

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 26

Holy Ground

Section III

The Borderland

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

Overview of Section III

Oneness is once again emphasized as the ultimate goal, and yet the Course stops short of that goal. This section presents the real world as an interim state in which we learn to distinguish between illusions and truth, and to choose truth until we recognize that choice itself is an illusion.

Paragraph 1

Complexity is not of God. ²How could it be, when all He knows is one? ³He knows of one creation, one reality, one truth, and but one Son. ⁴Nothing conflicts with oneness. ⁵How, then, could there be complexity in Him? ⁶What is there to decide? ⁷For it is conflict that makes choice complex. ⁸The truth is simple; it is one, without an opposite. ⁹And how could strife enter its simple presence and bring complexity where oneness is? ¹⁰The truth makes no decisions, for there is nothing to decide between. ¹¹And only if there were could choosing be a necessary step in the advance toward oneness. ¹²What is everything leaves room for nothing else.

• Study Question •

1. (1:7–11). Why is choice and decision absent from Heaven, according to these sentences?

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“One” is not complex! That should be obvious. Clearly, then, complexity comes from someplace besides God (1:1–2) — if something beside God even exists! If everything is One, there are no alternatives, no options, no choices at all, much less *complex* choices, which result from an overabundance of conflicting alternatives. “Nothing *conflicts* with oneness” (1:4).

In this world of separation, we are deluged with choices every minute of every day. The notion of choiceness awareness, with total absence of conflict, seems unimaginable. The idea that choosing may *not* be a necessary step in the advance toward oneness (1:11) seems inconceivable.

And yet, if Oneness is the truth of things, “how could strife enter its simple presence and bring complexity where oneness is” (1:9)? It could not. It must be, then, that it *has* not done so.

How, then, can we explain our complex world, full of strife and choice? The Course does so, ultimately, by calling it an unreal illusion.

“There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach” (WpI.132.6:2-3 (FIP)).

That’s consistent with what is said here. Oneness cannot become complex because there is nothing beside oneness to divide it into warring parts.

But to declare “It’s not real” in the face of all the world’s conflicts seems like dodging the question. This complex world is our experience. How are we supposed to get from this experience to the conflict-free awareness of unity when we are confronted so forcefully by what seems incontrovertible evidence of separation and conflict?

The Course proposes something it designates as a “borderland,” a kind of transition zone “between this world and Heaven” (2:2).

Paragraph 2

2 Yet is this magnitude beyond the scope of this curriculum, nor is it necessary we dwell on anything that cannot be immediately grasped. ²There is a borderland of thought that stands between this world and Heaven. ³It is not a place, and *when* you reach it is *apart* from time. ⁴Here is the meeting place where thoughts are brought *together*, where conflicting values *meet*, and *all* illusions are laid down beside the truth, where they are judged to be untrue. ⁵This borderland is just before the gate of Heaven. ⁶Here is every thought made pure and wholly simple. ⁷Here is sin denied and everything that *is* received instead.

• Study Question •

2. (1:12–2:1). *It seems beyond us to comprehend a oneness in which no choices are necessary. Is the Course asking us to do so now?*

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The magnitude and wonder of Absolute Oneness that the first paragraph describes *is not our immediate concern*. As I said, it seems unimaginable and inconceivable to us, and *that’s OK!* It isn’t even necessary for us to “dwell on anything that cannot be immediately grasped” (2:1). *A Course in Miracles* does not attempt to make such Oneness comprehensible to us; it says such a task is “beyond the scope of this curriculum” (2:1).

Instead, the Course's goal is to bring us into a transition zone, a "borderland of thought" between this world and Heaven (2:2). The borderland is not part of space or time (2:3); it is a borderland *of thought*, where the thoughts that made *this* world are brought together with God's creative Thought, which exposes the untenable nature of our misguided thinking. Illusions are set side-by-side to truth, so that their untruth may be seen (2:4).

The borderland is not Heaven. It comes "just before the gate of Heaven" (2:5). It's what the Course also calls the real world or right-mindedness. This is the place where our thoughts are purified and simplified (2:6). The thought of sin is banished from our minds as an impossibility, and instead we willingly receive all that truly *is* (2:7). It's not quite Heaven, but it's darn close!

