

Commentary

ACIM® Text (CE)

Miracle Principles 48:19-50

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.

T-1.48:19-26, 1.49-50

Overview

The remainder of the discussion under Principle 48 deals mainly with the conception of *lack*.

Principle 48 (Continued)

19 The following section will be the only one which deals with the concept of “lack,” because while the concept does not exist in what God creates, it is *very* apparent in what you make. ²It is, in fact, the essential difference.

Despite the assertion here that this will be the only discussion of lack, the word “lack” occurs 173 times in the Course and its supplements. Not all of them discuss the *concept* of lack, as the following paragraphs do, but many of them do. The following discussion, however, is perhaps the most focused passage on this topic, which needs to be discussed because, although there is no lack in what God creates, lack is “*very* apparent” in everything we make. In Sentence 2, Jesus makes a statement that requires our careful notice. Lack is the *essential* difference between what we make and what God creates. Everything God creates is whole and complete. Everything we make as egos is never whole and complete; it is full of holes.

20 A need implies lack by definition. ²It involves the recognition, conscious or unconscious (and at times, fortunately, superconscious), that you would be better off in a state which is somehow different from the one you are in. ³Until the separation (which is a better term than “the fall”), nothing was lacking. ⁴This meant that you had no needs at all. ⁵If you had not deprived yourself, you would never have experienced them.

If you have a need it indicates you lack something (20:1). You recognize, consciously or unconsciously, that something needs to change. Your current state is somehow inadequate. That recognition can occur on any one of three levels: conscious, unconscious, or superconscious (20:2). When we are conscious of lack we typically try to obtain what is lacking. If the awareness is unconscious, we may feel uneasy, depressed, unhappy, restless, or any of a wide variety of unfortunate feelings. If, at times, the awareness is from the superconscious, it will always turn us toward God and our completion in Him. We may affirm some Workbook Lesson truth such as, “Above all else I want to see this differently.”

When God created us, we were complete. Nothing was lacking. When we made the mistake of believing we could be separate from God, we opened ourselves to the experience of lack. We had no needs at all. (Note that the Course uses the term “the separation” where traditionally we have used the term “the fall.” (20:3–4).) We experience needs because we have deprived *ourselves* (20:5)!

21 After the separation, needs became the most powerful source of motivation for human action. ²All behavior is essentially motivated by needs, but behavior itself is not a divine attribute. ³The body is the mechanism for behavior. ⁴Nobody would bother even to get up and go from one place to another if he did not think he would somehow be better off. ⁵Believing that you *could* be “better off” is the reason why you have the mechanism for behavior at your disposal. ⁶That is why the Bible says, “By their *deeds* ye shall know them.”¹

“After the separation” means “now.” Our current experiences are all post-separation. In this state of mind our most powerful sources of motivation for action are our seeming *needs* (21:1). The Course then makes some unusual statements about “behavior.” It says that all our behavior is motivated by needs. That much makes sense. But it goes on to say that behavior isn’t an attribute of our divine nature. Behavior is something *bodies* do (21:2–3). Spirits, apparently, don’t “behave.” I surmise that spirits just create.

We engage in our behaviors, such as moving from one place to another, because in some sense we think we’d be better off if we moved (21:4). In other words, in our original location we *lacked* something that we could have if we moved. Perhaps that might be privacy, or proximity to our computer or phone. Maybe we need to visit the doctor or dentist. He tells us that “the body is the mechanism for behavior,” and then

¹ Matthew 7:16 (KJV): “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” In the above passage, it seems to mean that by our behavior we will know the needs we believe we have.

adds, “Believing that you *could* be ‘better off’ is the reason why you have the mechanism for behavior [our bodies] at your disposal” (21:5). We know that the origin of bodies is ourselves. God did not create the body; we *made* it.

“The ego holds the body dear because it dwells in it, and lives united with the home that it has made” (W-199.3:3 (FIP)).

“Christ’s vision has one law: It does not look upon a body and mistake it for the Son whom God created.” (W-158.7:1 (FIP)).

The Bible verse, Matthew 7:16, as normally understood, deals with how to tell false prophets from true ones—by their fruits. What are their results? What effect do they have in the world? But here he changes the word “fruits” to “deeds,” tying it to what he has said about behavior being motivated by needs. As the footnote points out, Jesus uses it to mean “by our behavior we will know the needs we believe we have.” In a way the two things are alike. If we observe the behavior of a prophet or spiritual leader, we will be able to discern what needs they believe they have. Are they seeking for money, adulation, or are they genuinely altruistic, expressing love and offering miracles?

