

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.

CE T-1, Miracle Principles 38-42

Principle 38

38. The spiritual eye is the mechanism of miracles, because what the spiritual eye perceives is true.

The phrase "spiritual eye" was used early in the Text to refer to what later is called "the eyes of Christ" or "the vision of Christ." It refers to a faculty in us all that can see past all appearances to the Truth of spirit. Using this faculty, I can look past your * and ego and see the Christ in you. This faculty is what makes miracles possible.

When we affirm we want to see things differently, we are asking to perceive with this spiritual eye. Likewise, when we pray, "Now let a new perception come to me," we are asking to see with our spiritual eye.

Paragraph 2

² The spiritual eye perceives both the creations of God *and* the products of human beings. ²Among the latter, it can also separate the true from the false by its ability to perceive totally rather than selectively. ³It thus becomes the proper instrument for reality testing, which always involves the necessary distinction between the true and the false.

A special aspect of the spiritual eye is that it perceives not only the creations of God (the Christ in our brothers and sisters), but it can also discriminate what is true and loving in a person's words or actions from what is false. I think this applies first of all to ourselves. With this spiritual sight, we can evaluate our choices and discern which comes from spirit and which does not. I am cautious about attempting to evaluate the actions of others, although there seem to be several examples in the gospels when Jesus did this.

Principle 39

39. The miracle dissolves error because the spiritual eye identifies error as false, or unreal. ²This is the same as saying that by seeing light, darkness automatically disappears.

This principle expands the previous one. It goes into more detail about how this spiritual sight makes miracles happen. We look upon another person's errors and, using the spiritual eye, see that they are not real. They disappear like a dark spot when we turn a light on.

Paragraph 2

² Darkness is lack of light. ²It does not have unique properties of its own. ³It is an example of the scarcity fallacy, from which only error can proceed. ⁴Truth is always abundant. ⁵Scarcity leads to overeating and other false drives. ⁶Abundance eliminates these. ⁷Those who perceive and acknowledge that they have everything have no need for driven behavior of any kind.

Darkness is not a *thing*; it is the lack of a thing, the lack of light. Darkness has no properties, as light does. It is an emptiness, a void, and light effortlessly dispels it. Jesus calls it "an example of the scarcity fallacy." That phrase indicates that scarcity does not exist; it isn't a "thing." It is the absence of true abundance. When we fail to perceive our own inner abundance, given to us by God in creation, we *falsely* feel empty, and we seek to fill the illusory emptiness with things of the world—vices, addictions, food, money, sex. No matter what we use to try to fill the emptiness we feel, which is wholly imaginary, we can't fill it.

Spiritual vision reveals our inner abundance and eliminates all the "false drives." We live from an endlessly deep well, knowing we have *everything*.

So, this spiritual eye is not only the mechanism of miracles we offer to others; it is a faculty that brings us inner peace, happiness, and satisfaction.

Principle 40

40. Miracles are a blessing from parents to children. ²This is just another way of phrasing the earlier principle about "by those who have more for those who have less."

This principle applies what has been said about miracles to *parenting*. Ideally, parents have come in contact with their inner reservoir and offer their children endless miracles! They constantly overlook errors in their children and see past them to the inner light. They instill in their children an awareness of their wholeness as wholly lovable and wholly loving beings.

Paragraph 2

² Children do not *belong* to parents, but they *do* need to share their parents' greater abundance. ²If they are deprived, their perception becomes distorted. ³When this occurs, the whole family of God, or the Sonship, is impaired in its relationships. ⁴Ultimately, every member of the family of God must return. ⁵The miracle calls to him to return, because it blesses and honors him even though he may be absent in spirit.

Children are entitled to share the abundance of their parents, not just material abundance but spiritual abundance. All encounters are intentional and arranged, and parent-child relationships must surely be high on the list. Parents should function like miracle workers in their families. A parent should seek spiritual growth for the sake of their children, as well as for themselves. They can build up a reservoir of love and wisdom to pass on to their children, teaching them their nature as love. If that does not happen, it can injure the children; their "perception becomes distorted" (2:2). We all know of such occurrences. Like miracles, this has ripple effects, but these effects damage the relationships of the "whole family of God." We are not alone in experiencing the effects of our thoughts, whether positive or negative.

Sentence 4 is both encouraging and challenging. "Ultimately," every single being will awaken. That's very encouraging! The challenge lies in the part that we must play in making it happen—first and foremost, with our children. How sad that a child comes into this world, able to learn and awaken, but is denied the opportunity to do so because of a poor family environment. Some children indeed rise above their environment to become loving and productive adults, but too often, they are misshapen by childhood trauma.

