

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 13, Section I

### Paragraphs 5 to 12

#### Summary of Points from Introduction and Section I, Paragraphs 1 to 4

(Int) We see others as guilty because we see ourselves as guilty; therefore, the way to discover our innocence is by seeing others as innocent.

The last chapter contained a great deal of instruction on how we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit to have our perception of things changed, at first with individual persons or things, then more generally, and finally extending to the entire world, at which point we would be seeing the real world.

...You could not attack anyone if you realized that they were really another part of your own mind—you would not purposely judge yourself and condemn yourself.

...The undoing process reverses projection of guilt: We give up judgment and attack; we take the guilt back within our mind and recognize it as our own; and then God shows us we made it all up in the first place, and we are still united with Him.

...The Course calls the world “the symbol of punishment” (2:4) because so many things in this world, from birth to death and all the suffering in between, seem to be the kind of things that would happen to us if we were guilty and condemned to continual punishment in hell.

...To give us life for just the brief span of years we seem to have, to allow us to work most of our short life towards wisdom and then, once it is gained, to have no more time in which to enjoy life, to allow us to mature in love and then lose our loved ones to death—all of this is cruel, if it is real.

...To all the questions people down through the ages have asked, questions that begin with the words “How could a loving God...” the Course replies: “No loving God could; you are right!”

...In the Bible, Paul teaches that when Adam and Eve (the original human couple from whom all humanity is said to have descended) disobeyed God, their nature became corrupted by sin, and that corrupt nature was then passed on to all their descendents.... The Apostle Paul taught that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men” (Romans 5:12, NIV); he asserts that “as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (I Cor. 15).

...The point the Course is making here is that such a fantastic “solution” would be entirely unnecessary and inconceivable if it were not accompanied by **our belief that our sin was real**, and that God has cast us out of the garden and now is intent on carrying out His sentence of death.

...The transformation the Course attempts to work in us is such that, when our minds have been healed, we will see people as having never condemned anyone, and as having given nothing but love.

...We are not aware of this guilt because the ego has constructed an elaborate defense system to deny this guilt and hide its existence from us. We believe we attack others and they attack us; we do not see we are attacking ourselves.

...On the one hand, the Course makes it plain that we cannot do without the Holy Spirit and that, left to our own devices, we would be trapped in our oblivion; on the other hand, we have this theme that tells us that, in the end, the Holy Spirit will become completely unnecessary.... We need to avoid an adolescent belief that we don't need His help. I use the term “adolescent” there because what comes to mind is the familiar pattern in teen-aged children, who often falsely assume they are ready for adult privileges and responsibilities when, in fact, they are not quite finished with growing up.

...Notice how Jesus dismisses both the idea of divine retribution and the less common but no less threatening idea that, while there may be no God meting out punishment, we are quite capable of causing ourselves irreparable harm by our blind stupidity. In the Introduction to the chapter, Jesus pointed out that everyone at one time or another has looked on something in the world and thought that if God created this, He must be cruel (T-13.Int.2:11).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>You will see me as you learn the Son of God is guiltless. <sup>2</sup>He has always sought his guiltlessness, and he has **found** it. <sup>3</sup>For everyone is seeking to escape from the prison he has made, and the way to find release is not denied him. <sup>4</sup>Being **in** him, he has found it. <sup>5</sup>*When* he finds it is only a matter of time, and time is but an illusion. <sup>6</sup>For the Son of God is guiltless **now**, and the brightness of his purity shines untouched forever in God's Mind. <sup>7</sup>God's Son will **always** be as he was created. <sup>8</sup>Deny **your** world and judge him not, for his eternal guiltlessness is in the Mind of his Father, and protects him forever.

### • Study Question •

1. *The “it” spoken of in sentence 5 is guiltlessness. How does it make you feel when you read this sentence and apply it to yourself: “When I find guiltlessness...”?*

Three times in the Text, Jesus says, “You will see me.” The first was back in Chapter 12:

A little while and you *will* see me, for I am not hidden because *you* are hiding. I will awaken you as surely as I awakened myself, for I awoke *for* you (T-12.II.7:1-2).

The thrust of that statement is the emphasis on “will.” In a sense, the goal of all our spiritual seeking and practice is to see Jesus, or as we often hear it said, to see Christ in ourselves and in others. He seems in this passage to be speaking primarily of our seeing him *in ourselves*. He is assuring us that he will, for certain, awaken us, and we will see him. He is not hidden. It is our vision that is clouded.

The second occurrence is toward the end of Chapter 12:

I *have* heard your call and I have answered it, but you will not look upon me nor hear the answer that you sought. That is because you do not yet want *only* that. Yet as I become more real to you, you will learn that you *do* want only that. And you will see me as you look within, and we will look upon the real world together. Through the eyes of Christ, *only* the real world exists and *only* the real world can be seen (T-12.VII.11:3-7).

