

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM Text, Section 1.III

Atonement and Miracles

The “I” who speaks as the author of the Course never explicitly identifies himself, but it quickly becomes evident that it is Jesus. Helen Schucman, who wrote down the words of the Course, considered herself a scribe who was taking dictation from Jesus. It is not necessary to accept this to benefit from the words of the Course, but at the very least it helps our understanding of this section, which begins with the words, “I am in charge of the process of Atonement, which I undertook to begin” (T-1.III.1:1). This is not Helen speaking; this is Jesus.

Forget everything you know about what “Atonement” means, and forget nearly everything you know about Jesus. The way both are presented in the Course is very different from what you may have learned in a traditional Christian church. Nearly every seemingly Christian term is defined in the Course in a radically different way. The Course offers this redefinition, not as a change to what Jesus originally taught, but as a correction to what we have been told he taught. This will become a lot clearer as we go on, particularly in the opening sections of Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.

• Study Questions •

1. *The traditional meaning of the word “Atonement,” according to the American Heritage Dictionary, is: “Amends or reparation made for an injury or wrong; expiation.”*

This is not the meaning given to the word in the Course. As you read through this whole section, try to come up with a definition of what the Course means by “Atonement.” You may want to refer to Miracle Principles 25, 26 and 37 as well, which began to define the term.

2. *After you have read through the entire section once or twice, look through it and try to explain in a few sentences what the general relationship is between miracles and the Atonement. These sentences all relate to this relationship: 1:10; 3:3,4; 4:2,3; 7:3-5; 9:1-2.*

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Paragraph 1

1. ¹I am in charge of the process of Atonement, which I undertook to begin. ²When you offer a miracle to any of my brothers, you do it to yourself and me. [Ur: “Inasmuch as you do it unto the least of these, my children” really ends with “you do it unto yourself and me.”]

³The reason you come before me is that I do not need miracles for my own Atonement, but I stand at the end in case you fail temporarily. ⁴My part in the Atonement is [Ur: My Atonement was for] the cancelling out of all errors that you could not otherwise correct. [Ur: (Helen Schucman explanation: This means that He will backstop whenever human miracles will not suffice for atonement purposes. However, it is perfectly clear that when a person can atone by miracles, both giver and receiver are atoning. It is better to atone this way because of the mutual benefits involved.)] ⁵When you have been restored to the recognition of your original state, you naturally become part of the Atonement yourself. ⁶As you [Ur: You now] share my unwillingness to accept error in yourself and others, you [Ur: and] must join the great crusade to correct it; [Ur: The slogan for this Crusade is “Listen, Learn, and Do.” This means] listen to my voice, learn to undo error and act [Ur: do something] to correct it. [Ur: The first two are not enough. The real members of my party are active workers.] ⁷The power to work miracles belongs to you. ⁸I will provide the opportunities to do them, but you must be ready and willing [Ur: since you are already able to]. ⁹Doing them will bring conviction in the ability, because conviction comes through accomplishment. [Ur: I repeat that you will see Miracles thru your hands thru mine.] ¹⁰The ability is the potential, the achievement is its expression, and the Atonement, which is the natural profession of the children of God, is the purpose.

• Study Question •

3. *3. Try to get a sense of the respective roles played in the Atonement process by Jesus and by yourself. How would you summarize these two roles?*

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Jesus speaks in the first person all through this paragraph about his place in the Atonement, and our part in relation to him. He says he is in charge of the process of Atonement, which he began. His being “in charge” is a point that is made fairly often (T-1.II.4:6; T-4.IV.10:4; T-4.VI.6:5-6; C-6.2:2). This does not mean that nothing was accomplished spiritually before Jesus lived in Israel 2000 years ago or by others; although the Course clearly indicates that the Atonement was set in motion by his resurrection (T-3.I.1:2), and at least implies that Jesus attained his own complete awakening in that lifetime. He might have begun his work prior to that; we do not know. But clearly he somehow made the Atonement more accessible to us, and is in charge of it now. He provides us with opportunities to do miracles and tells us when to do them; we read previously in Section II that he deserves our obedience. We can assume here that “his voice” and “God’s Voice” are one and the same, so according to T-1.I.4, we can expect very specific direction, telling us exactly what to do.