Heaven, the Course claims, goes a bit farther than this. Heaven, it says, "...is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within" (T-18.VI.1:6). It is more than being aware that, "I am one with everything." The "with" of it, which still implies a certain duality, disappears, and the awareness is more, "I *am* everything," an "awareness of perfect oneness." But Heaven isn't the goal of the Course's curriculum. Its goal for us is the real world, the right mind, the borderland.

I've been teaching a class in Spiral Dynamics, which is a system describing the evolution of consciousness as it passes through various levels or stages, both in the individual and in society. One student, who is also a student of *A Course in Miracles*, asked me, "What level do you think Jesus was speaking from in the Course?" I told him that, in my opinion, Jesus is speaking from a level beyond the known spiral. Its "Second Tier" stages of Yellow and Turquoise are the beginning stages of the awareness of Oneness, a realization that "I am one with everything." But (at least according to Ken Wilber) there are even higher stages, which Wilber calls "non-dual mysticism." These stages are, I think, what is being referred to as "Heaven" in the Course: an awareness of perfect Oneness.

In the Course, Jesus is speaking from that higher plane, but he is addressing us here in our seeming awareness of non-oneness, of separateness. This is why so much of the Course seems at times to be dualistic, representing God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as beings separate from us. He is doing just what Spiral Dynamics says we must do to communicate to people whose thinking is framed by an earlier stage of evolution: We must speak to them in their own terms using values they value (not our own values) and concepts they can grasp. Jesus is acting to move us gently into a higher way of thinking, a borderland of thought between this world and Heaven.

Paragraph 3

3 This is the journey's end. ²We have referred to it as the "real world."
³And yet there is a contradiction here, in that these words imply a *limited*
reality, a *partial* truth, a *segment* of the universe made true.¹ ⁴This is
because knowledge makes *no* attack upon perception. ⁵They are brought
together, and only *one* continues past the gate where oneness is. ⁶Salvation
is a borderland where place and time and choice have meaning still, and yet
it can be seen that they are temporary, *out* of place, and *every* choice has
been *already* made.

• Study Question •

3. (3:1–2, 6). In these three sentences, what four terms (including the referent for "this" in 3:1) are shown to be synonymous?

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The end of the journey the Course has set for us isn't Heaven; it is this borderland (3:1), which he has previously called the "real world" (3:2). That very phrase, however, seems to contain a contradiction. How can there be a "real" world when in reality there *is* no world? It seems to imply that part of what is no more than illusion is, somehow, real: "a *limited* reality, a *partial* truth, a *segment* of the universe made true" (3:3). All of which, of course, is simply impossible! You cannot have a *partial* truth. Either it's truth or it's not.

Jesus says the apparent contradiction can be explained by the realization that "knowledge makes *no* attack upon perception" (3:4). Knowledge (or truth) does not directly contradict and oppose our misguided perceptions. Instead, the truth is laid alongside the illusion, and it becomes apparent to us that the illusion *is* an illusion.

In this borderland of thought, knowledge and perception are simply brought together. This is the "place," the mental space, in which illusions are vanishing, one by one. All the major illusions such as place and time and choice still have meaning to us. We act as if they are real, and yet part of us knows they are not. Even science has begun to support the idea that time is an illusion. If we know intellectually that only God's Truth is true in the end, that "the outcome is as certain as God" (T-2.III.3:10 (FIP), (T-2.VI.8:7 (CE))), we know there are no actual choices to be made, although we continue to make them anyway!

The borderland is a way of living in this world without quite leaving it, while knowing at the same time that it is not ultimately real. It is being aware of our oneness with all that is, and yet still aware of our individual separateness. This is a state of being that has been described (as well it can possibly be described) by mystics of all religions down through the ages.

¹ In other words, the term "real world" appears to be a contradiction in that it implies some segment of this *world*—which is by definition limited, partial, and illusory—that is somehow true and *real*.

