

# *Commentary*

## *ACIM® Manual for Teachers*

### *Chapters 11 & 12*

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

## *11. How Is Peace Possible in This World?*

### **Overview**

At first, this section seems to be a switch of the topic, but it soon becomes evident that the section is extending the topic of judgment. All this talk about letting go of judgment probably leaves most people feeling disquiet. There is still a lingering doubt that it is possible to be at peace, without judgment, “in this world.” Just look at the world! Yesterday (as I write), a newscaster summed up the last few years with these words: “Runaway inflation. Starvation. Homelessness. Insurrection. A plague. And the imminent threat of World War III!” Indeed, how is peace possible in such a world?

### **Paragraph 1**

This is a question everyone must ask. <sup>2</sup>Certainly peace seems to be impossible here. <sup>3</sup>Yet the Word of God promises other things that seem impossible as well as this. <sup>4</sup>His Word has promised peace. <sup>5</sup>It has also promised that there is no death, that resurrection must occur, and that rebirth is man's inheritance. <sup>6</sup>The world you see cannot be the world God loves, and yet His Word assures us that He loves the world. <sup>7</sup>God's Word has promised us that peace is possible here, and what He promises can hardly be impossible. <sup>8</sup>But it is true that the world must be looked at differently, if His promises are to be accepted. <sup>9</sup>What the world is, is but a fact. <sup>10</sup>You cannot choose what this should be. <sup>11</sup>But you can choose how you would see it. <sup>12</sup>Indeed, you must choose this.

“How is peace possible” is an inevitable question. It must be in the mind of every person who reads the Course and probably every person in the world (1:1). When you look around you at the world we live in, the idea of being at peace in our minds and

hearts seems ludicrous, inappropriate, and even irresponsible. Of course, it does (1:2)! It really seems impossible.

But God's Word <sup>1</sup> promises many things besides peace that seem impossible (1:3). Face it. A lot of spiritual teaching seems blind to the suffering of the world. That's a frequent objection made by many people. They accuse people who espouse spiritual ideas such as peace, the unreality of death, life after physical existence, and God's unconditional love (1:4–6) of promoting "pie in the sky by and by." They think we are delusional, naïve, blind to the facts. But if it is true that God has promised these things, they "can hardly be impossible" (1:7).

Yet we all know from personal experience that when we look at the world, we find it difficult, if not impossible, to be at peace. That states our problem, but it also hints at the answer to the problem. If we could find a different way of looking at the world, perhaps we could accept all these promises of God as entirely true (1:8).

There is no denying what the world is like. It's just a fact: "What the world is, is but a fact" (1:9). I think that is one of the most startling statements in the Course. After all the other things the Course says about the world, such as, "There is no world," how can it say it is just "a fact"? What are the implications here? I think this means that all the terrible things we see about the world, like war, sickness, famine, climate change, despotism, and genocide, are just facts. That's what the world is, and it probably isn't going to change any time soon. We can't choose to turn the world into something more to our liking (1:10).

However, what we can do is choose how we see the world (1:11). Indeed, that is precisely what we must choose (1:12). Remember those early Workbook lessons?

"Above all else I want to see things differently." (#28)

"I could see peace instead of this." (#34)

"God did not create a meaningless world." (#14)

"There is another way of looking at the world" (#33)

I could go on listing lesson titles. There are so many of them in the first 50 lessons that have to do with precisely this topic: choosing a different way of seeing the world. Take a look at Lesson 57, which reviews five such lessons:

Today let us review these ideas:

1 (31) I am not the victim of the world I see. <sup>2</sup>How can I be the victim of a world which can be completely undone if I so choose? <sup>3</sup>My chains are loosened. <sup>4</sup>I can drop them off merely by desiring to do so. <sup>5</sup>The prison door is open. <sup>6</sup>I can leave it simply by walking out. <sup>7</sup>Nothing holds me in this world. <sup>8</sup>Only my wish to stay keeps me a prisoner. <sup>9</sup>I would give up insane wishes and walk into the sunlight at last.

2 (32) I have invented the world I see. <sup>2</sup>I made up the prison in which I see myself. <sup>3</sup>All I need do is recognize this and I am free. <sup>4</sup>I have deluded myself into believing it is possible to imprison the Son of God. <sup>5</sup>I was bitterly mistaken in this

<sup>1</sup> "God's Word" in traditional Christianity usually refers to the Bible, but in the Course, it means the message of Truth that the Holy Spirit communicates to us.

belief, which I no longer want. <sup>6</sup>The Son of God must be forever free. <sup>7</sup>He is as God created him, and not what I would make of him. <sup>8</sup>He is where God would have him be, and not where I thought to hold him prisoner.