22 You act according to the particular hierarchy of needs you establish for yourself.² ²Your hierarchy, in turn, depends on your perception of what you are; that is, what you *lack*. ³This establishes your own rules for what you need to know. ⁴Separation from God is the only lack you really need to correct. ⁵But your separation would never have occurred if you had not distorted your perception of truth, and thus perceived yourself as lacking. ⁶The concept of any sort of need *hierarchy* arose because, having made this fundamental error, you had already fragmented yourself into levels with *different* needs. ⁷As you integrate, you become one and your *one* need becomes one accordingly. ⁸Only the fragmented can be confused about this.

On the meaning of the phrase “hierarchy of needs,” see the footnote.

We each fill out our individual hierarchy. Which level do your typical needs fall in? Most of us are beyond struggling to meet simple bodily needs such as food (although we *do* believe we need food). Some of us exist primarily in need of some kind of security. For others the main class of needs is in social belonging. Some think their major need is some kind of self-esteem. Few of us have risen to exist primarily on the level of self-actualization, which leads eventually to recognition of our divine identity. Whatever level we are on, our actions are governed by that level of need (22:1).

Which level we are on depends on how we see ourselves—what we think we are. If we are living on a subsistence level, as little more than animals, what will demand our interest is how to get food and shelter. Each higher level is based on a corresponding.

² This appears to be a reference to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (first proposed in his 1943 paper “A Theory of Human Motivation”), which progresses from physiological needs up through security needs, social/belonging needs, self-esteem needs, and finally to the need for self-actualization.

higher view of ourselves (22:2-3). Are we bodies, loners needing safety, part of a community, self-aware and self-sufficient individuals, or actualized and fully realized persons?

I know a 92-year-old woman who says she wants to be babied. A newborn baby is at the subsistence level. A baby needs to be fed, cleaned up, clothed, and to sleep. That's about it. All human beings start at that level and proceed to grow into larger self-concepts, but all such growth is really letting go of illusions about ourselves and our separation from God.

In reality our only need is to correct our imagined separation from God (22:4). As I write, I happen to have read Lesson 41 in the Workbook this morning. Its opening paragraphs are a clear statement of how our imagined separation from God are the root cause of all what we call stages of growth. Take a moment now to read the first three paragraphs of that lesson.

Our belief in lack of any kind is a distortion of the truth about ourselves. God goes with us wherever we go. We live and move and have our being in God (22:5). Our belief in different levels of need has occurred only because we have fragmented ourselves into levels with different needs (22:6). We need to be defragmented! We need to reintegrate and become one again, whole, and as we do, we begin to realize we have only one need: to correct our belief that we are separate from God. This lesson is a beginning in that direction, affirming that God goes with us wherever we go.

23 Internal integration within the self will not suffice to correct the lack fallacy, but it will correct the need fallacy.³ ²Unified need produces unified action, because it produces lack of ambivalence. ³The concept of need hierarchy, a corollary to the original error, requires correction at its *own* level, before the error of levels itself can be corrected. ⁴You cannot operate (or behave) effectively while you operate at split levels. ⁵But as long as you do so, you must introduce correction from the bottom up.

Self-integration isn't the final answer to our belief in lack, but it moves us in the right direction (23:1). Robert's footnote says it well, but to put it in my own words, as we integrate or defragment our self-concept, we collapse the illusion of a hierarchy of needs. We begin to realize we have only one need: union with God. We begin to focus all our efforts on that one need. Our actions become unified in that direction, realizing that to do so will meet *all* our seeming needs (23:2).

Sentence 3 tells us that the very concept of a hierarchy of needs is "a corollary to the original error" of separation. That concept must be corrected by self-integration before the very concept of levels can be corrected. You and I are not comprised of levels, each of

³. As the context makes clear, this means that by integrating within yourself, you come to realize you have only one need. You thus correct the notion of a need *hierarchy* (the "need fallacy"). This then enables you to unify your efforts behind meeting this one need, and as you meet this need, you realize that you have no needs. You lack nothing. You have thus corrected the "lack fallacy."

which has its own needs. But we cannot be free of that concept about ourselves until we recognize we have *only one need*: oneness with God; absence of separateness. As long as we are operating at split levels (bodily needs; social needs; self-esteem needs; self-realization needs) we cannot operate and behave effectively (23:4).

