

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 29

The Worship of Idols

Section X

The Dream of Judgment

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview of Section X

As I pointed out at the start of Section VIII, three sections in a row (VIII, IX, and X) emphasize idols and our slavery to them. The term “idol” appears sixty-one times in these three sections. This section returns to the imagery of dreams, combining that theme with that of idols. It shows how all figures in our dream of this world are idols, but we can transform them by allowing the Holy Spirit to change our dream from one of judgment to forgiveness. It gives a picture of our lives that is unique to this section. Its an important picture, useful in empowering our forgiveness with an understanding of what we must forgive.

Paragraph 1

The slave of idols is a willing slave. ²For willing he must be to let himself bow down in worship to what has no life, and seek for power in the powerless. ³What happened to the holy Son of God that this could be his wish; to let himself fall lower than the stones upon the ground, and look to idols that they raise him up? ⁴Hear, then, your story in the dream you made, and ask yourself if it be not the truth that you believe that it is *not* a dream.

• Study Question •

1. (1:1–2). *These lines recap ideas from the preceding two sections about our enslaving ourselves to idols that have no life or power. What aspect of that slavery is emphasized here?*

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The critical point in the first two sentences is that our slavery to idols is something we have chosen. It is *willing* slavery. Jesus points out that it *must* be willing because the idols we now worship surely have no power to coerce us into such slavery. They are lifeless and powerless, so our servitude to them must be self-inflicted (1:1–2).

Then, in 1:3, Jesus poses a question that comes to mind when we take that thought seriously: How could the Son of God possibly wish to be enslaved? God created us perfect, having everything. How could we allow ourselves to “fall lower than the stones upon the ground, and look to idols that they raise [us] up” (1:3)? The image implies that the stones on the ground are actually in a better condition than we are! Perhaps even closer to God. We fall below the level of stones and then look to stone idols to lift us. What insanity! What happened to us?

The fourth sentence announces that what follows will be an attempt, on Jesus’ part, to relate our story as it has occurred in our dream. He wants us to listen carefully to this story and to realize that *we don’t think it is a dream; we think it is real* (1:4).

Practice Suggestion: (1:1–2). *Try applying these lines to yourself. Pick an idol in your life (for instance, someone’s body, a car, money, alcohol) and say, “As a slave of [name the idol], I am a willing slave. For willing I must be to bow down in worship to what has no life, and to seek for power in the powerless.”*

Paragraph 2

2 A dream of judgment came into the mind that God created perfect as Himself. ²And in that dream was Heaven changed to hell and God made enemy unto His Son. ³How can His Son awaken from the dream? ⁴It is a dream of judgment. ⁵So must he judge not, and he will waken.¹ ⁶For the dream will seem to last while he is part of it. ⁷Judge not, for he who judges will have need of idols which will hold the judgment off from resting on himself. ⁸Nor can he know the Self he has condemned. ⁹Judge not, because you make yourself a part of evil dreams, where idols are your “true” identity and your salvation from the judgment laid in terror and in guilt upon yourself. ¹⁰All figures in the dream are idols, made to save you from the dream. ¹¹Yet they are *part* of what they have been made to save you *from*.

¹ Matthew 7:1 (KJV): “Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

• Study Question •

2.(2:1-2). Here is the story he promised to tell us in 1:4. We dreamt of judgment, of being a condemning judge (the rest of the paragraph indicates that we are judging and need to cease doing so). How did this make us seemingly fall “lower than the stones upon the ground”? How did this make God seem to become our enemy?

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Jesus has asked us to “hear...your story in the dream you made” (1:4). The first two sentences in paragraph 2 summarize that story; the next two paragraphs flesh it out. The story’s gist is that we dreamed that we were judging against our brothers and even (so we are told elsewhere) against God. A dream of judgment entered our mind,² a mind that was as perfect as God Himself (2:1). The Course described it earlier in these words:

“**6**Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh. In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects.” (T-27.X.5:6:1–2 (CE), T-29.VIII.6:2–3 (FIP))

It was a tiny, mad idea of *judgment*. We forgot to laugh at its absurdity, so the idea *seemed* real, with real effects. To judge is to attack. We all know this because when someone judges us, we *feel* attacked. So, as attackers, we felt guilty. We believed we had sinned, our Heaven became hell, and God had become our enemy (2:2), judging us in return because of our “sin.”

The “dream of judgment” (2:4) goes two ways: in the dream, we judge, and in the dream, *others judge us*. They condemn us for our judgments. Jesus is addressing the judging that *we* do as the root of any apparent problem because the remedy—the way to “awaken from the dream” (2:3) that is “a dream of judgment”—is to “judge *not*” (2:5). In short, how do we awaken from a dream of judgment? We stop judging, and we “*will waken*”!

Judging keeps us in the dream of judgment; that should be obvious (2:6). When we judge, we are judging the Son of God. But we *are* the Son of God, so we are judging ourselves (2:8). We send out judgment and then experience judgment coming back, and don’t realize it is coming from us! So we invent idols to deflect the judgment (2:7, 9). We focus on a brother’s shortcomings and blame something outside of our minds for our problems. We make up a false identity, and that also becomes an idol, something we worship and protect, and something to protect us from judgment. But we are the sole source of the judging, and if we stop, it all stops.

