

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 23

The Escape from Conflict

Section IV

Above the Battleground

You can find the explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats at the end of the commentary.

Review of Section III

This section is the longest single section in the Text, apart from "The Obstacles to Peace" in Chapter 19, which is sub-divided into multiple subsections. Both sections deal with the same topic, from different perspectives: the thought system of the ego. Both are extremely important in gaining an overall understanding of the Course, so we are going to devote five or more commentaries to it, and at least that many weeks in the study group.

These are the laws that rule the world we have made:

1. The truth is different for everyone.
2. Each one *must* sin, and therefore deserves attack and death.
3. God, Who cannot be mistaken, must accept His Son's belief in what he is, and *hate* him for it.
4. The belief that you have what you have taken; another's loss is your gain.
5. There is a *substitute* for love.

The Section So Far

The purpose of these laws is to attack truth and render it meaningless. They are meaningless in themselves since chaos has no laws, so it is not necessary to understand them, although it is essential for us to understand their purpose (see the previous sentence). We need only to look at them, and then to simply go beyond them.

The first law is a denial that Truth is absolute, and the same for everyone. The Course asserts that only Truth is true, and nothing else is true. The first law assumes that we are all separate and different from one another, and leads to the competition of egos

trying to validate their reality by attacking the values of others. It also violates the first principle of miracles, that there is no order of difficulty in miracles; it makes it seem that some illusions are more real, or more persistent than others. We must realize that all illusions are equally untrue, and when we do, they will merely disappear.

The second law follows from the first because, if truth is different for everyone, we inevitably come into conflict with those whose “truth” differs from ours, competing to prove our truth is *the* truth. Differing truths leads to judgment of others and attack in both directions. We all end up feeling guilty because we feel we are forced into conflict and attack, validating ourselves by invalidating others. Because we have “sinned,” we believe we deserve punishment, as does everyone.

The third law says that God must accept our judgment on ourselves, and hate us for it. This is the traditional Christian belief in original sin, which holds that we all deserve to die, and God has no choice but to send us to hell if we don't accept Christ as our Savior. It ruins any possibility of having a good relationship with God.

The fourth law derives from the first three laws, which present a universal war between all of God's Sons and God Himself—a picture of enemies. Enemies will not give you what they have, even though you need it. So you must take it. The fourth law says you have what you have taken.

The fifth law simply describes what we are trying to take from each other—the substitute for love.

The remainder of the section focuses on what it calls “a strange device” that makes it possible for us to believe that these insane laws of *chaos* are true laws of *order*: the “emphasis on form and *disregard of content*.” That will be the focus of these final eight paragraphs.

Overview of Section IV (Sections III and IV in (FIP))

This section ends the battle discussion that was begun in Section II.6, “The War Against Yourself.” After pages of telling us about the battle, Jesus tells us how to get out.

Paragraph 1 (23.III.1 (FIP))

Is it not true you do not recognize some of the forms attacks can take? ²If it is true that attack in any form will hurt you, and will do so just as much as in another form which you *do* recognize, then it must follow that you do not always recognize the source of pain. ³Attack in *any* form is *equally* destructive. ⁴Its purpose does not change. ⁵Its sole intent is murder, and what *form* of murder serves to cover the massive guilt and frantic fear of punishment the murderer must feel?

• Study Question •

1. *What is the underlying cause of all our pain?*
 - A. *Our parents*
 - B. *Our murderous attack thoughts*
 - C. *Our nightmares*

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The opening two sentences (1:1–2) ask us first to agree with a premise: *We do not recognize some forms that attack can take.*

Then, he states a second premise: *Attack in any form will hurt you*, whether or not you recognize it as an attack.

Finally, he uses logic to arrive at a conclusion: Therefore, it must be true that: *We do not always recognize the source of our pain.* That's a significant point! Sometimes, when we are experiencing pain, we do not connect it to its actual cause. Instead, we cast about, trying to find the cause. And far too often, we mistakenly attribute the cause to some innocent person or situation. Sometimes the cause is *our* attack, which has taken a form that we don't recognize as an attack.

It does not matter what form attack takes: It is *always equally* destructive (1:3). "Mild" attack, attack veiled as humor ("I'm only joking!"), sarcasm, passive-aggressive attack, or whatever the forms, they share the same common purpose: murder (1:3–5).

Every time you attack someone, in any way, your subconscious reacts as if you had just committed murder! You may push it down, but you are feeling pain, the pain of "massive guilt and frantic fear of punishment" (1:5). Because you do not recognize what you have done as a murderous act, you don't connect the emotional distress you feel to what you have done. You probably think it is caused by something "out there." But, as the Workbook teaches us in Lesson 338, "I am affected only by my thoughts."

Attack is attack is attack, and in every form it takes, its purpose is murder. And murderers always experience massive guilt (see 2:3) and frantic fear of punishment.

Paragraph 2 (23.III.2 (FIP))

2 He may deny he is a murderer, and justify his savagery with smiles as he attacks.¹ ²Yet he will suffer, and will look on his intent in nightmares, where the smiles are gone and where the purpose rises to meet his horrified awareness and to pursue him still. ³For no one thinks of murder and escapes the guilt the thought entails. ⁴If the intent is death, what matter the form it takes? ⁵Is death in *any* form, however lovely and charitable it may seem to be, a blessing and a sign the Voice for God speaks through you to your brother? ⁶The wrapping does not make the gift you give. ⁷An empty box, however beautiful and gently given, still contains nothing, and neither the receiver nor the giver is long deceived. ⁸Withhold forgiveness from your brother, and you attack him. ⁹You give him nothing, and receive of him but what you gave.

• Study Question •

2. *When the paragraph speaks of us giving a beautifully wrapped but empty box to our brother, what does the image refer to? (There is more than one possible answer.)*
- A. *We are attacking our brother by withholding forgiveness, but doing so in a form that “looks nice.”*
 - B. *We pretend to give the brother what he wants but give him nothing.*
 - C. *We are offering our brother death (the emptiness in the box) in a form that looks lovely and charitable (the wrapping).*
 - D. *We have been extremely forgetful in our gift wrapping.*

The paragraph speaks of “he,” referring to “the murderer.” Apply it to yourself!

We do this, don't we? Deny that we intend harm to the other person, and try to justify our words or actions (2:1)? I know I do. I defend my remarks as having some benevolent purpose — certainly not to criticize, wound, or attack in any way! What Jesus is saying here is that these seemingly gentler forms of attack are just as murderous as taking a gun and deliberately shooting someone. The *forms* are very different, but the *content* is the same: a desire or thought to “erase” someone.

