

Commentary

ACIM® CE Text

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

Miracle Principles 33-34 T-1.33-34

33. Miracles honor a person because he is lovable.

We saw in Principle 30 that miracles praise God by honoring His creations; here, it tells us that miracles honor the person, which Principle 30 implied but which is stated clearly here to highlight its importance. Towards God, miracles praise Him for what He created; towards *persons*, they honor the person. It's one action with two results: first, honor to a person whom God created; second, as a result of that honor, the person praises God for their creation.

Another thought added here is that we honor a person *because he is lovable*. Since a miracle is the same as a holy encounter, we could deduce that a holy encounter occurs when one person sees another as worthy of love. That, of course, requires forgiveness. How could you see someone as lovable if you have not forgiven them?

2 They dispel his illusions about himself and perceive the light in him. 2 They thus atone for his errors by freeing him from his nightmares about himself. 3 They release him from a prison in which he has imprisoned himself. 4 By freeing his mind from illusions, they restore him to his right mind and place him "at the feet of Jesus."

"Himself," "him," and "his" all refer to the person being forgiven, the recipient of the miracle. You can probably think of more than one person for whom your forgiveness would be a miracle because you cannot conceive of forgiving them or seeing them as lovable. The forgiveness of *anyone* is miraculous! But there is no order of difficulty in miracles (Principle #1), so it is equally true that there is no order of difficulty in forgiveness. "One is not 'harder' or 'bigger' than another. They are all the same" (CE T-1.1.1).

Forgiving Adolph Hitler is the same as forgiving your toddler for spilling milk. Even forgiving a toddler may seem more difficult when they spill their milk *on purpose*. But generally, that too will seem "easier" than forgiving Hitler. We still see the toddler as lovable, the mistakes easy to overlook. The Course teaches us that in any case, in *every* case, it is always possible and equally easy for us to perceive the light in any person and

see them as worthy of love—even Hitler. We get stuck in looking at the consequences instead of the person. Wasted milk and a messy floor seem dwarfed by the horror of causing the deliberate murder of over six million human beings, to say nothing of the suffering and death brought on by Hitler's warfare. But Hitler was a human being like us, deluded and insane. Still, he possessed the same holy spirit, the same loving and lovable being, deeply buried by his delusions and insanity. He is equally worthy of our love.

So, when we forgive, we are brushing aside the other person's illusions about themselves and choosing to perceive the light in them. In doing so, we are freeing them from their nightmares about themselves. That atones for their errors (the things we've been seeing as *sins*). We have released them from the prison they have built for themselves. We have freed their mind from illusions and restored them to their *right* mind. We have placed them "at the feet of Jesus."

That latter phrase is in quotes because it is a reference to a biblical story about the healing of a demon-possessed man. Footnote 61 in the CE gives the details:

"61. This refers to the healing of the Gadarenes demoniac, a man possessed by a "legion" of demons. After his exorcism by Jesus, the man was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (Luke 8:35 KJV). This reference, therefore, likens miracles to the exorcisms performed by Jesus in the gospels, for both restore someone "to his right mind." The difference, as clarified in the next paragraph, is that with miracles the mind is cleansed not of real demons, but of "illusions."

Most biblical scholars (other than those who take the entire Bible literally) believe that the stories of Jesus casting out demons are using the belief system of the day to describe freeing people of mental illnesses. By comparing our miracles of forgiveness to these stories, he is teaching us that we are doing exactly the same thing as Jesus. Our beliefs in sin and guilt and our mistaken identification with our egos and bodies is a form of insanity, and forgiveness heals it.

3 The mind can be possessed by illusions, but the spirit is eternally free. 2 If a mind expresses without love, it can make an empty shell. 3 This can be possessed by evil thoughts. 4 But Atonement restores the mind to its proper place. 5 Unless there is emptiness, there is no danger, and emptiness is a false creation. 6 The mind that serves the spirit is invulnerable.