It is vital to grasp the purpose we give to idols, the reason we think we need them: to “hold the judgment off from resting on [ourselves]” (2:7). We seek after idols to *protect* us from the judgment we imagine is coming at us because we have judged. They become, in our minds, our “salvation from the judgment laid in terror and in guilt upon [ourselves]” (2:9). Ironically, we make idols in the dream save us *from* the dream, “yet

² Presumably this refers to our *shared mind*.

they are *part* of what they have been made to save [us] *from*” (2:10-11). The idols we value because they seem to protect us from the harsh aspects of the dream—things like money, friends, family, physical strength, a beautiful and secure home—are themselves parts of the dream (3:1–2). How can *part* of the dream save us *from* the dream? It can’t, of course.

Paragraph 3

3 Thus does an idol keep the dream alive and terrible. ²For who would wish for one unless he were in terror and despair? ³And this the idol represents, and so its worship is the worship of despair and terror, and the dream from which they come. ⁴Judgment is an injustice to God’s Son, and it is justice that who judges him will not escape the penalty he laid upon himself within the dream he made. ⁵God knows of justice, not of penalty. ⁶But in the dream of judgment, you attack and are condemned, and wish to be the slave of idols, who are interposed between your judgment and the penalty it brings.³

• Study Question •

3.(3:6). *Here is the same idea from 2:7, 2:9: You have a dream in which you first attack (or judge) and then in return you experience condemnation (or punishment) from the dream. Then you try to “interpose” idols in between these two, so that the punishment never reaches you. How do idols actually accomplish this feat? How do they protect you?*

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Idols, which are part of the dream, can’t save us *from* the dream. The reverse is true: the idols *lock us into* the dream (3:1). The need for idols is proof that the dream is one of judgment; it represents our terror and despair (3:3). If the dream were not real, we would not need any protection, so the idols seem to *prove* that the fearful dream is real (3:1). Worshipping idols is, therefore, worshipping terror and despair (3:2)! The very presence of something that is supposed to protect us is evidence that there is a real threat! Why do we have triple locks on our doors? Because we are in terror of what might come in if the

³ The term “idols” here includes both valued objects and valued bodies. (For a clear reference to viewing people as idols, see 7:7: “And the forms which enter in the dreams [and were perceived as idols] are now perceived as brothers.”) To understand the notion of idols being “interposed between your judgment and the penalty it brings,” we should think in terms of three zones. The outer zone is composed of all the dangers and attack in the dream. These are really just messengers of the penalty we have laid upon ourselves for judging. The inner zone is our self, the one who does the judging. To defend ourselves (the inner zone) from the self-imposed penalty for judging (carried out by the outer zone), we surround ourselves with a *middle* zone of idols—valued objects and valued people. Their job is to protect us from the outer zone. They carry out our judgment against it, acting as hired security men who attack it and neutralize its assaults.

door were open. If we live in a city like Amsterdam or New Orleans, protected by dikes, the dikes are a constant reminder of the threat of flood that lies on the other side. Idols not only don't protect us; they *reinforce our fear*. The very things we value are imprisoning us.

When we lay judgment on God's Son (for instance, by judging a sister or brother, or judging ourselves), we do an injustice to God's Son. The Son does not merit judgment. Therefore, because we do an injustice, it *is* just to us that our judgment should fall upon us within the dream (3:4). *In the dream*, there is a penalty for our unjust judgment. But "God knows of justice, not of penalty" (3:5). God does not judge us, but *we do*. We dream that we have attacked, and therefore, we must be condemned. We've earned the penalty. Therefore, we *wish* to submit to idols because they stand between us and the penalty. We think that because of idols, we can judge and get away with it (3:6).

And there is the answer to the question posed in 1:3: "What happened to the holy Son of God, that this [punishment] could be his wish?" We *want* to be slaves to our idols because we think they protect us from the "wages of sin" we suppose we have earned by our wholly imaginary judgment against God's Son.

Practice Suggestions: (3:1-4). *Think about the ways these lines apply to your life. All the things you have collected to you are idols, made to save you from a terrifying world that would blot your existence out unless you had these idols to protect you. Imagine, for instance, being without food, shelter, clothing, means of transportation, or money. You value these things so highly because they protect you from a terrifying world. Yet they are part of this world. And they symbolize (in your value of them) your terror about this world. Thus, they only serve to reinforce the terrifying nature of this world.*

(3:4). *Think of a specific idol you worship. Then apply this sentence to it: "This idol [name it] represents my terror and despair. And so its worship is the worship of despair and terror, and the dream from which they come."*

Paragraph 4

4 There can be no salvation in the dream as *you* are dreaming it. ²For idols must be part of it, to save you from what you believe you have accomplished, and have done to make you sinful and put out the light within you. ³Little child, the light is there. ⁴You do but dream, and idols are the toys you dream you play with. ⁵Who has need of toys but children? ⁶They pretend they rule the world, and give their toys the power to move about and talk and think and feel and speak for them. ⁷Yet everything their toys appear to do is in the minds of those who play with them. ⁸But they are eager to forget that they made up the dream in which their toys are real, nor recognize their wishes as their own.⁴

• Study Question •

4.(4:4-8). *Children dream an imaginary world. In this world they make their toys speak and act for them. Let's apply this metaphor to your life. What do you **not** want to realize about the world you live in? What do you **not** want to realize about the idols that seem to sustain you and make you happy? The answer to both questions is in Sentence 8.*

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Sentences 4:1–2 bring the first three paragraphs to a conclusion, summarizing their findings. You may not have fully grasped the purpose we have given to idols in what has preceded. These sentences make it very clear: Idols exist to save us from the destruction that we believe we have brought upon our Self, the wages of our supposed “sin” that extinguished the light of God within us. Of course, they are powerless to do so, and there has been no destruction; the inner light still shines (4:3). But in our version of the dream, inner darkness is our condition, and in that scenario, “there can be no salvation” (4:1). So, in the dream, we are profoundly messed up. But *it is a dream*. “The light is there” within (4:3), and the idols are no more than toys within the dream (4:4).

