

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 19, Section III

### *The Unreality of Sin*

#### Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

*Italic sans serif text* = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

**Bold sans serif text** = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strike through sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

### Overview of the Section

Section III continues the discussion contrasting *sin* with *error*. It shows the connection of *guilt* with sin, and how the guilt actually makes sin attractive to the ego. Shifting our perception of sin to see it as error is key to being able to let go of our mistaken behaviors and to be healed. The section emphasizes that sin is *unreal*. Sin is “beyond the hope of healing” (8:1), but errors *can* be corrected. Our relationships are the temple of healing in which we learn to make the exchange of error for sin.

Incidentally, this is the section I was reading during my second pass through the Text, back in 1986 or 1987, when I suddenly realized that I was agreeing with what I read, and that my fundamentalist mindset, which held that everyone had a sinful nature, had been mysteriously undone and dissolved. “Someone has been messing with my mind!” I thought. I had not consciously *decided* that I no longer believed in the reality of sin. It had just happened.

### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>The attraction of guilt is found in sin, *not* error. <sup>2</sup>Sin will be repeated *because* of this attraction. <sup>3</sup>Fear can become so acute that the sin is denied the acting out. <sup>4</sup>But while the guilt *remains* attractive the mind will suffer, and not let go of the *idea* of **[the]** sin. <sup>5</sup>For guilt still calls to it, and the mind hears it and yearns for it, making itself a willing captive to its sick appeal. <sup>6</sup>Sin is an idea of evil that cannot *be* corrected, and yet will be forever *desirable*. <sup>7</sup>As an *essential* part of what the ego thinks you *are*, you will *always* want it. <sup>8</sup>And only an *avenger*, with a mind *unlike* your own, could stamp it out through *fear*.

## • Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 1 speaks of our attraction to sin. For instance, suppose you have an overpowering desire to verbally abuse someone. You can't help doing it over and over. What do you find so attractive, so desirable, about doing this?*
  - A. *It makes you feel vindicated over shadow figures.*
  - B. *It makes you feel a sense of triumph, of power.*
  - C. *It makes you feel guilty.*
  - D. *There is no reason.*

What causes us to repeat the things we know we should not do, such as pushing the buttons of people we love, lying, or over-eating? The thing that makes “sin” attractive to us, says the Course, is *guilt* (1:1–2). Most of us think that guilt is just an undesirable side-effect of the things we do. We judge and verbally attack people close to us, we think, because we are trying to get them to do what we want, or we are punishing them for what they did wrong. We lie to hide our misdeeds or to obtain some desirable goal. We eat because—well, hey!—it tastes good and feels good. But the real reason we repeat “sins,” according to Jesus in the Course, is that we *want to feel guilt*.

That's a key point, to be sure, but do not miss the secondary point Jesus makes here: The alternate way of *viewing* our misdeeds—as errors, not as mistakes—does *not* lead to guilt (1:1). And that is precisely the reason why we find it hard to look upon things as errors rather than as sins: Misdeeds without guilt is like food without calories, to our egos. To the ego, there is no point in doing something nasty if you don't feel guilty afterwards.

So, we keep on doing things and making ourselves feel guilty for it, because “guilt still calls” to our minds (1:5). Even if we *don't act out* the “sin” (1:3), we hold on to the *idea* of it (1:4). This reminds me of the words in the gospels about lusting after a woman being the same as actual adultery.<sup>1</sup> But, rather than making the thought as sinful as the deed, the indication here is that it is our *mind* that holds on to the *idea* of “sin.” Although we don't act it out we still think of it as “sinful,” and therefore guilt-inducing, because our mind “yearns” for guilt and willingly makes itself captive to guilt, which is sin's “sick appeal” (1:5). Guilt is what keeps the ego alive.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes our yearning for guilt takes

<sup>1</sup> “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28 NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> We have encountered the idea of guilt's attractiveness to the ego several times already in the Course: See T-13.I.2:5; T-15.VII.2:5-7; T-15.VII.3; T-15.VII.10:4; T-15.IX.6:2–4; T-16.V.9:1; and T-16.VI.3.

The basic idea is that the ego *is* the idea of separation, and guilt seems to prove that we *are* separate from God. Thus, “Without guilt the ego has no life” (T-13.I.2:5) and, “Guilt is the only need the ego has” (T-15.VII.10:4). Robert's ACIM glossary entry on guilt says this:

“Yet guilt is purely an ego device for arrogantly demonstrating that we are separate from God and should fear Him. Guilt maintains the ego's existence. For this reason, the ego is attracted to guilt (see attraction of guilt). Thus, the ego tells us to “sin” in order to obtain certain pleasures, to attack in order to find safety, and to project guilt onto others in order to rid ourselves of guilt. Yet the real motivation behind all of these, and their real result, is the accumulation of more guilt. Since guilt is the only thing that keeps

the form of yearning to see guilt *in others*, but that is just a projection of our *own* yearning for guilt:

“You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own. Whatever form his sins appear to take, it but obscures the fact that you believe them to be yours, and therefore meriting a “just” attack (T-31.III.1:5-6).