But as long as we *are* operating at split levels, we have to “introduce correction from the bottom up” (23:5). Our seeming evolution, as a race and as individuals, is actually undoing our devolution, climbing back up the ladder that separation has led us down.

This world is full of miracles.²They stand in shining silence next to every dream of pain and suffering, of sin and guilt.³They are the dream's alternative, the choice to be the dreamer, rather than deny the active role in making up the dream.⁴They are the glad effects of taking back the consequence of sickness to its cause.⁵The body is released because the mind acknowledges, “This is not done to me, but *I am doing this*.”⁶And thus the mind is free to make another choice instead.⁷Beginning here, salvation will proceed to change the course of every step in the descent to separation, until all the steps have been retraced, the ladder gone, and all the dreaming of the world undone.

What waits in perfect certainty beyond salvation is not our concern, for you have barely started to allow your first, uncertain steps to be directed up the ladder separation led you down. (T-28.II.12:1–28.III.1:1 (CE))

24 This is because you now operate in space, where “up” and “down” are meaningful terms.²Ultimately, of course, space is as meaningless as time.³The concept is really one of space-time *belief*.⁴The physical world exists only because you can use it to correct your unbelief, which placed you in it originally.⁵As long as you *knew* you did not need anything, the whole device was unnecessary.

The reason our growth seems to occur in vertical movement, first down, then back up, is only because we experience ourselves as “in space, where ‘up’ and ‘down’ are meaningful terms” (24:1). This is just how we think, so we experience it that way. Really, there is no space or time; both are just part of our *belief* in separation (24:2–3). Our belief in multiple needs at different levels has to be resolved gradually into the realization of our single need. The differing (often competing) needs are masks of the ego used to hide our one true need. This gradual resolution of all needs into one occurs level by level, from the bottom up. We “grow” as human beings until, at some point, we realize that this whole separate experience has been a dream, a mirage of our minds.

Does the physical world exist? As we know, the Course says it isn't real. But does it exist *in some sense*? Jesus says it does! “The physical world exists only because you can use it to correct your unbelief, which placed you in it originally” (24:4). We made the world, and now we must use it to grow out of it. The world was unnecessary for us in our original state, having no needs and knowing it (24:5). Yet, having made the world of needs, we now can use it to climb back up the ladder formed by our unbelief. That is what evolution is: climbing the ladder back to God.

25 You can never control the effects of fear yourself, because you have *made* fear and believe in what you make. ²In attitude, then, though not in content, you resemble your own Creator, who has perfect faith in *His* creations because He created them. ³All creation rests on belief, and the belief in the creation produces its existence. ⁴This is why it is possible for you to believe what is not true for anyone else. ⁵It is true for you because it is made *by* you.

We made fear, and we believe in what we made. That's why we can't escape completely on our own (25:1). This attitude of faith in what we made is similar to God's perfect faith in His creations, although the *content* is quite different (25:2). The existence of everything is *caused* by the creator's belief in it (25:3). Because of this, any one of us can believe in some things that are not true for anyone else (25:4). "It is true for you because it is made *by* you" (25:5). In the next paragraph Jesus gives a brief outline of how this power of belief works out in psychological terms. People have different kinds of mental prisons to escape, but fundamentally they are all the same. We made them.

26 Every aspect of fear proceeds from upside-down perception. ²The truly creative devote their efforts to correcting this. ³The neurotic devotes his to compromise. ⁴The psychotic tries to escape by establishing the truth of his own errors. ⁵It is most difficult to free him by ordinary means only because he is more stable in his denial of truth.

Everyone is suffering from some form of this upside-down perception (26:1), making something by our belief in it and then suffering at the effect of what we made, when in truth we are not at effect, we are at cause! It takes various forms.

Truly creative: psychologically healthy, we devote our efforts to correcting our mistaken perception.

Neurotic: we devote our efforts to compromise with our errors. We move a bit in both directions, up and down..

Psychotic: in the reverse of the healthy approach, we devote our efforts to prove our errors are real. (26:2–4)

Those who are psychotic are the most difficult to free from their prisons. They are more stable in their denial of the truth. Conspiracy theorists fall into this category, constantly looking for and finding things that seem to support their beliefs. The hell they envision is of their own making.

