

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 21, Introduction & Section I

The Forgotten Song

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strikethrough sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

The two-paragraph Introduction serves as an excellent summary of Chapter 20, and contains some of the justifiably most-quoted lines in the Course—at least, quoted by me! Section I goes on to present one of the most beautiful, poetic images in the Course. It has been recorded as a kind of guided meditation by Beverly Hutchinson, a gorgeous dramatic reading backed by the music of Steven Halpern. The forgotten song image is followed by a mind-expanding description of the vision of Oneness.¹

Introduction

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Projection makes perception. ²The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. ³But though it is no *more* than that, it is *not* less. ⁴Therefore, to *you* it *is* important. ⁵It is the witness to your state of mind, the *outside* picture of an *inward* condition. ⁶As a man thinketh, so does he perceive. ⁷Therefore, seek not to change the *world*, but choose to change your mind *about* the world. ⁸Perception is a *result* and *not* a cause. ⁹And that is *why* order of difficulty in miracles is meaningless. ¹⁰*Everything* looked upon with vision is healed and holy. ¹¹*Nothing* perceived without it means anything. ¹²And where there is no meaning, there is chaos.

¹ Other than indication of emphasis, this section is completely unchanged from the Urtext. Not one word differs.

• **Study Question** •

1. Paragraph 1 states the important Course concept that “projection makes perception.” It then says that perception is a result, not a cause. What is perception a result of, according to this paragraph (there may be more than one right answer)?
 - A. Projection.
 - B. What you gave it.
 - C. Your state of mind.
 - D. An inward condition.
 - E. Your thinking.
 - F. Your mind.

It’s hard for me not to write a book about this paragraph. To me, it succinctly summarizes one of the core messages of the Course.

“Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that” (1:1–2). I’ve already said, in commenting on T-20.VIII, that these sentences are a great summary of the entire Chapter 20. In fact, they are more; they summarize much of the Course. This is why I’ve referred to them, especially to 1:1, multiple times in my comments. The basic meaning of the sentence is that we see what we want to see, what we *expect* to see, and we do not see what is real.

The first sentence actually occurs *earlier* in the Text, in Chapter 13, where it is part of a discussion about shadow figures—the mental images of the past and people from the past, particularly those who have caused us pain. It is a good illustration of what the basic meaning is. It says:

Projection makes perception, and you cannot see beyond it. Again and again have you attacked your brother, because you saw in him a shadow figure in your private world. And thus it is you must attack yourself first, for what you attack is not in others. Its only reality is in your own mind, and by attacking others you are literally attacking what is not there (T-13.V.3:5-8).

The Course’s assertion is that if we are looking *only* with the body’s eyes, all we see is projected images from our own minds. Thus, the world is nothing more than what we gave it via projection (1:2). Only *vision* sees the reality.

If this seems extreme to you, ask yourself how often you, and the people you know, are thoroughly convinced that your (or their) perception of things is pure fact, only to discover later that you’ve misinterpreted things entirely. Someone makes a remark that, to you, seems rude and inconsiderate, but later you realize it was meant differently, or you mis-heard, or there was background you didn’t know about that entirely changed the meaning. You greet someone with “Good morning!” and they ignore you, so you wonder if they are mad at you about something, and spend long minutes or hours trying to figure out what the problem is; but then you learn they had just received a phone call about their father’s death, or some other major personal disaster, and you realize that they really did not even hear you! We foolishly imagine that our perceptions are facts. Many people will

argue with you vociferously if you even suggest that their perceptions may not be the truth.

The lesson comes up over and over. Later in this chapter, we will be told again:

Perception is a choice and not a fact (T-21.V.1:7).

A later chapter in the Text will repeat it yet again:

Perception is a choice of what you want yourself to be; the world you want to live in, and the state in which you think your mind will be content and satisfied. It chooses where you think your safety lies, at your decision. It reveals yourself to you as you would have you be. And always is it faithful to your purpose, from which it never separates, nor gives the slightest witness unto anything the purpose in your mind upholdeth not. Perception is a part of what it is your purpose to behold, for means and end are never separate. And thus you learn what seems to have a life apart has none (T-25.I.3:1-6).