The result, *for us*, is the same in every case. *We will suffer* (2:2). We will have nightmares in which we confront our homicidal desires, and we will be horrified at what we see, and unable to shake it off. We may, and probably will be able to block it from our waking awareness, but it will haunt our dreams. This is so because “no one thinks of

¹ As the next sentence implies, he is putting on a smiling face while he attacks not just to hide his murderous intent from the other person, but mainly to hide it from *himself*. The point of that sentence is that this doesn't work—at some point, his real intent rises to awareness.

murder and escapes the guilt the thought entails” (2:3). Regardless of the form it takes, the *intention* is murder, and guilt is inescapable; the thought is as guilt-inducing as the deed (2:3–4).

Notice the emphasis on the words “thinks” and “thought” in 2:3. It is the *thought* of murder that entails the guilt, not the deed. Our thoughts are the crucial factor. Thoughts are the source of deeds, so it is the thought that demands and produces guilt. This is the same principle by which Jesus taught while on earth:

“You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27–28, ESV).

What we fail to recognize is the connection between our thoughts and the suffering we endure. Thoughts entail guilt, and it is guilt that produces all our suffering:

Of one thing you were sure: Of all the many causes you perceived as bringing pain and suffering to you, your guilt was not among them (T-27.VII.7:4 (FIP), T-27.IX.1:1 (CE)).

For it is guilt that has obscured the Father to you, and it is guilt that has driven you insane.

The acceptance of guilt into the mind of God's Son was the beginning of the separation, as the acceptance of the Atonement is its end. The world you see is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt (T-13.Int.1:7-2:2 (FIP), T-13.I.9:1-2:2 (CE))

The connection moves further from any conscious awareness when we are not even aware of our thoughts as being murderous. Lesson 136 describes the same dynamic at work regarding our defensiveness (and defense is a form of attack, isn't it?). It calls this trick of the ego being “doubly shielded.” I suggest that you read W-pI.136.3:1-5:6, and consider how it applies to your thoughts.

The thought of murder arises in mind, and we *consciously* choose to act on it, although we may limit the way we implement it to words or facial expression rather than physical attack. Next, we bury the thought of murder, pushing it out of our conscious awareness. And then, we deliberately *erase* that act of concealment from our minds, so that we end up unaware of both the thought and our forgetting of it! All this in a matter of seconds.

How can we possibly think that the things we say and do are really a lovely and charitable blessing, God speaking through us to our brothers and sisters (2:4)? We have just eviscerated them, chewed them up with our words, our looks, or our actions, with a shallow pretense of “It's for your own good,” or “I only say this because I care about you.” We've offered them a pretty, beautifully wrapped gift of an empty box (2:5–6). It doesn't fool them, and it does not fool *you* for long, either (2:7). The guilt always follows. When you withhold forgiveness from anyone, you are attacking them! No matter how considerate your words or behavior may seem, you are giving *nothing*, and getting nothing back (2:8). You are still allowing the thought of murder to dwell in your mind,

and it is producing guilt, and *you will suffer*, in some way.

One way we suffer from guilt is physical sickness:

Atonement heals with certainty and cures all sickness. For the mind which understands that sickness can be nothing but a dream is not deceived by forms the dream may take. **Sickness where guilt is absent cannot come, for it is but another form of guilt.** Atonement does not heal the sick, for that is not a cure. It takes away the **guilt that makes the sickness possible.** And that is cure indeed. For sickness now is gone, with nothing left to which it can return (W-pI.140.4:1-7, my emphasis).

Another effect of guilt is that it made the physical world.² Guilt makes time persist in our experience.³ Guilt also causes us to attack others.⁴ Guilt is the source of all our pain.⁵ Salvation, or accepting the Atonement, consists in learning the unreality of guilt through forgiveness.⁶

Paragraph 3 ((23.III.3 (FIP))

3 Salvation is no compromise of any kind.⁷ ²To compromise is to accept but part of what you want; to take a little and give up the rest. ³Salvation gives up nothing. ⁴It is complete for everyone. ⁵Let the idea of compromise but enter, and the awareness of salvation's purpose is lost because it is not recognized. ⁶It is denied where compromise has been accepted, for compromise is the belief salvation is impossible. ⁷It would maintain you can attack a little, love a little, and know the difference. ⁸Thus it would teach a little of the same can still be different, and yet the same remain intact, as one. ⁹Does this make sense? ¹⁰Can it *be* understood?

² T-13.IN.2:4 (FIP), T-13.I.2:1 (CE))

³ (T-5.VI.2:1-2 (FIP), T-5.VI.17:1-2 (CE).

⁴ T-13.IN.1:1 (FIP), T-13.I.1:1 (CE))

⁵ T-30.V.2:4 (FIP), (T-30.VI.2:1 (CE))

⁶ See T-5.V.8 (FIP), T-5.VI.15 (CE), and the preceding context.

⁷ "Compromise" in this context means to compromise between love and murder, especially by expressing *murderous* content in a "*loving*" form. That this is the meaning of compromise here is made clear later in the paragraph where it says that "you can attack a little, love a little." Given that love holds everything you want and attack merely brings suffering, to mix love and attack is to compromise in the usual sense: "to take a little and give up the rest" (see next sentence).

• **Study Question** •

3. *Based on this paragraph, regarding this discussion, what would it mean to live without compromise?*
- A. *We would love and accept everyone equally and attack no one.*
 - B. *We would be careful never to say anything that seemed contradictory of the Course.*
 - C. *We would insist on having what we want and refuse to give in to any argument.*

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As the footnote to 3:1 points out, the compromise being referred to here is the compromise between love and murder. There is no way you can mix attack, however seemingly mild or nicely wrapped with pretty paper and ribbons, with love. There is no such thing as a loving attack. To attack is not to love, and “what is not love *is* murder” (see 8:4). Compromise means that you only get “part of what you want” (3:2); you get *some* satisfaction from making a disparaging remark about someone else, but you are forced to tone it down with a smile or sweet tone. Your vengeance is incomplete, and so is your acceptance of your own holiness. Salvation, or accepting the Atonement for yourself and your brother, “gives up nothing” (3:3). You are affirming wholeness in both; “It is complete for everyone” (3:4). If you attempt to mix any amount of attack in with the gentleness of salvation, “the awareness of salvation's purpose is lost because it is not recognized” (3:5). In fact, when you compromise with attack, you are caught in the belief that full salvation is not possible! (3:6).

You cannot mix a little love with a little attack and know with certainty the difference between them (3:7). The love gets lost in the attack. It cannot “remain intact” (3:8). Thinking that you can be a loving person and still engage in judgment and attack (no matter how mild the form) makes no sense. If you attack at all, how can you consider your behavior to be loving? (3:9–10) Attack with love makes no sense.

Paragraph 4 (23.III.4 (FIP))

4 This course is easy just because it makes no compromise. ²Yet it seems difficult to those who still believe that compromise is possible. ³They do not see that if it is, salvation is attack⁸ ⁴Yet it is certain the belief that salvation is impossible cannot uphold a quiet, calm assurance it has come. ⁵Forgiveness cannot be withheld a little. ⁶Nor is it possible to attack for this and love for that and understand forgiveness. ⁷Would you not want to recognize assault upon your peace in any form⁹ if only thus does it become impossible that you lose sight of it? ⁸It can be kept shining before your vision, forever clear and never out of sight if you defend it not.

