

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 31

The Final Vision

Section V.8:2–17:8

The Concept of the Self (Part 2)

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 V

The previous section spent a lot of time talking about how we have been following all the paths the world offers in the mistaken assumption that they are somehow different from one another. In reality, they all lead to the same place, to death; they lead us away from the truth of what we are. It assured us that we cannot escape from what we are; a journey away from ourselves does not exist. It asked us to abandon the pathways of the world and to choose a “real alternative.”

This section begins by talking about “the world’s learning” and “the concept of the self,” showing how they are related to one another. Choosing the alternative to the world’s pathways means choosing a different way of looking at ourselves.

Pay attention to the term *concept*. It will occur a lot in this section and, as it turns out, in most of the remaining sections in this final chapter of the Text. The terms *lesson* and *learning* also occur over and over throughout the chapter. They are all related. A lesson inculcates concepts that we must learn. The current section states that the concepts in question are primarily about how we think of ourselves, but they give birth to concepts about the world.

In the second half of this long section (paragraphs 8 to 17), Jesus first shows that the ego’s lesson, namely that you are what your brother made of you, is utterly illogical. He shows how our concept of the entire world would disappear if we let go of our concept of self. He invites us to consider alternatives to the ego’s lesson. He explains that we must have deliberately chosen this false self-concept. He zeros in on the positive fact: the ability of our minds to choose. We will move through many different concepts of self until we reach the point where no images of the self remain. We will realize we don’t

know what we are and thus open our minds to the return of the truth. Salvation lies in learning that *we don't know what we are or what the world is.*

Paragraph 8

8 Thus are the Holy Spirit's lesson plans arranged in easy steps, that though there be some lack of ease at times and some distress, there is no shattering of what was learned, but just a retranslation of what seems to be the evidence on its behalf. ²Let us consider, then, what proof there is that you are what your brother made of you. ³For even though you do not yet perceive that this is what you think, you surely learned by now that you *behave as if it were.*

In the last commentary, we left off after considering 8:1 because 8:2 begins a new topic: evaluating the apparent evidence on behalf of the ego's concept of the self: that I am the thing my brother or sister made of me, and they stand condemned because of it. Instead of "shattering" what we have taught ourselves (8:1), inducing total panic and the fear we are losing our self, the Holy Spirit simply reinterprets the evidence we've used to support our flawed self-perception. This reinterpretation follows, reconsidering evidence for the "proof...that you are what your brother made of you" (8:2).

We probably don't fully accept that this is our belief. We have not yet perceived that we think like this. If we were not trying to conceal our victim layer, we would not have a "face of innocence," whose purpose is to *hide* the victim layer. When we fully acknowledge the victim part of our self-concept, we no longer need a mask to hide it from ourselves. There is evidence for our belief in the existence of the victim layer, however: *our behavior* (8:3). We commit hostile acts and then claim they don't represent us. We maintain that a brother or sister provoked us and forced us to defend ourselves. And there is the victim. We can see it in little ways. We haven't yet accepted that victimhood is a governing principle of our identity.

Paragraph 9

9 Does he react for you? ²And did he know exactly what would happen? ³Could he see your future, and ordain before it came what you should do in every circumstance?¹ ⁴He must have made the world as well as you² to have such prescience in the things to come.

So let's consider the evidence for the victim level. As you read, ask yourself these questions and answer them.

Perhaps your brother does something that “sets you off,” but does he control *how you react*? Perhaps you think he is somehow responsible for your reactions. After all, don't we all sometimes feel that we couldn't help responding with anger? We say, “You make me so angry!” *And we believe it!* So maybe we do feel that he controls our reactions, at least at times.

If so, ask yourself, “Did he know how this would turn out?” Do we think he knows what will happen due to our reactions and chooses the one that gives him the desired outcome? That is extremely unlikely! (9:1–4) Only a being who created you and created the whole world would be able to predict the future with complete certainty.

When we think someone else is responsible for our behavior, we aren't making sense. No one is in control of your thoughts but *you*. Your brother could not be controlling your reactions unless he is also controlling what you are reacting *to*. We are attributing omnipotence to another human being.