The introduction of the word “toys” begins a new extended analogy, comparing our idols to children’s toys. Only children need toys (4:5). (We’re talking about actual toys here, not the electronic gadgets and such that we sometimes refer to as *toys for grown-ups*.) As you read 4:6, does it bring back any childhood memories? It does for me. I had a strange game, all my own, in which various sticks—branches that the wind broke off the trees—were alive and were persons. I invented a whole story and some rules for the game I played, in which I would throw one stick up in the air and then strike it with another stick. It was a kind of “sword fight,” and the loser was the stick that broke first. I mentally gave my toy sticks “the power to move about, and talk and thing and feel” (4:6). Did you ever do something like that with your toys?

As the Course points out, everything the sticks seemed to do was in my mind as I played with them, and nowhere else (4:7). While I was playing, it was entirely real to me, and I even remember, at times, crying when a favorite stick, to which I had assigned a

⁴ Pronoun clarification: “nor recognize [the toys’] wishes as [the children’s] own.”

hero's role in my game, was broken by a "bad guy." I was not so far gone that I was not aware that I was making the whole thing up, though.

Some kids get very caught up in their imaginary games with the toys. They forget that the toys cannot act independently, and Jesus is saying we are like that with our idol-toys (4:8). Take one example. Consider the man who has a car for an idol, believing that he is somehow special because he owns, for instance, a Mercedes. If that car is damaged or destroyed, he feels devastated. Who enabled that car to make him feel special or to cause such grief if it is damaged? The car's owner, of course. In itself, the car has no power at all to make him special or to upset him. Everything that the car appears to do is in the owner's mind. However, that man would not appreciate being told this fact and would probably vehemently deny it. He *wants* to believe that it can impart some objective virtue to him because he owns the car. For each of us, the same thing is true, although our idols may take forms that are very different from a Mercedes. We are "eager to forget" that we made up the power these idols seem to have.

Let this analogy strike home. Think of the things that are idols for you, including the people to whom you have assigned the role of protector or buffer against the world. "Idols are the toys you dream you play with" (4:4), Jesus tells us. How does it feel to realize you have been using other people as your "toys"? You "hire" people to protect you and then express surprise when any of them "betray" you. But the betrayal was part of the contract. In betraying you, they justify your judgment on the world; they allow you to deny your responsibility for the whole dream, this dream of *judgment*. You gave them the role they are playing in your dream of life.

In 4:8, the CE has a slight difference from the FIP, but I think it's worth looking at.

FIP: But they are eager to forget that they made up the dream in which their toys are real, nor recognize their wishes **are** their own.

CE: But they are eager to forget that they made up the dream in which their toys are real, nor recognize their wishes **as** their own.

As the CE points out in a footnote, the two pronouns, "their" and "their," refer to two different things. It isn't that those who "play with toys" do not recognize their own wishes. Instead, it means that the toy-players don't recognize what seems to be the toy's wishes "as their own." When we apply this to the notion of treating as our "toys" the people in our lives, who seem to be other than us, what emerges is the idea that what seems to be the wishes of those "other people" are *our own wishes being acted out*. The people are playing the roles we have assigned to them.

That's why forgiveness is the way out of the dream. We need to forgive the "bad guys" who betray or attack us, and we need to forgive the "good guys" who don't fully live up to the protective task we've assigned to them. We need to realize they are only doing what we have hired them to do, playing the parts assigned to them by us. We need to stop using them as our toys and start accepting them as equal brothers or sisters.

Paragraph 5

5 Nightmares are childish dreams. ²The toys have turned against the child who thought he made them real. ⁵ ³Yet *can* a dream attack? ⁴Or *can* a toy grow large and dangerous and fierce and wild? ⁵This does the child believe because he fears his thoughts and gives them to his toys instead. ⁶And their reality becomes his own, because they seem to save him from his thoughts. ⁷Yet do they keep his thoughts alive and real, but seen outside himself, where they can turn against him for his treachery to them. ⁸He thinks he needs them that he may escape his thoughts, because he thinks the thoughts are real. ⁹And so he makes of anything a toy, to make his world remain outside himself and play that he is but a part of it.

• Study Questions •

5.(5:1-4). *The metaphor of the child playing with toys in his dreams continues. Now the dream has turned into a nightmare because the toys have turned against the child. This, of course, is impossible, because the toys are not real. They have no mind of their own. What phenomenon in our lives is referred to here as the toys turning against the child?*

6. *Children probably do have a toy act out aggressive thoughts that they themselves are afraid to act out. But how does an idol in our lives do this for us? How does a lot of money, for instance, carry our thoughts of anger for us?*

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(5:1-4). As I read this, I find myself wondering if Helen saw the same horror movie I once saw, where a child's marionette comes to life and attacks the child as he lies in bed. Children do have nightmares like this, in which their toys attack them. Teddy bears sprout teeth and claws; ray guns shoot real death rays. Of course, the good news is that just as toys cannot really "grow large and dangerous and fierce and wild" (5:4), neither can our projections attack us. But alas! We *believe* they can (5:5).