49. The miracle makes no distinction among degrees of misperception. 2It is a device for perception correction which is effective quite apart from either the degree or the direction of the error. 3This is its true indiscriminateness.

Creative, neurotic, or psychotic are merely degrees of misperception. The miracle sees them all as the same (1:1). Where "ordinary means" such as psychology or drugs

might fail (1:5), a miracle can correct perception regardless of either the degree or the direction of the error (1:2). It can heal the mind of psychotics and neurotics as easily as it can produce growth in the truly creative who is actively engaged in seeking the correction of his misperceptions. That's the true sense in which a miracle is "indiscriminate" (1:3). I think that this is truly good news for us because most of us suffer from some degree of neurosis, at least, and we are probably actively engaged in trying to prove that some of our misperceptions are true.

2 Christ-controlled miracles are selective only in that they are directed toward those who can use them for themselves. ²Since this makes it inevitable that they will extend them to others, a very strong chain of Atonement is welded. ³But Christ-control takes no account at all of the magnitude of the miracle itself, because the concept of size exists only in a plane that is itself unreal. ⁴Since the miracle aims at restoring reality, it would hardly be useful if it were bound by the laws of the same error it aimed to correct. ⁵Only human beings make that kind of error. ⁶It is an expression of the "foolish consistency" their own false beliefs have engendered.⁴

The only criteria Christ has for directing miracles to people is that the targets are people who can *make use of* the miracle to correct some of their misperceptions (2:1). When such a person receives a miracle they inevitably extend it to someone else. This forges a strong "chain of Atonement" (2:2). In extending miracles, Christ does not even consider the *magnitude* of the miracle. Is it a dramatic healing of a disease or simply a kind, loving word? That does not matter because size counts only in our illusion of physicality (2:3). This explains why some people are rewarded after death more for their simple acts of kindness than for all their "great" worldly achievements. To abide by the rules of the illusion would not help to *correct* the illusion (2:4). God and Christ do not make such mistakes! Only we humans struggle to find ways *within* the illusion to solve the problems *of* the illusion. Thus, we are foolishly consistent with our false beliefs (2:6).

3 Both the power and the strength of your creative will must be understood before the real meaning of denial can be appreciated and abolished. ²Denial is not mere negation. ³It is a positive miscreation. ⁴While the miscreation is necessarily believed in by its own maker, it does not exist at all at the level of true creation.

"Our creative will is one of the most potent forces in our lives. It is so powerful that it can sometimes make us believe in illusions that we create ourselves. We have to recognize and understand this power before we can move past our denial and see the truth. The

⁴ "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines"—Ralph Waldo Emerson, from his essay "Self-Reliance" (1841). Jesus' point here is that our little minds tend to devise solutions that work within the laws of the problems they are designed to correct. Our solutions, in other words, tend to be foolishly consistent with the problem.

illusions we create only exist in our minds, and they can be abolished once we acknowledge our true creative potential. It may be challenging to accept that the world we see is just an illusion, but the power of our will can help us recognize the truth and overcome our denial.”

Much later in the Text, Jesus returns to these ideas in more detail:

To the extent to which you value guilt, to that extent will you perceive a world in which attack is justified. To the extent to which you recognize that guilt is meaningless, to that extent you will perceive attack cannot be justified. This is in strict accord with vision's fundamental law: You see what you believe is there, and you believe it there because you *want* it there. Perception has no other law than this. ⁵The rest but stem from this, to hold it up and offer it support. This is perception's form, adapted to this world, of God's more basic law: that love creates itself, and nothing *but* itself. (T-25.III.1:1-6 (CE))

But this world has two who made it, I and they do not see it as the same. To each it has a different purpose, and to each it is a perfect means to serve the goal for which it is perceived. For specialness it is the perfect frame to set it off, the perfect battleground to wage its wars, the perfect shelter for the illusions which it would make real. Not one but it upholds in its perception; not one but can be fully justified.

4 There is another Maker of the world, the simultaneous Corrector of the mad belief that anything could be established and maintained without some link that kept it still within the laws of God; not as the law itself upholds the universe as God created it, but in some form adapted to the need the Son of God believes he has. Corrected error is the error's end. And thus has God protected still His Son, even in error. There is another purpose in the world that error made because it has another Maker Who can reconcile its goal with His Creator's purpose. (T-25.III.3:1-4:4 (CE))

We made the world, yes. And it is an illusion, yes. But “there is another Maker of the world”! There is a link that keeps the world “still within the laws of God” in some form that is adapted to the need we believe we have. The Holy Spirit uses the world, and miracles within it, to correct our error. He can reconcile the world's goal with the Creator's purpose, and bring us home. When that is done, the world will have no further purpose and will disappear.

50. The miracle compares what you make with the higher level of creation, accepting what is in accord as true, and rejecting the discordant as false.

Miracles correct our error by comparing what we make with what creation creates. A miracle accepts only what is in accord with creation, and rejects anything else. Again looking at a later chapter, we find a more detailed description::

5 The body can be made a home [that separates you from your brother] *because* it lacks foundation in the truth. And yet, *because* it does, it can be seen as *not* your home, but merely as an aid to help you reach the home where God abides.

4 With *this* as purpose is the body healed. It is *not* used to witness to the dream of separation and disease, nor is it idly blamed for what it did not do. It serves to help the *healing* of God's Son, and for *this* purpose it cannot be sick. It will not join a purpose *not* your own, and you have chosen that it *not* be sick. (T-28.VII.3:5-4:4 (CE))

The idea that miracles correct our errors by comparing our illusions (such as bodies) to what God creates is crucial. It helps us understand why we might extend a miracle to one person and not to another. Some people are locked into their individual hierarchy of needs. They may not yet feel the need to recognize their oneness with God. The miracle might then be wasted in their case. As the next paragraph puts it (2:2), they may not yet be willing to submit their beliefs to the real test of validity.

2 All aspects of fear are untrue, because they do not exist at the higher creative level, and therefore do not exist at all. ²To whatever extent you are willing to submit your beliefs to the real test of validity, to that extent are your perceptions healed (or corrected).⁵

“All aspects of fear” includes many things, such as the world, our bodies, separate identities, wars, disasters, sickness, death, and pain. They are all untrue “because they *do not* exist at the higher creative level, and therefore do not exist at all” (2:1). They do *seem* to exist at the level of our making, but not at the higher level. Only that higher level is real; the rest is a dream (or a nightmare). We may believe that *all* of these things are real.

Our perception of them can, however, be corrected if we are willing to submit these beliefs to “the real test of validity” (2:2). That means we must be willing to compare our beliefs with what God has created. The Course often asks us to do this. It says things such as, “Would God create a world like this? Would God create an existence in which you come helpless and ignorant into this world, struggle, suffer, knowing pain and loss, fearing your eventual disappearance, and weeping as loved ones grow sick or old and die? Would God create anyone only to send them to hell?”

“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. Look carefully at this world, and you will realize that this is so. For this world is the symbol of punishment, and all the laws that seem to govern it are the laws of death. Children are born into it through pain and in pain. Their growth is attended by suffering, and they learn of sorrow and separation and death. Their minds seem to be trapped in their brain, and its powers to decline if their bodies are hurt. They seem to love,

⁵ “The real test of validity” refers to comparing your beliefs to reality, to “the higher level of creation.” Only when they are in accord with that higher level are they truly valid.

yet they desert and are deserted. They appear to lose what they love, perhaps the most insane belief of all. And their bodies wither and gasp and are laid in the ground, and are no more. Not one of them but has thought that God is cruel.

“If this were the real world, God *would* be cruel. For no Father could subject His children to this as the price of salvation and *be* loving. *Love does not kill to save*. If it did, attack would be salvation, and this is the ego's interpretation, not God's. Only the world of guilt could demand this, for only the guilty could conceive of it. Adam's "sin" could have touched no one, had he not believed it was the Father Who drove him out of paradise. For in that belief the knowledge of the Father was lost, since only those who do not understand Him could believe it.

“This world is a picture of the crucifixion of God's Son. And until you realize that God's Son cannot be crucified, this is the world you will see. Yet you will not realize this until you accept the eternal fact that God's Son is not guilty. He deserves only love because he has given only love. He cannot be condemned because he has never condemned. The Atonement is the final lesson he need learn, for it teaches him that, never having sinned, he has no need of salvation” (T-13.Int.2:1-4:6 (FIP)).

