

Commentary

ACIM® Clarification of Terms

Epilogue

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

Initially, the Epilogue to the *Manual for Teachers* served to end the entire Course. Still, since the addition of the Clarification of Terms, the current Epilogue has become the new ending. I will share it with you in that light. It is one of the most poetic sections in the Course. It *is* poetry because the entire thing is in Iambic Pentameter.¹

Written primarily to inspire and encourage us on our journey, the section contains no new teachings, just reminders of what the author has said earlier and glimpses of what lies ahead.

Paragraph 1

Forget not once this journey is begun, the end is certain. ²Doubt along the way will come and go, and go to come again, yet is the ending sure. ³No one can fail to do what God appointed him to do. ⁴When you forget, remember that you walk with Him and with His Word upon your heart.² ⁵Who could despair when hope like this is his?

The biggest problem we all face on our spiritual journey is doubt or disbelief that we will ever reach the end. Every spiritual seeker faces this issue over and over again. How many of us expect to achieve full enlightenment in this lifetime? To even think we might do so seems presumptuous or egotistical. Isn't that ironic? The belief that I can become fully enlightened, awake to God and Oneness, is seen as egotistical! If I never allow myself to think I will make it, how will I ever make it?

That is why Jesus reminds us yet again—here at the end of the Course when we are being sent out into the world on our own, so to speak—that once we embark on this

¹ For those unfamiliar with the term, Iambic Pentameter is poetry consisting of lines of verse with five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable. Try reading the first line or two with a rhythm like “da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH da-DAH,” and you'll see what I mean.

²Jeremiah 31:33 (RSV): “I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” Here, we remember that God's Word is written on our hearts as an affirmation that we cannot fail to reach Him in the end.

journey, we are sure to complete it (1:1). We need that reminder. Yet, even as he offers it, Jesus acknowledges that we will doubt the ending repeatedly. Still, even our lapses in faith won't keep us from finishing the race. The ending is sure (1:2).

How can that be so? How can he be so sure? Because it was God Who appointed us to do this, to finish the course. If God, who knows everything, sent us on this journey, He must have done so knowing we could do it. No one sent out under His auspices can fail to do what He sent them to do (1:3). When you feel tempted to doubt you can make it, remember Who got you going on this path and Who pledges to walk with you on the way. Remember that He has written His Word on your heart (1:4)!

Writing His Word on your heart is something He promised a very long time ago. Back in Old Testament days, the prophet Jeremiah, who lived from 650 BCE to 582 BCE, over 3900 years ago, prophesied this promise of God:

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD” (Jeremiah 31:33–34).

Having God's Word written on your heart means God has embedded it as an integral part of your being. It has become the heart of who you are! You can't erase it. You can't forget it. You can't lose it. It will always be there, your inner compass, guiding you every step of the way.

The biblical promise goes even further. *Everyone* will know God “from the least of them to the greatest.” Nobody will have to teach anybody. Nobody will need to tell anyone about God, forgiveness, or holy behavior. Everybody will know God. Everyone will have His Word engraved on their hearts.

With promises like that, giving us such powerful and reassuring hope of the certain completion of our spiritual journey, how could we ever despair (1:5)?

Paragraph 2

2 Illusions of despair may seem to come, but learn how not to be deceived by them. ²Behind each one there is reality, and there is God. ³Why would you wait for this and trade it for illusions, when His love is but an instant farther on the road where all illusions end? ⁴The end is sure and guaranteed by God. ⁵Who stands before a lifeless image when a step away the Holy of the Holies opens up an ancient door that leads beyond the world?³ ⁶You *are* a stranger here,⁴ but you belong to Him Who loves you as He loves Himself.⁵ ⁷Ask but my help to roll the stone away, and it is done according to His will.⁶

Yes, despair may seem to rear its ugly head more than once, but these are only illusions of despair! He urges us to “learn how not to be deceived by them” (2:1). We must learn that behind every illusion of despair is reality, along with God Himself (2:2). The despairing illusions try to hide that from us, and we must learn to discount them, reminding ourselves of what they hide. We can and should ask ourselves repeatedly, “Why am I waiting for Heaven? Why am I putting it off with illusions of despair?” God’s love is just “an instant farther on the road” (2:3). Why do we deceive ourselves with false concerns about how far off our awakening is?

