

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 25

### The Holy Spirit's Justice

#### Section VII

## *God is Not Insane*

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

### Overview of Section VII

This section, as a whole, addresses our fear that surrendering to our special function will somehow deprive us of something, involving sacrifice and loss. Our belief is that, if God gains, we must lose. The section teaches that God isn't insane; His will never involves suffering or loss for anyone. Rather, God's will is that everyone will gain.

### Paragraph 1

And if the Holy Spirit can commute each sentence that you laid upon yourself into a blessing, then it *cannot* be a sin.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>Sin is the one thing in this world that cannot change. <sup>3</sup>It is immutable, and on its changelessness the world depends. <sup>4</sup>The magic of the world can seem to hide the pain of sin from sinners and deceive with glitter and with guile. <sup>5</sup>Yet each one knows the cost of sin is death.<sup>2</sup> <sup>6</sup>And so it is. <sup>7</sup>For sin is a *request* for death, a wish to make this world's foundation sure as love, dependable as Heaven, and as strong as God Himself. <sup>8</sup>The world is safe from love to everyone who thinks sin possible. <sup>9</sup>Nor will it change.

<sup>1</sup>. Commuting “each sentence that you laid upon yourself into a blessing” is a reference to the teaching in the previous section, in which the Holy Spirit takes the specialness that each one “chose to hurt himself” and turns it into “the means for his salvation” (T-25.VI.6:4). The Holy Spirit does this by transforming specialness from a means of triumphing over our brothers into our special role in serving our brothers.

<sup>2</sup>. Romans 6:23 (RSV): “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

• **Study Question** •

1. (1:8-9). *Sin not only leads to death, it is a request for death. We want death. Why, according to these sentences, would we actually want death?*

The section begins with the words, “And if the Holy Spirit can commute each sentence that you laid upon yourself into a blessing,” clearly referring to something at the end of the preceding section, as if there were no section break. (That would make a terribly long section—21 paragraphs.) It seems to refer to 25.VI.7:5: “The Son of God can make *no* choice the Holy Spirit cannot employ on his *behalf*, and *not* against himself.” The Holy Spirit is able to transmute everything we do or have ever done, the worst “sin” you can accuse yourself of, even the “original sin” of our choice of specialness and separation, into a blessing, something that can be used on our behalf instead of against us. Therefore, if He can do that, so that what we *thought* was a sin becomes a blessing instead, “then it *cannot* be a sin” (1:1).

By definition, a sin is something that cannot change. If a thing can be converted somehow into a blessing, it wouldn't be a sin any more. So, if it is real and truly exists, sin must be “immutable” (1:3). The very existence of “this world” depends on sin's changelessness (1:3). Why? Because this is a world of separation, where every life ends in death. Our belief in sin is actually “a *request* for death, a wish to make this world's foundation sure as love, dependable as Heaven, and as strong as God Himself” (1:6). The smoke and mirrors of the world can “*seem* to hide” this painful truth from us, but it never really goes away (1:4). “Yet each one knows the cost of sin is death” (1:5).

William James wrote about the suppressed fear of death, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*:

This sadness lies at the heart of every merely positivistic, agnostic, or naturalistic scheme of philosophy. Let sanguine healthy-mindedness do its best with its strange power of living in the moment and ignoring and forgetting, still the evil background is really there to be thought of, and the skull will grin in at the banquet.

In his book, *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker wrote about this shadow of death:

Yet, at the same time, as the Eastern sages also knew, man is a worm and food for worms. This is the paradox: he is out of nature and hopelessly in it; he is dual, up in the stars and yet housed in a heart-pumping, breath-gasping body that once belonged to a fish and still carries the gill-marks to prove it. His body is a material fleshy casing that is alien to him in many ways—the strangest and most repugnant way being that it aches and bleeds and will decay and die. Man is literally split in two: he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order to blindly and dumbly rot and disappear forever. It is a terrifying dilemma to be in and to have to live with.

“The cost of sin is death” (1:5). And the Course immediately adds, “And so it *is*” (1:6). If sin is real, death is the inevitable cost. If we cling to this world we are

clinging to the concept of sin, of separation from God. If we think sin is possible, “the world *is* safe from love...Nor *will* it change” (1:8–9).

But the whole point of the first part of the paragraph is that, since the Holy Spirit can commute *every* judgment of sin we’ve laid on ourselves into a blessing, it proves that our supposed sins are *not immutable*, and therefore cannot actually be sins at all!

## Paragraph 2

2 Yet is it possible what God created not should share the attributes of His creation, when it opposes it in every way?<sup>3</sup> It cannot be the sinner’s wish for death is just as strong as is His will for life. <sup>3</sup>Nor can the basis of a world He did not make be firm and sure as Heaven. <sup>4</sup>How could it be that hell and Heaven are the same? <sup>5</sup>And is it possible that what He did not will cannot be changed? <sup>6</sup>What is immutable besides His will? <sup>7</sup>And what can share its attributes except itself? <sup>8</sup>What wish can rise against His will and be immutable?

### • Study Question •

2. “...it opposes it...” (2:1). What do each of the “its” refer to?

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How could it be possible that “sin” is immutable? Only God’s creation is immutable, and something that opposes God’s creation in every way cannot share creation’s attributes (2:1), any more than water could be dry. Our will for life has been given us by God. Our wish for death cannot possibly be as strong as that will (2:2). Becker talks about the paradox of humankind, “up in the stars and yet housed in a heart-pumping, breath-gasping body...that will decay and die.” But the star-part of us is God-given, God-created. It cannot be overcome by our insanity.

Likewise, the world we made cannot be as firm and sure as Heaven (2:3). God never willed hell; how could it possibly be as real and permanent as Heaven (2:4)? Hell and sin are not part of God’s will and never entered His Mind. Nothing beside God’s will is immutable; nothing beside God’s will shares its attributes such as changelessness, and therefore, everything *beside* God’s will can be changed (2:5–7). No wish that you or I have ever had that rose against His will of Oneness and Love can be immutable (2:8).

Over the years I came to the same conclusions. I think, perhaps, even the Apostle Paul did, or came close. In his letter to the Romans, he wrote about the seeming failure of the Jews to accept the good news announced by Jesus. How could it be that God’s chosen people would be abandoned by Him and lost? He seems to say, at the end of chapter 11, that God will use the seeming disobedience of Israel as a blessing to the world, “so that he may be merciful to all” (Romans 11:32). I remember reading Romans and thinking, “How is it possible that God created us all, gave us life, but that in the end the majority of the human race will end up in hell? How can it be that the devil wins?” It just made no sense that God’s will could be so entirely thwarted by the willfulness of humans.

