

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 21, Section VI

### *What Reason Tells You*

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

Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is exactly the same as the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often quite different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will give references to the CE in the commentary itself; if the FIP reference is different, I will indicate it in a footnote. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

### Overview of the Section

The discussion of reason, begun in Section V, is continued in Section VI. The emphasis now is on what reason *tells us*. You may find it interesting to list all the things in the two sections that reason tells us, including equivalent words like "speaks of" or "assures of."

### Paragraph 1

Reason cannot see sin but *can* see errors, and leads to their correction. <sup>2</sup>It does not want to keep them. <sup>3</sup>It does not value them, but their *correction*. <sup>4</sup>But reason will also tell you when you think you sin you call for help. <sup>5</sup>Yet if you will not accept the help you call for, you will not believe that it is yours to give. <sup>6</sup>And so you will not give it, thus maintaining the belief. <sup>7</sup>For uncorrected error of any kind deceives you about the power that is in you to make correction. <sup>8</sup>If it can correct and you allow it not to do so, you deny it to yourself *and* to your brother. <sup>9</sup>And if he shares this same belief, you both will think that you are damned.

• **Study Question** •

1. *Besides speaking of reason, this section also has several references to our power. See 1:6, 7:4, 11:1. (a) List the things we are said to have power to do. (b) How does reason relate to sin?*

Reason looks at the same acts and events that our egos look at, but rather than seeing them as “sins,” reason simply sees mistakes. That difference in evaluation opens the doorway to *correcting* the errors (1:1). The ego sees sins and wants to keep them; it likes having the leverage, the grounds for manipulation. Reason just wants to end the errors by correcting them (1:2–3)<sup>1</sup>.

When you listen to reason about your own presumed sins, you will realize that you are actually calling for help (1:4)<sup>2</sup>. This can be a huge breakthrough! I’ll never forget the time when I realized that my anger with my girlfriend was actually a call for love; it helped me realize that I didn’t need to feel guilty about how I was feeling, I just needed to reinterpret that feeling and to accept the love (or help) that I was clumsily asking for. In other words, I needed to forgive myself. Wanting to be loved is okay!

But what if you aren’t *ready* to forgive yourself? What if you are not willing to “accept the Atonement,” to use the Course’s phrase? In that case, you won’t believe that you can *give* forgiveness to others. If you don’t know that you *have* forgiveness, you will think that can’t *give* it; therefore, you *won’t* give it, which will just reinforce your belief in your *inability* to forgive (1:5–6)<sup>3</sup>. Note the starting point: Your unwillingness to accept help, to accept forgiveness. This is why the Course says that accepting the Atonement is the only responsibility of the miracle worker (that is, you) (T-2.VIII.5:2)<sup>4</sup>. When you do not allow your own error to be corrected, you cannot believe you have the power to *make* correction, thus denying that correction to both yourself and your brother (1:7–8)<sup>5</sup>.

Note also that your brother does not necessarily have to *share* your belief in unforgiveness. If he *does* share it, both of you will think that you are damned (1:9)<sup>6</sup>. The implication is that if he *does not* share the belief, *only you* will believe in your damnation. (I understand “damned” not to refer to an eternity in hell, but to the unbearable self-condemnation of guilt.)

## Paragraph 2

2 This you could spare him *and yourself*, for reason would not make way for correction in you alone. <sup>2</sup>Correction cannot be accepted or refused by you without your brother. <sup>3</sup>Sin would maintain it can. <sup>4</sup>But reason tells you that you cannot see your brother or yourself as sinful

<sup>1</sup> 1:2 (FIP). Sentence 1:2 in the CE is not present in the FIP edition.

<sup>2</sup> 1:3 (FIP)

<sup>3</sup> 1:4–5 (FIP)

<sup>4</sup> T-2.V.5:1 (FIP)

<sup>5</sup> 1:6–7 (FIP)

<sup>6</sup> 1:8 (FIP)

and still perceive the other innocent. <sup>5</sup>Who looks upon himself as guilty and sees a sinless world? <sup>6</sup>And who can see a sinful world and look upon himself apart from it? <sup>7</sup>Sin would maintain you must be separate. <sup>8</sup>But reason tells you that this must be wrong.

• **Study Question** •

2. *What are some of the things reasons will tell you, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *You cannot receive correction (i.e., Atonement) for yourself without accepting it for your brother.*
  - B. *You can see yourself as separate from the sinful world.*
  - C. *You cannot see your brother as sinless without seeing yourself that way.*
  - D. *You cannot be separate.*

•

“This you could spare him *and yourself*” refers to the previous paragraph: The “this” to be spared from is the experience of being “damned” by your uncorrected error, viewed as “sin.” We each have the power to choose a different outcome, to deliver ourselves and our brother or sister from the pangs of guilt (2:1<sup>7</sup>) by accepting the atonement for ourselves. By accepting the atonement for ourselves we also are accepting it for our brother or sister, and vice versa. The paragraph goes on to explain why this is so, why the acceptance of forgiveness for one brings it to both, or putting it another way, why it is impossible to forgive yourself *without* forgiving your brother.