I confess to being a bit puzzled at first by the phrase in Sentence 5, "absent in spirit." The whole sentence seems to hint at a somewhat negative sense; a miracle blesses and honors a person *even though* they are absent in spirit. One might assume that someone absent in spirit does not deserve honor and blessing, but a miracle overlooks their apparent unworthiness and gives them honor and blessing anyway. "Absent in spirit," then, seems to mean something like "out of contact with spirit." Some children come into this world out of touch with their spiritual nature. Through miraculous expressions of love, parents (and others) can grant them honor and blessing that will awaken them to their inherent worthiness, calling them to *return* to spirit, and thus recruiting them into the Great Crusade of Love. This is a particular function of parents with their children, although it is the function of every miracle worker with everyone they encounter.

Principle 41

41. The miracle acknowledges all men as your brothers and mine. ²It is a way of perceiving the universal mark of God in them. ³This is the true "strawberry mark" of brotherhood.

day

Paragraph 2

² Your false idea about your own exclusion from universal love is both fallacious and arrogant. ²Your *real* specialness does not stem from exclusion, but from inclusion. ³*All* my brothers are special. ⁴You should stop interpreting this as "all except me." ⁵This is ridiculous. ⁶The implied lack of love that this version contains is way off the mark, and misses the level of right thinking entirely.

Many people feel unworthy or left out. Bill Thetford often felt like an outsider, unwanted and unloved. Others may think claiming to be an equal brother with Jesus would be arrogant, humbly saying, "I'd never think so highly of myself." In such thoughts, we place ourselves outside God's universal love. We have convinced ourselves that the only way to be "special" is to distance ourselves from everyone else. Jesus says that specialness comes from *inclusion*, not from *exclusion*. We are *all* included in God's love, and *that* is what makes us "special." "*All* my brothers are special." If that statement seems illogical, it only proves that you think being special means standing out from the crowd—being different. What makes us special is that God loves us.

Parents with several children are in an excellent position to understand this. I have two sons. They are both equally "special" to me. I love them both equally. It is my love for them that makes them special to me. We are all equally special to God.

To think that God loves everybody except me or anyone else is ridiculous. God has no lack of love, no diminution of His love for any one of us. He loves Vladimir Putin just as much as He loves me, and He loves me as much as He loves Jesus. To think otherwise is to impugn the quality and depth of God's love; it "misses the level of right thinking entirely."

Paragraph 3

³ You must heal your perception in this respect. ²You must work a miracle on behalf of yourself here (see the principle about miracles as perception correctors) before you can extend miracles as creative energizers, which they are. ³Fifty million Frenchmen *can* be wrong, because the notion is too fragmented. ⁴What *can't* be wrong is the universal Sonship, of which you are a part.

Healing perception isn't something we can dismiss lightly: "You *must* heal your perception in this respect" (3:1). And here we learn that there *is* a necessary sequence in forgiveness, at this fundamental level. "You must work a miracle on behalf of yourself here (see the principle about miracles as perception correctors) before you can extend miracles as creative energizers, which they are" (3:2). There are *two different aspects of miracles* here: one internal, the other outward directed. In the internal aspect, miracles are "on behalf of yourself" and act "as perception correctors" on your thinking about *yourself*. In the external aspect, miracles act as "creative energizers" in the minds of others, awakening them to the truth about themselves. The two aspects are similar in that they both assist a person in recognizing their Christ nature. The two differ in that the

inward action must occur in yourself *before you can extend miracles* to others! We've seen that offering a miracle is closely equivalent to forgiving. Here, then, it appears that Jesus *does* imply that we "must" forgive ourselves in some central fashion before we can forgive others. Yet it is still true that, in forgiving another person, we receive forgiveness as well as offer it. Indeed, in relinquishing judgment on another, I lift a burden of guilt from myself as well.

There is a saying, "Fifty million Frenchmen can't be wrong." It was the title of a 1927 song contrasting the liberal-mindedness of Paris with the censorship and prohibition in the USA. Jesus disputes the assertion, saying that even fifty million people are "too fragmented" a number. Only the *universal* Sonship cannot be wrong, and we are all part of it. We need to realize that no one is left out. The most important inclusion we all must recognize is *ourselves*.

Paragraph 4

4 "God is not mocked" may arouse anticipation of punishment, but it is really a reassurance. ²God *would* be mocked if any of His creations lacked holiness. ³The creation is whole. ⁴The mark of wholeness is holiness, not holes. ⁵The Sonship has *no holes anywhere*. ⁶Remember, God is not mocked under any circumstances.

