Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 12, Section VII Part 1 (paragraphs 1–7)

Looking Within

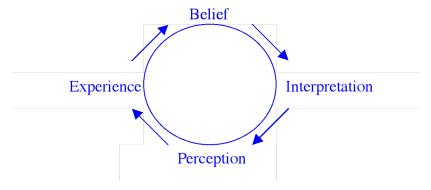
The key sentence in this section, "Looking Within," might well be this:

Two ways of looking at the world are in your mind, and your perception will reflect the guidance you have chosen. (5:6)

The world is always showing us what we have chosen to believe *about ourselves*. The Course teaches, clearly and repeatedly, that the world is an illusion and not a fact. Yet it does not make light of the world. People who think that because the world is an illusion they can disregard it entirely have missed the point of the Course. The world reflects what you believe about yourself. The way to healing taught by the Course is to realize this truth: How you see the world comes from a decision within the mind. By changing that decision, you change the way you see the world. And you will not *know* your true self until you are willing to *choose* to see your own perfection reflected in the world around you.

If you see the world as sinful and guilty, an awful place, it reflects the fact that you see *yourself* that way. If you see the world as unimportant, you are choosing to see yourself as unimportant. If you see the world as the Holy Spirit sees it, filled with only love or calls for love, it reflects your choice to see yourself like that.

In my commentary on the Introduction and Section I of this chapter, I showed how *belief* leads to *interpretation*, which leads to *perception*, which leads to *experience*, which in turn reinforces *belief*. The cycle continually reinforces itself. The following diagram should make the cycle very clear:



This cycle repeats in an endless loop. If you bear that in mind, it helps to understand the theme of this section. The Holy Spirit wants to introduce a *new experience*, by which the Course means something we experience in this world (as opposed to Heaven). A new experience will break the cycle and begin to produce belief in the truth instead of the

ego's lies. That belief will enable us to interpret the events of our lives differently, and thus toperceive our brothers and sisters differently. The ego projects its fear and thoughts of attack; if we listen to the Holy Spirit, we will extend love instead. If our experience of the world does not change, it shows that we have not changed our thoughts.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Miracles demonstrate that learning has occurred under the right guidance, for learning is invisible and what has been learned can be recognized **only** by its **results**. ²Its **generalization** is demonstrated as you use it in more and more situations. ³You will recognize that you have learned there is no order of difficulty in miracles when you apply them to **all** situations. ⁴[For] There **is** no situation to which miracles do not apply, and by applying them **to** all situations you will gain the **real** world. ⁵For in this holy perception you will be made whole, and the Atonement will radiate from **your** acceptance of it **for yourself** to everyone the Holy Spirit sends you for your blessing. ⁶In every child of God His blessing lies, and in your blessing of the children of God is His blessing to **you**.

Study Question

1. The Course uses the term "miracle" in different ways at different times. How would you define the word "miracle" as used in this paragraph?

The world and how you perceive it is very, very important to you because it provides you with the only means of knowing what you have learned spiritually (1:1). Your spirit is invisible; the way you come to know its reality is by seeing that invisible reality reflected in the world around you. Miracles, *visible miracles*, demonstrate that invisible learning has occurred. Like thunder and lightning, true learning and miracles go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other.

One critical factor in learning anything is the ability to generalize. For instance, if I show a child that two apples plus two apples yields four apples, he show that he has grasped the abstract general principle when he is able to correctly answer a question such as, "If I have two books and you give me two more, how many books will I have?" Our spiritual learning can be recognized in the same way, by our ability to abstract a general spiritual principle from one situation and apply it to another (1:2).

No learning, no results. But also, no results, no learning! When you *truly* receive the Atonement for yourself, "the Atonement will radiate...to everyone the Holy Spirit sends to you for your blessing" (1:5). If that does not occur (at least to some extent, and more and more as your learning progresses), the validity of your acceptance is questionable. You begin with one situation. You apply what you learned to another situation, and another. Gradually, your learning proceeds from a small fraction of your life to encompass the entire world. Applying miracles in *every* situation is what it means to "gain the real world"(1:4). When you have forgiven the world, you will know just how completely *you* have been forgiven (1:6).