It seems to me that this reciprocal nature of forgiveness has two aspects. First, that I cannot grant forgiveness to either my brother or myself *alone*. I must forgive both, or neither (2:2<sup>8</sup>). I may *experience* this as sequential, first forgiving one, and then the other. The usual sequence seems, in the Course, to be that I forgive myself, which allows me to offer forgiveness to my brother. That produces a change in him that reflects forgiveness back to me, and confirms to me that I do indeed have it. But I believe that in reality the entire transaction is simultaneous, outside of time.

The second aspect—and this is harder to understand and perhaps harder to believe—is that when I *do* grant forgiveness to myself and my brother, *we both experience it* because our seemingly separate minds are really one. This will be made clear in the next paragraph.

As long as I believe that sin is real, that there really is such a thing, it will seem to me that it is possible to forgive one person but not the other (2:3<sup>9</sup>). Often I think I can forgive myself but not my brother, but sometimes my brother will seem easier to forgive than I am. Whichever one seems to have, in my estimation, the “worst” sin, will seem beyond forgiveness. But if I don't believe in sin's reality, the reason for making a distinction

<sup>7</sup> 1:9 (FIP)

<sup>8</sup> 2:1 (FIP)

<sup>9</sup> 2:2 (FIP)

between us disappears. Reason tells you that it is impossible to sin one as sinful, the other as innocent (2:4<sup>10</sup>). Why? because you and your brother are not separate! You are both part of the world, drops in the ocean of life. Seeing yourselves as different is like trying believe that one drop of water in the ocean is different from all the rest of the ocean.

Water is water.

Sin *presumes* separation. Reason *knows* unity (2:5–8<sup>11</sup>).

### Paragraph 3

3 If you are joined, how could it be that you have private thoughts?  
<sup>2</sup>And how could thoughts that enter into what but seems like your mind alone have no effect at all on what *is* yours? <sup>3</sup>If minds are joined, this is impossible. <sup>4</sup>No one can think but for himself, as God thinks not without His Son. <sup>5</sup>Only were both in bodies could this be. <sup>6</sup>Nor could one mind think only for itself unless the body *were* the mind, for only bodies can be separate, and therefore unreal. <sup>7</sup>The home of madness cannot be the home of reason. <sup>8</sup>Yet it is easy to leave the home of madness if you see reason.

#### • Study Question •

3. *Only if we are truly in our bodies, so that the body has actually become the mind (i.e. mind is limited to the physical brain) could it be possible to think thoughts that affect only ourselves. The body is the “home of madness” and not the home of reason. What does it mean to leave the home of madness, or leave insanity? (See also 4:1–2).*
- A. *You go somewhere else*
  - B. *You leave your body and enter another world (e.g. by dying)*
  - C. *You recognize that you are not really in your body, and you accept reason in place of madness in your mind, which enables you to look on the same things, but differently*

We've just asserted that we are united, one. How you perceive yourself is how you perceive the world, and how you perceive the world is how you perceive yourself. "The world you see is but your judgment on yourself" (T-20.III.5:3)<sup>12</sup>. "It is the outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.I.1:4)<sup>13</sup>. You and the world are one. If that is so, how *could* there be such a thing as "private" thoughts (3:1)<sup>14</sup>? If there is no separation, the concept of "private" has no meaning! Therefore, thoughts that enter your mind *must* have effects on

<sup>10</sup> 2:3 (FIP)

<sup>11</sup> 2:4–7 (FIP)

<sup>12</sup> T-20.III.5:3 (FIP)

<sup>13</sup> T-21.In.1:5 (FIP)

<sup>14</sup> 2:8 (FIP)

what only *seems* to be "other" minds (3:2)<sup>15</sup>. It's impossible that it could be otherwise (3:3)<sup>16</sup>.

Perhaps it is a scary idea that, "No one can think but for himself" (3:4)<sup>17</sup>. You cannot think thoughts that affect only yourself. No thought of yours is private, just as no thought of God is private, but rather is shared with His Son—that is, with all of us. It isn't a matter of whether or not you *want* your thoughts to be private. Our minds are open to one another and in communication with one another. In fact there isn't any "one another" about mind at all! Minds are joined; they are one. This was stated clearly previously:

Being is completely without these distinctions. It is a state in which the mind is in communication with everything that is real, including its own spirit. To whatever extent you permit this state to be curtailed, you are limiting your sense of your own reality, which becomes total only by recognizing all reality in the glorious context of its real relationship to you. (T-4.X.6:3-5)<sup>18</sup>

The body is a limit imposed on the universal communication which is an eternal property of mind. But the communication is internal. Mind reaches to itself. It is not made up of different parts which reach each other. It does not go out. Within itself it has no limits, and there is nothing outside it. It encompasses everything. It encompasses you entirely; you within it and it within you. There is nothing else, anywhere or ever. (T-18.VI.9:1-9)<sup>19</sup>

So, no thought *can* be private. The up-side of that is that no thought *of God* is private; all God's thoughts are open and available to us (3:4). The reservoir of divine ideas is a public access resource!

