

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 15, Section XI

Christmas as the End of Sacrifice

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
~~strike through blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Paragraph 1

1. ¹Fear not to recognize the whole idea of sacrifice as **solely of your making**. ²And seek not safety by attempting to **protect** yourself from where it is **not**. ³Your brothers and your Father have become **very** fearful to you. ⁴And you would bargain with them for a few special relationships, in which you think you see some scraps of safety. ⁵Do not try longer to **keep apart** your thoughts and the Thought that has been **given** you. ⁶When they are brought together and perceived **where they are**, the choice **between** them is nothing more than a gentle awakening, and as simple as opening your eyes to daylight when you have no more need of sleep.

• Study Question •

- 1. Sentence 1 reiterates that we must not be afraid to see that we are responsible for the whole idea of sacrifice. When we are afraid, we try to see the demands for sacrifice coming from somewhere besides ourselves.
(a) Who do we blame for the demands of sacrifice?
(b) Surrounded (apparently) by demands for sacrifice, what do we do to find a little safety?
(c) Rather than being afraid, what do we need to do (1:5)? (This is a reference to a major theme of Chapter 14, especially Section VII.)
(d) What, then, will be as simple as opening our eyes to daylight?*
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This paragraph and the next two really follow very closely on the final paragraph of Section X, so let me briefly review what topic was under discussion there. Jesus was pointing out that the choice we *must* make is a black-or-white choice; there is no grey, no in between. Either you are a hostage to the ego or you are totally free of it; you cannot be *partial* host to the ego. The thing that holds us back is our failure to recognize that all of

the demand for sacrifice (which seems to justify our egos) is *internal*, arising in our *own egos*; none of it comes from other people or from God. We make the mistake of seeing the source of the problem as *outside of us*. We can be released only when we recognize that it is wholly within us. But if we can recognize the actual decision just as it is, the choice becomes “*very easy*” (T-15.X.9:5).

Paragraph 1 begins, then, by urging us not to be afraid of this recognition: “the whole idea of sacrifice [is] *solely of your making*” (1:1). The choice is simple when this is seen clearly. Our fear of taking responsibility so completely leads us to seek “safety” by protecting ourselves against *external* demands for sacrifice, but that is precisely “where it is *not*,” i.e., in other people or in God (1:2). This causes us to see other people and God in a *very* fearful light (1:3). Being generally afraid of other people, we try to find a select few that we think we can bargain with to form special relationships in which we think we can be safe (1:3–4), instead of looking within ourselves for the Answer (T-15.X.9:8).

In Sentence 5, Jesus speaks of “your thoughts” and “the Thought that has been *given* you.” These phrases seem to be another way of speaking of the self we have made, the ego, and the Self created by God, the Christ. Or, perhaps the words mean our *concept* of ourselves versus the Truth about us as God created us. He speaks of our bringing our thoughts and the Thought together (1:6). To me, this is the same thing spoken of in several other ways earlier: bringing the darkness to the light, bringing the illusion to the truth, bringing unholiness to holiness, bringing the undesirable to the desirable, or bringing what you do not want to what you do. The whole idea is that if we clearly see the contrast between the ego’s insanity and God’s sanity, “the choice between them is nothing more than a gentle awakening, and as simple as opening your eyes to daylight when you have no more need of sleep” (1:6). As it said in that previous paragraph, it becomes “*very easy*.”

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The sign of Christmas is a star, a light in darkness. ²See it not **outside** yourself, but shining in the Heaven within, and accept it as the sign the time of Christ has come. ³He comes demanding **nothing**. ⁴No sacrifice of **any** kind, of **anyone**, is asked by Him. ⁵In His Presence **the whole idea** of sacrifice loses **all** meaning. ⁶For He is Host to God. ⁷And you need but invite Him in Who is there **already**, by recognizing that His Host is One, and no thought **alien** to His Oneness can abide with Him there. ⁸Love **must** be total to give Him welcome, for the Presence of holiness **creates** the holiness that surrounds it. ⁹No fear can touch the Host Who cradles God in the time of Christ, for the Host is as holy as the Perfect Innocence which He protects, and Whose power protects **Him**.