The way such nightmares are generated gives what seems to me to be a profound psychological insight: The child has nightmares in which the toys attack him because of *his own attack thoughts*, which are given to the toys because he fears those thoughts. The nightmare toys are the child's own desire to bite, claw, or shoot death rays, projected onto the toys, and seen now as directed at him (5:5). The attacking toys seem to "save" him from his thoughts because he can disown those thoughts and pretend they are outside

⁵ To understand why the toys turn against us, we need to realize that we have given them our judgments against the unpleasant things in the dream, so that the toys act out those judgments for us: "he fears his thoughts and gives them to his toys instead" (5:5). Yet as this line says, the thoughts of judgment we give our toys are thoughts that we *fear*, for they bring guilt. They are thus thoughts that betray us, thoughts that attack us with "the guilt and pain of self-betrayal" (9:2). Since our toys are there to act out thoughts that attack and betray us, the toys themselves are in a sense programmed to attack and betray us.

of himself (5:6–7). He thinks he is afraid of the toys, but he really fears his own thoughts, and displacing them onto the toys does not get rid of them. Instead, it keeps those thoughts “alive and real” to him (5:7). He continues to think that these dark *thoughts* are real, so he *needs* the escape valve that the nightmare idols offer (5:8). He makes anything into an idol to prevent himself from realizing that everything he fears is within himself (5:9).

Stop for a moment and realize that Jesus is talking about *you and your idols*. He refers by analogy to the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” that we think life has thrown at us. The world is indeed a stage, as Shakespeare wrote, upon which are acted out the dramas within our mind. We populate our world with “good” idols, who make us feel special, valuable, and safe because we project our worth and power onto them, but we also populate it with *angry* idols who carry our darker thoughts for us. Unfortunately, the villains we put into play often act out their roles against us, their “creator.”

To me, however, there is encouraging news implicit in sentence 5:8: “he thinks the thoughts are real.” That must mean that these fearful thoughts we project onto the world, manifesting as its dark side, *are not real thoughts!* We only think they are real. Consider: Why would we be *afraid* of a thought if it were indeed *our own thought?* We fear the thought because it is contrary to another “part” of our mind, which is the only real part: “The only part of your mind that has reality is the part that links you still with God” (T-14.V.1:1 (FIP), T-14.VI.5:1 (CE)). Because our secret thoughts are not real, the Workbook lessons advise us to respond to thoughts of anger or hatred that arise in our minds (as well as to our “good” thoughts) with the words: “These thoughts do not mean anything” (W-4.Title).

Paragraph 6

6 There is a time when childhood should be passed and gone forever. ²Seek not to retain the toys of children. ³Put them all away, for you have need of them no more. ⁴The dream of judgment is a children’s game in which the child becomes the father—powerful, but with the little wisdom of the child. ⁵What hurts him is destroyed; what helps him, blessed. ⁶Except he judges this as does a child, who does not *know* what hurts and what will heal. ⁷And bad things seem to happen, and he is afraid of all the chaos in a world he thinks is governed by the laws he made. ⁸Yet is the real world unaffected by the world he thinks is real, nor have its laws been changed because he did not understand.

• **Study Question** •

7. Bad things, of course, do seem to happen in your life (6:7). Why do they, in the context of this paragraph and section?

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Jesus, assuming we've gotten the analogy he was making, now appeals to us to give up all our childish toys—our idols. It's time we did (6:1–2). He tells us we no longer need them (6:3).

(6:4-6). Now he applies the image of a child playing to the theme that began this section: the dream of judgment. Note that what the child does is play the judge who assumes the father's role, "but with the little wisdom of a child" (6:4). He blesses what serves him and attacks what hurts him (6:5), but since he has no real wisdom, his idea of what is good for him and what isn't is seriously impaired (6:6). As a result, the wrong things get blessed, and the wrong things get attacked.

Can you see yourself acting in your life like a child turned omnipotent judge? Can you see yourself trying to or wanting to destroy what hurts you? Can you see yourself blessing what helps you (your idols)? Is this not a childish game? What if, like a child, you have no idea what hurts you or what helps you? What if what hurts you is this very process of judgment? Perhaps it is time to recognize that you don't know enough to make these judgments and ask the Holy Spirit to assist you.⁶

"I do not know what anything is for." (W-25)

⁶ For anyone who is bothered by anthropomorphizing the Holy Spirit as some kind of separate Being Who guides us, remember that this is not the ultimate stance of the Course.

"His is the Voice for God, and has therefore taken form. *This form is not His reality*" (C-5.1.4-5).

"4 The Holy Spirit abides in the part of your mind that is part of the Christ Mind. He represents your Self and your Creator, Who are one. He speaks for God and also for you, being joined with both. And therefore it is He Who proves them one. *He seems to be a Voice*, for in that form He speaks God's Word to you. *He seems to be a Guide through a far country*, for you need that form of help. *He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have*. But He is not deceived when you perceive yourself entrapped in needs you do not have. It is from these He would deliver you. It is from these that He would make you safe." (C-5.4)

"The voice you hear in him is but your own." (T-31.II.6:1 (CE), T-31.II.5:11 (FIP))

I believe we can, if we choose, think of the Holy Spirit as our own divine intuition. our "right mind." We pray, but not for our own gain. We pray for wisdom to think, say, and do only that which will heal, that which will result in a win-win for everyone involved, that which will extend the Love of God. We take the output of our "rational mind" lightly, and rely more heavily on our inward knowing.

Nevertheless, if it is easier and more comfortable for anyone to think of the Holy Spirit as an all-knowing Divine Guide Who tells us what to think, say, and do, by all means go for it! "He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have."

“It is necessary for the teacher of God to realize, not that he should not judge, but that he cannot. In giving up judgment, he is merely giving up what he did not have. He gives up an illusion; or better, he has an illusion of giving up. He has actually merely become more honest. Recognizing that judgment was always impossible for him, he no longer attempts it” (M-10.2:1-5 (FIP), M-10.2:3-7 (CE)).