The only way thoughts *could* be private is if your mind and your brother's mind were encased in physical bodies (3:5). The above quotations certainly *imply* that mind does not have to go "out" of anything, and that there is nothing outside of mind. Elsewhere, the Course actually *mocks* the notion that the mind is encased in a body:

The body is the ego's idol; the belief in sin made flesh and then projected outward. This produces what *seems to be* a wall of flesh around the mind, keeping it prisoner in a tiny spot of space and time, beholden unto death, and given but an instant in which to sigh and grieve and die in honor of its master (T-20.VI.11:1-2, my italics)<sup>20</sup>.

Their minds are trapped in their brain, and its powers decline if their bodies are hurt (T-13.I.2:6).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> 2:9 (FIP)

<sup>16</sup> 2:10 (FIP)

<sup>17</sup> 3:1 (FIP) Further references to sentences in Paragraph 3 are all 3 less in the FIP.

<sup>18</sup> T-4.VII.4:3-5 (FIP)

<sup>19</sup> T-18.VI.8:3-11 (FIP)

<sup>20</sup> T-20.VI.11:1-2 (FIP)

<sup>21</sup> T-13.Int.2:7 (FIP)

The latter quote, in the FIP, was edited to include the “seems to be” idea: “Their minds seem to be trapped in their brain, and its powers to decline if their bodies are hurt” (T-13.Int.2:7, FIP). Surely, that is the sense of the whole passage, which describes how many, perhaps most, people view their life in this world, but clearly conveys the notion that such a view is in error. Here’s another quote showing that, in the Course’s understanding, the mind is *not* in the body:

The ego's fundamental wish is to replace God. In fact, the ego is the physical embodiment of that wish. For it is this wish which seems to surround the mind with a body, keeping it separate and alone and unable to reach other minds except through the body which was made to imprison it. (W-pI.72.2:1-3).

The paragraph continues to drive this home. Our seemingly individual mind cannot “think only for itself” (3:6), because only physical bodies can *be* separate; minds cannot do that. The body is “the home of madness,” and therefore it cannot be home to reason (3:7). This means that to understand true reason we must leave our bodies out of the equation. And we *can* do that, if we allow our minds to “see reason” (3:8).

## Paragraph 4

4 You do not leave insanity by going somewhere else. <sup>2</sup>You leave it simply by accepting reason where madness was. <sup>3</sup>Madness and reason see the same things, but it is certain that they look upon them differently. <sup>4</sup>Madness is an attack on reason that drives it out of mind and takes its place. <sup>5</sup>Reason does *not* attack, but takes the place of madness quietly, replacing madness if it be the will of the insane to listen to it. <sup>6</sup>But the insane know not their will, for they believe they see the body and let their madness tell them it is real. <sup>7</sup>Reason would be incapable of this. <sup>8</sup>And if you would defend the body against your reason, you will not understand the body *or* yourself.

Leaving the home of madness (the body) does not entail anything that leaving the body might seem to imply: death, astral projection, or out-of-body experiences as in near death. It does not involve “going somewhere else” at all (4:1).<sup>22</sup> Since the mind isn’t *in* the body to begin with, all it involves is “accepting reason where madness *was*” (which was in the mind) (4:2).<sup>23</sup> It’s a matter of perspective; not a change of location but a mental shift. Not *what* you see, but *how you see it* (4:3).<sup>24</sup> And madness and reason see things very differently.

Madness *is* an attack on reason; reason does *not* attack. Madness drives reason out of our minds; reason quietly replaces madness when we choose to listen to it (4:4–5).<sup>25</sup> The problem is that, in our insanity, we believe we see our bodies and we think they are real;

<sup>22</sup> 3:7 (FIP)

<sup>23</sup> 3:8 (FIP)

<sup>24</sup> 3:9 (FIP)

<sup>25</sup> 4:1–2 (FIP)

therefore, we don't know what we really want (4:6).<sup>26</sup> Reason, as the Course sees it, could never believe that the body is our reality. But when we hear the message of the body's unreality, our madness shouts it down. We end up defending the reality of the body "against your reason," and if we do that, "you will not understand the body or yourself" (4:7–8).<sup>27</sup>

And isn't that just what goes on in your mind? When the Course teaches that the body is basically irrelevant; when it tells you that you have to leave the body behind, or go beyond the body, in order to find truth and reality—you resist the notion. You think about all the reasons you *like* your body, the pleasures it can bring you, and so on. You *defend* the body. As long as that continues, you will never truly understand yourself. You'll never know the reality of your own magnificence.

