

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM CE Text, Chapter 2

Right Defense and Release from Fear

Section II

The Cause of the Separation

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.

Special Note

For readers who were not around when I was creating these commentaries, there is no commentary on Chapter 2, Section I, of the CE edition. That is a specialized section of interest primarily to people very familiar with the teachings of Freud and Jung. See the footnote in the CE edition for more information and a summary of the section's general teachings.

The section covered in this commentary, T-2.II, was Section 2.I in the FIP edition. The CE version is a bit over $\frac{1}{3}$ longer, and the ordering of some of the material has been rearranged to the order used in the original dictation. The first four paragraphs and most of the 14th paragraph were completely omitted in the FIP edition, so they will be new to readers of the CE. What are the 21st and 26th paragraphs of Section 2.I were preserved in the FIP, but combined at the end of the following section, which is T-2.I in FIP, T-2.II in the CE. I will cover this combined paragraph of the CE T-2.I *before* delving into 2.II.

In the remaining paragraphs, many of the sentences use different wording. One significant difference is that where the original and the CE use the word "projection" to refer both to God's or the Son's creating and to its misuse in our making of illusions, the editors of the FIP edition decided to use "projection" only in reference to our making of illusions, and to always substitute a form of the word "creation" when referring to divine creation.

As I understand it, Robert Perry, the editor of the CE, chose to adhere to the original use in the dictation, probably because (as Jesus explains) it has the meaning of "extend," which sense does apply to God's creation and to our tendency to push our undesirable thoughts about ourselves onto other people.

There are other differences in wording throughout. I will point out some of them, but by no means all of them.

Relocated Paragraphs 21 and 26 of T-2.I

21 It is emphasized here that these differences have no effect at all on the miracle, which can heal any of them with equal ease. ²This is because of the miracle's inherent avoidance of within-error distinctions. ³Its sole concern is to distinguish between truth on the one hand and *all* kinds of error on the other. ⁴This is why some miracles seem to be of greater magnitude than others. ⁵But remember the first principle in this course: that there is no order of difficulty in miracles.¹

26 You are perfectly unaffected by *all* expressions of lack of love. ²These can be either from yourself and others, or from yourself to others, or from others to you. ³Peace is an attribute in you. ⁴You cannot find it outside. ⁵All mental illness is some form of external searching. ⁶Mental health is *inner* peace. ⁷It enables you to remain unshaken by lack of love from without, and capable, through your own miracles, of correcting the external conditions which proceed from lack of love in others.

This paragraph gets practical. In fact, it is an early example of a pattern found all through the Text, in which the closing paragraphs² of a section seem to come down to earth after a discussion of elevated metaphysical issues, and offer either very practical advice in applying the thoughts to one's life, or else reassurances and encouragement that what has been discussed is not beyond us. This paragraph seems to offer both.

There is a lot of reassurance. We may have believed the same lies as Adam, or quite different lies, but that is "of no concern" because the miracle "can heal any of them with equal ease" (26:1). In reality, "all expressions of lack of love," no matter their source (within us or without, shared or not), have no effect on us (26:1–2). The healing brought by miracles can not only enable us to remain unshaken ourselves, but actually enables us to heal the effects lack of love has on others (26:7).

And there is practical advice here also. We are advised, when we seem to perceive the need for "a really big miracle," to remember that miracles don't come in sizes; there is no order of difficulty (21:3–4). When we are seeking peace because we have been disturbed by some flagrant lack of love, we can remember that, "Peace is an attribute in you. You cannot find it outside" (26:3–4). We won't find peace by trying to change what's out there; it is something we must find within ourselves. And that is always the same process: It consists in recognizing that, whatever the lack of love may be, however great it seems, and no matter whether someone did it to us, or we did it to someone else, or we all are

¹ T-1.1.1:1: "The first principle of miracles is that there is no order of difficulty among them."

² This paragraph in the FIP was the concluding paragraph for the section it appears in.

doing it to each other, our true Self is “perfectly unaffected” by it (26:1). God’s creations cannot be changed by anything we do; we cannot usurp His power. So what we do has not damaged anything, and what anyone else has done has never damaged us. The separation never occurred.

In a nutshell, when you feel upset, accept the Atonement. Deny the power of anything not of God to hurt you.

Mental illness is actually a way our twisted minds take trying to find peace through “some form of external searching,” while health is consistent with inner peace (26:5–6). The Course will explain later, in great detail, how even physical sickness is a form of external searching; we don’t need to go into details now. But it somehow rings true, doesn’t it? Inner peace needs to become our focus of attention, not getting rid of an external condition.

The acceptance of the Atonement, which means true denial, denying that lack of love from without has power to shake you, is what we are called to practice. If we do, we will be able, “through your acceptance of miracles” (26:7), to bring healing to others who seem to be suffering from lack of love in those around them. By our own healing, we will heal others. And by offering miracles to them, we will be healed.