3 (33) There is another way of looking at the world. <sup>2</sup>Since the purpose of the world is not the one I ascribed to it, there must be another way of looking at it. <sup>3</sup>I see everything upside down, and my thoughts are the opposite of truth. <sup>4</sup>I see the world as a prison for God's Son. <sup>5</sup>It must be, then, that the world is really a place where he is set free. <sup>6</sup>I would look upon the world as it is, and see it as a place where the Son of God finds his freedom.

4 (34) I could see peace instead of this. <sup>2</sup>When I see the world as a place of freedom, I will realize that it reflects the laws of God instead of the rules which I made up for it to obey. <sup>3</sup>I will understand that peace, not war, abides in it. <sup>4</sup>And I will perceive that peace also abides in the hearts of all who share this place with me.

5 (35) My mind is part of God's. <sup>2</sup>I am very holy. <sup>3</sup>As I share the peace of the world with my brothers, I begin to understand that this peace comes from deep within myself. <sup>4</sup>The world I look upon has taken on the light of my forgiveness and shines forgiveness back at me. <sup>5</sup>In this light, I begin to see what my illusions about myself had kept hidden. <sup>6</sup>I begin to understand the holiness of all living things, and their oneness with me.

I believe it would do everyone good to read straight through the first 50 lessons, in one sitting if possible, or spread out over a week. At least read through all of Review I (Lessons 51–60). If you do, you cannot help being struck by how many of the lessons deal one way or another with changing our perception of the world.

It's quite evident that the Course puts our choosing a different way of seeing the world front and center in its spiritual program. We look around and desperately want to change the world we perceive. The Course's comment on our attitude is clear and concise:

“Therefore, seek not to change the world, but will to change your mind about the world.” (T-21.I.1:6 (CE))

Stop trying to change the world, and "will" (the FIP had the word "choose" here, as does the Manual in the paragraph we're studying) to change your mind about it. The word "will" implies that this is more than a simple choice. It takes an act of will. To will something seems to include some effort to overcome resistance. Most of us know the significant difference between choosing to start a diet and being willing to go through with it. It takes sustained effort. The world's way of thinking has programmed our minds, and we must be de-programmed. That takes an exercise of will over time.

## Paragraph 2

<sup>2</sup> Again we come to the question of judgment. <sup>2</sup>This time, ask yourself whether your judgment or the Word of God is more likely to be true. <sup>3</sup>For they say different things about the world, and things so opposite that it is pointless to try to reconcile them. <sup>4</sup>God offers the world salvation; your judgment would condemn it. <sup>5</sup>God says there is no death; your judgment sees but death as the inevitable end of life. <sup>6</sup>God's Word assures you that He loves the world<sup>2</sup>; your judgment says it is unlovable. <sup>7</sup>Who is right? <sup>8</sup>For one of you is wrong. <sup>9</sup>It must be so.

So once again, “we come to the question of judgment” (2:1). The Course has already told us that giving up judgment should be easy because we aren't giving up anything real; we are *incapable* of judgment. But “this time,” looking at it again, consider only the decision-maker. Who is likely to make the most accurate judgments: you or God (2:2)? Set aside the fact that you are incapable of judging and suppose that you *can* judge. There is still no contest over who will make the best judgments. God., of course. The Word of God and you say *very* different things about the world, so diametrically opposite “that it is pointless to try to reconcile them” (2:3). M-9.2:4 told us that our egos might find this “personally insulting,” but, annoying as it may be to our egos, there is no middle ground here. God is right; we are wrong.

Consider some of the ways your judgment differs from God (2:4–6):

1. God offers the world salvation and forgiveness; you condemn the world and most of the people in it.
2. You see death as the inevitable end of life; God says there is no such thing as death.
3. God loves the world; to you, the world is unloveable.

Who is more likely to be correct; you or God (2:7)? No one would assert that we are better than God at assessing such things. But one of you must be wrong ((2:8–9), very likely you, which means God must be right. That's all that the Course asks us to recognize and acknowledge so that we stop trying to judge on our own and accept God's truth. Stop trying to replace God as the judge of the world.

<sup>2</sup> “The Word of God”: The Bible? The Course? Here, this is probably a reference to John 3:16 in the Bible, “For God so loved the world...”. But even in the Course, God is said to love the world. However, it does not refer to the world of illusion we made: “I said before that God so loved the world that He gave it to His only begotten Son. God does love the real world, and those who perceive its reality cannot see the world of death. For death is not of the real world, in which everything reflects the eternal.” (T-12.III.8:1-3)↩

### Paragraph 3

<sup>3</sup> The text explains that the Holy Spirit is the Answer to all problems you have made. <sup>2</sup>These problems are not true, but that is meaningless to those who believe in them. <sup>3</sup>And everyone believes in what he made, for it was made by his believing it. <sup>4</sup>Into this strange and paradoxical situation—one without meaning and devoid of sense, yet out of which no way seems possible—God has sent His Judgment to answer yours. <sup>5</sup>Gently His Judgment substitutes for yours. <sup>6</sup>And through this substitution is the un-understandable given understanding and release. <sup>7</sup>How is peace possible in this world? <sup>8</sup>In your judgment it is not possible and can never be possible. <sup>9</sup>But in the Judgment of God what is reflected here is only peace.