Paragraph 4

4 Nothing the Son of God believes can be destroyed, but what is truth to him must be brought to the last comparison that he will ever make, the last evaluation that will be possible, the final judgment upon this world. ²It is the judgment of the truth upon illusion, of knowledge on perception: “*It has no meaning and does not exist.*” ³This is *not* your decision. ⁴It is but a simple statement of a simple fact. ⁵But in this world there *are* no simple facts, because what is the same and what is different remains unclear. ⁶The one *essential* thing to make a choice at all is this distinction. ⁷And herein lies the difference between the worlds: In this one choice *is* made impossible; in the real world is choosing simplified.

• Study Question •

4. Note the reason for lack of simplicity stated in Sentences 5 & 6. Based on the remaining sentences, what is it about the real world that makes choice simple and possible?

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We are God’s Son, and our thoughts are invulnerable. They cannot be destroyed (4:1). This is why knowledge makes no attack on perception; attack won’t work! Our mistaken thoughts cannot be *driven* out. They have to be brought alongside the truth, compared, and evaluated by us so that we come to see, “*It has no meaning and does not exist*” (4:1–2). It *seems* we are making a choice, but it really is not our decision to make! We are just recognizing “a simple statement of a simple fact” (4:3–4).

A simple example can help. Imagine someone shows you two boxes, one twice as large as the other, and asks you to decide which box is heavier. Your first guess might be the larger box. But then, the two boxes are placed on a scale one after the other, and the smaller box turns out to weight twice as much as the larger one. So, you change your mind. You did not actually make a new *choice*, you simply recognized the self-evident fact.

The problem with the world of perception is “there *are* no simple facts, because what is the same and what is different remains unclear” (4:5).

The overall point of this paragraph is that in this borderland, the real world, it is actually possible to make a real choice, while in the world of perception choice is impossible, because what’s real and what isn’t, or what is the same and what is different, remains unclear (4:5–7).

The defining characteristic of the real world is simplified choice. Remember: This is the goal of the Course for us. This is what its instruction is meant to bring about in our minds.

Paragraph 5

5 Salvation stops just short of Heaven, for only perception *needs* salvation. ²Heaven was never lost, and so cannot be saved. ³Yet who can make a choice *between* the wish for Heaven and the wish for hell unless he recognizes they are *not* the same? ⁴This difference is the learning goal this course has set. ⁵It will not go beyond this aim. ⁶Its *only* purpose is to teach what is the same and what is different, leaving room to make the only choice which *can* be made. ⁷There is no basis *for* a choice in this complex and overcomplicated world, for no one understands what is the same, and seems to choose where no choice really is. ⁸The real world is the area of choice made real, *not* in the outcome, but in the perception of alternatives *for* choice.

• Study Question •

5. (5:1–6). *If choice is impossible in the world as we perceive it, we must be brought to a state of perception (which is still short of the knowledge of Heaven) in which choice is possible. That is the learning goal of the Course. What two ways is that learning goal stated in this paragraph?*
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The process of salvation the Course is leading us through “stops just short of Heaven” (5:1). Its purpose is to correct our perception. In the state of Heaven there no longer *is* any perception because perception requires two, subject and object, while Heaven is an awareness of perfect Oneness — nothing outside to *be* perceived.

“Peace is the bridge that everyone will cross, to leave this world behind. But peace begins within the world perceived as different, and leading from this fresh perception to the gate of Heaven and the way beyond.” (W-pI.200.8:1-2 (FIP)). (See also T-13.VIII.2:1-3:9 (FIP), T-13.IX.2:1-3:9 (CE)).

“Heaven was never lost” (5:2). “The Fall” never happened. So Heaven cannot be saved; there is nothing to save it from. But we, in our insanity, have wished for something else, other than Heaven — which can only be hell! We think what we have chosen ought to be heaven for us, it ought to make us happy and fulfilled. Instead, it brings us misery and pain. We have to come to the point where we can recognize that wishing for Heaven and wishing for hell are not the same thing! That is the *only* learning goal the Course has set for us (5:3–4). It is just trying to get us to notice when what we are choosing or what we are wishing for is causing us pain, to teach us “what is the same and what is different” (5:5–6). There are *so* many things in this world that we, and others, think are very different, when really they are all the same: roads to hell and misery. Some go by drugs; some by alcohol; some by anger; some by money; some by destructive relationships (5:7). What’s *your* poison? Once we recognize that, “I am doing this to myself” by whatever the means might be, we are free to make a different choice².