Overview of Section II

If you look at the section titles for Chapter 2, you will see that it deals with the separation in the this section, and then turns to a discussion of the Atonement in the next section. The rest of the chapter continues to discuss what the Atonement is, how it corrects our errors, how it solves the problem of separation, and what part we play in the Atonement, which culminates in the Last Judgment. The word “Atonement” occurs in this chapter twenty-six times, most of them in Sections II, III, IV and V. (Looking for recurring words is a useful technique for getting a feel for the general theme of a chapter or section.)

Looking at Chapter 2 as a whole, you will notice that in the CE there are thirteen sections, while in the FIP there are only nine sections. I’ve already pointed out that Section I in Chapter II is new in the CE. Sections III, IV, and V are made up of what was Section II of the FIP, with much material added in. This accounts for two additional sections. The remaining sections of Chapter II contain a lot of restored material, the titles have been changed, and things have been reorganized (really, returned to their original order) in the CE, making any close comparison with the FIP edition difficult if not impossible.

This section deals with a very important Course topic: what traditional Christianity calls “the Fall.” The Course replaces that term with “the Separation.” It is of special interest to Christians who have been taught that the early chapters of Genesis in the Bible teach that humankind “fell from grace,” was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and cursed by God so that forever afterward, all human beings are “born in sin,” their original

nature now being a sinful one that requires some kind of blood sacrifice to God in order to be restored to grace. That blood sacrifice, this teaching asserts, was the death of Jesus, who was God the Son.

In this section, Jesus drastically reinterprets the Genesis story.

Paragraph 1

This section deals with a more fundamental misuse of knowledge, referred to in the Bible as the cause of the fall (or separation).³ ²There are several introductory remarks which are intended to make these explanations less fear provoking. ³First, I draw your attention to a couplet from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

⁴Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see.⁴

⁵These words were said by Oberon in releasing Titania from her own errors, both of being and perceiving. ⁶These were the words which reestablished her true identity as well as her true abilities and judgment.⁵ ⁷The similarity to your release is obvious.

Of note here, besides the change of terms from “fall” to “separation,” is the identification of the separation as “a more fundamental misuse of knowledge” (1:1). As the footnote points out, that is what is symbolized by Adam and Eve’s eating of “the forbidden fruit” of the Tree of Knowledge. The modifier, “more,” I believe refers to the several misuses mentioned in Paragraph 14 of Section I, which are part of the discussion about how knowledge can be misused or misunderstood in relation to a confusion of mind with the brain. The misuse under consideration here is “more fundamental.” What exactly did humanity do with knowledge that brought about their experience of separation from God?

The traditional interpretation is quite fearful. Therefore, Jesus begins with some thoughts intended to make this whole discussion “less fear provoking” (1:2).

He begins by quoting Shakespeare’s “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” something that pleased Helen and also Ken Wapnick, who was a great fan of Shakespeare. Ken helped Helen edit the Course.

³ This refers to eating the forbidden fruit of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9 [KJV]).

⁴ “Wont” means “accustomed,” “used to,” “in the habit of.”

⁵ Titania, queen of the fairies, has been under the influence of a magic flower that causes one to fall in love with the first living creature one sees. As a result, she has fallen in love with the foolish Bottom, who currently has the head of a donkey. Oberon, king of the fairies, puts Titania to sleep and then releases her from the flower’s spell and awakens her with the words quoted above, thus also restoring the love between them.

A footnote explains the Early English word “wont,” which means “accustomed” in modern English. So the quotation means, “Be as you were accustomed to be; see as you were accustomed to see.” The fairy kind, Oberon, had instructed the fairy, Puck, to cast a spell on Titania that caused her to fall in love with the first person she met. That happened to be Bottom, who has the head of a donkey! Not a great choice! Oberon later releases Titania from the spell, freeing her from her mistaken choice and returning her to her original state. She was once again her true self and could see clearly. She regained “her true identity as well as her true abilities and judgment” (1:5–6). He then says, “The similarity to your release is obvious” (1:7) Our release is like hers; we are remembering our true identity, rediscovering true vision, and restoring our power of true creation.

Paragraph 2

² There are also some dictionary definitions which will be helpful.
²Their somewhat unusual nature is due to the fact that they are not usually the first definitions listed. ³Nevertheless, the fact that each of them does appear in the dictionary should be reassuring.

⁴project (verb): to extend forward or out⁶

⁵project (noun): a plan in the mind⁷

⁶world: a natural grand division⁸

Here, Jesus presents three definitions of terms terms that appear frequently in the Text. The definitions are not the most common ones, but they *are* listed in the dictionary. See footnotes for the editor’s comments on the terms.

⁶ In this section, “projection” (to “project”) stands for the mind’s basic dynamic of expressing outwardly what is within. This means that, unlike in the later Course, projection here is an umbrella concept under which is included both true projection (later called *extension*) and false projection (later simply called *projection*).