¹ In other words, the idea that your brother made you what you are implies that he is the cause of what you *do*. This implies that he knows ahead of time what circumstances you will encounter (“exactly what would happen”), that he controls your reactions to them (“react for you”), and that this extends to everything—that he foresees *every* circumstance you'll face and dictates *all* your reactions to them (“see your future, and ordain before it came what you should do in every circumstance”). All of this must be true if he, rather than you, is the author of what you do.

² This means “He must have made the world as well as making you.”

Paragraph 10

10 That you are what your brother made of you seems most unlikely.
²Even if he did, who gave the face of innocence to you? ³Is this *your* contribution? ⁴Who is, then, the “you” who made it? ⁵And who is deceived by all your goodness and attacks it so? ⁶Let us forget the concept’s foolishness, and merely think of this: There are two parts to what you think yourself to be. ⁷If one was generated by your brother, who was there to make the other? ⁸And from whom must something be kept hidden? ⁹If the world be evil, there is still no need to hide what you are made of. ¹⁰Who is there to see? ¹¹And what but is attacked could need defense?³

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- 1. *We are hiding the victim self-concept in us (by covering it over with the face of innocence) because we fear that someone would attack it. The question is: Who do we fear would attack it?*
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The mad idea of the ego, “that you are what your brother made of you,” is “most unlikely” (10:1). But suppose he did. Who made up the face of innocence to mask the victim level? You? It could hardly be your brother (10:2–3). So it must have been you. But wait! You think of the face of innocence as yourself, but *that* you could not have made itself up. So who made it? There must be some other “you” involved here somehow (10:4). And someone is questioning the reality of the face of innocence, accusing it of being a sham (10:5). It’s all quite confusing, isn’t it?

Forget all the confusion and foolishness for a moment and take a closer look (10:6). We’ve established that “There are two parts to what you think yourself to be” (10:6). There are the victim and the face of innocence that attempts to hide the victim. If your brother made one of them, who made the other (10:7)? If the face of innocence was made to hide the victim, *from whom* is it being hidden (10:8)? The world is evil (you are its

³ This paragraph further undermines the idea that you are what your brother made you to be. It is based on the idea that the self-concept is made of two parts. There is the first part, the face of innocence, which “believes that it is good within an evil world” (2:6). This face serves as a mask that hides the second part, which we can call the *victim* and which condemns your brother for turning you into a “hated thing” (5:8) through his brutality. The existence of the face of innocence assumes that there is a need to hide the victim with a mask, and the mask must be defended against accusations that it *is* just a mask. All of this raises three questions: 1) Even if we accept that the second part (the victim) was made by your brother, “who gave the face of innocence to you?” 2) Who is attacking the face of innocence, accusing it of being just a façade? 3) Who is the victim being hidden from? After all, if the world is evil, who cares what it thinks? The implied answer to all three questions (an answer stated overtly in the first sentence of the next paragraph) is *you*. This makes you a powerful player in the picture, and this means that you cannot be a mere victim, at the mercy of your brother’s actions.

victim); why would you care what it thinks? Does a rape victim care what the rapist thinks of them? (10:9). Who is it that might see the victim level? Who needs a defense against seeing it (10:10–11)?

There has to be someone besides the world and these two entwined levels of your self-concept. As 11:1 suggests, *it must be you*. It must be you that is hiding the victim, you pretending to be the innocent face, and you who “must be kept in darkness” lest you see through the charade (11:1). You are and active participant in all this. Therefore you *cannot* be a victim of your brother.

Paragraph 11

11 Perhaps the reason why this concept must be kept in darkness is that, in the light, the one who would not think it true is *you*. ²And what would happen to the world you know if all its underpinnings were removed? ³Your concept of the world depends upon this concept of the self, and both would go if either one were ever raised to doubt. ⁴The Holy Spirit does not seek to throw you into panic. ⁵So He merely asks if just a little question might be raised.

Study Question

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- 2. *Based on the latter part of this paragraph, why are you determined to preserve the victim self-concept?*
- 3. *What do you think the Holy Spirit's “little question” might be?*
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So, who's hiding the self-concept? You, because you are afraid that seen in the light of day, you'd realize it was a bunch of nonsense (11:1). Worse than that, if your self-concept is nonsense, then “the world you know” would no longer exist because it rests on that faulty self-concept (11:2). The concepts you hold of the world and of yourself are mutually dependent. If one goes, the other goes with it (11:3).