The yearning for guilt is almost certainly *unconscious*. If it were conscious, we’d realize how undesirable it is and let it go. The next section, “The Obstacles to Peace,” delves into the several layers of camouflage the ego uses to hide its agenda from our conscious minds.

Sentence 6 defines well what the Course means by “sin”: It is some “evil” thing that I, or someone, has done, that *cannot be corrected*, but which—because of the ego’s peculiar insane, hidden need for guilt—“will be forever *desirable*” (1:6). Here, again, we need to note the contrast with “error”—something that *is* correctable. The ego is the belief that we have successfully separated ourselves from God, which of course is a “sin,” but also “an *essential* part of what the ego thinks you *are*” (1:7). Therefore, as long as we identify with the ego (i.e., believe that we are separate from God, that we exist independent from God), we “will *always* want it,” that is, want “sin” (1:7). We’re stuck with wanting it and repeating it, unless there is some terrifying person or being (a super parent? God?) who can “scare the hell” out of us by threat of punishment (1:8). Of course, that is exactly what traditional religion has invented: a punishing God. One British Christian writer I know of once wrote: “If I have never been a blackguard, the reason is a mixture of cowardice and the protection of civilized life.” I mention that he was British because the word “blackguard” is not one you commonly run into in American writing; it means “a person who behaves in a particularly dishonorable or contemptible way.” What he is saying is that the only reason we don’t “sin” is because of the fear of being caught and punished or rejected by civilized society.

That, I believe, is what the Course means here. The ego believes and tries to convince us that the only thing that keeps us reined in is *fear of punishment*. The doctrine of original sin, which declares we are all born with a sinful nature, is a blatant form of this ego error.

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The ego does not think it possible that love, *not* fear, is really called upon by sin, *and always answers*. <sup>2</sup>For the ego brings sin to *fear*, demanding punishment. <sup>3</sup>Yet punishment is but another form of guilt’s *protection*, for what is *deserving* punishment must have been *really done*. <sup>4</sup>Punishment is always the great *preserver* of sin, treating it with respect and honoring its enormity. <sup>5</sup>What must be punished, *must be true*. <sup>6</sup>And what is true *must* be eternal, and *will* be repeated endlessly. <sup>7</sup>For what you think is real *you want*, and will *not* let it go.

us from God, the journey home consists entirely of teaching and learning the unreality of guilt through forgiveness.”

• Study Question •

2. Each time after you verbally abuse this person, you feel a compulsion to somehow punish yourself. Perhaps you do it by acting really apologetic, or by making some magnanimous sacrifice on this person's behalf, or by inwardly berating yourself, or by getting drunk. Why are you punishing yourself, according to this paragraph?
- A. As a way of getting the other person to not abandon you.
  - B. In order to pay your dues for your "sin" so you can feel clean again.
  - C. Because your sense of justice demands your punishment.
  - D. In order to prove that you really are guilty and really did sin.
  - E. B and C.

My ego is convinced that my sins call forth fear of punishment, but the truth is that these so-called sins are really a call for love (2:1). What is true of me is true for everyone. God's response to our misbehavior is never anger and punishment, but *always love*. It is not God, but the ego, that believes that sins demand punishment, resulting in fear (2:2). We may think that punishment can alleviate guilt. If I have done something bad, but I've been punished for it, I believe that I will now be free of guilt. However, the notion of punishment actually *helps* to maintain the illusion of guilt, because "what is *deserving* punishment must have been *really done*" (2:3). Punishment makes sin real: "What must be punished, *must be true*" (2:3-5).

Then, the ego's logic appropriates the truth to support its insanity: Since what is true "*must be eternal*" (and that's true), *sin* must be eternal, and "*will be repeated endlessly*" (2:6). In other words, you *really* are a sinner, deserving of hell, and your very nature is infected with sin. You *want* to sin, and will sin again and again (2:6-7). If you think of your bad deeds as "sins," you can't escape; you are on your way to hell, or at least to some kind of punishment.

Ask yourself honestly if you have ever had thoughts along that line. Have you never felt that you *deserved* to be punished, to suffer in some way? Have you never despaired of ever being able to break a bad habit? Your ego is always trying to convince you that your sin is real, that you are bad, that you have missed the mark and never will learn to be better.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans Chapter 7, expresses this so clearly! I believe he was writing, not from his *present* experience, but from the perspective of an ego-driven individual, in the same tone and intent as this section of the Text (see boxed text).

7:14-20 - After all, the Law itself is really concerned with the spiritual - it is I who am carnal, and have sold my soul to sin. In practice, what happens? My own behaviour baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don't want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. But it cannot be said that "I" am doing them at all - it must be sin that has made its home in my nature. (And indeed, I know from experience that the carnal side of my being can scarcely be called the home of good!) I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. Yet if I do things that I don't really want to do then it is not, I repeat, "I" who do them, but the sin which has made its home within me.