In 3:1, Jesus refers to the Text, specifically to this passage:

“I said before that the Holy Spirit is the Answer. He is the Answer to everything, because He knows what the answer to everything is” (T-8.IX.1:1-2 (FIP), T-8.VIII.8:1-2 (CE)).

Our access to the flawless judgment of God is through the Holy Spirit (3:1). He is the inner Voice for God we can choose to listen to instead of making judgments on our own. He is “the Answer to everything,” particularly to any problems we face. Jesus says the problems are not genuine, that is, illusory. But, as is so often the case, he acknowledges that because we believe in the problems, there must be (for us) an Answer (3:2). Understandably, we believe in the reality of the problems because we made the problems by believing in them (3:3). Simply put, the fact that we see problems proves that we believe in them. If we didn't believe, there would be no problems.

The situation is “strange,” “paradoxical,” “without meaning,” and “devoid of sense,” and nevertheless, there seems to be no way out of it (3:4). We make the problems by believing them into existence and then try to escape from them as if they were real, an effort doomed to failure. The problems are our judgment on the world around us, but God has sent us the Holy Spirit — His Judgment to answer ours (3:4).

This substitution of His Judgment for ours is a gentle, subtle process (3:5). God does not overwhelm us, force His will upon us, or violate us. God is not violent. This theme makes me think of the old gospel hymn:

“Softly and gently, Jesus is calling, calling to you and to me...Come home! You who are weary, come home!”

It is a gentle substitution. The Truth of Oneness, the only wholly understandable picture of All That Is, is slowly released into our understanding (3:6). The imaginary world of pain, strife, and difficulty gradually evaporates out of our perception. and we find perfect peace.

Giving up judgment is the only way peace becomes possible in this world (3:7). As long as we cling to our private judgments, peace “is not possible and can never be possible” (3:8). Yet when we come to share Christ's vision, which sees God's Judgment of “very good” everywhere, only peace is possible (3:9):

"God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31 ESV).

Or, as the Manual put it earlier:

One who shares Christ's vision "puts himself in a position where judgment through him rather than by him can occur. And this judgment is neither 'good' nor 'bad.' It is the only judgment there is, and it is only one: 'God's Son is guiltless, and sin does not exist.'" (M-10:9-11 (CE))

Imagine seeing a world in which sin does not exist, where everyone is guiltless, where the whole of creation is "very good" in your perception! Do you see how this makes peace inevitable?

## Paragraph 4

4 Peace is impossible to those who look on war. 2Peace is inevitable to those who offer peace. 3How easily, then, is your judgment of the world escaped! 4It is not the world that makes peace seem impossible. 5It is the world you see that is impossible. 6Yet has God's Judgment on this distorted world redeemed it and made it fit to welcome peace. 7And peace descends on it in joyous answer. 8Peace now belongs here because a Thought of God has entered. 9What else but a Thought of God turns hell to Heaven merely by being what It is? 10The earth bows down before Its gracious presence, and It leans down in answer to raise it up again. 11Now is the question different. 12It is no longer "Can peace be possible here?" but instead "Is it not impossible that peace be absent here?"

If what you see around you is war, it's impossible to be at peace (4:1). If all you have to offer everyone is peace, your inner peace is inevitable (4:2). To "look on war" means, I think, perceiving other people (at least many people) as enemies whose interests are separate from your own. You see people as separate, opponents or competitors, not as parts of the Self you share with them. When potential threats surround you, how can you be at peace? That makes perfect sense; we can understand that idea. The sticking point for us is the Course's assertion that our minds' choice determines whether or not we see things as threats.

We think that the world around us is what makes it impossible to be at peace. Not so, says the Course (4:4). No; "It is the world you see that is impossible" (4:5). The world we see around us every day, with conflict on every side, *cannot exist*. It cannot be real. The reasoning is something like this: God created everything that exists. God would never create hatred, attack, or war. Therefore, if we see such things, they must be hallucinations made up by our minds.

I'm not exaggerating what the Course says. Consider these passages:

"What God did not create does not exist. And everything that does exist exists as He created it. The world you see has nothing to do with reality. It is of your own making, and it does not exist" (W-14.1:2-5 (CE)).

“God did not create that war in [Ukraine], and so it is not real.” (W-14;4:5)

“If God knows His children as wholly sinless, it is blasphemous to perceive them as guilty. If God knows His children as wholly without pain, it is blasphemous to perceive suffering anywhere. If God knows His children to be wholly joyous, it is blasphemous to feel depressed. All these illusions, and the many other forms which blasphemy may take, are refusals to accept creation as it is. If God created His Son perfect, that is how you must learn to see him to learn his reality” (T-10.V.12:1-5 CE).