Losing both your concept of the self and your concept of the world could understandably induce panic, and that isn't the intent of the Holy Spirit (11:4). Rather than spook you out by raising such drastic questions, He asks you “if just a *little* question might be raised” (11:5). How considerate! He *asks* if it would be okay. As He told us back in 8:1, He has no intention of “shattering” our illusions. He approaches our disillusionment in easy steps.

Don't you wonder what “little question” He wants to raise?

Paragraph 12

12 There are alternatives about the thing that you might be. ²You might, for instance, be the thing you chose to have your *brother* be.⁴ ³This shifts the concept of the self from what is wholly passive, and at least makes way for active choice and some acknowledgment that interaction must have entered in. ⁴There is some understanding that you chose for both of you, and what he represents has meaning that was given it by you. ⁵It also shows some glimmering of sight into perception's law that what you see reflects the state of the perceiver's mind. ⁶Yet who was it that did the choosing first? ⁷If you are what you chose your brother be, alternatives were there to choose between, and someone must have first decided on the one to choose and let the others go.

I confess that the identity of the “little question” (11:5) is not immediately apparent. Some believe it refers to all the many questions in paragraphs 8 and 9, but I think it is more subtle than that. In 12:1, Jesus suggests that there are *alternatives* about the thing that you might be. We think we are the innocent self or the victim, but *maybe* we are something else. He is questioning our conclusions about who we are and suggesting alternatives (12:1). That, to me, is the “little” question.

He emphasizes that “there *are* alternatives” (12:1). Then he offers a for instance: “you might...be the thing you chose to have your *brother* be” (12:2). That is a more challenging suggestion than you may think at first glance. What *was* that role that you chose for your brother? Oh, yes. I remember: victimizer! Wait, what? I think maybe I’m a victim, and you suggest I might be the *victimizer*? The idea here is that you both are victimizers. You made your brother into the guilty sinner, but as a victimizer, he made you what you are. What’s the advantage of that idea?

Well, for one thing, being a victim is a very passive role. It is being inflicted on you by someone else. If you are a *victimizer*, you are active, not passive. It “makes way for active choice” (12:3). If you have chosen to be a victimizer, it acknowledges that *you have a choice* about the role you are playing, which hints at the possibility of choosing something different.

What’s more, it acknowledges that “interaction must have entered in” (12:3). There has been some influence from your brother on your view of yourself. You chose the roles for both you (victimizer) and your brother. The role you give him is either victim or victimizer, but regardless of which, “what he represents has meaning that was given it by *you* ” (12:4).

⁴ What “you chose to have your *brother* be” is the evil victimizer who stands condemned for turning his brother (namely, you) into a grotesque, hated thing. So now, you are also an evil victimizer who stands condemned for turning your *brother* into a grotesque, hated thing.

If we open ourselves to the possibility that *we* are a victimizer, we have realized that *our choice* has power, that *we* are the ones giving meaning to the roles both *we* and our brother play. That's huge!

A third benefit of becoming willing to think we might be the victimizer is that we have begun to recognize the functioning of “perception’s law”: “What you see reflects the state of the *perceiver’s* mind” (12:5). The perceiver is you, of course, and how you see your brother reflects *your* state of mind, not his. When you realize that you have chosen the roles for both yourself and the other, you have to realize that your state of mind has determined how you perceive your brother, and his state of mind determines how he sees you.

The question that arises is, “Who chose first” (12:6)? It’s a kind of vicious circle. You made your brother into the one who made you into the one who made him into the one who..., ad infinitum. Someone must have made the first choice (12:7).

Paragraph 13

13 Although this step has gains, it does not yet approach a basic question: Something must have gone *before* these concepts of the self, and something must have done the learning which gave rise to them. ²Nor can this be explained by either view.⁵ ³The main advantage of the shifting to the second from the first is that you somehow entered in the choice by your decision. ⁴But this gain is paid in almost equal loss, for now you stand accused of guilt for what your brother is. ⁵And you must *share* his guilt, because you chose it for him in the image of your own. ⁶While only he was treacherous before, now must *you* be condemned along with him.