I think it is important to note in passing the reference to the activity of the Holy Spirit in sentence 5. Quite clearly, in the understanding of the Course, the Holy Spirit is active

in this world to "send" people to us who need our help. These are people particularly suited to our ability to shine the Atonement into their hearts and minds. As the Course states quite clearly elsewhere, the places we "happen" to be in and the time we "happen" to be there are *arranged* for us by the Holy Spirit, in coordination with our own choices:

Your passage through time and space is not at random. You cannot but be in the right place at the right time (W-pI.42.2:3-4).

For you and your adviser must agree on what you want before it can occur. It is but this agreement that permits all things to happen. Nothing can be caused without some form of union, be it with a dream of judgment or the Voice for God (T-30.I.16:2-4).

He sends people to us when we ask Him to do so, indicating our willingness to give them the love and healing they seek:

I give Your peace to those who suffer pain, or grieve for loss, or think they are bereft of hope and happiness. Send them to me, my Father. Let me bring Your peace with me (W-pII.245.1:5-7).

Despite the title of the section, it talks mostly about *looking out* to find the *witnesses* to what is within. What is within is invisible; you can't see it directly. You can only see what is within as you see it reflected in what is without, what is visible. The world is your mirror and without it, you cannot see yourself. What you perceive in the world *tells you how you are seeing yourself*. That is why the world is very, very important: It is our classroom.

Paragraph 2

2. Everyone in the world must play his part in its redemption, in order to recognize that the world **has been** redeemed. You cannot see the invisible. Yet if you see its effects **you know it must be there**. By perceiving what it **does**, you recognize its being. And by **what** it does, you learn what it **is.** You cannot **see** your strengths [abilities], but you gain confidence in their existence as they enable you to **act**. And the results of your actions you *can* see.

• Study Question •

2. Paragraph 2 clearly states a cause and effect principle that is basic to the thought system of the Course: You know the existence of something and learn its nature by observing its effects. Paragraph 1 applied this to our learning. In this paragraph, name two more things that you become convinced of through seeing their effects.

By definition, "invisible" means "not able to be seen with the eyes" (*Encarta World Dictionary*). We all want to see the world cleansed of corruption, evil, and loss, but in order to see it that way, the Course says, we have to play our part in *making* it that way (2:1). Note the tenses of the verbs here: Our participation is called for in the present as if the redemption of the world were future, but when we consent to participate, what we come to learn is that the redemption of the world has *already been accomplished*! The eternal world of spirit exists in perfection now and always has existed. However, instead

of allowing us to sit on our butts and do nothing, this fact elicits our energetic extension of love, healing, and forgiveness within the world of time.

If we are truly tuned in to the world of spirit, the world of miracles, it will have a known effect upon us: We will become miracle workers. We will forgive; we will bring peace; we will heal. The appearance of miracle-working activity in a life demonstrates that that life is connected to God, and it *validates* or *substantiates* that connection with God to the person manifesting the healing activities (2:4–6).

In the Bible, even in the time the New Testament was being written, there was a misunderstanding of the principle of God's grace. Some spiritual teachers were saying that since God forgives sin freely, it didn't matter what you did in the world. You could "continue in sin so that grace may increase" (Romans 6:2, NASB). Both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle James (for the moment, at least, I am accepting that they were the authors of the books attributed to them) make it clear that this cannot be. Even though nothing is beyond God's forgiveness and, as the Course would put it, no real sin exists to be forgiven no matter what we do, this does not give us license to do whatever we damn well please!

Paul argues that if we have united our lives with God, it will manifest in deeds of righteousness: "Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6;13).

Jesus himself uttered familiar words on the subject: "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

James wrote:

Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

...Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. (James 2:17–18, NIV)

In other words, just as the Course says, our actions or works demonstrate the reality of our inner transformation. We know ourselves, and other know us, by our fruits. If we are not extending miracles to those around us, any claim that we have accepted the Atonement and seen the real world is proven to be false.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The Holy Spirit is invisible, but you **can** see the results of His Presence, and through them you will learn that He is there. ²What He enables you to do is clearly **not** of this world, for miracles violate every law of reality as this world judges it. ³Every law of time and space, of magnitude and mass [, of prediction and control,] is transcended, for what the Holy Spirit enables you to do is clearly beyond **all** of them. ⁴Perceiving His **results**, you will understand where He **must** be, and finally **know** what He is.