The world you see is but a judgment on yourself. It is not there at all. Yet judgment lays a sentence on it, justifies it and makes it real. Such is the world you see; a judgment on yourself, and made by you (T-20.III.5:2-5).

So, the world we see with perception is the result of our projection, “nothing more than that.” But it goes on to add that, however true that may be, it is nonetheless important to us *for that very reason* (1:3–4). It provides us with a way of knowing what our own state of mind is, even though we are so often quite unconscious of that state (1:5). It *outpictures* our state of mind, like a mirror. Look at the meanings you think you find in the world and you will know what’s going on in your mind. “It reveals yourself to you as you would have you be” (T-25.I.3:3).

The line in 1:6 contains the archaic word, “thinketh,” because it is a loose paraphrase of a famous book title, *As a Man Thinketh*, by James Allen, which in turn was based on the King James Version of Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” New Thought churches have long used this as a proof text for one of their favorite aphorisms: “Change your thinking, change your life.” While the Course totally agrees with this idea, as we can see from 1:7, modern translations, unfortunately, have rather drastically altered the way that verse in the Bible reads. For instance, the New Revised Standard Version has it, “for like a hair in the throat, so are they,” while the English Standard Version translates it, “for he is like one who is inwardly calculating.” Clearly there is some very obscure Hebrew in that text! Fortunately, we do not depend on the Bible to prove the truth of what we believe.

The practical application for all of us then, is that when something we perceive seems to cause us to be upset, or when something occurs that we dislike, rather than trying to adjust the world to our liking we need, first of all, to change our mind *about* what we see (1:7). We are not upset because of what we see. Perception does not cause our upset. Rather, perception is the *result* of our state of mind, our beliefs and desires (1:8).²

² To reiterate what I’ve already said in the previous commentary, this does not necessarily mean that we have caused *what we see*, but it clearly does mean that we have caused *how we see it*. Nor, in my opinion,

This explains “*why* order of difficulty in miracles is meaningless” (1:9). Nothing outside has to change; all that need change is our thoughts about it, and that change of mind is equally easy, or equally difficult, no matter what the object of our perception. A cold or a cancer, for instance. Looked upon with vision, both are “healed and holy,” as is everything looked upon with vision (1:10). When we look without vision, *nothing means anything* (1:11), no matter what we think or how upset we feel by it. Seeing a meaningless world, everything seems to be in chaos (1:12).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Damnation is your judgment on *yourself*, and this you *will* project upon the world. ²See *it* as damned, and all you see is what *you* did to hurt the Son of God. ³If you behold disaster and catastrophe, you tried to crucify him. ⁴If you see holiness and hope, you joined the Will of God to set him free. ⁵There is no choice that lies between these two decisions. ⁶And you will see the *witness* to the choice you made, and learn from this to *recognize* which one you chose. ⁷The world you see but shows you how much joy *you* have allowed yourself to see in you, and to accept as *yours*. ⁸And, if this *is* its meaning, then the power to *give* it joy *must* lie *within* you.

• Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 2 applies the statement from the first paragraph that the world we perceive is a witness to our state of mind. It says that what kind of world we see shows us what we have chosen in our minds. So, let's say that you are watching the news and see a report on a particularly tragic jet crash. What does that mean you, in coming into this world, chose (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *You chose to hurt the Son of God.*
 - B. *You chose to set the Son of God free.*
 - C. *You chose to crucify yourself and all others.*
 - D. *It doesn't say what you chose, only what those involved in the crash chose.*
 - E. *You chose to damn yourself.*

We see the world as we see ourselves, and because we have judged ourselves as damned, that is how we see the world (2:1). When I read lines like this I have to remind myself that everyone, including me, has seen themselves as damned. There is a kind of existential guilt that comes along with the experience of living as separate beings in this

does it mean that we completely ignore the distressing conditions of the world. The world itself need not change for our sight of it to change from sin to holiness; that can happen purely in our minds. But we are called upon to extend miracles to the world around us, and even to “save the world” (see W-153:8:2). We are instructed to see the suffering of the world and bring it rest (W-191:10.5–8). But the way we do that is by first denying the hold of pain on ourselves, and recognizing our own sinlessness.

world. We are guilty *just for being*, because we *think* we have wrested our existence away from God. Part of us simply knows that separation is our own doing, and judges us worthy of damnation for the egregious sin of becoming separate.

