacking them, condemning them and judging them as sinners, we somehow think we will feel vindicated. We put another down to elevate our self. They are all doing the same thing to us, so we have evidence that we are right, that they have stolen our holiness or wholeness.

In the process, it seems as if we must have also stolen our holiness from God. God cannot be whole without all of us, and we have separated from Him (or so we believe). Therefore, it seems inevitable to us that, eventually, God will get tired of all our constant bickering and conflict, realize that His Wholeness with us is a lost dream, and give in to “split the world apart” in righteous anger, becoming convinced that the only way to have peace and innocence again is to destroy us. Thus will God have lost His mind, and proved the ego right.

Paragraph 14 (13:4–13 (FIP))

14 You who believe you walk in sanity, with feet on solid ground and through a world where meaning can be found, consider this: These *are* the laws on which your “sanity” appears to rest. ²These *are* the principles which make the ground beneath your feet seem solid. ³And it *is* here you look for meaning. ⁴These are the laws you made for your salvation. ⁵They hold in place the substitute for Heaven that you prefer. ⁶This is their purpose; they were made for this. ⁷There is no point in asking what they mean. ⁸This is apparent. ⁹The means of madness must be insane. ¹⁰Are you as certain that you realize the *goal* is madness?

• Study Question •

5. *This paragraph claims that you believe in these laws. True or false, if you didn't believe in these principles, physical matter would seem transparent. Please provide justification from this paragraph.*

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Jesus now addresses all of us. At least, I doubt that any of us do not fit the description given in the first sentence: We are generally sure we are not certifiably insane. We know without any doubt that we are walking around on solid ground. And we are sure that there

is meaning that we can find in this world. After all, if there is *no* meaning in this world, what's the point?

Well, as we should suspect by now, the Course thinks all of those statements are incorrect.

We *are* insane.

The ground is not solid, and we are not really walking around on it.

This world is meaningless.

Our picture of sanity, solidity, and meaning actually rest on the five insane “laws of chaos” we have been examining. You may not think so, so Jesus emphasizes, “These *are* the laws...” (14:1). Our understanding of sanity is defined by these laws. It is the laws of chaos that “make the ground beneath your feet seem solid” (14:2). We look for meaning within the framework of these laws (14:3).

Consider this: Don't we think it is nuts to be defenseless? Don't we believe that loving *everyone* is dangerous and foolish? We know “it's a jungle out there,” and the only sane way to live is to keep our guard up constantly.

As for the seeming solidity of the ground being something based on the laws of chaos, I think this is a reference to our certainty that the visible, material world is real, and the spiritual, invisible world is the dream. Our acceptance of the reality of sin and separation is the ground from which the material world has sprung into seeming existence. Time and space are manifestations of separateness. But the truth, according to the Course, is that “there is no world” (W-pI.132.6:1-7:1).

Clearly, then, it is a mistake to look for meaning in this world. (For confirmation of this, see Lessons 11, 12, 13 & 14 in the Workbook.)

We made these laws of chaos, in a mad attempt to find an alternative to union with God (14:4). It is the laws of chaos that “hold in place the substitute for Heaven that you prefer” (14:5). “This is their *purpose*; they were *made* for this” (14:6). Up till now, perhaps, it has seemed inexplicable that these “laws” exist. Why on earth would we have believed in them? Why believe that truth is different for everyone, that everyone *must* sin and deserve death, that God must hate us for our sin, that we only have what we *take from others*, and that there is a substitute for love? Why? Because we wanted a substitute for Heaven. *We wanted an alternative to union with God.*

Remember what was said about these laws back in the first paragraph?

Let us, then, look upon them calmly, that we may look beyond them, understanding what they are, not what they would maintain. It is essential it be understood what they are for, because it is their purpose to make meaningless and to attack the truth. (T-23.III.1:1-5 (CE))

The laws cannot be understood; it's pointless to ask what they mean (14:7). What's *essential* is to understand their *purpose*, and now, we have that made plain (14:6). We wanted an alternative to union with God, a substitute for Heaven. These laws are what gives that insane substitute its seeming reality. A substitute for Heaven is sheer madness, totally impossible. The laws are “the means of madness,” and therefore, obviously, “must be insane” (14:8-9). But the question remains: Do we realize “the *goal* is

madness” (14:10)? Do we realize that trying to make separation *work*, trying to have a substitute for love, trying to find completion in *anything other than God*, is totally, absolutely, completely *nuts*?

