

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 14, Section VIII

The Holy Meeting Place

Legend:

- blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~striketrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Paragraph 1

1. ¹In the darkness you have obscured the glory God gave you, and the power He bestowed upon His guiltless Son. ²All this lies hidden in every darkened place, shrouded in guilt and in the dark denial of innocence. ³Behind the dark doors you have closed lies nothing, **because** nothing **can** obscure the gift of God. ⁴It is the **closing** of the doors that interferes with recognition of the power of God that shines in you. ⁵Banish not power from your mind, but let all that would hide your glory be brought to the judgment of the Holy Spirit, and there undone. ⁶Whom He would save for glory *is* saved for it. ⁷He has promised the Father that through Him you would be released from littleness to glory. ⁸To what He promised God He is wholly faithful, for He shares [~~shared~~] **with** God the promise that was given Him to share with **you**.

• Study Question •

1. *What actually interferes with our recognition of the power of God within us?*
(One answer)
- A. *Our sinfulness*
 - B. *Our guilt*
 - C. *Our refusal to look at our egos*
 - D. *Our egos*

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In this section the imagery of the locked door and sentinels (first seen in T-14.II.7, and then in T-14.VII.6) returns. The “closing of the doors” represents our denial, our refusal to look at our egos, and our attempts to hide and shroud our darkness and guilt. The darkness, of course, is only imaginary; nothing lies behind the doors (1:3). Yet we think it is real, and seek to hide it. That imaginary darkness, in turn, hides our true glory as the holy Son of God (1:1–2).

There are two ways the last phrase of sentence 3 can be interpreted. We may think it means that it is impossible to obscure God's gift. Yet how can that possibly be the meaning? In sentence 1, Jesus states that we *have* obscured it. The alternative reading is to place the emphasis on the word "can" as the Urtext does, so that the meaning becomes, "It *is* possible for 'nothing' to obscure God's gift." That is the way I understand it.

We attribute great power to our egos, and imagine that it is the ego that is keeping us from God. While that is true in a sense, it is not strictly accurate. The ego is not real and does not exist. In itself, it cannot hide our glory. The ego would be no problem if we were simply willing to look at it honestly, without fear, because if we looked we would find that it is only an illusion. What hides our glory is *our refusal to look* (1:4). That is what gives "nothing" its apparent power. In turning away our eyes from the ego, we are simultaneously turning them away from our true power that was given us in God's creation. What cripples us is a lack of openness. We are so afraid that our seeking after specialness has blackened our souls forever that we are unwilling to look at ourselves. If we did, we would see only God's perfect creation. Closing ourselves off from the light, fearing that it would expose our sin, we close ourselves off from the power of God.

The way to *recover* our inherent divine power and glory is to *uncover* all that seems to hide it (1:5). The Holy Spirit will eradicate all of it if we will bring it to Him. His will cannot be impeded; therefore, our salvation is a done deal (1:6). He has promised the Father to bring us to glory, and He will not deviate from that purpose (1:7–8).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹He shares it [the promise given to Him] still, **for you**. ²Everything that promises otherwise, great or small, however much or little valued, He will replace with the one promise **given** unto Him to lay upon the altar to your Father and His Son. ³No altar stands to God **without** His Son. ⁴And **nothing** brought there that is not equally worthy of **Both [together]**, but will be **replaced** by gifts wholly acceptable to Father **and** to Son. ⁵Can you offer guilt to God? ⁶You cannot, then, offer it to His Son. ⁷For They are **not** apart, and gifts to one **are** offered to the other. ⁸You know not God because you know not this. ⁹And yet you **do** know God and **also** this. ¹⁰All this is safe **within** you, where the Holy Spirit shines. ¹¹He shines not in division [between Father and Son], but in the meeting place where God, **united** with His Son, speaks to His Son **through** Him. ¹²Communication between what cannot **be** divided **cannot** cease. ¹³The holy meeting place of the unseparated Father and His Son lies in the Holy Spirit and in **you**. ¹⁴All interference in the communication that God Himself wills with His Son is quite impossible here. ¹⁵Unbroken and uninterrupted love flows constantly between the Father and the Son, as **Both** would have it be. ¹⁶And so it **is**.

• Study Question •

2. *What is the "holy meeting place" this section speaks about?*



The Holy Spirit still shares with us the promise God gave Him to share with us (1:8 and 2:1), which is the promise of our release from littleness to glory. Everything that contradicts our glory (that "promises otherwise") He replaces, in our minds, with God's promise of our glory (2:2).

It's a divine exchange program. We bring in junk and it is exchanged for gold. We bring in all our self-recrimination, all our thoughts of unworthiness, all our doubts and fears, and all our judgments against our brothers and sisters, and the Holy Spirit transmutes them into holy treasures. He doesn't just wipe them out; He transforms them into something of value (2:4).