<sup>3</sup>. “What God created not” is sin.

Elsewhere, the Bible declares what God's will is:

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants ALL men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. (I Tim 2:3–4)

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring ALL things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:9–10)

If God “wants all men to be saved,” and his will is “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ,” and His will is immutable, then the conclusion is that that is what is happening: No one is going to wind up in hell.

Well, that's what is being said here. God's will is *immutable*, and nothing we do or fail to do can change it.

### Paragraph 3

3 If you could realize nothing is changeless but the will of God, this course would not be difficult for you. <sup>2</sup>For it is this that you do not believe, yet there is nothing else you *could* believe if you but looked at what it is. <sup>3</sup>Let us go back to what we said before and think of it more carefully:<sup>4</sup> It must be so that either God is mad or is this world a place of madness. <sup>4</sup>Not one thought of His makes any sense at all within this world. <sup>5</sup>And nothing that the world believes as true has any meaning in His Mind at all.

#### • Study Question •

3. If you ever have had difficulty with the Course, why is that, according to sentence 3:1?

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If we could just “realize *nothing* is changeless *but* the will of God, this course would not be difficult” for us to understand and believe (3:1). That fact underlies and leads to so much of what the Course tells us, for instance that “I am as God created me,” “There is nothing to fear,” and “Light and joy and peace abide in me.” As we read back in 24.VI 4:

What aim can supersede the will of God and of His Son that Heaven be restored to him for whom it was created as his only home—nothing before and nothing after it, no other place, no other state or time, nothing beyond or nearer, nothing else in any form?

The fact is, we *don't* believe that only God's will is changeless. We *do* believe that some sins — at least *some* sins — are changeless, and cannot be forgiven. We *do* believe that God's will can change or be blocked by something, whether that something is us, the devil, or persons we blame for all the woes of the world. Yet Jesus says that if we only looked carefully at what God's will *is*, there would be nothing else we could possibly believe (3:2)!

<sup>4</sup>. T-11.I.1:1: “Either God or the ego is insane.”

In the Workbook, Jesus says that the idea that there is no will but God's "can be regarded as the central thought toward which all our exercises are directed" (W-pI.74.1:1). Our belief that there *is* some will that can oppose God's, perhaps even our own, is really the foundation of our whole problem. Accepting that there is no will but God's is, then, the whole answer!

So, he suggests we revisit an idea he has voiced before: "It *must* be so that either God is mad or is this world a place of madness" (3:3). He is apparently referring to this passage:

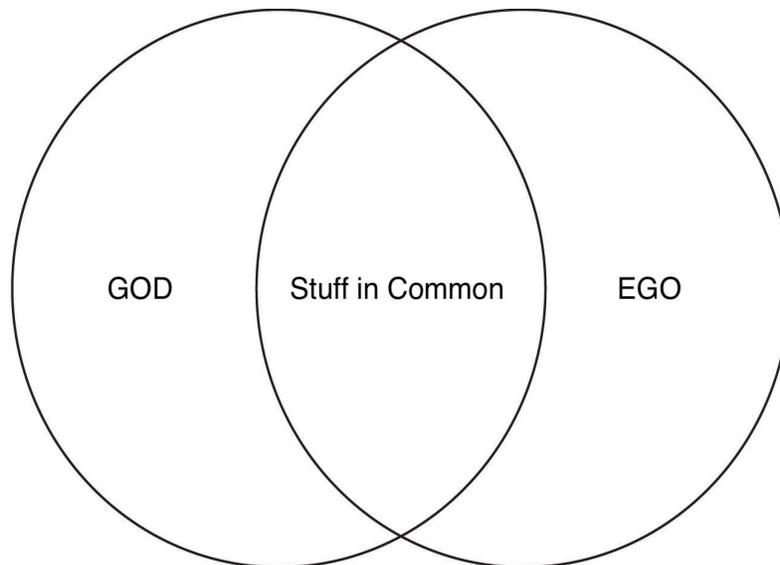
*"Either God or the ego is insane. If you will examine the evidence on both sides fairly, you will realize this must be true." (T-11.I.1:1-2).*

In my commentary on Chapter 11.I, I commented on this passage like this:

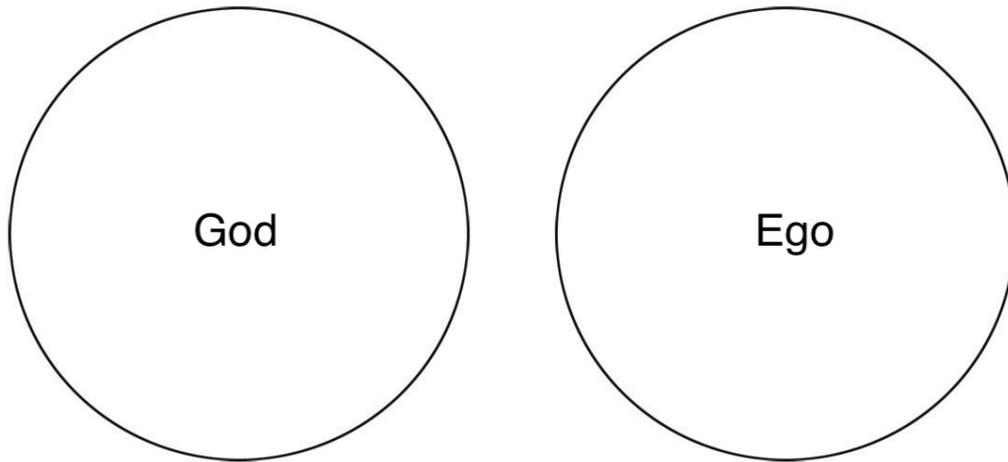
Because both thought systems are "internally consistent" you cannot be consistent and choose both; you must choose one or the other completely, in the end (1:3-4). It is a totally black-or-white choice (1:4). So eventually, the only possible outcome for any one of us is to choose 100% for either God or the ego. In fact, the only truly possible outcome is to choose God, since the ego's basic premise, separation from God, is false and impossible. That is why the outcome is certain (T-2.III.3:10) and "guaranteed by God" (T-8.V.4:4 and also W-pI.93 throughout).