7:21-25 - When I come up against the Law I want to do good, but in practice I do evil. My conscious mind whole-heartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death. It is an agonising situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Romans 7:14-25, New Testament in Modern English*, J. B. Phillips, translator).

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>An *error*, on the other hand, is *not* attractive. <sup>2</sup>What you see clearly *as a mistake* you *want* corrected. <sup>3</sup>Sometimes a sin can be repeated over and over, with *obviously* distressing results, but *without* the loss of its appeal. <sup>4</sup>And suddenly, you change its status from a sin to a *mistake*. <sup>5</sup>Now you will *not* repeat it; you will merely stop and let it go, *unless the guilt remains*. <sup>6</sup>For then you will but change the *form* of sin, granting that it was an error, but *keeping it uncorrectable*. <sup>7</sup>This is not really a change in your perception, for it is *sin* that calls for punishment, *not error*.

#### • Study Question •

3. *No matter how distressing the results, you keep verbally abusing this person, over and over. According to this paragraph, how do you finally stop?*
- A. *You become so afraid of being avenged that you stop.*
  - B. *You decide that it wasn't a sin, only an error.*
  - C. *You punish yourself so severely that you decide never to do it again.*

By contrast with a “sin,” which keeps drawing you back for the guilt, “an error... is *not* attractive” (3:1). When you make a *mistake*, you *want* to correct it and have done with it (3:2). Nobody *wants* to keep making the same mistake over and over! But with “sin,” it’s quite possible, even likely, that you will repeat it “over and over, with *obviously* distressing results,” and yet still return to it again and again (3:3). I’m sure all of us can think of several examples of both kinds of thing from our own lives.

Jesus says here that when we “change its status from a sin to a *mistake*” (3:4) I will stop repeating it; I’ll simply stop doing it (3:5). So the question is, really: *How* do I convert what I see as “sin” into seeing it as a mistake, so it can be corrected and ended? It must be a clear-cut change of perception. The indicator of whether or not my perception has truly changed will be the presence or absence of *guilt* about the act in question. If the guilt remains, my perception hasn’t really shifted (3:5). I may have changed the *label* I put on the act. I may *call* it a mistake instead of a sin, but if guilt is present, asking for or fearing punishment, it’s proof that I still believe it is a sin! If I still feel guilty I didn’t really change how I see it, regardless of the word I’m using. I’m still seeing it as

*uncorrectable* (3:6). When I truly perceive it as “just a mistake,” there is an entirely different feeling within my mind. A burden has lifted from my shoulders, and I feel free.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>The Holy Spirit *cannot* punish sin. <sup>2</sup>Mistakes He recognizes, and would correct them all as God entrusted Him to do. <sup>3</sup>But *sin* He knows not, nor can He *recognize* mistakes that cannot be corrected. <sup>4</sup>For a mistake that cannot be corrected is *meaningless* to Him. <sup>5</sup>Mistakes are *for* correction, and they call for *nothing else*. <sup>6</sup>What calls for punishment must call for *nothing*. <sup>7</sup>Yet *every* mistake *must* be a call for love. <sup>8</sup>What, then, is sin? <sup>9</sup>What *could* it be but a mistake you would keep hidden; a call for help that you would keep *unheard* and thus *unanswered*?

### • Study Question •

4. *What we think of as sins are really mistakes. So, when you were verbally abusing that person, what was your action really calling for?*
- A. *Love.*
  - B. *Punishment.*
  - C. *Correction.*
  - D. *A and B.*
  - E. *A and C.*
  - F. *All of the above.*

The Holy Spirit can't punish sin *because He does not see sin—ever!* (4:1, 3). He sees our mistakes, and wants to fulfill the purpose given to Him by God to “correct them all” (4:2). And there *are* no mistakes that can't be corrected (4:3); the concept of an “uncorrectable mistake” is meaningless to the Holy Spirit (4:4). Mistakes exist for one reason only: to be corrected (4:5). They do not call for judgment, attack, or punishment; they call for loving correction, and nothing else (4:5, 7). It is a call for love, as was mentioned back in 2:1.

Nothing exists that calls for punishment, and there is no punishment (4:6). So, what is “sin,” which *seems* to call for punishment (4:8)? It is nothing but a misperceived mistake! A mistake that, being attached to your ego, you want to keep hidden for the guilt it offers. You don't *want* it to be corrected because your ego craves the guilt it brings (4:9).

**Note:** In what is the next paragraph in the FIP edition of the Text, two additional paragraphs that were present in the Urtext have been deliberately omitted by the editors (Helen Schucman and Ken Wapnick). Ken Wapnick relates that Helen received instruction from Jesus to do so. To me it appears very valuable, and helps to understand the “difference between time and eternity” referred to in 5:2. Therefore, I have included it here. I have broken the resulting text into four paragraphs, with commentary after each.