When you see the world, or anyone in it, as worthy of hell—damned, guilty, unworthy of love—it *proves* that you have seen yourself as damned for “what *you* did to hurt the Son of God” (2:2). If you *did not* see yourself as damned you *could not* see anyone else that way. Two ways of looking at the world are mentioned, and both reflect our relationship with “the Son of God,” that is, our divine Self as God created it. If we see disaster and catastrophe in the world, we have attempted to crucify him. If we see holiness and hope in the world, we have “joined the Will of God to set him free” (2:3–4). Those two choices are the only ones open to us (2:5). This is summing up the message that ended Chapter 20: Do we look with vision, or with judgment? Do we see our brothers and sisters, or the world, as sinful or sinless? All of it reflects the way we perceive ourselves: “*All* meaning that you give the world outside must thus reflect the sight you saw *within*” (T-20.VIII.10:3).

The way you see the world, then, witnesses to how you have chosen to see the Son of God in yourself (2:6). The joy you see in the world is the measure of “how much joy *you* have allowed yourself to see in you, and to accept as *yours*” (2:7). By choosing to accept your own sinlessness, with the joy that release must bring, you *give* joy to the world. You have the power to bring joy to the world! (2:8) Perhaps the Christmas carol should be sung this way:

Joy to the world! The Christ has come *in me*.

Section I, The Forgotten Song

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Never forget the world the sightless “see” *must* be imagined, for what it *really* looks like *is* unknown to them. ²They must infer what *could* be seen from evidence forever indirect; and *reconstruct* their inferences as they stumble and fall because of what they did *not* recognize, or walk unharmed through open doorways that they *thought* were closed. ³And so it is with you. ⁴You do *not* see. ⁵Your cues for inference are wrong, and so you stumble and fall down upon the stones you did not recognize, but fail to be aware you *can* go through the doors you *thought* were closed, but which stand open before unseeing eyes, waiting to *welcome* you.

• **Study Question** •

3. *Paragraph 1 likens us to the blind. In what sense are we blind?*
- A. *We do not see the meaning in the world.*
 - B. *We all have imperfect eyesight because the ego always manifests an imperfect body.*
 - C. *We do not see what decisions will be right for us. We often make decisions about our external lives that lead to financial ruin or being with the wrong partner.*

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The first two sentences are speaking literally of blind people, as analogous to our spiritual blindness. Sightless people have to *imagine* what the world looks like because they have never seen it. They don't know what it really looks like. They have to use their other senses, and what they can learn from the words of sighted friends or family members, and *infer* what things *might* look like. But those inferences are necessarily imperfect, and need revision all the time. They may stumble over a child's toy they could not see, or be miss the chance to pass through an open doorway because they expected it to be shut (1:1–2).

In summary, they must infer the world from indirect evidence, and constantly revise their inferences as they encounter something unexpected. “*And so it is with you*” (1:3, my emphasis). We do not see the real world (1:4). We make judgments (inferences) that are quite imperfect, and so we stumble and fall. We get tripped up by our misunderstandings all the time. And we miss so many opportunities to “go through the doors you *thought* were closed,” such as the door to peace, the door to health, the door to heaven (1:5). When it comes to spiritual matters, we are like the blind.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹How foolish is it to attempt to judge what could be seen instead. ²It is not necessary to *imagine* what the world must look like. ³It must be *seen* before you recognize it for what it is. ⁴You can be *shown* which doors are open, and you can *see* where safety lies; and which way leads to darkness, which to light. ⁵Judgment will *always* give you false directions, but vision *shows* you where to go. ⁶Why should you guess?