Before we talk about how we hear his voice, let’s consider this: If the author is indeed Jesus, a being like us who has completed his own Atonement process, having remembered his true Identity as Christ—if he is such a being, then who would be better at directing the

Atonement process? And who would know better who is ready to receive a miracle and who is not? The picture I get here is of Jesus training us to do miracles (to offer forgiveness, or correct errors of guilt), and sort of standing behind us to catch any errors that we cannot handle—which is most of them to begin with!

He tells us that as we accept the Atonement for ourselves we naturally become part of the Atonement. We pass it along. As he said a bit earlier, “It is the privilege of the forgiven to forgive” (T-1.I.27:2). This idea is developed a bit more in the third paragraph, as we will see.

This seems to me to be the whole purpose of the Course. Jesus is recruiting miracle workers to complete the process of the Atonement. We are gathered in and forgiven, and then sent out to spread forgiveness throughout the world, in a “great crusade” to correct error. I love the three verbs in sentence 6: listen, learn, and act. We get our direction from him by listening; we learn from him to undo error in ourselves (which we do by re-perceiving it), and then we act to correct error in others. As the Prayer of St. Francis advocates, where there is hatred, we sow love; where there is injury, pardon.

How do we listen to and hear his voice? The answer is simple but not easy: We practice. Indeed, that is what a great deal of the Course is all about, especially in the exercises of the Workbook: learning to listen to and hear the Voice for God. Most of us are guided by something inside that works very much like the game of “hot” and “cold” we played as children, where you were told you were getting warmer the closer you got to something, and colder if you moved away. The best way to learn to hear guidance is to study and practice *A Course in Miracles*. Teaching us to listen to the Voice is clearly one of the purposes of the Course (see W-Ep.3:2–3).

We all have the power to work miracles; we just have to be ready and willing to do so. Remember that the miracles the Course is talking about are miracles that give someone a way of seeing themselves without guilt, as wholly lovable and wholly loving. The opportunities to work miracles that Jesus is going to provide for us are going to be situations into which we can bring forgiveness, mercy, and release from guilt. They are going to be opportunities to express love. Our days are already filled with such opportunities. We just need to listen to that inner prompting to know when it is our turn to act.

Perhaps you don't really believe you have the power to transform someone else's consciousness. You do, the Course insists. How will you discover this power in yourself? By doing it. This is a principle that runs all through the Course: it is as we give something away that we come to fully realize that we have it. It teaches us that, “To give is how you recognize you have received” (W-pI.159.1:7). Another way it puts it is that the Holy Spirit must work through us to teach us that He is in us (T-7.IV.2:1).

Paragraph 2

1”Heaven and earth shall pass away” means that they will not continue to exist [Ur: *always exist*] as separate states. 2My word, which is the resurrection and the life, shall not pass away because life is eternal. 3You [You] are the work of God, and His work is wholly lovable and wholly loving. 4This is how a man must [must] think of himself in his heart, because this is what he is [is].

Jesus is talking about Atonement and miracles, and suddenly he is quoting his words about “Heaven and earth,” and explaining what he meant. The words here are from the Gospels, where Jesus says:

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away
(Matthew 24:35; also in Mark and Luke).

This is not the huge change of topic it seems to be. These early chapters often seem to have gaps, or what could be called missing links. Connecting ideas can be found, if you look hard enough. Part of the reason for the jerkiness is that Helen Schucman's spiritual hearing, in the early days of her scribing, was imperfect; it improved as time went by. Another reason is that these early sections were interspersed with personal material that was edited out prior to publication; sometimes the connection was clearer in that deleted material.

Jesus has been talking about the ongoing process of Atonement, and its eventual goal. He has at least hinted that the outcome of Atonement is that you will be “restored to the recognition of your original state” (1:5). So when he speaks of Heaven and earth passing away, in the sense that they will no longer appear to be separate states, he is talking about Heaven and earth being joined—which is their original state. They join in the sense that earth disappears into Heaven, as he tells us later:

For as Heaven and earth become one, even the real world will vanish from your sight. The end of the world is not its destruction, but its translation into Heaven (T-11.VIII.1:7–8).