Our insanity, our "possession" by our illusions about ourselves, has no effect on our spirits, which are "eternally free." When our minds express themselves in an unloving way, we make room in our minds where "evil thoughts" can take root. These "empty shells" can occur in our conscious minds, but I think more often they cause us discomfort so that we push them down into our subconscious, which makes them harder to detect and uproot. Accepting the Atonement offered to us (by God or by the loving expression of a brother or sister) restores our mind to its proper state. The emptiness is filled with love instead of evil thoughts, which are really empty thoughts with no reality. These empty spots filled with evil thoughts are really illusions, and cannot hurt us. *There is no*

danger. We need to remember this when we inspect our minds and find unloving thoughts. When we give our mind to Spirit, we become invulnerable.

The next principle explores more of the effects of a miracle on our minds.

34. The miracle restores the mind to the fullness of spirit. 2 By atoning for lack, it establishes perfect protection. 3 The strength of the spirit leaves no room for intrusions.

When we receive a miracle, it atones for or makes up for our illusions of lack. Freed of any sense of lack, the mind knows it is safe and secure. It recognizes its true strength, the strength of spirit, so strong that "tranquil in the might of its Creator, nothing can intrude upon the sacred Son of God within" (T-29.VI.2:2 (CE)).

2 The forgiven are filled with the spirit, and their spirit forgives in return. 2 It is the duty of the released to release their brothers. 3 The forgiven are the means of Atonement. 4 Those released by Christ must join Him in releasing their brothers, for this is the plan of Atonement.

When people receive forgiveness, they are filled with the spirit. Acting now according to their spiritual nature, they forgive others in return. Forgiving is their *duty*. It is the function of the forgiven to forgive others; this is the core of Jesus's Plan of Atonement. The Atonement grows through the forgiving acts of those already forgiven. Bear this in mind. Sometimes, our reception of the Atonement is blocked by our unwillingness to forgive others—perhaps one person in particular.

35. Miracles are the way in which minds that serve the spirit unite with Christ for the salvation or release of all God's creations.

#35 builds on the concluding thought of the preceding Principle #34. *How* do we join Christ in releasing our brothers (34:2:4)? By offering miracles of forgiveness to our brothers and sisters and to "all God's creations." It isn't by teaching thousands of people or organizing a church or spiritual movement. The world's salvation will come through every expression of love, large or small. It reminds me of a famous quote from Mother Teresa: "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." Or this, from Mahatma Gandhi: "The simplest acts of kindness are by far more powerful than a thousand heads bowing in prayer."

2 There are certain advantages in being a psychologist. 2 A major one is the understanding of projection and the extent of its results. 3 Possession is very closely related to projection. 4 "Lucifer" could literally be translated "light-bearer." 5 He literally projected himself from Heaven.

Projection is a fundamental part of the teaching of the Course. Psychologists have an advantage in that they generally understand just how significant projection can be and how far-reaching its results are. In Robert Perry's Glossary of Course terms, he says, "We...use projection to try to throw outside of us our feelings of guilt. This takes the form of blaming others. Yet this simply causes more guilt." The Course teaches that our

projection makes our perception of the world. Psychology substantially agrees with this notion.

"Lucifer" is named in the Old Testament book of Isaiah, Chapter 14 verses 12–14 (KJV):

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!
how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Many Bible teachers have seen this as a poetic image of how a fallen angel became the devil. As the Course says, a literal translation of "Lucifer" could be "light-bearer." Other Bible versions translate it as "Morning Star" or "Day Star." Jesus summarizes the Isaiah passage by saying that this angelic being "literally projected himself from Heaven." The underlying meaning of this comment, I believe, is that our notions of the devil, evil, and hell all arise from projection.

3 Projection still has this "hurling" connotation, because it involves hurling something you do not want, and regard as dangerous and frightening, to someone else. 2 This is the opposite of the Golden Rule, and having placed this rule upside down, the reverse of miracles, or projection, follows automatically. 3 The correction lies in accepting what is true in yourself, by bringing all that you are into light.