• Study Question •

4. *In no more than five sentences, explain why, if compromise is not possible, this makes the Course easy; and why, if compromise is possible, "salvation is attack."*

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This refusal to brook any compromise — saying that you cannot mix love with attack — is what makes *A Course in Miracles* easy to understand and practice (4:1). There are no grey areas. There's no confusion. To those who *want* compromise and think it is possible, total uncompromising love seems difficult if not impossible (4:2). If compromise in this area *is* possible, that means that salvation can include attack! And, as such, since what we do to others we are doing to ourselves, it is attacking ourselves as well (4:3).

If we believe that totally abstaining from attack is impossible, there is no way for us to experience "a quiet, calm assurance it [salvation] has come" (4:4). If you attempt to withhold forgiveness "a little," you do not forgive at all (4:5). Nor is it possible to love a person for some things and attack them for others and achieve any real understanding of forgiveness (4:6). Forgiveness means there is nothing to forgive. If you are keeping some things apart from forgiveness, you clearly don't understand that!

Attacking another person, in *any* form, is an assault on your own peace. Thus, the only infallible way you can never lose sight of peace is if you can recognize attack regardless of what form it takes, and avoid it. Isn't that a desirable thing (4:7)? Paradoxically, the only way to keep peace "shining before your vision, forever clear and

⁸. This seems to mean that if we find salvation by attacking a little and loving a little, then salvation *is* attack—and not just attack on others, for attack on them is an assault on our own peace of mind. So if salvation involves a compromise between attack and love, then salvation is synonymous with attack on ourselves.

⁹? "Assault upon your peace in any form" refers to your own attacks that you dress up in a loving form, making it difficult to recognize them as what they are.

never out of sight,” is “if *you* defend it not” (4:8). To be entirely at peace, learn to recognize all your attempts at murder (that is, any form of attack) and *never defend your peace*.

Paragraph 5 (23.III.5:1–6:1 (FIP))

5 Those who believe that peace can be defended, and that attack is justified on its behalf, cannot perceive it lies within them. ²How could they know? ³Could they accept forgiveness side by side with the belief that murder takes some forms by which their peace is saved? ⁴Would they be willing to accept the fact their savage purpose is directed against themselves? ⁵No one unites with enemies, or is at one with them in purpose. ⁶And no one compromises with an enemy but hates him still for what he kept from him. ⁷Mistake not truce for peace, nor compromise for the escape from conflict.

• Study Question •

5. *The belief that peace can be defended (5:1) is the same as believing that "murder takes some forms by which...peace is saved" (5:2). The questions that follow in the paragraph imply some consequences of this belief. Which of the following are results from believing that we can (or need to) defend our peace? (More than one)*
- A. *We cannot perceive that peace lies within us, and not outside.*
 - B. *We continue to hate our "enemies."*
 - C. *We cannot accept the fact that our savage anger is really directed against ourselves.*
 - D. *We become more and more peaceful.*
 - E. *We cannot accept forgiveness because we entertain murderous thoughts.*
 - F. *We call on God to help defend us against our enemies.*
 - G. *We cannot unite with the people we consider our enemies.*

The fact is, attack *in any form* cannot defend peace. Peace is an internal affair; "it lies within" (5:1), and if you welcome attack as a way of "defending" your peace from outside assault, you have destroyed your own internal peace. When you are engaged in attack in any form¹⁰ you have pushed peace out of your awareness and are unable to see it within yourself. You may think you are saving your peace by some form of murder, but it's impossible to accept forgiveness for yourself when you do so, and accepting forgiveness is the way to recognize peace within you (5:3). No one engaged in attack in any form is

¹⁰, I keep repeating the phrase "attack *in any form*" because we tend to doubt that what we think of as "gentler" forms should really be considered to be attack.

willing to recognize that they are attacking themselves (5:4).

You cannot view anyone as an enemy and yet truly love them. You can't make a *truce* with an enemy and think you have found peace. All you have done is suspended the battle for a time. As long as there is any shred of attack in your attitude toward another, you have not escaped from conflict (5:5–7).

Paragraph 6 (23.III.6:2–10 (FIP))

6 To be released from conflict means that it is over. ²The door is open; you have left the battleground. ³You have not lingered there in cowering hope that the battle will not return because the guns are stilled an instant and the fear that haunts the place of death is not apparent. ⁴There is no place of safety in a battleground. ⁵You can look down on it in safety from above and not be touched, but from within it you can find no safety. ⁶Not one tree left standing still will shelter you.¹¹ ⁷Not one illusion of protection stands against the faith in murder. ⁸Here stands the body, torn between the natural desire to communicate and the unnatural intent to murder and to die.

• Study Question •

6. *Every paragraph has, in one way or another, been telling us to give up conflict, unforgiveness, and attack entirely, or we haven't given them up at all. Why is a truce not peace, and compromise not escape from conflict? (More than one possible answer.)*
- A. *Because the other person cannot be trusted and can resume the conflict at any time.*
 - B. *Because truce and compromise are still within the context of battle; peace comes only in leaving the battleground behind entirely.*
 - C. *Because truce and compromise leave us with a lingering fear that the battle may resume at any minute.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

Being released from conflict means that the conflict *has ended; it's over* (6:1). If your experience is still one of conflict, then you have not yet been released. When the conflict ends, you've gone through the open door of release and have left the battleground (6:2). This release is a final peace; it is not the fragile pseudo-peace that you have previously experienced when the guns of warfare are momentarily quiet and "the fear that haunts the place of death is not apparent" (6:3). Our egos sometimes allow us these moments of quiet to deceive us into believing we are making progress toward peace, even though we

¹¹. See Cameo 28: "The Blue-Gray Bird."

still linger on the battleground in our relationships. Unless we completely abandon the battlefield, "there *is* no place of safety" (6:4).

To find true safety and peace, we *must* rise above the battlefield entirely. We must be untouched by battle (6:5). That lone tree still left standing in the wasteland of battle,¹² the forms of attack that we've convinced ourselves are not really attack, and that we cling to imagining that we need them to "protect" ourselves (6:7), cannot shelter us. We are putting faith in murder (6:7) and trying at the same time to be loving, just enough to maintain the truce. We're still trying to compromise, but it won't protect us for long. Eventually, the battle will break out again.

The final sentence pictures the dilemma very well. Here we are, living as bodies, feeling pulled in two directions, "torn between" two opposite forces: "the natural desire to communicate" and "the unnatural intent to murder and to die" (6:8).