• Study Question •

3. Please give an example of a miracle that transcends one of the following six things: time, space, magnitude, mass, prediction, and control.

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The external effects have shown us three things: what we have learned, the redemption of the world, and our strengths. Now, to that list, Jesus adds the Holy Spirit. He, too, cannot be detected with our eyes, "but you can see the results of His Presence, and through them you will learn that He is there" (3:1). This clearly refers to physically visible evidence consisting of the effects of His working through us. He accomplishes things that go counter to scientific laws; we can all think of examples (3:2–3).

The Course portrays its graduates in this light, with miracles popping up around them spontaneously, just as they did with Jesus in the Gospels. It even speaks of us raising the dead! (T-1.I.24:1). It pictures us with healing energy flowing out of us to everyone we meet:

From this day forth, your ministry takes on a genuine devotion, and a glow that travels from your fingertips to those you touch, and blesses those you look upon. A vision reaches everyone you meet, and everyone you think of, or who thinks of you. (W-pI.157.5:1).

The Course seems to expect that kind of thing to become the norm for us. I believe this is its goal for us, although we may not yet be experiencing it. When such miracles begin to happen we will know without a doubt that the Holy Spirit is in us, and understand His nature (3:4).

As He works miracles through you, altering your perception of everyone and everything in the world, you will come to know He is there. But this won't happen unless you start bringing specific situations from your life to Him, asking Him to take your muddled perceptions and to give you His own. It begins with what is at hand, and spreads from there to include everything. I doubt very much any of us will raise the dead until we learn to consistently forgive the guy who cuts us off in traffic.

Paragraph 4

4. You cannot see the Holy Spirit, but you can see His manifestations. And unless you do, you will not realize He is there. Miracles are His witnesses, and speak for His Presence. What you cannot see becomes real to you only through the witnesses that speak for It. For you can be aware of what you cannot see, and It can become compellingly real to you as Its Presence becomes manifest through you. Do the Holy Spirit's work, for you share in His function. As your function in Heaven is creation, so your function on earth is healing. God shares His function with you in Heaven, and the Holy Spirit shares His with you on earth. As long as you believe you have other functions [you have two functions], so long will you need correction. To this belief is the destruction of peace, a goal in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit's purpose.

Study Question

4. What does it mean when it says that "your function on earth is healing"? (4:7). For instance, are you supposed to become a doctor?

Unless you see the miracles of transformation that occur from having your perception altered by the Holy Spirit, you won't realize He is there (4:1–2). Miracles are what witness to Him (4:3). This is actually a very familiar phenomenon. Sentence 4 puts it in

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terms that could apply just as well to your toaster as to the Holy Spirit. You know that electric current is flowing through the wires because you see them begin to glow; you know they are giving off heat because the surface of the bread in the toaster turns brown and crispy. You are seeing things that witness to the presence of other things that are invisible.

Miracles that happen through you prove the Presence of something in you capable of producing them. As the Spirit manifests *through you* His Presence *within you* becomes "compellingly real to you" (4:4–5).

This is why "salvation is a collaborative venture" (T-4.VI.8:2). This is why you can be grateful when someone's attack is transformed into something that calls upon the love that already exists in your mind. Everyone, in every instant, is giving you the opportunity to make the invisible love within yourself visible in the world. Like the Holy Spirit (4:6); you are here to transform earth into Heaven. Your function in Heaven is creating; on earth, that shows up as *healing* (4:7). *You have no other function than this in the world*, and as long as you think there *is* some other reason you are here, you need healing yourself (4:9). A goal other than healing would have to be something based on attack. If you aren't trying to heal someone, you are trying instead to injure them. Your goal, if not based on love, must be based on not-love. Such goals are incompatible with peace (4:10). Therefore, you are never going to find peace for yourself until you accept healing as your only goal on earth.

People often say that the healing and miracles the Course speaks of happen entirely within your mind. That's true, as far as it goes. "Salvation is for the mind" is a very clear statement in the Course (T-12.III.5:1). But unless you *see* the salvation that is in your mind mirrored in the world around you, you will not know it is there! The way the invisible becomes visible is by *extending* from your mind into the world. You come to trust in that salvation as you allow it to flow through you to others. You become a healer, a peacemaker, and a savior to others; in so doing, you find your own salvation within yourself.

We've seen this same three-fold process before, and we will see it over and over again: first, we *accept* salvation; second, we *extend* salvation; third, we *recognize* the presence of salvation within us. I think a simple way of putting it is, until we extend it, we aren't *certain* that we have it.

Paragraph 5

5. You see what you expect, and you expect what you invite. ²Your perception is the result of your invitation, coming to you as you sent for it. ³Whose manifestations would you see? ⁴Of whose presence would you be convinced? ⁵For you will believe in what you **manifest**, and as you look out so will you see in. ⁶Two ways of looking at the world are in your mind, and your perception will reflect the guidance you have chosen [chose].

Study Question

5. Once you accept the guidance of the ego and see the world that it shows you, what will happen? What will happen when you see the world through the Holy Spirit's eyes?

Here is a progression similar to the one I described in commenting on paragraph 1: Desire (invitation), expectation (belief), seeing (perception), and conviction (belief again). In a sense it is the same progression with the addition of *desire* as the driving force.

The way you see the world, in short, depends on what want to see (5:1–2). Which voice do you choose to listen to? Where does your *investment* lie: in a world of attack, or a world of love? You see what you want to see; this is repeated over and over:

This is in accord with perception'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 (T-25.III.1:3-4).

You will see it or not see it, as you wish. While you want it you will see it; when you no longer want it, it will not be there for you to see (W-pI.32.1:4-5).

This is salvation's keynote: What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want (W-pII.325.1:1).

Therefore, the crucial question is: "Whose manifestations would you see? Of whose presence would you be convinced?" (5:3–4) Do you want to be convinced that the ego is what you are, or that Christ is what you are? The early Workbook lessons spend a great deal of time helping you to realize that how you view the world depends, ultimately, on your choice.

Whatever you want to see you will manifest. What you manifest, you will believe in; that is, your *experiences* in the world reinforce your beliefs (5:5). "As you look out so will you see in" (5:5). The ego and Holy Spirit are both in your mind, two ways of seeing the world, and which one you choose to listen to will determine how you see the world; then, in turn, how you see the *outside* world will determine what you believe about yourself *inside* (5:5–6). Essentially, you are simply using the world to teach yourself what you are; the world becomes whatever you think you need to validate your identity, whether that identity is the ego or the Christ.

Note: The thoughts of this section are very similar to what was said earlier in "The Two Evaluations" (T-9.VII), especially in paragraphs 3 to 5. It could be helpful to re-read those paragraphs now, to reinforce what is being said.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹I am the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and when you see me it will be because you have invited Him. ²For He will send you His witnesses if you will but look upon them. ³Remember always that you see what you seek, for what you seek you **will** find. ⁴The ego finds what it seeks, and **only** that. ⁵It does not find love, for that is **not** what it is seeking. ⁶Yet seeking and finding are the same, and if you seek for two goals you will **find** them, but you will **recognize**

neither. ⁷[For] You will think they are the same **because you want both of them**. ⁸The mind always strives for integration, and if it is split and **wants to keep the split**, it will still believe it has **one** goal by **making it seem to be one**.

Study Question

6. Most of us believe that all we really want is love. In what way is that self-appraisal suspect?

Jesus informs us that he is "the manifestation of the Holy Spirit" (6:1). "Manifestation" is an intriguing word. The *American Heritage Dictionary* has two interesting definitions:

2. An indication of the existence, reality, or presence of something: *A high fever is an early manifestation of the disease.* **3a.** One of the forms in which someone or something, such as a person, a divine being, or an idea, is revealed.

Thus, Jesus is an indication of the reality and existence of the Holy Spirit; he is one of the forms in which the Holy Spirit is revealed.