## Paragraph 5

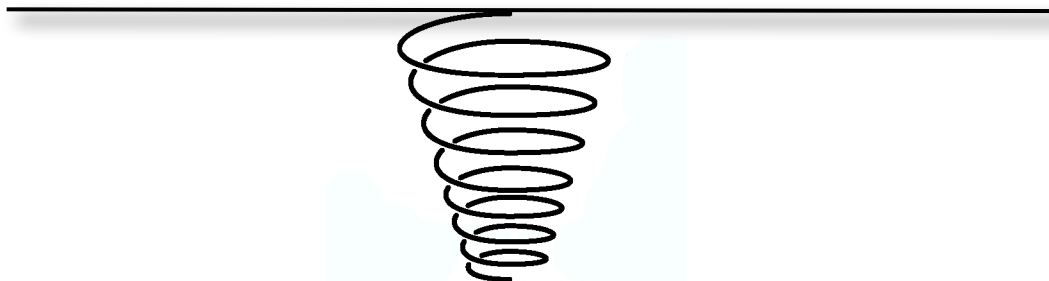
5. <sup>1</sup>In time, the Holy Spirit *clearly* sees the Son of God can make mistakes. <sup>2</sup>On this you *share* His vision. <sup>3</sup>Yet you do *not* share His recognition of the difference between time and eternity. **[The Holy Spirit knows that time is for correction.]** <sup>4</sup>And when correction is completed, time *is* eternity.

The Holy Spirit isn't naïve. He knows very well that we all make mistakes (5:1). To that extent we share His vision; we know darn well we screw things up now and then (5:2). Where our perceptions diverge is in our failure to recognize "the difference between time and eternity," which He sees quite clearly (5:3). We somehow believe that what is done in time can have eternal consequences. In fact, that is a fundamental premise of any religion that teaches the reality of an eternal hell.

Time's actual purpose, to the Holy Spirit, is "*for correction*" (5, Urtext between 3 and 4). Time exists to give us a chance to rid ourselves of all our mistakes! Time is for healing (T-9.III.8:3). Time is for learning to be perfectly at peace (T-15.I.1:1-2). Time is meant to restore the whole power of God to us (T-15.I.15:1-3). The purpose of time is to end the dream of sin and guilt (W-pI.pII.8.4:1-5:1). Once that occurs, time ceases, and only eternity exists (5:4).

**Time is like a downward spiral that seems to travel down from a long, unbroken line, along another plane, but which in no way breaks the line or interferes with its smooth continuousness. Along the spiral, it seems as if the line *must* have been broken. But at the *line*, its wholeness is apparent. Everything seen from the spiral is misperceived. But as you approach the line, you realize that *it* was not affected by the drop into another plane at all. But *from* this plane, the *line* seems discontinuous.**

Take a few moments to try to grasp the analogy that Jesus is presenting here. Picture eternity as a long, unbroken line, while time spirals down from it. The line is eternity; the spiral is time. Something like this:



Notice that the spiral does not break the line or interfere with its continuity in any way. We are situated on the spiral, and, looking up at the line (eternity), it seems as if the



line must have been broken, and branched off into time. From our perspective in time, we have lost sight of eternity. Eternity—an endless present—seems inconceivable. We believe that our detour into time has *broken* the perfection of eternity, and allowed us all, within time, to become infected and condemned by sin.

At the level of the line, however, “its wholeness is apparent.” As we approach the line we realize that *it* was not affected by the spiral offshoot. Likewise, the more our perception begins to perceive the eternal as real, and time as illusion, the perfection and pristine purity of eternity becomes more and more apparent, more and more certain.

**And this is but an error in perception, which can be easily corrected in the mind, although the body’s eyes will see no change. The eyes see many things the mind corrects, and you respond, not to the eyes’ illusions, but to the mind’s corrections. You see the line as broken, and as you shift to different aspects of the spiral, the line looks different. Yet in your mind is One Who knows it is unbroken and forever changeless.**

Our perception that the perfection of eternity has been lost is nothing but “an error in perception, which can be easily corrected *in the mind*, although the body’s eyes will see no change.” That’s an important statement, I think: “the body’s eyes will see no change.” We will continue to see bodies, to see apparently separate individuals making their unique mistakes. There will be screw-ups and mishaps and disasters. But those are what our *eyes* show us; our *minds* will correct our perception, like the way photo editing software can apply “effects” to our photos to enhance them and make them better than the original: objects become visible that were hidden in shadows, colors shift to be more vibrant, etc. Then, we respond, “*not to the eyes’ illusions, but to the mind’s corrections.*” We can recognize the call for love in apparent attacks, for instance. We can recognize the potential for wholeness in the most broken individual. The Holy Spirit in our minds is “One Who *knows*” the truth about each person, each situation, and can transform our perception to see what He sees.