Abraham Lincoln, in his First Inaugural Address, referred to what he called "the better angels of our nature," which is a poetic synonym for what the Course calls "the natural desire to communicate." The address was given just two weeks after Jefferson Davis was inaugurated as the President of the Confederacy; the secession of the South was a grim reality, but war had not yet broken out. Lincoln ended the address with these moving words:

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Alas! The "better angels" lost out to the lust for battle in that case. But both the Course and Lincoln seem to feel that the "angelic" side is the truth of us. The Course calls it a "natural desire," and Lincoln said these were "angels *of our nature*." Stephen Pinker has titled a book with Lincoln's phrase, subtitling it, "Why Violence Has Declined." In his book, Pinker amasses piles of historical evidence about the decline of violence over time, to show that the human race *is* making progress, albeit far too slowly, to rise above the battleground. It is an encouraging book.

7. **Summary Question (Optional).** *To pull together one of the running themes: Look through the previous thirteen paragraphs (including 23.III.16–23) and list as many as you can of the various and subtle "forms" attack can take. If you can, include examples: for instance, "a form you think is lovely" might bring to mind "special love." There is at least a dozen mentioned or hinted at.*

¹² This is a clear reference to Helen's dream of "The Blue-Gray Bird." See Cameo 28 in the back of the CE, p. 1844. The tree is a symbol of the veiled forms of attack and murder we are still clinging to.

8.

Paragraph 7 (23.III.6:11–IV.I:6 (FIP))

7 Think you the form that murder takes can offer safety?¹³ ²Can guilt be absent from a battlefield? ³Do not remain in conflict, for there is no war without attack. ⁴The fear of God is fear of life, and not of death. ⁵Yet He remains the only place of safety. ⁶In Him is no attack, and no illusion in any form stalks Heaven. ⁷Heaven is *wholly* true. ⁸No difference enters, and what is all the same cannot conflict.

• Study Question •

9. *Attacking places us at war. Instead, we must choose Heaven, in which there is no attack, no illusion, no war, no difference and no conflict. Let's say that you are at a party and someone says something subtle but stinging to you. You feel an instant rage and have the desire to cut them down in front of everyone with a self-satisfied smile. What do you do?*
- A. *Realize that attacking them while smiling is no different from stabbing them in the throat with a shrimp fork.*
 - B. *Use your power of will to fight this wish.*
 - C. *Realize that what you really fear is not how you express the attack, but your sheer desire to murder.*
 - D. *Tell them, with a quiet peace in your voice, "What is not love is murder, bitch."*
 - E. *A and C.*
 - F. *B and C.*

To think that we are safe from feeling guilty if we disguise our attack with smiles and soothing words — attempting to give it a form that does not look like murder — we are kidding ourselves (7:1). If it's attack, we are on the battlefield, and where there is a battle, guilt always follows (7:2). It doesn't matter what form the battle assumes. If you are in conflict, you are at war, you are attacking, you are listening to the thought of murder, and guilt is inevitable. Give up the conflict! (7:3).

Worse, if you are in guilt, you are afraid of God's judgment. You may think you are afraid of death at God's hand, but "the fear of God is fear of life, and not of death" (7:4). You fear God, and God is the only place of safety (7:5) because there is no attack in God; when you are in Heaven, no fearful illusions stalk you (7:6). To have conflict you must have differences, and there are none in Heaven (7:7). All is one; all is the same.

¹³. We think that if we express our murderous intent in a “loving” form, then we have kept ourselves safe from guilt. The point here is that this is not true. As the next sentence says, “Can guilt be absent from a battlefield?”

The ego uses guilt to keep us from God. That's why guilt must go if we are to remember our Oneness with God. And since guilt is an unavoidable consequence of any form of attack, since they all are expressions of the thought of murder, attack and conflict must go. We *must* rise above the battleground.

Paragraph 8 (23.IV.1:7–2:6 (FIP))

8 You are not asked to fight against your wish to murder. ²But you *are* asked to realize the form it takes conceals the same intent¹⁴ ³And it is this you fear, and not the form. ⁴What is not love *is* murder. ⁵What is not loving *must* be an attack. ⁶Every illusion is an assault on truth, and every one does violence to the idea of love, because it seems to be of equal truth. ⁷What can be equal to the truth yet different? ⁸Murder and love are incompatible. ⁹Yet if they both are true, then must they be the same, and indistinguishable from one another. ¹⁰So *will* they be to those who see God's Son a body. ¹¹For it is not the body that is like the Son's Creator, and what is lifeless cannot be the Son of Life.

• Study Question •

10. Why don't we need to fight against our wish to murder? What are we asked to do instead?

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Jesus' emphasis on certain words here is striking: "You are *not* asked to fight *against* your wish to murder. But you *are* asked to realize the *form* it takes conceals the *same* intent. And it is *this* you fear, and *not* the form" (8:1–3). Jesus says, "I will never attack your ego" (T-4.I.3:5). Attack is the ego's solution to things, not God's, nor should it be ours. So we do not fight against our wish to murder; that's conflict! That's attack.

What we *are* asked to do is to realize that *every* form of attack is an expression of the wish to murder. And when Jesus says, "It is *this* you fear," the word "this" refers to our wish to murder. That's what we fear. We are afraid of our own wish to murder; we are afraid to recognize that wish hiding behind our apparently well-intentioned "benevolent" attacks.

But ask yourself: Is it love? Because if it isn't pure love, it's murder. Is it loving? If not, it *must* be an attack (8:4–5). Our problem is that we don't recognize a lot of the attack in our lives (we don't really *want* to), and so we continue to live on the battleground, taking shelter in that silly, puny tree. Look at the words used here: "assault," "does violence" (8:6), "murder." You probably don't see yourself in that light, and yet — for some "inexplicable" reason, you continue to experience guilt. You think you know the truth. Maybe you believe that your brother or sister is perfect and whole in

¹⁴. In other words, rather than fighting against your wish to murder, you need to simply look honestly at the wish, realizing that it is the same whether it is hidden in a "loving" form or expressed more openly.

Christ, as you are. And yet, sometimes in your mind, you judge them. Sometimes you feel less than wholly loving toward them. So, then, truth and illusion, murder and love, "seem to be of equal truth." Of course, the two are *actually* incompatible.

However, if truth and illusion, and murder and love, seem equally true to you, "they must be the *same*, and indistinguishable from one another" (8:9). You cannot tell them apart. And *that is how they will* "be to those who see God's Son [as] a body" (8:10). When we relate to one another as if the body is our reality, we cannot always tell the difference between love and murder. Attack thoughts survive in our minds, undetected, and bear their bitter fruit of guilt.

Being created in God's image does not mean that God is a body! The body itself is lifeless. Even in the book of Genesis, after God formed man's body, He had to breathe life into it. "What is lifeless cannot be the Son of Life" (8:11). We are not bodies, and we should not see each other as if we *were* bodies. This isn't an easy lesson. Earlier, Jesus offered some helpful advice:

Your question should not be, "How can I see my brother without the body?"
Ask only, "Do I really wish to see him sinless?" (T-20.VII.9:1-2).