“Make then but one more judgment. It is this: There is Someone with you Whose judgment is perfect. He does know all the facts; past, present and to come. He does know all the effects of His judgment on everyone and everything involved in any way. And He is wholly fair to everyone, for there is no distortion in His perception.

“Therefore lay judgment down, not with regret but with a sigh of gratitude. Now are you free of a burden so great that you could merely stagger and fall down beneath it..” (M-10.4:6-5:2).

Even though we’ve made up the world and set in motion the laws that we wanted to govern the world, “bad things seem to happen” (6:7). Things in our dream have gotten out of hand, to put it mildly! We all feel as though we have opened Pandora’s Box, letting out the demons of chaos. Wikipedia’s description of the contents of Pandora’s box says it contained all “the misfortunes of mankind (plague, sorrow, poverty, crime, despair, greed, vice, old age, sickness, insanity, spite, passion, famine, deceit, etc.).” The presence of such things in our lives is our mind’s self-punishment for releasing evil (judgment) into the world.

This world of our dream, however, is not the *real* world. *That* world is “unaffected” by the world of the dream. In other words, none of the misfortunes of humankind have altered the real world, and the laws of the real world remain unchanged. Our ignorant mistake has had no effects (6:8).

As we have seen in earlier parts of the Text, the *real world* is not Heaven, but a perceptual reflection of Heaven, a dream of waking. It is not a world of form because it has no buildings, streets, stores, or day or night (T-13.VII.1:1-8). *The Manual for Teachers*, in the Clarification of Terms section, tells us that the body’s eyes cannot see it (C-4.2:1 (FIP), C-3.2:1 (CE)); it is a non-physical realm seen with an inner vision. I sometimes think that the real world is like a perceptual *overlay* or filter through which we look at the world. I draw that from these words;

Each spot His reason touches grows alive with beauty, and what seemed ugly in the darkness of your lack of reason is suddenly released to loveliness. Not even what the Son of God made in insanity could be without a hidden spark of beauty that gentleness could release.

6 “All this beauty will rise to bless your sight as you look upon the world with forgiving eyes. For forgiveness literally transforms vision, and lets you see the real world reaching quietly and gently across chaos and removing all illusions that had twisted your perception and fixed it on the past. The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder, and a blade of grass a sign of God’s perfection.” (T-17.II.5:4-6:3 (CE), T-17.II.5:4-6:3 (FIP))

Practice Suggestion: (6:1-3). *Try applying these lines to your life: “Now is the time when my childhood should be passed and gone forever. I will not retain the toys of children. I will put them all away, for I have need of them no more. I no longer need [this idol] or [that idol] or [this other idol].”*

Paragraph 7

7 The real world still is but a dream, except the figures have been changed. ²They are not seen as idols which betray. ³It is a dream in which no one is used to substitute for something else, or interposed between the thoughts the mind conceives and what it sees. ⁴No one is used for something he is not, for childish things have all been put away.⁷ ⁵And what was once a dream of judgment now has changed into a dream where all is joy, because that is the purpose that it has. ⁶Only forgiving dreams can enter here, for time is almost over. ⁷And the forms which enter in the dreams are now perceived as brothers, not in judgment but in love.

• Study Questions •

8. *Have the actual figures in the dream been changed, or has the meaning and purpose given them been changed?*
9. **(7:3).** *Where else in this section have we seen this idea of taking a “someone” (or, rather, our image of that someone) and “interposing” him between our judgmental thoughts and the external punishment they bring on?*
10. **(7:3).** *What is an idol, our image of someone, used to substitute for, take the place of (see VIII.1:6-7, 2:2)?*
11. **(7:3-4).** *In these sentences, is an idol portrayed as an external thing (for instance, a place or a possession) or as a person (special relationship partner)?*

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As it has done before, the Course points out that the real world just referred to in the preceding paragraph is “still...a dream” (7:1), that is, not Heaven, not reality (for instance, see T-13.VII.2:4 (FIP), T-13.VII.2:1 (CE), where “both” refers to the world you see and the real world). The term is part of a progression of terms the Course often uses: in this instance, world, real world, and Heaven. I’ve referred before (in commenting on T-3.IV, Answer Key, Question #4, for instance) to the various triads of terms that show the same progression:

⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:11 (KJV): “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” In the above reference, the “childish things” we put away are the toys that “adults” play with—the idols of the world.

World	Real world	Heaven
Wrong-minded	Right-minded	One-minded
False perception	True perception	Knowledge
Nightmare	Happy Dream	Awakening

The Course always identifies the middle term as its goal and tells us that the final member of each triad is beyond its scope. It is simply *preparing* us for that final step, which will be carried out by God. So, as you can see, both a *nightmare* and a *happy dream* are still dreams. What distinguishes them?

When we see with Christ's vision, we look upon the dream in a new way. Christ's vision transforms the figures in the dream from "idols that betray" into "brothers" who are "perceived...not in judgment, but in love" (7:1-2, 7). The figures in the dream become symbols or reflections of Heaven. On the one hand, a mind in the real world sees the physical world but interprets everything as symbols of loving thoughts. On the other hand, with Christ's vision, a mind sees *through* the physical world to a non-physical reality: Heaven, or the face of Christ, which symbolizes the holiness of all things in God.