² See T-27.VIII.10:1-11:6 (FIP), T-27.XI.1:1-2:5 (CE).

Once we learn to make that distinction, nothing else is needed. The rest will happen naturally. That's what it means to live in the real world, where "the area of choice is made real, *not* in the outcome, but in the perception of alternatives *for* choice" (5:8).

Paragraph 6

6 That there *is* choice is an illusion. ²Yet within this *one* lies the undoing of every illusion, *not* excepting this. ³Is not this like your special function, where the separation is undone by change of *purpose* in what once was specialness and now *is* union? ⁴All illusions are but one, and in the recognition this is so lies the ability to give up *all* attempts to choose *between* them and to make them different. ⁵How simple is the choice between two things so clearly *unlike*. ⁶There *is* no conflict here. ⁷No sacrifice is possible in the relinquishment of an illusion *recognized* as such. ⁸Where *all* reality has been withdrawn from what was *never* true, can it *be* hard to give it up and choose what *must* be true?

• Study Question •

6. *What ends all of our attempts to choose among the many illusions of the world?*

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There really is no choice; choice itself is an illusion (6:1). Between what is real and what is not real, there is no actual choice. Only what is real is actually *there*. But in the *apparent* choice between truth and illusion, every illusion is undone — even the illusion of choice itself (6:2)! That's what the borderland is all about.

The comparison to our special function in 6:3 is a reference back to T-25.VI.IV, where Jesus tells us that the special relationship we made to "harm" by promoting specialness has been co-opted by the Holy Spirit to heal the separation. "What once was specialness and now *is* union" (6:3). Here in the borderland, the ability of choice that *we* made to choose between illusions is being co-opted to *undo* illusions. That's how the Holy Spirit works. He uses time to undo time; He uses our bodies to show us we are not bodies; He corrects our perceptions to ultimately do away with perceptions entirely.

What we are learning in this training zone is that all illusions are really one illusion. Learning that makes it possible for us to give up every one of our attempts to pretend they are different and to choose among them (6:4).

We have so many ways we try to find happiness. We choose one relationship after another, one job after another. We move from place to place. We try entertainment, movies, TV, HD-TV, 4K and 5K TV, better mobile phones, newer cars, this therapy and that therapy, this diet and that diet — on and on it goes. Recognizing that all these things as sources of happiness are the same — illusions — makes our choices amazingly simple (6:5)! Real or unreal? How could any choice be easier, less conflicted (6:7)? Letting go of an illusion is no sacrifice when I *recognize* it as an illusion (6:7).

That recognition is the goal of our learning: To withdraw all reality from all of our illusions. Once we do so, giving them up and choosing “what *must* be true” becomes the most natural thing in the world (6:8).

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.

Answer Key

1. There is nothing to decide *between*.
2. No, it is beyond the scope of the Course's curriculum.
3. Borderland, journey's end, real world, salvation.
4. The clear distinction between what is the same and what is different. This refers to the sameness of all illusions, and to the clear-cut difference between illusions and truth.
5. To recognize that the wish for Heaven and the wish for hell are not the same; to teach what is the same and what is different, thus allowing the final choice.
6. The recognition that all illusions are really one, really the same, and are in fact *illusion*.

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 26

Holy Ground

Section IV

Where Sin Once Was

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

Overview of Section IV

This section deals with the surge of universal, joyful song that arises within us when we finally recognize that union with one another and with God is all we have ever wanted.

Paragraph 1

Forgiveness is this world's equivalent of Heaven's justice. ²It translates the world of sin into a simple world where justice can be reflected from *beyond* the gate behind which total lack of limits lies. ³Nothing in boundless love could *need* forgiveness. ⁴And what is charity *within* the world gives way to simple justice past the gate that opens into Heaven. ⁵No one forgives unless he has believed in sin, and *still* believes that he has much to be forgiven. ⁶Forgiveness thus becomes the means by which he learns *he* has done nothing to forgive. ³ ⁷Forgiveness always rests upon the one who offers it, until he sees *himself* as needing it no more. ⁸And thus is he returned to his *real* function of creating, which his forgiveness offers him again.