“The world you see is an illusion of a world. God did not create it, for what He creates must be eternal as Himself” (C-4..Int.1:1-2 (FIP)).

“The world stands like a block before Christ's face. But true perception looks on it as nothing more than just a fragile veil, so easily dispelled that it can last no longer than an instant” (C-4..Int.4:1-2 (FIP)).

“You are not the victim of the world you see because you invented it. You can give it up as easily as you made it up. You will see it or not see it, as you wish. While you want it, you will see it; when you no longer want it, it will not be there for you to see” (W-32.1:2-5 (CE)).

“What if you recognized this world is a hallucination? What if you really understood you made it up? What if you realized that those who seem to walk about in it, to sin and die, attack and murder and destroy themselves, are wholly unreal? Could you have faith in what you see if you accepted this? And would you see it? Hallucinations disappear when they are recognized for what they are” (T-20.VIII.5:1-6 (CE)).

The world we see isn't going to disappear any time soon; our eyes won't stop seeing what we see. What will change is that we won't “have faith” in what we see. What happens is that we can see everyone as guiltless, no matter what they appear to do. The crimes and atrocities our eyes show will not faze us because we know they are unreal. The world becomes “a fragile veil” blocking our vision of the Real World. When we have thoroughly cleansed our minds of our desire for separateness, we will no longer want the sinful world and will no longer see it.

As I write this, the world is horrified at what we see happening in Ukraine. Does it seem callous to affirm: “God did not create the war in Ukraine, and so it is not real”? Is it naïve to say that no one has died, that nothing has been lost? Does it seem possible to you that “when you no longer want it, it will not be there for you to see”?

It isn't easy. Nevertheless, I believe the Course calls us to deny the reality of all the horror in this world. It asks us to recognize and believe that God could not create anything like this; it is of our own making and does not exist. It asks us to look upon everything in this world with forgiveness. Only as we can forgive the world we see will the Real World appear:

“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" (T-17.II.5:1-6:2 (CE)).

## 12. How Many Teachers of God Are Needed to Save the World?

### Paragraph 1

The answer to this question is "one." 2 One wholly perfect teacher, whose learning is complete, suffices. 3 This one, sanctified and redeemed, becomes the Self Who is the Son of God. 4 He who was always wholly spirit now no longer sees himself as a body or even as in a body. 5 Therefore, he is limitless, and being limitless, his thoughts are joined with God's forever and ever.<sup>3</sup> 7 His perception of himself is based upon God's Judgment, not his own. 8 Thus does he share God's will and bring His thoughts to still deluded minds. 9 He is forever one, because He is as God created him. 10 He has accepted Christ, and he is saved.

The first sentence answers the question posed in the chapter title: It takes just one teacher of God to save the world. In a way, it is a trick question because there is only one Son of God: "God has but one Son, knowing them all as one" (T-9.VI.3:5)". There are two possible interpretations that I can see:

The first person to wake up to our true Identity as Son of God opens the path back for all of us and "activates" the One Son, guaranteeing the full awakening of the entire Sonship. Possibly, Jesus was that person.

Each of our seemingly individual awakenings is a part of the One Son waking up.

In either case, it does away with any idea that we have to wait for a certain number of people to wake up to enable the world's salvation. "One wholly perfect teacher, whose learning is complete, suffices (1:2)." That sounds like it might have been Jesus, but possibly others preceded him. All it takes to trigger the inevitable universal awakening is one person who awakes. She, or he, takes on the identity of "the Self Who is the Son of God" (1:3). (I'm going to use "\_they\_" to avoid repeating "\_he or she\_" over and over.) They have always been "wholly spirit" (1:4), as have we all. But this wholly awakened

<sup>3</sup> As of April, 2022, there is no sentence #6 in this paragraph because two sentences in the previous versions were joined into one sentence here, and the numbering was not corrected. It may be corrected in a future edition.



being no longer sees itself "as a body or even as in a body." They are limitless, and their thoughts are unified with God's thoughts forever.

I've read a few accounts by people who have had such experiences. They speak of being one with the earth, with the sky, and with the stars. Many people who have had near-death experiences report "looking back" on their bodies and, at that moment, knowing they were not bodies nor in bodies. It's easy to see how such an experience would transform how you viewed everything when you returned to "life" in the world. Likewise, people have recorded being in the Light and seeing themselves as part of it, learning that they are guiltless in God's sight. They have learned to judge themselves as God judges them (1:7): "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." In the Bible, that line is associated with Jesus at the time of his baptism by John the Baptist. He heard those words spoken to him by God. I believe that was the moment of his awakening. It is a moment that awaits every one of us. Knowing the truth of His Being, Jesus was able to bring that truth "to still deluded minds" (1:8), as he has done in this Course.

