

Commentary

ACIM® Text (CE)

Miracle Principles 44-46

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-1.44-46

Overview

Principles 44 and 45 are quite short, while 46 has many explanatory paragraphs. It's likely that I will have to break the commentary on 46 into two parts, finishing up in the next commentary.

Notes on Principle 44

1 Miracles arise from a miraculous state of mind. ²This state of mind goes out to *anyone*, even without the awareness of the miracle worker himself.

We have already seen the basic idea expressed in the first sentence. Our minds must be healed, at least temporarily, to enable us to extend a miracle. What is new here is the second sentence, which tells us that a miracle may extend from our minds *to anyone*, even without our awareness of that extension. When you or I are in a miraculous state of mind, seeing things with the vision of Christ, and extending love rather than judging, miracles can happen anywhere in the world as a result!

This makes sense if all minds are joined, as the Course teaches. Your miraculous state of mind may bring healing to a child in Africa or a Bedouin in the Sahara.

2 The impersonal nature of miracles is because the Atonement itself is *one*. By being one, it unites all creations with their Creator.

The reason distance healing can occur is that miracles are impersonal and not directed towards any individual. When something miraculous happens to you, you should realize that somewhere in the world, someone became miracle-minded, and you just happened to

be in a receptive state at that moment! All of God's creations are One, and so is the Atonement.

The Course mentions numerous times that you and I are saviors of the world. Perhaps you have wondered how that could be, since your contact with the entire world is rather limited. Everyone's direct contact with the rest of humanity is severely limited if you think contact requires some kind of physical proximity, or even including electronic contact. Very few people can directly impact millions of people via television or the Internet, yet even they are reaching only a small fraction of the human race. Yet any one of us, through miracle-mindedness, can impact the entire human race! Yes, we are the saviors of the world. Several people who have experienced near-death experiences and have returned to talk about it have said that they were amazed at how much impact their simple expressions of love had. It was for those random acts of kindness that they were most recognized.

45 1 The miracle is an expression of an inner awareness of Christ and acceptance of His Atonement.

This principle really is a statement of what a miraculous state of mind is. In a miraculous state of mind, we are aware of the presence of Christ, and are willing in that moment to accept his Atonement for ourselves. We recognize our innocence.

² The mind is then in a state of grace, and naturally becomes gracious, both to the Host within and the stranger without. ²By bringing in the stranger, he becomes your brother. ³The miracle of healing is to bring those who are estranged from each other together, because they are estranged from God.

When your mind is in a state of grace, you naturally become gracious to others, even those whom you may consider as "strangers." You offer grace to them, overlooking their mistakes and seeing their innocence. As you do so, you realize that they are no longer strangers, but your brothers and sisters. The Course plainly states what we must learn: "There are no strangers in God's creation." (T-3.V.12:1 (CE)) We become gracious to everyone and also "to the Host within," which must refer either to the Holy Spirit or to Christ. That is, we welcome Christ within our home, our heart. When I was in college, I read a little booklet titled "My Heart, Christ's Home." It presented a moving allegory of how we need to welcome Christ into every "room" of our lives: our kitchen, our bedroom, our library (our reading material), our family room, and so on. That is what we do as we become miracle-minded.

Robert Perry makes some moving comments on welcoming the stranger. He writes:

Isn't this bringing in of the stranger what holy men and women are known for? I've always been inspired by the figure of the bishop in the novel *Les Misérables*. He literally has no lock on his door and is known locally as "Monseigneur Bienvenu" ("Monseigneur Welcome"). When he takes in the desperate ex-con

Jean Valjean, who is shunned by all, the welcome he extends to him is deeply moving:

“Let me assure you, passer-by though you are, that this is more your home than mine. Everything in it is yours. Why should I ask your name? In any case I knew it before you told me.”

The man looked up with startled eyes. “You know my name?”

“Of course,” said the bishop. “Your name is brother.”

3 The miracles you are told not to perform have not lost their value. 2 They are still expressions of your own state of grace. 3 But the action aspect of the miracle should be Christ-controlled, because of His complete awareness of the whole plan. 4 The impersonal nature of miracle-mindedness ensures your own grace, but only Christ is in a position to know where grace can be bestowed.