• Study Question •

2. *How do we invite God in?*
 - A. *By realizing that He does not demand sacrifice.*
 - B. *We do not invite Him in; He is already in us.*
 - C. *By recognizing that His Host (the Sonship) is One.*

Returning to the analogy of the Christmas season, he points out that a star is the symbol of Christmas (2:1). Nearly every Christmas tree is topped by a star for that reason. The star represents “a light in darkness.” The twist Jesus puts on this symbol is what comes next: “See it not *outside* yourself, but shining in the Heaven within” (2:2). There is a light shining in the darkness of our minds, and it is “the sign the time of Christ has come.” In the Bible story, the “star in the East” was a sign to the astrologers (the three “kings”) of a royal birth. To us, the shining star within is the sign that Christ is being born in *us*.

I suggest you take a moment to look up Lesson 303 in the Workbook, and read it. The title is, “The holy Christ is born in me today.” It is a wonderful prayer that expresses this idea.

When the third sentence says, “He comes demanding *nothing*,” the pronoun, “he,” clearly refers to “the Christ.” It is a personification of the divine spirit, the divine nature, that has been given to every one of us. Lesson 303 says, “He is but what I really am in truth.” In saying he comes “demanding *nothing*,” Jesus is clearly referring to the previous section where we saw that the ego always comes demanding payment, demanding sacrifice. We believe that love demands sacrifice, and that the people with whom we are in relationship also demand sacrifice from us. But Christ comes demanding *nothing*. “No sacrifice of *any* kind, of anyone, is asked by Him” (2:4). Our fears that total love demands total sacrifice are groundless! In fact, “In His Presence *the whole idea* of sacrifice loses all meaning” (2:5). When we encounter that Presence within, there is no sense that It requires anything of us, even while at the same time knowing It requires *all* of us. But it is a giving in to Wholeness, a blending with our Source, like a piece of a puzzle finally fitting into its proper space in the larger picture. We just have to be what we are, because what we are is what we were meant to be. Augustine supposedly said that there is a God-shaped blank in every human heart, but I think it is equally true that there is a you-shaped blank in God’s Heart. To give ourselves to God is no sacrifice. It is nothing but gain.

We need to pay some attention to pronouns in the remainder of this paragraph. As we’ve seen, up to this point, “he” refers to “the Christ.” So, now, when it says that, “He is Host to God” (2:6), it is saying that *Christ* is Host to God. But in Sentence 7, “And you need but invite Him in Who is there *already*,” the “Him” refers, not to the Christ, but to God (the following context makes this clear, as I will explain in a moment). The idea is that Christ has come to you, and God comes with Him because He, Christ, is Host to

God. You are inviting God in, and God is already within you and within Christ. It's all within you: the star, the Host, the Hosted Deity.

We invite God in "by recognizing that His Host is One, and no thought *alien* to His Oneness can abide with Him there" (2:7). I believe this is saying that we invite God into our lives by acknowledging the Oneness of the Sonship; "the Host is One," that is, the Christ is a Self shared by all of us, and we are One Self, Host to God. No thought that is incompatible with Oneness can exist in the Sonship that is Host to God. Therefore, "Love *must* be total to give Him welcome" (2:8), that is, our love must extend to *everyone equally* in order to give welcome to God. We invite Him in "by recognizing that His Host is One." As we were told earlier, "God knows His Son as wholly blameless as Himself, and He is approached through the appreciation of His Son" (T-11.IV.7:2). The Sonship is created by God, and Its holiness is a given, created by the Presence of holiness Itself (2:8).

The Oneness of the Sonship is the Host Who cradles God. In this sphere of existence fear is impossible; all is holy. The Perfect Innocence of God within protects the Host Who cradles It; the Host protects or embraces the Perfect Innocence it hosts; and the holiness of God radiates through the Sonship, protecting It in turn (2:9). We get the sense here of a Reality that is beyond the ability of words to express it, as if they are describing something that is more than three-dimensional, more than anything that can be spoken in linear terms. The words are redolent of visions of the mystics that left them speechless with wonder.

What is clear is that this kind of holy instant can only be experienced when our hearts open with love and appreciation to every child of God, when every thought of attack or of judgment falls away (if only for a moment), and we are willing to welcome the Oneness of the Host, Who brings God with Him.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹This Christmas give the Holy Spirit **everything** that would hurt you. ²**Let** yourself be healed completely that you may **join** with Him in healing, and let us celebrate our release together by releasing everyone **with us**. ³Leave nothing behind, for release is **total**, and when you have accepted it **with me** you will **give** it with me. ⁴All pain and sacrifice and littleness will disappear in **our** relationship, which is as innocent as our relationship with our Father, and as powerful. ⁵Pain will be brought to us and disappear in our presence, and **without** pain there can **be** no sacrifice. ⁶And **without sacrifice** there love *must* be.

