

# Commentary

## ACIM® Clarification of Terms

### 3. *True Perception—Knowledge*

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

This chapter explains why seeing the Face of Christ must precede God's final step and why the last perception, like all perception, is an illusion that will eventually disappear. It discusses the temporary nature of the physical world we see, which leads to guilt and reinforces our belief in our egos. True perception allows us to see beyond the world's veil and creates an empty space for the sight of the Face of Christ, thus enabling forgiveness. The Course's statement that the world is an illusion that will disappear refers to the physical world and the entire physical universe.

"What seems eternal all will have an end. The stars will disappear, and night and day will be no more. All things that come and go, the tides, the seasons and the lives of men; all things that change with time and bloom and fade will not return."  
(T-29.VI.2:7-9 (FIP), T-29.VII.2:7-9 (CE))

#### Paragraph 1

The world you see is an illusion of a world. <sup>2</sup>God did not create it, for what He creates must be eternal as Himself, yet there is nothing in the world you see that will endure forever. <sup>3</sup>Some things will last in time a little while longer than others. <sup>4</sup>But the time will come when all things visible will have an end.

God did not create the world we see (1:1-2). Some Course students try to make this mean the the world is real but *as we see it* is an illusion. True, we are seeing a distorted picture through our false perception. We see attack where there is only a call for love. But, they say, the actual objects we see are real, created by God. The Course argues here that what God creates "must be eternal as Himself" (1:2). Maybe some things may last a lot longer in time, like the Sun, or mountains (1:3). "But the time will come when all things visible will have an end" (1:4). Note that phrase "all things visible." Everything our eyes are capable of seeing, even distant galaxies, will have an end. None of it is eternal, and therefore cannot have been created by God. (See also the lines from T-29 that I quoted just before this paragraph.)

The illusory nature of the world is a challenging idea. So much about the world seems good! The Bible teaches that the world was created “very good” by God, but that Adam and Eve somehow destroyed that by their sins, and destroyed it for all people for all time, which seems quite unreasonable to me. And if that were so, wouldn't God be responsible for creating man and woman so flawed that they could make such a terrible mistake?

The Course escapes this problem by simply saying the world isn't real at all. Yes, the world we see is the result of our “tiny, mad idea” of separation, but it had no real results—only illusory ones. Yes, the illusion contains many lovely things. That's how the ego deceives us. If the world were all bad, we would gladly let it go.

## Paragraph 2

2 The body's eyes are therefore not the means by which the real world can be seen, for the illusions that they look upon must lead to more illusions of reality. <sup>2</sup>And so they do. <sup>3</sup>For everything they see not only will not last, but lends itself to thoughts of sin and guilt. <sup>4</sup>But everything that God created is forever without sin and therefore is forever without guilt.

This paragraph makes it clear that your body's eyes are incapable of seeing the real world. The world is an illusion and fosters derivative illusions (2:1–2). The content of the world's illusion “lends itself to thoughts of sin and guilt” (2:3). God's creation can never contain sin or guilt (2:4). So now we have two reasons why “there is no world,” which is the “central thought this Course attempts to teach” (W-132.6:2). First, the world is not eternal; therefore, God could not have created it. Second, the world lends itself to thoughts of sin and guilt, which cannot be part of God's creation.

## Paragraph 3

3 Knowledge is not the remedy for false perception since, being another level, they can never meet. <sup>2</sup>The one correction possible for false perception must be *true perception*. <sup>3</sup>It will not endure. <sup>4</sup>But for the time it lasts, it comes to heal. <sup>5</sup>For true perception is a remedy with many names: forgiveness, salvation, Atonement, true perception—all are one. <sup>6</sup>They are the one beginning, with the end to lead to oneness far beyond themselves. <sup>7</sup>True perception is the means by which the world is saved from sin, for sin does not exist, and it is this that true perception sees.

We may think that being taught the truth soundly enough and deeply enough will liberate us from our false perception, but perception and knowledge belong to different levels of consciousness (3:1). Back in Text, Chapter 8, the Course declared that “Knowledge is not the motivation factor for learning this Course. *Peace is.*” (T-8.I.1:5–6 (CE), T-8.I.1:1–2 (FIP)).