Here, Jesus is again reassuring us that our call for help has been heard *and answered*. Christ is within us, as us; always has been, always will be. But we “will not look upon” him within us, because our desire is divided—we want to see him, but we still want to hold on to our egos. In the *Psychotherapy* pamphlet, in discussing how a new patient often views psychotherapy, he says:

Their aim is to be able to retain their self-concept exactly as it is, but without the suffering that it entails. Their whole equilibrium rests on the insane belief that this is possible (P-2.I.2:3-4).

And that is what we do as well. We want to retain our ego-identification, “but without the suffering that it entails.” And we cannot do that. Until we relinquish that hope, Christ within will remain invisible to us.

In the third passage, here in Chapter 13, Jesus says that once we learn to see the Son of God as guiltless, we will see Christ (5:1). Guilt is the life-breath of the ego; it is what sustains and nourishes it. What this sequence of three passages implies to me is that learning to see ourselves, and others, without guilt is the key to “seeing him” in ourselves.

I think “seeing him” means both that our relationship with Jesus will become more real to us, and that our awareness of and identification with the Christ will increase. Guilt is the veil that hides the spiritual world from us, and removing the guilt will open our spiritual perception.

Learning that the Son of God is guiltless means seeing ourselves as guiltless and seeing everyone in our lives as guiltless. Perhaps that seems difficult to us. We’ve all been looking most of our lives for something outside of us to lift our own guilt (5:3), without much luck. Erasing our perception of others as guilty seems, perhaps, even more beyond our reach. We’ve never realized that the means to escape from guilt was already within us. We don’t need anything outside of us to do this; God has already given it to us, and what’s more, the Son has already found it (5:2,4).

Most of us, of course, are not aware of having found the way out of guilt. That’s why, in the same paragraph, Jesus talks about both having found it and continually looking for it. That’s exactly what we do. This is another expression of what he said earlier about our

being guilty in time but not in eternity. In eternity, as God sees things, there is no guilt. As we stand with the Holy Spirit at the end of time, in eternity, we are not guilty. We have already found our innocence. Within the illusion of time, however, we still experience guilt, and we are still learning to become free of it. In *reality* (as opposed to *illusion*) we are not guilty, but we are still suffering from the illusion of guilt, and looking to regain our innocence.

Typically, we think of ourselves as guilty, but somehow moving to become innocent again. That's impossible, of course; once you are guilty, you are guilty; there is no going back. But that's the whole point! I say, "Once you are guilty," but we never have been guilty, and so there is no need to regain innocence. We have it already; that is what we are learning.

"When he finds it is only a matter of time, and time is but an illusion. For the Son of God is guiltless now" (5:5–6). That seems like both good news and bad news. The bad news is that it's going to take time for us to rediscover our innocence; we'd like that to happen instantly. The good news is, the time that it takes is irrelevant, because time is nothing but an illusion. If it takes a lot of time, that won't hurt anything, because nothing can touch our innocence (5:8).

I must admit that, to a certain extent, even the "good news" about time's unimportance bothers me a little. It seems belittling to be told that my entire life in time and space simply does not matter! I've worked hard, I've struggled to awaken, I've fought against temptation, and I've stood up for what was right. I've done so much! Surely, that earns me some kind of brownie points or a gold star, or maybe a sinecure in God's Kingdom?

That kind of thought, I believe, is just coming from my ego; I just want to be special. Part of me—the ego part—simply does not want to hear that my awakening is just a matter of time, and that everyone will awaken in the end, no matter what. We are like the laborers in the parable Jesus told (Matthew 20:1–16) who worked from sunup to sundown, and who greatly resented being paid the same wage as the guys who showed up at 4 PM just as things were winding up. If we have been on a spiritual journey all our lives, we secretly think we are better than the people who goofed off until the last minute. Letting go of that sense of superiority is part of seeing our brothers as guiltless.

We were created guiltless and we cannot change what God created (5:7). All the evidence for our guilt, which is the entire world, is something we have made up. In order to believe we were separate we had to make up guilt, and make up the world to substantiate the guilt. To free ourselves of guilt we have to learn to deny the evidence of our eyes; that is what Jesus means when he tells us, "Deny your world and judge him not" (5:8).

We will continue to see evidence that people are guilty. We will see anger and hatred and murderous intent. The Course is teaching us to say, "This is not real." Very early in the Workbook, in Lesson 14, Jesus instructs us to say things like, "God did not create that war, and so it is not real" (W-pI.14.4:5) Most of us find that lesson difficult. It *is* difficult. It is also crucial to what the Course is trying to accomplish. We need to look past the evidence for guilt that our eyes show us, denying its reality, and to look with spiritual eyes for the universal innocence that the evidence is hiding. That is our mission here: to rediscover the eternal innocence in all things.

