

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 26

Holy Ground

Section X

Realizing Their Presence

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

Overview of Section X

This section gives a surprising view of fairness (or justice) and unfairness (or injustice), linking our typical thinking about this to our desire to remain separate, thus projecting a time delay into the rewards of forgiveness.

Paragraph 1

What, then, remains to be undone for you to realize Their presence? ²Only this: You have a differential view of when attack is justified, and when you think it is unfair and not to be allowed. ³When you perceive it as unfair, you think that a response of anger now is just. ⁴And thus you see what is the same as *different*. ⁵Confusion is not limited. ⁶If it occurs at all, it will be total. ⁷And its presence, in whatever form, will hide Their presence. ⁸They are known with clarity or not at all. ⁹Confused perception will block knowledge. ¹⁰It is not a question of the size of the confusion or how much it interferes. ¹¹Its simple presence shuts the door to Theirs and keeps Them there unknown.

“They¹ have come,” the previous section repeated over and over. So, why do we not all realize Their presence? What in us needs to be “undone” for that to happen (1:1)?

There is only one obstacle: Our “differential view” of attack, some of it justified, some unfair (1:2). The word “differential” simply implies that we see two *different* kinds or categories of attack: just attack, which is allowable, and unjust attack, which is “*not* to be allowed.” We believe that when attack is unjust, anger is justified (1:3). So we are distinguishing between what we believe are two different kinds of attack: just, and unjust. But really there are not two kinds; we’re seeing things as different that are really the same (1:4).

¹ The memory of God and the face of Christ

We're confused about attack, and any confusion is *total* confusion (1:5–6). The results of confusion are devastating: It hides the memory of God and the face of Christ from our awareness (1:7). If we believe that some forms of attack *deserve* anger, we will believe in a God Who is capable of justified anger. It leads to a belief in hell. If we do not know God and Christ clearly we don't know Them at all (1:8). True knowledge is in us, but it is blocked from our awareness by our confused perceptions (1:9).

Don't think that there is such a thing as "minor" confusion that has minor effects (1:10). Confusion interferes with knowledge, period. Totally! If confusion is present, Their Presence cannot be known by us (1:11).

Remember: What we're talking about here is our confusion about attack, thinking there are two kinds, just and unjust. As long as we are perceiving some attacks as unjust and some as justified, we cannot truly know God! Getting angry at what we perceive as unjust is a form of attack. "Anger is *never* justified" (T-30.VI.1:1 (FIP), (T-30.VII.1:1 (CE)).

Paragraph 2

² What does it mean if you perceive attack in certain forms to be unfair to you? ²It means that there must be some forms in which you think it fair. ³For otherwise, how could some be evaluated as *unfair*? ⁴Some, then, are given meaning and perceived as sensible, and only *some* are seen as meaningless. ⁵And this denies the fact that *all* are senseless, equally without a cause or consequence, and cannot have effects of any kind. ⁶Their² presence is obscured by any veil which stands between Their shining innocence and your awareness that it is your own, and equally belongs to every living thing along with you. ⁷God limits not, and what is limited cannot be Heaven. ⁸So it must be hell.

In our confusion about attack, which sees at least two different forms (just and unjust), we see *some* attacks on us to be unfair. The obvious corollary is that some attacks on us *are fair* (2:1–3). When someone attacks us for what we know is one of our faults, we may think, "Well, I deserved that." We're still very confused.

Some attacks seem meaningless and senseless; others seem meaningful and sensible (2:4). This split perception prevents us from understanding that *all* attacks are meaningless and senseless, "*equally* without a cause or consequence, and *cannot* have effects of *any* kind" (2:5). You and everyone else share God's own innocence. Therefore, there is no justification for attack of any kind on anyone. You and everyone are eternal creations of God, invulnerable. Therefore, no attack can have any consequence or effect on anyone.³ Our confusion about attack acts as a veil, hiding the innocence of God and

² "Their" refers to God and Christ.

³ Remember, we are not talking about your body or even your ego; we are talking about what you are in Truth, an invisible spirit or mind. Remember, we are not talking about your body or even your ego; we are talking about what you are in Truth, an invisible spirit or mind.

Christ, an innocence that we all share, from our awareness. We don't know that it belongs to us, and "*equally* belongs to every living thing along with you" (2:6).

We don't believe in *total* innocence; that's our problem. We accord *limited* innocence to some people, a lot to others, and none at all to some. We limit who has innocence, and we limit how much they have. But, "God limits not, and what is limited *cannot* be Heaven. So it *must* be hell" (2:7–8). It's another example of the Course's absolutism. All attacks are unjustified. Everyone shares God's total innocence. There are no exceptions.