The idea is that the goal of the Course is peace. Peace comes, not from knowledge but from true perception—which is the same as forgiveness, seeing the real world, or seeing the Face of Christ (3:5). All of them lead to peace. Gaining more knowledge is not the way to peace. Peace is the prerequisite to knowledge. When we have achieved true

perception, the way is open for God to bring us to knowledge. True perception “won’t endure” (3:3) because it ushers in knowledge, and *all* perception will end. While time exists, true perception heals us (3:4).

The Course here equates *forgiveness, salvation, Atonement, and true perception*, and elsewhere adds *the real world* to the list of synonyms since it is simply what true perception sees. In different places, it tells us that when these things are complete, the physical world of bodies will only endure an instant—just enough for us to realize it is there—before it vanishes, its gentle illusion no longer needed as God gathers us home. All of these synonymous terms “are the one beginning.” They share the same purpose: to lead us “to oneness far beyond themselves” (3:6). True perception sees a sinless world because “sin does not exist,” and when we have fully accepted that, we will once again recognize the oneness of which we have always been a part (3:7).

## Paragraph 4

4 The world stands like a block before Christ’s face. <sup>2</sup>But true perception looks on it as nothing more than just a fragile veil, so easily dispelled that it can last no longer than an instant. <sup>3</sup>It is seen at last for only what it is. <sup>4</sup>And now it cannot fail to disappear. <sup>5</sup>Now there is an empty place made clean and ready. <sup>6</sup>Where destruction was perceived the face of Christ appears, and in that instant is the world forgot, with time forever ended as the world spins into the nothingness from where it came.

Our perception of the world constantly irritates us, causing a profound disturbance. How can we be peaceful when our world assaults us with pandemics, wildfires, insane politicians, children dying of hunger, mass shootings, earthquakes (or threat of them), plane crashes, racial hatred, and other discrimination, homeless people, migrants fleeing criminal cartels or poverty drowning at sea, nations engaged in senseless wars? They are just some ways our sight of the world blocks our sight of Christ’s face (4:1). The list could go on and on.

True perception looks on all these things as “just a fragile veil, so easily dispelled that it can last no longer than an instant” (4:2). It’s nothing but a mirage; it does not really exist at all! Seeing the world this way is the only way to be at peace.

I need to pause here to address a possible objection, one that, for many of us, is powerful. Simply put, the question is, “Does this mean that none of the horrors of this world should concern me? Shall I just brush them off, ignore them, telling myself they are not real and therefore do not matter?” My answer is a firm “No!” If that were the case, God would never have given us Jesus or the Course. The following quotes should dispel that mistaken line of thought:

“Love always answers, being unable to deny a call for help, or not to hear the cries of pain that rise to it from every part of this strange world you made but do not want” (T-13.VII.3:4 (CE)).

“Your glory is the light that saves the world. Do not withhold salvation longer. Look about the world, and see the suffering there. Is not your heart willing to bring your weary brothers rest?”

”They must await your own release. They stay in chains till you are free. They cannot see the mercy of the world until you find it in yourself. They suffer pain until you have denied its hold on you. They die till you accept your own eternal life.” **(W-pl.191.10:5-11:5 (FIP))**.

We are not expected to ignore the suffering we see. The Course tells us to look at the world and acknowledge the suffering. Our response must be to show mercy, love, and help toward those who are suffering, which ultimately helps us release our own pain and suffering through forgiveness. While we work towards this goal, we should physically manifest our response in acts of love, mercy, and help, as James says in his epistle:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” **(James 2:14–17 NRSV)**

When we finally see with a true perception that the world is nothing, it will disappear **(4:3–4)**. That creates a vacuum in our minds, so to speak, “an empty place made clean and ready” for the appearance of the face of Christ **(4:5)**. In that instant, our minds will be so stunned and overwhelmed with the beatific vision of the oneness of all things in God that we will forget the world entirely **(4:6)**. Time ends; the world “spins into the nothingness from where it came” **(4:6)**.

