Acceptance is infinite; and it starts here, in your own heart. Whatever arises is accepted.
Surrender Revisited

"Whatever happens. Whatever what is is what I want. Only that. But that."
- Galway Kinnell

"Earthly things must be known to be loved.
Divine things must be loved to be known."
- Blaise Pascal

Let this be clear from the start. It is a question that arises often: at a certain point the implications of this annihilation, this total surrender of the sense of individual self, will begin to sink in and you will begin to suspect that what is being talked about here is not compatible with the continuation of the familiar, of life as you know it. The question will arise: is it really necessary to die completely, to surrender everything? Isn’t there some more moderate, less radical way of going about this, some middle way to be found while not rejecting this life and myself as an individual?
And there will be many teachers, in fact most, who will comfort you by saying; 'Yes, of course there is. All that talk of utter annihilation is metaphorical. Enlightenment is to be found even as you continue your everyday life. It is important to honor who you are; negating that is being... well, negative.' Other teachers will take it a little deeper and tell you; 'It is not the dying, not the surrender which is important, but only your attachment. Dying is good, not dying is good. Are dying and not dying equally good to you?' And if you can say; 'Sure: surrender, not surrender, who cares;' then you don't have to surrender.

All of this sounds quite reasonable from the point of view of the dream. But from the Understanding, it's just silliness. It is all predicated on the idea of there being someone there to die or not die, to surrender or not surrender, to continue a life or be attached or be free. When there is the Understanding it is obvious that there is no such entity as 'you' to either be free or not, to surrender or die or not. It is the very idea that there is such an entity which is incompatible with the Understanding. This movement to protect that sense of individual, this aversion to complete annihilation, runs very deep in the illusory self. It is the ego's sense of self preservation. When faced with his own surrender and death, Jesus sweat blood and prayed that he be allowed to pass this cup by without drinking from it. But he recognized that this is not possible. "Yet not my will, but Thine be done."

The basic Understanding is that you do not exist as an independent entity or agent, but only as an object in the dream of Consciousness. All this bargaining about surrender and death is just an attempt by that illusory agent, that nonexistent doer, that fictitious individual to continue on in its
mythical life. Nisargadatta Maharaj called the individual self the "child of a barren woman." It's hard for any such individual to take this seriously, to accept that it has no existence other than as a myth, a construct in mind. But without this total acceptance, this complete surrender, the Understanding, enlightenment, awakening, is — by definition! — not possible.

It is the ego-rebellion of the mere object in Consciousness, the usurpation of subjectivity, the setting itself up as a separate entity unto itself, which is the basic error, encoded in such myths as the Judeo-Christian story of the 'fall from grace,' the 'original sin,' of the first humans. It is this mistaken concept of a separate, self-determining individual, taken to extreme, which results in arrogant and destructive behavior toward others, toward environment, and so on; but even in its most basic, benign form is the cause of separation, anxiety, and suffering.

What is being asked is whether it is possible to awaken while remaining comfortably asleep. This is what the sense of individual self, the ego, wants. And, there are a multitude of teachers who will cater to this, who will bring you a wonderful experience in the dream and call it awakening. 'Awakening lite.' But listen to or read the true masters; the Buddha, Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Huang Po, Hui-Neng, Wei Wu Wei, even Rumi or Teresa of Avila, among others. When they talk about the Understanding, awakening, acceptance, surrender, they use words like complete, final, total, utter, absolute. The very basis of the Understanding is that you are not. This cannot be accepted without at the same time surrendering every vestige of the idea that one is. Totally.
Only the one who loses his or her life will find It.

From here, it's obvious. There is no reason or motivation to water down this truth or make it more acceptable or politically or spiritually correct so that more dream characters can believe in it while staying in the dream. Why would there be any such inclination? What Is, is. If you hear this and it is not acceptable to you, that's perfect and wonderful: it is the perfect unfolding of the role for that dream character. Why would there be any interest in changing that? That this complete surrender of self should occur in the case of any dream characters at all, that any should wake up in the dream, is a great mystery in any case. Why should there be any motivation to make the Teaching more moderate, more palatable, more widely acceptable? Acceptable to whom? Comforting to whom? Thinking that there should be such an accommodation is foolishness, is continuing to take the dream and the dream characters seriously; is confused thinking, taking illusion for truth and what is true for mere illusion.

Essentially, the Teaching contained in the perennial wisdom is what Ken Wilber calls an 'instrumental injunction.' Such an injunction is an invitation. It lays out a way of thinking, perhaps even a set of practices, a kind of recipe that says, "If you want to know this, try this." Try thinking this way, try doing this investigation, try letting go of these cherished ideas, and see what happens.

Of course perhaps even then nothing may happen; there are no guarantees. Many have tried these ideas and fallen flat and gone back to their old ways. That is as it should be. But if it is to be approached at all, it must start somehow.
Absolutely no one can directly convey what It is, or what It is like. But if you attend to and follow the Teaching, and by unspeakable Grace it sinks in and takes hold, it becomes possible that direct experience and understanding of what is pointed to, what is presented indirectly by the Teaching, may occur.

Then you will be in a position to discuss, verify, question or reject various ways in which the Teaching is expressed, should 'you' still have any interest in doing so. But until then, the idea of diluting the Teaching to be more acceptable to dream characters, more compatible with what dream characters already believe and hold dear, is a silly waste of time.

Within the dream, the common wisdom is that you must understand something before you can accept it. But this will lead at best only to intellectual understanding and intellectual acceptance. Characters in the dream cannot understand, evaluate, or judge waking up from that dream in any meaningful way. By its nature, awakening turns the whole dream on its head. Nothing applies. Rather, the Understanding must be accepted before it can be understood. There must be awakening before there can be any evaluation or real understanding of awakening.

That's why it's called surrender.

And the complete, total surrender and the complete, final Understanding, are the same.