Again he reminds us that “The end is sure and guaranteed by God” (2:4). Like idiots, we dare to question whether what is guaranteed and promised by God will occur. If we could only see what we are doing, we would realize that we are imploring lifeless idols and making outrageous sacrifices to them when we are only one step away from the open door that leads beyond the world into the Holy of Holies, the very Presence of God. Who does that?! (2:5) Alas! *We* do.

Do you sometimes feel like a stranger here, that you don’t belong or fit into the world? Well, “you *are* a stranger here.” That feeling isn’t wrong or bad; it’s accurate. It is a consequence of an inner knowledge of where your home is: With God. “You belong to Him Who loves you as He loves Himself” (2:6). When you feel alone in the world or out of place in it, remember that God loves you as much as He loves Himself! You *do* belong—to God. That’s bound to provide a lift any day. If you feel drained, beaten up, or even crucified and shut in a tomb, ask Jesus to help you roll the stone away and experience the resurrection that is yours as much as his (2:7).

³The Holy of Holies was the inmost chamber of the sanctuary in the Temple in Jerusalem. God was believed to dwell in this chamber, which was considered so holy that it was entered only once a year by the High Priest. In the above allusion, we have the choice of standing worshipfully before the lifeless idol of our despair (despair of ever making it back to God) or simply walking through the open doorway of the Holy of Holies, only a step away, and entering directly into the presence of God.

⁴W-200.4:4: “You are a stranger here.”

⁵Mark 12:31 (RSV): “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” In the above passage, God Himself abides by this injunction: He “loves you as He loves Himself.”

⁶Matthew 28:2 (RSV): “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it.” In the above allusion, we are entombed in our condition of separation from God, and so we ask Jesus to help us “roll the stone away”—the “stone” presumably being that which keeps us in the tomb.

Paragraph 3

3 We have begun the journey. ²Long ago the end was written in the stars⁷ and set into the Heavens with a shining ray that held it safe within eternity and through all time as well. ³And holds it still; unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable. ⁴Be not afraid.⁸ ⁵We only start again an ancient journey long ago begun that but seems new. ⁶We have begun again upon a road we traveled on before and from which we lost our way a little while.⁹ ⁷And now we try again. ⁸Our new beginning has the certainty the journey lacked till now. ⁹Look up and see His Word among the stars, where He has set your name along with His. ¹⁰Look up and find your certain destiny the world would hide but God would have you see.¹⁰

Notice that in the first two paragraphs, Jesus has been addressing “you.” Now he switches to “we. That refers to himself and us (3:1). Jesus and we have begun the journey together. He’s traveling with us. He completed his journey but has stayed with us to ensure we complete it, too. He is another big part of why the end is certain once we begin the journey. When I think of this, I often recall the line from the Text: ”If you knew Who walks beside you on this way which you have chosen, fear would be impossible. “ (T-18.III.3:1 (CE), T-18.III.3:2 (FIP)).

The problem is that we don’t *know* that we have him with us. ”If you knew“ implies that, presently, we *don’t* know. That passage in Chapter 18 continues to say just that and gives reasons for our lack of knowledge about Jesus’ companionship. It says we have gone deep into the long and cruel darkness of our illusion, so deep that we have lost confidence in ourselves. For a very long time, we have despised ourselves, believing in our guilt and believing that God, Who is Love, wants to send us to hell. We journey toward His Love, yet we are terrified of Him and Jesus. We are afraid to acknowledge he walks with us. He then affirms:

”But what is that to us who travel surely and very swiftly away from fear? You who hold each other’s hand also hold mine, for when you joined each other you were not alone. Do you believe that I would leave you in the darkness you agreed to leave with me? In your relationship is this world’s light, and fear must disappear before you now. “ (T-18.III.4:3–6 (CE))

Jesus called us to this journey. How can we believe that he would leave us in darkness, knowing that to be so? He is with us in our brothers and sisters as well. It’s in our relationships with one another that we can and will recognize the divine Presence that is always with us.