First, the world “spinning into nothingness” is a pretty clear statement that the physical universe will disappear completely because it never existed. The wording implies that the world has ended for everyone, which in turn implies that everyone has achieved true perception and has been rewarded with the vision of the face of Christ. That may not be the case. I’m certain Jesus saw with true perception, that he saw the face of Christ and that, for him, the world ceased to exist. Jesus became like a vaccine injected into the bloodstream of humanity that is slowly eradicating the ego virus that has infected our minds. If that’s so, we join him in that healing work as each of us awakens. I say “slowly” with reservation because slowness is a measure of time’s passage, but time only exists as an illusion in minds still clouded in ego darkness. To us, and them, it may seem slow. To aspects of mind awake, time is *already* over.

<sup>2</sup>And what He would replace *has been* replaced. <sup>3</sup>Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity. <sup>4</sup>And so is *all* time past, and everything exactly as it was before the way to nothingness was made. <sup>5</sup>The tiny tick of time in which the first mistake was made, and all of them within that one mistake, held also the Correction for that one, and all of them that came within the first. <sup>6</sup>And in that tiny instant time was gone, for that was all it ever was. <sup>7</sup>What God gave answer to *is* answered and is gone.” **(T-26.V.3:2–7 (CE))**

The truth is the world has never existed, and time is already over. Salvation is complete. Paradoxically, however, we continue to experience both as if they are here and

now and real. God accommodates Himself to our illusions and gives us a way out of them:

“To you who still believe you live in time and know not it is gone, the Holy Spirit still guides you through the infinitely small and senseless maze you still perceive in time, though it has long since gone. You think you live in what is past. Each thing you look upon you saw but for an instant long ago, before its unreality gave way to truth. Not one illusion still remains unanswered in your mind. Uncertainty was brought to certainty so long ago that it is hard indeed to hold it to your heart as if it were before you still. The tiny instant you would keep and make eternal passed away in Heaven too soon for anything to notice it had come.”

**(T-26.V.3:2-4:6 (CE), T-26.V.3:2-7 (FIP))**

As it says in Workbook Lesson 158.4, time is a trick. We're looking at the journey from its endpoint, looking back at it, and imagining we're doing it all over again. It's a mental review our minds are making.

## Paragraph 5

5 A world forgiven cannot last. <sup>2</sup>It was the home of bodies, but forgiveness looks past bodies. <sup>3</sup>This is its holiness; this is how it heals. <sup>4</sup>The world of bodies is the world of sin, for only if there is a body is sin possible. <sup>5</sup>From sin comes guilt as surely as forgiveness takes all guilt away. <sup>6</sup>And once all guilt is gone, what more remains to keep a separated world in place? <sup>7</sup>For place has gone as well, along with time. <sup>8</sup>Only the body makes the world seem real, for being separate it could not remain where separation is impossible. <sup>9</sup>Forgiveness proves it is impossible because it sees it not. <sup>10</sup>And what you then will overlook will not be understandable to you, just as its presence once had been your certainty.

How many times must he tell us: “A world forgiven cannot last” (5:1). The world came about (in our minds) as a place where we could live in separate bodies that die (5:2). But forgiveness perceives something beyond the body, something pure and eternal. That's what enables forgiveness to heal (5:3). How so?

Without a body, we cannot sin; it would be impossible. By convincing us that we are bodies, separate and competing with other bodies, the ego makes sin seem possible (5:4). Of course, sin always produces guilt, which evokes the fear of God (5:5). Forgiveness, however, seeing beyond the body, erases all guilt because it removes the possibility of sin (5:5). Without guilt, the ego has no life. Without guilt, the separated world cannot exist (5:6). Both time and space (place) have ceased to exist when forgiveness powers our perception (5:7).

Bodies make us seem separate and make the world seem real, and the body cannot exist where separation (space, place) is impossible. It's the body that makes the world seem real (5:8)! “Forgiveness proves it [separation] is impossible because it [forgiveness] sees it [the body] not” (5:9).