⁷ “Project” as a noun is not explicitly referred to in the discussion that follows. It is, however, closely related to “project” as a verb in that both involve a mental “throwing forward” (the word comes from the Latin *proicere*—to throw forward). A project is a case of throwing forward (into the future) one’s desire in the form of a planned undertaking designed to achieve something that will fulfill that desire. In this sense, then, we might be able to speak of God’s creation of the Son (the main projection discussed in this section) as being a *project* as well as a *projection*.

⁸ Examples of “world” as defined here would be the animal world, the vegetable world, and the mineral world. In this sense, then, “world” refers to a domain that is one of the grand divisions of the natural world. A synonym would be “kingdom,” as in the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, etc. Indeed, as will become clear later, Jesus is using the term “world” in the sense of “a natural, grand division” to refer to the Kingdom of God.

Of note is the definition of “world.” When this term is used he does not mean “the planet Earth” or even “the material universe,” which are other dictionary definitions. We should try to remember, when we see this term in the Course, to consider that he may be speaking about “a natural grand division” and not the material universe. The three footnotes that refer to these terms should also be read for a more detailed explanation.

Paragraph 3

3 We will refer later to projection as related to both mental illness and mental health.⁹ ²It has also been commented on that Lucifer literally projected himself from Heaven.¹⁰ ³We also have observed that you can make an empty shell, but cannot make nothing at all.¹¹ ⁴This emptiness provides the screen for the misuse of projection.

There will be considerable discussions later in the Course (see references in the footnote) about the role projection plays in “both mental illness and mental health” (3:1). It has already been discussed to some degree in Principle 35 (3:2), and referred to in the example of making an empty shell by projection (Principle 43). When you project unreality which is nothing but nothing, it is as if you create a screen on which you can project your illusions (3:4).

Paragraph 4

4 The Garden of Eden, which is described as a literal garden in the Bible, was not originally an actual garden at all. ²It was merely a mental state of complete need-lack. ³Even in the literal account, it is noteworthy that the pre-separation state was essentially one in which man needed nothing. ⁴The tree of knowledge, again an overly literal concept (as is clearly shown by the subsequent reference to “eating of the fruit of the tree”), is a symbolic reference to some of the misuses of knowledge referred to in the section immediately preceding this one.¹² ⁵There is, however, considerable clarification of this concept which must be understood before the real meaning of the “detour into fear” can be fully comprehended.

This is where he gets into the reinterpretation of the Garden of Eden story. It wasn't a *literal* garden at all (4:1). It was a symbol for “a mental state of complete need-lack,” that is, a complete lack of needs (4:2). Switching the location of the story from a literal garden to a mental state transforms the nature of the entire story, so it is important to bear this in mind when considering the Genesis accounts. Humanity was created whole and complete, lacking nothing. Adam and Eve (or whatever the first humans were called prior

⁹ See T-2.III.11 and T-2.IV.2.

¹⁰ T-1.35.2:5.

¹¹ T-1.48.3:2: “You can make an empty shell (see previous reference), but you do not make nothing at all.”

¹² See T-2.I.13-16.

to taking physical form as a result of choosing to separate from God) had no consciousness of lack because they *had* no lacks. This is true even in the literal account (4:3). They had everything (4:1–2). The tree of knowledge, likewise, was not a literal tree bearing literal fruit (3:4). (Even taken literally, there is absolutely no reference in the Bible to the fruit's being an *apple*.) It is a symbolic reference to various misuses of knowledge. The preceding section of the Text discussed these misuses in very psychological terms (see 1.I.13–16).

A key concept here is that it was misuse of knowledge that created a false sense of needs and a belief in lack. This concept needs a lot of clarification before we can really understand the “detour into fear” (i.e. the separation or “the Fall”) (4:5). That clarification follows.

Paragraph 5

5 Projection, as defined above (this refers to the verb), is a fundamental attribute of God, which He also gave to His Son. ²In the creation, God projected his creative ability out of Himself toward the Sons whom He created, and also imbued them with the same loving will to create. ³We have commented before on the fundamental error involved in confusing what has been created with what is being made.¹³ ⁴We have also emphasized that you have not only been fully created, but also been created perfect.¹⁴ ⁵There is no emptiness in you. ⁶The next point, too, has already been made, but bears repetition here: The Son, because of his own likeness to his Creator, is creative.¹⁵ ⁷No child of God is capable of losing this ability, because it is inherent in what he *is*.

In its verbal sense of extending, “Projection... is a fundamental attribute of God” (5:1). In A Course in Miracles, God is preeminently the Creator. He constantly creates. He extends His Love because He is Love, and the nature of Love is to extend Itself.