• Study Question •

1. (1:1-2). *How do these two sentences relate forgiveness to the real world, the borderland just outside Heaven's gate?*

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The theme of Heaven's justice shows up again, demonstrating that the themes of the Course run all through it like colored threads in a tapestry, weaving a total picture. We are reminded in 1:1 of what we were previous told in Chapter 25: that to be just forgiveness

³ Forgiveness in these sentences refers to the forgiveness of others. In other words, forgiving others is the means by which you learn that *you* have done nothing to forgive.

must be for everyone: justice *demand*s forgiveness. Here is it plainly stated: “Forgiveness is this world’s equivalent of Heaven’s justice” (1:1). Forgiveness is the reflection in this world of the truth of Heaven (W-357.1:1).

Forgiveness, though, is a borderland thing. Forgiveness and justice are not the same thing exactly; forgiveness is *equivalent* to justice; it is how justice (which is native to Heaven) shows up in this world (where sins seem real).

“Forgiveness is the great need of this world, but that is because it is a world of illusions” (W-pI.46.1:3 (FIP)).

“Forgiveness, then, is an illusion, but because of its purpose, which is the Holy Spirit’s, it has one difference. Unlike all other illusions it leads away from error and not towards it” (C-3.1:3-4 (FIP), C-2.1:3-4 (CE)).

Forgiveness readjusts our perception of the world in such a way that justice, which exists in pure form beyond the gate of Heaven, can be *reflected* in this world (1:2). There is nothing in Heaven that could possibly *need* forgiveness (1:3). What seems like forgiveness (or charity) here devolves into simple justice once past that gate (1:4). How could the wholly innocent need anything but perfect justice?

Why do we forgive? We forgive because we have believed in sin, and without a doubt still believe we need a lot of forgiveness ourselves (1:5). That’s a sobering assertion, isn’t it? We forgive because we believe someone has sinned. The Course makes it quite clear that we only see sin in others because we are projecting some belief about ourselves. The whole process just cannot and will never exist in a heavenly state of mind.

The fact that we forgive because we see sin, and see sin because we believe we need forgiveness, means that forgiveness is the means by which we learn *we* have done nothing to forgive (1:6). When we are willing to extend forgiveness to another, we receive it ourselves. “Forgiveness always rests upon the one who offers it, until he sees *himself* as needing it no more” (1:7). Once we truly realize we no longer need forgiveness, we won’t need to forgive anyone. They’ll share our innocence.

That release from the need to forgive, which is our only function in this world (T-25.VI.5:3 (FIP), (T-25.VI.5:1 (CE))), liberates us to return to our “*real* function of creating” (1:8).

“Miraculous creation was your own source, and also your own real function (T-3.VII.11:3 (CE), T-3.V.6:8 (FIP); the FIP sentence is worded quite differently).

“As your function in Heaven is creation, so your function on earth is healing” (T-12.IX.5:2 (CE), T-12.VII.4:7 (FIP)).

Here again we see the concept of the real world, or borderland, as something meant to *prepare* us for the transition to the Heaven of Oneness.

Paragraph 2

2 Forgiveness turns the world of sin into a world of glory, wonderful to see. ²Each flower shines in light, and every bird sings of the joy of Heaven. ³There is no sadness and there is no parting here, for everything is totally forgiven. ⁴And what has been forgiven must join, for nothing stands between to keep them separate and apart. ⁵The sinless must perceive that they are one, for nothing stands between to push the other off. ⁶And in the space which sin left vacant do they join as one, in gladness recognizing what is part of them has not been kept apart and separate. ⁷The holy place on which you stand is but the space that sin has left,⁴ and here you see the face of Christ arising in its place.

• Study Question •

2. (2:4-6). Why does forgiveness lead to the joining together of all the separated parts of the Sonship?

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As mentioned earlier in the chapter (26.I.5:3–4 and footnote) and reported at length in T-17.II, the world, seen through forgiving eyes, is completely transformed⁵. It becomes “a world of glory, wonderful to see” (2:1). Flowers and birds and all of nature’s sights and sounds are miraculously filled with heavenly messages; we see and hear God everywhere (2:2).