Let's write without the pronouns: "Forgiveness proves separation is impossible because forgiveness does not see the body."<sup>1</sup> Overlooking or not seeing the body Without bodies, separation isn't understandable, whereas now, seeing ourselves as bodies, separation seems like a certainty (5:10). The body symbolizes the ego, which is the symbol of separation:

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

Simply by overlooking bodies, then, forgiveness overlooks sin, guilt, the world, time, space, and separation. And *that* is the shift brought by true perception (6:1)!

## Paragraph 6

6 This is the shift that true perception brings: What was projected out is seen within, and there forgiveness lets it disappear. <sup>2</sup>For there the altar to the Son is set, and there his Father is remembered. <sup>3</sup>There are all illusions brought to truth and laid upon the altar. <sup>4</sup>What is seen outside must lie beyond forgiveness, for it seems to be forever sinful. <sup>5</sup>Where is hope while sin is seen outside? <sup>6</sup>What remedy can guilt expect? <sup>7</sup>But seen within your mind, guilt and forgiveness for an instant lie together, side by side, upon one altar. <sup>8</sup>There at last are sickness and its single remedy joined in one healing brightness. <sup>9</sup>God has come to claim His Own. <sup>10</sup>Forgiveness is complete.

The first sentence is a great summary of how perception is corrected (6:1). It goes like this:

- Our minds are constantly projecting our guilt onto the world, including everything and everyone, and onto God.
- Through self-examination we realize that what we have been seeing outside of us is all in our own minds, and nowhere else.
- We open to forgiveness, choosing love instead of fear, and all the thoughts we have been hiding and projecting disappear.

Within us is the altar to the Son of God; this is where the memory of God is returned to us (6:2). This place in our mind is our meeting place with God. We bring our illusions there and "lay them on the altar," recognizing that we've been looking at the projections of our minds (6:3). Our perceptions are outside of us and, seen there, seem beyond forgiveness (6:4). We have to bring them back into our minds. If we leave them outside, there is no hope of forgiveness, no remedy for their guilt (6:5–6). When we realize what we are seeing are projections of our thoughts, we can lay them on the altar alongside God's forgiveness (6:7). There, our sickness (ego, separation) joins with forgiveness, emitting blaze of light (6:8). We have been reclaimed by God as His own, part of Himself (6:9). The task of forgiveness has been done (6:10).

<sup>1</sup> My pronoun clarification differs from that given in Robert's footnote to 5:9. You may want to discuss this in class.

The latter step, forgiveness, comes about by recognizing that all the separate bodies we see are projections of our own thoughts. We begin to “overlook” them and the illusion of separateness they symbolize (as we saw in **5:8–10**). We lay our illusions on the altar. Gradually, we purify our minds, and when nothing remains to overlook and transform... God takes the last step.

## Paragraph 7

<sup>7</sup> And now God's *knowledge*—changeless, certain, pure, and wholly understandable—enters its kingdom. <sup>2</sup>Gone is perception, false and true alike. <sup>3</sup>Gone is forgiveness, for its task is done. <sup>4</sup>And gone are bodies in the blazing light upon the altar to the Son of God. <sup>5</sup>God knows it is His Own, as it is his. <sup>6</sup>And here They join, for here the face of Christ has shone away time's final instant, and now is the last perception of the world without a purpose and without a cause. <sup>7</sup>For where God's memory has come at last there is no journey, no belief in sin, no walls, no bodies, and the grim appeal of guilt and death is there snuffed out forever.

God takes the last step. *Knowledge* enters our minds, which is its kingdom, where it belongs (**7:1**). His knowledge is “changeless, certain, pure, and wholly understandable.”

- **Changeless:** God's knowledge is never an opinion or a conclusion based on the best evidence. It does not depend on circumstances. It is the truth. It cannot change because it is in perfect accord with all that is.
- **Certain:** Knowledge is not subject to doubt. There is no possibility that it could be incorrect. Evangelical Christians sometimes say about the Bible, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” Not true about the Bible, but it is true about the knowledge that will fill our minds when God takes the last step.
- **Pure:** God's knowledge never contains any element of error or incompleteness. It is wholly accurate down to the last detail.
- **Wholly Understandable:** Marvel of marvels, this paragon of wisdom, this masterpiece of explanation, can be completely understood by every one of us. Once we get rid of our mental debris and garbage, the truth is simple. There is nothing to figure out; it's all as plain as day.