To create is to love. Love extends outward simply because it cannot be contained. (T-7.1.3:3–4 (FIP), T-6.VII.3:5–6 (CE))

In the Course, the words “creation” and “extension” mean almost the same thing: “In the creation, God projected His creative ability” (5:2). God’s creations (ourselves) are, therefore, extensions of God, something new and yet the same as God, similar to a limb on a tree. In the Gospel of John, Jesus compared us to branches on a vine (John 15), a similar idea. Therefore,

¹³ T-1.48.3:6-7: “You were *not* created by your own free will. Only what *you* make is yours to decide.”

¹⁴ T-1.43.3:3: “The creation of the spirit is already fully accomplished.” T-1.46.13:6: “The Sons are perfect creations, and should be struck with awe in the presence of the Creator of perfection.”

¹⁵ T-1.23.2:3: “You are capable of this kind of creation too, being in the image and likeness of your own Creator.”

God's Son (His creation) has all the same attributes that God has, including "the same loving Will to create" (5:2) or to extend. God is a Giver, a Creator, an Extender, a Lover, and what He creates is like Himself: "God is but Love, and therefore so am I" (W-pI.rV.in.4:3). "Love created me like Itself" (W-pI.67.Title).

This important idea is repeated three times to make the point. In sentence 1, we learn that God gave the extending aspect of Himself to His Son; in sentence 2, His creations received "the same loving Will to create"; and in sentence 6, we are creative because of our likeness to the Creator. We have the creative ability that is God's own creative ability, given to us in creation.

Somehow it seems to me that sentence 4 is almost a play on words and would be if it read like this: "You have not only been fully created but you have also been created *full*." Especially since the next line is, "There is no *emptiness* in you." Before he tells us that our false sense of lack is behind all our projections, Jesus first denies that there is any lack in us at all.

God creates out of His own fullness or completeness, and our creativity works the same way. We cannot extend something we do not have. Therefore, if we conceive of ourselves as empty or lacking, we cannot create as God did. We miscreate or, as it tells us here, we project. Projection is simply an inappropriate use of extension that happens when we believe lack exists in ourselves (5–6). In sum: *Creation is the expression of our belief in inner fullness or completion; projection is the expression of our belief in lack.*

It's fairly easy to see how creation or extension is the expression of an overflowing sense of inner fullness, but how does projection express lack? We normally think of projection as a mental attempt to get rid of something we do not want, such as guilt. But there is more to projection, as this passage shows:

This is salvation's keynote: What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want. From there, the mind makes up an image of the thing the mind desires, judges valuable, and therefore seeks to find. These images are then projected outward, looked upon, esteemed as real and guarded as one's own. (W-pII.325.1:1-3)

Besides being a means we use to get rid of what we do not want, projection is a process in which we take what we do want, project an image of it outward and see it as if it actually existed outside ourselves. There, it looks real and causative. It looks like it has power to fill up the hole inside of us. So, the things we see outside of us that look like they can fill our lack were projected out there in order to fill our lack. That hot fudge sundae, that hot car, that hot body—all projections, all things we made up to fill our imaginary emptiness.

Paragraphs 6–10

6 Whenever projection in its inappropriate sense is utilized, it always implies that some emptiness (or lack of everything) must exist, and that it is within your ability to put your own ideas there instead of the truth. ²If you will consider carefully what this entails, the following will become quite apparent:

7 First, the assumption is implicit that what God has created can be changed by your own mind.

8 Second, the concept has intruded that what is perfect can be rendered imperfect or wanting.

9 Third, the belief has arisen, and is tolerated, that you can distort the creations of God, including yourself.

10 Fourth, the idea has entered that since you can create yourself, the direction of your own creation is up to you.

This particular passage is of great significance as it delves into the origins of separation, which is a central theme in the Text. The teachings of the Course are built upon the understanding of the nature and origin of separation, which ultimately shapes the approach and solution to this problem. The nature of the problem determines the answer to the problem.

“Separation from God is the only lack you really need correct.” (T-1.VI.2:1 (FIP), (T-1.I.22:4 (CE))) (See also W-pl.79.1:4–5 and W-pl.80.1:4–5.)

We will understand the relevance of God’s Answer and apply it to every situation when two things are true:

- We clearly understand that our real problem is our sense of separation;
- In the seeming multiplicity of different problems, we learn to recognize the problem of separation in disguise.

The four steps presented in paragraphs 7 to 10 are not, strictly speaking, sequential steps but, as the next paragraph calls them, “related distortions” (11:1). The first distortion is our assumption and belief that our own mind can change what God created. This is a distortion because it is not possible. We cannot change anything God created. Our mind is simply not that powerful.

The second distortion is believing that something perfect can be made imperfect or lacking. This is logically absurd. If something can be damaged or injured, it isn’t perfect; if it is perfect, it invulnerable and cannot be rendered incomplete.

Put these first two distortions together, and you get the third: The belief that we can not only change God’s creations, which are perfect; we can *distort* them. This includes the ability to distort *ourselves*.