Jesus tells us that when we have truly forgiven, “there is no sadness and no parting here” (2:3). How, and why, can that be? Since forgiveness sees that, in truth, no one has lost, no harm has been done, and nothing has changed eternal truth, I can understand the “no sadness” part, at least intellectually. Why “no parting,” though?

The rest of the paragraph contains what, for me, answers that question. Remember, forgiveness is more than just overlooking sin, it is also recognizing oneness. Our perceptions of sin are what keep us apart. When they are gone, we will naturally join together, becoming one (2:4–5).

The title of this section is, “Where Sin Once Was.” It implies that sin is no longer there, and that something else has taken up that place. What has taken the place where sin once stood between us is our joining as one, recognizing each other as a part of ourselves that “has *not* been kept apart and separate” (2:6). That’s what forgiveness does! And when we have experienced that kind joining, that recognition of unity, “there is no parting.”

When we stand in the real world, this borderland, we are standing on the place that sin has left, and in it, we “see the face of Christ arising in its place” (2:7).

⁴ Exodus 3:5 (RSV): “Then [God] said [to Moses], ‘Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’”

⁵ See also (FIP references) T-18.IX.9:1; T-30.V.1:1; T-30.VI.3:3; and W-pII.8.1:4. (CE references) T-18.VIII.9:6; T-30.VI.1:1; T-30.VII.3:3; and W-8.1:4;

I believe I had that kind of joining with the person with whom I first studied the Course. We were both learning it together. We lifted one another up, we saw Christ in each other, and I know I saw her as sinless. Imperfect, making mistakes, but without sin. I felt she saw me the same way.

She has left her body behind, now 24 years ago, but I feel no parting. We are as joined as we ever were.

Paragraph 3

3 Who could behold the face of Christ and *not* recall His Father as He really is? ²Who could fear love and stand upon the ground where sin has left a place for Heaven's altar to rise and tower far above the world and reach beyond the universe to touch the heart of *all* creation? ³What *is* Heaven but a song of gratitude and love and praise by everything created to the Source of its creation? ⁴The holiest of altars is set where once was sin believed to be. ⁵For here does every light of Heaven come, to be rekindled and increased in joy. ⁶For here is what was lost to them restored, and all their radiance made whole again.

• Study Question •

3. *Why does seeing the face of Christ remove our fear of God or of Heaven?*

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Imagine that you are seeing the face of Christ in a brother or sister. How could you see that and *not* remember the true nature of God the Father? If you turn back to Chapter 25, Section II, Paragraph 7, you will be reminded of the way Jesus told us that the body can become a frame displaying the face of Christ to us. He made the same point about the memory of God in that passage: "...you will see the masterpiece. Look at its loveliness and understand the Mind that thought it, not in flesh and bones, but in a frame as lovely as itself" (T-25.II.7:1-2). You will *understand the Mind of God!* How amazing is that!? It makes this difficult forgiveness stuff really seem worthwhile.

When you stand in the place sin has left, you can see an amazing sight: the altar of Heaven, huge, towering beyond sight so that it reaches "beyond the universe to touch the heart of *all* creation" (3:2)⁶. It is an altar of forgiveness, an altar of love, and altar of "gratitude and love and praise by everything created to the Source of its creation" (3:3). All this, forgiveness shows you. How could you, having seen this, ever fear love again?

This "holiest of altars" stands in that place where once you believed sin to be (3:4). This is what you see when you choose to see someone sinless. Of course it is here! Where else would it be? Where else would you find the celebration of the prodigal's return, the re-recognition of the boundless love of God and the perfection of God's every creation? This is the place where "every light of Heaven" comes "to be rekindled and increased in

⁶ That phrase, "beyond the universe," in contrast to "all creation," clearly implies *alternate universes* sourced by the same Creator.

joy” (3:5). I believe that “every light of Heaven” refers to every being who bears the divine light, the image of its Creator. I can almost picture angels dipping in to this holy altar, getting recharged with divine grace as they bask in the glow of your forgiveness. Anyone who has lost awareness of their divinity can come here to be restored to radiant wholeness (3:6).

We have no idea how powerful and profoundly healing it is when we forgive one another!