Recognizing the victimizer in ourselves hiding beneath the upper two layers offers many gains. To summarize them:

- you are no longer wholly passive
- you must have made an active choice
- you must have interacted with your brother (since you made him and he made you)
- your choice was a choice for both of you
- the meaning you see in him was put there by you
- what you see in him was put there by your state of mind—an acknowledgment of perception’s law

But there is an unanswered question remaining. The question is: Who or what was the something or someone who did the learning that produced these concepts? Something

⁵ The two views are 1) that you are the damaged victim your brother made of you (as the second aspect of the self-concept claims; see 9:1) or 2) that you are the victimizer, the very “thing you chose to have your *brother* be” (12:2). Neither of these views explains the “you” that came before these two concepts of the self and did “the learning which gave rise to them.”

must have been there before the concepts existed. What was it? (13:1). Of the two views of yourself, victim or victimizer, neither one can be the “you” that *came before* these concepts and produced them (13:2). There must be a still deeper “you” that we haven’t stumbled on yet.

13:3 mentions “shifting to the second from the first.” It refers to the two views about what you are: victim (the first view) or victimizer (the second view). Shifting to the second view gives some advantage because, in this view, “you somehow entered in the choice by *your* decision” (13:3). Of all the gains in the second view that we just listed, the “main advantage” is that you must have made an active choice. You are the one who assigned the roles to yourself and your brother. If you are not the victim

The downside of the second view is that in affirming the power of your choice in assigning roles, “now *you* stand accused of guilt for what your *brother* is” (13:4). Before (in view 1), as the victim, only your brother was guilty as victimizer. You now *both* seem to be guilty (13:5–6). So, though it has some benefits, this alternative isn’t so desirable.

The same progression in self-view from victim to victimizer is depicted vividly in Workbook Lesson 196, “It can be but myself I crucify.” The lesson approaches the subject from a slightly different angle, but it is about realizing that you are the victimizer, not only of others but also of yourself. It speaks of the guilt which arises when that realization hits home.

“There is an instant in which terror seems to grip your mind so wholly that escape appears quite hopeless. When you realize, once and for all, that it is you you fear, the mind perceives itself as split. And this had been concealed while you believed attack could be directed outward and returned from outside to within. It seemed to be an enemy outside you had to fear. And thus a god outside yourself became your mortal enemy, the source of fear.”

“Now, for an instant, is a murderer perceived within you, eager for your death, intent on plotting punishment for you until the time when it can kill at last. Yet in this instant is the time as well in which salvation comes.” (W-196.1:1-11:2 (CE))

We saw this same shift from victim to victimizer back in Chapter 27:

“Once, you were unaware of what the cause of everything the world appeared to thrust upon you, uninvited and unasked, must really be. Of one thing you were sure: Of all the many causes you perceived as bringing pain and suffering to you, your guilt was *not* among them.” (T-27.IX.1:1–2 (CE))

“A brother separated from yourself, an ancient enemy, a murderer who stalks you in the night and plots your death, yet plans that it be lingering and slow—of this you dream. And *underneath* this dream is yet another, in which *you* become the murderer, the secret enemy, the scavenger and the destroyer of the brother and the world you fear alike.” (T-27.IX.5:2–3 (CE))

That moment when “a murderer [is] perceived within you” can be devastating, the sudden sense of guilt overwhelming. And yet, “in this instant is the time as well in which

salvation comes.” When we reach the victimizer layer, we almost immediately touch on something even deeper, what Robert calls “the call for love” or “the loving mind.”

“Beneath all your grandiosity, which you hold so dear, is your real call for help.” (T-13.III.9:1 (CE), T-13.III.8:1 (FIP))

The “grandiosity” is the three layers we’ve discussed: the face of innocence, the victim, and the victimizer. There is something *beneath* all this.

“The reason you must look upon your delusions and not keep them hidden is that they do not rest on their own foundation. In concealment they appear to do so, and thus they seem to be self-sustained. This is the fundamental illusion on which they rest. For *beneath* them, and concealed as long as they are hidden, is the loving mind that thought it made them in anger. And the pain in this mind is so apparent when it is uncovered that its need of healing cannot be denied. None of the tricks and games that have been offered it can heal it, for here is the *real* crucifixion of God’s Son.” (T-13.III.7:1–6 (CE), (T-13.III.6:1-6 (FIP)).

That’s where the guilt hits us.