The world will end, but it will be translated into Heaven, not destroyed. It will end as a separate entity. The outcome of Atonement is the reunification of all things, or the recognition that what appeared to be separation and difference was never more than an illusion of separation and difference; the oneness was never lost.

The third and fourth sentences in this paragraph are two of my favorites in the whole Course. They offer another summary of its message: God is perfect and creates perfectly; therefore, all He creates is perfect. God is Love, and what He creates is like Him, Love. Therefore, as God's creation, you are wholly lovable and wholly loving. Learning to know that about ourselves is what the Course is all about; it is a course in remembering what we are (T-9.I. 2:4–5).

You are only love, but when you deny this, you make what you are something you must learn to remember (T-6.III.2:3).

• **Study Question** •

4. *Ponder the two-fold statement about yourself, especially the word “wholly,” which means completely. Make it a first-person statement, and repeat it aloud to yourself: “I am wholly lovable and wholly loving...” and so on. How would the way you feel about yourself change if you believed this? The purpose of the Course is to teach you that this really is the truth about you.*

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Paragraph 3

¹The forgiven are the means of the Atonement. ²Being filled with spirit, they

forgive in return. ³Those who are released must join in releasing their brothers, for this is the plan of the Atonement. ⁴Miracles are the way in which minds that serve the Holy Spirit unite with me for the salvation or release of all of God's creations.

[Ur had sentences in a different order, as well as different wording. I have italicized major differences:]

The forgiven are filled with *the Soul*, and *their Soul* forgives in return. *It is the duty of the released to release their brothers*. The forgiven ARE the means of Atonement. Those released *by Christ* must join in releasing their brothers, for this is the plan of Atonement.

• **Study Question** •

5. *From this paragraph, how would you describe "the plan of the Atonement"?*

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The idea presented here is central to the Course; it is why Jesus is recruiting miracle workers. Those who are forgiven forgive others. The Atonement spreads from person to person, through us, as minds in service to the Holy Spirit unite with Jesus to release their brothers and sisters. In the Manual for Teachers, this is called "the plan of the teachers":

The Call... calls for teachers to speak for It and redeem the world... Because of this... the plan of the teachers was established. Their function is to save time. Each one begins as a single light, but with the Call at its center it is a light that cannot be limited (M-1.2:4-12, selected).

I have to admit there is a part of me that recoils from this idea violently. I want to be forgiven; I want to be saved from my misery; but I don't especially want to be recruited into some kind of "Salvation Army" that is out to "redeem the world." When it says that, "those who are released must join in releasing their brothers," I feel imposed on. I just want to be released; I don't want to take on the job of releasing others. And interestingly enough, that resistance is part of what the Course sets out to release us from. What needs to be healed in me is my very failure to recognize that the "others" I perceive are really parts of myself. Until we are willing to accept our part in the plan of the Atonement, our own experience of Atonement will be incomplete.

Paragraph 4

¹I am the only one who can perform miracles indiscriminately, because I am the Atonement. ²You have a role in the Atonement which I will dictate to you. ³Ask me which miracles you should perform. [Ur: *Never perform a miracle without asking me if you should.*] ⁴This spares you needless effort [Ur: *from exhaustion*], because you will be acting under direct communication [Ur: *and because you are acting under direct communication the trance (Edgar Cayce's trance) becomes unnecessary*]. ⁵The impersonal nature of the miracle is an essential ingredient, because it enables me to direct its application [Ur: *control their distribution as I see fit*], and under my guidance miracles lead to the highly personal experience of revelation. [Ur:

Christ-guidance, on the other hand, leads to the highly Personal experience of Revelation. This is why it involves *personal choice*.] ⁶A guide does not control but he does direct, leaving it up to you to follow. ⁷"Lead us not into temptation" means "Recognize your errors and choose to abandon them by following my guidance" [Ur: "Lead us not into temptation" means "guide us out of our own errors." Note that the word is "lead", NOT order. "Take up thy cross and follow me" should be interpreted to read "Recognize your errors and choose to abandon them by following My guidance."]