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>When you have accepted the Atonement for yourself, you will realize **there is no guilt in God's Son**. <sup>2</sup>And **only** as you look upon him as guiltless can you understand his oneness. <sup>3</sup>For the **idea** of guilt brings a belief in condemnation of one by another, projecting separation in place of unity. <sup>4</sup>You can condemn only yourself, and by so doing you cannot know that you are God's Son. <sup>5</sup>You have denied the condition of his being, which is his perfect blamelessness. <sup>6</sup>Out of love he was created, and in love he abides. <sup>7</sup>Goodness and mercy have always followed him, for he has always extended the Love of his Father.

### • Study Question •

2. *Why does projecting guilt make it impossible for us to know ourselves as God's Son?*

Accepting your own innocence means you have accepted innocence for everyone (6:1). The Course teaches that the true realization of Atonement is always shared. Sometimes it says it like this sentence does: accept it for yourself and you will see it is true of everyone (God's Son includes everyone). Other times it says the opposite: See your brother as guiltless and you will see your own guiltlessness. This is not a contradiction. Seeing myself without guilt or seeing my brother without guilt are not two separate tasks; they are one and the same thing. They are both based on the realization that "I am as God created me," and that all sin is therefore an illusion.

We still think that seeing ourselves as innocent and seeing our brothers and sisters as innocent are separate actions we can take. We think it is possible to see ourselves as innocent and still see others as guilty, or perhaps vice versa. The Course teaches clearly that this is simply not possible. It is all or nothing. Either we are all innocent or we are all guilty.

The guilt we feel originates in the belief that we separated ourselves from God and from each other. We broke the bond of Love, or so we think. In fact, we did not; it is not possible to separate from God, and therefore, we can't be separate from each other, since all of us are still joined to the Source. If you took geometry in high school, you may remember the basic axiom in Euclid's geometry: "Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." If I am one with God, and you are one with God, we must also be one with each other. It isn't possible for you to see yourself as innocent and others as guilty since, if they are guilty and you are not, you must be separate from them; if you are separate, then the separation is real, and therefore you must be guilty too!

If you see anyone as guilty, "You have denied the condition of his being, which is his perfect blamelessness" (6:5). And since that person is identical with the Son of God, you have condemned the Son of God. Yet, *you* are also the Son of God. Therefore, if you deny the condition of one person's being, you have denied your own being. "You can condemn only yourself" (6:4). In simple terms, when you see guilt in anyone you inevitably lose the awareness of your own identity with God.

Try applying that to a real person in your life, one you tend to judge or condemn. Remind yourself that God created this person out of His love, and that this person is still embraced by the love of God (6:6). He is perfectly blameless (6:5). "Goodness and mercy

have always followed him” (6:7), a clear reference to Psalm 23. This puts him in a class with David the King who wrote that psalm, whose Shepherd is God, cared for and guided by God, protected through the valley of the shadow of death, fed in the presence of his enemies, who will dwell in the house of God forever.

Remind yourself that to judge him is to judge the Son of God, and therefore, to judge yourself. What is even more amazing is the Course's assertion that the Son of God, this person you are thinking of, “has always extended the Love of his Father” (6:7). It reminds us of what was said in the Introduction to this chapter, 4:4–5. We need to get our minds around this concept that absolutely everyone, in the Course's view, is not simply free of sin but positively holy. Literally everything is either an expression of love or a call for help, and only the love is real (T-1.VI.5:7; T-13.III.8:7).

Conversely, if you accept the condition of one person's being—either yourself or your brother—you have accepted it for everyone. When you see your brother as guiltless, you will understand the oneness of the Sonship. Therefore, we could say, “You can forgive only yourself,” even when you seem to be forgiving another.

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>As you perceive the holy companions who travel with you, you will realize that there **is** no journey, but only an awakening. <sup>2</sup>The Son of God, who sleepeth not, has kept faith with his Father **for** you. <sup>3</sup>There is no road to travel **on**, and no time to travel **through**. <sup>4</sup>For God waits not for His Son in time, being forever unwilling to be without him. <sup>5</sup>And so it has always been. <sup>6</sup>Let the holiness of God's Son shine away the cloud of guilt that darkens your mind, and by accepting his purity **as** yours, learn of him that it *is* yours.