There is only one Son; therefore, it only takes one teacher of God to save the world. This Son is "forever one"; He remains exactly as God created Him (1:9). This one Son has already "accepted Christ" and "is saved" (1:10). The phrasing here is the same as the words used by evangelical Christians: "Have you accepted Christ? Have you been saved?" However, the meaning the Course gives to these words is quite different. Here, it means accepting Christ as your true identity and being saved from the illusion of being a separate being among billions of other separate beings. In "born-again" Christianity, accepting Christ means accepting Jesus as your personal Savior from hell through his death on the cross, while being "saved" means "saved from hell and bound for Heaven after you die."

## Paragraph 2

2 Thus does the son of man become the Son of God. 2 It is not really a change; it is a change of mind. 3 Nothing external alters, but everything internal now reflects only the love of God. 4 God can no longer be feared, for the mind sees no cause for punishment. 5 God's teachers appear to be many, for that is the world's need. 6 Yet being joined in one purpose, and one they share with God, how could they be separate from each other? 7 What does it matter if they then appear in many forms? 8 Their minds are one; their joining is complete. 9 And God works through them now as one, for that is what they are.

In the Course, being "saved" means that you who believed you were a mere individual, a tiny speck of humanity living for a brief time on the planet, have realized that you are an eternal being, the Son of God, one with God Himself (2:1). Nothing outward has changed — just a change in your mind (2:2). "Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all" (W-188.1:4). What is outside of you — the world you see — has not changed, but \*how\* you see it has undergone a radical change. Now, everything you see reflects the love of God (2:3). You no longer fear any punishment from God because you no longer see any "sin" to merit it, in either yourself or the world (2:4).

“How many teachers of God are needed”? Only one. It seems as if there are many of them, but the apparent many are all the One. As we look around in the world, with eyes open to the truth in whatever form it takes, we can see many people who seem to be teachers of God. Perhaps not as many as we'd like to see, but more than a few. The diversity of teachers is as the world needs things to be (2:5). The world of illusion people believe in is separated into billions of people, separated by both time and space. Teachers in many forms, many times, and many places are needed to reach them all. But these many teachers are not separate from one another. They share one purpose with one another and with God, and they are not separate from each other (2:6); they are One. If you share their purpose, you are one with them as well. The multiplicity of forms is irrelevant (2:7). They have all recognized their union with the divine Son. Their minds are one (2:8). God is working through them all “as one, for that is what they are” (2:9). As the Bible says:

“...it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”  
(Philippians 2:13 (ESV))

The unity of all God's teachers was expressed earlier in the Text:

Teachers of innocence, each in his own way, have joined together, taking their part in the unified curriculum of the Atonement. There is no unity of learning goals apart from this. There is no conflict in this curriculum, which has one aim, however it is taught. Each effort made on its behalf is offered to the single purpose of release from guilt, to the eternal glory of God and His creation. And every teaching that points to this points straight to Heaven and to the peace of God. There is no pain, no trial, no fear that teaching this can fail to overcome. The power of God Himself supports this teaching, and guarantees its limitless results (T-14.VII.5:1-7 (CE))

Perhaps what unites them is that they are all “teachers of innocence.” They are all teaching that “the Son of God is guiltless,” despite the many seemingly competing ways they may teach it. If you recall, Chapter 1 told us that there are many different forms of teachers of God, but they all teach the same one lesson:

“The form of the course varies greatly. So do the particular teaching aids involved. But the content of the course never changes. Its central theme is always, “God's Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation.” It can be taught by actions or thoughts; in words or soundlessly; in any language or in no language; in any place or time or manner” (M-1.3:2-6 (FIP)).

### Paragraph 3

3 Why is the illusion of many necessary? 2 Only because reality is not understandable to the deluded. 3 Only a very few can hear God's Voice at all, and even they cannot communicate His messages directly through the Spirit Which gave them. 4 They need a medium through which communication becomes possible to those who do not realize that they are spirit. 5 A body they can see. 6 A voice they understand and listen to without the fear the truth would find in them. 7 Do not forget that truth can come only where it is welcomed without fear. 8 So do God's teachers need a body, for their unity could not be recognized directly.

*Notice* the assumption here that the wide variety among God's teachers is necessary (3:1). Underlying that assertion is the idea that the way things are in the world is under God's control.

I love the Course's explanation of why it is necessary to have the illusion of many different teachers of God: "Reality is not understandable to the deluded" (3:1–2). Reality is One, and in the end, everyone will see that. However, the world's many illusions require, for now, that people hear the truth in many different ways.

There are many forms of teachers because their variety is necessary. Depending on where a person is in their psychological, emotional, and spiritual development, different forms of teaching are required to reach them. The Course makes no bones about the superiority of its approach. It tells us that its path is the most direct one; it will save us considerable time versus other spiritual paths. But it never belittles other forms of the universal course. They all have their place in God's Plan. One of my sons is a devout fundamentalist Christian and has been for most of his 53 years. He's not about to change as far as I can tell. Do I think he, or I, made a mistake somehow? No. I think he is right where he needs to be. I rejoice that his spirituality means so much to him!