The fact that the ego's thought system (which produces "this world") is internally consistent, as is God's, it must be true that no thought of God's "makes *any* sense at all within this world" (3:4). The reverse is also true, and perhaps easier to comprehend: No thought of the ego makes any sense in Heaven, or as the Course phrases it, "...*nothing* that the world believes as true has *any* meaning in His Mind at all" (3:5).

It's often hard to realize how utterly different from one another the two thought systems, of God and of the ego, really are. There's no overlap. We may think that there must be some things in common, like this:



Actually, it's like this:



The point is, either God is insane or the world and ego are insane. It's one or the other. No compromise is possible!

## Paragraph 4

<sup>4</sup> What makes no sense and has no meaning is insanity, and what is madness cannot be the truth. <sup>2</sup>If one belief so deeply valued here is true, then every thought God ever had is an illusion. <sup>3</sup>And if but one thought of His is true, then all beliefs the world gives any meaning to are false and make no sense at all. <sup>4</sup>This is the choice you make. <sup>5</sup>Do not attempt to see it differently or twist it into something it is not. <sup>6</sup>For only this decision can you make. <sup>7</sup>The rest is up to God and not to you.

### • Study Question •

4. (3:9). “This is the choice you make”—when?

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The thinking of the world “makes no sense and has *no* meaning,” and therefore, it “*is* insanity,” and if it is insane it “*cannot* be the truth” (4:1). The Course is using a broad brush to paint every thought of the world as insane. It may help to remember that the key thought we are being asked to accept is that nothing in the world is changeless; only the will of God is changeless. The thinking of the world attributes permanence or changelessness to many things, and in the ego’s mind, chief among them is the reality of sin and the inevitability of death as the result of sin. Those thoughts are what make no sense, are meaningless, and insane; they *cannot* be the truth.

The chasm separating the two systems of thought is so vast and so fixed that if even *one* belief the world values is true, “then every thought God ever had is an illusion” (4:2). Wow! To me, that underscores just how insane the world’s thinking is. Every thought of God is illusion? Talk about insane!

The good news is that the reverse is also true: If a single thought of God is true, every belief held by the world is totally, utterly false, and make zero sense (4:3). For instance, if God willed to create, say, Jesus, as a perfect human being, then every human being shares that same perfection! “I am as God created me.”

We are choosing between two absolute and uncompromising belief systems. We must avoid any attempt to blend them, to somehow hold on to part of the world or part of the ego, to find some lasting value in the ego’s projections. You cannot twist God’s reality into something else. You can’t take the world with you. There really is no other choice, no other decision possible in the end. And once you make that decision, to believe God and God alone, the rest is up to God. (4:4–7)

## Paragraph 5

5 To justify one value that the world upholds is to deny your Father’s sanity *and yours*. <sup>2</sup>For God and His beloved Son do not think differently, and it is the *agreement* of Their thought that makes the Son a co-creator with the Mind Whose thought created him. <sup>3</sup>And if he chooses to believe one thought opposed to truth, he has decided he is *not* his Father’s Son, because the Son is mad and sanity must lie apart from both the Father and the Son. <sup>4</sup>*This you believe*. <sup>5</sup>Think not that this belief depends upon the form it takes. <sup>6</sup>Who thinks the world is sane in any way, is justified in anything it thinks, or is maintained by any form of reason believes this to be true.

### • Study Question •

5. (5:1–4) *The previous paragraph already said if one belief of the world is true, then God is insane. These sentences repeat that idea but add an additional idea. What is that additional idea?*

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If you or I try to justify any of the world’s values, we are in effect labelling God and ourselves (our True Self) as insane (5:1). Perhaps that seems extreme to you. It might appear to be nihilistic, saying that life in this world is meaningless, that there is no beauty in nature, nothing to admire in a healthy body, and so on. I don’t think so. The Course itself allows that there is beauty in this world, but only after it is transformed by our complete forgiveness:

The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness. The Great Transformer of perception will undertake with you the careful searching of the mind that made this world, and uncover to you the seeming reasons for your making it. In the light of the real

reason that He brings as you follow Him, He will show you that there is no reason here at all. Each spot His reason touches grows alive with beauty, and what seemed ugly in the darkness of your lack of reason is suddenly released to loveliness. Not even what the Son of God made in insanity could be without a hidden spark of beauty that gentleness could release.

All this beauty will rise to bless your sight as you look upon the world with forgiving eyes. For forgiveness literally transforms vision, and lets you see the real world reaching quietly and gently across chaos and removing all illusions that had twisted your perception and fixed it on the past. The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder, and a blade of grass a sign of God's perfection. (T-17.II.5:1-6:3 (CE), T-17.II.5:1-6:3 (FIP))

Where we go astray is in attempting to get by with partial forgiveness, when only *complete* forgiveness brings about the transformed vision that finds every blade of grass a sign of God's perfection.

We not only make God insane, we make our Self insane, because our Christ-self and God are identical in their thinking. That's what makes us co-creators with Him (5:2). When we choose to believe in some thought that is not in God's Mind, we have in that moment chosen to believe we are not God's Son, because insane thoughts cannot be in the mind of God's Son any more than they can be in God's Mind. The two minds are One. Accepting the ego's thoughts is a rejection of sanity in both ourselves and in God.

Maybe the notion that you think yourself insane is confusing. Maybe it's hard to relate to. But think about this: Most of us believe in love but hold on to some form or some degree of justifiable attack. We tend to think it is crazy to meet every situation with nothing but love. Sometimes you have to attack, right? We all are deathly afraid of becoming patsies, doormats. There are evil people in the world and you have to defend yourself. Turning the other cheek can get you killed. Well, when we think that way we are saying that the mind of our True Self, which like God *is* love, is crazy.

Then Jesus says, flatly, "*This you believe*" (5:4). Note the emphasis on these words; it is a strong statement made with emphasis. He does not want us to dodge the truth here. This mad belief can take many forms, but they are all the same (5:5). The world is *not sane*. Anyone who thinks it is sane in any way must also believe God and His Son are *insane*. Anyone who thinks that excluding certain "sins" or persons from forgiveness is justified, or that anger is sometimes justified, or any similar thoughts, believes God is insane. The world isn't reasonable, and if you think it is, you believe in your own insanity and in God's (5:6).

## Paragraph 6

6 Sin is not real *because* the Father and the Son are not insane. <sup>2</sup>This world is meaningless *because* it rests on sin. <sup>3</sup>Who could create the changeless if it does not rest on truth? <sup>4</sup>The Holy Spirit has the power to change the whole foundation of the world you see to something else: a basis not insane, on which a sane perception can be based, another world perceived, and one in which is nothing contradicted that would lead the Son of God to sanity and joy. <sup>5</sup>Nothing attests to death and cruelty, to separation and to differences. <sup>6</sup>For here is everything perceived as one, and no one loses that each one may gain.

### • Study Question •

6. (6:6). *What would a world be like in which everyone gained and no one lost?*

God isn't insane. Neither is the Christ (your True Self). Therefore, "*sin is not real*" (6:1, my emphasis). If any thought that sin is real means God must be insane, but God isn't insane, then sin cannot be real.

That makes the whole world meaningless "*because it rests on sin*" (6:2). To understand this, we have to recall what the Course means by "sin."

Sin is the proclamation that attack is real and guilt is justified. It assumes the Son of God is guilty, and has thus succeeded in losing his innocence and making of himself what God created not. Thus is creation seen as not eternal; the will of God open to opposition and defeat. (T-19.II.2:3–5 (CE))

Sin is the belief that attack is real and guilt is justified, we have lost our innocence, and have successfully opposed and defeated the will of God. And *that* is the foundation stone of this world. But all of *that* is insane; therefore "this world is meaningless" because it is built on insanity (6:2). Nothing here is changeless (Certainly not sin!) because nothing here rests on the truth (6:3).

But rejoice! Another view of the world is possible. The Holy Spirit has the power to change the foundation of the world from sin to truth, from insanity to sanity. On the basis of the truth about God and ourselves (that we are One, that God's Will is immutable, that we remain as God created us, sinless, innocent), we can perceive a different world, "one in which nothing is contradicted that would lead the Son of God to sanity and joy" (6:4).

This world is a world where "everything is perceived as one." Nothing you see gives evidence that death or cruelty are real. Nothing supports any thoughts of separation or differences. Everything you perceive is part of the One; "no one loses that each one may gain" (6:5–6). There is no competition here, no attack, no comparison.

What could bring about such a radical reversal of the way we see the world? We are talking here about seeing that the basis of the world is something other than sin, but we are talking about "the world you see," the same world you see right now. We've been told already that the Holy Spirit can "commute each sentence...into a blessing." Clearly we

are talking about forgiveness. We are talking about learning to see every seeming attack as a call for love. When we begin to accept the truth that there is no will but God's, that every one of us was created perfect and remains as created, we learn to reinterpret the behavior of others using different premises. This is a holy child of God who is confused, mentally disturbed, someone who needs our loving help and not our condemnation. He or she is a part of us.

## Paragraph 7

7 Test *everything* that you believe against this one requirement,<sup>5</sup> and understand that everything that meets this one demand is worthy of your faith. <sup>2</sup>But nothing else. <sup>3</sup>What is not love is sin, and either one perceives the other as insane and meaningless. <sup>4</sup>Love is the basis for a world perceived as wholly mad to sinners, who believe theirs is the way to sanity. <sup>5</sup>But sin is equally insane within the sight of love, whose gentle eyes would look beyond the madness and rest peacefully on truth. <sup>6</sup>Each sees a world immutable as each defines the changeless and eternal truth of what you are. <sup>7</sup>And each reflects a view of what the Father and the Son must be to make that viewpoint meaningful and sane.

### • Study Question •

7. (7:1). *Test everything you believe against what one requirement?*

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We are urged to “test *everything* that you believe against this *one* requirement... this *one* demand” (7:1). What is the requirement or demand that it is talking about? As always, the immediate context is the first place to look, specifically, the preceding sentence. And there it is: “For here is everything perceived as one, and no one loses that each one may gain” (6:6). That’s the requirement against which we are to test everything we believe. Are we seeing the Oneness? Are there winners and losers if we follow this line of thought? Is someone else losing so that I may gain? Or does *everyone* gain?

As we shall see as we continue, this is a core idea of the Course. It shows up early in the Workbook:

"This idea contains the first glimmerings of your true function in the world, or why you are here. Your purpose is to see the world through your own holiness. Thus are you and the world blessed together. No one loses; nothing is taken away from anyone; everyone gains through your holy vision" (W-pI.37.1:1-4 (FIP)).

Speaking of the “game” of salvation:

"His game instructs in happiness because there is no loser. Everyone who plays must win, and in his winning is the gain to everyone ensured" (W-pI.153.12:3-4 (FIP)).

<sup>5</sup>. The “one requirement” is given in the previous sentence: “and no one loses that each one may gain.”

"No one can lose and everyone must gain whenever any gift of God has been requested and received by anyone. God gives but to unite. To take away is meaningless to Him. And when it is as meaningless to you, you can be sure you share one Will with Him, and He with you. " (W-pl.185.13:1-4 (FIP)).

Notice, too, the double emphasis on the word "one." This is another of those places where the Course says, in effect, "Get this one thing and you've got everything." The fact that the Course says this about several different ideas<sup>6</sup> does not mean it contradicts itself. Any of these ideas, accepted wholeheartedly, will lead to all the others.

Consider for a moment how simple this makes the Course! You don't have to learn a lot of deep ideas. Just learn one thought! It isn't difficult to pause and ask oneself, "Is someone losing here? How can *everyone* be a winner?"

Why is this such a powerful idea? Why is it true? It is true because we really are all One. If anyone loses, therefore, we all are losing. The Course states this in another way when it teaches that giving and receiving are the same thing.

So, any thought that meets this criteria is worthy of our faith, and nothing else is (7:2). Everything must be motivated by love, by the desire that one perceived as "other" deserves to be blessed, to prosper as I do. If it isn't love it's sin (7:3) — and remember, this does not mean it's a wicked deed deserving hell, but rather that it is a manifestation of a belief in specialness and separation<sup>7</sup>. Wherever "sin" occurs, it is a call for help.

A mind governed by love will look at anything but love as insanity. A mind governed by anything *but* love will adjudge love to be insane (7:3). We see evidence of this clearly demonstrated all around us. In US politics today (September, 2018) the progressives and the right-wingers both think the other side is nuts. One is operating more on the side of specialness and separation, and the other on the side of oneness and love (7:4–5).

When we react to another person as if they were nuts, it's often due to this division between love and not-love. What we have to remember, if we are advocating love, is that the not-loving are among those (everyone) whom we must meet with love! We must, with "gentle eyes...look *beyond* the madness and rest peacefully on truth" (7:5). What truth? The truth that this "crazy person" is just as much a child of God as I am, just as deserving of love as I am (and as everyone is), just as much filled with Christ as I am, and as Jesus was. May God give us all gentle eyes!

Both mindsets, love and sin, see an "immutable" world. One sees beauty, oneness and signs of God's perfection everywhere; the other sees a dangerous jungle where only the strong and ruthless can survive. These views of the world are based on how "each defines

<sup>6</sup> For instance, "Today we continue with the one idea which brings complete salvation; the one statement which makes all forms of temptation powerless; the one thought which renders the ego silent and entirely undone. You are as God created you. " (W-pl.94.1:1-2 (FIP)).

Also: ". We will repeat today's idea from time to time. For this one thought would be enough to save you and the world, if you believed that it is true. " (W-pl.110.9:1-1:2 (FIP)).

And: "And it is this that you must look upon; sacrifice is attack, not love. If you would accept but this one idea, your fear of love would vanish. " (T-15.X.5:9-10 (FIP)).

<sup>7</sup> As I said earlier, sin is the belief that attack is real and guilt is justified, we have lost our innocence, and have successfully opposed and defeated the will of God.

the changeless and eternal truth of what *you* are” (7:6), and “reflects a view of what the Father and the Son *must* be to make that viewpoint meaningful and sane” (7:7). One views God as Infinite Love; the other sees God as a Stern Judge, meting out punishment to the wrongdoers and rewarding the powerful.

## Paragraph 8

**8** Your special function is the special form in which the fact that God is *not* insane appears most sensible and meaningful to you.<sup>8</sup> <sup>2</sup>The *content* is the same. <sup>3</sup>The *form* is suited to your special needs, and to the special time and place in which you think you find yourself, and where you can be free of place and time and all that you believe must limit you. <sup>4</sup>The Son of God cannot be bound to time or place or anything God did not will. <sup>5</sup>Yet if His will is seen as madness, then the form of sanity which makes it most acceptable to those who are insane requires special choice. <sup>6</sup>Nor can this choice be made *by* the insane, whose problem is their choices are not free and made with reason in the light of sense.

### • Study Question •

8. (8:3–5): *True or false: We can learn our lessons equally well in any time and place, because the whole lesson is that time and place are illusory and that we are not bound by them in any way.*

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So, surprise! Suddenly the conversation turns back to “your special function”! The discussion about the changeless will of God, the unreality of sin and the absurdity of anything that pictures God as insane, all this has been a diversion, a subtext to the presentation of your special function that began in Section VI. It was a necessary sidetrack, needed to provide the understanding behind the description of what your particular special function is: “the special form in which the fact that God is *not* insane appears most sensible and meaningful to you” (8:1).

What is the special form *for you* that seems to best express this fact? For me, it has been largely leading ACIM study groups and writing about it, mixed in with working out the teaching in my own life and relationships. But there are zillions of forms that can express the Truth, although they all have the same content (8:2).

For each of us, the form of our special function depends on many factors: “your special needs”; “the special time and place in which you think you find yourself” (hmm; I’m in the USA under President Trump...how does that affect my special function?); and the particular way in which you can be “free of place and time and *all* that you believe

<sup>8</sup>. “That God is *not* insane” means (as the previous paragraph implies) that *love is sane*. You learn this through your special function, which consists of expressing love to the particular people and in the particular way the Holy Spirit has chosen for you. Fulfilling this function proves to be so possible and desirable (see paragraph 10 in this section) that you realize love is actually sanity, not insanity.

must limit you” (8:3). Those are all things we need to consider as we attempt to formulate what our special function is going to be. My personal needs; my life circumstances; and the way in which I can express my lack of limitation.

That last point gets expanded in 8:4. Time and place (or space) were not God’s will. They are aspects of separation. Place certainly appears to separate us, and time separates us from so much more. If we are the Son of God, we cannot be bound by these things (8:4). But those who have not awakened believe they are bound by them, and they believe that God is insane (unconditional love is an impossible ideal). So how can you or I best communicate to such people in a way that makes God’s will (unconditional love) acceptable to them? It requires “special choice” on our part, a choice that can only be made by those who are already sane (8:5–6)! That is the whole purpose of your special function, and of mine — making love appear sane to those who think it is insane. It seems to demand the ability to live somehow outside of space and time, to refuse to recognize them as limits. I haven’t quite figured out how this fits in, but it will make for interesting discussion!

## Paragraph 9

9 It would be madness to entrust salvation to the insane. <sup>2</sup>Because He is not mad has God appointed One as sane as He to raise a saner world to meet the sight of everyone who chose insanity as his salvation. <sup>3</sup>To this One is given the choice of form most suitable to him; one which will not attack the world he sees, but enter into it in quietness and show him it is mad. <sup>4</sup>This One but points to an alternative, another way of looking at what he has seen before and recognizes as the world in which he lives and thought he understood before. <sup>5</sup>Now must he question this, because the form of the alternative is one which he cannot deny nor overlook nor fail completely to perceive and see at all.

### • Study Question •

9. (9:3). *This gives us a clue as to how the Holy Spirit chooses our special function. He does not want to scare us off. He chooses something that will unobtrusively enter our world, will not shock or jar us too much. What wonderful thing will His saner world show us?*

•

This special function thing seems to call for very advanced qualifications. Certainly God can’t be expecting *me* to do this job, can He? Jesus has made it plain that we are *all* insane to a large degree. Justifying merely *one* value of the world is a denial of God’s sanity and of my own (5:1). “To entrust salvation to the insane would be madness (9:1). But God isn’t mad; He solved this problem. He has provided the Holy Spirit, Who is as sane as God, to show us (we who have chosen to find salvation in insanity) a saner world, another way of seeing the world we (seem to) live in (9:2).

It is His job to chose the form of our special function. It will be some form that does *not* attack the world we see. It think that is crucial! It's so easy to judge and condemn the world we see! We are not here to reject the world, but to save it, to redeem it. And how we do that is up to the Holy Spirit.

The idea that the Holy Spirit alone can choose our special function for us is consistent with the teaching that we are not to make any decisions by ourselves except to decide to let Him decide for us! The idea occurs over and over again in the Course (see Appendix to this commentary, "Giving All Decisions to the Holy Spirit").