### • Study Question •

3. (a) *In your opinion, who are the “holy companions” mentioned in 7:1? (b) According to this paragraph, how do we come to learn of our own eternal purity?*

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When, by starting to wake up, you perceive your brothers as holy, your perspective on what enlightenment means will change. Your brothers don't have to change in order for your perception of them to change; you can see them as guiltless even though they remain exactly as they are. That will show you that they are already holy; therefore, you don't have to go on a long journey to achieve holiness, you just have to awaken to its eternal presence (7:1). The words “sleepeth not” in 7:2 are probably another reference to the Bible (as seems evident from the archaic “eth” ending). The reference is not certain, however; the phrase does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible, which is what Helen Schucman knew best. My intuition is that it is a reference to Psalm 121, which begins with these words:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.  
My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.  
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.  
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (Psalm 121:1–4)



There is a version of this psalm in poetic form in which this line occurs: "Behold, He sleepeth not, He slumbereth ne'er." Possibly Helen was familiar with that versified form of the psalm, but whether or not that is so, there is a strong emphasis here on God watching over us like a shepherd, and the Son of God remaining faithful to God on our behalf. The mind of Christ, we are assured, has never slept and never lost sight of us (T-12.VI.5:4-5). What we know, in our ego-dominated identity, is only mind asleep (T-29.VII.9:1; W-pl.167.8:1), but the Son of God is still awake and still vibrantly in love with his Father. It is that larger "mind awake" to which our small, sleeping part of mind is awakening.

"There is no road to travel on, and no time to travel through" (7:3). Like the statement in 7:1, this statement reflects what is true in eternity (where we always are) and is not necessarily true of our experience in time. In fact, that should be obvious: How could we experience that there is no time and still be in time? I keep coming back to this in my own thinking, however, because for me it is extremely liberating. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do. The ultimate aim of all the mind training that the Course puts us through, training which does require considerable effort and repeated practice, is the realization that we are already home. Salvation has already been accomplished. The paradox is that it takes a great deal of doing to finally recognize that we "need do nothing" (T-18.VII.5:7).

The vision of holiness in my brother or myself happens instantaneously. When it happens, there is nothing to do about it. We are seeing what has always been true. Nothing has changed because what we are seeing is the changeless nature of God's creation. "No road" (that is, no space) and "no time." Space and time are both illusions.

We think we are in time; God, however, most definitely is not. We tend to imagine God sitting around with irritation waiting for us to "get it," wondering how incredibly slow and resistant we can be, and becoming impatient with us. That is not the case at all. How could He be impatient if He is outside of time, since impatience means an irritation at having to wait? How can God *wait* if there is no time to wait in? God is perfectly happy and perfectly at peace, but how could that be so if He were distressed because of our recalcitrance? He isn't waiting for us to return to Him; in His knowledge, we've never left! The whole journey, down and back, is already over and in fact never even started. There is definitely some sense, then, in which God is not caught up in the drama of our nightmare as we are. It should be reassuring to us to know that, because it means that our momentary distress is unfounded; in the end we will see that there has never been any reason for concern.

Until we fully awake, we are going to continue to experience this as a journey, a long road taking a very long time to travel. When the Course says it won't be long until we remember God, we have to remember its attitude toward time: It's an illusion, something that does not really exist, and therefore it does not really matter.

In a sense, to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, it doesn't matter how long it takes us to awaken because they know that time in this world has no more importance than the passage of years in a dream. Nothing really changes. We make a big deal of how long it might take. Awakening might take your entire lifetime. It might take dozens of lifetimes. That seems awful and terrifying to us.

Jesus tries in several ways to reassure us. He tells us on the one hand that it won't be long. He tells us the outcome is inevitable. He tells us time is just an illusion anyhow, so

don't worry about it because the whole long trip we envision isn't really happening. He says he is giving us means, in the Course, to shorten the time it will take, to "collapse" time. Sometimes he seems to recognize how important time is to us. At other times, he seems to treat time as wholly unimportant.

It reminds me somewhat of how parents try to deal with children when they are on a long trip in a car. The parent knows the trip will take, say, three hours. After an hour the child is asking, "Are we almost there?" To the child it seems so important. They want to be there immediately. The parent knows they will get there, and there is nothing to worry about. Sometimes we can see things from the child's perspective, in which three hours seems an eternity. Other times we see it from the adult perspective, in which three hours is almost nothing. The best we can do is somehow communicate that, as a parent and an adult, we are not concerned about how long it seems to be taking. Everything is OK.

We are trapped within time. Not in reality, but we are firmly convinced that we are trapped and that makes it real to us. Jesus knows it isn't real. So, he isn't concerned, but he knows we are. He deals with our concerns as best he can, assuring us "It won't be long now." Still, to us, it seems forever. What he seems to be saying is, "It seems to you now to be a long and terrible journey. When you awaken, you'll see that your concerns are needless. It isn't long at all, not really; it just seems that way. Don't lose hope; don't be discouraged. Don't feel sad about all the mistakes people make, about the apparent suffering and pain. It's just a bad dream; it isn't real. You're safe with me."