• **Study Question** •

4. *Our current picture of the world is obtained in the same way a court reaches its verdict. We put together a picture by making inferences from indirect evidence. What word does this paragraph use to describe this process?*
- A. *Darkness.*
 - B. *Judgment.*
 - C. *Vision.*

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We interact with the world by *judging* it, instead of allowing ourselves to *see* it as it is; and that is foolish (2:1). We don't have to infer or imagine or try to figure things out; it can be seen and recognized for what it is if we open our minds to the Holy Spirit (2:2–3). We can be shown the way, the open doors, the safe path, the path of light (2:4). The theme of vision versus judgment carries right through from the preceding chapter. If we are willing to let go of judgment, which “will *always* give you false directions,” we will receive *vision*, which “*shows* you where to go” (2:5). Why stumble along blindly, *guessing* what things mean or where they are, when vision is available to us? (2:6)

Paragraph 3

3. ¹There is no need to learn through pain. ²And gentle lessons are acquired joyously, and are remembered gladly. ³What gives you happiness you *want* to learn and *not* forget. ⁴It is not this you would deny. ⁵*Your* question is whether the means by which this course is learned *will* bring to you the joy it promises. ⁶If you *believed* it would, the *learning* of it would be *no* problem. ⁷You are not a happy learner yet because you still remain uncertain that vision gives you *more* than judgment does, and you *have* learned that both you *cannot* have.

• Study Question •

5. *Why are we having a hard time learning the Course (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *We think we must learn through pain.*
 - B. *We do not realize that we can learn through joy.*
 - C. *We do not know if the Course will bring the joy it promises.*
 - D. *We are not sure that vision gives more joy than judgment.*

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We do not have to trip over the dog and bruise ourselves in a fall, or bark our shins on the coffee table in the dark. We can turn on the lights! We don't have to stumble our way through the world, learning through pain, which is what we do when we try to govern our lives by our judgments (3:1). When you learn something painlessly, gently and joyously, you happily remember the lesson; you *want* to learn it and *not* forget it because it brings you happiness (3:2–3). That advantage of painless learning is very clear and we don't question it.

What we *do* question is whether or not the lessons the Course is trying to teach us really *will* bring us the joy the Course promises (3:4–5). We aren't sure that what we gain from following the Course's teaching is worth what we have to give up—and we *do* have to give things up, notably, judgment (3:7). We have to give up the right to make other people wrong. We are not yet convinced that vision will give us more than judgment does. If we really believed that the Course can deliver what it promises, learning its lessons would not be difficult (3:6).

Paragraphs 4 & 5

4. ¹The blind become *accustomed* to their world by their adjustments to it. ²They think they know their way about in it. ³They learned it, not through joyous lessons, but through the stern necessity of limits they believed they could not overcome. ⁴And *still* believing this, they hold those lessons dear, and cling to them *because* they cannot see. ⁵They do not understand the lessons *keep* them blind. ⁶This they do *not* believe. ⁷And so they keep the world they learned to “see” in their imagination, believing that their choice is that or nothing. ⁸They hate the world they learned through pain. ⁹And everything they think is in it serves to remind them that *they* are incomplete and bitterly deprived.

5. ¹Thus they *define* their life and where they live, *adjusting* to it as they think they must, afraid to lose the little that they have. ²And so it is with all who see the body as all they have and all their brothers have. ³They try to reach each other, and they fail, and fail again. ⁴And they *adjust* to loneliness, believing that to *keep* the body is to *save* the little that they have. ⁵Listen, and try to think if you remember what we will speak of now.