Sometimes, we experience a miraculous impulse towards someone, but we are told not to act on it. Despite this, these impulses still hold immense value (3:1). As the Course suggests, “They are still expressions of your own state of grace” (3:2). Miracles entail both a mental and an action aspect. While miracles are impersonal and can arise towards *anyone*, the action aspect must be “Christ-controlled” (3:3). Why? Because only Christ “is in a position to know where grace can be bestowed”, given His “complete awareness of the whole plan” (3:3-4).

It's important to note that listening to inner guidance is central to the Course's training program. Before offering any miracle to someone, we must seek guidance. It's also essential to follow inner guidance for our daily activities, including where to go, what to do, and what to say. This practice is our way out of hell. While Jesus acknowledges that mastering this practice takes great effort and willingness, it remains the final and most crucial lesson to learn.

46. A miracle is never lost. 2 It touches many people you may not even know, and sometimes produces undreamed-of changes in forces of which you are not even aware.

Pause for a moment to let that first short sentence sink in: “A miracle is never lost.” Suppose you offer a miracle, an expression of love, to someone you know, but don't see the response you were hoping for. Perhaps no response, or a negative one. When that happens, you may think that your effort was wasted and the miracle you offered was lost.

What Jesus says in this short sentence is that it isn't lost at all! Read the next sentence. That expression of love has touched *many people*, people you may not even know! Sometimes your simple offering of love produces undreamed-of changes in the world, affecting “forces of which you are not even aware.” There are many things in the world that you and I are not aware of, yet our simple, seemingly localized expressions of love

can affect *forces* we are not aware of. Forces! I try to imagine what that word can include. Perhaps things like the outcome of wars, medical discoveries, scientific breakthroughs, sudden insights for politicians trying to resolve a crisis...I really do think the word *forces* implies things like that. If all minds are joined, why not?

2 This is not your concern. ²The miracle will also always bless you.
³This is not your concern either. ⁴But it is the concern of the record, which *always* measures what it was supposed to measure.¹

In the videos about near-death experiences I showed recently in class, people testified as to how it was not their great achievements in this world in education, business, or some public career that they were praised for by their heavenly contacts. It was seemingly small acts of pure love, often forgotten until brought to their attention in their life-review. These acts, these miracles, were their crowning glory.

It appears that the Course recognizes the existence of “the record,” something which has been called the Akashic record, which is like a library containing a record of everything you have ever done along with its results. Those far-flung results of your miracle offerings are not your concern, but *there is a record being kept* “which *always* measures what it was supposed to measure.” But what goes on the record isn’t our concern, nor is the fact that offering a miracle always blesses *us*. We don’t offer miracles to get rewarded or recognized. We offer them because it is our nature to do so. It is the will of God and of our Self, and *not* extending miracles produces a sense of lack in us (3:4).

3 I want to finish the instructions about sex, because this is an area which the miracle worker *must* understand. ²Inappropriate sex drives (or misdirected miracle impulses) result in guilt if expressed and depression if denied. ³We said before that *all* real pleasure comes from doing God’s will.²
⁴Whenever it is not done, an experience of lack results. ⁵This is because not doing the will of God *is* a lack of self.

And strangely enough, this discussion of miracles and their effects leads to another instruction about sex (3:1). Let me first make a personal observation: I believe it was a terrible mistake for Helen and Ken Wapnick to remove these discussions of sex. Jesus says here, “This is an area which the miracle worker *must* understand” (3:1). The emphasis is clear. Omitting this deprived miracle workers of something that is vital to their proper functioning as miracle workers! So, let’s try to comprehend *why* it is necessary and how it relates to Principle 46.

¹ “The record” seems to be something like the Akashic records, a “library” containing every thought, word, and deed, located on a nonphysical plane of existence. In this passage, it records the miracles you perform, along with all of the specific effects they have on anyone anywhere.

² T-1.18.5:2: “The pleasure from using anything should come from utilizing it for God’s will.”

The problem presented earlier is that miracle impulses can be mistaken for inappropriate sex drives. When this occurs two outcomes are possible: one, the sexual impulse is expressed; two, it can be denied. Both outcomes lead to undesirable results. Inappropriate expressions lead to *guilt*; suppressions can lead to *depression*. In addition, either result also includes an experience of lack. Guilt is a lack of holiness; depression is a lack of satisfaction, a lack of fulfillment of desires. But “*all* real pleasure comes from doing God’s will” (3:3). Not doing God’s will (in this instance, mistaking a miracle impulse for a sexual one) is what yields the experience of lack in one form or another. Regardless of the form lack takes with us, what we are actually experiencing is a “lack of self” (3:5). We are out of touch with the truth of our being.