Paragraph 3

3 Unfairness and attack are *one* mistake, so firmly joined that where one is perceived the other must be seen. ²You cannot be unfairly treated. ³The belief you are is but another form of the idea you are deprived by someone not yourself. ⁴Projection of the cause of sacrifice is at the root of everything perceived to be unfair and not your just deserts.⁴ ⁵Yet it is you who ask this of yourself, in deep injustice to the Son of God. ⁶You have no enemy except yourself, and you are enemy indeed to him because you do not know him *as* yourself. ⁷What could be more unjust than that he be deprived of what he is, denied the right to be himself, and asked to sacrifice his Father's love and yours as not his due?

In fact, unfairness and attack "are *one* mistake" (3:1). If you perceive unfairness, you are attacking.

What follows is, I think, one of the most challenging statements in the Course: "You *cannot* be unfairly treated" (3:2). Combine that with 4:1, "Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated," and we are being called to do something that I suspect seems utterly foreign and maybe impossible to most of us, if not all of us.

How is it possible that we cannot be unfairly treated? It happens all the time, doesn't it? Someone criticizes us in an untrue way, painting us in a way that feels belittling. Someone else gets the promotion we're sure we deserved. A merchant cheats us in some way. There are countless examples on TV of people who have been wrongfully accused of a crime, people who have been jailed for years and even executed. The world is just crammed full of unfairness. Isn't it? How can we possibly *not* see ourselves as unfairly treated, at least some of the time?

So, let's look in more detail at what "unfairly treated" means. Jesus says its "another form of the idea you are deprived by someone *not* yourself" (3:3). The clue to how it is possible to not perceive ourselves as unfairly treated is right there in that sentence. "... someone *not* yourself." That seems to imply that the deprivation is caused, not by anyone other than ourselves, but by *us*. Somehow, it is me that is causing the perception of unfair treatment.

⁴ In other words, whenever we see someone treating us unfairly, it because we have projected onto him the actual cause of our experience of sacrifice: our own internal demand that we suffer loss. This explains why we cannot be unfairly treated—because no one outside of us can actually cause us to experience sacrifice.

We see the unfairness coming at us from outside ourselves because we've projected it onto other people perceived as separate from ourselves (3:4). Jesus says it plainly: "It is *you* who ask this of yourself" (3:5). Yes, it is unjust (3:7), unjust to yourself as the Son of God Who is wholly innocent (3:5). You do not recognize the Son of God as yourself; you have made Him your enemy and rained this injustice down on His head (3:6).

We are looking at primordial guilt here, the ancient guilt of our betrayal of our Creator, for which we believe we deserve hell. But we cannot acknowledge this inner, hidden self-judgment, so we project the punishing blows on persons and things perceived as not a part of us. We see these others (and ourselves, unconsciously) as no longer what we were as God's perfect creations. In our judgment, none of us can be ourselves, our divine Selves. None of us deserves God's love or our own. And nothing could be more unjust than that (3:7).

Paragraph 4

4 Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated. ²In this view, you seek to find an innocence which is not Theirs but yours alone, and at the cost of someone *else's* guilt. ³Can innocence be purchased by the giving of your guilt to someone else? ⁴And is this innocence which your attack on him attempts to get? ⁵Is it not retribution for your own attack upon the Son of God you seek?⁵ ⁶Is it not safer to believe that you are innocent of this, and victimized despite your innocence? ⁷Whatever way the game of guilt be played, there must be loss. ⁸Someone must *lose* his innocence that someone *else* can take it from him, making it his own.

That's why we are admonished to watch out for the temptation to perceive ourselves unfairly treated (4:1). Seeing ourselves this way, suffering at the hands of others, is the ultimate form of gaslighting⁶. We are punishing ourselves for our guilt, but we blame someone else, and try to convince them of their guilt instead of seeing their divine innocence. We attempt to find our own innocence, an innocence which is not the one given to us by God in creation, but one we've created for (and by) ourselves. "I'm not at fault here; *you* are" (4:2). Yogananda also saw this problem: "Some people try to be tall by cutting off the heads of others." —Paramahansa Yogananda

It isn't really possible to make up our own innocence by giving our guilt away (4:3). Possibly we are not so much looking for innocence as we are trying to find someone else to take the blame for our own attack upon the Son of God (4:4). We'd all like to believe we have never attacked God at all, but we are being victimized *despite* our innocence (4:5).

⁵ This seems to mean that when we attack another, we are really trying to get him back for (supposedly) forcing us to become an attacker, to become one who attacks the Son of God.

⁶ Gaslighting is a form of psychological manipulation in which a person seeks to sow seeds of doubt in a targeted individual or in members of a targeted group, making them question their own memory, perception, and sanity. (Wikipedia)

It doesn't really matter which flavor of this projection game you are playing, seeking a false innocence or trying to find a scapegoat. However you play the game, "*there must be loss*. Someone must *lose* his innocence" (4:7–8). The loser has his innocence stolen from him by the accuser (you and me). We appropriate the other's innocence for ourselves.