Paragraph 4

4 Forgiveness brings no little miracles to lay before the gate of Heaven. ²Here the Son of God Himself comes to receive each gift that brings him nearer to his home. ³Not one is lost, and none is cherished more than any other. ⁴Each reminds him of his Father’s love as surely as the rest, and each one teaches him that what he fears he loves the most. ⁵What *but* a miracle could change his mind so that he understands that love cannot *be* feared? ⁶What other miracle *is* there *but* this? ⁷And what else *need* there be to make the space between you disappear?

• Study Question •

4. (4:5). *What is it that we “feared the most” but now love the most?*

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When the Course says that forgiveness “brings no little miracles,” I think what it means is that every miracle of forgiveness is a big deal (4:1). Each act of forgiveness has enormous impact. It reverberates throughout the consciousness of humanity and quickens the dormant Son of God nature in everyone, bringing us all “nearer to... home” (4:2). Minds *are* joined, and as Ken Wilber has written:

The very activity in your consciousness is building internal objects and ontologically real phenomena of an Integral nature that literally are being stored in the real Kosmos and that will one day reach down and bring men and women to their knees with joy and gratitude and grace and awe, will rewrite history as we know it, and will shape the world with a greater Truth and Goodness and Beauty than has ever been conceived or seen or known. (Ken Wilber, “The Religion of Tomorrow,” page 647)

Every thought of forgiveness is never lost, and all of them are “cherished” equally (4:3). You or I may think that our act of forgiveness is insignificant compared to someone who forgives the person who murdered their son, but in God’s sight they are all of equal value. Remember, there is no order of difficulty! A miracle is a miracle.

So every thought of forgiveness ripples out through the collective consciousness, stirring the memory of God’s love in every mind, teaching us that what we have feared — God, union, a shared Identity, our brother or sister — is actually what we love the most (4:4).

It takes a miracle to convince us that “love cannot *be* feared” (4:5). That change of mind is the essence of what a miracle is, and really is all that is needed to eliminate our separateness and remind us of our oneness (4:6–7). Can it really be that our chief obstacle in finding enlightenment is that we are afraid of love, afraid of the one thing we have no reason to fear?

Paragraph 5

5 Where sin once was perceived will rise a world which will become an altar to the truth. ²And you will join the lights of Heaven there and sing their song of gratitude and praise. ³For as they come to *you* to be complete, so will you go with them. ⁴For no one hears the song of Heaven and remains without a voice that adds its power to the song and makes it sweeter still. ⁵And each one joins the singing at the altar which was raised within the tiny spot that sin proclaimed to be its own. ⁶And what *was* tiny then has soared into a magnitude of song in which the universe has joined with but a single voice. ⁷This tiny spot of sin that stands between you still is holding back the happy opening of Heaven's gate. ⁸How *little* is the hindrance which withholds the wealth of Heaven from you! ⁹And how *great* will be the joy in Heaven when you join the mighty chorus to the love of God!⁷

• Study Question •

5. How many times do the words “tiny” or “little” occur in this paragraph? What do they refer to, and what great thing are they contrasted with?

•

The place of union between us is where a new world is rising, one that will “become an altar to the truth” (5:1). The beautiful image carries on through the chapter:

The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love. And They come quickly to the living temple where a home for Them has been set up. There is no place in Heaven holier. And They have come to dwell within the temple offered Them to be Their resting place as well as yours.
(T-26.IX.5:4–7 (CE), T-26.IX.6:1-4 (FIP))

Perhaps “the lights of Heaven” refers to angelic beings of light, thoughts of God who have never left their home as we have, beings who come to celebrate our awakening with a song of gratitude and praise, inviting *you and me* to join in their song (5:2). They recognize us as part of themselves, and we in return see our own completion in them (5:3). It is perhaps the most grand and glorious reunion in the universe!

⁷ Luke 15:7 (RSV): “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” In the above allusion, the “one sinner who repents” is you, when, through forgiveness, you leave sin behind and “join the mighty chorus to the love of God.”

There is a wonderful television show, *Long Lost Family*, in which two genealogists help people reunite with family members not seen for years or decades: birth parents, children given for adoption, brothers or sisters separated somehow by circumstances beyond their control. The joy of reunion, the relief, the instant recognition of someone who is part of yourself somehow is extremely emotional. There are tears and laughter, and long, long hugs.