• Study Question •

- 6. This paragraph pictures each miracle worker being guided, in some detail, by Jesus. He speaks about the benefits of being so guided by him. You may have, as Helen Schucman did, some resistance to the idea of deferring to guidance from another, even from Jesus. Does Sentence 6 of this paragraph help you in accepting the idea of being guided by Jesus? If so, explain how it does so.*



Jesus is the speaker here; he claims that he is the only one who can perform miracles "indiscriminately," which means without making distinctions, without selection. He says that is so because, "I am the Atonement." To me that means he has completely identified with the truth of the Atonement. He has been "completely enlightened," to use terminology from Eastern spiritual paths. For all the rest of us, some discrimination is required; we can perform miracles for some people but not others, in some situations but not others. The selectivity is necessary both because some people or situations are ready for miracles and some are not, and because we are not ready, in some cases, to extend the Atonement without reservation.

How do we know when to extend miracles? This is where the guidance comes in; our "role in the Atonement" is dictated to us by Jesus. We are explicitly told, "Ask me which miracles you should perform," so that we will be "acting under direct communication." We need to develop that habit of asking before acting, and not acting until we have the sense that Jesus is guiding us to do so.

I realize that, for many people, this kind of talk about a personal interaction with Jesus—really, a personal relationship with Jesus—is a little spooky, and a bit too reminiscent of unsophisticated, childish religion. The Course does encourage this kind of relationship; that's obvious in this paragraph. However, it also says, in the Manual for Teachers:

Jesus is for you the bearer of Christ's single message of the Love of God. You need no other. It is possible to read his words and benefit from them without accepting him into your life. Yet he would help you yet a little more if you will share your pains and joys with him, and leave them both to find the peace of God (C-5.6:4-7).

The stance the Course is taking about Jesus, therefore, is that you do not have to accept him into your life to benefit from his words (this Course being his words), but that if you are

willing to do so, he can be even more helpful to you. So, it's up to you. For many people, one of the major relationships that needs to be healed is their relationship with Jesus.

Notice above how the Urtext's version of the final sentence, about the meaning of "Lead us not into temptation," is actually *three sentences*. Two sentences were dropped, and the last part of the third sentence got tacked onto the first part of the first sentence, resulting in a nearly incomprehensible "explanation" of the meaning of that biblical phrase. What Jesus actually said was, "'Lead us not into temptation' means 'guide us out of our own errors.'" That makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

He then adds, "Note that the word is 'lead', *not* order." Jesus and the Holy Spirit do not order us to do anything; they *guide*. The choice is left to us. Jesus then quotes another verse from the Gospels and reinterprets it along similar lines: "'Take up thy cross and follow me' should be interpreted to read 'Recognize your errors and choose to abandon them by following My guidance.'" It isn't a call to suffer with Jesus. It is a call to figuratively die to our own ego independence, and instead to follow the guidance Jesus is willing to give us. All this comes in the context of being told that we should never perform a miracle without asking Jesus if we should—in other words, following his guidance.

The "trance" referred to in the Urtext version is a reference to the way Edgar Cayce used to do his healing work. In the Urtext, just prior to this paragraph, there is a fairly lengthy discussion to the effect that Cayce "burned himself out with indiscriminate miracles" because "he could not be induced to ask me each time whether I wanted him to perform this particular miracle." If we act under direct communication, having asked for guidance, such trances become unnecessary.

Paragraph 5

5. 1[Ur: Tell Bill when he is afraid of Possession, he need only remember that] error cannot really threaten truth, which can always withstand it. 2Only the error is actually vulnerable. [Ur: The "Princes of this World" are princes only because they are really angels. But they are free to establish their kingdom where they see fit. If you will remember that all princes inherit their power from the Father, the right choice becomes inevitable.] 3You are free to establish your kingdom where you see fit, but the right choice is inevitable if you remember this:

⁴Spirit is in a state of grace forever.