4 Sex was intended as an instrument for physical creation (see previous notes),³ to enable souls to embark on new chapters in their experience, and thus improve their records. ²The pencil was *not* an end in itself (see earlier section).⁴ ³It was an aid to the artist in his own creative endeavors. ⁴As he made new homes for souls and guided them through the periods of their own developmental readiness, he learned the role of the father himself. ⁵The whole process was set up as a learning experience in gaining grace.

Sentence 4:1 implies that sexual reproduction was a thing introduced by God. The Course clearly states that God did not make the body (T-6.VII.2:1 (CE)), but apparently He tinkered with it to make it capable of “physical creation,” that is, sexual reproduction. He did so to enable “souls” (our non-physical being) “to embark on new chapters in their experience, and thus improve their records” (4:1). If one physical “chapter” of existence isn’t enough for us to create a good life record, one we can be proud of, we can re-enter physical existence again and improve our record.

The pencil reference (4:2–3) is to the example in T-43.10:2–3 about the artist who kept sharpening his pencils but never drew anything. The application of it here appears to be saying that God also needed to *learn* “the role of the father” in his act of creation. Or, it could refer to the Holy Spirit or Jesus, since it speaks of “guiding them [the newly born or re-born] through the periods of their own developmental readiness.” What seems to refer to God the Father is the words, “As he made new homes for souls,” that is, creating bodies for them to live in. Who does that? God? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? A male human being who has sex? Or the woman who bears the body of a baby? It just isn’t clear to me. Perhaps, coming after the earlier discussion of parents and their roles in guiding their children,⁵ the best fit is to parents as those who make new bodies and guide them in their

³ T-1.18.4:2: “Sex relations are intended for having children.”

⁴ T-1.43.10:2-3: “Remember the story about the artist who kept devoting himself to inventing better and better ways of sharpening pencils. He never created anything, but he had the sharpest pencil in town.”

⁵ “The real function of parents is to be wiser than their children in this respect, and to teach them accordingly.” (T-1.18.6:3)

developmental readiness while learning for themselves the role God has played in their lives.

5 The pleasure which is derived from sex as such is reliable only because it stems from an error which people shared. ²Awareness of the error produces guilt. ³Denial of the error results in projection. ⁴Correction of the error brings release.

While the ideal use of sex is procreation, few of us are quite ready to live at that pinnacle any more than we are ready to go about raising the dead, even though he assumes some of us will attain even that (see T-1.23.1:2; Matt. 10:5-8). Therefore, he addresses how we experience sex in our less-developed state. Miracle impulses to express love are the only true motivators for social interaction. However, as we've seen, we often distort these because of our identification with our bodies into sexual impulses. When we engage in sex as a result, the pleasure we derive is nevertheless reliable, but only because we've shared the same error of misinterpretation! And there are unpleasant side-effects. If we are *aware* of the error we've made it produces guilt. If we push the error out of our conscious minds we end up projecting the guilt onto someone else in one form or another. Only if we learn to *correct* our errors can we find release.

When we misinterpret miracles impulses as sexual ones, we don't derive the real pleasure that comes from extending a miracle. Remember, miracles don't have to be dramatic, physically impossible things. They can be a smile, a recognition of another as part of yourself, or forgiveness. As we read back in Paragraph 3, "—*all* real pleasure comes from doing God's will." (T-1.23.3:3 (CE))

6 The only valid use of sex is procreation. ²It is *not* truly pleasurable in itself. ³"Lead us not into temptation"⁶ means "Do not let us deceive ourselves into believing that we can relate in peace to God or our brothers with anything external." ⁴The "sin of Onan" was called a "sin" because it involved a related type of self-delusion—namely, that pleasure *without* relating can exist.⁷ ⁵The concept of either the self or another as a "sex *object*" epitomizes this strange reversal. ⁶It is objectionable, but only because it is invalid.⁸ ⁷Upside-down logic produces this kind of thinking.

⁶ Matthew 6:13 (KJV), Luke 11:4 (KJV). "Lead us not into temptation," of course, sounds as if prayer is needed to hold God back from leading us into temptation. In contrast, in the Course's interpretation of this line, we use prayer to hold us back from self-deception—from leading *ourselves* into temptation.