<sup>5</sup>The Holy Spirit [This One] can teach you how to look on time differently and see *beyond* it, but *not* while you believe in sin. <sup>6</sup>In error, yes, for this *can* be corrected by the mind. <sup>7</sup>But sin is the belief that *your* perception is *unchangeable*, and that the *mind* must *accept as true* what it is told *through* it. <sup>8</sup>If it does not obey, the *mind* is judged insane. <sup>9</sup>The *only* power that could *change* perception is thus kept impotent, held to the body by the *fear* of changed perception which its Teacher, Who is one with it, would bring.

Sentence 5 then is clearly linked to the omitted section by the words, “This One,” referring to the Holy Spirit. As was just described, He can “teach you how to look on time differently and see *beyond* it,” beyond to eternity (5:5). However, if we continue to believe in sin, His teaching is blocked, because if sin is real it must be eternal and



endlessly repeated (2:6), never corrected. “Sin is the belief that *your* perception is *unchangeable*” (5:7), which rules out any possibility of changes to the way you see things. If we shift our perception to error instead, then yes, that *can* be corrected by the mind (5:6).

The belief that *what we see is fact* is extremely common. The Course teaches quite the opposite:

Perception is a choice and not a fact (T-21.V.1:7).

Perception is a mirror, not a fact. And what I look on is my state of mind, reflected outward (W-pII.304.1:3-4).

We think our perception cannot change because what we see is really what is there. Our mind just has to accept what our perception is telling us; we think that not to believe our eyes would mean we are insane (5:7–8). Belief that perception is fact, fixed and unchangeable, renders our minds (the only power that could change perception) “impotent” (5:9). The mind is “held to the body by the *fear* of changed perception.” This seems difficult to understand, but a look at the preceding context shows that what we are afraid of is that a mistake that we *want* to keep hidden, perceived as a sin (for the guilt it brings), would be shown to be nothing but a mistake, and no cause for guilt.

Change in perception can only come when we realize that we *can* see things differently and determine to do so (see Workbook lessons 21 and 28). We think we see “sins” in others or in ourselves, but the Holy Spirit can teach us to see differently *if* we are willing to give up the guilt.

• **Study Question** •

5. *The Holy Spirit can correct your perception so that you see time differently and see beyond it to eternity. Yet, going back to our example, as long as you believe that your verbal abuse is a sin, He cannot do this. Why (there may be more than one right answer)?*
  - A. *Because you believe that your perception of your behavior is unchangeable, which blocks correction of perception.*
  - B. *Because you are rendering your mind impotent.*
  - C. *Because you are afraid of changed perception.*
  - D. *Because you are afraid of the Holy Spirit and what He would bring to you.*

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## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>When you are tempted to believe that sin is real, remember this: If sin is real, both God *and you* are not. <sup>2</sup>If creation is *extension*, the Creator *must* have extended *Himself*, and it is impossible that what is *part* of Him is totally unlike the rest. <sup>3</sup>If sin is real, God must be at war ~~with Himself~~ [***within Himself***]. <sup>4</sup>*He* must be split, and torn between good and evil; partly sane and partially insane. <sup>5</sup>For He must have created what wills to destroy Him, *and has the power to do so*. <sup>6</sup>Is it not *easier* to believe that *you* have been mistaken than to believe in this?

### • Study Question •

6. *Paragraph 6* presents an argument for why, if sin is real, you and God are not. Not all the parts of the argument are present, it seems to me. I have tried to reconstruct the argument. We will say that the beginning premise is: "Since God created by extension, you, as His extension, must be part of Him." Please place the following parts of the argument in the right order.
- A. *If part of God is at war with Himself, then, God is at war with Himself.*
  - B. *If you are at war with God, part of God is at war with Himself.*
  - C. *The idea of sin implies that you are at war with God.*
  - D. *Therefore, if sin is real, then God (and you as part of God) cannot be real.*
  - E. *If God is at war with Himself, then He is a contradiction, and contradictions cannot be real.*

In an attempt to convince us why sin is not real, this paragraph presents two unbelievable conclusions that must be true if sin *is* real. First, "both God *and you* are not" (6:1); second, "God must be at war *within Himself*...torn between good and evil; sane and partially insane" (6:3–4). The second is really a subsidiary point, part of explaining the first.

"If sin is real, both God *and you* are not." Why is that so? Because God creates by extending Himself. Therefore, what is created cannot be unlike its Creator (6:2–3). If *you* are sinful, God must be sinful too. If you are split, torn between good and evil, God must be like that (6:3–4). He must be at war within Himself, part sane, part insane. He has created something that wills to destroy him and has the power to do it (6:5). God and you are both a mixture of incompatible components. To be *both* sane and insane, *both* good and evil, simply isn't possible. It is the description of something that does not exist. Therefore, *God and you don't exist!*

That is clearly nuts. You obviously *do exist*, as does God. Therefore, it's easier to believe that you are wrong to think that sin is real (6:6).