It's very much the same idea here. We must be willing to stop attacking our brother, stop judging him. The body will take care of itself, and fade into the background of our sight. I think it only seems as if seeing someone as a body leads to our judging and attacking, and actually, it is our "wish to murder" that causes our perception to stop at the wall of flesh, and fail to see the truth that hides within.

Paragraph 9 (23.IV.2:7–3:7 (FIP))

9 How can a body be extended to hold the universe? ²Can it create, and *be* what it creates? ³And can it offer its creation all that it is, and never suffer loss? ⁴God does not share His function with a body. ⁵He gave the function to create unto His Son because it is His Own. ⁶It is not sinful to believe the function of the Son is murder, but it *is* insanity. ⁷What is the same can have no different function. ⁸Creation is the means for God's extension, and what is His must be His Son's as well. ⁹Either the Father *and* the Son are murderers or neither is. ¹⁰Life makes not death, creating like itself.

• **Study Question** •

11. **Paragraph 9** begins (sentences 1–3) with an interesting test for whether or not the body is the Son of God. If you think the body is the Son of God, what will you think is true, according to this paragraph?
- A. You will think that you can express love through attack, or attack in a loving form.
 - B. You will think your body can be blown up to encompass the entire universe.
 - C. You will think that murder and love are compatible.
 - D. A and C.
 - E. All of the above.
12. If you think the Son is a body, you will think that his function is murder, not creation. Yet to accept that the Son's function is murder, you must also be willing to accept what, according to this paragraph (there may be more than one correct answer)?
- A. That he is doomed to die.
 - B. That God's function is also murder.
 - C. That life makes death.
 - D. That you have the same function that he does.

The preceding paragraph ended with references to the body and the certainty that those who “see God’s Son a body,” as a result, will be unable to tell murder apart from love. It asserts that the body is lifeless, unlike God the Father. Here, the Course continues to examine the shortcomings of the body that prove it cannot be the Son of God:

- It cannot be extended to hold the universe (as the Son can, apparently).
- It cannot create.
- It cannot *be* what it creates.
- It cannot give all of itself to creation without suffering loss.

All these things, God’s Son *can* do, and the body cannot (9:1–3). God the Father has given His own function of creation to His Son *because* it is God’s own function (9:5). Creation is God’s means for extending Himself, so God’s characteristics *must* belong to the Son as well (9:8). He does not share His function with a body (9:4).

Since the function of the Son is identical to that of His Father, creation, it’s insane to believe that your brother’s function, or your own, could be murder *in any form* (9:6–7). As we were told way back in Chapter 1:

You are the work of God, and His work is wholly lovable and wholly loving.

This is how you must think of yourself in your heart, because this is what you are. (T-1.27.5:1–2 (CE), T-1.III.2:3-4 (FIP)).

If you are love, you cannot be murder. If you are a creator, you cannot destroy. But if you are the body, *you might be murder. You might destroy.*

You, as God's Son, share God's nature.¹⁵ Based on that fact, Jesus makes the startling statement that, "Either the Father *and* the Son are murderers or neither is" (9:9). He sums it up by saying, "Life [God] makes not death [murder & murderers], creating like itself" (9:10). To think that the Creator of all life also makes death does not make any sense, does it? Thus *you* cannot be a murderer either, nor can your brother or sister.

Paragraph 10 (23.IV.4:1–5 (FIP))

10 The lovely light of your relationship is like the love of God. ²It cannot yet assume the holy function God gave His Son, for your forgiveness of one another is not complete as yet, and so it cannot be extended to all creation. ³Each form of murder and attack that still attracts you, and that you do not recognize for what it is, limits the healing and the miracles you have the power to extend to all. ⁴Yet does the Holy Spirit understand how to increase your little gifts and make them mighty. ⁵Also, He understands how your relationship is raised above the battleground, in it no more.

• Study Question •

13. *If you must completely forgive your holy relationship partner before you and he can extend healing and miracles to all the universe, and you have not forgiven your brother entirely, what consolation is there for you (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *The Holy Spirit has the power to take even your tiny expressions of forgiveness to your brother and make them mighty (as in 22.VIII, "Becoming the Means to His End" (CE), which is 22.VI, "The Light of the Holy Relationship" in (FIP)).*
 - B. *Your relationship, though still exhibiting signs of battle, is nevertheless raised above the battleground.*
 - C. *You are now able to overlook the battleground, for murder is no longer your purpose.*

A holy relationship reflects the love of God (10:1). Having joined in the purpose of forgiveness, your relationship is already holy; nevertheless, it cannot yet take on the holy function of creation given to the Son by God because your forgiveness of one another is "not complete as yet" (10:2). I doubt very much that anyone reading this would dispute that assertion. *Can* our forgiveness of a relationship partner *be* complete in our lifetime? I believe it is possible, although rare. But for our forgiveness of one another to be extended "to *all* creation," it must first be complete within our relationship.

The various disguised forms of murder that still dupe us, fooling us and deceiving us that they are *not* murder and causing us, perhaps unwittingly, to withhold forgiveness

¹⁵ "he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature," (2 Peter 1:4 ESV)

from one another, put a limit on the power we have to extend healing and miracles to everyone else (10:3). We already *have* the power (note the emphasis) to extend it, but our unforgiveness restricts our ability to access it.

We should not be discouraged by this, however. We have a Great Assistant. We have the help of the Holy Spirit, Who knows how to “increase your little gifts and make them mighty” (10:4). He knows that our holy relationship has been raised *above* the battleground so that we will no longer be *in* it, part of the battle (10:5). He will help us to claim that high position, and to live out what has already been worked within us.

Paragraph 11 (23.IV.4:6–5:9 (FIP))

11 This is your part: to realize that murder in *any* form is not your will. ²The overlooking of the battleground is now your purpose. ³Be lifted up, and from a higher place look down upon it. ⁴From there will your perspective be quite different. ⁵Here in the midst of it, it *does* seem real. ⁶Here you have chosen to be part of it. ⁷Here murder *is* the choice. ⁸Yet from above, the choice is miracles instead of murder. ⁹And the perspective coming from this choice shows you the battle is not real, and easily escaped. ¹⁰Bodies may battle, but the clash of forms is meaningless. ¹¹And it is over when you realize it never was begun.

• Study Question •

14. *This paragraph gives a stirring description of being raised above the battleground. Let's say you are still at that party. And that obnoxious party-goer with the barbed tongue says something wicked to you again. What do you do now, and what are the results, according to this paragraph?*

•

So, what can *we* do? Realize the truth of our divine nature, which is “that murder in *any* form is not your will” (11:1). Notice that this is not asking you to change anything. Rather, it is asking you to recognize *something that is already true about yourself*. Love, not murder, is your nature. Love, not murder, is your will. God created you that way, so that's what you are.