## Paragraph 5

5 The body does not separate you from your brother, and if you think it does, you *are* insane. <sup>2</sup>But madness has a purpose, and believes it also has the means to make its purpose real. <sup>3</sup>To see the body as a barrier between what reason tells you must be joined must be insane. <sup>4</sup>Nor could you see it if you heard the voice of reason. <sup>5</sup>What can there be that stands between what is continuous? <sup>6</sup>And if there *is* nothing in between, how can what enters part be kept away from other parts?<sup>28</sup>  
<sup>7</sup>Reason would tell you this, but think what you must recognize if it be so.

### • Study Question •

4. **Paragraphs 4 & 5.** *Why is it essential to listen to the part of the message of reason which tells us that we are not our bodies, and that bodies do not separate us?*
5. **Paragraph 5.** *From the list below, select the things this paragraph says are true of our minds:*
  - A. *Minds are continuous*
  - B. *What enters one part of mind enters all parts of mind*
  - C. *Bodies can be barriers to separate parts of the mind*
  - D. *Minds must be joined*

If you think your body separates you from your brother or sister, *you're nuts* (5:1). That pretty much means that all of us are nuts, because getting beyond the idea that bodies separate us is a very rare accomplishment! For the moment, though, try to wrap your mind around the idea that your body *does not* separate you from anyone else. It's an *imaginary* barrier. Scientific analogies help me understand this. There are things for

<sup>26</sup> 4:3 (FIP)

<sup>27</sup> 4:4–5 (FIP)

<sup>28</sup> This means that if there is no body that separates different minds, then how can thoughts that enter one mind be kept apart from other minds?

which your body is not a barrier at all: radio waves, microwaves, or X-rays, for instance. Think of spirit or mind like that. Bodies are transparent to it. Mind isn't physical; it *cannot* be separated into distinct parts.

Madness, which seems to be a shorthand term for the entire ego thought system, has a purpose, and (insanely) thinks it can make its purpose *real* (5:2). Those lines from the Workbook are worth quoting again in this context. Madness has a purpose, and here it is:

The ego's fundamental wish is to replace God. In fact, the ego is the physical embodiment of that wish. For it is this wish which seems to surround the mind with a body, keeping it separate and alone and unable to reach other minds except through the body which was made to imprison it. (W-pI.72.2:1-3).

Bodies are just part of what the ego believes is its *means* to make separation real.

Reason knows that mind, all of mind, *must* be joined. Thinking that bodies can somehow break up that unity *must* be madness (5:3). Mind is “continuous” (5:5); how can anything come between parts of it? If we listen to reason, we cannot continue to see our bodies as separating us (5:4). And since there *is* nothing in between, anything that enters one “part” of mind must be equally available to all “parts” of that one mind. That is, what enters my mind can't be kept away from *your* mind (5:6).

*That is what reason would tell you*, if you really listen (5:7). Your mind is continuous with my mind, and with everyone's mind. Wow! What I think, then profoundly affects *you*, and vice versa.

Let that sink in, and then, think of all that it implies, “what you must *recognize*” if this is the truth (5:8). Jesus is leading into, and calling our attention to, what follows.

## Paragraph 6

6 If you choose sin instead of healing, you would condemn the Son of God to what can never be corrected. <sup>2</sup>You tell him by your choice that he is damned; separate from you and from his Father forever, and without a hope of safe return. <sup>3</sup>You teach him this, and you will *learn* of him exactly what you taught. <sup>4</sup>For you can teach him only that he is as you would have him, and what you chose he be is but your choice for *you*.

### • Study Question •

6. *Paragraph 5 emphasized that mind is continuous, with nothing between any of the parts of mind. It ended by saying, “But think what you must recognize, if it be so.” The ensuing discussion in this paragraph gives us some of the reasons why we resist recognizing the unity of minds. List several of these reasons.*

•

First, he looks at what happens “if you choose sin *instead* of healing” (6:1). And it's not good! Before we look at the consequences, though, let's be sure we understand what the choice referred to really means. I think that, in a nutshell, it means unforgiveness. I

choose to see my brother as permanently stained by his “evil” deeds, unworthy of love, and I choose that in place of desiring and seeking that he be totally healed of his mistakes.

When that happens, I’ve condemned him to eternal damnation. I see him as forever separate from me and also *from God*, with no hope of ever returning to his divine home. My thoughts about this are *teaching* him these things, and as a result, as he thinks them, he will teach them back to me. What I lay on him is what I will believe about *myself*. All that is true because minds are continuous, not separate (6:1–4). What I chose for him becomes my choice for me (6:4).

## Paragraph 7

7 Yet think not this is fearful. <sup>2</sup>That you are joined to him is but a fact, not an interpretation. <sup>3</sup>How can a fact be fearful, unless it disagrees with what you hold more dear than truth? <sup>4</sup>Reason will tell you that this fact is your *release*. <sup>5</sup>Neither your brother nor yourself can be attacked alone. <sup>6</sup>But neither can accept a miracle instead without the other being blessed by it and healed of pain.

### • Study Question •

7. *If joined minds is a fact, why do we find it fearful? What do we hold more dear than this truth?*

•

What I choose for you becomes my choice for me: That could seem frightening. Jesus tells us *not* to think of it that way.