⁷ The "sin of Onan" (see Genesis 38:7-10) is usually equated with masturbation, but is also equated with coitus interruptus. It seems to refer here to masturbation, because it is called "pleasure *without* relating," and because the next sentence speaks of seeing "the self" as a sex object. Given this interpretation, Jesus is likening conventional sex (sex which objectifies the partner) to masturbation.

⁸ This is one of Bill's puns (Jesus began the sentence by saying, "As Bill put it"): To see someone as an *object* is *objectionable*.

Jesus underscores the fact that sex isn't truly pleasurable in itself. Its only *valid* use is procreation (6:1–2). Then, he dramatically expands the meaning of the line in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." He says it really means, "Do not let us deceive ourselves into believing that we can relate in peace to God or our brothers with anything external" (6:3). That certainly applies to sex, but "anything external" includes a lot more! For instance, the idea that relating to God can be done using external things calls to mind the verse in the gospel of Matthew: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others." (Matthew 23:23 ESV) Justice, mercy, and faithfulness are expressions of love; these bring true pleasure.

Then, he refers to an incident in the Old Testament in which a man named Onan commits a "sin" by masturbating. He says this was a "related type of self-delusion—namely, that pleasure *without* relating can exist (6:4). Does this mean we should avoid being alone? That deriving pleasure from a solitary walk in the woods is somehow wrong? I don't think so. We can relate to others while being alone, at least mentally. But we've learned that real communication does not require physical proximity—minds are joined. And when we enjoy a walk in the woods we can be relating to the trees and wildlife around us. I do think the general principle does speak against isolation in general, but we needn't make a law out of it.

Returning to Onan: He was viewing himself as a "sex object," and that is the same reversal in which we are viewing the other as no more than a sex object. It is objectionable (pun intended for Bill's benefit; see the footnote), "but only because it is invalid." Neither thing results in true pleasure. Thinking it can bring pleasure is the result of upside-down thinking, that is, level confusion, putting body where mind or spirit should be and vice versa.

7 Child of God, you were created to create the good, the beautiful, and the holy.⁹ ²Do not lose sight of this. ³Invite me to enter anywhere temptation arises. ⁴I will change the situation from one of inappropriate sexual attraction to one of impersonal miracle working. ⁵This is the real meaning of changing the channel for libidinal expression.¹⁰

We were created for a purpose: "to create the good, the beautiful, and the holy" (7:1). As the footnote suggests, this may be an allusion to Plato's trio of abstract, eternal

⁹ This may be a reference to Plato's well-known trio of abstract, eternal essences, "the true and the good and the beautiful."

¹⁰ This refers to *sublimation*, the idea that we can channel (in this case) sexual energy into more socially useful expressions, such as art. The original form of this sentence adds that sublimation "was Freud's greatest contribution, except that he did not understand what 'channel' really means." For Jesus, "channel" refers to being a conduit of miracles from the Holy Spirit to others. Sublimation, therefore, should mean channeling sexual energy into miracle working.

essences, “the true and the good and the beautiful.” Plato’s teaching parallels the Course in many ways, but some dispute that this trio was first used by him. If you are curious about this kind of thing as I am, you might want to read [this article](#) (click the link). At any rate, people have been using variations of the trio for centuries. Here, Jesus says our purpose is creating the good, the beautiful, and the holy—all non-physical, non-tangible things. True, a physical thing can be beautiful, but the beauty itself is not in the object but in the mind of the beholder.

Jesus seems to be urging us to shy away from seeking for or creating external things and to focus on creating these intangibles in our lives. When we see a mother’s love for her baby, there are two physical bodies involved. But what strikes us as beautiful is not their physicality but the flow of love that is being expressed. You have probably experienced some things like this you can recognize as good, or true, or beautiful. It’s worth taking a few moments to see if you can recall some.

And where “temptation” arises (used here for any mistaking of miracle impulses as sexual), Jesus encourages us to invite him into the situation. He promises to change any such situation “from one of inappropriate sexual attraction to one of impersonal miracle working” (7:4). For understanding Sentence 7:5, see the associated footnote.