Knowing that about ourselves, our purpose becomes that of *overlooking* the battleground, rather than responding to it and being part of it (11:2). “Be lifted up, and from a higher place look down upon it” (11:3). That higher place, I think, must be a higher consciousness, the awareness that we are spirit, not bodies, that we are lovers, not murderers, creators, not destroyers. Try to visualize literally be lifted up high above a battlefield and looking down on it as if from space. How small it all seems! How insignificant in the larger picture of the entire planet, and even more insignificant compared to the vastness of space. In this larger view, does your strife with some individual seem as important as you may have thought?

Being lifted up above the battle also seems to me to imply becoming detached from it.

The disputes and disagreements of your life no longer seem all that important or relevant. They belong to someone else, not to the new Self you have discovered. I think this passage, spoken about a different aspect of ego, applies equally well to our disagreements:

To judge them individually is pointless. Their tiny differences in form are not real differences at all. None of them matters. That they have in common and nothing else. But what else is necessary to make them all the same? Let them go, dancing in the wind, dipping and turning till they disappear from sight far, far outside you. And turn you to the stately calm within, where in holy stillness dwells the living God you never left, and Who never left you. (T-18.I.8:3-9 (CE))

When viewed from above the battleground, we can “let them go,” “and turn...to the stately calm within.” Being above the battle gives us a very different perspective (11:4). When we are enmeshed in the battle it all seems so dramatically real, because we are actively choosing to be part of it (11:5-6). We’re listening to the ego’s siren voice, tempting us to murder, which seems the only choice (11:7). But from the elevated perspective of spirit, *miracles* are the obvious choice instead (11:8). From here we can see that the warfare isn’t necessary, isn’t even real, and can be “easily escaped” (11:9). There may be bodies battling, but they are only forms, not the reality of you or of anyone, and therefore, the battles are quite meaningless (11:10).

It *is* difficult for us to view things like terrorist attacks, riots, and wars as “meaningless.” From the Course’s point of view, above the battleground, all of these things have no more meaning than the horrendous battles in movies like *Star Wars* or TV shows like *Game of Thrones*. At the end, you know nothing really happened. Nobody really died. In reality, there was no battle at all (11:11).

Paragraph 12 (23.IV.5:10-6:7 (FIP))

12 How can a battle be perceived as nothingness when you engage in it?
²How can the truth of miracles be recognized if murder is your choice?
³When the temptation to attack rises to make your mind darkened and murderous, remember you *can* see the battle from above. ⁴Even in forms you do not recognize, the signs you know. ⁵There is a stab of pain, a twinge of guilt, and above all, a *loss of peace*. ⁶This you know well. ⁷When it occurs, leave not your place on high, but quickly choose a miracle instead of murder. ⁸And God Himself and all the lights in Heaven will gently lean to you and hold you up. ⁹For you have chosen to remain where He would have you, and no illusion can attack the peace of God together with His Son.

• Study Question •

15. *Paragraph 12* makes the information from the previous paragraph into a kind of practice, in which you first recognize the temptation to attack, then remember you can see the battleground from above, and quickly choose a miracle instead of murder. Yet this section and the previous two sections

have emphasized that we do not always recognize attack, because it takes disguised forms—which can make this practice difficult to even begin.

What is the main way we can recognize attack even when it is disguised?

- A. *Your mind feels darkened and murderous.*
- B. *Fear.*
- C. *Loss of peace.*
- D. *A twinge of guilt.*

This paragraph is about as practical as the Text gets in giving instructions on how to apply its teaching. I think if you read it over a few times, you will find its message to be quite clear. It all begins with remaining conscious of your feelings (!), and when certain feelings are detected, quickly making a choice for a miracle instead of murder. Here's the details:

If you allow yourself to be drawn into conflict with another person, you cannot possibly perceive that the battle is a meaningless nothing (12:1). You are choosing murder over miracles, thus blocking yourself from recognizing the truth of miracles (12:2). But there is a way out! It all depends on your making the correct choice at the right moment. That moment is the moment when “the temptation to attack” first “rises to make your mind darkened and murderous” (12:3).

At that point, you must remember that it is possible for you to see the battle *from above* rather than from the battlefield (12:3). You do not have to lock horns with your “opponent.” You must learn to watch for the signs that you have been tempted to attack — and they are signs you know very well, *even if you don't recognize this particular form of attack as attack* (12:4)! This means that there is a way to avoid the battle even for the most subtle, well-disguised forms of attack. What are these “signs you know”?

There is a stab of pain, a twinge of guilt, and above all, a *loss of peace*. This you know well (12:5–6)

You know these signs well; they are easy to recognize. Therefore, when you feel a little stab of pain or a twinge of guilt, or most important of all, a loss of peace, *stop*. Your early warning system has just kicked in. You are contemplating something contrary to your nature as love. Maybe you can't quite figure out *why* what you are thinking of should result in pain or guilt or loss of peace, but you don't need to figure it out! If the feelings are there, they are there for a reason, like the pain that comes from touching a hot pot on the stove. Trust them. You should pull back from whatever it is as quickly as you would pull your hand back from that pot!

The Course several times identifies the loss of peace as a key “red flag.”

But let me first remind you of something I told you myself: Whenever you are not wholly joyous, it is because you have reacted with a lack of love to some brother that God created...the first step in the undoing is to recognize that you have actively decided wrongly, but can as actively decide otherwise...I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace. I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise. I will to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace. (T-5.X.7:1, 8:3, 9:23 (CE), T-5.VII.5:1, 6:3, 6:7-8 (FIP))

Yet any instant it is possible to have all this undone. How can you know whether you chose the stairs to Heaven or the way to hell? Quite easily. How do you feel? Is peace in your awareness" (T-23.II.22:5-9 (FIP), T-23.III.23:3-8 (CE)).

Watch your mind carefully for any beliefs that hinder its accomplishment, and step away from them. Judge how well you have done this by your own feelings, for this is the one right use of judgment. (T-4.IV.8:5-6 (FIP), T-4.VI.11:5-12:1 (CE)).

The last quote does not mention peace specifically, but in the light of the others, I think it is implied by the word "feelings." This is what the Course means by mental vigilance. Notice how this passage from Chapter 6 clearly involves vigilance *against conflict*, just as this section does:

But while the first step seems to *increase conflict* and the second still *entails* it to some extent, this one calls for *consistent effort against it*.

5 We said already that you can be as vigilant *against* the ego as *for* it. This lesson teaches not that you *can* be, but that you *must* be. It does not concern itself with order of difficulty, but with *clear-cut priority for vigilance*. This step is unequivocal in that it teaches *there must be no exceptions*, but it does *not* deny that the temptation to *make* exceptions will occur. (T-6.VII.4:6-5:4 (CE), T-6.V.4:1-5 (FIP)).

There are many other places where the Course emphasizes the importance of watching our minds:

"No one can see through a wall, but I can step around it. Watch your mind for the scraps of meanness, or you will be unable to ask me to do so" (T-4.V.13:4-14:1 (CE), T-4.III.7:4-5 (FIP)).