When the Course speaks of an altar it means a place in our mind that contains what we are devoted to. Sentence 3 is powerful; what it says, if you think about it, is that you cannot be devoted to God without being equally devoted to God's Son. That does not mean just Jesus; it means all of us. We cannot accuse our brothers of sin without pointing a finger at God as well (2:5–6). If you attack God's Son you attack God; "They are not apart" (2:7). The Bible clearly states the same idea:

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (I John 4:20–21)

I've been talking about bringing to the Holy Spirit all of our darkness, and I've been defining that darkness primarily as our own guilt and sense of unworthiness, but here we see that the darkness also includes any dark thoughts that would cast aspersions on any brother or sister. We often refer to suspicions of a person's guilt as "dark thoughts," and that is exactly what is being referred to here. Such thoughts are exactly the sort of thing the Holy Spirit wants us to bring to Him. Yet, when we begin to have suspicious, condemning thoughts about another person, usually the *last* thing we think of is bringing those thoughts into the presence of God!

That's what it means to close the doors.

Shutting God out when we have thoughts that are not worthy of Him, thoughts that we know instinctively are not worthy of us, is what keeps us from knowing God (2:8). When we deny the unity of God with His Son by attacking the Son in any of His forms—and to see anyone as guilty is such an attack—we have blinded ourselves to the nature of God Himself. And yet, somewhere inside of every one of us, we *know* that God and His Son are one (2:9). That knowledge cannot be driven out of us. It abides safe in our right mind, where the Holy Spirit guards it and continually holds it up for our remembrance (2:10).

He will always remind us of union. He will always hold before us the fact that we are

one with our brother or sister, and that together we are one with God. In that light He will help us reinterpret the actions or words of our brother or sister that we have wanted to judge as sin. He will help us to see them as a call for love, a fearful response to self-condemnation, or a mistaken attempt to solve a perceived problem. He will motivate us to offer love (2:15), and will guide us as to what form that love should take.

Within each of us lies "the holy meeting place" (2:13). Come to that place when dark thoughts invade your mind, and lay them on the altar in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Let Him help you sort them out. In this place "love flows constantly" (2:15). Saints down through the ages who have experienced enlightenment have reported that "place" (that mental state) as one of universal love for all things. Perhaps you have tasted that love. Every moment is another opportunity to find that place, to remember it, and to experience it. Every dark thought that crops up is an invitation to enlightenment, an opportunity to transmute the lead of judgment into the gold of divine love.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Let your mind wander not through darkened corridors, **away** from light's center. ²You ~~and your brother~~ may choose to lead **yourselves** astray, but you can [**only**] be **brought together only** by the Guide appointed **for** you. ³He will surely lead you to where God and His Son await your recognition. ⁴They are joined in giving you the gift of oneness, before which **all** separation vanishes. ⁵Unite with what you **are**. ⁶You **cannot** join with anything **except** reality. ⁷God's glory and His Son's **belong** to you in truth. ⁸They **have** no opposite, and nothing else can you bestow upon yourself [**yourselves**].

• Study Question •

3. *What are we asked to unite with? (One answer)*
- A. *Our brothers*
 - B. *What we are*
 - C. *God*



This paragraph continues the theme of oneness seen in the previous paragraph, and also in the preceding section (VII.7). We are asked to no longer wander in "darkened corridors," but to come to the holy meeting place. Here we are brought together and receive the gift of oneness.

Notice now that what wanders is *your mind*, and that it wanders "away from light's center" (3:1). This is mental wandering, not physical wandering, and it has a specific direction. Sometimes we talk about thoughts wandering while we meditate, and what we mean is the loss of focused attention: instead of following the breath, or meditating on a particular line of thought, our thoughts just ramble off in some random direction—planning a shopping expedition, day-dreaming about a special relationship, or trying to

solve some vexing problem. That isn't the kind of mental wandering the Course has in mind here. This wandering entails turning your back on the light and walking off into the darkness. It means walking away from God.

This kind of wandering can take a form very similar to the mental wandering during meditation, however. For instance, if my mind begins to rehash some encounter with a brother, playing it over and carefully finding fault with my brother, building a case against him, that is, I think, the sort of mental wandering Jesus is referring to here. We do that sort of thing so often! I would say that any line of thought that increases your sense of separation between yourself and another child of God is mental wandering in darkened corridors.

We can separate ourselves in darkness, but only the Holy Spirit can bring us back together (3:2). The Course offers us such strong reassurances that such reunion is inevitable (3:3). The entire Trinity is mentioned here: God, the Son, and Holy Spirit, all working together "in giving you the gift of oneness" (3:4) How can it possibly *not* happen with that kind of power behind it?

What we are being asked to unite with is not some foreign entity or a state beyond our current reach. We are asked only to accept the unity that *already exists* in reality. We are reclaiming the union given us in creation. We denied it; we hid the union with our guilt and denial, but in truth it never left us. We are not billions of separate human beings, all separate from God; rather, together we share the one life of God, and it is that with which we reunite (3:5–6). "God's glory and His Son's belong to you in truth" (4:7). It is no hubris to claim equal glory with God, and nothing but that glory exists (3:8).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹There is no substitute for truth. ²And truth will make this plain to you as you are brought into the place where you must **meet** with truth. ³And there you must be led, through gentle understanding which can lead you nowhere else. ⁴Where God is, there are **you**. ⁵Such is the truth. ⁶**Nothing** can change the knowledge, **given** you by God, into unknowingness [*unknowing*]. ⁷Everything God created **knows** its Creator. ⁸For this is how creation is accomplished by the Creator and by His creations. ⁹In the holy meeting place are joined the Father and His creations, and the creations of His Son with Them together. ¹⁰There is one link [*the Holy Spirit*] that joins them all together, holding them in the oneness out of which creation happens.