In this real world, we no longer *use* other people to meet our own imagined needs (7:4), either to acquire their specialness or to make them scapegoats for our guilt. We stop projecting blame on them for our pain and sorrow and stop seeking their punishment for what we perceive as *their* sins, which are the images of our *own* thoughts (7:3). In the real world, the purpose of the world is *joy*, not judgment (7:5). Imagine the difference it could make if we entered every situation in our lives with this simple change of purpose from judgment to joy! That change of purpose would dictate that "only forgiving dreams can enter here" (7:6).

T-29.V.8:5 (FIP), T-29.VI.7:5 (CE) was the most recent passage to mention forgiving dreams. In such dreams, we stop dreaming of a world outside of us, which means we see the world *within* us. These dreams will lead us beyond *all* dreams to eternal life. They are mentioned here (7:6) as the only kind of dream that belongs to the real world and are also the subject of the next paragraph and paragraph 10.

Paragraph 8

8 Forgiveing dreams have little need to last. ²They are not made to separate the mind from what it thinks. ³They do not seek to prove the dream is being dreamed by someone else. ⁴And in these dreams a melody is heard which everyone remembers, though he has not heard it since before all time began. ⁵Forgiveness, once complete, brings timelessness so close the song of Heaven can be heard, not with the ears, but with the holiness that never left the altar which abides forever deep within the Son of God. ⁶And when he hears this song again, he knows he never heard it not. ⁷And where is time when dreams of judgment have been put away?

• **Study Question** •

12. 8:7 says that when dreams of judgment have been put away, time is no longer perceived. Why does time disappear when we set aside of dreams of judgment?

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Once forgiveness enters the dream, the dream will not persist for much longer (8:1). The Course often mentions this notion. For instance:

“The Final Judgment on the world contains no condemnation. For it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless. Without a cause, and now without a function in Christ’s sight, it merely slips away to nothingness.” (W-WI.10.2:1-3)

“When the thought of separation has been changed to one of true forgiveness, will the world be seen in quite another light; and one which leads to truth, where all the world must disappear and all its errors vanish.” (W-WI.3.1:4)

“The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more for God to take His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it as it goes, and leaving but the truth to be itself.” (W-WI.8.5:1-2)

“The perception of the real world will be so short that you will barely have time to thank God for it. For God will take the last step swiftly, when you have reached the real world and have been made ready for Him.

“The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness.” (T-17.II.4:4-5, 5:1)

The last quotation implies, of course, that not all our dreams have been transformed from judgment to forgiveness. The world is a classroom in which we learn forgiveness. If we are still here, we still have more learning to do.

Does pain seem real in the perception? If it does, be sure the lesson is not learned. And there remains an unforgiveness hiding in the mind that sees the pain through eyes the mind directs. (W-193.7:2-4)

By implication from 8:2–3, *unforgiving* dreams are “made to separate the mind from what it thinks” and “seek to prove the dream is being dreamed by someone else.” In other words, the whole purpose of the dream and everything in it is to prove that our thoughts are not what control and manipulate the dream. The dream is continually trying to demonstrate its independent existence and to deny our responsibility for it. Both things are interminable tasks because they are simply impossible, so the job of unforgiving dreams is never accomplished. *Forgiving* dreams, however, have a simple task: to prove that truth is true and what is false is false. Once the mind accepts forgiving dreams, their task is complete because their goal already exists and always has existed. So they have “little need to last” (8:1).

When our dream becomes one of forgiveness, we once again can hear “the forgotten song” (T-21.I), the song of Heaven. This song lives in *everyone's* memory, although our entrance into time has blotted out our awareness of it (8:4). We recognize it at once when we hear it:

Listen, and see if you remember an ancient song you knew so long ago and held more dear than any melody you taught yourself to cherish since. (T-21.I.7:5 (FIP), T-21.I.9:4 (CE))

The song begins again which had been stilled only an instant, though it seemed to be unsung forever. (C-Epilogue.4:6)

Prayer is the greatest gift with which God blessed His Son at his creation. It was then what it is to become; the single voice Creator and creation share; the song the Son sings to the Father, Who returns the thanks it offers Him unto the Son. Endless the harmony, and endless, too, the joyous concord of the love they give forever to each other. (S-In. I:1-3)

This is the archetypal song, the melody behind all music, the essence and aggregation of all the beauty, wonder, and joy of music we as a race have ever known. All the delight you have ever felt in listening to music originates in this song we sing with God. The repressed memory of home is what brings tears to our eyes as we listen. We are catching a hint of that “ancient state not quite forgotten,” remembering a wisp of that eternal melody and “how lovely was the song, how wonderful the setting where you heard it, and how you loved those who were there and listened with you” (T-21.I.6:3 (FIP), T-21.I.8:5 (CE)). When music moves you, you are remembering home.

Forgiveness brings the memory of this song to you with breath-taking clarity. Note that it is “Forgiveness, *once complete*” (8:5, my emphasis) that has this effect. It takes us almost into Heaven, almost into eternity. Earlier, Jesus said that the real world is a “borderland...just beyond [that is, *just outside*] the gate of Heaven” (T-26.III.2:4). It's very close to Heaven. He's now speaking of the same place or state. In the Song of Prayer, he says this about the culmination of forgiveness:

The ladder ends with this, for learning is no longer needed. Now you stand before the gate of Heaven, and your brother stands beside you there. The lawns are deep and still, for here the place appointed for the time when you should come has waited long for you. Here will time end forever. At this gate eternity itself will join with you. Prayer has become what it was meant to be, for you have recognized the Christ in you. (S-I.V.4:1-6)

Almost as fascinating as the song is the “organ” with which we hear it. It is heard “not with ears, but with the holiness that never left the altar that abides forever deep within the Son of God” (8:5). I like taking statements like this and making them personal: “There is a holiness that abides forever at the altar deep within me.” Through forgiveness, we reconnect with that inner holiness. That holiness is what hears the forgotten song we sing with God because it is God's own holiness that He gave to us in creation, which resonates with the melody God's heart is ever singing.