The choice of the form your special function takes is given "to this One," that is, the Holy Spirit. He chooses the form most suitable *to you*, a form that will *enter into* the world you see *in quietness* so as to *show* you, to demonstrate to you, that the world is mad (9:3). He provides to you "an *alternative, another* was of looking at what [you] have seen before," the very same world you can easily recognize as "the world in which [you] live and *thought* [you] understood before" (9:4).

So, you are looking at the very same world. You easily recognize it as the world you always believed you lived in. You thought you understood what it is. Doubtless, you looked on it with some judgment. But now the Holy Spirit is offering you an alternative way of looking at it. Therefore, you must now question your understanding. Maybe what you thought of the world and the people in it isn't the truth at all! The way the Holy Spirit's alternate view perceives the world is one you just *cannot* deny. You can't pretend you don't see it that way at all, so you can't just overlook His viewpoint and dismiss it out of hand (9:4-5).

## Paragraph 10

**10** To each his special function is designed to be perceived as possible, and more and more desired as it proves to him that it is an alternative he *wants*. <sup>2</sup>From this position does his sinfulness and all the sin he sees within the world offer him less and less, until he comes to understand it cost him sanity, and stands between him and whatever hope he has of *being* sane. <sup>3</sup>Nor is he left without escape from madness, for he has a special part in *everyone's* escape. <sup>4</sup>He could no more be left outside, without a special function in the hope of peace, than could the Father overlook His Son and pass him by in careless thoughtlessness.

### • Study Question •

10. (10:1-4). Please write down all the effects that your special function, the special form of the alternative, has on you.

•

One interesting aspect of the special function that the Holy Spirit has for you is that it is "designed to be perceived as possible" and even something that, over time, you begin to realize that you *want* (10:1).

People sometimes think of extreme examples, such as Adolph Hitler, and say, “I could never forgive someone like that.” True. Probably, you would not even want to forgive Hitler. But all that tells you is that forgiving Hitler is *not your special function!* I think we need to get firmly in mind that our special function is *possible*.

Once we accept our function and begin to carry it out, it will prove itself to us as a way of alternative thinking that we *want*, and our desire to fulfill it will increase. The sight of sin in ourselves and others will seem less and less attractive until it reaches the point where we realize how much it has cost us. We will recognize the idea of sin as the chief obstacle between ourselves and our sanity (10:2). But this is an obstacle that can be overcome; there is a way out of our insanity. The way out, in fact, is our special function, the “special part [we play] in *everyone’s* escape” (10:3).

There is no danger God is going to be carelessly thoughtless and forget us or leave us outside of Heaven. There is no way God would fail to provide us with our special function, which is our own hope for peace of mind. That’s as unlikely as God the Father carelessly and thoughtlessly overlooking Christ (10:4)! There is a special function for each of us. You can be certain of that.

## Paragraph 11

11 What is dependable *except* His love? <sup>2</sup>And where does sanity abide *except* in Him? <sup>3</sup>The One Who speaks for Him can show you this, in the alternative He chose especially for you. <sup>4</sup>It is God’s will that you remember this, and so emerge from deepest mourning into perfect joy. <sup>5</sup>Accept the function that has been assigned to you in God’s Own plan to show His Son that hell and Heaven are different, not the same, but that in Heaven *They* are all the same, without the differences that would have made a hell of Heaven and a “Heaven” of hell, had such insanity been possible.

### • Study Question •

11. (11:5). What does it mean here that “hell and Heaven are different”? You may want to consult 2:2–3 (FIP), 2:3–4 (CE).

•

God’s love is the most dependable thing in the entire universe; in fact, the *only* dependable thing (11:1). Love is God’s sanity, and God *is* love. Love belongs to God — period (11:2). As the Bible says in the first epistle of John:

“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 John 4:7–8 NRSV)

“God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” (1 John 4:16 NRSV)

To live in love is to live in God, and to have God living in you. This is basically what our special function is, whatever its form: The most meaningful way in which you can

make the love of God manifest in the world so that others realize that love is the only sane response — always.

But you are merely asked to see forgiveness as the natural reaction to distress which rests on error, and thus calls for help. Forgiveness is the only sane response. (T-30.VII.2:6–7 (CE), T-30.VI.2:7-8 (FIP))

“The One Who speaks for Him,” that is, the Holy Spirit, can show you the dependability of love, the sanity of love, and He will do so in the context of your special function, “the alternative He chose especially for you” (11:3). God’s will for you and for me, for all of us, is to remember just how dependable God’s love is. That remembrance will lift us out of the deepest depression into perfect joy (11:4). There are Christian songs that celebrate this truth. I may have rejected fundamentalist theology, but I still retain a love for some of its heart-felt poetry and music:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the sky of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

God’s plan is benevolent and simple. He wants to show all of us, who are His Son, that hell and Heaven are different! Duh! “*Not the same.*” I think we really need this message, though. Yes, there really is a Heaven, a place (really a state of consciousness) of perfect joy, of total love, and *you* can live there. It’s a place completely unlike *this* world. “*Not the same.*”

And in this Heaven, we are all the same. Differences are what seems to make this world into hell, and to make all the aspects of this hell seem attractive to us so that we want to hold onto it as if it were Heaven (11:5). Difference is quite literally in our DNA; it is the basic principle of the biological universe. And it is nearly always our differences that drive us to violence against one another, to attack instead of to love. These different selves are the illusion we’ve made; the Truth of us is Sameness, Oneness. We are not merely *like* one another, we *are* one another; we are the same One Life expressing in many, many forms. Or as the non-dual religions put it: Emptiness is Form; Form is Emptiness. They are not two, but One.

## Paragraph 12

**12** The whole belief that someone loses but reflects the underlying tenet God must be insane. <sup>2</sup>For in this world it seems that one must gain *because* another loses. <sup>3</sup>If this is true, then God is mad indeed. <sup>4</sup>But what is this belief except a form of the more basic tenet “Sin is real, and rules the world”? <sup>5</sup>For every little gain must someone lose and pay exact amount in blood and suffering. <sup>6</sup>For otherwise would evil triumph and destruction be the total cost of any gain at all. <sup>7</sup>You who believe that God is mad, look carefully at this, and understand that it must be that either God *or* this must be insane, but hardly both.

### • Study Question •

12. (12:3). *Why would someone gaining from someone else's loss mean that God is mad?*

In the world we see, in which we think hell is the Heaven we want, it seems self-evident that for anyone to gain something, someone, somewhere, has to lose (12:2). That is, in fact, a widely accepted belief. But if that is true, God must be crazy (12:1,3). Why would the God of love create a world that demands constant attack of others in order to survive?