As we pass through time, what is important is allowing the guilt to be lifted from our minds, which we can do through our willingness to see the holiness of God in our brothers and sisters. As we see the light in them, it will dispel our own guilt as well, because we recognize that we share the same purity that they share with God (7:6).

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>You are invulnerable **because** you are guiltless. <sup>2</sup>You can hold on to the past **only** through guilt. <sup>3</sup>For guilt establishes that you **will be** punished for what you have done, and thus depends on one-dimensional time, proceeding from past to future. <sup>4</sup>No one who believes this can understand what **always** means, and therefore guilt **must** deprive you of the appreciation of eternity. <sup>5</sup>You are immortal **because** you are eternal, and "always" **must** be now. <sup>6</sup>Guilt, then, is a way of holding past and future in your mind to ensure the ego's continuity. <sup>7</sup>For if what **has been will be** punished, the ego's continuity is [*would be*] guaranteed. <sup>8</sup>Yet the guarantee of your continuity is God's, not the ego's. <sup>9</sup>And immortality is the opposite of time, for time passes away, while immortality is constant.



• Study Question •

4. (a) Explain in your own words how guilt and time are connected, according to this paragraph.  
(b) Which statement more accurately reflects the teaching of this paragraph:  
A. As long as we remain in time, we will experience being guilty.  
B. As long as we hold on to guilt, we will continue to experience time.

The Course insists that being without guilt makes us invulnerable (8:1, see also T-14.III.7:1). The connection isn't obvious to us in a world where the innocent seem to suffer. However, I believe the idea is that, if guilt is real, we can and do expect punishment. If we are totally innocent, we are exempt from punishment. Think of a person who is in public office. If he or she has committed some crime or foolish act, it places him or her in a vulnerable position. There is a weakness that can be attacked. If, however, he or she is guiltless, then there is no vulnerability, no flaw to be attacked. In this sense, at least, it makes sense to say that we cannot be attacked if we are without guilt.

There is another explanation, a more metaphysical one. The only possible source for guilt, in the end, is our separation from God. If we are guiltless then we have not separated from God; if we are one with God, we are as eternal as He is and cannot be attacked. Our body can be attacked, and our ego can be attacked, but our true identity is "hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3, NASB).

Guilt and the belief in time are inextricably tied together. The basic formula is: past sin, future punishment, and therefore present misery (8:3). This is a linear view of time, what is called "one-dimensional time" in 8:3. In the past, we sinned. That produces guilt in the present, and will earn us some kind of hell in the future. Give up the belief in linear time and guilt disappears. Give up the belief in guilt and time disappears (8:2). Guilt is what holds the illusion of time in place, and that illusion, in turn, supports guilt, which the ego requires in order to exist. Without this concept of time, in which the past is followed by the present and then by the future, with linear cause and effect operating through the corridor of time, you could not have guilt.

Let me state it plainly: The Course is teaching us that the physical universe of space and time is an illusion produced by the ego in order to sustain guilt, and thus "to ensure the ego's continuity" (8:6).

In reality, you are invulnerable and immortal. *You as an ego* are not immortal, but *you as the Son of God* are. Eternity is "always," therefore eternity must be *now* (8:5). If you are guiltless in eternity, you must be guiltless right now.

Do you see that if you believe the past is real, we *must* believe in guilt? We all admit, "Nobody's perfect." If that is real, there is no way out. We're doomed, sinners in the hands of an angry God. We're ugly, vile persons, so is everybody, and we're all going to hell in a hand basket. If guilt and punishment are real, the ego has won its independence from God (8:7).

Ours is not the continuity of an endless cycle of time, with a distant, dismal future deriving from a distant, dreadful past. We share God's immortality (8:8). We are outside of time, not within it. Immortality does not mean, as I've said before, time stretched out like a rubber band. Something that is immortal is something that does not pass away, and

passing away is the trademark of time (8:9). What does time do? It passes. Immortality does not, and immortality is our nature. We are not creatures of time, as we seem to be.

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Accepting the Atonement teaches you **what immortality is**, for by accepting your guiltlessness you learn that the past has never been, and so the future is needless ~~and will not be~~. <sup>2</sup>The future, **in time**, is **always** associated with expiation<sup>1</sup>, and **only** guilt could induce a sense of a **need** for expiation. <sup>3</sup>Accepting the guiltlessness of the Son of God **as yours** is therefore God's way of reminding you of His Son, and what he is in truth. <sup>4</sup>For God has never condemned His Son, and being guiltless he **is** eternal.