• Study Question •

3. *Which of the following things are we asked to do to make healing our relationship with Jesus (and everyone else) possible? (More than one is correct.)*

- A. *Give the Holy Spirit everything that would hurt us.*
- B. *Let ourselves be healed completely.*
- C. *Heal the pain of others.*
- D. *Celebrate our release by releasing everyone else.*

This paragraph emphasizes healing our relationship with Jesus and sharing our healing with him, and implies that once our relationship with him is healed, we will celebrate by releasing everyone else with us (3:2, 3:3, 3:5). It suggests an interesting, new way to celebrate Christmas. Since Christmas is the time of gift-giving, why not “give the Holy Spirit *everything* that would hurt you” and “Let yourself be healed completely” (3:1–2)? Jesus has appealed to us to do this same thing in an earlier chapter:

Do not hide suffering from His sight, but bring it gladly to Him. Lay before His eternal sanity all your hurt, and let Him heal you. Do not leave any spot of pain hidden from His Light, and search your mind carefully for any thoughts you may fear to uncover. For He will heal every little thought you have kept to hurt you and cleanse it of its littleness, restoring it to the magnitude of God (T-13.III.7:3-6).

This answers the question of what should be done with our pain and suffering: Bring it gladly to the Holy Spirit, and let Him heal you of your pain. I believe that this is speaking primarily of psychological or mental pain. Of course, physical pain ultimately stems from mental pain, so healing the mind completely would result in physical healing as well. Or so I believe; the Course seems to teach this:

Let us be glad that you will see what you believe, and that it has been given you to change what you believe. The body will but follow (T-31.III.6:1-2).

Mental pain, emotional pain, or psychological pain (different aspects of one thing) arises *from our beliefs*. We believe we have been injured because we have identified with what *can* be injured: the body, or the ego. The Holy Spirit heals our pain by altering our beliefs. We realize, “I am doing this unto myself.” We release all the attack thoughts (thoughts of being attacked as well as thoughts of attacking). We relinquish all condemning judgments.¹ We cease to value the valueless, the ephemeral, and value only the eternal. We no longer see any value in pain or suffering. We accept the insignificance of the body.²

¹ "It is not difficult to relinquish judgment. But it is difficult indeed to try to keep it. The teacher of God lays it down happily the instant he recognizes its cost. All of the ugliness he sees about him is its outcome. All of the pain he looks upon is its result" (s-9.Int.6:1-5).

² "The world does nothing to him. He only thought it did. Nor does he do anything to the world, because he was mistaken about what it is. Herein is the release from guilt and sickness both, for they are one. Yet to accept this release,

When we have been healed of *our* pain, it enables us to join with Jesus in healing others; we “celebrate our release together by releasing everyone *with* us” (3:2). That is the real celebration of Christmas, the birth of Christ! Once we accept total release *with* Jesus, we will *give* it to everyone as he does (3:3). Our relationship with Jesus will be completely healed. Not one shred of “pain and sacrifice and littleness” will remain in the total innocence of communion with him; our relationship together will be as innocent as our relationship with the Father. And it will be *as powerful* as our relationship with the Father (3:4). So powerful that any pain that is brought to us (you and me and Jesus) “will disappear in our presence” (3:5)! That’s amazing! That is what being truly healed is like.

I have had the honor and delight of being in the presence of beings such as Jesus describes here, people in whose presence my pain, my doubt, and my guilt just vanished. It’s an incomparable experience. How amazing to be told that you and I can become such beings, such perfect manifestations of the Holy Spirit that other people can be healed simply by coming into our presence!³ What it takes to make that happen, however, is allowing *ourselves* to be healed completely.

The last few phrases of the paragraph are a tight logical sequence:

Pain will disappear.

Without pain there can be no sacrifice.

And without sacrifice there love *must* be.

What makes a sacrifice a sacrifice? Isn’t it the pain that is experienced from the loss of what has been “sacrificed”? If I give you a dollar and experience no pain, then clearly the gift of one dollar is not a sacrifice. No pain, no sacrifice. That’s easily understood.

The next part isn’t quite so obvious: without sacrifice there love *must* be. Why is that so? The next paragraph will explain.

the insignificance of the body must be an acceptable idea.