Tuning forks are set to a particular tonal frequency. If something near it like a voice or musical instrument sounds the same tone, the tuning fork begins to vibrate. Have you ever heard a tuning fork or guitar string that begins to “sing,” issuing its tone, when something else issues that same tone? Similarly, when our inner heart is exposed to God’s holiness, we begin to vibrate or resonate with the same frequency because we were tuned to that frequency at the moment of creation. The only reason we have not always been singing that song is that we have wrapped the “tuning fork” of our holiness in heavy cotton padding, the padding of our unforgiveness or judgment, soaked in time. Though the song continues, the tuning fork cannot resonate with it. It is an eternal song, but time has blocked out eternity. When we remove that padding through forgiveness, the tuning fork begins at once to vibrate because, beneath that padding, its nature has never changed. Just so, when we hear God’s song, we know that we have always heard it (8:6).

The final sentence adds that when we relinquish judgment, we no longer have any need for time (8:7), so time no longer stands in the way of our inner hearing of the eternal song.

Paragraph 9

9 Whenever you feel fear in any form—and you *are* fearful if you do not feel a deep content, a certainty of help, a calm assurance Heaven goes with you—be sure you made an idol and believe it will betray you. ²For beneath your hope that it will save you lies the guilt and pain of self-betrayal and uncertainty, so deep and bitter that the dream cannot conceal completely all your sense of doom. ³Your self-betrayal must result in fear, and fear *is* judgment, leading surely to the frantic search for idols and for death.

• Study Questions •

13. **(9:1).** *Think about this statement, that you are afraid if you are not feeling a “deep content, a certainty of help, a calm assurance Heaven goes with you.” What does it say about your usual state of mind? And why are you afraid?*

14. **(9:2).** *Why—and this question is crucial to the whole section—do you believe your idol will betray you?*

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All of our fears are related to idols. We make an idol to save us, and then become convinced it will betray us instead (9:1). At some level, we know the tremendous power over us that we have given to our idols. We have to give them that power for them to save us, but it also gives them the power to do us great harm. It makes me think of people who give themselves over to a guru for their salvation only to have the guru betray them by stealing their money or sexually abusing them, or in some other way failing as their savior.

Others experience tremendous hurt and betrayal after the dissolution of a special love relationship that fails to live up to their expectations. For most of us, even if we have never personally gone through a deep personal betrayal, we have heard of it so often that even as we *consider* beginning a love relationship, the fear of eventual betrayal arises. We are afraid to love because we are afraid of being hurt.

The point made here is that such fear is not an isolated case. *All our fears derive from idols*. In some way, at some level, fear in any form means that we have an idol we believe will betray us. And what is more, fear is much more pervasive than we realize. If we had no fear at any moment, we would “feel a deep content, a certainty of help, a calm assurance Heaven goes with [us]” (9:1). So if we do *not* feel that way, we are in fear and believe an idol will betray us.

Why are you so sure your idols will betray you? Because an idol embodies your *self*-betrayal (9:2–3). It holds your judgments for you, and you think your judgments have betrayed you by making you guilty. Because of them, you think you are doomed. This logical sequence leads to a shocking conclusion: Your idols have the same function as the attacking dream you want them to protect you from. Both are there to deliver to you physically the judgment you laid on yourself.

I also think that the term “self-betrayal” may refer to how we have denied our true Self and judged against it. At some level, we recognize that all our judgments are judgments against ourselves. “It can be but myself I crucify” (W-196.Title). We *know* that we have crucified ourselves, and we feel guilty because of it; we fear judgment because of it. Although we have attempted to rid ourselves of guilt by projecting our self-judgment onto our idols, the idols now symbolize that guilt. The guilt pollutes our dream with an unshakeable sense of doom. In Edgar Allan Poe’s story, “The Telltale Heart,” a murderer hid his victim’s body beneath the floor but was driven mad because every time he stood in the room where he had buried the body, he heard the beating of the victim’s heart. Similarly, our idols are constant reminders of what we hid in them. Intended to save us, they damn us and drive us to “the frantic search for [better] idols” and, eventually, driven mad by guilt, the search “for death” (9:3).

Paragraph 10

10 Forgive dreams remind you that you live in safety and have not attacked yourself. ²So do your childish terrors melt away. ³And dreams become a sign that you have made a new beginning, not another try to worship idols and to keep attack. ⁴Forgive dreams are kind to everyone who figures in the dream, and so they bring the dreamer full release from dreams of fear. ⁵He does not fear his judgment, for he has judged no one, nor has sought to be released through judgment from what judgment must impose. ⁶And all the while he is remembering what he forgot when judgment seemed to be the way to *save* him from its penalty.⁸

• Study Questions •

15. **(10:1)**. *Forgive dreams remind you that you have not attacked anyone and so have not attacked yourself and so have no attacks to fear. Using the imagery of this section, explain why has none of this happened.*

16. **(10:2)**. *How do your dreams signify (“become a sign”) that you have switched from judging and worshipping idols to a new beginning?*

17. **(10:4)**. *What causes forgive dreams to release the dreamer from fear? What is the cause and effect connection here?*

•

The good news that forgive dreams bring is that we have nothing to fear and have not attacked ourselves (10:1). The whole rationale of fear that precipitates and perpetuates the game of idols is without any ground. *We are already safe.*

Although we are still living in the dream (and are not yet awake in Heaven), our dreams now lose the element of fear that once dominated them (10:2). Having forgiven, we have broken the cycle of judgment, and now we manifest the contentment, certainty, and calm assurance that characterize those from whom fear is absent. Such peaceful dreams are the clear indicators that we “have made a new beginning” (10:3). (The title of the next chapter, by the way, is “The New Beginning.”) Forgive dreams pour kindness on your mind and heart, but not just yours. They uplift “everyone who figures in the dream” (10:4). You are free from guilt, and you realize that everyone is as innocent as you are, bringing you “full release from dreams of fear.”