I think our heavenly reunion will be like that times infinity! I think that each of us, when we awaken to that glorious Oneness, will fairly explode in joyful song, harmonizing with the Whole of Heaven (5:4). That tiny place between us where sin once was becomes the root of our irrepressible song (5:5). We will find ourselves caught up in “a magnitude of song in which the universe has joined with but a single voice” (5:6).

The mystics all speak of it. I have at least tasted it. A Christian hymn called it “joy unspeakable and full of glory, the half has never yet been told,” and that based on I Peter 1:8 in the Bible.

What holds us back from it? “This tiny spot of sin that stands between you still” (5:7). Our forgiveness can release that Hallelujah Chorus if we let it. Such a small thing that “withholds the wealth of Heaven from you” (5:8)! Compared to the “joy unspeakable” waiting to flood out through Heaven’s gate when you finally “join in the mighty chorus to the love of God,” that spot is nothing (5:9).

May we meditate on this huge disparity, on the foolishness of holding on to our grievances. May we recognize that “My grievances are hiding the light of the world in me” (W-69).

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes. *Italicized words* were emphasized in the FIP Edition.

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.

Answer Key

1. In these sentences, forgiveness is described as the means by which the world we see is translated into the real world. This real world is described as “simple,” the very word used so often in “The Borderland.”
2. The barrier of sin that kept us apart has been removed by forgiveness; there is nothing remaining to push each other away, keeping us apart and separate.
3. With sin removed by forgiveness we see the unity of all creation and the absence of any reason for separation. When we see total innocence and realize the unreality of sin, we realize that God does not condemn, and we are free to accept His Love.
4. The Father and His Love.
5. “Tiny” occurs 3 times; “little” occurs once. They refer to the spot of sin that we perceive standing between us and our brother or sister. This is contrasted with the tremendous joy, the magnitude of song, that will fill Heaven when we forgive that tiny spot and let it go.

The following visualization is taken from Volume 6 of *The Illuminated Text*, by Robert Perry and Greg Mackie.

Application: This section is so full of beautiful imagery that it would be a shame not to do a visualization. Further, the section is really all of a piece, laying out a single process that results from forgiveness. To pull it all together, let's do the following visualization:

Think of a relationship in which the two of you are separated by mutual condemnation, bitterness and blame.
See the space between you filled with a dark cloud of sin, blocking each other from clear sight.
Now repeat this line to yourself as a prayer of forgiveness and reconciliation: "Let our grievances be replaced by miracles, [name]."
Say it over and over, and as you do, picture it actually happening; the grievances on both sides are replaced by miracles.
The cloud of sin between you evaporates. The air between you clears up.
You and this person are filled with a sense of being one, "for nothing stands between to push the other off" (2:5).
And now the two of you "join as one, in gladness recognizing what is part of [you] has not been kept apart and separate" (2:6).

As you join, the place around you begins to transform.
The ground on which you stand becomes holy ground.
The sun comes out, you see the flowers shine in light, and hear the birds sing a love song to God.
In front of the two of you arises an altar to the Holy One, shining with purity and sparkling with the lilies of forgiveness that you gave each other.
The world of sin has been transformed into a world of glory, wonderful to see.
Spend a moment taking this in and realizing that all this came from your forgiveness.

Then the two of you look up and see countless radiant lights from Heaven coming to this altar as if completing a pilgrimage.
They gather round it and hover above it.
They begin to sing a song of love to God, a song of indescribable sweetness and power,
of beauty beyond what you could have imagined.
Without thinking, you and your brother are drawn to join in this song.
You find you actually can harmonize with this song,
that you fit into it, that you *belong* in this song.

Indeed, with your voice, the song becomes somehow even more sweet and powerful.

Now that you have added your voice, literally every voice in the universe joins in, and the song soars into an incomprehensible magnitude.

The altar begins to rise higher and higher, and as it does, you go with it.

The lights of Heaven are taking you with them.

You are now part of them.

And you and they continue to rise as one, past the world, past the stars, until you touch and enter the formless Heart of God Himself, the One to Whom you have all been singing.

There you remain, to join your voice to the endless, timeless, boundless chorus to the Love of God, forever and ever.

This is what your forgiveness of your brother offers you.