⁵Your reality is only spirit.

⁶Therefore you are in a state of grace forever.

⁷Atonement undoes all errors in this respect, and thus uproots the source of fear. ⁸Whenever you experience God's reassurances as threat, it is always because you are defending misplaced or misdirected loyalty. [Ur: That is what projection always involves. "Casting spells" merely means "affirming error," and error is lack of love.] ⁹When you project this to others you

imprison them, but only to the extent to which you reinforce errors they have already made. 10This makes them vulnerable to the distortions [Ur: the curse] of others, since their own perception of themselves is distorted [Ur: since they have already cursed themselves]. 11The miracle worker can only bless them, and this undoes their distortions [Ur: the curse] and frees them from prison.

• Study Question •

7. *The three lines in 5:4–6 present a logical syllogism. In a syllogism, two premises are given and then a conclusion: for example, “If A is true and B is true, then C must also be true.” (a) What are the two premises given here, and (b) What is the conclusion? (c) Ask yourself, “Do I accept the premises as true?” If you do, the conclusion must also be true.*
***Suggestion:** Try making these three lines personal by repeating them in the first person several times: “My spirit is in a state of grace forever. My reality is only spirit. Therefore I am in a state of grace forever.”*
8. *The sentence that follows the syllogism says, “Atonement undoes all errors in this respect” (my emphasis). What, then, is the nature of the errors which the Atonement undoes?*



Apparently Bill Thetford had some fears about being possessed by demonic powers, either for himself or perhaps just in general. It may refer to being negatively influenced by the thoughts of others (see 5:9–10). This has been neatly eliminated from the published version, but when it is put back it fits neatly into the context. Everything said about projection in the latter part of the paragraph applies as well to any kind of external influence on our minds, including things such as being “cursed” by someone using black magic: No error can be imposed from outside against our will. It can only affect us to the degree that we have already made the same mental error ourselves. In other words, we alone rule our minds (compare with W-pII.236).

Here is another paragraph about possession that was entirely omitted from later editions:

Possession really means “Not under Christ-Control”, thus making him (the mind?) vulnerable to projection. The references to the earth-bound entering bodies really refer to the “taking over” by their own earth-bound “thoughts.” This IS Demon Possession. After all, Lucifer fell, but he was still an angel. He is thus the symbol for man. Atonement is the knowledge that the belief that angels can fall is false. It is true that mind can create projections as well as miracles, but it's NOT true that projections are REAL. Any psychologist should understand this. This is what is meant by “The Truth shall set you free.”

Jesus has already said that Atonement corrects our errors. In the last part of Paragraph 4, he said that our errors are corrected by choosing to follow his guidance. Now, he continues the

line of thought about errors by saying that error can't threaten truth. Truth is not vulnerable, only errors are vulnerable. "Nothing real can be threatened; nothing unreal exists" (T-Int.2:2-3), as the Introduction said. We do not need to be afraid of recognizing our mistakes because they are powerless to change reality. Our spirit is eternally in a state of grace, and our reality is "only spirit."

This is the message of the Atonement. We appear to be in anything but a state of grace. Our minds are muddled at best and corrupt at worst; our bodies are sick, or aging, and inevitably dying. If this is our reality we are a sad lot! But if our reality is spirit, something eternal and incorruptible, then we can be at peace, even though our bodies are failing. The Atonement comes to remind us this is indeed our reality; we are wholly lovable and wholly loving; our errors have not changed the truth of our being as God created us. The Atonement "undoes all errors in this respect, and thus uproots the source of fear" (5:7).

Though the Atonement message is meant to uproot fear, sometimes we receive it as a threat because of "misdirected loyalty," by which the Course means our loyalty to our false images of ourselves, or our egos. It's the kind of loyalty we sometimes have to mistaken ideas; we defend them simply because they are ours, "our babies," so to speak. He refers to this more clearly in Chapter 4:

Think of the love of animals for their offspring, and the need they feel to protect them. That is because they regard them as part of themselves. No one dismisses something he considers part of himself. You react to your ego much as God does to His creations,—with love, protection and charity (T-4.II.4:1-4).