Keep in mind that this is a discussion of why seeing ourselves as unfairly treated is to be avoided, and in fact, being unfairly treated isn't even possible. When I see myself as unfairly treated by someone else, this is the game my ego is playing. I'm stealing his or her innocence for myself, or I'm trying to use him or her as a scapegoat on whom to dump my existential guilt. Unfair and unjust are synonyms. I'm perceiving this person as guilty of unjustly attacking me, and seeing my perception of them as unfairly treating me, which is my attack on them, as completely justified. I'm falsely distinguishing two kinds of attack.

Paragraph 5

5 You think your brother is unfair to you because you think that one must be unfair to make the other innocent. ²And in this game do you perceive one purpose of your whole relationship, and this you seek to add unto the purpose given it. ³The Holy Spirit's purpose is to let the presence of your holy Guests be known to you. ⁴And to this purpose nothing *can* be added, for the world is purposeless except for this. ⁵To add or take away from this one goal is but to take away *all* purpose from the world, and from yourself. ⁶And each unfairness that the world appears to lay upon you, you have laid on it by rendering it purposeless, without the function that the Holy Spirit sees. ⁷And simple justice has been thus denied to every living thing upon the earth.

For you to be innocent, your brother or sister has to be unfair to you. Being unfairly treated is what *makes* you innocent in your eyes (5:1)! In fact, this whole game becomes the purpose of most of our special relationships, taking the place of the purpose given to relationship by God (5:2). In our egos we see relationships as dumping grounds for our guilt.

The purpose of relationships to the Holy Spirit "is to let the present of your holy guests⁷ be known to you" (5:3). That is the only possible purpose for relationships; nothing else can be added. There is no other purpose than this, for your relationship and for the whole world (5:4-5). Anything that adds to or detracts from this single purpose actually renders the whole thing, you and the world, purposeless (5:6).

When you see someone or something that seems to be treating you unfairly, in that very moment you have unfairly laid the guilt on them (or it). You have taken away their holy purpose of manifesting the presence of God and Christ in themselves and in you (5:6). Simple justice would see their holiness, their innocence, but you have denied it "to every living thing upon the earth" (5:7).

⁷ God and Christ.

Paragraph 6

6 What this injustice does to you who judge unfairly and who see as you have judged, you cannot calculate. ²The world grows dim and threatening, and not a trace of all the happy sparkle that salvation brought can you perceive to lighten up your way. ³And so you see yourself deprived of light, abandoned to the dark, unfairly left without a purpose in a futile world. ⁴The world is fair because the Holy Spirit has brought injustice to the light within, and there has all unfairness been dissolved and been replaced with justice and with love. ⁵If you perceive injustice anywhere, you need but say:

Our judgments of others, seeing them as having unfairly treated us, inflicts incalculable injury upon *us* who judge (6:1). It completely distorts our perception of the entire world, so that we perceive it as “dim and threatening.” Does that ring a bell with you? In this current political situation, with an unpredictable president who is facing impeachment, making what some call irrational decisions, it isn’t hard to see the world as threatening whichever side of the political spectrum you stand on. The right threatens the left, and the left threatens the right. Consider the possibility that seeing the world as threatening is a result of your ego’s determination to see yourself as unfairly treated (6:2).

Moreover, “all the happy sparkle that salvation brought” which could “lighten up your way” simply cannot be seen if you see yourself as unfairly, unjustly treated (6:2). Take a look again at some of the early Workbook lessons:

LESSON 22: What I see is a form of vengeance.

LESSON 23: I can escape from the world I see by giving up attack thoughts.

LESSON 31: I am not the victim of the world I see.

LESSON 32: I have invented the world I see.

I have found, over the years, that the more I study the Text, the more significance I find in the Workbook lessons, particularly the early ones. Things that seemed to make no sense to me, such as, “What I see is a form of vengeance,” suddenly make sense.

Seeing the world as threatening, with no trace of the happy sparkle of salvation, we end up seeing *ourselves* that way too: “deprived of light, abandoned to the dark, unfairly left without a purpose in a futile world” (6:3).

That’s not the truth about the world. That’s not the truth about you.

Injustice has been exposed to the light within us by the Holy Spirit. All unfairness has been dissolved. It has been replaced with justice and love (6:4). We need to get in touch with that inner light. We need to allow the Holy Spirit to shift our perception from judgment to love, from attack to help. We need to realize that we have Their Presence within us, and to choose to know that Presence instead of holding on to injustice.

The section ends with four lines we are encouraged to say any time we think we perceive injustice (or any time we feel unfairly treated, which is the same thing). It would help to memorize them so we can actually *say* them to ourselves when injustices rear their ugly heads, any time we are tempted to perceive ourselves as unfairly treated.

By this do I deny

*the presence of the Father and the Son.
And I would rather know of Them than see
injustice, which Their presence shines away.*

Legend:

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

The 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 identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely 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.