### • Study Question •

5. *How does Atonement teach us about immortality, and show us what the Son is in truth?*

“Accepting the Atonement” (9:1) means accepting your guiltlessness. Faced with all the evidence of your own past in your mind, you hear God say He “has never condemned His Son” (9:4). From all you know and see, you are guilty. *God*, however, says you are innocent. Accept that; simply take it as true. What does that do to your thought system? To accept the Atonement is to make that leap of faith.

It is a leap of faith; it truly is. It is a radical assertion of innocence despite all evidence to the contrary. The world you see “proves” that guilt is real; God says it isn't. Are you going to believe your own eyes, or believe the Creator? The Course literally says we can't trust our own eyes. In fact, we made our eyes for the purpose of seeing sin and guilt, and that is what they are always going to show us. We have to *unlearn* our trust in our senses.

What can the body's eyes perceive, with power to correct? Its eyes adjust to sin, unable to overlook it in any form and seeing it everywhere, in everything. Look through its eyes, and everything will stand condemned before you. All that could save you, you will never see (T-20.VIII.6:5-8).

These eyes, made not to see, will never see. For the idea they represent left not its maker, and it is their maker that sees through them. What was its maker's goal but not to see? For this the body's eyes are perfect means, but not for seeing. See how the body's eyes rest on externals and cannot go beyond. Watch how they stop at nothingness, unable to go beyond the form to meaning. Nothing so blinding as perception of form. For sight of form means understanding has been obscured (T-22.III.6:1-8).

I asked above, “What does the idea that you are perfectly innocent do to your thought system?” Think about it. If you simply accept the fact that you are not guilty, what does that do to the past? What does it do to the future? If the past is real we are all guilty; if

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<sup>1</sup> Expiation means “to make amends, show remorse, or suffer punishment for wrongdoing.”

none of us are guilty then the past cannot be real! If the sins we believe happened in the past never happened, then there is no need of a future in which those sins are paid for or compensated for in some way (9:2).

“Expiation” (9:2) means “Something done or paid to compensate or make amends” (American Heritage Dictionary). When we accept the Atonement we learn that there is nothing to make amends *for*. Accepting the Atonement is the only way to deal with guilt. Remember who you are, remember Who created you and what you therefore *must* be, despite all the evidence of your senses to the contrary, and evidence of the past (9:3). If God created you, you must be immortal; you must be holy; you must be guiltless; and you must be eternal (9:4). If that flies in the face of everything you know about yourself, then everything you know about yourself must be wrong! The past, with its memories of sin and guilt, *cannot* be real, and therefore you don’t need any future to atone for it, or to make up for it.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>You cannot dispel guilt by making it real, and **then** atoning for it. <sup>2</sup>This is the ego’s plan, which it offers **instead** of dispelling it. <sup>3</sup>The ego believes in **atonement through attack**, being fully committed to the insane notion that **attack is salvation**. <sup>4</sup>And **you** who cherish guilt must **also** believe it, for how else but by identifying **with** the ego could you hold dear what you do not want?

### • Study Question •

6. *The ego’s plan for salvation is “atonement through attack” (10:3). Explain what you think this means.*

“You cannot dispel guilt by making it real, and then atoning for it. This is the ego’s plan” (10:1–2). It also happens to be the plan of orthodox Christianity, in which sin is deemed real but is then atoned for by the sacrificial death of God’s Only Son, Jesus. According to the Course, Jesus did not die for your sins; in fact, Jesus did not *die*, although his body ceased to have the appearance of life. Belief in sacrificial, substitutionary atonement through the death of Jesus lies at the very heart of fundamentalist belief, and the Course’s rejection of this belief is surely one of the primary reasons fundamentalists consider the Course to be heresy. It makes the Course and fundamental Christian theology incompatible at the core.

The Course contends that the method for dealing with guilt that traditional Christianity proposes is simply impossible. It won’t work. It is a ploy of the ego that is intended, not to display guilt, but to preserve it. In my experience with fundamentalist Christianity, I found that to be the result. The Christian teaching might result in a brief release from guilt, but that was usually followed by a massive relapse into guilt. Often, that guilt seemed to come from a different source: Instead of being guilty for the sinful things I had done in the past, now I felt guilty for causing Jesus suffering he did not deserve. I felt *obligated* to him for his sacrifice. This is a very common feeling among Christians. In fact, it was even commemorated in Christian verse, for instance:

My life, my life was giv’n for thee.  
What hast thou giv’n for me?

Atonement through sacrifice is really a belief that attack can bring salvation. I believe the Course here is referring to attack in the form of punishment; God attacked or punished Jesus instead of us.