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>While you believe that *your* reality or *your brother's* is bounded by a body, you will believe in sin. <sup>2</sup>While you believe that *bodies* can unite, you will find guilt attractive and believe that sin is precious. <sup>3</sup>For the belief that bodies *limit [the]* mind leads to a perception of the world in which the *proof* of separation seems to be everywhere. <sup>4</sup>And God and His creation seem to be split apart and overthrown. <sup>5</sup>For sin would *prove* what God created holy could not prevail against it, nor remain *itself* before the power of sin. <sup>6</sup>Sin is perceived as mightier than God, before which God *Himself* must bow, and offer His creation to its conqueror. <sup>7</sup>Is this humility or madness?

### • Study Question •

7. *If you believe in the reality of bodies you will believe in the reality and attractiveness of sin. Why are bodies the apparent proof of sin?*
- A. *Because bodies are so naughty.*
  - B. *Because bodies seem to prove that the primordial sin of separation occurred.*
  - C. *Because bodies have so many sinful needs.*
  - D. *Because bodies are so miraculous, and in the incredible intelligence of their design and functioning, they seem to be mightier than God.*

To believe that anyone is limited to a body is to believe in sin (7:1): why? The answer is in 7:3: "The belief that bodies limit [the] mind leads to a perception of the world in which the proof of separation seems to be everywhere" (7:3). Look around you at all the billions of bodies, people with whom you seem *not* to be united. Doesn't that seem to "prove" that separation is real? But not if you refuse to believe that the mind is limited by bodies.

The second sentence about belief that bodies can unite leading to finding guilt attractive and sin precious goes back to earlier teaching in the Text about how, in the ego's form of special relationships, we use guilt to try to coerce love out of our partners.

"For the ego really believes that it can get and keep *by making guilty*. This is its one attraction; an attraction so weak that it would have no hold at all, except that no one recognizes it. For the ego always seems to attract through love, and has no attraction at all to anyone who perceives that it attracts through guilt" (T-15.VII.2:5-7).

"All anger is nothing more than an attempt to make someone feel guilty, and this attempt is the only basis the ego accepts for special relationships. Guilt is the only need the ego has, and as long as you identify with it, guilt will remain attractive to you. Yet remember this; to be with a body is not communication. And if you think it is, you will feel guilty about communication and will be afraid to hear the Holy

Spirit, recognizing in His Voice your own need to communicate" (T-15.VII.10:3-6).

So belief in bodies is leads to our belief in the reality of sin. We see separation everywhere, and try to use guilt as the cement in our relationships. We perceive many, many people as apparently separated from God, with God's good intentions in creation having been totally "overthrown" (7:4). His creation, created holy and One, has been corrupted and shattered into billions of separate parts by the power of sin, which therefore must be more powerful than God Himself (7:5–6). Is a belief in *this* any form of humility, or is it outright madness (7:7)?

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>If sin is **[were]** real, it must forever be beyond the hope of healing. <sup>2</sup>For there would be a power *beyond* God's, capable of making another will that could attack His Will and *overcome* it—and give His Son a will *apart* from His, and *stronger*. <sup>3</sup>And each part of ~~God's~~ **[His]** fragmented creation would have a *different* will, *opposed* to His, and in eternal opposition to Him *and to each other*. <sup>4</sup>Your holy relationship has, as its purpose now, the goal of proving *this* is impossible. <sup>5</sup>Heaven has smiled upon it, and the belief in sin has been uprooted in its smile of love. <sup>6</sup>You *see* it still, because you do not realize that its *foundation* has gone. <sup>7</sup>Its *source* has been removed, and so it can be cherished but a little while before it vanishes. <sup>8</sup>Only the habit of *looking* for it still remains.

### • Study Question •

8. *This paragraph says that in your holy relationship the belief in sin has been uprooted. What does that mean?*
- A. *It is talking here about an advanced holy relationship, in which the two people have only a tiny remnant of their original belief in sin.*
  - B. *In the holy instant in which the relationship was made holy, the source, the unconscious root, of the belief in sin was removed.*
  - C. *It is talking about the final instant of the holy relationship, in which both people are in the real world, and there is only a little while before God takes the final step.*
  - D. *A and C.*

If sin is real, and has really done what we believe it has done, there is utterly no hope for us: "Sin...must forever be beyond the hope of healing" (8:1). Why is that? To achieve what we believe sin has done, sin must be "a power *beyond* God's." This power has attacked God's Will and has *overcome* it; it has given the Son of God a will *apart from* and *stronger than* God's Will (8:2)! Not only that, each individual son has been given a will separate from all others (Don't you think your will is separate from God's, and separate from everyone you know and the rest of the world? Of course you do!), a will

that is opposed to God and opposed to everyone else's will (8:3). Face it: This *is* what we believe! We may profess differently, but our actions betray the underlying belief.