The Bible *does* say "God is not mocked." That's the King James translation. Others, like Weymouth and the Revised English Bible, say, "God is not to be fooled" or "God is not to be scoffed at." The verse (Galatians 6:7) adds that everyone reaps what they sow. That can certainly lead to "anticipation of punishment" (4:1), and that may be how the Apostle Paul meant it to be understood. But he continues, "Let us never tire of doing good, for if we do not slacken our efforts we shall in due time reap our harvest." (Galatians 6:9 REB). That's saying that you receive what you give, and the Course definitely agrees with that. The "reaping" happens on the positive side as well as the negative.

The sense Jesus gives it here is a little different. He says that if any of God's creations lacked holiness, God *would* be mocked (fooled, worthy of scoffing). The unholy ones would have thwarted His will to create only holiness. He then says, "The creation *is* whole" ("is" is emphasized in the original). A whole cannot have "holes." The mark of God's creation is holiness—holiness everywhere in everyone. There are no "holes" where holiness is missing. The juxtapositioning of the words "whole," "wholeness," "holiness," and "holes" is likely a nod to Bill's fondness for puns and plays on words.

Principle 42

42. Wholeness is the perceptual content of the miracle. ²It thus corrects, or atones for, the faulty perception of lack.

The theme of wholeness now takes center stage. Wholeness is what a miracle perceives, thus correcting the faulty perception of lack. Wholeness is the mental content of a miracle. It results in an *expression* of that perception which manifests in our behavior

toward another. We see another person as *whole*, without lack of any kind. It's easy, I think, for us to understand why seeing someone without anything lacking is a miracle! How often do you see anyone as whole, with no "holes" of lack? Yet this is how we should *always* perceive everyone. Perceiving someone as whole (not less than me, not deserving pity) controls our behavior and speech. We see them as whole, which energizes their perception of themselves. They feel lifted up, and elevated in their self-awareness.

Paragraph 2

² We can now return to the fundamental distinction between miracles and projection. ²The stimulus must precede the response, and must also determine, or at least influence, the kind of response that is evoked. ³The relationship of stimulus and response is *extremely* intimate. ⁴(The behavioristic terminology is because this part deals with behavior.) ⁵Behavior is response, so the question "Response to what?" becomes crucial. ⁶Stimuli of all kinds are identified through perception. ⁷You perceive the stimulus and behave accordingly. ⁸It follows, then, that:

⁹As ye perceive,
so will ye behave.

Now the focus returns to "the fundamental distinction between miracles and projection" (2:1) (see Principle 35, paragraph 3). In both projection and miracle, "the stimulus must precede the response" (2:2). What is it that evokes our response to a person? That is the crucial question. Typically, we think something outside of us evokes our response. It's what someone says or does that causes our response. But the fact is that "stimuli of all kinds are identified through perception. You perceive the stimulus and behave accordingly" (2:6).

What can we deduce from this fact? *It is our perception of things that determines our behavior.* "As ye perceive, so will ye behave." The real stimulus is our perception of the person's actions or words, *not those actions or words themselves.*

Paragraph 3

³ Consider the Golden Rule again. ²You are asked to behave toward others as you would have them behave toward you. ³This means that your perception of both must be accurate, since the Golden Rule is the order for appropriate behavior. ⁴You can't behave appropriately unless you perceive accurately, because appropriate behavior depends on lack of level confusion. ⁵The presence of level confusion always results in variable reality testing, and hence in variability in behavioral appropriateness.

[As you go through the following five paragraphs, I encourage you to read the footnotes in the CE. I will refer to several of them, but not all, although all of them will aid your understanding.]

We are asked to consider the Golden Rule again (another reference to 35.3). "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This rule, he says, is the order for appropriate behavior. You'll recall that Jesus told us that projection is the opposite of the Golden Rule. When you project, you give others what you *do not* want in yourself. Following the Golden Rule, you give others what you *want* to see in yourself. To follow the Golden Rule, which is the same as to work miracles, you must accurately perceive yourself and the other person because appropriate behavior depends on appropriate perception.

The appropriate perception calls for a "lack of level confusion." We've learned several things about confusing levels in Principles 21, 26, and 28. The level confusion he admonishes us to avoid is primarily the confusion of body with spirit, the physical and spiritual levels. Still, it can also apply to the confusion of the levels of mind introduced in Principle 28. There, it talks of how we can confuse miracle impulses arising from the deep subconscious mind for sexual impulses at the body level. We must learn to perceive ourselves accurately, for only then can we begin to see others accurately, leading to truly loving behavior.