Our unwanted thoughts, which we regard as "dangerous and frightening," become like mental projectiles that we "hurl" or project onto someone else. The Golden Rule tells us to do to others as we want them to do to us, which is another way of looking at miracles; projection is the opposite. It turns the Golden Rule upside down. The way to correct projection is to accept the Truth about ourselves and, by bringing all of that Truth into the light, we can share *that* with others rather than besmirching them with our dark beliefs about ourselves. The Workbook describes it like this:

"Today we are trying to use a new kind of 'projection.' We are not attempting to get rid of what we do not like by seeing it outside. Instead, we are trying to see in the world what is in our minds, and what we want to recognize is there. Thus, we are trying to join with what we see, rather than keeping it apart from us" (W-30.2:1-4).

4 One of the major problems with miracle workers is that they are so sure that what they are doing is right, because they know it stems from love, that they frequently do not pause to let me establish my limits. 2 While what they do comes from me, they often cannot be induced to ask me each time whether I want them to perform this particular miracle. 3 If they did, they would not perform any miracles that could not get through constructively, and would thus save themselves unnecessary strain. 4 Instead, some burn themselves out with indiscriminate miracles, and to this extent do not fulfill their own full purpose.

The whole idea behind Paragraph 4 is that Jesus wants us to ask him each time whether or not to perform any miracle (any expression of love). It isn't enough to be sure what we intend to do comes from love! Only Jesus knows which miracles will "get through constructively." We could avoid a lot of unnecessary strain, which can cause burnout if we just remember to ask first. Asking first will allow us to fulfill our full purpose.

5 The answer is to never perform a miracle without asking me if you should. 2 This spares you from exhaustion. 3 Just because miracles are expressions of love, it does not follow that they will always be effective. 4 I am the only one who can perform miracles indiscriminately, because I am the Atonement. 5 You have a role in the Atonement, which I will dictate to you.

Paragraph 5 carries on the message of the previous paragraph. The answer to the problem of burnout is simply to ask Jesus if we should perform any miracle, whether or not it seems the loving thing to do. Even though it is an expression of love, it may not be effective. We need to be discriminating and to allow Jesus to tell us what our role is in the Atonement.

6 Remember, you already have a principle about the involuntary nature of miracles. 2 We have also established the fact that everything involuntary belongs under Christ-control, not yours. 3 Under Christ-control, miracles replenish the doer as well as the receiver. 4 Miracle workers must learn Christ-control to replace their former habits, which did produce scarcity in place of abundance. 5 From errors of this kind the sense of deprivation is inevitable, but very easily corrected.

This is another way of telling us what Principle 5 told us, that miracles are "involuntary." They should be done under Christ-control, *not* under our control. Miracles given under his control replenish us. Miracles given indiscriminately can drain us. Asking for guidance in expressing love is a habit few of us (if any) formed before studying the Course. As a result, we experienced scarcity rather than abundance. Just think how it might feel to offer love repeatedly to one or several people without seeing any positive results or feedback. You feel drained, discouraged, deprived. You probably know what I'm talking about. We can easily correct errors of this kind just by asking first.

7 Possession really means “not under Christ-control,” thus making the mind vulnerable to projection. 2 The idea of earthbound entities entering into bodies really refers to being “taken over” by your own “earthbound” thoughts. 3 This is demon possession. 4 After all, Lucifer fell, but he was still an angel. 5 He is thus the symbol for humanity. 6 Atonement is the knowledge that the belief that angels can fall is false. 7 It is true that mind can make projections as well as miracles, but it is not true that projections are real. 8 (Any psychologist should understand this.) 9 This is what is meant by “the truth shall set you free.”

Jesus is constantly comparing acting on our own, without His wise control, to being possessed by a demon. This does not mean demons are real. Possession really means being "taken over" by our own "earthbound" thoughts.