• Study Questions •

6. *Paragraph 4 returns again to the theme of the blind, talking about how they learn to get around in their world. Based on this paragraph, what is a cause of our feelings of incompleteness and deprivation?*
 - A. *We have not obtained the idols we seek.*
 - B. *We have not been given special love.*
 - C. *We cannot see the world and have had to build a picture of it through painful lessons.*
7. *According to the 5th paragraph, who are the blind?*

Jesus returns to his analogy of blind persons and their behavior. His emphasis is on the way they “become *accustomed* to their world by their adjustments to it” (4:1). We should recall here how, in T-20.III Jesus discussed “Sin as an Adjustment.” Blind persons often adjust their external world to compensate for their lack of sight. They keep furniture, utensils, and clothing in fixed locations because, unlike the sighted, they cannot “look for them” if things are misplaced. And they adjust themselves, their behavior, to a world they cannot see. Jesus says we adjust *ourselves* to our misperceptions, and we try to adjust the world we perceive to ourselves, just as blind persons do.

The blind learn to make these adjustments as a result of painful, unfortunate interactions with the world. Through struggle, they learn their limitations, and cling to the lessons they learn as the best way to handle a world they cannot see (4:2–4). Jesus then makes a rather startling statement: He says their hard-earned lessons *keep them blind* (4:5). I think that here Jesus has shifted his focus from the physically blind to the

spiritually blind, although perhaps this may also imply that physical blindness is the result of belief in limitation, and that a change of belief could cure the blindness. There are stories in the gospels of Jesus healing blind people, even those blind from birth (e.g., John 9). My mind remains open on the question.

But what he says applies clearly and definitely to the spiritually blind. We've adjusted to our judgments of the world and the persons around us, and we think those adjustments are keeping us safe and secure—at least as safe and secure as possible. We do not realize that the only reason we cling to our judgments and adjustments is because we cannot see reality. "Have you not wondered what the world is really like; how it would look through happy eyes" (T-20.III.5:1)? We don't believe that the lessons we've taught ourselves for getting along in the world are keeping us blind to the real world (4:5–6).

You have probably noticed the tendency in other people to believe that what they "see" is fact. Nothing you can say to the contrary seems to change their mind. So-and-so has it in for them, or cannot ever be trusted, or whatever. They believe the way they see the world is the only choice they have (4:7). You and I probably have not realized the extent to which the same is true of us! This is why the early lessons in the Workbook are so heavily concerned with getting us to question all our perceptions.

The spiritually blind (including all of us to one extent or another) "hate the world they learned through pain" (4:8). We've all found ourselves lamenting the state of the world, haven't we? We hate the way it reminds us of our incompleteness and deprivation (4:9). There is always someone else who has more, or better, than we do, and so often they don't deserve it (in our judgment!). So we define our lives according to our physical identity, adjusting to its limitations, afraid if we let go of the body we'll lose everything (5:1).

What kind of blindness is Jesus speaking about here? Essentially, he means "all who see the body as all they have and all their brothers have" (5:2). He's talking about the need we all feel to join together, the need for companionship, for support, for love. So we reach out, but because we are locked into our bodily identities and see one another as bodies, we keep running into problems. Most of us have tried repeatedly to form abiding relationships, and most of us have failed (5:3). So we adjust to the pain. We accept that true joining is a pipe dream, and we retreat into our personal shells, our bodies (5:4). We are trying to achieve union while cherishing the symbol of separation. It's a fruitless endeavor.

And so Jesus calls us to pay heed to an entirely different vision, one he seems to think we once knew and can remember if we only try: "Listen, and try to think if you remember what we will speak of now" (5:5). As you read these next two paragraphs, try to do that. Try to allow yourself to remember, to recognize a part of yourself that has not quite forgotten what true union is like.

Paragraph 6 & 7

6. ¹Listen,—perhaps you catch a hint of an ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar, like a song whose name is long forgotten, and the circumstances in which you heard

completely unremembered. ²Not the whole song has stayed with you, but just a little wisp of melody, attached not to a person or a place or anything particular. ³But you remember, from just this little part, 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.