With this idea is pain forever gone" (M-5.II.3:8-4:1).

3 The Course tells us that, "Jesus is the manifestation of the *Holy Spirit*" (C-6.1:1). It also tells us that, "You are His [the Holy Spirit's] manifestation in this world" (C-6.5:1). That is our destiny once we let ourselves be healed.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹You who believe that sacrifice **is** love must learn that sacrifice is **separation from** love. ²For sacrifice brings guilt as surely as love brings peace. ³Guilt is the **condition** of sacrifice, as peace is the condition for the awareness of your relationship with God. ⁴[For] Through guilt you **exclude** your Father and your brothers **from** yourself. ⁵[And] Through peace you [will] invite them back, realizing that they are where your invitation bids them be. ⁶What you **exclude** [excluded] from yourself seems fearful, for you **endow** [endowed] it with fear and ~~try~~ [tried] to **cast it out**, though it **is** [was] part of you. ⁷Who can perceive part of himself as loathsome, and live within himself in peace? ⁸And who can try to resolve the "**conflict**" [perceived conflict] of Heaven and hell **in him** by casting Heaven out and **giving it** the attributes of hell, **without** experiencing himself as incomplete and lonely?

• Study Question •

4. In Sentence 7, what does "part of himself" refer to?
- A. Our brothers and God.
 - B. Our ego.
 - C. Our "sinfulness."

Sacrifice brings guilt; therefore it is not love but separation from love (4:1–2). Sacrifice brings guilt in two ways. When someone sacrifices something for my sake, it can arouse guilt in me, and often does. And when I sacrifice for another person there is a part of me that recognizes that sacrifice is really an attack⁴, and so I feel guilty for sacrificing! With guilt on both sides, and with a sense of attack on one side and loss on the other, how could love exist? Sacrifice is not an expression of love, it is the exclusion of love.

"Guilt is the *condition* of sacrifice" (4:3). I have said that pain is what makes sacrifice sacrifice, but it is equally true that guilt is what makes a gift into sacrifice. A call to sacrifice is an appeal to guilt, and when I sacrifice for another, I see that other as guilty for having required my sacrifice. Thus, I exclude that other from myself, and I also exclude myself from God because of my own guilt (4:4). Sacrifice divides; it does not unite.

But through peace, which is presented here as the antithesis to sacrifice (see 4:3), I invite both God and my brothers back into fellowship (4:5). I realize that they, God and my brothers, are *already* one with me, so my invitation is simply the acknowledgment of what has always been so (4:5). How is peace the antithesis of sacrifice? Peace assumes the absence of guilt. I remember when I first encountered the idea that I could have a personal relationship with God, when I first heard the evangelist, Billy Graham, speaking in Madison Square Garden in 1957. He had just published a book which was suddenly

4 "And it is this that you must look upon; sacrifice is attack, not love" (T-15.X.5:9).

plastered in the store windows of bookstores and drug stores all over Manhattan: *Peace With God*. I bought the book, read it, and devoured it. And I experienced what the book spoke of, peace with God, through forgiveness of what, in my teens, I saw as my “sins.” I lived under a cloud of guilt, and suddenly I realized that I did not have to do so. God was inviting me to “come home.” The absence of guilt brought me peace such as I’d never known.

When *you* are at peace, it invites others to join you in that peace. Guilt pushed away God and our brothers, and “What you excluded from yourself seems fearful” (4:6). In reality—perhaps I should write, “Reality” with a capital R—you, your brothers, and God are all One. We have “tried to cast...out” what “was part of you,” and we have “endowed it with fear.” It seems fearful only because *we* have “endowed it with fear.” “Endow” means to provide, supply, or equip. In other words, God and our brothers only seem fearful to us because we have attributed fearful things to them; there is nothing fearful about them in Truth.