But it isn't just orthodox Christianity that believes in salvation through attack; we all do. We show it when we believe spanking children will make them behave. We show it every time we think someone "deserves" to suffer. We show it by our fear of death. We show it every time something goes wrong and we think, "What did I do to deserve this?" We show it every time we get angry, because to be angry at someone we must condemn them, and "Condemnation... is the judgment of one mind by another as unworthy of love and deserving of punishment" (T-13.In.1:1-2). Anger is a manifestation of our belief that attack will somehow right the wrong we perceive. All anger ever accomplishes is to perpetuate the guilt.

What is it that stops us from simply accepting the Atonement? Why do we hesitate to believe in our own innocence, without any kind of sacrifice or struggle being called for? Why do we insist on thinking, "I must have to *do something* to earn it?" Why do we so fiercely and protectively hold on to our guilt?

The answer is this: if I can so easily let go of all my own guilt, so can everybody else. If I let myself off the hook, I have to let everyone else off the hook for the same reason. That leaves me with nobody to blame for anything. If nobody is to blame, nothing I think is blameworthy can have actually happened. If it didn't happen, "I" (as the ego) don't exist. And that's the bottom line. The ego resists dissolution; it refuses to quietly go away. The ego believes "that attack is salvation" (10:3), and so do we (10:4). We may not think we believe it, but we *must*, because we have identified ourselves with the ego. And if we are inclined to deny that identification, the Course points out that we seem to "cherish guilt" (as evidenced by our refusal to accept the Atonement for ourselves). Consciously, of course, we do not want guilt, so we must be identifying with something that does want it: the ego (9:4).

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>The ego teaches you to attack yourself **because** you are guilty, and this **must increase** the guilt, for guilt is the **result** of attack. <sup>2</sup>In the ego's teaching, then, there **is** no escape from guilt. <sup>3</sup>For attack **makes guilt real**, and if it is real there *is* no way to overcome it. <sup>4</sup>The Holy Spirit dispels it simply through the calm recognition that it has never been. <sup>5</sup>As He looks upon the guiltless Son of God, He **knows** that this is true. <sup>6</sup>And being true for you, you **cannot** attack yourself, for **without** guilt attack is impossible. <sup>7</sup>You, then, **are** saved **because** God's Son is guiltless. <sup>8</sup>And being wholly pure, you **are** invulnerable.

### • Study Question •

7. *How does the Holy Spirit dispel guilt and end attack?*

The ego, knowing that if we let go of guilt it is doomed, has its own plan to hold on to guilt and even increase it, although it ruthlessly suppresses our awareness of that plan. The plan is: Make guilt real and insist on atoning for it, insist on punishment. If this

means attacking yourself because you are guilty, that's all to the good, because you end up feeling more guilty for attacking yourself (11:1). That is the price of the ego's existence; guilt is the ego's very breath. Most of us have been aware at one time or another of attacking ourselves in some way—making ourselves sick, sabotaging our relationships, rejecting real offers of love from others, or simply bad-mouthing ourselves in a constant masochistic mental monologue. Have you noticed how, when you become aware of doing this kind of thing, the first feeling that arises is guilt? Guilt for making yourself guilty?

It is an insane plan, of course. Instead of decreasing our guilt, the ego's plan multiplies it and makes escape from guilt seem impossible. If guilt is real, we are guilty forever (11:3). A person who accrues real guilt would be guilty forever. Guilt is not a reversible condition.

The more we attack the guiltier we feel (11:1). The more we attack our brother's guilt the more solid that guilt becomes in our perception (11:3). If I see guilt as real (in myself or another) and try to atone for it by attacking it (in myself or another), I just accrue more guilt because of the attack. Guilt, attack, more guilt, more attack, still more guilt. It goes on forever.

If you start from the premise that guilt is real, you are completely trapped in an endless cycle of guilt. "The Holy Spirit dispels it simply through the calm recognition that it has never been" (11:4). By the very nature of guilt that is the *only* way it can be dispelled. Once you grant existence to guilt, and make guilt real, you cannot get rid of it. Accepting the Atonement means recognizing that guilt does not exist. If guilt has never been, then *attack* has never been either, because you can't have one without the other. So you can't attack yourself, you can't attack anyone, and no one can attack you; "you are invulnerable" (11:6–8).

Although this is perfectly logical, our minds still scream, "Foul!" Probably some part of your mind is thinking right now, "Wait a minute! I can't attack anyone? Then what is this I clearly remember doing? What are these attack thoughts I remember, or which I am aware of even now? And 'no one can attack me?' I certainly remember attacks, and they were not unintentional attacks either; the person *meant* to hurt me. They even said so."