7. ¹The notes are nothing. ²Yet you have kept them with you, not for themselves, but as a soft reminder of what would make you weep if you remembered how dear it was to you. ³You *could* remember, yet you are afraid, believing you would lose the world you learned since then. ⁴And yet you know that nothing in the world you learned is half so dear as this. ⁵Listen, 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.

• **Study Question** •

8. *Why is this discussion of the forgotten song here? How does it relate to what preceded it in this section?*
- A. *It does not relate; it is the beginning of a new thought.*
 - B. *The references to the people who listened with you are the key. This is a discussion of special vs. holy relationships and thus relates to the material in the last chapter.*
 - C. *The forgotten song is the state that the blind have deprived themselves of, by thinking the body is all they have and by learning the world that they taught themselves.*

You have probably had the kind of experience these paragraphs are calling you to have again, in a very significant manner. You've heard a song, maybe just a melody that you barely recognize, like some popular song homogenized as elevator music, and yet somehow those note evoke a long-forgotten memory. I have songs like that which remind me of past relationships, and nearly always produce a wave of emotion in me when I hear them. Other songs call up memories of happy times in Bible college or my year abroad in France. Even thinking of it now causes my eyes to tear up.

These two paragraphs describe an "ancient state" that is like such a forgotten song. He is speaking of a song we remember from *eternity*, before the tiny, mad idea took hold on our consciousness. The memory of it may be dim, but somehow it seems familiar, though at first we cannot recall the circumstances in which we heard it (6:1). It's like a nostalgia for something we once knew but have forgotten; only the sense of "something missing" remains.

We have forgotten everything but a little wisp of the song's melody (6:2). And why? We are afraid to remember the whole song, because if we did we "would lose the world

[we] learned since then” (7:3). But the wisp is enough to bring back a memory of a wonderful setting, with people we deeply loved there with us, listening (6:3). We’ve held on to the wisp because we are not willing to let go entirely, yet if we allowed ourselves to remember the song completely, we would weep with a profound sense of loss (7:2).

We *could* remember (7:3). We’re afraid of losing the world we’ve made, the world we’ve adjusted to and have a love/hate relationship with. “And yet you know that nothing in the world you learned is half so dear as this” near-forgotten state (7:4).

So, having appealed to our memory of heaven, Jesus asks us again to “listen” as he describes something he characterizes as “an ancient song you knew so long ago and held more dear than any melody you taught yourself to cherish since” (7:5). This makes me stop and think. I recall those melodies I mentioned above, the ones I cherish, that can evoke whole memories and emotions of times, places and people long past. How wonderful they are! How precious! But this song he will attempt to describe is *more dear* than any of them, the association far deeper, the emotions more powerful, and the delight we felt in its experience beyond anything this world has ever given us.

All of this talk of the forgotten song has been build-up for what’s coming now. So, *listen!*

Paragraphs 8 & 9

8. ¹Beyond the body, beyond the sun and stars, past *everything* you see and yet somehow familiar, is an arc of golden light that stretches as you look into a great and shining circle. ²And all the circle fills with light before your eyes. ³The edges of the circle disappear, and what is in it is no longer contained at all. ⁴The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere. ⁵Within it *everything* is joined in perfect continuity. ⁶Nor is it possible to imagine that anything *could* be outside, for there *is* nowhere that this light is not.

9. ¹This is the vision of the Son of God, whom you know well. ²Here is the sight of him who knows his Father. ³Here is the memory of what you *are*; a *part* of this, with *all* of it within, and *joined* to all as surely as all is joined in you. ⁴*Accept* the vision that can show you this, and *not* the body. ⁵You *know* the ancient song, and know it well. ⁶Nothing will ever be as dear to you as is this ancient hymn of love the Son of God sings to his Father still.³

³ "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. And in this, creation is extended. God gives thanks to His extension in His Son. His Son gives thanks for his creation, in the song of his creating in his Father's Name. The love they share is what all prayer will be throughout eternity, when time is done. For such it was before time seemed to be" (Song of Prayer, 1.1:1-8).