Peace is the condition we must be in in order to be aware of our real relationship with God (4:2), but how can we be at peace if we perceive part of ourselves “as loathsome” (4:7)? We must first heal the dichotomy within ourselves, which the Course portrays here as “the perceived conflict of Heaven and hell” within us (4:8). But the solution isn’t to cast “Heaven out and [to give] it the attributes of hell, which is what we’ve done by excluding our brothers and our Father! Doing what we’ve done inevitably results in a sense of incompleteness and loneliness (4:8).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹As long as you perceive the body as your reality, so long will you perceive yourself as lonely and deprived. ²And so long will you also perceive yourself as a **victim of sacrifice, justified** in sacrificing others. ³For who could thrust Heaven and its Creator aside **without** a sense of sacrifice and loss? ⁴And who could suffer sacrifice and loss without attempting to **restore** himself? ⁵Yet how could you accomplish this yourself, when the basis of your attempts is the belief in the **reality of the deprivation**? ⁶[For] deprivation breeds attack, **being** the belief that attack **is** justified. ⁷And as long as you would **retain** the deprivation, attack becomes salvation and sacrifice becomes love.

• Study Question •

5. *“Deprivation breeds attack, being the belief that attack is justified” (5:6). We feel deprived when we sacrifice; therefore, we believe attack of others (or sacrificing others) is justified in return. What leads to our perception of ourselves as deprived? (One correct answer.)*
- A. *Our attempts to sacrifice ourselves for others.*
 - B. *Our belief that the body is our reality.*
 - C. *Our belief that love means sacrifice.*

Incompletion and loneliness, we have just read, result from excluding ourselves from our brothers and from God through the sacrifice-guilt-attack dynamic. Yet here we are told that loneliness and deprivation (the equivalent of incompletion) come from perceiving ourselves as bodies (5:1). The two causes must be intimately connected, if not identical somehow. As I see it, when I am identified with my body as my reality, sacrifice, with the concomitant attack and guilt, seem a necessary part of relationships. Because I think I am a body, I will “perceive [myself] as a *victim of sacrifice, justified in sacrificing others*” (5:2). Mistaking the body for my reality carries with it an automatic belief that I am separated from others and from God, and that entails an inevitable sense of sacrifice and loss (5:3). That sense of sacrifice and loss creates a perception of myself as “a victim of sacrifice, justified in sacrificing others” (5:2).

We might ask ourselves, “Who told me I am a body?” The only possible answer is, “I did.” Having put ourselves into this impoverished condition, we naturally try to *restore* ourselves to wholeness (5:4). It is an impossible task, though, because we are trying to undo a deprivation *that does not really exist* (5:5). We believe the deprivation is real; something has been taken from us, leaving us incomplete. Starting from that premise, recovering our sense of completion and belonging is simply impossible. We feel deprived because we believe we really are incomplete. “Deprivation breeds attack” because if we *truly* have been deprived, we believe that attack *is* justified (5:6). So, as long as we hold on to the belief in deprivation, attack seems like the way out, and the way to win love becomes through sacrifice (5:7). Someone has deprived us, and we have to get back what was taken from us, either through obligating them to us by sacrifice, or by frontal assault.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹So is it that, in all your seeking for love, **you seek for sacrifice and find** it. ²Yet you find **not** love. ³[For] it is impossible to **deny** what love **is** and still **recognize** it. ⁴The meaning of love lies in what you have cast **outside** yourself, and it **has** no meaning [**at all, apart**] from you. ⁵It is what you **prefer** [preferred] to **keep** that has no meaning, while all that you would **keep away** holds all the meaning of the universe, and holds the universe together in its meaning. ⁶[For] Unless the universe were joined in **you** it would be **apart from** God, and to be without Him *is* to be without meaning.

• Study Question •

6. *What do the phrases “what you have cast outside yourself” and “what you prefer to keep” refer to?*
- A. *Our sins, and our innocence.*
 - B. *Our belief in sacrifice, and our seeking for love.*
 - C. *Our brothers, God (the universe), & ourself as an ego in a body.*

Our “seeking for love” is in special relationships, through bodies. Because body identification leads to belief in sacrifice, and sacrifice means deprivation, and deprivation breeds attack, we seek for love but are really seeking and finding sacrifice and attack (6:1). And we *find* what the ego is looking for instead of the love we really want (6:2).

This paragraph is reasoned in reverse. It starts (in 6:3) with the conclusion that, “it is impossible to *deny* what love *is* and still *recognize* it.” This is given as the reason (the Urtext begins the sentence with “for”) that we don’t find love when we go looking for it. How can we recognize love if we have denied what love is? But how have we done that? Let’s work backward from the end of the paragraph to see.

First: “Unless the universe were joined in *you* it would be *apart from* God” (6:6). The truth of the matter is that all is One, and we are one with God. If the people we are excluding from ourselves are not part of us, they are not part of God, “and to be without Him *is* to be without meaning.” God is the Source of all that is; there is nothing outside of God.