You and I are joined; that’s a fact, not an interpretation, not an opinion. But a fact is just a fact. The only way it can become frightening is if, for some reason, I do not *want* it to be true, if I want something else more than I want the truth (7:1–3).<sup>29</sup> Do I, somehow, want my thoughts about you to apply to you alone, and not to me? Do I want my thoughts for myself to apply to me alone, and not to you? Do I want *separation* and not *joining*?

Reason tells us our minds are continuous. What reason *also* tells us is that this fact of continuous mind is not a threat, but our *release* (7:4).<sup>30</sup> If choosing sin has fearful results for me, choosing healing has quite different results. We may share attacks (if I attack him I attack myself) but we also share miracles (7:5–6)<sup>31</sup> (if I bless him I bless myself). Here are a few relevant thoughts from Lesson 187:

Protect all things you value by the act of giving them away, and you are sure that you will never lose them. What you thought you did not have is thereby proven yours (W-pI.187.4:1-2).

<sup>29</sup> 6:5–7 (FIP)

<sup>30</sup> 6:8 (FIP)

<sup>31</sup> 7:1–2 (FIP)

Thoughts extend as they are shared, for they can not be lost. There is no giver and receiver in the sense the world conceives of them. There is a giver who retains; another who will give as well. And both must gain in this exchange, for each will have the thought in form most helpful to him (W-pI.187.5:4-7).

Now are we blessed, and now we bless the world. What we have looked upon we would extend, for we would see it everywhere. We would behold it shining with the grace of God in everyone. We would not have it be withheld from anything we look upon. And to ensure this holy sight is ours, we offer it to everything we see (W-pI.187.11:1-5).

## Paragraph 8

8 Reason, like love, would reassure you and not seek to frighten you. <sup>2</sup>The power to heal the Son of God is given you because he must be one with you. <sup>3</sup>You *are* responsible for how he sees himself. <sup>4</sup>But reason tells you it is given you to change his whole mind, which is one with you, in just an instant. <sup>5</sup>And *any* instant serves to bring complete correction of his errors and make him whole. <sup>6</sup>The instant that you choose to let yourself be healed, in that same instant is his whole salvation seen as complete with yours. <sup>7</sup>Reason is given you to understand that this is so. <sup>8</sup>For reason, as kind as is the purpose for which it is the means, leads steadily away from madness toward the goal of truth.

### • Study Question •

8. *Because we are joined, an attack on one is an attack on all, but by the same token, the blessing of a miracle for one is a blessing for all (7:5–6). What, then, is our “power to heal the Son of God” (8:2)?*
- A. *We can telepathically send healing thoughts into his mind.*
  - B. *We can accept healing for ourselves, and because minds are joined, he will receive it also.*
  - C. *There is a healing energy we can tap into and transmit to our brothers.*

Facts should not, and need not, frighten us. When we understand the truth it becomes reassuring, not frightening. Reason is *loving* just as love is reasonable. The continuity of mind can become one of the most reassuring pieces of knowledge we have (8:1).<sup>32</sup> Being one with our brothers is what gives us “the power to heal the Son of God” (8:2).<sup>33</sup>

Because we are all one, you actually *are* responsible for how your brother sees himself (8:3)!<sup>34</sup> Your thoughts affect your brother; indeed, they affect everyone. It may seem like a huge responsibility, but it can be viewed as a huge privilege and power. Think

<sup>32</sup> 7:3 (FIP)

<sup>33</sup> 7:4 (FIP)

<sup>34</sup> 7:5 (FIP)

of the wonderful opportunity that is given to you, as reason tells you: “it is *given* you to change his whole mind, which is one with *you*, in just an instant” (8:4).<sup>35</sup>

Let’s reflect on this whole idea of continuous mind. The thought has probably occurred to you that if your thoughts can affect others and can even change someone’s entire mind, what about what *their* thoughts are doing to *you*? The Course indicates that the thoughts of others do impinge on you; all of them. But something in you must *agree* with and harmonize with those thoughts for them to take effect in your mind. If you join with the other mind and affirm your oneness, only healing can occur (see T-28.III.2:1–3). Ultimately, you are in charge of your own mind and choose which thoughts to accept, which to reject. Of course, this means that your loving, forgiving, healing thoughts directed to another person may not *immediately* initiate change in that other person’s mind, since they are ultimately in charge of their mind just as you are. But the thought-gift you give to them will remain with them, waiting until they are ready to welcome it, as, one day, they will.

However, if you *do not* think those loving thoughts, they won’t have the opportunity to receive them. All it takes is *one* such instant to bring about complete healing (8:5).<sup>36</sup> You can go through life, sowing kindness and love wherever you go. You will never know the cumulative effect of it all, but it is enormous:

The peace of God is shining in you now, and from your heart extends around the world. It pauses to caress each living thing, and leaves a blessing with it that remains forever and forever. What it gives must be eternal. It removes all thoughts of the ephemeral and valueless. It brings renewal to all tired hearts, and lights all vision as it passes by. All of its gifts are given everyone, and everyone unites in giving thanks to you who give, and you who have received.