Very few people "can hear God's Voice at all." (3:3). Those few who hear confront the challenge of communicating what they hear inwardly, in spirit, to people who don't even have a clue that they *have* a spirit. Communicating with their spirits isn't even an option. The communication has to reach them in a form and terms they understand: "a body they can see," "a voice they understand and listen to without the fear the truth would find in them" (3:4–6).

That last phrase is critically important (3:6): "without the fear the truth would find in them." This fear is the reason for so many different forms of teaching. To a deluded mind, a direct confrontation with the truth of oneness, the unreality of the physical universe and sin, or the error of defensiveness, could generate intense fear. Ways around this are needed, ways to gently lead and shepherd people out of their deluded thinking and to make the truth seem at least possible and even attractive to them. Some people, for instance, are comforted by the idea that God will eventually punish evildoers. The idea that God does not judge "sin" would cause them distress.

Imagine getting a staunch fundamentalist Christian to read and appreciate A Course in Miracles. They would run from it and call it heresy. If you come from a traditional

Christian background, you may have had adverse reactions like this when you first encountered the Course, although if you've made it this far, I think you must have been ready. But for many people, the Course is not the best introduction to truth. The truth will not come to a person who meets it with fear (3:7). Our bodies are not real, but if a disembodied voice began speaking to you, you'd probably freak out! So “God's teachers need a body” (3:8), even though bodies are not part of the truth.

## Paragraph 4

4 Yet what makes them God's teachers is their recognition of the proper purpose of the body. 2 As they advance in their profession, they become more and more certain that the body's function is but to let God's Voice speak through it to human ears. 3 And these ears will carry to the mind of the hearer messages which are not of this world, and the mind will understand them because of their Source. 4 From this understanding will come the recognition, in this new teacher of God, of what the body's purpose is; the only use there really is for it. 5 This lesson is enough to let the thought of unity come in, and what is one is recognized as one. 6 The teachers of God appear to share the illusion of separation, but because of what they use the body for, they do not believe in the illusion, despite appearances.

Teachers of God recognize that the only function of a body is “to let God's Voice speak through it to human ears” (4:1–2). At first they may not be clear about this, but the realization grows more certain as they mature as teachers. As their spoken messages reach the ears of their pupils, the pupils ears will transmit to their minds messages that do not come from this world. The minds of the pupils will understand those words because of their divine Source (4:3), a Source that the words and the minds have in common.

As a result, the person hearing the message begins to realize that the purpose of his or her body is to communicate this truth to others; they become teachers of God in their turn (4:4). This leads to a third recognition: the realization that all teachers of God are one. Recall back in 3:8 it said bodies were required because “their unity could not be recognized directly.” That recognition of unity comes about through an indirect process: words from one person penetrate the mind and understanding of another person, who realizes the only purpose of their body is to communicate this truth, just as their teacher did.

Speaking to us as teachers of God, Lesson 155 tells us, “And the ones who walk the world as you do recognize their own” (W-155.,1:4). Teachers of God recognize one another, even when the forms are different. The Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu knew their oneness despite the fact that one was an Anglican Bishop and the other a Buddhist monk. The truth the Course speaks of is the perennial philosophy that runs like a golden thread through all the major religions of the world. Mystics of every background arrive at the same revelations of truth.

All these teachers seem to “share the illusion of separation.” They are in bodies that appear to be separate, but despite appearances, they do not believe in the illusion. They have become one in realizing what their bodies are for.(4:6).

## Paragraph 5

5 The central lesson is always this: that what you use the body for, it will become to you. 2 Use it for sin or for attack, which is the same as sin, and you will see it as sinful. 3 Because it is sinful it is weak, and being weak, it suffers and it dies. 4 Use it for purposes of bringing the Word of God to those who have It not, and the body becomes holy. 5 Because it is holy it cannot be sick, nor can it die. 6 When its usefulness is done it is laid by, and that is all. 7 The mind makes this decision, as it makes all decisions which are responsible for the body's condition. 8 Yet the teacher of God does not make this decision alone. 9 To do that would be to give the body another purpose from the one that keeps it holy. 10 God's Voice will tell him when he has fulfilled his role, just as It tells him what his function is. 11 He does not suffer either in going or remaining. 12 Sickness is now impossible to him.

This paragraph brings the topic back to sickness and health. The “central lesson” (5:1) Jesus is attempting to get across here is that what you use your body for determines your health, or lack of it. Your use of the body determines what it becomes to you. There are two alternative uses he mentions:

1. Attack (which is the same thing as sin) (5:2)
2. Communicating God's Word to others (5:4)

When I use my body to attack someone (a verbal attack is still using the body) I will judge my body for it. I will feel guilty, at least subconsciously, and will mentally punish my body. I will cause it to become weak, to be sick, and to die (5:2–3).