The Holy Spirit is the invisible Spirit of God; Jesus is that Spirit *taking form in the world*. To see him, we have to choose the Holy Spirit; we have to *want* to see that Spirit of love manifested, taking form in the world. If we *invite* witnesses for the Holy Spirit, He will send them (6:2).

What does it mean to see Jesus? To understand, we have to look ahead a bit in this section. Read what he says in 11:8 and 12:1. I think here that Jesus is speaking as the Christ, rather than as the human being who walked the earth. He is telling us that as we ask the Holy Spirit to extend miracles through us, we will begin to perceive the Christ within ourselves. That is entirely consistent with the general message of the section, that we come to know what is inside us by seeing it outside of us.

What are you looking for? What are you seeking to find? "Remember always that you see what you seek, for what you seek you will find" (6:3). If what you are finding is pain, death, sickness, and attack, it must mean that you are seeking those things. In some part of your mind, perhaps a part you are not conscious of, you want to see these things; that is why you see them. Perhaps it might be more accurate to say, that is why you see things that way. Things themselves may not change; how you see them is what can change. People may still cut you off on the highway, but you can see that as a manifestation of their appeal for help, instead of seeing an attack; you can respond with love instead of anger. Your body may become ill, but you will interpret that as your own call for help instead of seeing it as a threat to your life.

If you listen to the ego you will always find what the ego is looking for, and nothing else (6:4). It does not want to find love, so it won't (6:5), even when love is all around you and within you. However, if you listen to the Holy Spirit, you will find what He is looking for, and He *is* looking for love, so that is what you will find—in you and all around you.

If you seek with mixed motives, you will find both goals, but you will confuse them (6:6–7). This is why we often confuse pain and pleasure, or bondage and freedom. The mind is not comfortable with divergent goals and so it deceives itself into thinking both

goals are the same. Really, what the mind is after is seeing *itself* as unified (6:8); it rearranges its perceptions of itself and the world to give itself the appearance of having one goal. The next paragraph continues this discussion and expands on it, so I will try to explain these ideas a bit more there.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹I said before that **what** you project or extend is up to you, but you must do one or the other, for that is a law of mind, [Perception *is* projection,] and you must look in **before** you look out. ²As you look **in**, you choose the guide for seeing [the ego or the Holy Spirit]. ³And **then** you look out and behold his witnesses. ⁴This is why you find what you seek. ⁵What you want **in yourself** you will make manifest [by *projection*], and you will accept it **from** the world because you put it there **by** wanting it. ⁶When you think you are projecting what you do not want, it is still because you *do* want it. ⁷This leads directly to dissociation, for it represents the acceptance of two goals, each perceived in a different place; separated from each other because you made them different. ⁸The mind then sees a divided world outside itself, but not within. ⁹This gives it an illusion of integrity, and enables it to believe that it is pursuing one goal. ¹⁰Yet as long as you perceive the world as split, you are not healed. ¹¹For to be healed is to pursue one goal, because you have accepted [Ur: *accepted*] only one and want [Ur: *want*] but one.

Study Question

7. Why do you see a world that is attacking you, rather than one that is blessing and loving you?

Most of us are convinced that we are pursuing a single goal: love. The Course shows us a picture of our mind as split: Part of us wants love; part wants not-love. Because of this division in the mind, we see a world that is also divided between love and not-love.

The conscious mind wants to believe that it is unified behind the goal of love. Therefore, it has to deny that not-love is inside of it, and that it is projecting not-love. The mind perceives itself as basically loving, and seeking love. However, since it is projecting both, it sees a world that is split between love and non-love. It has projected the split onto the world to give itself an aura of unity.

We all think of ourselves as very loving by nature. As we see it, the only reason we ever attack is because somebody else makes us do it. What's really going on is that we constantly reinforce the split within ourselves by seeing a split world, but we are denying half the process. We simply don't realize that *all* of it is our dream. We secretly believe our mind is split, and we make a world that reflects that belief.