The ultimate meaning of Reality is found in Oneness. That’s what 6:5 means when it says, “all that you would *keep away* holds all the meaning of the universe, and holds the universe together in its meaning”. Meaning is to be found in what we’ve separated ourselves *from*: the Oneness. “The meaning of love lies in what you have cast *outside* yourself” (6:4). But “it [love] *has* no meaning at all, *apart* from you” (6:4). As 6:6 said, if it isn’t joined to you it isn’t joined to God, and that’s where all meaning originates.

So, we go seeking for love, but we’re doing so as separated beings. The only way to find love’s meaning is to recognize that what we think is outside of us, against us, deserving of attack, is in fact part of us, and we of It. It is to recognize the Oneness that includes God, our brothers, and ourselves. That simply isn’t possible without losing the sense that we are limited bodies.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹In the holy instant the condition of love is met, for minds are joined without the body’s **interference**, and where there is communication there is peace. ²The Prince of Peace was born to re-establish the **condition** of love [see 4:3] by teaching that communication remains unbroken even if the body is destroyed, **provided that** you see **not** the body as the necessary means of communication. ³And if you **understand** this lesson, you will realize that to sacrifice the **body** is to **sacrifice nothing**, and communication, which **must** be of the mind, **cannot** be sacrificed. ⁴Where, then, *is* sacrifice? ⁵The lesson I was born to teach, and still would teach to all my brothers, is that sacrifice is nowhere and love is everywhere. ⁶For communication **embraces everything**, and in the peace it re-establishes, love comes of itself.

• Study Question •

7. *What two things does this paragraph say are key parts of the message Jesus came to give the world? (Notice that the second part of the message really depends on learning the first part.)*

All of this still is related to the holy instant, because it describes what happens in the holy instant. Awareness of the body drops away, and it is no longer in play as a limit on our consciousness. “Minds are joined without the body’s *interference*” (7:1). Mind communicates perfectly with mind, and wherever that happens, peace happens.

Referring again to the symbols of Christmas, Jesus says that he (the Prince of Peace) was born to bring peace to the world, since peace is the condition of love. How did he (or does he) bring peace? First, by “teaching that communication remains unbroken even if the body is destroyed, *provided that you see not the body as the necessary means of communication*” (7:2). That is what he taught by being crucified and resurrected. His body was destroyed, but he remained, and remains, in full communication with those who are his followers. The traditional interpretation of the crucifixion is that Jesus sacrificed his body for our sins, but here, he tells us that to sacrifice the body is to sacrifice *nothing*.

The idea of sacrifice is closely tied to our identification with our bodies. This paragraph states that since sacrificing the body is sacrificing nothing (7:3) (which is no sacrifice), and that since communication, which is of the mind, cannot be sacrificed (7:3) (no sacrifice), “sacrifice is nowhere: (7:5). There is no sacrifice. But to realize this we must realize that we are not bodies.

This is the second lesson Jesus says he was born to teach, that “sacrifice is nowhere and love is everywhere” (7:5). As body identification drops away and communication of the mind “embraces everything,” thus establishing peace, love simply shows up (7:6). The interference has been removed.

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it *is* necessary to seek for what is false (T-16.IV.6:1-2).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Let no despair darken the joy of Christmas, for the time of Christ is meaningless apart from joy. ²Let us join in celebrating peace by demanding no sacrifice of anyone, for so you offer me the love I offer you. ³What can be more joyous than to perceive we are deprived of nothing? ⁴Such is the message of the time of Christ, which I give you that you [Ur: *you*] may give it [to others] and [thereby] return it to the Father, Who gave it to me. ⁵For in the time of Christ communication is restored, and He joins us in the celebration of His Son’s creation.

• **Study Question** •

8. *What is the best way to celebrate Christmas? (More than one answer is correct.)*
- A. *Go on a shopping binge at the mall.*
 - B. *Demand no sacrifice of anyone.*
 - C. *Teach one another that we are deprived of nothing.*
 - D. *Communicate with all our friends.*

“Let no despair darken the joy of Christmas,” so the paragraph begins (8:1). Why is he bringing up despair now? Perhaps it is because of the reference to the destruction of the body in 7:3. I think the lesson we are meant to get is that bodies are temporary and irrelevant, while relationships are central and eternal. When a loved one leaves their body, they never truly leave us. A body is not the necessary means of communication (7:2). So, no despair, but joy.