My comrade, Robert Perry, so nicely summarizes the last part of this paragraph that I can do no better than to quote that summary here:

(10:5-6). These last two sentences summarize the insane process described in this section, while also suggesting a release. Here is the process:

1. You judge (you condemn).

⁸ This means “when judgment [carried out by his idols] seemed to be the way to *save* him from its penalty [carried out by the dangers in the dream].”

2. This judgment imposes a judgment on you, a self-condemnation, which will be carried out through the events of the dream you dream.
3. So then you hire idols to protect you from this penalty. But they are there to express *judgment* against it. They, then, are vehicles of judgment. You are using judgment to save you from judgment. Something is wrong here.
4. Since they are expressing *your* judgment for you, the judgment that made you deserving of punishment, the judgment by which you betrayed yourself, they will turn on you and betray you. They will do the same to you as what they are there to protect you from.
5. The way out of all this? Judge no one, and you will remember all that you forgot during the dream of judgment. You will remember the song of Heaven.

Answer Key

1. The emphasis is that our slavery to idols is a *willing* slavery. We must have chosen it.
2. Being a judge made us an attacker and, therefore, apparently a sinner. That is how we “fell” so low. Falling lower than the stones on the ground is not merely an image of powerlessness but lost innocence. This apparent fall made God seem to be our enemy because now (we believe) He became the punisher of our sin. So our judging resulted (so we think) in God’s judging us in return.
3. I can think of two ways that idols protect us from the world’s harsh judgment upon us. First, they stop the world’s attacks from reaching us somehow, either by changing the world’s mind about us (a great looking mate or a lot of money makes the world think better of us) or by physically warding off danger (a guard dog stops intruders, food stops hunger, a roof stops the rain). Second, they communicate a positive view of who we are, which helps counteract the world’s negative judgment of us. They make us *special*. For instance, a beautiful house says, “You are a fabulous person,” as does a well-paying job, a remarkable achievement, or a Ph.D. By giving you this positive self-image, idols make you strong, while the world would make you weak and miserable.
4. You don’t want to realize that you made up your world, that you dreamt it. You don’t want to realize that only you have given life to your idols (the bodies, possessions, rights, achievements, desired places, etc., you have collected to yourself). Everything they do is only in your mind, and all that they do is speak your words and feel your feelings.
5. I think the image of toys turning against us represents our idols betraying us by failing what we hoped they would do. Take a romantic relationship, for instance, that starts with the “other” being on a pedestal and perhaps ends with them being a monster in our eyes! Could it be the entire drama was a projection of our mind?
6. Remember, these idols are there to ward off and counteract the world’s judgment upon us. Their purpose, therefore, is to condemn the world’s judgment on us.

- Let's take our example of money. Without money, the world might judge us as insignificant, unimportant, lazy, irresponsible, or second class. Our money, then, does battle with this judgment. It gets in the world's face and tells the world that it is wrong about us. We don't have to send this condemning message to the world ourselves. Our money does it for us. Our money expresses our aggression for us.
7. Bad things seem to happen to you because, in your dream, you are the all-powerful, terrible judge. You judge yourself for this, and your dream naturally expresses to you this judgment on yourself. You are punishing yourself for your imagined sins.
 8. Their meaning and purpose have been changed. 7:3 makes this clear: "They are not *seen as...*" [italics mine], and also in 7:6 and 7:8.
 9. The idea occurred in 2:7, 2:9, and 3:7.
 10. This image substitutes for your brother's reality and your reality.
 11. As a person. Both sentences use the phrase "no one is used." A prominent class of idols, then, is images we make of other people to use them for something they are not, use them as a substitute for who they really are. The last sentence of this paragraph backs this up. It talks about us perceiving the forms that enter the dream (obviously human bodies) as brothers we love rather than judge.
 12. When we set aside dreams of judgment, we experience forgiving dreams instead. In those dreams, we hear a song "not heard...since before all time began" (8:4). We cannot hear this song while our mind dwells in time. We hear it only when we are in touch with eternity. And that cannot happen while we hold onto dreams of judgment.
 13. Your typical state of mind is not deeply content with a calm assurance of Heaven's presence. It is, therefore, a state of fear. You are afraid because you believe you made an idol that will betray you.
 14. You think your idol will betray you because it carries the thoughts *by which you believe you betrayed yourself*.
 15. None of it has happened because it was only a childish game, nothing more.
 16. 10:1-3 describes how our terrors have melted away and have been replaced by peace. These new dreams signify that we have switched from judging to a new beginning.
 17. Forgiving dreams release from fear because the dreamer is kind (see 10:4), not judgmental (see 10:5); therefore, he need not fear a dream that punishes him for his sins.

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.

Effects of Switching Editions of the Course

The commentaries on Chapters 29, 30, and 31 were written prior to the publication of the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE) of the Course in 2017. Originally they were based on the edition published by the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP). The references to other parts of the Course were based on the FIP edition, and the comments themselves were based on the same edition. There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and these final chapters had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate CE reference if it differs from the FIP reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.