If I use my body to bring “the Word of God to those who have It not” (5:4), and I will see my body as a holy thing. Being holy “it cannot be sick, nor can it die” (5:5).

This black or white picture sums up the Course's unique understanding of sickness and health. To the degree our minds believe in sin, we experience weakness and sickness because we blame our bodies for our sins, and choose to punish them. The idea crops up repeatedly:

“Sickness is anger taken out upon the body, so that it will suffer pain”  
(T-28.VI.5:1 (CE))

“Do not be confused about what must be healed, but tell yourself:

I have forgotten what I really am,  
for I mistook my body for myself.  
Sickness is a defense against the truth.  
But I am not a body.  
And my mind cannot attack.  
So I cannot be sick.” (T-31.IX.21:2–2 (CE))

The near universality of sickness says a lot about the mental state of the human race!

As for death, in 5:3 we read that when we see the body as sinful it becomes weak, suffers, and dies. Earlier, in the Text, it said something a bit different:

“The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life.”  
“ (T-6.VII.1:4 (CE))

When it says in 5:3 that the body dies, I believe it is speaking about the apparent death. Bodies cease being animated and begin to decay; it appears that life was in them and has departed. The statement from the Text views the body as a kind of flesh-and-bone suit we put on and then lay aside. It was never truly alive, any more than a suit of clothing is alive. Elsewhere it says the body cannot be sick, although it appears to be:

”A sick body does not make any sense. It could not make any sense, since sickness is not what it is for. Sickness is meaningful only if the two basic premises on which the ego’s interpretation of the body rests are true. These are specifically: first, that the body is for attack, and second, that you are a body. Without this, sickness is completely inconceivable.“ (T-8.VII.7:3–7 (CE))

”Only perception can be sick, because only perception can be wrong.  
“ (T-8.VIII.2:3 (CE))

”Your perception of the body can clearly be sick, but project this not upon the body.“ (T-18.VI.5:3 (CE))

”And the body will seem to be sick, for you have made of it an 'enemy' of healing and the opposite of truth.“ (T-19.I.4:6 (CE))

We may wonder about the fact that everyone's body appears to die. The next sentence, 5:6, clarifies. It does not die; it is simply laid aside, no longer useful, just as we discard an old set of work clothes. The Song of Prayer puts it like this:

”Yet there is a kind of seeming death that has a different source. It does not come because of hurtful thoughts and raging anger at the universe. It merely signifies the end has come for usefulness of body functioning. And so it is discarded as a choice, as one lays by a garment now outworn.

This is what death should be; a quiet choice, made joyfully and with a sense of peace, because the body has been kindly used to help the Son of God along the way he goes to God. We thank the body, then, for all the service it has given us. But we are thankful, too, the need is done to walk the world of limits”  
(S-3.II.1:8-2:3 (FIP)).

Laying the body aside is a decision of the mind, because the mind “makes all decisions which are responsible for the body's condition” (5:7). Deciding to lay aside the body isn't entirely the decision of the teacher of God. It is a joint decision with the Holy Spirit, as all decisions should be. If we made it by ourselves we would be serving some unholy purpose “because of hurtful thoughts and raging anger at the universe”, some goal of the ego. I think suicides fall into this category. God's Voice will tell us when the time has come, our function here completed (5:10). There is no suffering for such a mature teacher of God who has learned to use their body solely to communicate Truth to those who lack It. Both his life in this world and his departure from it are free of suffering

(5:11). For such a saint (I use the word purposively; this is speaking of an advanced spiritual state). sickness is impossible (5:12).

## Paragraph 6

6 Oneness and sickness cannot coexist. 2 God's teachers choose to look on dreams a while. 3 It is a conscious choice, for they have learned that all choices are made consciously, with full awareness of their consequences. 4 The dream says otherwise, but who would put his faith in dreams once they are recognized for what they are? 5 Awareness of dreaming is the real function of God's teachers. 6 They watch the dream figures come and go, shift and change, suffer and die, yet they are not deceived by what they see. 7 They recognize that to behold a dream figure as sick and separate is no more real than to behold it as healthy and beautiful. 8 Unity alone is not a thing of dreams. 9 And it is this God's teachers acknowledge as behind the dream, beyond all seeing and yet surely theirs.

When a person becomes part of Oneness, sickness cannot exist in them (6:1). We are speaking here of a bodhisattva, which Buddhism defines as “a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings” (lexico.com). Such a person could leave the material world behind at any time but chooses “to look on dreams a while” (6:2), that is, they choose to remain in the world of illusions and bodies in order to “bring the Word of God” to unenlightened beings.