8 The love of God, for a little while, must still be expressed through one body to another. ²That is because the real vision is still so dim. ³Everyone can use his body best by enlarging the perception of others, so they can see the real vision. ⁴This vision is invisible to the physical eye. ⁵The ultimate purpose of the body is to render itself unnecessary. ⁶Learning to do this is the only real reason for its existence.¹¹

Despite all that has been said to this point, physical nearness is almost always still necessary for us to express God’s love “through one body to another” — at least “for a little while” (8:1). Zoom is helping with that 🤪. Seriously, I think the Internet and digital communication really is helping by providing a means for sharing love around the planet. I’ve referred before to the amazing choral creations that join thousands of voices from all over the world in a hymn of love and joining. My favorite so far is this one: [Eric Whitacre’s ‘Sing Gently as One’](#)¹² with 17,572 singers. The video’s visual effect of joining highlights the central message of oneness.

9 We said before that prayer is the medium of miracles.¹³ ²The miracle prayer is:

³*If you will tell me what to do, I will to do it.*

⁴This prayer is the door that leads out of the desert forever.

¹¹ See Cameo 11: “The Notes on Sex.”

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InULYfJHKIO>

¹³ T-1.11:1.

As I've pointed out before, the Course tells us in several ways that listening for and following the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit is the "way out of hell" for us ("Do not, then, think that following the Holy Spirit's guidance is necessary merely because of your own inadequacies. It is the way out of hell for you" (M-29.3:10–11 (CE))). Are you willing to pray this prayer? "If you tell me what to do, I'll do it." That is the "medium" of miracles. It is the pathway that provides the way miracles flow into the world. And offering miracles of forgiveness to everyone we meet is the way out of hell *for us*.

10 This, however, is not a complete statement, because it does not exclude the negative. ²We have already told you to add the thought "and not to do those you would not have me do" in connection with miracles.¹⁴ ³The distinction has also been made here between "miracle-mindedness" as a state and "miracle doing" as its expression.¹⁵ ⁴The former needs your careful protection, because it is a state of miracle *readiness*. ⁵This is what the Bible means in the references to "Hold yourself ready" and other similar injunctions.¹⁶

We need to remember that not all miracle impulses are meant to see immediate light. Be ready to hear, "Not now. Not to this one." Failure to do so will lead to burnout. There is a distinction between being in a state of miracle-mindedness and actually performing miracles. We need to protect our mental readiness for miracles to flow through us, as Jesus admonished in the gospels of Matthew and Luke: "Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matthew 24:44 New Jerusalem Bible) Most people who read the Bible think "the Son of man is coming" refers to Jesus returning to Earth, but Jesus here gives his own interpretation: the arrival of Christ consciousness in our minds.

11 Readiness here means keeping your perception right-side up, so you will *always* be ready, willing, and able. ²These are the essentials for "listen, learn, and do."¹⁷ ³You must be:

¹⁴ T-1.24.5:3: "Therefore, when you say, 'If you want me to I will,' please add 'and if you *don't* want me to I won't.'"

¹⁵ T-1.45.3:3-4: "But the action aspect of the miracle should be Christ-controlled, because of His complete awareness of the whole plan. The impersonal nature of miracle-*mindedness* ensures your own grace, but only Christ is in a position to know where grace can be *bestowed*."

¹⁶ "You too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44 [New Jerusalem Bible], Luke 12:40 [New Jerusalem Bible]). In its context above, this now means, "You must stand ready, because the miracle may want to come through you at any time."

¹⁷ T-1.26.6:5-7: "The slogan for this Crusade is 'Listen, learn, and *do*.' This means:

Listen to my voice,
Learn to undo the error, and
Do something to correct it."

*Ready to listen,
willing to learn, and
able to do.*

Holding yourself ready, he says, “means keeping your perception right-side up.” It’s not about being ready to join Jesus in some great cataclysmic battle with evil at the end of time. It’s about constantly reminding ourselves that we and everyone around us are spirit, not bodies, still the perfect beings created by God. With our minds fixed on this truth, miracles can flow from us when they are appropriate. Back in Principle 26 he told us the slogan for his great crusade to correct error is “listen, learn, and do” (T-1.26.6:5–7). Now, after calling us to keep perception right-side up so we will always be ready, willing, and able for miracles, he applies it to that earlier trio of terms by saying they enable us to listen, learn and do: we must be “*Ready to listen, willing to learn, and able to do.*”

⁵Only the last is involuntary, because it is the *application* of miracles which must be Christ-controlled. ⁶But the other two, which are the voluntary aspects of miracle-mindedness, *are up to you.*

“Only the last” refers to our being *able to do*, and that is “involuntary,” that is, it must not be our choice, but must be Christ-controlled. Listening and learning are things we can and must choose; they are up to us. Doing should not be determined by our choice but by His direction. The idea is to hold ourselves *always ready* for a miracle to come through us, listening to his voice, prepared to offer a miracle when it is called for.