The only way for me to gain is to take something (whatever it is) from someone else. I gain, you lose: Too bad for you! Which is just another way of saying, “Sin is real, and rules the world” (12:4). What kind of world is that? If sin is real it must be paid for in blood and suffering (12:5); that is what passes for justice in this world. It seems that without this kind of punitive justice, evil or sin would simply take over. What kind of God would create a world like that? An insane god. Either God really is insane, or this picture of the world, with sin ruling the world, restrained only by savage punishment, is insane and totally removed from reality (12:7).

In simple words, if this picture of the world is true, God must be insane. If God is *not* insane then this understanding of the world cannot be true. God has an entirely different understanding of what “justice” is, as we shall see.

## Paragraph 13

**13** Salvation is rebirth of the idea no one can lose for anyone to gain, and everyone must gain if anyone would be a gainer. <sup>2</sup>Here is sanity restored. <sup>3</sup>And on this single rock of truth can faith in God's eternal saneness rest in perfect confidence and perfect peace. <sup>4</sup>Reason is satisfied, for all insane beliefs can be corrected here. <sup>5</sup>And sin must be impossible if this is true. <sup>6</sup>This is the rock on which salvation rests, the vantage point from which the Holy Spirit gives meaning and direction to the plan in which your special function has a part. <sup>7</sup>For here your special function is made whole, because it shares the *function* of the whole.

• **Study Question** •

13. (13:1-2). *According to these sentences, in order for you to gain, what two things must happen?*

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Salvation is found in the complete reversal of the idea that for anyone to gain, someone has to lose. It is a reversal based on the reality of Oneness, of our union with God and one another. Because the seeming many are in reality One, if one aspect gains, loss *anywhere* is impossible! For anyone to gain *everyone must gain* (13:1). *That* is sanity (13:2)! This one shift of thought brings sanity everywhere, erasing any possibility that God might be insane or might go insane. Once the reality of our Oneness sinks it, “reason is satisfied” (13:3–4).

If it is true that for anyone to gain all must gain, and loss is impossible, then sin itself is impossible as well (13:5). “To give and to receive are one in truth” (W-108) is the foundation stone of the Holy Spirit’s thought system, “the rock on which salvation rests” (13:6). Once you have accepted it and begin to see things from this vantage point, God’s plan and your special part in it can be viewed with meaning and direction (13:6). You will come to see your special function as identical with “the *function* of the whole” (13:7).

## Paragraph 14

14 Remember all temptation is but this: a mad belief that God’s insanity would make you sane and give you what you want; that either God or you must lose to madness, because your aims cannot be reconciled. <sup>2</sup>Death demands life, but life is not maintained at *any* cost.<sup>9</sup> <sup>3</sup>No one *can* suffer for the will of God to be fulfilled. <sup>4</sup>Salvation is His will *because* you share it; not for you alone, but for the Self which is the Son of God. <sup>5</sup>He cannot lose, for if He could, the loss would be His Father’s, and in Him no loss is possible.<sup>10</sup> <sup>6</sup>And this is sane because it is the truth.

• **Study Question** •

1. 14:1 combines two themes from this section. The first is that either God or the world is mad. How is the second idea, that gain must come from some kind of loss, woven into the first idea?

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Looking at this paragraph with the original emphasis Helen heard on many words (indicated by faint underlining or italics), it’s clear that Jesus is feeling intensely

<sup>9</sup>. This sentence means that while the concept of death requires the concept of life, the reverse is not true: life does *not* require death. Specifically, life is not maintained by any kind of payment—any suffering, sacrifice, or loss, all of which are forms of death.

<sup>10</sup>. Pronoun clarification: “He [the Christ, the single Self of the Sonship] cannot lose, for if He could, the loss would be His Father’s, and in Him [the Father] no loss is possible.”

passionate about this message. There are 16 words emphasized in just six sentence, and no sentence is without at least one emphasized word. Try reading it aloud to yourself with the emphasis that is indicated.

Any temptation we may experience is some form of the mad belief that our will and God's are so diametrically different that for us to be sane, God must be insane (14:1). Put less dramatically, we think that following God's law of love and total forgiveness is nuts; it isn't safe. It isn't sane. For me to act rationally I have to believe God's thought is irrational.

Recall for a moment the emphasis. The teaching seems, at least indirectly, to be circling back to our fear of turning our lives over to divine guidance, the fear that if we accept the special function the Holy Spirit has for us, it will involve sacrifice and loss on our part. In other words, for God's will to gain, we must lose!

The paragraph continues with an argument against any possibility that God's will and our will are anything less than identical, and particularly against any possibility that our idea of "one gains, another must lose" is right, and God is indeed insane.

Let's see if we can follow Jesus' thinking here. There is a difficult line 14:2: "Death demands life, but life is not maintained at any cost" (14:2). As to the first 3 words, I agree with Robert's interpretation in the footnote in the Complete Edition, which is that for something known as death to exist, life must also exist, and exist prior to death. But for life to exist does not require the existence of death!

Robert's footnote says: "This sentence means that while the concept of death requires the concept of life, the reverse is not true: life does not require death. Specifically, life is not maintained by any kind of payment—any suffering, sacrifice, or loss, all of which are forms of death."

I see a bit more meaning in the latter part of the sentence. There are two ways the phrase "at any cost" can be understood. We might think that because life is so important, it should be maintained "at any cost," which might include sacrifice and blood from something or someone else: For me to live, you must die. But the emphasis on "any" seems to me to transform the meaning: "At *any* cost." To me, it says, "There is *no* cost to maintaining life. Life is maintained without cost to anyone. Life simply IS." Not that "some costs are too high to pay to maintain life," but rather, "Life is maintained without any cost at all."

It's a particularized application of the theme that runs through the section: "No one can lose for anyone to gain, and everyone must gain if anyone would be a gainer." Applied to the concepts of life and death, "No one can die for anyone to live, and everyone must live if anyone would be alive."

The next sentence in the Text nails down that interpretation for me: "No one can suffer for the will of God to be fulfilled" (14:3). And this completely blows away any thought you might have that following God's will entails suffering and sacrifice. God's will is salvation for all; how could that entail any loss? Especially because *you* share the same will, not just for your little self alone but "for the Self that *is* the Son of God" (14:4). As I have often said, when we surrender to the will of God we are surrendering to the Truth of our own Self.