The shining in your mind reminds the world of what it has forgotten, and the world restores the memory to you as well. From you salvation radiates with gifts beyond all measure, given and returned. To you, the giver of the gift, does God Himself give thanks. And in His blessing does the light in you shine brighter, adding to the gifts you have to offer to the world (W-pI.188.3:1-4:4).

It all starts with your allowing *yourself* to be healed (8:6).<sup>37</sup> The blocks to your awareness of love’s presence are removed, and your heart overflows with that love, forgiving your brother. He is healed with you. God has given you the gift of reason so that you can *understand* that this is so (8:7).<sup>38</sup>

Not only is reason loving, it is also kind. It is the means by which Atonement (the purpose of the Holy Spirit) is accomplished. The Holy Spirit does not use reason to paint

<sup>35</sup> 7:6 (FIP)

<sup>36</sup> 7:7 (FIP)

<sup>37</sup> 7:8 (FIP)

<sup>38</sup> 7:9 (FIP)

you into a corner and impose His will on you. He employs reason to lead you gently, but steadily, with great kindness, toward the truth (8:8)<sup>39</sup>.

**Note:** I'm still experimenting with the best way to handle cross-referencing to the FIP edition. For the final four paragraphs of this section, instead of footnoting every single reference, I'm going to indicate for each paragraph what are the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a lot less visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references.

## Paragraph 9 (FIP: 7:11–8:8)

9 And here you will lay down the burden of denying truth. <sup>2</sup>This is the burden that is terrible, and not the truth. <sup>3</sup>That you are joined is your salvation; the gift of Heaven, not the gift of fear. <sup>4</sup>Does Heaven seem to be a burden to you? <sup>5</sup>In madness yes, and yet what madness sees must be dispelled by reason. <sup>6</sup>Reason assures you Heaven is what you want, and *all* you want. <sup>7</sup>Listen to Him Who speaks with reason and brings your reasoning in line with His. <sup>8</sup>Be willing to let reason be the means by which He would direct you how to leave insanity behind. <sup>9</sup>Hide not behind insanity in order to escape from reason.

### • Study Question •

9. (a) *What is “the burden that is terrible”?*  
(b) *What is one form our madness can take, so that we “hide...behind insanity to escape from reason”?*
- A. *Our madness can persuade us that it is fearful to be joined to all our brothers, to live in Heaven (“the awareness of perfect oneness”).*
  - B. *Our madness can seem so powerful that we believe reason can't overcome it.*
  - C. *Our madness can lead us off after useless goals.*

In these holy instants of forgiveness, we experience a profound sense of relief, a relief that comes from the absence of the constant strain of denying the truth (9:1–2). “The strain of constant judgment is virtually intolerable” (T-3.X.7:1)<sup>40</sup>. The truth is not stressful, it's our resistance to it that causes us distress (9:2). Recognizing our union with one another is our salvation, and it brings us Heaven, not fear, when it is seen with reason (9:3). Being joined us what enables us to truly help one another. It means we can never be alone.

<sup>39</sup> 7:10 (FIP)

<sup>40</sup> T-3.VI.5:6 (FIP)

Jesus then asks what *ought* to be a ridiculous question: “Does Heaven seem a burden to you?” We all are quick to answer in our minds, “Heaven a burden? Of course not!” But the fact is, in our madness that is how it seems (9:4–5). This is where reason comes into play, gently leading us away from our madness, showing us how eminently desirable the truth really is. It reassures us that, “Heaven is what you *want*, and *all* you want” (9:6). Our fears all have to do with losing the ego’s goodies, all of which are ephemeral and ultimately empty. As the Gospel of Thomas puts it:

76b You too should seek for long-lasting treasures that do not decay, where moths do not come to eat them or grubs to destroy them.<sup>41</sup>

We are afraid that, in recognizing our union, we lose our independence, our autonomy. And we do. But that is not ultimately a real loss, since we have never been independent and autonomous; it’s all been an illusion. We are giving up a fantasy, nothing more.

All this the Voice for God relates to you. And as He speaks, the image trembles and seeks to attack the threat it does not know, sensing its basis crumble. Let it go. Salvation of the world depends on you, and not upon this little pile of dust. (W-186.7:1-5).

We must allow the Holy Spirit to persuade us, to bring our reasoning “in line with His” (9:7). We need to be willing to listen to reason, and allow it to lead us out of our insanity (9:8), instead of continually bringing up our insane excuses to put off acceptance of reason and truth (9:9). Listen to your thoughts, and learn to recognize the tired old arguments you so often make against Heaven and happiness. Recognize them, and allow the reasoning of the Holy Spirit to dispel them.

## Paragraph 10 (FIP: 8:9–9:5)

**10** What madness would conceal, the Holy Spirit still holds out for everyone to look upon with gladness. <sup>2</sup>You *are* your brother’s savior.<sup>42</sup> <sup>3</sup>He is *yours*. <sup>4</sup>Reason speaks happily indeed of this. <sup>5</sup>This gracious plan was given love by Love. <sup>6</sup>And what Love plans is like Itself in this: Being united, it would have you learn what *you* must be; and being one with Love, it must be given you to give what *It* has given, and gives still.<sup>43</sup> <sup>7</sup>Spend but an instant in the glad acceptance of what is given you to give your brother, and learn with him what has been given both of you.

<sup>41</sup> Davies, Stevan (2011-02-18). *Gospel of Thomas: Annotated & Explained* (SkyLight Illuminations) (Kindle Locations 866-867). Jewish Lights Publishing. Kindle Edition.

<sup>42</sup> Genesis 4:9 (RSV): “Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’”

<sup>43</sup> We believe that the meaning of these two sentences is as follows: “This plan was given you by God (Love). And God’s plan is like God Himself in this way: Given that this plan is united within itself, it (like God) would have you be united within *yourself*—i.e., it would have you learn what you are. And given that you are one with God, you must be able to give what God has given, and gives still.”

• **Study Question** •

10. *What does it mean that we are our brother's savior?*

- A. *When we know more than our brother, we can tell them what the truth is.*
- B. *We are supposed to rescue our brothers from the effects of their mistakes.*
- C. *We can learn that we are one with Love, and give that knowledge to our brother by receiving it for ourselves.*

•

Madness tries to block out the reality of our union with one another and with God, but the Holy Spirit continues to offer it to everyone, seeking to evoke our glad reception of the truth (10:1). I *am* my brother's savior (10:2)! In the biblical story of Cain and Abel, when Cain out of jealousy killed his brother Abel, God asked him (As if God didn't know!), "Where is your brother?" And Cain replied, "I don't know! Am I my brother's keeper?" Jesus seems to be offering an opinion on the matter here, saying, "Yes, you are!" When the Workbook has us affirm, "Salvation of the world depends on me" (Lesson 186), this teaching of the Text about the continuity of mind is the undergirding truth behind that statement. How I think of you (or of anyone) can either save or damn; the choice is mine. Am I judge, or savior?

And as I am your savior, you are mine (10:3). Does being savior of the world seem like an onerous task to you? Think, then, of this: You have something like 7.4 billion saviors! How can you miss?

You will never know that you are co-creator with God until you learn your brother is a co-creator with you. God's will is your salvation. Would He not have given you the means to find it? If He wills you to have it, He must have made it possible and very easy to obtain it.

Your brothers are everywhere. You do not have to seek far for salvation. Every minute and every second gives you a chance to save yourself. Do not lose these chances, not because they will not return, but because delay of joy is needless. God wills you perfect happiness now. Is it possible that this is not also your will? And is it possible that this is not also the will of your brothers? Consider, then, that in this joint will you are all united, and in this only. There will be disagreement on anything else, but not in this. This, then, is where peace abides. And you abide in peace when you so decide. (T-9.VI.9:2–10:11)

No wonder reason speaks of this "happily" (10:4). It's a wonderful thing! I love the lines in the above quote, "in this joint will you are all united, and in this only. There will be disagreement on anything else, but not in this." We are united in mutual salvation. It's a "gracious plan," in which God's Love speaks to the love in each of us, love being what we are. "Teach only love, for that is what you are" (T-6.I.20:2).<sup>44</sup> Our participation in the plan is nothing more or less than the recognition that God's own Love is in us; what's

<sup>44</sup> T-6.I.13:2 (FIP)

more, that Love *is* us. God is unadulterated Love (my understanding of love's being "united"), and so are you. Because you are one with Love, you have the ability to give what Divine Love has given and is still giving even now—pure love (10:5–6).

Let us together open our minds and hearts to full acceptance of this reality: I am the Love of God in this place, in this time, for this person. And *you* (speaking to every other person) are this Love for me. This is the gift that we have been given to share with our brothers and sisters, and in so doing, to learn that it has been given to us as well (10:7). Maybe you and I are not ready yet to *live* in the reality of this, but for just "an instant," perhaps we can. Let the awareness wash over you. Bask in it. "I am the Love of God, here and now. I am the savior of the world. I am my brother's savior, and he is mine."

## Paragraph 11 (FIP: 9:8-10:6)

**11** To give is no more blessed than to receive.<sup>45</sup> <sup>2</sup>But neither is it *less*.<sup>3</sup> The Son of God is always blessed as one. <sup>4</sup>And as his gratitude goes out to you who blessed him, reason will tell you that it cannot be you stand apart from blessing. <sup>5</sup>The gratitude he offers you reminds you of the thanks your Father gives you for completing Him. <sup>6</sup>And here alone does reason tell you that you can understand what you must be. <sup>7</sup>Your Father is as close to you as is your brother. <sup>8</sup>Yet what is there that could be nearer you than is your Self?