We have reached a point where we not only think that we can create ourselves, but also that we are in complete control of our own creation. We have convinced ourselves that we have taken the reins from God. We strongly believe that we have the ability to create and shape our own lives, and that we have the power to direct the entire process.

As humans, we tend to believe that we are responsible for our own existence. We think that we have created ourselves in a specific way, and that there are certain things we lack which can only be satisfied by finding the right things in the external world. However, over time, our ability to extend ourselves has become distorted, leading us to project our thoughts outside of our minds. This has resulted in perceiving things and people as external objects that we must acquire in order to fulfill our needs.

11 These related distortions represent a picture of what actually occurred in the separation. ²None of this existed before, nor does it actually exist now. ³The Sonship was created as a natural grand division, or projecting outward of God. ⁴That is why everything which He created is like Him. ⁵Projection as undertaken by God was very similar to the kind of inner radiance which the children of the Father inherit from Him. ⁶It is important to note that the term “project outward” necessarily implies that the real source of projection is internal. ⁷This is as true of the Son as of the Father.

These four related mistaken thoughts can help us understand the nature of the separation¹⁶. Sentence 2 introduces what is a uniting theme in this section: Despite all our talk about the separation and its effects in projection, it does not “actually exist now” (11:2). We cannot distort God’s creations or ourselves; we only think we can. There are no lacks, and no need to fill them. To help yourself realize how this applies to your life, try mentally listing several perceived “lacks” in your life and apply this truth to them. For example, “In reality, I have no need for a new job; my only need is to end my sense of separation.”

Two themes run through this section:

1. You are really complete, and so don't need to search outside yourself for completion.
2. You cannot really change the way you were created, and the illusion of change can be removed any time you wish by a miracle.

Thus, our whole “normal” way of thinking about ourselves—as beings with certain needs that must be met for us to find happiness—is a distortion. God extended¹⁷ His Being to create us (11:3), and that original outflow was meant to go on extending itself

¹⁶. FIP included the phrase, “or the ‘detour into fear’” after the word separation. Apparently, the phrase was not in the original dictation, but I like it.

¹⁷. Bear in mind that the early dictation uses the word *projection* to mean both true creation by God and us and in the psychological sense of pushing away what we don’t like about ourselves and seeing it in others. Later chapters replace the word “projection” with “extension” when it refers to true creation.

through us (11:5). We are like God because we are the extension of His inner being. Like God, the source of our extension is this same internal radiance. Extension is radiating out of an inner *completeness* rather than an attempt to fill an inner *lack* with external (projected) images. We are not intended to be impoverished beings grubbing in the dust for our very existence; we were created as radiant beings overflowing with love and lacking absolutely nothing.

Jesus wants us to note that the source of projection of any kind, in God and in us, is *internal* (11:6–7). Creation is not accomplished by physical actions; it consists in an extension of love. Sometimes that love *takes a physical form*, either in actions or things like speaking, writing, and art. But what makes it creative is the love that inspires it.

12 The Kingdom of God, in its original connotation, included both the proper creation of the Son by God and the proper creation by the Son in his right mind. ²The latter required the endowment of the Son by God with free will, because all loving creation is freely given. ³Nothing in either of these statements implies any sort of levels, or, in fact, anything except one continuous line of creation, in which all aspects are of the same order.

That creative outshining, however, can be—has been—blocked because, by the very nature of it, love’s extension requires that we be in our right mind. freely willing to love (12:1–2). If we have not joined with God to willingly extend His extension, creation cannot occur through us. “All loving creation is freely given” simply means that love cannot be coerced. You cannot force anyone to love you, nor can you be forced to love anyone; love is inherently a free gift. There was a movie called “The Stepford Wives,” in which a whole town of men replaced their wives with robot women. The men apparently thought this would make them happy. But robots could not give them love because they had no freedom of choice. Love is a choice. If we cannot choose *not to* give, there is no more meaning to our giving than there was to the kisses of the robot wives.

God desires His Love to extend “in one continuous line, in which all aspects are of the same order” (12:3). In other words, He wants the extending of His initial creative act to be just like His initial creative act. Therefore, it must be free, just as His love was. Thus, He *must* endow us with a will that is as free as His.

13 When the “lies of the serpent”¹⁸ were introduced, they were called lies because they are not true.¹⁹ ²When man listened, all he heard was untruth. ³You do not have to continue to believe what is not true, unless you choose to do so. ⁴All of your miscreations can disappear in the well-known “twinkling of an eye,” because they are a visual misperception.²⁰ ⁵Your spiritual eye can sleep, but remember, a sleeping eye can still see.²¹

As Paragraph 4 told us, the myth of the Garden of Eden is an image of “a mental state of complete need-lack” (4:1). Here, in 13:1, he says that all reports of lack were lies, or untruth. All the ego ever says is only a batch of lies (13:2). Need is only a misperception only a dream. We need not continue to believe what our egos say *unless we choose to do so* (13:3).