Lucifer is a good symbol for humanity because he remained an angel even though he "fell." In the view of the Course, angels *cannot* fall (7:6), and to *know* that *is* the Atonement! If we know that about angels, we will know it about ourselves. We, as creations of God, cannot sin. Our mind can make projections as well as miracles, but the projections *are not real*. Again, this agrees with the psychological understanding of projection. Our projections cause us to "see" things about other people that simply aren't true; they cause us to see attacks where only calls for love exist. Truth sets us free from our false beliefs.

8 You need to understand the very important difference between Christ-control and Christ-guidance. 2 Christ-controlled miracles are part of the Atonement. 3 But Christ-guidance is personal, and leads to personal salvation. 4 The impersonal nature of miracles is an essential ingredient, because this enables me to control their distribution as I see fit. 5 Christ-guidance, on the other hand, leads to the highly personal experience of revelation. 6 This is why it involves personal choice. 7 A guide does not control, by definition. 8 But he does direct, leaving the following up to you. 9 “Lead us not into temptation” means “Guide us out of our own errors.” 10 Note that the word is “lead,” not “order.” 11 “Take up thy cross and follow me” should be interpreted to mean “Recognize your errors and choose to abandon them by following my guidance.”

Okay. I've been saying we need to ask for guidance before offering miracles. Now, Jesus says there is a "very important difference" between being guided by Christ and being *controlled* by Christ. Christ guidance is *personal* and leads to personal salvation. As part of the Atonement, Christ-controlled miracles are *impersonal*; they are distributed to people as Christ sees fit. But guidance results in our *personal* salvation.

When you think of it, there is a clear difference between control and guidance. With guidance, *we* remain in control. The whole point is for us to "choose once again" to affirm the truth. It is more about our thinking than our behavior. I pointed out when discussing the "Higher Shopping Service" that Jesus was guiding Helen's *thinking* about what she was doing. He wasn't *controlling* her, telling her to go to this specific store to buy this specific coat. He made a point of saying he did *not* tell her which coat to buy. In guid-

ancwe about our daily affairs, he *leads* us; he does not *order* us. It's up to us to follow his guidance. But with miracles, he says it is essential that he *control* them. So he *will* order us regarding miracles.

9 When you are afraid of possession, you need only remember that error cannot really threaten truth, which always can withstand its assaults. 2 Only the error is really vulnerable. 3 The "princes of this world" are princes only because they are really angels. 4 But they are free to establish their kingdom where they see fit. 5 If you will remember that all princes inherit their power from the Father, the right choice becomes inevitable:

6 Spirit is in the state of grace forever.

7 Your reality is only your spirit.

8 Therefore, you are in the state of grace forever.

Jesus is dealing here and above with fears of such things as demon possession. Most of us probably believe there are no such things as demons or fallen angels, but he indicates that they really exist! He refers to them as "princes of this world" and says they are angels. That phrase comes from the Bible, but not exactly as it is used here. "Princes of this world" in the Bible seems to refer to the *human* rulers of the world, among whom were those who crucified Jesus (I Cor. 2:8). At another place, the phrase "the prince of the power of the air" occurs and is explained as "the spirit that now is at work in the persons of disobedience," which may refer to the devil or some evil spirit. I think Jesus' response is to Helen's misunderstanding and misuse of the biblical phrase.

His message is clear. It might seem that real fallen angels should frighten us. Jesus says all we need to remember is that error can never threaten truth; truth can always overcome error. Error is vulnerable; the truth is not. The fact that the so-called "princes" are really angels is a good thing; it indicates their true nature cannot change. They inherit their power from God. They can choose wrongly, just as we have done, but they cannot create anything real any more than we can.

The paragraph ends with another logical syllogism:

6 Spirit is in the state of grace forever

7 Your reality is only your spirit.

8 Therefore, you are in the state of grace forever.

Things like demons cannot threaten us. We abide in an eternal state of grace. When people *seem* to be taken over by some evil power, they merely have been overtaken by their own earthbound thoughts.