### • Study Question •

11. Which of the following things result when you choose to bless the Son of God (e.g. forgive your brother, see him sinless, teach him he is Love)? (more than one)

- A. You get brownie points with God
- B. The blessing you give him is also given to you
- C. He extends gratitude to you
- D. His gratitude reminds you of God's gratitude
- E. You begin to understand what you must be
- F. You feel superior to him because you gave him healing
- G. You realize your Self is one with God and with your brother

•

<sup>45</sup>. Acts 20:35 (RSV): "In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" The reason the Course corrects this biblical teaching is almost certainly because it can encourage people to give as a source of one-upmanship. This is probably the reason why when dictating the original version of miracle principle 16, which approvingly quoted this same Bible verse ("Miracles are teaching devices for demonstrating that it is more blessed to give than to receive"), Jesus then said, "*Be very careful* in interpreting this."

The overall meaning of 11:1–3 is summed up in Workbook Lesson 108: “To give and to receive are one in truth.” When you give love, you receive it; and vice versa. Minds are joined, and what is given to one part of mind is given to every part (11:4). When we give love and forgiveness to anyone and they accept it, they offer gratitude in return (11:5). This reminds us of the Father’s gratitude to us for completing Him (perhaps in the sense that, in offering love to a brother, we have been God’s extension). This, reason tells us, shows us the truth of what we are: God’s Love individualized as us (11:6). We are as much one with God as we are one with our brother (11:7). No, more than that: God *is* our Self (11:8). “There is one life, and that I share with God” (W-167).

## Paragraph 12 (FIP: 11:1–10)

12 The power that you have over the Son of God is not a threat to his reality. <sup>2</sup>It but attests to it. <sup>3</sup>Where could his freedom lie but in himself, if he is free already? <sup>4</sup>And who could bind him but himself, if he deny his freedom? <sup>5</sup>God is not mocked; no more His Son can be imprisoned, save by his own desire.<sup>46</sup> <sup>6</sup>And it is by his own desire that he is freed. <sup>7</sup>Such is his strength and not his weakness. <sup>8</sup>He is at his own mercy. <sup>9</sup>And where he chooses to be merciful, there is he free. <sup>10</sup>But where he chooses to condemn instead, there is he held a prisoner, awaiting in chains his pardon on himself to set him free.

### • Study Question •

12. *Using ideas from the paragraph or anywhere in the section, explain the statement: “The power you have over the Son of God is not a threat to his reality. It but attests to it.”*

•

To say that I am responsible for how my brother sees himself seems to demean my brother and give me inordinate power over him. Actually, this truth does not threaten his reality; it attests to it (12:1–2). As I affirm the truth about him, it liberates that truth in him. What I am affirming is that he, like me, rules his own mind; that his mind is incredibly powerful, endued with all the creative power of God. I am affirming his freedom, not his bondage. He, like me, can free himself, and only *he* could bind himself if he so chooses (12:3–4). The only thing that can imprison *any* of us is our own desire (12:5). Likewise, the only thing that can free any of us is our own desire (12:6). To affirm this about another is not to weaken them or demean them in any way; it strengthens them and lifts them up to the truth of their being (12:7).

<sup>46</sup>. Galatians 6:7 (KJV): “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” In the Course’s reference to this, just as God’s power is such that He cannot be mocked, so the Son’s power is such that he cannot be imprisoned except by his own choice.

We are at our own mercy (12:8). If any of us chooses to be merciful, we are free; if we condemn another, we imprison ourselves. Our condemnation is our chains, and awaits only our pardon on ourselves to set us free (12:9–10). As this is true of me it is also true of my brothers and sisters. Though I can offer salvation to everyone, and that is my mission in life and yours as well, the final acceptance of salvation is always the responsibility of each individual; it is our “sole responsibility.”

# Answer Key

1. (a) 1) To make correction of errors. 2) To heal the Son of God. 3) To attest to the reality of the Son of God.  
(b) It doesn't see sin, but errors, and leads to their correction. It tells us that what we think is sin in ourselves is really a call for help. If we accept the help we call for, we will also have the power to give that same help to our brother.
2. A,B, and D
3. C
4. If we "defend" or hold on to our identity with the body, against reason, we will not know our true will (our right mind, the "other self"), and will not be able to choose reason over insanity.
5. A,B, and D
6. 1) Our choice of sin condemns not just ourselves but the entire Son of God.  
2) When we choose sin, we tell our brother he is damned, separate from us and from God forever.  
3) What we teach our brother, we also learn for ourselves.  
4) What we choose for him, we are choosing for ourselves.
7. Our separate identity. We do not want to be joined. But being joined is our release.
8. B
9. (a) Denying truth  
(b) A
10. C
11. B,C,D,E,G
12. We might think that because our choices can directly affect our brothers, that this power somehow threatens their reality. This isn't so, because he is part of the same mind with the same freedom of choice we have. Only he can bind himself by his own choices and desires. It isn't *us* who free him; he frees himself by his own choice. This is his strength. Our decision to heal was made as much by our brother as by ourselves, because our minds are one.