I've always loved the story of an early Christian missionary to Africa, C. T. Studd. Pondering the near likelihood of his own death, he wrote:

There shall be no funeral, no wreaths, crape, nor tears, not even the Dead March. Congratulations all around will take place. 'And I, if I be offered up, rejoice and congratulate you; do ye also rejoice and congratulate me.' - [Phil. 2:17](#) and [18](#). The Wedding March, by special request.

“The Wedding March”! What an attitude! Jesus calls us to celebration instead of despair. “Let us join in celebrating peace by demanding no sacrifice of anyone” (8:2). This is like the Year of Jubilee, in which the ancient Hebrews would “Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants” (Leviticus 25:10 NRSV). Try to remember next Christmas that this is the best way to celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace. This is how we offer our love to Jesus (8:2). Recognize that “we are deprived of nothing” (8:3), and “give it and return it to the Father” (8:4), that is, communicate to others their liberty and wholeness, which is how we give thanks to God. Celebrate creation, both God’s and that of the Son. The Father joins in the celebration, rejoicing in the restoration of communication (8:5).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹God offers thanks to the holy host who would receive Him, and lets Him enter and abide where He would be. ²And by your welcome does He welcome you into Himself, for what is contained in you who welcome Him is returned to Him. ³And we but celebrate His Wholeness as we welcome Him into ourselves. ⁴Those who receive the Father are one with Him, being host to Him Who created them. ⁵And by allowing Him to enter, the remembrance of the Father enters with Him, and with Him they remember the only relationship they ever had, and ever want to have.

• **Study Question** •

9. *Instead of being host to the ego, we can be host to God. We can receive Him, let Him enter and abide in us, welcome Him into ourselves, allowing Him to enter (all phrases taken from this paragraph). Which of the following are results of being host to God?*
- A. *God welcomes us into Himself.*
 - B. *We are one with God.*
 - C. *Our memory of God and our relationship with Him returns to us.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

The previous paragraph ended by saying that God joins the celebration. Here (9:1), it continues that thought, telling us that God thanks us for being host to Him in the holy instant, allowing Him to “enter and abide where He would be.” Of course, God is not “entering” us in any sense other than entering our awareness of union with Him. As Jesus said in his prayer in John 17, “I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one” (John 17:22–23 NRSV). God celebrates when we recognize our union with Him and with one another. We welcome God in us, and God welcomes us into Himself. We “contain” God, and that divinity is “returned to Him” (9:2). We, in turn, celebrate the wholeness of God as we open unreservedly to the Indwelling Presence (9:3). To me, this is like the circulation of an ocean current, a flowing recognition and affirmation of the divine nature passing from Creator to creation and back to the Creator. "What is Heaven but a song of gratitude and love and praise by everything created to the Source of its creation" (T-26.IV.3:5)?

We are one with God!

Today we will again give thanks for our Identity in God. Our home is safe, protection guaranteed in all we do, power and strength available to us in all our undertakings. We can fail in nothing. Everything we touch takes on a shining light that blesses and that heals. At one with God and with the universe we go our way rejoicing, with the thought that God Himself goes everywhere with us (W-pI.124.1:1-5).

What is happening is “but a recognition, not a change at all” (W-pI.188.1:4). “The remembrance of the Father” is what enters, and together with God we remember “the only relationship [we] ever had, and ever want to have” (9:5). As we read three sections back: "For God created the only relationship that has meaning, and that is His relationship with you" (T-15.VIII.6:6). This is our relationship with God, which is also our relationship with the universe (T-15.VIII.4:4). This is what we remember in the holy instant; this is how we truly celebrate the birth of holiness in the world.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹This is the time [week-end] in which a new year will soon be born from the time of Christ⁵. ²I have perfect faith in you to do all that you would accomplish. ³Nothing will be lacking, and you will **make complete** and **not** destroy. ⁴~~Say, then, to your brother~~ [Say and *understand* this]:
⁵*I give you to the Holy Spirit as part of myself.*
⁶*I know that you will be released, **unless I want to use you to imprison myself.***
⁷*In the name of **my** freedom I ~~choose~~ [will] your release, because I recognize that we will be released **together.***
⁸So will the year begin in joy and freedom. ⁹There is much to do, and we have been long delayed. ¹⁰Accept the holy instant as this year is born, and take your place, so long left unfulfilled, in the Great Awakening. ¹¹Make this year different by making it **all the same.** ¹²And let **all** your relationships be made holy **for** you. ¹³This is **our** will. ¹⁴Amen.