Another psychological phrase is brought in here: "variable reality testing." Reality testing means testing the correctness of your perceptions against reality. Does what I am seeing line up with what's really there? A trivial example might be thinking you are about to arrive at your bus stop but glancing out the window shows you are still not there. An interpersonal example might be thinking someone has just insulted you, so you think of what you know about them and realize insulting people isn't something they are likely to do. "Reality check!"

We encourage one another to do reality testing when we say things like "Get real!" Often, however, the one saying that has perceptions based on level confusion so that the reality they want us to line up with isn't reality at all!

Variable reality testing means sometimes the test is accurate, sometimes not. We will get inaccurate test results when we perceive ourselves or others while confusing levels. We'll think the insult is real, and so on. Suppose our perception of self and others is completely accurate, that we are all wholly lovable and wholly loving creations of God. In that case, our thoughts will always line up with what is truly real, and the behavior that results will always be love.

Paragraph 4

4 All forms of debasing your self-image are *fundamental* perceptual distortions. ²They inevitably produce either self-contempt or projection onto others, and usually both. ³Since you and your neighbor are equal members of the same family, as you perceive both so will you behave toward both. ⁴The way to perceive for Golden Rule behavior is to look out from the perception of your own holiness and perceive the holiness of others.

Whenever you demean your self-image, you are suffering from "*fundamental* perceptual distortion." Misperception of your own self is the foundation of all kinds of additional perceptual distortions. You will not only experience self-contempt, but you will also distort your perception of everyone else because you project your judgments of

yourself onto others. Remember, in projection, the thoughts about yourself that you don't like are thrust out of your mind and seen in others. If you can look down on someone else, it gives your ego an illusion of self-worth.

How you see yourself and others determines how you behave towards them. It's interesting to notice how this affects how you treat yourself. It's behind things like overeating, avoiding exercise to the detriment of health, and addictions of all kinds. I won't be able to truly follow the Golden Rule as long as I misperceive myself, confusing myself with a body instead of with spirit, seeking happiness, pleasure, and fulfillment in the things of the world.

"The way to perceive for Golden Rule behavior is to look out from the perception of your own holiness and perceive the holiness of others." If we can perceive in this way, we will be able to treat ourselves and others with the love and dignity appropriate to children of God. That is what being a miracle worker means.

Paragraph 5

5 Note the very old Jewish practice of changing the name of a person who is very ill, so that when the list is given to the Angel of Death, the person with that name will not be found. ²This was actually a distortion of a revelation about how to alter or avert death. ³The revelation's proper content was that those who "change their mind" (*not* name) about destruction (or hate) do not need to die. ⁴Death is a human affirmation of a belief in hate. ⁵That is why the Bible says "There is no death," and that is why I demonstrated that death does not exist. ⁶Remember that I came to fulfill the law by *reinterpreting* it. ⁷The law itself, if properly understood, offers only protection. ⁸It is those who have not yet "changed their minds" who have entered the "hellfire" concept into it.

Jesus refers here to an ancient Jewish practice based on the Talmud. It involved a superstitious belief that people died only when the Angel of Death came to gather them in, and if the angel didn't have the right name he would pass them by. He says this was a corruption of a true revelation about how to avert death: If you change your mind about hate, you won't die. He's saying that "Death is a human affirmation of a belief in hate." Change that belief and you won't die.

The Course teaches flat out that "There is no death": "There is no death, but there is a belief in death." (T-3.XI.11:3 (CE)). Did you know the Bible, too, says there is no death? "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." (Proverbs 12:28 KJV) I never realized it did until I read it in the Course. Jesus demonstrated it when he rose from the dead.

The Course's teaching about death is fascinating. I wrote a booklet about it titled "What Is Death?"¹ For instance, it teaches that the body neither lives nor dies. Our true being is eternal spirit. It says our belief in death is insanity:

¹. Download as a PDF file: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/1ms093904n8gi0by63m2l/What-Is-Death-by-Allen-Watson.pdf?rlkey=u22c96silxdvca987zcek349&dl=0>

Is it not madness to think of life as being born, aging, losing vitality, and dying in the end?...this is taken as the Will of God. And no one asks if a benign Creator could will this (Manual, p. 63; M-1:2, 6, 7).

Death is nothing more than a thought. Change our mind about that thought, and death disappears. This is what Jesus did, what he demonstrated.