This is where other parts of the Course come in to teach us to *translate* our perceptions of things. What we thought was attack was really some form of love, a cry for help, and not an attack at all. If you can't see things that way now, don't worry—you will, eventually. Whatever was going on in those awful moments you remember, *it was not attack!* Guilt never was. If guilt never was, attack never was either. If there was real attack happening, then there must be real guilt.

Anyone can get a glimmer of this if they think for a moment on those people who have most deeply triggered their anger. What triggers the deepest anger is an apparent betrayal of love and trust, a person thrusting you away when you urgently desired to join with them, and to have them join with you. The deepest anger is love deeply frustrated. Your screams of anger are screaming, "Love me!" You perceive your anger as *attack* on the other person, but attack is not and can never be real; what is *real* is only and always the love. And *that* is why guilt has never been. You were not attacking them, you loved them! (Sure, you expressed it very poorly, but that does not affect your innocence.) What you remember about the past is the guilt and the pain; the Course is saying that Love was

always present, and that only the love in yourself and in the others involved was real. Only the love was real, and therefore there is no guilt.

• **Study Question** •

8. *Before you read my summary below, try writing out your own summary of the basic message of this section in one paragraph.*
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**Summary of Section I**

**One-paragraph Summary**

The Holy Spirit seeks to teach us our guiltlessness. The ego is tied to guilt because perfect innocence disproves the ego's existence. The ego has us focus on guilt in time, based on past sin and insuring future punishment. The Holy Spirit shows us our eternal guiltlessness by showing us the innocence of our holy companions, which teaches us our own. Free from guilt, which drives us to attack, we see that we are the invulnerable, eternal, and immortal Son of God. What we seem to be learning gradually in time is eternally true.

**Longer Summary**

Guilt must be removed from the mind before we can approach either God or our brothers without fear. The ego seeks to protect guilt because the ego can't live without it. The world we see hides our guilt but also hides Christ. In this world of time, we do appear to be guilty. Guilt is why we believe in time; it is the ego's purpose for time. When guilt is gone, time will be gone also. The ego uses time for the purpose of *punishment*: past sin, future punishment.

God is not going to punish us, and we can't hurt ourselves. We are invulnerable and perfectly safe. None of this is evident in the world. We won't see it until we let go of our guilt, and that is also going to mean denying the world, denying the evidence of guilt our own eyes continually show us. All we see is illusion, a replay of a drama that is already over. We need to *accept the Atonement*. This means a radical assertion of innocence despite all evidence to the contrary. This is always shared and leads to a vision of our oneness; we stand together in innocence or fall together in guilt. When we accept the Atonement, we see that salvation is not far off in the future. Its distance from us, and the time we seem to take to find it are illusions; they are simply defense mechanisms of the ego. God created us innocent and declares we still are innocent. It is up to you to accept that eternal fact.

The ego imagined that separation occurred, and therefore imagined guilt. If there were no separation, there would be no guilt; therefore the ego seeks to preserve guilt. The ego's plan for handling guilt is to make it real and then atone for it through attack of some kind (punishment), a plan that just perpetuates guilt. The Holy Spirit's plan is to calmly recognize that guilt has never been. There is no attack in this: therefore, you are invulnerable.



## Answer Key

1. No written answer is expected. Your response will be highly personal, and could range from “joyful” to “depressed,” depending upon how you interpret the sentence.
2. Our belief in guilt brings with it a belief in separation—one condemning another, one better than another. From this mindset we cannot know God’s Son, Who is one, and eternally blameless. Also, in condemning “another,” we are really condemning ourselves, making knowing ourselves impossible.
3. (a) Our brothers who walk with us on the journey, that is, the people we live with every day. (b) We accept the purity of Christ in our brothers, and so learn of our own purity.
4. (a) Only guilt enables us to hold on to the past. Guilt depends on one-dimensional or linear time, past to present to future, with the future reserved for punishment. Guilt keeps us in time and keeps the ego going.  
(b) The most accurate expression is B: “As long as we hold on to guilt, we will continue to experience time.” It is guilt that has produced the illusion of time to support itself.
5. If we are guiltless, what we believe was the past never was, and therefore the future will not be. It releases us from time to eternity. If we are guiltless, we are eternally the Son of God.
6. “Atonement through attack” means either that we “pay for our sin” with sacrifice and pain, or that we fabricate our innocence by projecting our guilt onto someone else. A specialized form specific to Christianity is the notion of Atonement through the suffering of Jesus on the cross.
7. He calmly recognizes that guilt has never been.
8. Summary appears immediately after the question.

### Legend:

- blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
- bold blue text** = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
- red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
- light blue text = editorial comments
- ~~striketrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition