

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 31

### The Final Vision

#### Section VI

## *Recognizing the Spirit*

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

### Overview of Section VI

As we have often pointed out, the editors added the section divisions and titles later. The preceding section ended by telling us that when we have let go of all concepts of the self, or stopped "seeing the flesh," we will simply "recognize the spirit." What we are will tell us of Itself. Try reading this first paragraph as a continuation of that line of thought.

This section and the next two continue the thought that we are making the fundamental choice between our true Self and various *concepts* of the self we have learned. Notice the three-fold repetition of the term *concept* in the fifth paragraph.

Suggested reading: Lesson 43 or Lesson 190.

### Paragraph 1

You see the flesh or recognize the spirit. <sup>2</sup>There is no compromise between the two. <sup>3</sup>If one is real, the other must be false, for what is real denies its opposite. <sup>4</sup>There is no choice in vision but this one. <sup>5</sup>What you decide in this determines all you see and think is real and hold as true. <sup>6</sup>On this one choice does all your world depend, for here have you established what you are as flesh or spirit in your own belief. <sup>7</sup>If you choose flesh, you never will escape the body as your own reality, for you have chosen that you want it so. <sup>8</sup>But choose the spirit, and all Heaven bends to touch your eyes and bless your holy sight, that you may see the world of flesh no more, except to heal and comfort and to bless.

• **Study Questions** •

1. (1:1). *The Course seldom uses the word "flesh." It appears in only eleven paragraphs (more than once in some, as in this paragraph), plus once in The Song of Prayer. Several places use it in a literal sense, describing bodies of flesh and bone and blood. The following passages are open to a broader interpretation. Examine them, along with how this paragraph uses the word, and try to come up with your own definition for the way the Course uses this word. (See Appendix for the text of these references.)*

FIP Version	CE Version
T-8.VII.7	T-8.VI.8:1–9:1
T-8.VII.14:1–2	T-8.VI.15:5–6
T-20.VI.11:1–2	T-20.VI.11:1–2
T-24.VI.9:3–5	T-24.VI.9:3–5
T-25.II.7:1–2	T-25.II.7:1–2
W-pI.161.13:4–6	W-161.13:4–6

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Our options are only two: flesh or spirit. We "see" the flesh using our physical senses, but we "recognize" the spirit. The senses are not involved. Spirit isn't physical; therefore, the spirit is invisible. It is not seen but recognized (1:1).

Which takes on reality for us is an either/or situation. We cannot grant reality to both at once; there is no compromise (1:2). If spirit is real, the flesh must be false, and vice versa (1:3). The assumption here is that the two are opposites. This exclusivity doesn't mean that when we recognize the spirit, the physical will immediately vanish. There is an interim stage, it seems, where we still see bodies, but we increasingly see them as "a shadow circling round the good" (T-31.VII.3:3–4 (FIP); T-31.VII.3:6–4:1 (CE)).

Sentence (1:3) is simple but offers intriguing insights into the reasoning of the Course. Notice the following:

**a. What is real denies its opposite.** This is a fundamental presupposition in the Course, a foundational principle in its non-dual (add footnote) thought system. It is very different from our usual, Western dualism, in which *both* flesh and spirit can be real and in which many opposites can co-exist. In nonduality<sup>1</sup>, there cannot be any opposite to

<sup>1</sup>. "Nonduality literally means 'not two.'" It indicates oneness. The Course repeatedly states it. In the Introduction to the Text it says, "The opposite of love is fear, but what is all-encompassing can have no opposite." Based on that denial of opposites it declares, "Noting real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists."

The concept that if two things are opposite only one of them can be real is woven into everything the Course teaches.

The Course says:

"There is nothing outside you. <sup>2</sup>That is what you must ultimately learn, for it is in that realization that the Kingdom of Heaven is restored to you." (T-18.VI.1:1–2 (CE))

"God's Will is all there is" (P-3.6:1 (FIP)). . (Footnote continues on next page.)

anything in reality. If flesh and spirit *are* opposites, as we could readily agree, then only one of them can exist. If anything is real in a non-dual thought system, then its opposite, whatever that might be, is *not* real.

**b. If the spirit is real, then flesh, which includes the body and by extension the entire physical universe, is not real, and vice versa.** This is just another example of this teaching in the Course, notable because in interpreting the Course, many people try to make *both* flesh and spirit real. To the Course, you cannot have both; "there is no compromise." To choose flesh is to deny spirit, and vice versa.

**c. Your choice of which is real, flesh or spirit, determines your entire view of reality,** of what is real and true.

This is the only choice we have: to see flesh or recognize spirit (1:4). The same choice has been an important topic in the first five sections of this chapter. It is the choice between illusion and truth, between which lesson we want to learn, guilt or innocence, between separate roles as leader and follower or oneness, between death and life.

This choice is crucial. Choose to see the flesh (i.e., see a brother or sister as their body), and you will see only the material world. It alone will be real to you; physicalness will be all that is true. Choose to recognize spirit (i.e., recognize your brother or sister as the invisible Christ), and you will see only spirit, and only spirit will be real and true for you; the physical will be no more than a translucent illusion. The book of Hebrews in the Bible speaks of how Moses was able to survive the despotism of Pharaoh because of this inner spiritual vision:

"By faith he left Egypt, unafraid of the king's anger; for he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27 NRSV)

"Him who is invisible" is the Christ. The "king's anger" was nothing to Moses because he recognized spirit.

Our entire world depends on this one choice! If we choose to recognize spirit, we have thereby determined what we believe *we* are. If we choose to see flesh, we have determined that *we* are flesh (1:6). I want to point out that the Course keeps referring to this as *a choice*. We have convinced ourselves that recognizing spirit is difficult, that there is some profound learning process we have to go through to enable it. Jesus says it's far more straightforward than that. *What do you want to see?* That's the message of many passages in the Text, such as these:

"And to all other thoughts respond with this, and see God's Name replace the thousand little names you gave your thoughts, not realizing that there is one Name for all there is, and all that there will be" (W-pl.183.8:5 (FIP))

God is all there is. Oneness is all there is.

"You are one Self, united and secure in light and joy and peace. You are God's Son, one Self, with one Creator and one goal; to bring awareness of this oneness to all minds, that true creation may extend the Allness and the Unity of God" (W-pl.95.12:1-2 (FIP)).

Perhaps the most explicit statement of nonduality in the Course is this:

"Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It 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.1:5-6).

"Projection makes perception; the world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive." (T-21.I.1:1-5 (CE), T-21.Int.1:1-6 (FIP))

"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.6:1-6 (CE), T-25.I.3:1-6 (FIP))

(1:7-8). In the Bible, to "walk after the flesh" meant to engage in carnal lusts, for example, adultery, fornication, drunkenness, gluttony, and so on. That is not what is meant here by "choose flesh" and "choose the spirit." There is no taint of sin or guilt associated with "flesh." "Choose flesh" or "choose the spirit" has to do with our decision about which of the two we want to be real and which of the two we believe we *are*. To "choose flesh" is to want the physical, material world to be real, most especially my physical body; that choice, according to the Course, inherently *denies* my reality as a spiritual being. To "choose the spirit" is to decide that I am not a body, but a spirit; this choice inherently *denies* my reality as a physical being. "There is no compromise between the two." You cannot be both body and spirit.

## Paragraph 2

<sup>2</sup> Salvation is undoing. <sup>2</sup>If you choose to see the body, you behold a world of separation, unrelated things, and happenings that make no sense at all. <sup>3</sup>This one appears, and disappears in death. <sup>4</sup>That one is doomed to suffering and loss. <sup>5</sup>And no one is exactly as he was an instant previous, nor will he be the same as he is now an instant hence. <sup>6</sup>Who could have trust where so much change is seen, for who is worthy if he be but dust? <sup>7</sup>Salvation is undoing of all this. <sup>8</sup>And constancy arises in the sight of those whose eyes salvation has released from looking on the cost of keeping guilt, because they chose to let it go instead.

• Study Questions •

2. (2:2–4). Think about what these lines say you see if you choose to see the body. First, why is it logical to see such things if you choose to see the body?
3. Are these things characteristic of what you normally see day to day? What does this tell you about the choice you have been making?

(2:1). The sentence is almost cryptic. It's as if the author began a thought that he could not explain. "Salvation is undoing...". Undoing *what*? If we read ahead, we realize that the remainder of the paragraph answers that question. Sentences 2 through 6 present what salvation undoes, namely, the things which, taken together, result in a world where trust is impossible. The original thought is resumed and completed in sentence 7. Finally, sentence 8 explains *why* salvation undoes "all this."

**Summing it up:** Salvation undoes the vision of separation, unrelated things, and nonsensical happenings. It does away with life that begins with birth and ends with death. It undoes all suffering and loss and the appearance of relentless change. All of these things are what we see when we look "on the cost of keeping guilt." They *are* the cost of holding onto guilt. When we choose to let go of guilt, our eyes will be released from all of this!

It's worth noticing that this first paragraph portrays a world that we simply cannot trust due to its impermanence and failure to make any sense. Yet, by the end of this section, we learn we can see "the world...as stable, fully worthy of your trust; a happy place to rest in for a while, where nothing need be feared, but only loved" (6:8). This shift in our perception of the world seems to be the overall goal of this section.

### Paragraph 3

3 Salvation does not ask that you behold the spirit and perceive the body not. <sup>2</sup>It merely asks that this should be your *choice*. <sup>3</sup>For you can see the body without help, but do not understand how to behold a world apart from it. <sup>4</sup>It is your world salvation will undo, and let you see another world your eyes could never find. <sup>5</sup>Be not concerned *how* this could ever be. <sup>6</sup>You do not understand how what you see arose to meet your sight, for if you did, it would be gone. <sup>7</sup>The veil of ignorance is drawn across the evil and the good,<sup>2</sup> and must be passed that both may disappear, so that perception finds no hiding place.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:45 (KJV): "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Just as God makes His sun "to rise on the evil and on the good," so the veil of our ignorance—ignorance of how what we see gets there—"is drawn across the evil [seeing the body] and the good [seeing the spirit]." In other words, why should we be concerned with how the vision of the spirit will arise when we don't understand how *anything* we see arises?

• **Study Questions** •

4. *After reading the paragraph, how would you distill the central thought of this paragraph into a single sentence? If you find that too difficult, try answering the question after reading my comments below.*

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Having been told that salvation consists of the undoing of our perception of the world of "flesh," we may wonder how we can do that. So Jesus quickly reassures us that he is not asking us to *do* anything, but only to *choose* to have our perception transformed (3:1–2). (Another instance of the running theme of *choice*.) The Course is not telling us, "Don't see the body; see only spirit." It asks that we *choose* that kind of perception. Earlier, he said much the same thing, but with a different emphasis :

"Be willing, then, to see your brother sinless, that Christ may rise before your vision and give you joy. And place no value on your brother's body, which held him to illusions of what he is." (T-20.VIII.1:1–2 (CE), T-20.VIII.3:3-4 (FIP))

"Your question should not be, 'How can I see my brother without the body?' Ask only, 'Do I really wish to see him sinless?'" (T-20.VII.9:1–2 (CE), T-20.VII.9:1-2 (FIP))

It seems that to be willing to see spirit rather than flesh is the same as being willing to see one another as sinless. That makes sense if we recall that sins are always associated with the body. Thus, to see someone sinless is the same as seeing them as a spirit rather than a body. We have been "released from looking on the cost of keeping guilt" (2:8). And the mechanism of release is our choice.

Salvation comes through the choice to let guilt go, and choosing to see the body equates to choosing to hold on to guilt. The body is the idea of separation made flesh:

"God did not make the body because it is destructible and therefore not of the Kingdom. The body is a symbol of what you think you are. It is a separation device and therefore does not exist." (T-6.VII.2:1–3 (CE), T-6.V.A.2:1–3 (FIP)).

"The body is the symbol of the ego, as the ego is the symbol of separation" (T-15.IX.2:3).

"The body is the ego's idol; the belief in sin made flesh and then projected outward. This produces what seems to be a wall of flesh around the mind, keeping it prisoner in a tiny spot of space and time, beholden unto death, and given but an instant in which to sigh and grieve and die in honor of its master. And this unholy instant seems to be life. An instant of despair, a tiny island of dry sand, bereft of water, and set uncertainly upon oblivion." (T-20.VI.11:1–4 (CE), T-20.VI.11:1–3 (FIP)).

Because of this relationship of the body to guilt and separation, when we let go of guilt, we stop seeing the *effects* or "cost" of guilt—that is, all the world of separation described in the earlier part of paragraph 2. All the symptoms of change and randomness disappear; "constancy arises" in your sight. And thus, trust is now possible.

(3:3–7). The question remains: "If I don't need to do anything to behold the spirit beyond the body, how is that ever going to happen?" The Course reassures us, "Don't worry about it" ("Be not concerned how this could ever be" (3:5)). Salvation will undo the physical world (and our perception of it) and allow us to see the world of spirit (3:4). We don't understand how we came to see the physical world (3:3,6). If we did, it would be gone (3:6), and we still see it, so it's evident that we don't understand how we are doing it. We do not understand how either seeing "the evil" or seeing "the good" in the world happens (3:7). How, then, can we be expected to know how to change that perception to see something else? That "veil of ignorance" must be passed for the world to entirely disappear, with the cause of perception fully exposed to our awareness. Salvation does that *for* you.

## Paragraph 4

4 How is this done? <sup>2</sup>It is not done at all. <sup>3</sup>What could there be within the universe that God created that must still be done? <sup>4</sup>And what could be before you still to do? <sup>5</sup>Only in arrogance could you conceive that *you* must make the way to Heaven plain. <sup>6</sup>The means are given you by which to see the world that will replace the one you made. <sup>7</sup>Your will be done! <sup>8</sup>In Heaven as on earth this is forever true. <sup>9</sup>It matters not where you believe you are or what you think the truth about yourself must really be. <sup>10</sup>It makes no difference what you look upon or what you choose to feel or think or wish. <sup>11</sup>For God Himself hath said "Thy will be done."<sup>3</sup> <sup>12</sup>And it *is* done to you accordingly.

### • Study Questions •

5. "How is this done?" (4:1). How is what done?
6. In the light of paragraph 2, sentences 1 and 7, how do you understand 4:2–3?

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Sentence 4:1 plainly states the question our minds raise on reading 3:1, "Salvation does not ask that you behold the spirit and perceive the body not." The preceding paragraph began to answer that question. Now, it proceeds to finish off the question entirely. How can this veil of ignorance be passed? How can we see another world, a world apart from the body? What do we, or God, have to do (4:1)?

"It is not done at all" (4:2). Huh? There is a fundamental misconception on our part that Jesus is trying to expose here. It reminds me again of that old Christian hymn I've quoted before:

"Doing is a deadly thing.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 6:10 (KJV): "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." In the above reference, rather than us saying this to God, God says it to us. We doubt that if we choose vision we will then actually gain vision. But "God Himself hath said 'Thy will be done.'"

Doing ends in death.  
Weary, working, burdened one,  
Wherefore toil you so?  
Cease your doing; all was done  
Long, long ago.  
Cast your deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesus' feet.  
Stand in him, in him alone,  
Gloriously complete." (Lyrics by James Proctor)

Our misconception is that we have to *do* something. Jesus is not telling us, "Don't see the body; behold the spirit." That would be doing something that he tells us over and over again is *already done for us*. Spirit already *is*. "Spirit am I, a holy Son of God, free of all limits, safe and healed and whole, free to forgive, and free to save the world" (W-97.7:2). That is why the following sentence asks, "God created the universe; what could there be He left undone?" It's all over. It's complete.

We do not have to do anything; it is done for us. It's a gift!

"To give reluctantly is not to gain the gift, *because you are reluctant to accept it*. It is saved for you until reluctance to receive it disappears, and you are willing it be given you.... For God is fair. He does not fight against His Son's reluctance to see salvation as a gift from Him. Yet would His justice not be satisfied until it is received by everyone." (T-25.X.2:1-2, 7-9 (CE), T-25.IX.2:1-2, 7-9 (FIP))

As the Bible puts it:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works". (Ephesians 2:8-10 NRSV)

The idea in the phrase, "not the result of works, so that no one may boast," conveys the same thought as 4:5: "Only in arrogance could you conceive that *you* must make the way to Heaven plain." The Course has often stated what the very Introduction to the Text said:

"[The Course] does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance." (Introduction, I:7)

The same idea shows up even more clearly here:

"The readiness for knowledge still must be attained. Love is not learned. Its meaning lies in itself. And learning ends when you have recognized all it is *not*. That is the interference; that is what needs to be undone. Love is not learned because there never was a time in which you knew it not. Learning is useless in the presence of your Creator, Whose acknowledgment of you—and yours of Him—so far transcends all learning that everything you learned is meaningless, replaced forever by the knowledge of love and its one meaning." (T-18.VIII.13:3-9 (CE), T-18.IX.11:7-12:6 (FIP))



The point is that in creation, God did everything that needs doing. We do not need *doing*, we need *undoing*. We need to end our interference. We need to unlearn the false lessons we've taught ourselves. I suppose you could say that is doing something: unlearning, undoing our reluctance to receive. But the point is that the state we're trying to obtain is one we already have! It was given to us in creation. There is nothing that remains to be done (4:4). It's *arrogant* to think *we* have to figure out the way to Heaven (4:5). God has already given us the means to see the real world (4:6). Heaven is what we want, the true will of our true Self, which is why Jesus exclaims, "Your will be done" (4:7)!

"The means" God gave to us *is* our will; it is by our choice the transfer of perception happens. 4:1–3 told us that the transfer is not something that we must do; it already has been done. Then, in 4:11, we read that "God Himself has said, 'Your will be done.'" That statement is true "In Heaven as on earth" (4:8). Where we believe we are or what we think we are does not matter (4:9)! Our will is a gift that has already been given to us by God. Therefore, "It is done to you accordingly" (4:12). Our will must be done; that is the gift. Our will is how the transfer of perception occurs, and it was given to us by God in our creation. It guarantees that "the world [of spirit] will replace the one you made" (4:6), because that is what we, that is, our true Self, chooses, and God decreed that what we choose *is done*.

Call to mind a few of the things you think stand as obstacles between you and the real world, the world of spirit that lies beyond the perception of the body. Think of some of the things you believe you are and what you think about yourself. Think of the apparent solidity of your experience in this world. Think about the things you have chosen to feel or think or wish. And then, thank God that He says, here, that these things do not matter and make no difference. God has decreed that your will be done, and your will *is* to see the real world. Take some time to meditate and pray along these lines.

## Paragraph 5

5 You who believe that you can choose to see the Son of God as you would have him be, forget not that no **concept** of yourself will stand against the truth of what you are. <sup>2</sup>Undoing truth would be impossible, but **concepts** are not difficult to change. <sup>3</sup>One vision, clearly seen, that does not fit the picture as it was perceived before will change the world for eyes that learn to see, because the **concept** of the *self* has changed.

• Study Questions •

7. (5:1) *We see the Son of God in one another as imperfect, sinful, and guilty. What does this sentence tell us about our perception of God's Son*?"
8. *What can change our vision of the Son of God and our vision of the entire world?*

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We are certainly among those who believe we can choose to see the Son of God as we want to see him (5:1); the way we see him — imperfect, weak, guilty, sinful, and above all, separate from God and splintered into billions of fragments — proves that we believe it. The Course has just told us that our entirely false perception does not matter and makes no difference. Our false concepts of one another (and of ourselves) cannot stand against the truth of what we are (5:1). Once again, the Text is dealing with *concepts of the self*, as it did in T-31.I. It's impossible to undo the truth, but concepts, he says, "are not difficult to change" (5:2). The false concepts we have of ourselves don't matter; they have no effect on the truth about us, and we can easily change them. Thank God!

How can these false concepts be changed? Simple. "*One* vision, clearly seen, that does not fit the picture as it was perceived before" (5:3). One glimpse of the innocence in a brother or sister will shake our preconceptions of guilt and force us to change our "concept of the *self*" (5:3). Notice the emphasis on the word "one." That's all it takes—just one.

I can tell you from experience that when you suddenly see God looking at you from someone's eyes, when you see the imagined separation between yourself and another simply vanish, it really does change your perception of the self.

## Paragraph 6

6 Are you invulnerable? <sup>2</sup>Then the world is harmless in your sight. <sup>3</sup>Do you forgive? <sup>4</sup>Then is the world forgiving, for you have forgiven it its trespasses,<sup>4</sup> and so it looks on you with eyes that see as yours. <sup>5</sup>Are you a body? <sup>6</sup>So is all the world perceived as treacherous and out to kill. <sup>7</sup>Are you a spirit, deathless and without the promise of corruption and the stain of sin upon you? <sup>8</sup>So the world is seen as stable, fully worthy of your trust; a happy place to rest in for a while, where nothing need be feared but only loved. <sup>9</sup>Who is unwelcome to the kind in heart? <sup>10</sup>And what could hurt the truly innocent?

<sup>4</sup> "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" is a common form of the petition in the Lord's Prayer "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12 [KJV]). Here, rather than God forgiving us because we have forgiven others, we see *the world* forgiving us because we have forgiven it. "And so it looks on you with eyes that see as yours."

• Study Questions •

9. (6:1–2): *How does seeing yourself as invulnerable cause you to see the world as harmless? Suggestion: In the rest of the paragraph, try to see the cause/effect relationship between each concept of yourself and the way you see the world.*

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The entire paragraph consists of various statements showing that how you see yourself—your self-concept—determines the way you will perceive the world.

If I am invulnerable, there is nothing that can harm me (6:1–2). Therefore, no matter what the world does, I will perceive it as harmless. And if I accept the concept that I am spirit, not a body, I *am* invulnerable. Therefore, I think I am vulnerable only because I identify with this body of mine.

If I forgive, I will perceive the world as forgiving *me* because I have forgiven it. The same principle by which I forgive others also applies to me. I have seen the innocence of the world, and so I see it as looking on me in the same way I look on it (6:3–4).

If I identify with my body, the world appears to be a dangerous place, with all sorts of ways of killing me: viruses, cancer, pollution, random shootings, traffic accidents, slips and falls, and we can't forget old age (6:5–6). I know of someone who fell out of bed and ended up a quadriplegic. Our bodies are little more than fragile bags of water. (We are 60% water, and if you leave out bones, it's closer to 75%.)

If I identify with my Self as a deathless, sinless spirit, I can see the world as stable and completely trustworthy. If I recognize that I am spirit, it "determines all [I] see and think is real and hold as true" (1:5). In other words, in recognizing that my body is *not* real and true, I will simultaneously realize the same is true of everyone else. If I see I am spirit, I will see that *all* is deathless spirit, and therefore, wholly stable and trustworthy. There is nothing to fear (I'm invulnerable); I have only love for everything (6:7–8).

If I am fundamentally "kind in heart," everyone is welcome to me (6:9). If I am genuinely innocent, nothing can hurt me (6:10).

The connection between guilt and vulnerability may need some explanation. The notion that "guiltlessness is invulnerability" shows up more than once in the Course. Think about it and try to understand why nothing can hurt the truly innocent. Consider the following:

"The joy of learning darkness has no power over the Son of God is the happy lesson the Holy Spirit teaches, and would have you teach with Him. It is His joy to teach it, as it will be yours. The way to teach this simple lesson is merely this: Guiltlessness is invulnerability. Therefore, make your invulnerability manifest to everyone you meet, and teach him that, whatever he may try to do to you, your perfect freedom from the belief that you can be harmed shows him he is guiltless. He can do nothing that can hurt you, and by refusing to allow him to think he can, you teach him that the Atonement, which you have accepted, is also his." (T-14.III.6:1–5 (CE), T-14.III.6:6-7:4 (FIP))

You are invulnerable *because* you are guiltless. You can hold on to the past only through guilt. For guilt establishes that you deserve future punishment for what you did in the past and thus depends on one-dimensional time, proceeding from past to future. No one who believes this can understand what "always" means, and therefore guilt must deprive you of the appreciation of eternity. You are immortal because you are eternal, and "always" must include now. Guilt, then, is a way of holding past and future in your mind to ensure the ego's continuity. If what the ego *has* done *will* be punished, guilt guarantees that the ego will continue.

**I3** "But the guarantee of your continuity is God, not the ego. And immortality is the opposite of time, for time passes away, while immortality is constant. 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. The future in time is always associated with expiation, and only guilt could induce a sense of need for expiation. 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. For God has never condemned His Son, and being guiltless, he is eternal."

**I4** "You cannot dispel guilt by making it real and then atoning for it. For this is the ego's plan, which it offers *instead* of dispelling it. The ego believes in atonement through *attack*, being fully committed to the insane notion that attack is salvation. 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?"

**I5** "The ego teaches you to attack yourself because you are guilty, and this must increase the guilt, for guilt is the *result* of attack. In the ego's teaching, then, there is no escape from guilt, for attack makes guilt real, and if it is real there is no way to overcome it. The Holy Spirit dispels it simply through the calm recognition that it has never been. As He looks upon the guiltless Son of God, He *knows* this is true. And being true for you, you cannot attack yourself, for without guilt attack is impossible. You, then, are saved because God's Son is guiltless. And being wholly pure, you *are* invulnerable." (T-13.I.12:1-15:7 (CE))

We suffer hurt and see ourselves as vulnerable because we think we deserve punishment for our sins. We are doing it to ourselves. Therefore, when we accept the Atonement and realize we are truly innocent, we lose any cause of suffering: We are invulnerable. If the idea is accurate, then when you see yourself as truly innocent, you will also realize nothing can hurt you, thus completely changing how you see the world. You will see it all as you see yourself.

## Paragraph 7

7      Thy will be done, you holy child of God! <sup>2</sup>It does not matter if you think you are in earth or Heaven. <sup>3</sup>What your Father wills for you can never change. <sup>4</sup>The truth in you remains as radiant as a star, as pure as light, as innocent as love itself. <sup>5</sup>And you *are* worthy that your will be done.

• **Study Questions** •

10. How can 7:1 and 7:3 both be true?

•

You are the holy child of God, as are we all (7:1). Therefore, it is appropriate to express the desire to every child of God, "Thy will be done." The Course borrows these words from the Lord's Prayer in which they address "Our Father." It may seem inappropriate or sacrilegious to apply them to ourselves, but it's not.

"You still want what God wills, and no nightmare can defeat a child of God in his purpose. For your purpose was given you by God, and you must accomplish it because it is His Will. Awake and remember your purpose, for it is your will to do so. What has been accomplished for you must be yours" (T-12.II.6:1-4).

Then comes a startling statement: "It does not matter if you think you are in earth or Heaven. What your Father wills for you can never change" (7:2-3). The second sentence qualifies the first. That is, taken together, they say that God's will for us does not change regardless of how we see ourselves, and that is why 7:1 is appropriate. "You still want what God wills" (T-12.II.6:1). May *your* will be done! Because it is God's will also. "You *are* worthy that your will be done" (7:5). Whatever you may think of yourself, wherever you think you are (earth or Heaven), "The truth in you remains as radiant as a star, as pure as light, as innocent as love itself" (7:4).

Remember that poetic section in Chapter 30 that proclaimed the same thing?

"The thought God holds of you is like a star, unchangeable in an eternal sky." (T-30.IV.3:1 (CE))

This section, taken as a whole, has emphasized that we must *choose* to behold the spirit, to recognize that we are not bodies. We must choose to allow our *concept of our self* to be changed, which will eventuate in a transformed perception of the world. And it closes with this strong statement of the shining radiance of our spiritual Self. If we can perceive that radiance in anyone—ourselves or someone else—it changes everything:

"One vision, clearly seen, that does not fit the picture as it was perceived before will change the world for eyes that learn to see, because the concept of the *self* has changed." (T-31.VI.5:1 (CE))

The following two sections will *continue the emphasis* on changing your concept of your self, and the final section of the Text asks us forcefully to choose how we see ourselves:

"Choose once again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world, or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there." (T-31.IX.1:4 (CE))

We *have* the ability to choose. It probably doesn't seem that way to you. I think it will go on seeming like it is beyond our choice, but if we continue to practice and affirm we want it, one day, the seeming impossibility simply evaporates and we choose with joy..

## Answer Key

1. **Flesh:** physical or material form, most especially the body. Unlike the Bible, the Course does not use *flesh* in the sense of a sinful, animal nature, a very real part of us as a result of the Fall, that must be chastised and denied. To the Course, “flesh” is nearly synonymous to “the body,” and has no negative connotation.
2. These things do logically follow from choosing to see the body. You see separated things because bodies are separate. They are unrelated because bodies are not related to each other. Bodies are born and they die; they are vulnerable and imperfect, so they suffer. And we see constant change because that is what bodies do.
3. Yes. I do see unrelated things, happenings that make no sense, persons who come into life and then disappear in death (this seems emphasized by TV news and the deaths of public figures, especially “premature” deaths), some people inexplicably suffer while others don't, and everyone changes every day. What this tells me is that my choice has been to see the body, and not spirit.
4. You must move beyond perception of the world of the body in order to behold spirit, but you don't have to do this yourself, you just have to choose it; salvation will undo your world for you.
5. How is the veil of ignorance passed, which means, how do we end our perception of the material world to the extent that we may “see the world of flesh no more except to heal and comfort and to bless” (1:8).
6. We don't do anything to end our perception of the world; salvation is an “undoing of all this” (2:7). To behold the spirit is a recognition (1:1). The world of spirit is already; nothing needs to be made or done to establish its reality. All that is necessary is to undo the perception of what is false.
7. Our perception cannot stand against the truth. We think we have a choice of how to see the Son, but in reality, we do not have any choice. Eventually, we will recognize the truth.
8. One clear vision that does not fit our preconceptions. If a miracle—just one—shows us something that does not fit the ego's picture, it will unravel our entire perception of our self; when the concept of the self changes, our perception of the world, and of God's Son, will change with it.
9. If I am invulnerable, there is nothing that can harm me. Therefore, no matter what the world does I will perceive it as harmless. And if I accept the concept that I am spirit, not a body, I am invulnerable. The only reason I think I am vulnerable is because I identify with this body of mine.

*10. Both your will and God's can be done because they are one. God imparted His will to you in your creation. As God's Son you want the same things He wants.*

### Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

### Effects of Switching Editions of the Course

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

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

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

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

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



# Appendix

## ACIM Uses of the word “flesh” in a non-literal sense

Remember that the Bible says, “The Word (or thought) was made **flesh**.”<sup>5</sup> <sup>2</sup>Strictly speaking, this is impossible, since it seems to involve the translation of one order of reality into another. <sup>3</sup>Different orders of reality merely seem to exist, just as different orders of miracles do. <sup>4</sup>Thought cannot be made into **flesh** except by belief, because thought is not physical. <sup>5</sup>But thought is communication, for which the body *can* be used. <sup>6</sup>This is the only natural use to which it can be put.

**9** To use the body unnaturally is to lose sight of the Holy Spirit’s purpose and thus to confuse the goal of His curriculum. (T-8.VI.8:1-9:9 (CE))

<sup>5</sup>You are *not* limited by the body, and thought *cannot* be made **flesh**. <sup>6</sup>But mind can be manifested by the body if it goes beyond it and does not interpret it as limitation. (T-8.VI.15:5–6 (CE))

The body is the ego’s idol; the belief in sin made **flesh** and then projected outward.<sup>6</sup> <sup>2</sup>This produces what seems to be a wall of **flesh** around the mind, keeping it prisoner in a tiny spot of space and time, beholden unto death, and given but an instant in which to sigh and grieve and die in honor of its master. (T-20.VI.11:1–2 (CE))

<sup>3</sup>Futility of function not fulfilled will haunt you while your brother lies asleep, till what has been assigned to you is done and he is risen from the past. <sup>4</sup>He who condemned himself, and you as well, is given you to save from condemnation, along with you. <sup>5</sup>And both shall see God’s glory in His Son, whom you mistook as **flesh** and bound to laws which have no power over him at all. (T-24.VI.9:3–5 (CE))

**7** Accept *His* frame instead of yours, and you will see the masterpiece. <sup>2</sup>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.6:7-7:2 (CE))

<sup>5</sup> John 1:14 (KJV): “And the Word was made **flesh**, and dwelt among us.” T-3.VII.16:2, 5: “*The* Word is really a thought....The original name for ‘thought’ and ‘word’ was the same.” One of the meanings of the biblical Greek word for “word” (*logos*) was “thought.”

<sup>6</sup> John 1:14 (KJV): “And the Word was made **flesh**, and dwelt among us.” In the above passage, as in the original, there is a thought that is “made **flesh**” and that then takes external form in the world. However, here the thought is “sin” rather than the Word of God. The body, then, is depicted as a manifestation of the unholy, an opposite to Jesus, who is depicted as a manifestation of the holy.

‘And He will answer Whom you called upon. ‘For He will hear the Voice of God in you, and answer in your own. ‘Behold him now whom you have seen as merely **flesh** and bone, and recognize that Christ has come to you. (W-161.1:4–6 (CE))

These passages all show that the Course uses the word “flesh” in the sense of “physical or material form,” without any negative connotation such as the Bible’s “sins of the flesh.” The nearest it comes is to refer to the body as “the belief in sin made flesh.”

**Flesh: physical or material form**, most especially the body. Unlike the Bible, the Course does not use *flesh* in the sense of a sinful, animal nature, a very real part of us as a result of the Fall, that must be chastised and denied. To the Course, “flesh” is nearly synonymous to “the body,” and has no negative connotation.