• Study Question •

- 10. Jesus affirms that he has “perfect faith” in us “to do all that [we] would accomplish.” He asks us to repeat some words to our brothers (10:5–7). It would be good to memorize these words and to practice mentally saying them to people around us, especially at Christmastime.*
Explain how you understand what Jesus means by
(a) “your place...in the Great Awakening” and by this sentence:
(b) “Make this year different by making it all the same.”



The chapter ends with the transition from the Christmas season to the New Year (10:1), and Jesus sets a task for us in the days ahead, a kind of spiritual practice to be performed with the various people we meet and interact with. He says that he has perfect faith in us “to do all that you would accomplish” (10:2). It is worth reminding ourselves of how often Jesus tells us how much faith he has in us:

My faith in you is as strong as all the love I give my Father. My trust in you is without limit, and without the fear that you will hear me not (T-13.X.12:4-5).

God loves you. Could I, then, lack faith in you and love Him perfectly (T-13.X.12:7-8).

The Teacher of peace will never abandon you. You can desert Him but He will never reciprocate, for His faith in you is His understanding. It is as firm as is His faith in His Creator, and He knows that faith in His Creator must encompass faith in His creation (T-14.XI.14:2-4).

⁵ At the end of 1966, when this was written, Saturday was December 31, 1966 and Sunday was January 1, 1967.

You have so little faith in yourself because you are unwilling to accept the fact that perfect love is in you. And so you seek without for what you cannot find without. I offer you my perfect faith in you, in place of all your doubts (T-15.VI.2:1-3).

So we can do this, this practice he gives us here. To really be able to do it, we need to memorize sentences 5, 6 and 7. It isn't that hard, and I urge you to give it a try. It can have an amazing and *immediate* effect on our interactions with the people around us. We mentally give each person to the Holy Spirit "as part of myself." We affirm that this person *will be released*, even though our egos may be telling us this person will *never* be released! To that end, we *will* their release, knowing that as this brother or sister is released, we, too, will be released because we will be released *together*. The release under discussion here, I'm certain, is release from guilt, and release from any demand for sacrifice. To say, "I will your release," is equivalent to saying, "I let you off the hook."

If we can do this, and carry out this practice, our time will pass in joy and freedom (10:8). Jesus reminds us that there is still a lot to do, and we've been putting it off long enough (10:9). There is a place for each of us, a role to play in "the Great Awakening"; we've left our part unfulfilled for a long time (10:10). Jesus appeals to us to "make this year different," that is, to stop procrastinating, and to begin playing our part in the Great Awakening. We are to make this time different "by making it all the same" (10:11). To me, that means by treating everyone equally as a holy child of God. To carry out the practice just given to us, willing that everyone be released from guilt, not limiting them to their body but seeing them as eternal beings. It means not demanding sacrifice of anyone, and seeing no sacrifices demanded of me. It means, day by day, moment by moment, welcoming the holy instant and welcoming the Holy Guest into our lives, living as one with God and with our brothers. It means allowing all of our relationships to be made holy (10:12).

"This is *our* will," says Jesus (10:13). Not "my" will, but "our" will. It is God's will, the will of Jesus, and it is your will and my will as well. This is what, in the very depths of us, we know that we want. This is the only relationship we have ever had, or ever want to have.

Answer Key

1. **(a)** Our brothers and our Father.
 (b) We try to find safety in special relationships.
 (c) Let our thoughts of sacrifice come together with the Holy Spirit; bring them together.
 (d) The choice between our thoughts and the Thought of God.
2. C
3. A, B and D
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. First, that communication remains unbroken even if the body is destroyed (provided you see the body as unnecessary to communication); second, that sacrifice is nowhere and love is everywhere.
8. B and C
9. D
10. **(a)** My place in the Great Awakening is to accept the holy instant, and to give the gift of the Holy Spirit to everyone around me, to see them as spirit or mind and not body, to demand no sacrifice, and to see no sacrifice demanded of me; to choose the release of my brothers as the means toward my own release.
 (b) Making it all the same means seeing everyone as equally the Son of God, equally sinless, equally free from demands for sacrifice, all part of the One Sonship.