So, because we feel protective about our egos, we react to God's message about what we really are as if it were a threat. It is a threat to our mistakes. We then project this onto others; we see them protecting their egos, being defensive, or perhaps we see them as the source of the threat to ourselves. This is the first mention in the Course of projection, which is a core concept in the Course; it means the mental attempt to throw an idea out of our mind and locate it outside, in a supposedly external world, where it appears to exist independent of us, having an effect on our mind, rather than being, as it is in truth, an effect of our mind.

This paragraph introduces an extremely important idea in regard to projection: Our projection can affect others only to the degree they have already made a corresponding mistake in their own minds. Thus, if I project my guilt onto you, it cannot make you guilty unless you already have accepted guilt in your own thinking. In that case, my projection will reinforce the pre-existing guilt in your mind. Elsewhere the Course teaches clearly that we are affected only by our thoughts (W-pII.338); here, it seems as though someone else's projections could affect me. They can—but only by reinforcing something I have already accepted in my own thinking.

The miracle worker, in extending blessing, undoes the distortions in the minds of others, and frees them from their imprisoning thoughts.

Paragraph 6

1You respond to what you perceive, and as you perceive so shall you behave.
2The Golden Rule asks you to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. 3This means that the perception of both must be accurate. 4The Golden Rule is the rule for appropriate behavior. 5You cannot behave

appropriately unless you perceive correctly. ⁶Since you and your neighbor are equal members of one family, as you perceive both so you will do to both. ⁷You should [Ur: The way to perceive for Golden Rule behavior is to] look out from the perception of your own holiness to the holiness of others.

He is still talking here about the need to transform our perception. Often, when we think of religion, we think of some kind of rules for behavior—what to do, what not to do. Here, the Course teaches that, although “the Golden Rule is the rule for appropriate behavior,” carrying out that rule—”And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31)—depends on having accurate perception of both ourselves and our brother. We always see others as we see ourselves; that is what projection is all about. An accurate perception means to “look out from the perception of [our] own holiness to the holiness of others,” which is the same thing as seeing ourselves and our brother as lovable and loving, or in a state of grace. When we perceive one another that way, our behavior will be appropriate, and not before. This makes perfect sense. If we see ourselves and our brother as guilty and unworthy of love, that is how we will treat everyone. Therefore, what needs to be healed first is our perception; our behavior will follow naturally.

Paragraphs 7 & 8

¹Miracles arise from a mind that is ready for them [Ur: from a miraculous state of mind]. ²By being united [Ur: One] this mind goes out to everyone [Ur: anyone], even without the awareness of the miracle worker himself. ³The impersonal nature of miracles is because the Atonement itself is one, uniting all creations with their Creator. ⁴[Ur adds: The miracle is an expression of an inner awareness of Christ and acceptance of his Atonement.] As an expression of what you truly are, the miracle places the mind in a state of grace [Ur: The mind is then in a state of Grace...]. ⁵The mind then naturally welcomes [Ur: and naturally becomes gracious, both to] the Host within and the stranger without. ⁶When you bring in [Ur: By bringing in] the stranger, he becomes your brother.

[The lines of the next paragraph come from different paragraphs, in different order, with some material omitted. The original passages are quoted below.]

¹That the miracle may have effects on your brothers that you may not recognize is not your concern. ²The miracle will always bless you. ³Miracles you are not asked to perform have not lost their value. ⁴They are still expressions of your own state of grace, but the action aspect of the miracle should be controlled by me because of my complete awareness of the whole plan. ⁵The impersonal nature of miracle-mindedness ensures your grace, but only I am in a position to know where they can be bestowed.

[Original paragraphs:]

The miracles you are told NOT to perform have not lost their value. They are still expressions of your own state of Grace, but the ACTION aspect of the miracle should be Christ-controlled, because of His complete Awareness of the Whole Plan. The impersonal nature of miracle-mindedness ensures YOUR own Grace, but only Christ is in a position to know where Grace can be BESTOWED.