12 To channelize does have a “narrowing down” connotation, though *not* in the sense of lack. ²The underlying state of mind, or grace, is a total commitment. ³Only the doing aspect involves channelizing. ⁴This is because doing is always specific. ⁵A channel must learn to do *only* what it is supposed to do. ⁶The prayer should therefore read:

*7If you will tell me what to do,
only that I will to do.*

Channelize, you will recall, means to be a channel for miracles. It’s what miracle-workers do. You and I are like water systems and garden hoses; Jesus is the gardener. We keep the water always ready to flow through us, but we don’t make the decisions about when that should occur. He does. Our “total commitment” is to being ready, maintaining the underlying state of grace, keeping our perceptions right-side up. The *doing* aspect is specific. A hose is for watering, but it should not be shooting out water all the time, only as needed by the garden.

Accordingly, Jesus modifies the “miracle prayer” given in Paragraph 9. Now he says it *should* read: “If you will tell me what to do, *only that I will to do.*” “Only that.” Only what he tells us to do. This is the third time he’s made this point, if I’m counting right.

Miracles must be under his control because it is important in order to avoid burning out the miracle worker. It's important in order to avoid having undesirable effects in the recipient. It's important to avoid misusing miracles as tools to inspire awe and make us feel superior or special. The awe aspect gets more treatment in the next paragraph.

13 Revelation is literally unspeakable, because it is an experience of unspeakable love. ²The word “awe” should be reserved only for revelation, to which it is perfectly and correctly applicable. ³It is not appropriately applied to miracles, because a state of true awe is worshipful. ⁴It implies that one of a lesser order stands before the Greater One. ⁵This is the case only when a Son of God stands before his Creator. ⁶The Sons are perfect creations, and should be struck with awe in the presence of the Creator of perfection.

Awe, he declares, should be reserved for revelation because it is “literally unspeakable” (13:1–2). Miracles are more comprehensible and can be discussed rationally. Revelation is beyond words; it is “an experience of unspeakable love” that leaves us in dumbstruck awe. Our only appropriate response to revelation is worship (13:3). We are aware that we are beings of a lesser order standing in the presence of a higher order of being (13:4)—Our Creator. Such dumbstruck awe is appropriate *only* when a Son of God, one of us, stands before his Creator (13:5). Awe is what *should* happen when perfect creations stand “in the presence of the Creator of perfection” (13:6).

That is *not* the case with miracles!

14 The miracle, on the other hand, is a sign of love among equals. ²The equal cannot be in awe of each other, because awe *always* implies inequality. ³Awe is not properly experienced even in relation to me. ⁴I kneel beside you *facing* the light.

A miracle “is a sign of love among equals” (14:1). Awe implies *inequality*, so miracles we perform should not inspire awe in those who receive them or see them. “Awe *always* implies inequality” (14:2), and that is the last thing we want to arouse in offering miracles. Rather, there should be a heightened sense of equality and oneness.

Jesus then makes it very clear that even about him, awe is not a proper reaction (14:3). He says, “I kneel beside you facing the light” (14:4). As the footnote explains, this was a reference to an experience Helen had in a vision, kneeling at an altar and having Jesus come to kneel beside her as her equal, not as a superior being toward whom awe and worship would be appropriate.

This puts an end to the many centuries of speculation about the nature of Jesus. Was he divine? Was he a combination of divine and human? Was he spirit only? Or was he a human being just like us? He makes it clear here that he is our equal, and he goes on in the following paragraphs to drive the point home.

15 An elder brother is entitled to respect for his greater experience, and obedience for his greater wisdom. ²He is also entitled to love because he is a brother, and also to devotion if he is devoted. ³It is only my own devotion that entitles me to yours. ⁴I have knelt at your altar as readily as I would ever have you kneel at mine.¹⁸

As our “elder brother,” Jesus is “entitled to respect for his greater experience, an obedience for his greater wisdom” (15:1). He claims the position of elder brother again later in this section, and once more in Chapter 4:

“A father can safely leave a child with an elder brother who has shown himself responsible, but this involves no confusion about the child’s origin. The brother can protect the child’s body and his ego, which are very closely associated, but he does not confuse himself with the father because he does this, although the child may” (T-4.II.23:2–3).

That quote acknowledges the idea that we, children of the Father, may mistakenly confuse our elder brother with the Father, as Christians have done for the last two thousand years. We have considered him equal to God, on a plane forever unreachable by us. He was the great exception rather than the great example. He had an insurmountable advantage over the rest of us, and we could never become like him.”

But that isn’t the cases, as he goes on to explain. Yes, he is entitled to our *respect* and *obedience* because of his greater experience and wisdom (15:1). He also has earned our *love* and *devotion* as a brother who is devoted to us (15:2). His devotion is what entitles him to our devotion (15:3). Jesus has knelt at *our* altar with just as much readiness as he has any reason to expect us to kneel at his (15:4).

16 There is nothing about me that you cannot attain. ²I have nothing that does not come from God. ³The main difference between us as yet is that I have *nothing else*. ⁴That leaves me in a state of true holiness, which is only a potential in you.

We can attain everything that Jesus attained (16:1)! It all comes from God—to us as well as to him. The primary remaining difference between Jesus and you is that he has *nothing else* but what God gave him. You, on the other hand, come with a lot of ego baggage you have yet to divest yourself of. Because of that, what he is now, in a state a true holiness, is still only potential in you.

¹⁸ This most likely refers to a vision Helen had, in which “a figure outlined in brilliant light stepped from behind the altar and came toward me. Recognizing him as Jesus I started to kneel, but he came around to my side and knelt beside me at the altar, saying, ‘I would as soon kneel at your altar as have you kneel at mine.’” (Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D., *Absence from Felicity: The Story of Helen Schucman and Her Scribing of “A Course in Miracles,”* 2nd ed. [Temecula, CA: Foundation for *A Course in Miracles*, 1991, 1999], 95).

Every time I read these words (words that exist in the FIP edition as well, in T-1.II.3), I find myself both overwhelmed with joy and struck with embarrassment. I can attain all that Jesus did? Hallelujah! All that stands in the way is stuff that God never gave me? Darn! Why am I still holding onto it? That's a question we need to continually ask ourselves.

17 “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” is among the most misunderstood statements in the Bible.¹⁹ ²It does not mean that I am in any way separate or different from you, *except in time*. ³Now, we know that time does not exist.²⁰ ⁴Actually, the statement is much more meaningful if it is considered on a vertical rather than a horizontal axis. ⁵Regarded along the vertical, humanity stands below me and I stand below God. ⁶In the process of “rising up,” I *am* higher. ⁷This is because without me the distance between God and humanity is too great for you to encompass. ⁸I bridge the distance as an elder brother on the one hand and a Son of God on the other. ⁹My devotion to my brothers has placed me in charge of the Sonship, which I can render complete only to the extent I can share it.²¹

Once again, Jesus interprets his words in the Bible, this time John 14:6, which he says is among the most misunderstood statements in the Bible. It is usually understood to mean you must believe in Jesus in order to get to God—specifically, believe that Jesus died for your sins. To fundamentalist Christians, it means that Jesus was somehow different from the rest of us, that he was a sinless human being who, because of his perfection, was the only acceptable sacrifice to absolve us from sin.

Jesus here proclaims that that is *not* what it means. The only difference between him and the rest of us is the difference in time. He reclaimed his oneness with God before we did. That's the only difference—time. But he has already asserted, in T-1.15.2:2, that time is just an illusion. So to be different only in time isn't really a difference at all!

Instead of considering this on the horizontal axis of time, look at it on a vertical axis. Jesus “rose up” towards God, and stands closer to God than we do *in the process of rising up*. Figuratively speaking, we are farther away from God than he is, so we need him to bridge the gap for us. He is our elder brother, placed in charge of the Atonement simply because he is in a position to do it. We can rise up just as he did, and he will help us to do so. The only way Jesus can restore the Sonship is if he shares it with all of us. To claim that he is somehow different would violate the unity of the Sonship.

Think of what this implies about us as miracle-workers. It rules out any notion of superiority or thought that we are in any way better than the person to whom we are “helping.” We can only awaken others to their innate divinity by seeing them as our

¹⁹ John 14:6 (KJV).

²⁰ T-1.15.2:2: “Since only eternity is real, why not use the illusion of time constructively?”