Watch your mind for the temptations of the ego, and do not be deceived by it. (T-4.VI.8:4 (CE), T-4.IV.6:1 (FIP))

You are willing to accept primarily what does *not* change your mind too much, and leaves you free to leave it quite unguarded most of the time. You persist in believing that when you do not consciously watch your mind, it is unmindful. It is time to consider the whole world of the unconscious, or unwatched mind. This will frighten you because it is the source of fright. You may look at it as a new theory of basic conflict if you wish, which will not be entirely an intellectual approach, because I doubt if the truth will escape you entirely.

The unwatched mind is responsible for the whole content of the unconscious which lies above the miracle level. (T-2.XI.1:1-2:1 (CE))¹⁶

For me, the new element introduced here is the emphasis on *feelings*, particularly the loss of peace, as tell-tale indicator that our thoughts have gone off track. When we are supposed to be watching the *unconscious mind*, how can we do that? Hey! It's *unconscious!* But if our feelings, our loss of peace or twinge of guilt, can serve as indicators of these hidden thoughts, then there is a way for us to uproot them.

What, then, are we to do when we sense these red flag feelings?

When it occurs, leave not your place on high, but quickly choose a miracle instead of murder. (T-23.IV.12.:7 (CE))

In other words, call a loving thought into your mind, instead of activating the unloving, murderous thought. Stay above the battleground. Stay out of the conflict. When you do, “God Himself and all the lights in Heaven” will lean down to support you (12:8)! I’m fairly sure that “the lights in Heaven” refers to every being created by God that is living in the awareness of perfect Oneness, which is what Heaven is.¹⁷ Perhaps the common idea of being “watched over” by angels or loved ones is not so far-fetched. But clearly, their assistance is triggered by *our choice* of a miracle instead of murder, as the next line underscores. It begins with “For,” meaning, “because.” God and the lights lean to you and hold you up *because* “you have chosen to remain where He would have you,” that is, in your “place on high” above the battleground. When you, the Son, are *together* with God, “no illusion can attack” your peace (12:9).

Paragraph 13 (24.IV.7 (FIP))

13 See no one from the battleground, for there you look on him from nowhere. ²You have no reference point from which to look where meaning can be given what you see. ³For only bodies could attack and murder, and if this is your purpose, then you must be one with them. ⁴Only a purpose unifies, and those who share a purpose have a mind as one. ⁵The body has no purpose of itself and must be solitary. ⁶From below, it cannot be surmounted. ⁷From above, the limits it exerts on those in battle still are gone and not perceived. ⁸The body stands between the Father and the Heaven He created for His Son, *because* it has no purpose.

¹⁶ This passage contains material that was omitted from the Foundation for Inner Peace edition.

¹⁷ ⁵Heaven is not a place or a condition. ⁶It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness and nothing else within. (T-18.VI.1:5–6 (CE))

• **Study Question** •

16. In the context of this paragraph and the entire section, what does it mean to see the nasty party-goer from the battleground (see sentence 1)? There may be more than one correct answer.

- A. To see her as a body, wearing that tacky dress.
- B. To see her as attacking and murdering, with those gaudy lips.
- C. To think you share with her the purpose of attack, that you should attack back.

•

Quick overview: This paragraph discusses the body, saying that the body's purpose seems to be murder and attack, but that in reality, the body has no purpose. To stay above the battleground we must abandon our identification with bodies.

As the previous paragraph told us, we need to remain above the battleground, and to see people from the perspective of absence of conflict (13:1). If we are on the battleground, we are actually nowhere, because all battle is illusion. You cannot give meaning to anything you see because your “point of view” is without meaning because your belief in where you are is an hallucination (13:2). To believe in any form of attack and murder, you must be imagining that you and your brothers and sisters are bodies (13:3), which is not so. Any meaning derived from that misapprehension is therefore irrelevant.

To stay above the battleground we have to stay away from bodily identification, both for ourselves and for others. Bodies are the only thing that can attack and murder. If you are *not* a body, *you* cannot do those things. If you *want* to engage in the battle, if your *purpose* is battle, you would have to identify with a body and see others as bodies (13:3). Your purpose of conflict will unite you in being bodies.

What unifies *is purpose*. Share a purpose with someone and your minds are united (13:4). But a body *has* no purpose it itself. Minds may be united but bodies cannot be; the body “*must be solitary*” (13:5). If you see yourself as on the battleground, in conflict after conflict, you *cannot surmount that solitariness* (13:6). You cannot unite *as bodies*. But looking on bodies from *above* the battleground, the apparent limits that bodies impose on us are simply *gone*; we no longer even perceive the limits (13:7). Union with God, union with the Creator-Created Oneness exists only in shared purpose, but the body “has no purpose” and therefore seems to stand between us and Heaven (13:8). We must learn to dis-identify with our bodies if we are to experience union with God. This is why the declaration that “I am not a body” appears 47 times in the Workbook! This is why we are admonished to practice this idea *every day* and to “Make it a part of every practice period you take” (W-pI.199.5:1-2).

Paragraph 14 (24.IV.8 (FIP))

14 Think what is given those who share their Father's purpose, and who *know* that it is theirs! ²They want for nothing. ³Sorrow of any kind is inconceivable. ⁴Only the light they love is in awareness, and only love shines upon them forever. ⁵It is their past, their present, and their future—always the same, eternally complete, and wholly shared. ⁶They *know* it is impossible that their happiness could ever suffer change of any kind. ⁷Perhaps you think the battleground can offer something that you can win. ⁸Can it be anything that offers you a perfect calmness and a sense of love so deep and quiet that no touch of doubt can ever mar your certainty? ⁹And that will last forever?

• Study Question •

17. *Paragraph 14* is a beautiful paragraph about what comes to those who share their Father's purpose, not the body's purpose. Please rewrite all of the benefits that come to those who share their Father's purpose, and make them statements about yourself. For instance, "I will want for nothing." Please try not to leave any of the benefits out.

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To motivate us in our determination to abandon the battlefield and drop identification with our bodies, Jesus asks us to consider "what is given to those who share their Father's purpose, and who *know* that it is theirs" (14:1). Remember that *shared purpose* is what unifies us, so sharing the Father's purpose brings union with the Father. What are the gifts that such persons enjoy?

"They want for nothing" (14:2). The psalmist knew this state when he wrote, "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1). Another psalm proclaims the same assurance: "The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing." (Psalms 34:10 ESV). The Apostle Paul exclaimed, "But I have all, and abound: I am full" (Philippians 4:18 KJV). When our consciousness is united with God, there is an utter absence of any sense of lack.

"Sorrow of any kind is inconceivable" (14:3). Not simply an absence of sorrow, but sorrow has become something we cannot *conceive* of! This is the "joy unspeakable" spoken of in I Peter 1:8. It is the "pure joy" that is experienced when "two minds perceive their oneness and become glad" (T-5.I.1:1 (FIP), T-5.I.6:1 (CE)).