⁷Saying that something is “written in the stars” means that it has been foreordained, predestined. Here, what was “written in the stars” is that our journey through time will end in God.

⁸Matthew 28:10 (KJV): “Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” This is one of several places in the gospels where Jesus tells his disciples “Be not afraid.”

⁹This implies that there was a distant past in which we followed Jesus’ way, that we then left that way, and that we are now joining it once again. Though surely not limited to Helen, this pattern is reminiscent of the journey Helen’s soul had made, according to some of her early guidance and inner visions. See Cameos 3 and 31.

¹⁰The injunction here seems to be for us to “look up” and see the stars as symbols of our own heavenly destiny.

So we travel with Jesus. But there is much more to this that we probably have not realized! The end of this shared journey was "written in the stars" and "set into the Heavens." In some sense we may never understand until we arrive Home, our journey with Jesus began and ended in the same instant, and the record of it was written everywhere in the universe or universes for all to know and see (3:2). It took only a "tiny tick of time" for us to make a mistake *and* for God to correct it. The journey began, and the journey ended. We are not guilty; all our manufactured doubt and despair of ever being holy beings are entirely without foundation. Everything is exactly as it was before that tiny instant.

"Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity. And so is all time past, and everything exactly as it was before the way to nothingness was made. 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. And in that tiny instant time was gone, for that was all it ever was. What God gave answer to is answered and is gone." (T-26.V.3:3-7)

The journey ended perfectly, held in the heavens "with a shining ray that held it safe within eternity and through all time as well." Maybe you think this is true in eternity but not in time, even if that time lasts only an instant, a tiny tick. But no! The end is sure and held safe "through all time as well." So there is no excuse for doubt and despair. The end is certain even now, here in time. No more "How much longer, Daddy?" Whenever you think that kind of question, remind yourself, "We're already home! I'm only dreaming I'm not." Every time we remind ourselves of that fact, we move that much closer to the day that all the Truth dawns on our minds in complete awareness. "Sometimes a thousand years or more are saved" (W-97.3:2).

That journey's end is written in the stars, which seems to be a kind of metaphysical astrology. When, as Course students, we look at the stars, instead of merely using astrology to determine what may happen in our lives on earth, we need to see the sure completion of our journey written there, the light that will never fail, "unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable" (3:3). Let the stars remind you of this every time you see them.

When we bear in mind the certainty of the successful outcome of our spiritual journey, there is nothing to be afraid of (3:4). The journey is not new for any of us. It began (and ended) long ago (3:5). We are just starting it over with Jesus, going over the same ground we covered before — starting over, at least in our minds, because from where we sit, we seem to have "lost our way a little while" (3:6). We're trying again, finding our way back to the path, but now we have a more profound assurance that we'll reach the goal (3:7-8) because we know we have someone with us who has made the journey already. The certainty of completion was written in the stars long ago, so you can "Look up and find your certain destiny the world would hide but God would have you see." (3:9-10)

Paragraph 4

4 Let us wait here in silence, and kneel down an instant in our gratitude to Him Who called to us and helped us hear His call. ²And then let us arise and go in faith along the way to Him. ³Now we are sure we do not walk alone. ⁴For God is here, and with Him all our brothers. ⁵Now we know that we will never lose the way again. ⁶The song begins again which had been stilled only an instant, though it seemed to be unsung forever. ⁷What is here begun will grow in life and strength and hope, until the world is still an instant and forgets all that the dream of sin had made of it.