We don't even need perception (**7:2**)! Once false perception ends, true perception ends as well. There is no further need for forgiveness because its job is done (**7:3**). When God takes the last step, even bodies are gone “in blazing light,” like a burnt offering to the Son of God (our true Self) (**7:4**). Knowing an altar to the Son is equally an altar to Himself, God joins with His Son at this altar, confirming their eternal unity (**7:5–6**). The Face of Christ has erased time and perception because it is the proof they are no longer needed (**7:6**).

Once the memory of God has returned at last, “there is no journey, no belief in sin, no walls, no bodies, and the grim appeal of guilt and death is there snuffed out forever” (**7:7**). Get used to the idea that this world is nothing more than a temporary schoolhouse.

Some day we'll graduate and put all that behind us, forgetting it as an unpleasant memory. No more separation! No more fear! No more guilt! No more death! As the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15:26–28, once death has ended and the last step is taken, God joins with His Son and is complete, “all in all.”

## Paragraph 8

**8** Oh my brothers, if you only knew the peace that will envelop you and hold you safe and pure and lovely in the Mind of God, you could but rush to meet Him where His altar is. <sup>2</sup>Hallowed your name and His, for they are joined here in this holy place. <sup>3</sup>Here He leans down to lift you up to Him—out of illusions into holiness; out of the world and into timelessness; out of all fear and given back to love.

Jesus now speaks passionately of the indescribable bliss he has come to know in God. He appeals to us as his brothers and sisters, deeply longing that we might know, as he does, the peace that will envelop us and hold us safe and pure and lovely in the Mind of God “**(8:1)**. If we knew we would *rush* to meet Him at that altar.

We all probably know a taste of that same longing. You have probably caught a glimpse of what a world full of love would be like. You've teared up listening to a rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine" and longed at that moment, as he did, "How I wish you would join us, and the world will be as one!" Jesus's impassioned "Oh! "is that same longing infinitely magnified because he does not have to imagine; he knows. He knows he is not dreaming. He knows all will become known in the One because it's only a bad dream that it is otherwise. When we finally allow ourselves to be surprised by that joy, we will rush to accept our place in that union, that Oneness.

No wonder when asked how we should pray, Jesus ended the prayer with the words, "Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. "He wants us to join him in that longing and desire. He has that prayer in mind when he says, "Hallowed your name and His, for they are joined here in this holy place" **(8:2)**. God is waiting for us at that altar, ready to lift us up to Himself, "out of illusions into holiness; out of the world and into timelessness; out of all fear and given back to love" **(8:3)**. If we knew what awaits us, we would become unstoppable, rushing toward that glorious goal. Several places in the Text tell the same story:

"O my child, if you knew what God wills for you, your joy would be complete! The bleak little world will vanish into nothingness, and your heart will be so filled with joy that it will leap into Heaven, and into the Presence of God. I cannot tell you what this will be like, for your heart is not ready." (T-I.I.III. 3:1,5–6 (FIP), T-I.I.III.6:6,7:3–4 (CE))

"For the truth behind illusions is so lovely and so still in loving gentleness, were you aware of it you would forget defensiveness entirely, and rush to its embrace." (T-30.IV.1:3 (FIP), T-30.V.1:3 (CE))



"If you but knew the glorious goal that lies beyond forgiveness, you would not keep hold on any thought, however light the touch of evil on it may appear to be." (T-29.V.6:1 (FIP), T-29.VI.5:1 (CE))

Our prayer and our effort, then, should be so to purify our minds of the ego's dark thoughts that this celestial vision would dawn upon us and draw us irresistibly home.

### 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 Foundation for Inner Peace (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. 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 Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* 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. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE 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 Text 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.*