• Study Question •

4. *What is the key "truth" to which we are being gently led by the Holy Spirit?*

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The idea of no substitutes and no opposites to God, mentioned in T-14.IV.1:7-8, is brought up again in 3:8 and 4:1. The state of separation from God and one another, in

which we imagine we find ourselves, is simply impossible. The spiritual journey consists of slowly having our minds led out of that illusion back to truth. As you read these lines (4:1–3), you should get a picture of a very gentle, loving process. The Holy Spirit leads us to bring our darkness to the light, where the truth can dispel our illusions.

The fundamental truth to which we are being led is stated in sentence 4. (Sentence 5 identifies this as the truth we “must meet” that was mentioned in sentence 2.) This is a truth taught by many religious traditions. For example, the Unity churches have what they have named “the Unity Prayer”:

The Light of God surrounds us;
The Love of God enfolds us;
The Power of God protects us;
The Presence of God watches over us;
Wherever we are, God is and all is well!

Lesson 41 in the Workbook states, “God goes with me wherever I go.” Lessons 222 and 223 expand on this idea (I recommend reading them), and Lesson 264 expresses it past any shadow of doubt, with consummate clarity: “Father, You stand before me and behind, beside me, in the place I see myself, and everywhere I go” (W-pII.264.1:1). Where I see myself, there is God; what an amazing truth! That is what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us as He instructs us in forgiveness.

Also, the idea that *unknowing* is impossible is mentioned again in 4:6 and 7. We have only dreamed that we do not know God, or that we do not know our union with Him. We know; we *do* know.

Creation is accomplished by knowing, which entails union (7,8 and 10). God *knew* us, and that brought us into being; our being arose from a shared knowing. Creation cannot happen without that sharing; therefore, we do know that union. When we choose to come to the altar to meet with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to transform our dark thoughts and opening ourselves to the light of truth, we join not only with Him, but with the Father and with all the Father’s creations—our brothers and sisters.

We join also with the creations of the Son, that is, of all our brothers and of ourselves. As I’ve said many times, I don’t know exactly what those creations are. The clearest description in the Course is still quite abstract (T-24.VII.7:1-3, another section about this same meeting place). The simplest thing I can say is that they are formless spirit.

The central point, however, is not what our creations are, but the union with them, with one another, and with God to which the Holy Spirit is guiding us. It is *one* union, the same oneness encompassing all things (4:10).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The link with which the Father joins Himself to those He gives the power to create [*like Him*] can **never** be dissolved. ²Heaven itself is union with **all** of creation, and with its one Creator. ³And Heaven remains the Will of God

for you. ⁴Lay no gifts other than this upon your altars, for nothing can coexist with [*beside*] it. ⁵Here your little [*meager*] offerings are **brought together** with the gift of God, and only what is worthy of the Father will be accepted by the Son, for whom it is [*was*] intended. ⁶To whom God gives Himself, He *is* given. ⁷Your little gifts will vanish on the altar, where He has placed His Own.

• **Study Question** •

5. *What are our "little gifts"?*

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Our link to God can never be dissolved; anything that says otherwise is unworthy of God and therefore unworthy of us. The Course defines Heaven as "union with all of creation" (5:2), and God's Will is to give it to us (5:3). Elsewhere, the Course repeats the same thought in more detail:

The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within (T-18.VI.1:4-6).

Our "little gifts" are brought to the altar where God's gift lies (5:5), and because nothing can coexist with Heaven (5:4), our little gifts vanish, and only God's gift remains.

The picture I see here is of a large altar. On it lies some glorious object, something that symbolizes Heaven, God's gift to us. For me, that might be a radiant ball of golden light. You may picture it differently. We come in bearing a tawdry pile of grimy gifts (our dark thoughts). Perhaps we have some thought of laying them on the altar. Perhaps we think that we have something to offer to God. But, as we reach out to lay our gifts on that altar, the light from God's gift shines on them and shines right through them! We realize they are merely a mirage, and that there is nothing at all in our hands.

Once again, we are told that we are saved by divine fiat. There is no choice for us (5:6). God has given Himself, and that settles the matter.

• **Study Question** •

6. *How does this section relate to the one that preceded it?*

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Answer Key

1. C; see 1:4.
2. The place in our minds where God speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, elsewhere referred to as our “right mind” (T-5.I.3:3).
3. B
4. Where God is, you are (4:4).
5. Our dark and hidden thoughts.
6. It speaks of the holy meeting place within us, where God's Voice speaks to us, and tells us, as did the previous section, to bring our little gifts here that they may be dissolved in the light of the truth of our oneness with God and with each other, which has never changed.