What is said here is a drastic contradiction of one traditional Christian interpretation of this story, and one of the most glaring differences between historic Christian teaching and the Course’s thought system. Many theological systems teach that what happened in the Garden of Eden is terribly real. Humankind has been banished from God’s presence and forever cursed. The sin of Adam and Eve has been literally inherited by all of their descendants, by the entire human race. This is the so-called doctrine of original sin, or as John Calvin referred to it, “total depravity” of all mankind. Because Adam sinned, we have been born as sinners, inheriting it in our genes. His choice to listen to the serpent’s lies, so the teaching goes, infected all of time. We are born damned, and only a deliberate act of faith in Jesus Christ, “receiving him as your savior” as the born-again teaching puts it, can “save” us from hell. The same doctrine is behind the perceived importance of infant baptism in churches that practice it; the act somehow protects the child until it is old enough to make its own choice for God. Without baptism, if a child dies, it is lost.

¹⁸. In the first sentence, the words in quotes, “lies of the serpent,” are not actually a quote from the Bible story; they carry the meaning of “so-called lies of the serpent.” In the Bible, the serpent spoke to Eve, who then repeated its lies to Adam (see Genesis 3:4, 3:13, and 3:17). Adam was told that eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil would make him like God (Genesis 3:5). The Course says this refers to our desire to usurp God’s position as Creator and to create ourselves: “Eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is a symbolic expression for usurping the ability for self-creating” (T-3.VII.4:1).????

¹⁹ Genesis 3:13 (RSV): “Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.’”

²⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (RSV): “Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” In the above reference, our miscreations can be changed in the twinkling of an *eye* because our *visual* misperceptions can instantly disappear when our *spiritual* eye is opened.

²¹ This is a reference to a story that appears later in the Notes, in which Jesus says that he inspired Bob, the elevator operator who took Helen down from her apartment, to make a remark to her that ended with “Every shut eye is not asleep.” This is slightly different from “a sleeping eye can still see,” but both have in common the idea that we should not assume, just because an eye is not currently open, that the faculty of sight is absent.

The Course flies in the face of such teaching when it tells us, “You do not have to continue to believe what is not true unless you choose to do so” (13:3). You have a *choice*; Adam’s choice was to believe the lie, but you don’t have to continue that choice. You can recognize that separation is a lie and an illusion, nothing more than a misperception, and for you, it will disappear instantly. Like things in a dream, the world seems very real. But we are dreaming! Adam fell asleep, and we are never told that he woke up (see Paragraph 14). The implication here is that we are all still asleep, dreaming this illusory world. When we realize what is going on, we will choose to let it go, and we will, together, awake.

The reference to “the twinkling of an eye” (13:4) is, in fact, a biblical quotation and one that gives us a clue to what Jesus is talking about when he says, “All that can literally disappear.” He is quoting the New Testament:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (I Cor. 15:51–52, KJV)

Obviously, this is talking about the end of the world, “the last trump,” or trumpet, which is a reference to the trumpets blown by the seven angels to sound the end of time in the book of Revelation.

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15 KJV)

This passage in the Course talks about the same thing. Thus, in sentence 7, the words “comprehensive awakening or rebirth” do not refer to some kind of wonderful spiritual revolution, as many people imagined would happen as we moved past the millennial milepost, the year 2000. They refer to what will happen in the latter stages of the history of the world, such as the events which the Course calls the Second Coming and Last Judgment. This awakening will reverse the process that began the world, and therefore will culminate in the *literal* ending of the world. This awakening far exceeds what we would call a spiritual revolution. When it says, “All of your miscreations can disappear” (13:4), “all” means the entire physical universe, and “disappear” means it literally (see W-WI.3.1:1– 5 (CE)).

The final sentence about the spiritual eye sleeping but still able to see must mean, as the footnote concludes, that although our spiritual eyes are closed, they have not lost their ability to see.

14 One translation of the fall, a view emphasized by Mary Baker Eddy and worthy of note, is that “a deep sleep fell upon Adam.”²² ²While the Bible seems to regard this sleep as a kind of anesthetic utilized for the protection of Adam during the creation of Eve, Mrs. Eddy was correct in emphasizing that nowhere is there any reference made to his waking up. ³While Christian Science is clearly incomplete, this point is much in its favor.

Jesus gives a nod to Mary Baker Eddy (the founder of Christian Science), while adding that Christian Science “is clearly incomplete” (14:3). Not entirely wrong, just incomplete. I think, coming from Jesus, this is high praise. I wonder what he would say about Unity and Religious Science? I’ve already covered the notion of Adam’s failure to awaken and its indication that we are all still asleep, which is a new and interesting interpretation that supports what the Course is saying.