Paragraph 15 (14:1–8 (FIP))

15 No one wants madness, nor does anyone cling to his madness if he sees that this is what it is. ²What protects madness is the belief that it is true. ³It is the function of insanity to take the place of truth. ⁴It must be seen as truth to be believed. ⁵And if it is the truth, then must its opposite, which was the truth before, be madness now. ⁶Such a reversal, completely turned around, with madness sanity, illusions true, attack a kindness, hatred love, and murder benediction, is the goal the laws of chaos serve. ⁷These are the means by which the laws of God appear to be reversed. ⁸Here do the laws of sin appear to hold love captive and let sin go free.

• Study Question •

6. *The last sentence of the previous paragraph said that the goal of the laws of chaos is madness. Yet how can we actually pursue madness as our goal? This paragraph contains an answer to that question. What is the answer?*
- A. *We can pursue madness because we have gone totally insane.*
 - B. *We can pursue madness because we think it is not madness, but the truth.*
 - C. *We can pursue madness because we have bought into the ego, which represents an insane thought system.*

If we really saw with calm clarity that the ego's goal is madness, we would no longer want it (15:1). Nobody really *wants* madness! “What *protects* madness is the belief *that it is true*” (15:2). There is still something in most of us, if not all of us, that really believes that attacking others can bring us happiness, that the ground really is solid, that meaning and happiness can be found in this world of separation. If that were not true, we would not experience so much resistance to the idea of giving it all up: letting go of the world, letting go of attack, letting go of our separate, ego identity.

The whole purpose of the ego's insane system is to replace the truth, and thus to be *seen as true* (15:3–4). The Course is trying to get us to realize that we've been brainwashed. It isn't just a matter of making a few minor adjustments to our view of reality; we have to abandon our whole view of what reality is! This is why the Introduction to the Workbook says:

The purpose of the workbook is to train your mind in a systematic way to a different perception of everyone and everything in the world (W-Int.4:1).

Let me suggest that, as soon as you can, you read (or re-read) Chapter 18, Section I. It talks there of the fundamental error we have made in believing God is fearful, and it emphasizes how totally our imagined existence in this world has become distorted by it. For instance:

It has taken many forms, because it was the substitution of fragmentation for wholeness. It has become so splintered and subdivided and divided again, over and over, that it is now almost impossible to perceive it once was one, and still is what it was. That one error, which brought truth to illusion, infinity to time, and life to death, was all you ever made. Your whole world rests upon it. Everything you see reflects it. And every special relationship which you have ever made is part of it. (T-18.I.4:2–7)

“Such a reversal, completely turned around, with madness sanity, illusions true, attack a kindness, hatred love, and murder benediction, is the goal the laws of chaos serve” (15:6). We need to realize how complete the brain-washing has been! Everything is upside down! “The laws of God *appear* to be reversed” (15:7). We seem to be trapped by sin (15:8).

What the Course is attempting to bring about for us is such a profound, fundamental shift of consciousness that it cannot be exaggerated. It will change the world we see. It will change *everything* we see. It will transform every special relationship we have ever made.

We need to be patient with ourselves, and gentle. A shift of perception that deep will not happen overnight and will not come easily. This is why the Course talks about things like a ring of fear, a journey through fear to love. This is why St. John of the Cross wrote of “the dark night of the soul.” But never diminish the enormity of the goal! Don’t be daunted by its seeming impossibility. Be inspired by its magnificence! Yes, it is deep, it is profound, its consequences are vast, but at the core it is very simple. Truth is true. We are one. We are already where we think we must strive to get. We are already home. Anything else is illusion.

• Study Question •

7. **Summary:** *As a way of summarizing the laws of chaos, please give brief answers to the following questions:*
- A. *How does the first law (that the truth is different for everyone) rest on the belief that there is a hierarchy of illusions?*
 - B. *How does the second law (that each one must sin and so deserves attack and death) follow from the first?*
 - C. *How does the third law (that God must accept His Son’s belief in his sin and hate him for his sinfulness) follow from the second?*
 - D. *How does the fourth law (that you have what you have taken) underlie the first three?*
 - E. *How does the fifth law (that there is a substitute for love) relate to the fourth?*

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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. C
2. A,B,C,D
3. A,B,C.
4. B
5. True, for these principles make the ground beneath your feet seem solid.
6. B
7. Summary
 - A. The first law says that each one establishes for himself which illusions are true for him and makes these true by attacking another's illusions. All of this assumes that some illusions are more true than others, which is the concept of a hierarchy of illusions.
 - B. If each one must establish his truth by attacking another, then each one must sin and so deserves attack and death.
 - C. If it is true that each one must sin and so deserves attack and death, and if God cannot be mistaken, then God must believe in each one's sinfulness and hate him for it.
 - D. The first three laws present a universal war between all of God's Sons and God Himself—a picture of enemies. Enemies will not give you what they have, even though you need it. So you must take it. The fourth law says you have what you have taken.
 - E. The fifth law is simply what we are trying to take from each other—the substitute for love.