A miracle is never lost. It touches many people you may not even know, and sometimes produces undreamed of changes in forces of which you are not even aware. This is not your concern. It will also always bless YOU. This is not your concern, either. But it IS the concern of the Record. The Record is completely unconcerned with reliability, being perfectly valid because of the way it was set up. It ALWAYS measures what it was supposed to measure.

Miracles are impersonal or indiscriminate because the Atonement applies equally to all of God's creations; God created us all whole, and the Atonement merely reminds us of that fact. We acknowledge the Christ in *everyone*. As one mind comes into harmony with this thought of Atonement, recognizing its own state of grace, it radiates miracles universally, "to everyone" (7:2), even when it is not aware of it, simply because all of creation is connected. This is why it has effects on people we may not ever meet. Our mind opens to God (the Host) and to those who seem, at first, to be strangers, but who turn out to be our brothers. So the content of miracles is impersonal; it belongs to everyone equally.

But the "action aspect" (8:4), which involves behavior in which we actively express a miracle towards a particular person (going beyond a mental attitude of universal blessing), needs to be directed, because only he knows who is ready to accept a miracle and pass it on. That is especially true because our perceptions are still imperfect. We need the sure hand of someone whose perceptions are unclouded and unlimited, and who is aware of the whole plan. Only Jesus is in such a position.

If the line about "inner awareness of Christ", which the Ur incudes after 7:3, sounds familiar, it should; it was transferred, in the published FIP version, to become Miracle Principle #44.

The references to "the Record" were deleted entirely from the published edition, and it isn't clear exactly what they mean. There are a couple of later references to it as well that imply that the Record is a bit like the record book supposedly kept about us by God, or what theosophy called the Akashic Records, containing the history of all human experience, and kept on a non-physical plane. The Course says later that when a miracle is offered by one person to another, it "introduces a correction into the Record."

Paragraph 9

¹[Ur: Christ-controlled] Miracles are selective only in the sense that they are directed towards those who can use them for themselves [*themselves*].

²Since this makes it inevitable that they will extend them to others, a [Ur: very] strong chain of Atonement is welded. ³However, this selectivity takes no account of the magnitude [*magnitude*] of the miracle itself, because the

concept of size exists on a plane that is itself unreal. ⁴Since the miracle aims at restoring [restoring] the awareness of reality, it would not be useful if it were bound by laws that govern the error it aims to correct. [Ur: Only man makes that kind of error. It is an example of the “foolish consistency” his own false beliefs have engendered.]

• Study Question •

9. *Each of us is, to some degree, a miracle worker and healer in regard to some people in our lives. If miracles are directed towards “those who can use them for themselves,” and Jesus is the one who knows who those persons are, what should we be doing as we seek to be of help to those around us?*



Jesus makes the criteria for selecting the recipients of miracles to be people who will accept them and, inevitably, extend them to others. Knowing who these people are is within his ability, but not within ours, which is why we need to ask him before we attempt to perform miracles. The criteria has nothing to do with how “big” the problem seems to be. As we have been told, there is no order of difficulty in miracles, and no concept of big or small. *We* (“man”) make the error of judging by size; he does not, because he knows that “the concept of size exists on a plane that is itself unreal.” To take that into consideration would be to attempt to govern miracles by a law that the miracle is attempting to correct. So the criterion for who we offer miracles to, basically, is their readiness to receive. And that readiness can be discerned only by Jesus, or by the Christ in us, not by our own perceptions.

Here once again (see T-1.I.25) we see the idea of a “chain of Atonement,” composed of the miracles that occur as one person receives a miracle and extends it to others. I want to catch that vision and hold it in my mind frequently! You and I are part of this process which will result, eventually and inevitably, in the complete redemption of the world. All of us, in the end, will be restored to the awareness of reality. Each act of loving perception brings that moment nearer.

Summary

In reading through this section several times, one begins to get an overall picture of the way Atonement and miracles relate.