15 The history of humanity in the world as you see it has not been characterized by any genuine or comprehensive reawakening or rebirth. ²This is impossible as long as humanity projects in the spirit of miscreation. ³It still remains within you to project as God projected His Own Spirit to you. ⁴In reality, this is your only choice, because your free will was made for your own joy in creating the perfect.

Our continuing choice to project or miscreate prevents the final rebirth that ends the world, and the history of humanity reflects that failure (15:1). Choosing to project makes false perception (15:2), and that is what the world is (W-pII.3:1:1). Only when “the thought of separation has been changed to one of true forgiveness” (W-pII.3:1:4) will that projected illusion finally disappear. Yet, even while we continue to project, we still retain the ability to extend as God extended (15:3). Doing so is all we really want to do.

It may be confusing to see the words “free will” and “your only choice” in the same sentence (15:4). Having free will seems to imply total freedom of choice. We can identify with our divinely created Self, or we can identify with the illusion of the ego. As I understand the Course, our free will is limited: we can choose to cooperate with the inevitable, or to not cooperate. In the end, however, our cooperation is indeed inevitable. We *will* cooperate because it is our will to do so. Our will only wants God, and sooner or later we will tire of not exercising our true will.

²² Genesis 2:21 (KJV): “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.”
Mary Baker Eddy was the founder of Christian Science.

16 All fear is ultimately reducible to the basic misperception that you have the ability to usurp the power of God. ²It is again emphasized that you neither *can* nor *have* been able to do this.²³ ³In this statement lies the real justification for your escape from fear. ⁴This is brought about by your acceptance of the Atonement, which places you in a position to realize that your own errors never really occurred.

Fear takes thousands of forms. The Course shockingly states that all its forms can be reduced to one basic misperception: I have the ability to usurp God's power (16:1). Or, as the first paragraph in the section put it, I have the ability to distort God's creations, including myself.

Of course, we cannot do that, and we never have done so (16:2). Our inability to corrupt God's creation has to be emphasized over and over.

If you doubt you think you have corrupted yourself in some way, ask yourself: "What would be the effect if I knew for certain that I cannot usurp God's power, and therefore I cannot alter His creations? That I cannot alter my nature, nor the nature of others?" How would guilt even be possible if you truly believed that? Believing what is being said here is "the real justification for your escape from fear" (16:3).

In Workbook Lessons 79 and 80, the Course says much the same thing: all problems are really variants of one single problem—the problem of separation. This concept is crucial to understanding the healing method of the Course, which is called our "acceptance of the Atonement" (16:4). First, learn to see all our fears, and all our problems, as manifestations of our core belief in separation. Then, recognize that this core belief is false; the separation has been "solved" because we cannot alter God's creation. We cannot usurp His power. Therefore, our "errors never really occurred" (16:4). *The separation never happened.*

The full awareness of the Atonement, then, is the recognition that the separation never occurred. (T-6.II.10:7 (FIP), (T-6.III.5:5 (CE))

"Never occurred? Then what is this I am experiencing?" you may ask. And the answer is, "A nightmare."

²³ See T-2.II.7-11.

17 When the deep sleep fell upon Adam, he was then in a condition to experience nightmares, precisely because he was sleeping. ²If a light is suddenly turned on while someone is dreaming and the content of his dream is fearful, he is initially likely to interpret the light itself as part of the content of his own dream. ³However, as soon as he awakens, the light is correctly perceived as the release from the dream, which is no longer accorded reality. ⁴I would like to conclude this with the biblical injunction “Go, and do thou likewise.”²⁴

Adam, representing mankind, fell asleep and still has not wakened. We are collectively asleep and having a bad dream (1:1). Any time we experience what seems to be the effect of being separate from God and from one another, accepting the Atonement means reminding ourselves that what we are experiencing is a dream and not real; we are still in Heaven, although we may be asleep and dreaming of exile (see T-10.I.2 (FIP), (T-10.I.6:3 (CE))).

The last part of the paragraph is probably something you have experienced—waking from a bad dream because of a light going on, or a loud sound. As you come awake, at first you incorporate the intrusion from the “real world” into your dream. The alarm clock is a telephone ringing, or the train about to hit you is your bed lamp coming on. Generally the external light or sound is turned, in the nightmare, into something fearful.

By analogy, as we sleep spiritually and dream our fearful dream, God’s light is often misperceived by us as something to be afraid of (17:2). We do not need any reason to fear it; in the dream, our minds will invent a reason. Once we awaken from the nightmare, we will understand that the “external” intrusion of light was really our way out of the dream, and we will realize the dream was not real (17:3). Sentence 17:4 is advising us to wake up and realize God’s light is the release from our nightmares.

In these final sentences, Jesus is reassuring us that some fear in regard to God, to the Course, and to the undoing of our egos is quite normal, but unfounded. We think God’s light is yet another fearful element in the dream, when actually it is the remedy to all fear and to the dream itself. Reality is not fearful.