We need to ask ourselves often, “Would God...?” If this were the real world, God *would* be cruel. I began to grow out of fundamentalist Christianity when I asked myself, “Why would God create the human race only to end up sending most of them into eternal punishment?” Some have asked that question and rejected the notion of God entirely. They decided that God is unreal and the world of pain is real. I find it far more reasonable to think that the *world* as we know it is unreal rather than that *God* is unreal.

2:3–7:

³In sorting out the false from the true, the miracle proceeds along these lines:

⁴Perfect love casts out fear.⁶

⁵If fear exists,
then there is not perfect love.

⁶But
Only perfect love really exists.

⁷Therefore, if there is fear,
it produces a state which does not exist.

In any situation, we should ask ourselves, “Does the way I perceive this situation produce fear in me?” If it does, then perfect love does not exist. But God *is* love, perfect love. Therefore, if I am feeling fear, the situation *as I perceive it* does not exist. Love is real, fear is not. (See Lesson 49, “There is nothing to fear.”)

⁶ 1 John 4:18 (RSV): “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.”

2:8–11:

⁸Believe this and you will be free. ⁹Only God can establish this solution, for *this faith is His gift*.⁷ ¹⁰But you must contribute to your readiness here as elsewhere. ¹¹The readiness for faith, as for everything else that is true, entails the two steps necessary for the release from fear.⁸

If we accept that fear is impossible if God is love, we will experience true freedom (2.8). “This faith is His gift” (2:9). He seems to be contrasting faith in love (which excludes any fear) with our stubborn faith in the illusions we have made. All our illusions involve fear. We must submit our false belief in illusions to the real test of validity: Is fear real, or love? Only God can establish that validity in our minds. “But you must contribute to your readiness here as elsewhere” (2:10).

What contribution to readiness must we make? It involves “the two steps necessary for the release from fear” (2:11). This must refer to the process given in 2:3–7. I summarize them like this: Step 1: Recognize that fear arises from our rejection of perfect love. Step 2: Realize that perfect love alone is real, meaning our disbelief in love and our fear are untrue.

3 Denial of fear, in human terms, is a strong defense because it entails two levels of error:

1. ²That what is true *can* be denied and
2. That absence of truth can be effective⁹

⁷ Ephesians 2:8 (KJV): “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” The comments following this reference provide an important clarification: Faith is the gift of God, but rather than waiting helplessly to receive this gift (or not), we must actively contribute to our readiness to receive it, by sorting out the true from the false.

⁸ “The two steps necessary for the release from fear” appears to refer to the two-step sorting out process given just above. Thus, step 1 would be realizing that your fear has cast perfect love out of your mind. And step 2 would be realizing that, since only perfect love is real, the loveless state you are in now must be unreal.

⁹ The first error is that the truth of what you are feeling—in this case, fear—can actually be denied. This is an error because the fear is still there, still influencing you. The second error—that “absence of truth can be effective”—seems to be the belief that chasing from awareness what you are really feeling (again, fear) can have its desired effect of allowing you to feel better and function well. The implication is that this is an error because you are always better off facing what you are actually feeling.

We are not being asked to *deny* our fears. To do so would involve two levels of error:

1. If fear is real and justified, to deny it is a mistake. The fear will still be there, still motivating you.
2. If fear is real, to push it out of your mind cannot be an effective approach. It won't help you feel better and make wise choices of behavior.

Yet denying fear is called “a strong defense” because, despite its lack of logic, it does a great job of *defending your fear!*

The next paragraph clarifies the distinction between these two levels.

4 *Experiencing* fear, which is more characteristic of some people, involves only the second error.¹⁰ ²However, such differences¹¹ do not affect the power of the miracle at all, since only the distinction between truth and error is its concern. ³Some are both more miracle-minded and less able to recognize fear, because of their stronger but split identification. ⁴Others are less miracle-minded but better able to recognize fear, because their identification is more consistently right but weaker. ⁵Together, the conditions needed for consistent miracle-mindedness, the state in which fear has been abolished, can be particularly well worked out.

Realizing that denying fear won't work, some people just grit their teeth and decide to experience their fear. Allowing yourself to *experience* fear escapes only the first error of trying to deny the fear you feel. You still wish you *could* forget your fear because you still believe that *if* you could, it would help you feel better and calmer and thus be able to make better choices.

Believing that forgetting fear would make you feel better is, alas, is the second error (4:1, cf. 3:2). It really makes no difference whether you suffer from only the first error, only the second, or both. The goal is to tell *all* errors apart from the truth. That is the only concern of a miracle (4:2).