The point is, all that is true if sin is real, and if all that *is* true, God has already been defeated. There's no hope. But that's impossible! Therefore, it *must* be impossible that sin is real, and *proving* its impossibility is the purpose of our holy relationships (8:4)! In the moment of its birth, our holy relationship has had a sin-ectomy. "The belief in sin has been uprooted in [Heaven's] smile of love" (8:5).

In the experience of a moment of true forgiveness we have *experienced* sin's unreality. It is no longer possible for us to entirely believe in it. Oh, we still *see* sin (8:8), but only because we have not become fully conscious of the fact that "its *foundation* has gone. Its *source* has been removed" (8:6–7). What does the Course mean by the source and the foundation of our belief in sin? I believe (and I'm open to other ideas here) that Jesus is referring to our belief that "your reality or your brother's is bounded by a body" (7:1), because he just told us that while we believe *that* we will believe in sin. The belief the bodies limit minds is the source and foundation of the belief in sin. And in a holy instant, at least for an instant, we've gone past that belief, and we have connected with another person mind-to-mind. We've seen past what the bodies eyes show us and have perceived the holy child of God hidden behind that wall of flesh.

With the foundation ripped out, our belief in sin is little more than a residual habit (8:8) that will eventually vanish (8:7). Like a lake whose source has dried up, the water may still be there a while but eventually it will all evaporate.

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>And yet you look with Heaven's smile upon *your* lips, and Heaven's blessing on your sight. <sup>2</sup>You will *not* see sin long. <sup>3</sup>For in the *new* perception the mind *corrects* it when it *seems* to be seen, and it becomes invisible. <sup>4</sup>**Errors [But errors]** are quickly recognized and quickly given to correction, to be healed, *not* hidden [see 4:9]. <sup>5</sup>You will be healed of sin and all its ravages the *instant* that you give it no power over ~~your brother~~ **[each other]**. <sup>6</sup>And you will ~~help him~~ **[help each other]** overcome *mistakes* by joyously *releasing him* **[one another]** from the belief in sin.

### • Study Question •

9. How, according to this paragraph, do you become healed entirely of the belief in sin?
- A. You help your holy relationship partner realize that his sins were only mistakes.
  - B. You forgive yourself.
  - C. You realize that sin has had no power to defile your holy relationship partner.
  - D. A and C.
  - E. All of the above.

The habit of looking for sin remains (8:8), but nevertheless we “look with Heaven’s smile upon *your* lips, and Heaven’s blessing on your sight” (9:1). Back in 7:5, Jesus said that Heaven has smiled upon your holy relationship, and that smile of love is what uprooted your belief in sin. To me, the “smile of love” symbolizes God’s overlooking our mistakes, not judging us, and accepting us as still lovable. The smile of love is the open arms of the father, welcoming the prodigal home. And now, that same smile is on *our* lips as we look on one another. The Spirit within us moves us to see as Heaven sees.

With that transformation of our inner core, “You will *not* see sin long” (9:2). Something has happened. When a brother “sins” against us, whereas before all we saw was that “sin,” now a “*new* perception” arises in our mind and corrects that perception. Sin becomes invisible, and we see only error, calling for correction and healing, not judgment (9:3–4). Gladly we give the situation to the Holy Spirit, rather than hiding it. We still have to *choose* that new perception, but it is always there, available to us.

The *instant* that we accept that new perception and refuse to see sin in each other, we “will be healed of sin and all its ravages” (9:5). What we give, we receive. This is what holy relationships are for: Helping “each other overcome [our] mistakes by joyously releasing one another from the belief in sin” (9:6).

This section, along with the first four paragraphs of 19.IV, are a great introduction to “The Obstacles to Peace.” That huge section, coming up, is all about the function of the holy relationship in bringing peace to one another and on out into the whole world. Here, in 19.III, it sounds as if the belief in sin is just going to fall away, having been uprooted. But in 19.IV we will see that there are still many obstacles in the way, many levels of resistance to be overcome as peace makes its way up and out, from the center of our unconscious out into every part of our minds.

The remaining paragraphs are a call to us to recognize what has been given to us in the new perception of the Holy Spirit, and to cultivate it in our lives.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>In the holy instant, you will see the smile of Heaven shining ~~on both you and your brother~~ **[on both of you]**. <sup>2</sup>And you will shine upon ~~him~~ **[each other]**, in glad acknowledgment of the grace that has been *given* you [see I.13]. <sup>3</sup>For sin will *not* prevail against a union Heaven has smiled upon. <sup>4</sup>Your perception was *healed* in the holy instant Heaven gave you. <sup>5</sup>Forget what you *have* seen [sin], and raise your eyes in faith to what you now *can* see [the smile of Heaven shining on both of you]. <sup>6</sup>The barriers to Heaven will disappear before your holy sight, for you who were sightless have been *given* vision, and you *can* see. <sup>7</sup>Look not for what has been *removed*, but for the glory that has been *restored* for you to see.