That is where the Course is heading. Yet, as the Course tells us, we cannot skip steps. We have to look at these delusional self-concepts and see their error. This mental shift from the face of innocence to the victim to the victimizer is the path that everyone must walk to escape from the ego’s world. The good news is that the journey does not end here! Remember what was said back in Paragraph 7: “A concept of the self is meaningless” (7:1). And in Paragraph 6: “Not one of them [concepts] is true.” We are slowly peeling away the layers of concepts, but eventually, we have to go beyond concepts.

Paragraph 14

14 The concept of the self has always been the great preoccupation of the world. ²And everyone believes that he must find the answer to the riddle of himself. ³Salvation can be seen as nothing more than the escape from concepts. ⁴It does not concern itself with content of the mind, but with the simple statement that it thinks. ⁵And what can think has choice, and can be shown that different thoughts have different consequence. ⁶And it can learn that everything it thinks reflects the deep confusion that it feels about how it was made and what it is. ⁷And vaguely does the concept of the self appear to answer what it does not know.

Everyone spends a great deal of time trying to figure out their self-concept. “I’m trying to find myself,” we hear some people say. Haven’t you at some time wondered about just who you are, what about you is real, and what isn’t? It’s a universal preoccupation. We think what we are is a riddle, and we have to find the answer (14::1–2). We need to abandon that search! We need and want deep down to “*escape* from concepts” (14:3). Concepts are ideas that we have made up. They are all false and all meaningless. Only the Thoughts of God are true.

Sentence 14:4 seems to contradict the rest of the Course, which seems wholly concerned with the content of your thinking. It even seems to contradict the following sentence, which talks about how different thoughts (different mental *content*) have different consequences (14:5). As I see it, the meaning is that salvation does not concern itself with the issue of what specific concepts you are thinking—what specific forms the ego’s thinking takes—since all of your concepts are false. All we can learn about our concepts is that we can choose what they are and that, no matter what we choose, different thoughts have different consequences. *All* concepts have consequences. We have many thoughts about how we came into being and what we are. All of them do no more than reflect our deep confusion on those matters (14:6). Our concepts of ourselves seem to tell us what we are vaguely, but no concept contains a satisfactory answer to what we are because *our minds do not know the answer*.

Paragraph 15

15 Seek not your Self in symbols. ²There can be no concept that can stand for what you are. ³What matters it which concept you accept while you perceive a self which interacts with evil and reacts to wicked things? ⁴Your concept of yourself will still remain quite meaningless. ⁵And you will not perceive that you can interact but with yourself. ⁶To see a guilty world is but the sign your learning has been guided by the world, and you behold it as you see yourself. ⁷The concept of the self embraces all you look upon, and nothing is outside of this perception. ⁸If you can be hurt by anything, you see a picture of your secret wishes—nothing more than this. ⁹And in your suffering of any kind, you see your own concealed desire to kill.

Concepts are merely symbols. Jesus urges us not to seek a symbol of ourselves. No concept exists “that can stand for what you are” (15:1–2); it doesn’t matter which concept of self we accept (15:3). We keep trying to figure out what our relationship is to the outside world. We see a wicked world and our self interacts with evil and evil things. How are we to react to the evil that surrounds us? As long as we think of things in this way, we will see a separate self that interacts with an evil world outside of us, and our self-concept will harden in meaninglessness (15:4). We will be unable to perceive that we are never interacting with anything but *ourselves* (15:5). That is the whole purpose of these top three layers: to prevent us from realizing that we never interact with anything but ourselves.

What a mind-boggling statement! “You can interact but with yourself.” The Course affirms this idea in other places as well:

“The voice you hear in him your brother is but your own. What does he ask of you? And listen well. For he is asking what will come to you, because you see an image of yourself and hear your voice requesting what you want.” (T-31.II.5:6-6:4 (CE))

“*There is nothing outside you.* That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is in that realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you.” (T-18.VI.1:1–2 (CE))T-18.VI.1:1-2 (FIP)

What do those top three layers of self-concept have in common? You believe you are one of these three: the innocent one in an evil world, or the victim of the world, or the victimizer of the world. In all of them, you think of yourself as something separate from a world that exists outside of you. And “there is nothing outside you.” “You can interact but with yourself.” That is the ultimate lesson we have to learn! In another place the Course says that the central thought the Course has to teach us is that there is no world.

Do you see how both of these teachings are saying the same thing? You can interact only with yourself because there is no world; there is nothing outside of you to interact *with*.