Sentences 3 and 4 deal with how we identify with both our true Identity and our egos. For some, their identification can be strong and yet mistaken (with the ego). I'll refer to them as Group 1. For others, the identification may be right (with spirit) but weaker. I will call them Group 2.

Neither group is actually *denying* fear, as are those mentioned in Paragraph 3. But Group 1, strongly identifying with ego, has trouble even *recognizing* they are afraid. At the same time, due to our tendency to strongly identify with parts of our being, Group 1 is

¹⁰ Experiencing fear does not involve the first error because the first error is the *denial* of fear—the decision to *not* experience it. How, then, does experiencing fear involve the second error? Perhaps it is because those who experience fear see how it compromises their mood and their functioning and thus believe that if only they *could* deny it they would feel better and function better (which is the second error).

¹¹ The “differences” referred to here appear to be differences between believing in both errors or in just the second error.

actually more miracle-minded than others. Group 2, with a weaker sense of self-identification, is less miracle-minded but can recognize their fear more easily.

What we really need is a Group 3, with their identification both strong *and* correct, with spirit. With a looser hold on their egos, such persons will be able to recognize fear when it intrudes, know that only love exists, and therefore believe that their fear is needless, being unreal. This state in which fear has been abolished is the condition needed for consistent miracle-mindedness (4:3–5).

5 The purpose of this course is integration. ²You cannot use it right until you have taken it. ³As long as your identification either vacillates or is weak, you cannot accept the gift that belongs to you. ⁴You are still either vacillating between recognizing the gift and throwing it away, or regarding yourself as too weak to accept it. ⁵You do not yet know its healing power.

We've been talking about our identification.¹² If it is either weak or wishy-washy, trying to hold onto ego as well as spirit, we can't be fully miracle-minded. The Course wants to help us *integrate* our identification, making a strong, clear choice for our God-given identity (5:1). It won't do just to pick pieces from the Course here and there. You must *take* the Course (5:2). From its first page, it offers us the gift of perfect peace, the gift of Heaven, but unless we engage with the material, study it, practice it, and fully apply it to our lives, it won't do us any good. Our unintegrated identification may vacillate between ego and spirit, or it may be weak. Either one will prevent us from accepting the gift the Course is offering. Either we vacillate between accepting it and pushing it away, or we think we are too weak to accept it. We do not yet know the power of the healing the Course can bring to us.

6 After you have taken the course, you will accept it and keep it and use it. ²That is the final exam, which you will have no trouble in passing. ³Midterm marks are not entered in the permanent record.

My Christian mentor, Norman Grubb, often wrote and said, “What you take, takes you.” He meant that if you take something into your mind, it will take you over. If you really *take* the Course, it *will* take you. It will transform you. Taking the course means more than just reading it. It means doing your best to understand what you read and doing your best to follow the practice instructions in the Workbook for each lesson.

¹² The editor, Robert Perry, has indicated elsewhere that these final two paragraphs originally occurred much earlier in Chapter 1, but seemed out of context. He moved them here because they provide a nice conclusion to the chapter. In my opinion, he made a good choice. They really do seem to sum up the rather confusing discussion of the preceding two paragraphs, especially tying in with *integration* being the purpose of the Course. I have written my notes here as if these final paragraphs were intended to be here. I think they were.

I am repeating the Workbook this year for maybe the tenth time, or maybe even more than that. I've lost track. I'm doing it again because I have yet to really practice every lesson. As I write it is February 16, 2024. Less than fifty days into the Workbook, I have already "accidentally" skipped doing the lessons for two days, and I have yet to actually practice the full number of periods that is called for by any of the lessons except the very early ones. I've done two times most days, three on a couple of days, but I haven't yet made four, which has been the target for the last couple of weeks! And I've been studying the Course since 1985!

Still, I'm not discouraged. I have no reason to complain that the Course hasn't brought me to full enlightenment yet. I've been using it for the last 38 years, but I don't think it has completely taken me over because I have not fully "taken" it. Not yet, but I will take it, and it will take me over. The same is true for you regardless of how long you've been at it, or how little so far. It doesn't matter how long it takes us to get it. The good news is that only the final exam counts; "midterm marks are not entered in the permanent record" (6:1-3). When any one of us gets there, all they will hear from the instructor is 'Well done!'"

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.