The overall process of Atonement is the correction, or undoing, of erroneous perception. And the fundamental misperception is one of guilt and separation from God. Each of us sees ourselves as guilty, and we project guilt onto others as well; that is, we see them as guilty. If they are already inclined to see themselves as guilty, as most people are, then our projection serves to reinforce their guilt.

A miracle is a divine act of grace which allows our minds to perceive innocence rather than guilt; to recognize that, “Spirit is in a state of grace forever,” and that we are, all of us, “wholly lovable and wholly loving.” This is the healing-of-our-minds part of the miracle. There is also a sense in which we do or work miracles, which is making use of some form of communication (a word, an act, a gesture, perhaps purely mental communication) to offer this perception of innocence to another person; to in some way facilitate their sharing with us the perception of their own innocence.

Jesus has already completed his Atonement process. Our part in the process is to join him in correcting error. The goal is to restore us “to the recognition of [our] original state.” Jesus directs the whole process because he sees the whole thing from end to end, as we cannot. He tells us who is open to receive the miracle of forgiveness, because not everyone is equally ready.

Therefore, miracles are offered selectively “towards those who can use them for themselves.” The offering of miracles has nothing to do with the relative merits of the persons, because all persons are equally meritorious; it has nothing to do with the magnitude of the miracle (or the apparent magnitude of the person's guilt that is addressed by the miracle), because there is no order of difficulty in miracles. We should be asking him which miracles to perform, and be constantly guided by him.

As we offer miracles under his guidance, people around us will begin to receive miracles. They will recognize their own innocence. That, in turn, will lead them to “the highly personal experience of revelation.” Thus, through an act of human-to-human forgiveness, people will be freed from guilt and freed from the fear of God, and led into direct contact with the Divine. And that is “the plan of Atonement” which it is our function to carry out.

Answer Key

1. Atonement, in this section and often throughout the Course, is explained as a process of correction, an undoing of errors and the undoing of fear. It is called an “interlocking chain of forgiveness.” The errors being undone are the errors of judgment and guilt. The picture that is presented is that one person receives a blessing from God, accepting Atonement for themselves as a miracle is offered to them by the Holy Spirit, sometimes by means of another person, sometimes directly from the Holy Spirit or Jesus within their own mind. The forgiven person thus becomes unwilling to accept error in herself or himself, and extends that forgiveness to others, unwilling to accept error (that is, sin or guilt) in them. This awakens the other person(s) to their own innocence, and they, in turn, pass on the forgiveness to others. Jesus began this process, according to the Course; we all must take part in it to complete it.

The section refers to the plan of the Atonement, which is simply this interlocking chain of forgiveness (T-1.III.3:1–3). It also refers to the principle of Atonement, which is the notion that separation from God never occurred, so that everyone, universally, is innocent, and has always and forever been one with God (T-1.III.7:3). Atonement focuses on the negation of the false, thus restoring what is true.

2. Atonement, here, is both the overall process of releasing all of God's creations from errors, and the outcome or goal of that process. Miracles are individual links in the chain of the Atonement process, releasing those we encounter; doing miracles is the part we play in the overall plan.

3. Jesus began the Atonement process; he is in charge of it, leading it and arranging individual roles in it; he stands at the end to handle any mistakes that slip by us uncorrected. We each have

a part to play in the Atonement, listening to Jesus' voice, learning to undo error and acting to correct it by offering miracles to our brothers as he directs.

4. No written answer is required here. The idea is to get yourself in touch with the feelings that you carry around of being less than one hundred percent lovable, and less than one hundred percent loving.

5. The plan of the Atonement is that those who are forgiven will forgive others in return; those who are released join in releasing others.

6. No written answer required.

7. (a) The two premises are: A. Spirit is in a state of grace forever; and B. My reality is only spirit. (b) If these two premises are true, then, "I am in a state of grace forever."

8. The Atonement undoes errors concerning both of the premises and the conclusion. Ultimately it corrects my belief that I am not in a state of grace forever; in simple terms, the Atonement reminds me of what I am in truth, wholly lovable and wholly loving.

9. We should be asking to be guided as to when, and to whom, we should extend miracles; we should be placing these action aspects into the hands of our Inner Guide.