²⁴ Luke 10:37 (KJV). This follows the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is told in response to a lawyer asking Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” After the parable comes this exchange: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:36-37 [KJV]).

18 It is quite apparent that this depends on the kind of knowledge which was *not* referred to by the “tree of knowledge,” which bore lies as fruit.²⁵ ²The knowledge that illuminates rather than obscures is the knowledge which not only makes you free, but also shows you clearly that you *are* free.²⁶

In the phrase, “this depends on” (18:1), what is “this”? I believe it refers to “the release from the dream” mentioned in 17:3. The type of knowledge associated with the tree of knowledge, which *initiated* the dream, clearly would not release us from it. This is the type of knowledge that makes you free and “shows you clearly that you *are* free” (18:2). It is the knowledge of the truth, not knowledge full of lies. This is the knowledge that the Course is imparting to us, the knowledge that we practice in doing the Workbook lessons.

²⁵ The fruit of the tree of knowledge was a lie because it affirmed that we have the “ability to usurp the power of God.”

²⁶ John 8:32 (RSV): “And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

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 on Separation

A number of passages, most of them fairly short, discuss the origins of the separation in several different ways, attributing it to seemingly different causes. It is possible, in my opinion, to see these different causes as simply different ways of describing the same thing. You may find it useful to look up these passages.

DESCRIPTIONS OF HOW SEPARATION BEGAN:

T-2.II - The subject of this commentary; separation grew out of our perception of an inner lack, and believing we could create ourselves.

T-3.VII.3-5 (FIP), T-3.IX.5-9 (CE) - Separation began by our usurping the ability for self-creating; separation is real in time but not in eternity.

T-13.Int.2:1-3 (FIP), (T-13.I.1:8-2:2 (CE)) - Separation began with the acceptance of guilt in the mind.

T-13.III.10, 11 (FIP), (T-13.III.11-12 (CE)) - Separation began when we asked for special favor.

T-28.II.8-12 (FIP), T-28.II.8-12 (CE) - Separation's final step was the reversal of cause and effect.

In summary, we desired to be special, which God would not give us because it would hurt us; therefore, we attempted to make ourselves special by creating ourselves and imagined we had done so; the belief we had altered God's creation produced guilt, which in turn led to the projection of the world, in which we have reversed effect and cause by seeing the world as our cause.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT QUOTES ABOUT THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE SEPARATION:

T-2.VII.5:6 (FIP), (T-2.XII.4:4-5:2 (CE)) See the footnote. See also: But you cannot deny that when you believe something, you have made it true for you. (T-7.V.9:1 (CE))

- Should not deny that separation seems true to us.

T-4.I.2:3 (FIP), (T-4.II.4:4 (CE)) - Separation was the first experience of change.

T-6.II.1:4-5 (FIP), (T-6.II.3:1-4 (CE)) - Separation, exclusion, dissociation all synonymous.

T-6.IV.12:5 (FIP), (T-6.VI.6:1 (CE)) - Separation was a failure in communication, not a loss of perfection.

T-7.X.6:5-7 (FIP), (T-7.IX.9:6-8 (CE)) - Whole separation lies in the error of believing we have a will other than God's. See also T-9.I.7:8-9 (FIP), (T-9.I.7:1-2 (CE)).

T-10.IV.8:5 (FIP & CE) - Separation was a descent from magnitude to littleness.

T-11.V.3:3 (FIP & CE) - Whole separation lies in the belief the ego has the power to do anything.

T-12.I.10:6 (FIP), (T-12.II.5:5 (CE)) - Separation is the denial of union.

T-13.III.2:5 (FIP), (T-13.III.3:4-5 (CE))- Savage wish to kill God's Son caused the separation.

T-13.VIII.3:4-5 (FIP), T-13.IX.3:4-5 - Separation is a faulty formulation of reality with no effect at all.

T-16.V.10:3-4 (FIP), (T-16.V.11:3-4 (CE)) - Separation's central theme: God must die so you can live.

T-16.V.15:1 (FIP), (T-16.V.16:2 (CE)) - Core of separation is the fantasy of destruction of love's meaning.

T-22.II.9:1-2 (FIP), (T-22.III.9:1-2 (CE))- Belief that what you made has power to enslave you caused the separation, i.e., thoughts can leave the thinker's mind (compare with the following two references).

T-27.II.10:8 (FIP), (T-27.III.1:8 (CE)) - Separation is a wish to take God's function from Him (see also T-2.I and T-3.VII.3-5).

T-28.II.8:1 (FIP), (T-28.II.8:4 (CE)) - Separation started with the dream the Father was deprived of His effects, no longer their Creator (see 22.II.9:2, above).

W-pI.rI.54.3:3 (FIP) & (CE) - The idea of the separation had to be shared before it could form the basis of the world.