• **Study Question** •

10. *This paragraph gives important practical instruction on forgetting "what you have seen," and looking not "for what has been removed." What are you supposed to forget and look not for?*

- A. *Sin.*
- B. *Time.*
- C. *Your brother to meet your needs.*
- D. *Bodies.*

•

In the holy instant, you will see what the previous two paragraphs have been talking about—this smile of Heaven that entered the relationship and uprooted the belief in sin, this smile that is now on *your* lips (10:1). Because you have experienced forgiveness, the smile of Heaven shining on the two of you, you will acknowledge the gift you have received by beginning to shine that smile on one another (10:2). Once you and your partner have experienced the smile of Heaven together, a holy instant within a holy relationship, the outcome of the battle against sin is determined. Sin loses (10:3).

As was said above, something has happened to your perception. It was healed (10:4). Now, you are asked to *forget* what your body's eyes have shown you (sin), and to use faith to see the invisible, God's smile shining on one another (10:5). You have been given that gift of sight; use it (10:6). Stop looking for the "sin" in one another. If you look with the vision you have been given, you will see *glory* (10:7)!

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>Look upon your Redeemer, and behold what He would show you in ~~your brother~~ **[each other!]**, and **[And]** let not sin arise again to blind your eyes. <sup>2</sup>For sin would keep you separate ~~from him~~, but your Redeemer would have you look upon ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** as yourself.<sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup>Your relationship is now a temple of healing; a place where all the weary ones can come and rest. <sup>4</sup>Here is the rest that waits for all, after the journey. <sup>5</sup>And it is brought *nearer* to all by your relationship.

• **Study Question** •

11. *This paragraph instructs you to not look for sin in your partner, but to behold what your Redeemer would show you in your brother. What do you think He would show you?*

•

The plea to use this new vision continues. I am struck by the fact that what we see in each other is what we see in "your Redeemer," that is, Jesus (11:1). You've probably heard the phrase, "I see the Christ in you." I think that very often, when we say that about someone, we're thinking of "the Christ" as some *part* of the person. Like, "I see the

<sup>3</sup> The final three sentences of this section make a lot more sense as the first three sentences of the next section. Accordingly, my comments end with sentence 2.



strength in your arm.” But what this sentence implies is that we see the Christ in one another in the same way we see Jesus as the Christ. It is only when our minds are expecting “sin” that we see it and are blinded to the glory in one another.

Seeing “sin” in one another keeps us separate, and for the ego that is its purpose. Our Redeemer (the Christ, Jesus, the Holy Spirit—take your pick, although I believe it refers to Jesus<sup>4</sup>) wishes us to look on one another and see *ourselves* (11:1), which I understand to mean that we realize that our brothers and sisters are literally a part of our larger Self. There is, in reality, nowhere that I leave off and you begin; we are One.

When a relationship is expressing such an awareness of Oneness, such a vision of sinlessness, it becomes a “temple of healing; a place where all the weary ones can come and rest” (11:3). I long for that in all my relationships, and I long to see it in every relationship. The example that comes to my mind—about the *only* one that comes to mind—is that of Steven and Ondrea Levine, a couple who teach Buddhist meditation and minister to the dying. I was privileged to attend a weekend workshop on death and dying they co-led in New York City, years ago. Their unity was palpable, and beautiful to behold. It was, during those days, truly a temple of healing.

This rest, from sin, from guilt, from judgment, from blame, is “the rest that waits for all, after the journey” (11:4). In John 14:2-3, Jesus said:

“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Jesus wants us to be where he is, in the place of rest, and he is with us to take us with him. Most of us dip in and out of that rest, but as we work through the obstacles to peace in our relationships, we are not the only ones who benefit; that rest “is brought *nearer* to all” (11:5).

### • Study Question •

12. Please summarize the main themes of this section, paying particular attention to the theme or themes that struck you the most.

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<sup>4</sup> The first reference in the Text to “redeemer” clearly refers to Jesus:

“Yet it is done already, and unless you give all that you have received you will not know that your redeemer liveth, and that you have awakened with him” (T-11.VI.9:5).

The words “awakened with him” definitely refer to Jesus, either to his resurrection or to his awaking to his divine nature. A number of other references to “redeemer,” however, could be applied equally well to the Holy Spirit.

# Answer Key

1. C
2. D
3. B
4. E
5. A,B,C,D
6. C,B,A,E,D
7. B
8. B
9. E
10. A
11. Holiness, Christ, innocence, Son of God, etc.
12. My summary: Sin seen as real is attractive, endlessly repeated, with power to overthrow God and His creation. Yet seen as error it calls for correction, for love. In your holy relationship, the belief in sin has been uprooted.