• Study Question •

9. *These paragraphs go into a moving description of an infinite light, that begins as an arc, becomes a circle, then a ball of light, and finally an endless light with no break and nothing outside of it. What is this specifically a description of?*
- A. *Heaven.*
 - B. *The vision of the Son of God.*
 - C. *The holy instant.*

Jesus switches to a visual image to set the scene for the song. Try to visualize it as he describes it. This description could come from nearly any of the great mystics like Meister Eckhart or Hildegard of Bingen. It is a familiar scene if you have read the mystics, and even more familiar if you have ever had a deep, mystical experience. But even if you never have had a mystical experience, you *have* experienced this scene. You have been there. You have seen it. This is the “lovely setting” for the song whose melody has haunted you all your life.

First is the description of “an arc of golden light” that exists beyond everything physical, beyond the sight of your eyes “yet somehow familiar.” This arc expands as you look upon it “into a great and shining circle” (8:1). We do not know yet just what this circle of shining, golden light represents, but the image surely evokes something wonderful, attractive, vibrant with energy.

That the golden circle is “somehow familiar” gives a clear link to the “forgotten song,” that “ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar” (6:1). These images are speaking of the same dimly remembered thing, something that lies dormant at the depths of our consciousness, a fragmentary memory of our original state.

As you look, the vast golden circle “fills with light before your eyes” (8:2). Now it is not simply a huge *outline* of a circle; it is a *solid* circle filled with golden light. Imagine that for a moment. Imagine the breath-taking effect as this great and shining circle suddenly *fills* with light! And now the edges of the circle disappear, its contents expanding, covering everything that exists, and “extending to infinity forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere” (8:3–4). You thought a galaxy was a huge thing, but this shining, golden light fills the galaxy of galaxies and more, “beyond the sun and stars.” There is “no break or limit anywhere” (8:4). This light is simply *everywhere* and covers *everything*.

The light joins everything together “in perfect continuity” (8:5). All has become one continuous whole.⁴ *Oneness*. Everything is included, exclusion is unimaginable because “there *is* nowhere that this light is not” (8:6).

All we have so far is the image of golden light filling and including all that is. We don't know yet what the light is. Is it God? But no! Jesus tells us plainly: “This is the vision of *the Son of God*, whom you know well” (9:1, my emphasis). This golden light is your identity and mine: “the memory of what you *are*; a *part* of this, with *all* of it within, and *joined* to all as surely as all is joined in you” (9:3). This dim memory of glorious, universal radiance is the memory of what you are! You are *part* of this radiance, and yet you contain *all* of it within you, and you are joined in oneness to everything in the universe, and everything in the universe “is joined in you.” *In you*. You are a part, and yet you contain the whole and are joined with the whole.

This vision of Oneness is what we can see if we are willing to accept that we, all of us, are not the body (9:4). Mystics down through the ages, Christian and non-Christian, have all reported the same thing. For instance:

The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw, and knew I saw, all things in God, and God in all things. —Mechtild of Magdeburg

Nicholas of Cusa, a medieval Christian mystic, explores this realization further, when he writes, “In every creature the universe is the creature; consequently, each creature receives the whole, so that in any creature all creatures are found, in a relative way. The universe is in each person in such a way that each person is in it, and so every person in the universe is the universe”

“I am the one whose praise echoes on high. I adorn all the earth. I am the breeze that nurtures all things green. I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits. I am led by the Spirit to feed the purest streams. I am the rain coming from the dew that causes the grasses to laugh with the joy of life. I call forth tears, the aroma of holy work. I am the yearning for good” (Hildegard of Bingen).

Switching back to the image of a song, Jesus tells us that we already know the ancient song very well (9:5). He emphasizes the word *know*. This is a part of us, built in to our minds and hearts. When we hear the song or see the vision (and sometimes both at once), we *recognize* it. We know this is what we've been longing for all our lives. It is the dearest thing we know and will ever know, the epitome of perfection (9:6). It is the song of love our heart sings to our Creator, our Father. It is the harmony of love to love.