They make this choice consciously; it does not just happen to them. Then, in the same sentence in which Jesus says this, he throws in a profound gem of wisdom which such saints have learned: “. . . all choices are made consciously, with full awareness of their consequences” (6:3). He adds, “The dream says otherwise” (6:4). Let this sink in. “All choices.” That includes every choice you have ever made. Every choice has been conscious. You have been fully aware of the consequences of every choice you've made. That may be hard to swallow, but if it is not true that would mean that you are a victim: some things were foisted upon you without your consent, and sometimes you were not aware of the devastating consequences of your unguided choices. This principle is really the mirror image of another hard saying:

“Say only this, but mean it with no reservations, for here the power of salvation lies:

I am responsible for what I see.

I chose the feelings I experience,

And I decided on the goal I would achieve.

And everything that seems to happen to me I asked for and received as I had asked.” (T.II.2:2–5 (CE))

The implication of this is that we must have chosen everything we experience. Perhaps—indeed, probably—we have conveniently forgotten that we made such a choice.

But in the moment, we knew. Consider this long discussion of how we choose our defenses and then forget them:

“Defenses are not unintentional, nor are they made without awareness. They are secret magic wands you wave when truth appears to threaten what you would believe. They seem to be unconscious but because of the rapidity with which you choose to use them. In that second, even less, in which the choice is made, you recognize exactly what you would attempt to do, and then proceed to think that it is done.

”Who but yourself evaluates a threat, decides escape is necessary, and sets up a series of defenses to reduce the threat which has been judged as real? All this cannot be done unconsciously. But afterwards your plan requires that you must forget you made it, so it seems to be external to your own intent, a happening beyond your state of mind, an outcome with a real effect on you, instead of one effected by yourself.

“It is this quick forgetting of the part you play in making your “reality” which makes defenses seem to be beyond your own control. But what you have forgot can be remembered, given willingness to reconsider the decision which is doubly shielded by oblivion. Your not remembering is but the sign that this decision still remains in force as far as your desires are concerned.” (W-136.3:1-5:3 (CE))

We are all subject to such ”quick forgetting of the part [we] play in making [our] 'reality'.” In the moment, as I said before, we knew exactly what we were doing. If this is true, and I am sure it is, our lives must be densely populated by such episodes of mental erasure. I have had evidence of it in myself. There have been many times I have spoken words that hurt another person, but when confronted with the fact, have denied it. I've claimed I had no desire to defend myself or attack them. I was ”just stating an opinion“ or ”trying to explain“ or ”misunderstanding what you said.“ But, upon further consideration, I have become aware of less-than-noble motivation behind my words. In that split instant, I chose attack and knew I was doing it, but immediately pushed it out of my mind.

”The dream says otherwise.“ It tries to convince us that we are not responsible, that we do not choose the feeling we experience, nor do we ask for everything we receive. It argues that the world we see is utterly real, and utterly awful.

”But who would put his faith in dreams once they are recognized for what they are? “ (6:4). We must become aware of what we are doing, recognize our deliberate forgetting. In fact, this is our true function as God's teachers! ”Awareness of dreaming is the real function of God's teachers“ (6:5). We need to take responsibility for all our choices and to help everyone to do the same. We must become aware that we are all living in a dream—dream bodies in a dream world. All the bodies we see around us are dream figures. They ”come and go, shift and change, suffer and die.“

If this were real it would indeed be tragic. But the true teachers of God ”are not deceived by what they see“ (6:6). This awareness of dreaming is how it is possible to experience peace in this world. This is the answer to the question asked by Chapter 11. We recognize that sickness or ugliness is unreal, and so are health and beauty (6:7). Both



are only characteristics of our separate dream figures. Separateness is an illusion! "Unity alone is not a thing of dreams" (6:8). We see the constantly changing dream figures, but we always look past their changeableness to the unchanging Unity behind them all, invisible to our eyes but surely ours (6:9). We see the changeless in the heart of change.<sup>4</sup> Anchored in Unity, our peace is unshakeable. Once again I am reminded of a Christian hymn, seeing its words in a new light: "On [the Unity which is] Christ, the solid Rock, I stand. All other ground is sinking sand."

In his commentary on this section, Robert Perry sums things up nicely:

"This theme of unity runs throughout the section. The teachers of God devote their bodies to serving the cause of unity. This devotion unites them with all other teachers of God and lets them see the unity behind the multiplicity of different teachers' bodies. And this seeing is how they spend their days here—gazing on the unity that lies beyond all the shifting and changing bodies of this world and realizing it is "surely theirs" (6:11)."

<sup>4</sup> In speaking of returning from deep meditation, Lesson 122 advises us: "Let not your gifts recede throughout the day as you return again to meet a world of shifting change and bleak appearances. Retain your gifts in clear awareness as you see the changeless in the heart of change, the light of truth behind appearances. Be tempted not to let your gifts slip by and drift into forgetfulness, but hold them firmly in your mind (W-122.13:1-3 (CE))." ↩

### 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 Foundation for Inner Peace (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. 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.

### Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE Text restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

*FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.*

*CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.*