We really cannot avoid projecting *something*, although it can take the positive form of extending love or the negative form of projecting attack. Projecting or extending is just how mind works (7:1). We can, however, determine the content of what we project, and we do so based on what we think we are. Whatever we want to see inside ourselves is what we will project onto the world (7:5). As I said earlier, if we think we are the ego, we will make a world that reflects that believe back to us; if we realize that we are the Christ,

we will make a world that reflects that *truth* back to us. The source of the world that you see, however, is always your mind.

As you look at yourself, you choose to see yourself as the ego or the Christ (for Whom the Holy Spirit speaks); then you look at the world outside and see whatever validates that self-perception (7:2–3). You inwardly *choose* to "make real" one picture of yourself, either a separated ego or an extension of God's Love. This is "a law of mind" (7:1), the way mind works. You see the world the way you *want* to see yourself! (7:5)

The next few lines, sentences 6 to 11, require some explanation. I used to think that "projecting what you do not want" (7:6) meant manifesting things like sickness, or an automotive breakdown, or the loss of someone you love. My idea was that we might think we didn't want such things, but part of us did want them. While that is true, I no longer think that is what this passage is referring to.

Instead, I think it means that we are trying to get rid of the things we don't want, such as our attack thoughts (compare with T-12.III.9:6–7). Our mind is split between love and not-love, but we don't want to admit to the not-love, so we project it in an attempt to get rid of it. Yet, the *real* reason we are projecting it is so that it can show up out there to bear witness to our identity with the ego. While the ego tells us that we can get rid of it by projecting it, its secret plan is for us to *keep* it.

What's showing up in the world are things that, in part of your mind, you actually want. The reason it appears differently to you at times is because you have *dissociated* from those desires (7:7); that is, they were so uncomfortable you could not bear their presence in your mind, so you denied that they were your own. You projected them outside in an effort to get rid of them. You wound up seeing the "divided world outside" without realizing that it is really your *mind* that is divided or split (7:8). This gives your mind the *illusion* of integrity and hides the split (7:9).

The ego teaches you to handle thoughts you don't like by projecting them onto the world; the Holy Spirit teaches you to handle them by admitting their presence in your mind and giving them to Him.

Therefore, "as long as you perceive the world as split, you are not healed" (7:10). The healed mind sees only the real world, where everything is either love or a call for love. "When you want only love you will see nothing else" (8:1). If you see anything else, you need more healing. *You* need healing, not the world.

Answer Key

- 1. In this paragraph, miracles are apparently some kind of *visible* phenomenon, as opposed to learning (1:1). In order for miracles to be the evidence of something else, they must be visible to our perception. Therefore, I understand the term here to refer to tangible changes in the material world, such as physical healings, reconciliation in relationships, or manifest happiness and peace of mind, that cannot be explained by anything beside the extension of the miracle from our minds to those of other people. In other words, the common definition of a miracle: "An event that appears inexplicable by the laws of nature and so is held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God" (*American Heritage Dictionary*).
- 2. Two things we recognize by the effects of miracles being done through us are: first, the fact that the world has already been redeemed; second, our true strengths (2:1,6).
- 3. Examples of miracles that transcend:
 - a. Time: Forgiveness of a past grievance; something you need arriving before you know you need it.
 - b. Space: Healing at a distance; yogis who bi-locate.
 - c. Magnitude: Biblical example of oil in lamp not running out (Chanukah story) or multiplication of loaves and fishes; any "David and Goliath" story.
 - d. Mass: Healing of a cancer or broken limb; lifting an automobile from a person trapped beneath it.
 - e. Prediction: precognition, being shown the future in a dream.
 - f. Control: not being subject to ordinary laws, rules, or regulations.
- 4. It means that our purpose while on earth is releasing the minds of others from guilt through forgiveness, whatever form our livelihood may take.
- 5. Seeing the world according to the ego will convince you of the reality of the ego as your self; seeing the real world will convince you of the reality of the Holy Spirit in you.
- 6. The Course would contend that until we are fully healed—as long as we still experience fear, for instance—we are looking for both love and fear, but telling ourselves that we are looking only for love. The mind is adept at deceiving itself.
- 7. Because you want to attack yourself and, at the same time, you want to convince yourself that you are not pursuing that goal. You dissociate yourself from the attack by projecting it outside you.