10 Atonement undoes all errors in this respect, and thus uproots the real source of fear. ²(If you will check back at the reference to uprooting, you will understand it better in this context.) ³ Whenever God's reassurances are experienced as threat, it is always because you are defending your misplaced and misdirected love and loyalty. ⁴ That is what projection always involves.

Atonement undoes all such errors about what might be called "positive evil." There is no such thing; whether in humans or angels, it is always error. The purity of God's creations remains unchanged. As Jesus said in Principle 26, we mistakenly fear the pull of our essential nature because it seems to threaten to uproot the self we think we are. The *real* source of our fear is our belief in a fallen self! When the Truth about us seems threatening, "it is always because you are defending your misplaced and misdirected love and loyalty." That's what we use projection for: the defense of our egos.

11 "Casting spells" merely means "affirming error," and error is lack of love. ² When a person projects this lovelessness onto others, he does imprison them, but only to the extent that he reinforces errors they have already made. ³ These distortions make them vulnerable to the curse of others, since they have already cursed themselves. ⁴ The miracle worker can only bless them, and this undoes the curse and frees the soul from prison.

While we're talking about demons, fallen angels, and possession, why not cover "casting spells" on people? Jesus says spell casting is just affirming error, which is a lack of love. Why does casting spells seem to work (especially in some cultures)? Because projecting "lovelessness" onto people can imprison people if they already harbor the same error about themselves. They have cursed themselves, and this makes them vulnerable to the curses of others. Miracle workers extend love instead of lovelessness. "This undoes the curse and frees the soul from prison."

36. Miracles are examples of right thinking.

² Through miracles, reality contact at all levels becomes strong and accurate, thus permitting correct delineation of intrapersonal and interpersonal boundaries. ²As a result, the doer sees the truth as God created it. ³(This is what is meant by the principle on perspective adjustment.)

Besides being an *interpersonal* expression of love, what is the effect of offering miracles on us, the miracle workers? Each miracle presents us with an example of seeing Truth in another and ourselves. These examples of right thinking build up until they become completely new thinking habits.

Miracles clear up our thinking on all levels. We've talked about the three levels of the mind, superconscious, conscious, and subconscious, with the last divided into two regions: the near region filled with suppressed judgments on ourselves and what we've

learned from the external world, and the deeper region consisting of our divine Self, which we've pushed out of our awareness. We've also talked about the levels of the body and the spirit. Working miracles produces strong and accurate contact with them all, putting all of them in the right perspective. We understand interpersonal boundaries that, up until now, we've been trampling underfoot. We understand the importance of spirit and the relative unimportance of bodies. We see beyond appearances to the eternal truth behind them.

37. A miracle is a correction factor introduced into false thinking by me. ²It acts as a catalyst, shaking up erroneous perception and snapping it into place.

² This correction factor places you under the Atonement principle, where your perception is healed. ²Until this has occurred, perception of the divine order is impossible. ³True depth perception becomes possible only at the highest order of perceptual integration.

Principle 37 continues to describe the effect of miracle-working on our minds. It becomes our path of salvation and enlightenment. A miracle acts on our minds like a catalyst. Consider what that means. A catalyst is a thing that causes a change or event to happen. Miracles shake up our mistaken perceptions and snap our perception into place. They enable us to see with true perception, with the vision of Christ. Our perception is healed.

We can't see divine order until this healing occurs. That is why offering forgiveness to another is how *we* are healed. Notice that a miracle is not the shift in perception; it *causes* the shift.

Think how stubborn many of our perceptions are! We know we see another person as guilty or sinful, but we can't seem to help it. This principle tells us that the way such a perception can be healed is through our conscious choice to forgive them. When we make that choice and move to act on it, I believe the Holy Spirit begins to work in our minds to "snap" our thinking into place. We choose the miracle, and it has a catalytic effect on our thinking. Seemingly without effort, our perception of the person changes, and we can see them as innocent creations of God, wholly worthy of our love.

"I will forgive, and this will disappear" (W-193.15:2).

Legend:

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

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

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

Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

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

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

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

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

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