Having looked up and seen the inevitable destiny God has provided for us, Jesus asks us to join him (“Let us” includes him), kneeling in silent gratitude to God for calling to us and helping us hear His call (4:1). Having done so, we stand up and “go in faith along the way to Him” (4:2). We have recognized and affirmed that we do not walk alone. Not only does Jesus accompany us, but God and all our brothers are also with us (4:3–4). He declares that we know that we will never lose the way again (4:5)! To me, what this is saying is that something changed dramatically when Jesus completed his journey. Before that, when anyone began the journey, they might lose their way again. However, after Jesus made it to the end and beyond, anyone who starts on the journey is guaranteed to finish because they have Jesus showing them the way.

With this certainty in our hearts, we once again begin to hear that “forgotten song.” (If you don’t recognize that phrase, read about it here: (T-21.I.7:8-12:7 (CE), T-21.I.5:1-10:7 (FIP)). We begin to sing along, realizing that though it seems forever since we heard it (4:6), not one note was ever missed:

“Only in the past—an ancient past, too short to make a world in answer to creation—did this world appear to rise. So very long ago, for such a tiny interval of time, that not one note in Heaven’s song was missed.” (T-26.V.5:2–3 (CE), (T-26.V.5:3–4 (FIP)).

The Course assures us that this journey we’ve begun will not peter out, leaving us unable to reach our goal. No! It will “grow in life and strength and hope, until the world is still an instant and forgets all that the dream of sin had made of it” (4:7). The whole world will forget everything that our nightmare of separation seemed to make of it! Take a deep breath and breathe that in. Let it melt the icy knot of fear that lingers within you about the world your eyes and ears show you. You can relax now; it was just a bad dream.

Paragraph 5

5 Let us go out to meet the newborn world, knowing that Christ has been reborn in it and that the holiness of this rebirth will last forever. ²We had lost our way, but He has found it for us. ³Let us come and bid Him welcome Who returns to us to celebrate salvation and the end of all we thought we made. ⁴The morning star of this new day looks on a different world,¹¹ where God is welcome and His Son with Him. ⁵We who complete Him offer thanks to Him, as He gives thanks to us. ⁶The Son is still, and in the quiet God has given him enters his home and is at peace at last.

When we complete the Course, we have prepared ourselves to meet the world in a new way. Not just *you* have been reborn; the *world* has been reborn. In fact, “Christ has been reborn in it” because Christ has been reborn in us, which clothes it with a holiness that will “last forever” (5:1). We have been endowed with the vision of Christ and now see the world through his eyes, and we see holiness wherever we look.

Yes, I know—most of the time, it doesn’t look that way to you yet. Me either. Maybe once in a while. But remember: the end is certain. We *will* see it this way. We have God’s guarantee! This paragraph describes what awaits us at the end of the journey, a journey that, in reality, has already been completed. This is the picture we can and should hold in our minds, inspiring us as we continue on the path to Home.

We all lost our way. Like the prodigal son in the Bible story, we were stuck in a foreign land, feeding slop to pigs and eating it too. But Jesus has found the way back Home for us (5:2) and now walks along the road with us, telling us what home is like, all the fantastic things we can expect to find there, and assuring us that “Yes! You can do it! Just follow me; I know the way.” I feel overwhelmed with gratitude to him as I write that.

We can welcome him every day and celebrate with him that nothing we thought we had made was real—evil, the horrors of war, terrifying sickness, death, all the things that seem to torture us—they were nothing but a nightmare (5:3).

The image of the morning star is traditionally a symbol for the return of Christ (see 2 Peter 1:19, Rev 2:28, and 22:16). As we look up (or within, to see the return of Christ there), the star shines “on a different world, where God is welcome and His Son with Him” (5:4). That would be a very different world, wouldn’t it? God and His Son seem very unwelcome in the world today. But we can see something different with Christ’s vision. On that last day, when all the world has awakened (4:7), God and Christ will be welcome everywhere, in every mind and heart. We will give thanks to God as He gives thanks to us. We (the Son) will be still, and in that perfect calm, we will enter our home to be at peace at last (5:5–6).