"Only the light they love is in awareness, and only love shines upon them forever" (14:4). Your awareness is flooded with "only...light." This state of experiencing only love and only light has been mentioned before, also in the context of union with our brothers instead of conflict:

Reach out to all your brothers and touch them with the touch of Christ. In timeless union with them is your continuity, unbroken because it is wholly shared. God's guiltless Son is only light. There is no darkness in him anywhere, for he is whole. (T-13.VI.8:2-5 (CE))

“It is their past, their present, and their future—always the same, eternally complete, and wholly shared” (14:5). When our will is united with the Father’s will, sharing the same purpose, *love* is our past, present, and future. If you think the shift of awareness the Course is aiming to impart isn’t radical, think again. Maybe you can conceive that, in some moment, your experience can be only love. And perhaps with a stretch of your imagination, you can imagine this love extending forever, changelessly, into the future. But can you imagine looking back at your past and *seeing nothing but love there*? What a miracle that would be!

14:6 underscores the fact that people living in the Oneness *know* that their happiness cannot *possibly* change in any way. Sorrow is inconceivable; happiness is unassailable. I think until we experience it, any understanding of it can only be a fraction of the reality it will be. Jesus tries to get us to imagine it in Workbook Lesson 107, and ends up saying our best efforts would only give “the faintest intimation of the state your mind will rest in when the truth has come” (W-pI.107.2:1-3:1 (FIP)).

It seems that such a state of bliss, no lack, undiluted joy, only light and love, eternal completion, and unchanging happiness, cannot be attained while we believe we are separate beings with separate interests, perpetually and unavoidably in conflict with one another. Only in full and perfect union can we find such bliss. This union, and only this, is Heaven.

What are we looking for on the battlefield? What prize do we think we can win that even begins to compare with all these gifts that belong to “those who share their Father’s purpose, and who *know* that it is theirs”? Can the battlefield bring us “a perfect calmness and a sense of love so deep and quiet that no touch of doubt can ever mar your certainty? And that will last forever” (14:7–9)? Of course not! Nothing we could possibly find here can match that deep, endless love.

Paragraph 15 (24.IV.9 (FIP))

15 Those with the strength of God in their awareness could never *think* of battle. ²What could they gain but loss of their perfection? ³For everything fought for on the battleground is of the body; something it seems to offer or to own. ⁴No one who knows that he has everything could seek for limitation, nor could he value the body’s offerings. ⁵The senselessness of conquest is quite apparent from the quiet sphere above the battleground. ⁶What can conflict with everything? ⁷And what is there that offers less and could be wanted more? ⁸Who with the love of God upholding him could find the choice of miracles or murder hard to make?

• **Study Question** •

18. *The final paragraph* gives many reasons why those mentioned in the previous paragraph could never think of battle. If you want something bodily—something the body offers you or something the body owns, what does that say about you?
- A. You are seeking after limitation.
 - B. You want miracles instead of murder.
 - C. You do not realize that you have everything.
 - D. You see reason to fight on the battleground.
 - E. All of the above.
 - F. A,B,D

United with the strength of God within our minds, battle would never enter our thoughts (15:1). How pointless! We would know we already have all things. Battle could bring us nothing but “loss of [our] perfection” (15:2). Battle’s prizes are all physical, something that a body owns or offers in itself (15:3). What value could any such thing hold to a person who “knows that he has everything” (15:4)?

When viewed from above the battleground, “the senselessness of conflict is quite apparent” (15:5). How can we even think of wanting what conflict brings when we compare it with the wealth of love and peace union with God offers? (15:6–7) When we become aware of God’s love upholding us, how can we “find the choice of miracles or murder hard to make” (15:8)?

George Macdonald, the Scottish poet and minister (1824–1905) once wrote:

*Lord, I have fallen again—a human clod!
Stood on my rights. Thy own child would not send
Away his shreds of nothing for the whole God!
Wretched, to thee who savest, low I bend:
Give me the power to let my rag-rights go
In the great wind that from thy gulf doth blow.*

Are we caught in that same kind of trap, refusing to “send away [our] shreds of nothing for the whole God”? The whole God!!! Are we still clinging to our “rag-rights,” refusing to let them be blown away by God’s great wind?

19. **Summary:** See if you can write a one-paragraph summary of paragraphs 7–15, including the following themes: all forms of attack are murder; responding to the temptation of attack, being lifted above the battleground, the results of being permanently above the battleground.

Legend:

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

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

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

Answer Key

1. B
2. A and C
3. A
4. Compromise being possible means that we can withhold a little forgiveness, attack for this and love for that. If that is not so, if forgiveness and love must be total, this makes the Course easy because everything can be responded to in the same way, with forgiveness and love; there are no decisions or judgments to be made. Furthermore, believing compromise is possible makes it impossible to understand forgiveness, making the Course appear very difficult. Salvation is attack if compromise is possible because it means that sometimes the right thing to do is to attack. It also means that, for some people or situations, salvation is impossible—salvation makes distinctions, saving some and not others, which is an attack on the whole.
5. A, B, C, E, G
6. B, C

Actual murder	Seeking to harm	Turning on oneself	Condemning
Seeing guilt	Seeing a brother as powerless	"A form you think is lovely"	Seeing life outside of Heaven
Exalting the body, seeing it is alive	Valuing some bodies more than others	Judging things as good/bad, alive/dead	Attacking another's values
Any form of conflict	Any lack of faith in love	Anything that causes loss of peace	Anything that causes uncertainty
Anything that causes doubt of attaining Heaven	Withholding forgiveness, even a little	Compromise, or partial forgiveness	Thinking certain forms of attack are OK
Attack a little, love a little, thing you know difference	Loving only certain things, attacking others	Defending your own peace	Having any enemies
Mistaking truce for peace	Hiding fear temporarily	Bargains	Anything that is not love (IV.1:10)

7. E

8. We don't need to fight *against* our wish to murder because it cannot be overcome by fighting, which is just another form of attack. Instead, we are asked simply to *recognize* the wish to murder in every attack, regardless of the form it takes. If we recognize it, our true desire to love will overcome it without effort.

9. D

10. B, C

11.

12. A, B, C

13.

14. You let yourself be raised up above the battleground and look down on it from a higher place. You now realize that miracles, not murder, are your choice, that the battle is not real, and so is easily escaped, was never begun and is already over.

15. C

16. A, B, C

17.

18. I will want for nothing.

Only the light I love will be in my awareness, and only love will shine upon me forever.

It will be my past, my present, and my future; always the same, eternally complete and wholly shared.

I will know it is impossible my happiness could ever suffer change of any kind.

I will have a perfect calmness, and a sense of love so deep and quiet that no touch of doubt can ever mar my certainty

19. F

No answer is provided.