This cannot possibly involve loss of any kind. Here's the logic:

1. No loss is possible in God.
2. Any loss in the Son of God would be a loss to God.
3. Therefore no loss is possible for the Son of God, who is my Self, your Self, and the Self shared by us all. (14:5)

This is the true definition of sanity *because* it is the truth.

Imagine the peace of mind that comes with the realization that all loss is impossible.

“Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists, Herein lies the peace of God.”

### **Legend:**

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

The 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 identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. 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 and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

## Answer Key

1. We want to make our world apart from God as sure, dependable and strong as God and His creation, by making its foundation of sin changeless. This would make our world permanent and safe from the intrusion of love, which would dismantle it. This would make it changeless.
2. The first “it” refers to “what God created not”; the second “it” refers to God’s creation. The meaning of the sentence is that, since what God did *not* create is completely opposite to what He *did* create, there is no way anything not created by God could share creation’s attributes, particularly its immutability.
3. You do not believe that only God’s Will is changeless.
4. Whenever you choose. This is the only thing you are ever deciding. Though the specific choice discussed in recent sections has been the choice of how you see your brother.
5. That this would not only make God insane, but would make His Son insane as well. By believing one worldly value, then, makes you think that your Self is mad and that you are not your Self.
6. No specific answer; your own thoughts are what are being asked for.
7. The one requirement is that no one loses that each may gain. If a belief doesn’t meet this test, then it is not love. If it is not love, it is sin. If it is sin, then it proclaims that God is mad. This, by the way, is the beginning of a running theme about losing and gaining. In fact, according to Chapter 26, each problem that we have, “regardless of the form it seems to take, is a demand that someone suffer loss and make a sacrifice that you might gain” (T-26.II.2:2).
8. False. There is an interesting tension in these sentences. The special form of our special function is suited to the special time and place in which we think we are, so that sanity can reach us in a form meaningful to us, and we can realize we are free of time and place altogether. This exact same tension is found recently in T-25.I.9:4–5 (CE), T-25.I.6:4–7:1 (FIP), in which the Holy Spirit takes note of time and place to tell us where to go and what to do in order to experience the oneness that proves all time and place unreal.

9. That the world we see is mad.
10. It seems possible, it seems increasingly desired. It makes the sin you see (in yourself and in the world) less and less desirable. It makes you realize your sin cost you your sanity.
11. That hell and Heaven are different means that sanity and changelessness abide only in Heaven, not in hell.
12. Because God is Love, and this idea implies that love is mad.
13. No one can lose and everyone must gain.
14. We believe that our sanity must come from the loss of God's sanity.

# APPENDIX:

## Giving All Decisions to the Holy Spirit

For some examples, see all these passages:

It will never happen that you will have to make decisions for yourself. You are not bereft of help, and help that knows the answer. Would you be content with little, which is all you can alone offer unto yourself, when He Who gives you everything will simply offer it to you?

4 He will never ask what you have done to make you worthy of the gift of God. Ask it not therefore of yourself. Instead, accept His answer, for He knows you are worthy of everything that God wills for you. Do not try to escape the gift of God, which He so freely and so gladly offers you. He offers you but what God gave Him for you. You need not decide whether or not you are deserving of it. God knows that you are. Would you deny the truth of God's decision and place your pitiful appraisal of yourself in place of His calm and unswerving value of His Son? Nothing can shake God's conviction of the perfect purity of everything that He created, for it is wholly pure. Do not decide against it, for being of Him, it must be true.

5 Peace abides in every mind that quietly accepts the plan that God has set for his Atonement, relinquishing his own. You know not of salvation, for you do not understand it. Make no decisions about what it is or where it lies, but ask of the Holy Spirit everything, and leave all your decisions to His gentle counsel. The One Who knows the plan of God, which God would have you follow, can teach you what it is. Only His wisdom is capable of guiding you to follow it. Every decision you undertake alone but signifies that you would define what salvation is and what you would be saved from. The Holy Spirit knows that all salvation is escape from guilt. You have no other "enemy," and against this strange distortion of the purity of the Son of God, the Holy Spirit is your only friend.

(T-14.IV.3:4-5:8 (CE), T-14.III.10:1-14:7 (FIP).

And also, consider this passage from the Manual for Teachers:

"There is another advantage, - and a very important one, - in referring decisions to the Holy Spirit with increasing frequency. Perhaps you have not thought of this aspect, but its centrality is obvious. To follow the Holy Spirit's guidance is to let yourself be absolved of guilt. It is the essence of the Atonement.

It is the core of the curriculum. The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear. The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so, making fear inevitable. To return the function to the One to Whom it belongs is thus the escape from fear. And it is this that lets the memory of love return to you. Do not, then, think that following the Holy Spirit's guidance is necessary merely because of your own inadequacies. It is the way out of hell for you" (M-29.3:1-11).

Or these quotes (I've added emphasis):

All false humility we lay aside today, that we may listen to God's Voice reveal to us what He would have us do. We do not doubt our adequacy for the function He will offer us. *We will be certain only that He knows our strengths, our wisdom and our holiness.* And if He deems us worthy, so we are. It is but arrogance that judges otherwise.

There is one way, and only one, to be released from the imprisonment your plan to prove the false is true has brought to you. *Accept the plan you did not make instead.* Judge not your value to it. If God's Voice assures you that salvation needs your part, and that the whole depends on you, be sure that it is so. The arrogant must cling to words, afraid to go beyond them to experience which might affront their stance. Yet are the humble free to hear the Voice Which tells them what they are, and what to do. (W-pI.186.3:1-5:6).

*Say to the Holy Spirit only, "Decide for me," and it is done.* For His decisions are reflections of what God knows about you, and in this light, error of any kind becomes impossible. Why would you struggle so frantically to anticipate all that you cannot know, when all knowledge lies behind every decision that the Holy Spirit makes for you? Learn of His wisdom and His love, and teach His answer to everyone who struggles in the dark. For you decide for them and for yourself. (T-14.IV.8:1-5 (CE), T-14.III.16:1-5 (FIP)).

When you are in doubt what you should do, think of His presence in you, and tell yourself this and only this:

*He leadeth me and knows the way, which I know not.*

*Yet He will never keep from me what He would have me learn.*

*And so I trust Him to communicate to me all that He knows for me.*

Then let Him teach you quietly how to perceive your guiltlessness, which is already there. (T-14.IV.10:1-5 (CE), (T-14.III.19:1-5 (FIP))).