If you wonder, "What about my parents? What about the thousands dead in Gaza?" The Course says:

When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone, you will know that you will last forever. Many think that this is accomplished through death, but nothing is accomplished through death, because death is nothing. Everything is accomplished through life, and life is of the mind and in the mind. The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life. If we share the same mind, you can overcome death because I did. (T-6.VII.1:1-5 (CE))

He then extends the idea about the misinterpretation of revelation—"Change your thought" became "Change your name"—to all of the Old Testament law of God. All of its external ordinances about food, clothing, holy days, and so on were distortions of God's original revelation in the minds of humans. The external rules, originally, were meant for protection, particularly the dietary ones. Some, I believe, were meant to be symbolic from the beginning, or outward ways of instilling inner habits of behavior. Take this, for example, from Deuteronomy 6:6-9:

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

(Deut. 6:6-9 ESV)

In my Christian days, I saw these verses as a way to get God's truth into my heart by memorizing it. I made up little cards with the verses on them and reviewed them while I was sitting anywhere waiting (bus stop, doctor's office), walking anyplace, just before sleep, and first thing in the morning. Over the next seven or eight years, I memorized well over one thousand verses of the Bible. I don't memorize things easily, but the factor for success was constant, regular repetition. My point here isn't to tell you how to memorize things; it is intended as an example of how a seeming external commandment can be understood for its intended purpose rather than its concrete form. Many Orthodox Jews have done quite well with literal obedience, such as posting small cases with scripture verses known as mezuzahs on their doorposts, while at the same time not doing much at all to write the thoughts in their hearts.

Finally, Jesus points out that the concept of hellfire punishment for not keeping the laws literally arose only in minds who had not yet learned the true lesson of changing their *thoughts*.

Paragraph 6

6 Remember, I said before that just because “nature abhors a vacuum,” it does *not* follow that the vacuum is filled with hellfire. ²The emptiness engendered by fear should be replaced by love, because love and its absence are in the same dimension, and true correction cannot be undertaken except within a dimension. ³Otherwise, there has been a confusion of levels.

This paragraph further examines the idea of hellfire. The absence of love creates an emptiness, but that does not call for us to fill the emptiness with hellfire! A lack of love needs to be met only with love. Meeting a lack of love (which often does have something to do with disobedience to external laws) with any kind of external punishment is another example of *level confusion*. The problem is a mind devoid of love, and the solution must come at the level of mind. As the Course often says, the solution is not punishment but correction.

Paragraph 7

7 You need considerable clarification of the channel role. ²If you ask somebody what he believes before you tell him what you believe, then you are implying that you will say what he approves. ³This is not the “real authority.” ⁴The right way to complete the sentence “When they told me what to do...” is “I referred the question to the only real authority.”

You’ll understand this paragraph better if you read over Cameo 9 in the CE, *Mrs. Albert: Miracle Worker* (Pages 1736–1742).

By “channel role,” he refers to working miracles, allowing God’s love and power to flow through us as His channels. The sentences that follow are drawn from Helen’s account about Mrs. Albert, as an example of a miracle worker. First, Helen called her “Mrs. Andrews,” an example of her misuse of names. But Mrs. Albert didn’t see it as an attack or threat, as many of us do when someone makes a mistake about our name. Such a reaction only comes because we are not secure in our identity, which apparently Mrs. Andrews was. She simply corrected Helen because it was a mistake, attaching no blame.

Next, Mrs. Albert did not ask Helen what she believed about healing. She spoke from her “real authority,” her established belief in God’s power to heal, and in so doing, raised Helen’s expectations of the possibility that God might heal their friend if He so chose. *That* was a miracle! If Mrs. Albert had asked Helen what she believed about healing, she would have implied that she would agree with Helen’s ideas.

For us, the idea is that we should speak the truth as we know it without embarrassment or any concern that the other person may disagree—not in any way trying to force our belief on the other person, simply being comfortable in our convictions. It might awaken something in them. It might not. But if we feel an inner prompting to say something like Mrs. Albert did, we should act on it.

Paragraph 8

8 The Bible says, "To everyone, then, who gives witness to me before men, I will give witness before my Father in heaven." ²The quotation means that you represent or witness for the authority in whom you believe. ³Your witnessing *demonstrates* your belief and thus strengthens it. ⁴I assure you that *I* will witness for anyone who lets me, and to whatever extent he himself permits it. ⁵Those who witness for me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned *belongs* to them.

When you speak from your inner authority, expressing what Jesus has taught strengthens your belief and demonstrates that truth to others. That's what Mrs. Albert did. When we "witness" to our belief in God and love, Jesus says *he* will bear witness on our behalf to his Father, God. That creates a mental picture: I stand beside Jesus before God the Father. Jesus puts his arm around my shoulder and says, "Father, this is my faithful brother. He has learned to trust in the abundance that You gave him in creating him." I don't know exactly *how* Jesus will witness for me, but I imagine it would feel something like that. It motivates me to be more forthright in telling people what I believe. Again, I am not trying to proselytize or convert them. I'm just offering them the opportunity to see things differently, as Mrs. Albert did for Helen.

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.