If you now see a guilty world, it is a clear sign that the world has guided all your learning, and you see a world that is nothing more than a projection of yourself (15:6). You see a world that springs from your perception of yourself (15:7). When you see someone as guilty, you see a projection of your self-concept. When you see a violent terrorist movement or a global pandemic, you see a projection of your self-concept. *Everything you see* is a projection of your self-concept. When you experience hurt, you perceive only “a picture of your secret wishes [to *be* hurt]—nothing more than this” (15:8). In any suffering, you experience, “you see your own concealed desire to kill” (15:9).

This teaching is difficult to accept. So far as it goes, it does not offer us much sense of freedom or release, does it? Bear with it. As Jesus says, we must look at our delusions and not keep them hidden. We are looking at the delusional system of those made mad by guilt. It may help a bit to remind yourself that this is all *delusion*. We have to see it to get past it, and we *will* get past it.

Paragraph 16

16 You will make many concepts of the self as learning goes along. ²Each one will show the changes in your own relationships, as your perception of yourself is changed. ³There will be some confusion every time there is a shift, but be you thankful that the learning of the world is loosening its grasp upon your mind. ⁴And be you sure and happy in the confidence that it will go at last and leave your mind at peace. ⁵The role of the accuser will appear in many places and in many forms, and each will seem to be accusing you. ⁶But have no fear it will not be undone. ⁷The world can teach no images of you unless you want to learn them.

Yes. We *will* get past our delusions. In the process of getting there, we will “make many concepts of the self,” The three we’ve examined are rather like *categories* of self-concept. There are many subdivisions in them we may pass through as our learning progresses —“easy steps,” as the Course called them earlier (16:1). The implication is

that we should not despair if we find ourselves expressing any of these self-concepts; it's expected. It won't happen just because we read this section!

Every time our perception of ourselves changes, we will see changes in our relationships to match them (16:2). And there will be "some confusion" every time our perceptions shift. We should look on the bright side. The changes show progress. They indicate that we are disentangling ourselves from the lessons of the world; be thankful for that (16:3)! You will be getting closer to complete liberation from concepts. You can be certain of that, happy that the world's learning will eventually be gone, leaving your mind at peace (16:4).

Perhaps the most consistent self-concept you will experience is that of the victimizer. It will show up "in many places and in many forms," and in the end, each appearance will end up pointing the finger at you, eliciting some feeling of guilt (16:5). Don't be concerned. "Have no fear it will not be undone" (16:6). Ultimately *you* are in charge. The self-concepts cannot be entirely accepted "unless you want to learn them" (16:7).

Paragraph 17

17 There will come a time when images have all gone by, and you will see you know not what you are. ²It is to this unsealed and open mind that truth returns unhindered and unbound. ³Where concepts of the self have been laid by is truth revealed exactly as it is. ⁴When every concept has been raised to doubt and question, and been recognized as made of no assumptions that withstand the light, then is the truth left free to enter in its sanctuary clean and free of guilt. ⁵There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this:

⁶I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself.

⁷Yet in this learning is salvation born. ⁸And what you are will tell you of itself.

The time will come when all self-concepts have been doubted, questioned, recognized as vacuous, and have gone. You will then realize you just do not know what you are; the concepts were all meaningless (17:1). At that point, your mind will be "unsealed and open." You will no longer have any opinion about what you are, and you will be ready to receive the truth (17:2). This transformation and elimination of self-concepts make up the process of forgiveness, which leads to the same open-mindedness:

"Forgiveness gently looks upon all things unknown in Heaven, sees them disappear, and leaves the world a clean and unmarked slate on which the Word of God can now replace the senseless symbols written there before."
(W-pl.192.4:1).

Laying aside all concepts reveals the truth that is always already there (17:3). We are gradually wiping the slate of our mind clean until the truth is free to enter in (17:4). Truth's sanctuary (our mind) is now clean and free of guilt.

Paradoxically, the ultimate goal of our learning in the world is ignorance. The world *hates* ignorance and fears it above all else because it opens the way to truth.

Recall what the Course said in 7:5: to lose all concepts of self would cause "greater terror" in us. That is why the closing statement is true:

"There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this:

"I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself." (17:5–6)

Learning that we do not know what we are, what we're doing, where we are, or how to look upon the world or ourselves is the birth of salvation. Our true Self will then be able to reveal Itself to us (17:7–8).

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.