¹¹Though the “morning star” in this passage seems to function primarily as a symbol of a new dawn (referring, as it does, to Venus, which often shines just above the coming sunrise), it also calls to mind the statement in Revelation 22:16 (RSV), in which Jesus says that he is “the bright morning star.”

Bonus: Commentary giving similar encouragement on the journey, based on Workbook Review V

REVIEW 5: GOD IS BUT LOVE, AND THEREFORE SO AM I.

Paragraph 5 of the review introduction:

The Self that is only Love, perfectly consistent in Its thoughts, is what “waits to meet us at the journey’s ending” (5:1). I often need to remind myself of what it is I am “going for” in this spiritual walk. Sometimes it seems like such a long journey—“countless situations...through time which seems to have no end” (T-24.VI.7:2). Keeping the goal in view, in the forefront of my mind, is a necessity for me. “This,” with a capital “T” (at least in some editions of the Course), “is promised us” (5:4). I am on a journey to find my Self, and at the end of the journey, God promises, I will find It. A Self in constant union with God. A Self at perfect peace within Itself. That is worth “going for.”

The journey seems long, but every step brings me a little nearer (5:2). Each time I pause for a minute to remember brings me nearer. Each time I open my heart in love to a brother brings me nearer. Each morning or evening that I take the time to practice, sitting in silence and listening brings me nearer. The path offered by the Course is not a flashy one. It is not, sometimes, a very exciting one. But it works. I must do this work somehow; I must undo the twisted thoughts of my ego and replace them with something else. The multitude of fear’s disguises must be unmasked and replaced with love. Sometimes I wish it could happen overnight. Sometimes I wonder why it takes so long and proceeds so slowly. And then I catch my thoughts, turning me away, delaying me, and I know why. Occasionally I even feel grateful that God does not force anything on me against my will because, when at last I end the journey, there will be no shred of uncertainty that it is my will, as well as His. And I return to the steady work the Course sets forth, knowing that—for me, at least—this is the only way I have found that works.

“This review”—done as it asks us to do it, of course—“will shorten time immeasurably” (5:3). So if I feel impatient, here is the means to shorten the time it takes. The means are being given to me, handed to me on a silver platter, set before my eyes day after day. Will I take them? Will I use the means given to me to shorten time? I say so often that I want the journey to proceed more quickly. Yet if, given the means to shorten the time, I do not use them, what does that say about my wanting? My regularity in practice is the measure of my genuine desire.

If I practice with the goal in mind and remember why I am doing it, the benefit will be maximal. If I trudge through the practice as if it were some duty God has imposed on me, a tedious chore, I will benefit less.

Today let me raise my heart from dust to life as I remember (5:4). Let me lift up my eyes and recall the glorious goal, the completeness of my Self that awaits my remembering. Let the inner hunger that never leaves me have its way and draw me onward.

Today's two review ideas dovetail nicely with the ideas in the paragraph from the review introduction. I "step back and let Him lead the way," willingly following His direction. And I am encouraged on my journey in knowing that as I go, "I walk with God in perfect holiness."

This course was sent to open up the path of light to us and teach us, step by step, how to return to the eternal Self we thought we lost. (5:4)

Thank You, Father, for this course. Thank You for your step-by-step instructions. Thank You for this time of review, for the times I can spend with You, quietly, listening, waiting, knowing that every minute draws me nearer to my goal, every minute saves immeasurable time. Thank You for opening up the path of light.

Legend:

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

I have taken the Text 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. The CE restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes, which results in different reference numbering. I will indicate the corresponding sentences in the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) edition for each paragraph. This should enable you to locate specific sentences in that edition with only a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. References to quotations are from the CE unless I am quoting another version, in which case, I will indicate that version.

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

Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

The CE has made significant changes from the earlier versions, although, for the most part, there was no alteration in the meaning of the text; and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. Some changes in section breaks, paragraph breaks, and sentence structure result in different numbering in references to the identical words in the two editions. When there is a significant difference in the wording, I will sometimes 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 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."