⁴ In *Infinite Potential* by Lothar Schäfer, he states that “the intuition is growing among some scientists that the universe is a coherent wholeness.” He refers to physicist David Bohm, who believed that wholeness is a general property of reality, meaning that an “implicate order” exists at the cosmic level— a level in which every particle “is in instant contact with every other particle in the universe.” This sounds very much like what the Course says about all minds being in constant, instant communication with their Source and with one another.

“With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” (Song 2:3–4 ESV)

Paragraph 10

10. ¹And now the blind can see, for that same song they sing in honor of their Creator gives praise to them as well. ²The blindness that they made will not withstand the memory of this song. ³And they will look upon the vision of the Son of God, remembering who he is they sing of. ⁴What is a miracle but this remembering? ⁵And who is there in whom this memory lies not? ⁶The light in one awakens it in all. ⁷And when you see it in your brother, you *are* remembering for everyone.

• Study Question •

10. This gives us a clue about why the golden light was in this section. What significance did that light have in this section?
- A. It is what the blind are not seeing but will see; they will see the vision of the Son of God.
 - B. It was very beautiful.
 - C. Because he had already used a sound metaphor (the forgotten song) he needed also to use a sight metaphor—the golden light.
 - D. When the blind begin to see they often don't see distinct colors and shapes but just shapeless light.

We are the light. We are the singers of the song. We once were blind but now we see, and we sing (10:1).

There is a logical puzzle in the first sentence: The song of praise we sing to the Creator also gives praise *to us* (10:1). How can that be? It can be true only if we *are* the Creator, sharing the same essence, so that praise offered to the Creator *is* being offered to us. Jesus, in John's Gospel Chapter 17, prayed:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:20–21 NRSV)

Just as God was in Jesus, and Jesus was in God, he prayed that all of us would equally be in “us,” that is, we would be in God, and God in us, in the same way that he was.

We were “the blind,” but the blindness we suffered from “cannot withstand the memory of this song” (10:2). We are talking here about the memory of our true, shared Identity, and remembering it is enough to awaken vision to look upon it as well (10:3). This awakening of an ancient memory is the very definition of “miracle” (10:4). A miracle is nothing more, and nothing less, than remembering and seeing the truth about a brother or sister, and about ourselves.

This ancient memory exists in every single person, lying dormant, waiting to be awakened (10:5). When you or I remember it and embrace it, it reaches out, the light in us awakening the memory in everyone (10:6). When you look on someone with the vision of Christ, it can awaken their awareness of their inner beauty and holiness. Sometimes, all it takes is one person living the light to trigger that dim, almost-forgotten memory of a sweet and wonderful song. You may have had that experience when some person walking ahead of you on the path touches your life with love and wisdom, awaking a longing in you for “something,” the feeling that, “I don’t know what it is you have, but I want it, too!” The memory of the forgotten song, when awakened and accepted, spontaneously will spread to others. Don’t you want to be a part of that spiritual epidemic? I know I do.

• **Study Question** •

11. *Summary: Please summarize the main themes of this section in a paragraph or less. You may focus on those themes that struck you the most, but please include the themes of 1) the blind, 2) the forgotten song and 3) the golden light, and how they relate to each other.*

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Answer Key

1. A,B,C,D,E,F
2. A,C,E. This does not mean you somehow *caused* the plane crash, beyond the part each of us plays in the corporate consciousness that manifests as this world. The choices referred to I understand as choices made as part of the decision to take on physical, separate form. But the Course does say we are responsible for what we see, so we cannot escape that responsibility by blaming God or anyone other than ourselves. What the Course is saying is that our choice to separate has inevitable, tragic consequences.
3. A
4. B
5. C,D
6. C
7. All who see the body as all they have and all their brothers have.
8. C
9. B
10. A
11. My summary: You are blind. You feel deprived by a world you cannot see, but are afraid to give it up. Yet you could remember the song of Heaven, which you hold more dear than anything in this world. And you could see the vision of God's Son, which is what you are blind to right now.