²¹ This statement may mean that he can only bring the Sonship back to completion if he himself shares the quality of “Sonship”—the quality of being a Son—with everyone.

equals, as members of our family of God. Perhaps we are awake, and they are not, but the only difference between us is time.

18 This appears to contradict another statement: “I and my Father are one.”²² ²It doesn’t. ³There are still separate parts in the statement, in recognition of the fact that the Father is greater.²³ ⁴Actually, the original statement was “are of one kind.” ⁵The Father and the Son are not identical, but you can say “Like Father, *like* Son.”

Here, Jesus deals with a possible contradiction between the statement in 17:5 that he stands below God and the biblical statement he made, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). He asserts that originally, the statement he made was that he and the Father “are of one kind” (18:4); so they are not identical, but they are of one kind. God the Father is greater than the Son.

What is true of Jesus is true of us. We are not God; God is greater than us. As was said in 13:4–5, awe is appropriate for us in God’s presence because we, the lesser, are standing before One greater than us. The theology of the Course differs from what we often hear in New Age circles or even in New Thought churches: “You are God.” “No, Jesus asserts, “you are not.” We are *like* God but not *identical* to God. We are one with God but still not equal to God. For me, Jesus’s illustration of the vine and branches helps me understand. A branch is one with the vine, but it is not the entire vine. It shares the life of the vine, but it is not the entire vine. To say “God is my Self” may be correct, but we cannot say “My Self is God.”

19 The Holy Spirit is the Bringer of revelations. ²Revelations are indirectly inspired by me, because I am close to the Holy Spirit, and alert to revelation readiness in my brothers. ³I can thus *bring down* to them more than they can *draw down* to themselves. ⁴Jeanne Dixon’s description is perhaps a better statement of my position: Because my feet are on the ground and my hands are in Heaven, I can bring down the glories of Heaven to my brothers on earth.²⁴

Although Jesus only indirectly inspires revelations, because of his proximity to the Holy Spirit (the Bringer of revelations) he is “alert” to the moments we are ready for revelation. That is very reassuring to me. As he points out, he can *bring down* revelations for us that we cannot *draw down* for ourselves. The difference in the two verbs in italics reflect the “vertical” nature of our relationship with him: he is above us, so he can grasp a revelation and *bring* it down to us where we, being below the level of that revelation,

²² John 10:30 (KJV).

²³ The separate parts are “I” and “my Father.”

²⁴ T-1.43.9:2: “Actually, Jeanne Dixon was right in her emphasis on ‘feet on the ground and fingertips in Heaven.’”

would not be able to *draw* it down. The practical application of that, for me, is to stay close to Jesus.

20 The Holy Spirit is the highest communication medium. ²Miracles do not involve this type of communication, because they are *temporary* communicative devices. ³When the Sonship can return to its original form of communication with God by direct revelation, the need for miracles is over. ⁴The Holy Spirit mediates higher- to lower-order communication, keeping the direct channel from God to humanity open for revelation. ⁵Revelation is not reciprocal. ⁶It is always *from* God to you. ⁷This is because God and you are not equal. ⁸The miracle, on the other hand, is reciprocal because it always involves equality.

It seems to me that, in these last few paragraphs, Jesus is attempting to rectify mistaken assumptions about God, particularly the relationship among the “three persons of the Trinity,” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as well as our relationship to God. Here, he states that the Holy Spirit is “the highest communication medium” (20:1). We don’t normally think of a person of the Godhead as a “medium” of anything. Still, all it is saying is that the Holy Spirit is a kind of bridge between the Sonship and God that provides for the highest form of communication. Elsewhere, the Course says that the Holy Spirit is the Voice for God within us and is also the voice of our true Self (Christ). That does not mean that we *are* God or even equal to God (20:7). Our Self is an extension of God, so Its voice is saying to us the same things God says to us. This is what revelation is.

This high communication is not involved with miracles, which are only “*temporary* communicative devices” (20:2). Permanent communication with God will be restored when we, as the Sonship, have been restored fully, able to receive direct revelation; miracles will no longer be needed. The job of the Holy Spirit is to act like a kind of transformer, changing higher-order revelation into something we can receive here and now. He keeps us in touch with God. Revelation goes only in one direction: from God to us (20:5–7) because we are not equal to God. Miracles, by contrast, are expressions of love between equals (20:8).

To sum up two critical points that we’ve seen in this long discussion: We are equals to Jesus. We are not equal to God.

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.