

# Commentary

## ACIM® Text (CE)

### *The Miracle as the Means of Healing*

You will find an Explanation of underlining, italics, and footnote formats 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-2.VII

## Overview

This section is the introduction to the major topic of healing. The entire section is devoted to it. The main point of Section VII seems to be quite simple: “Essentially, *all* healing is the release from fear” (2:2), brought about by the miracle (1:2).

Healing never asks us to go any faster than we can go *without* fear. In fact, as long as we have fear we *cannot* heal. Healing does not add anything to us; rather, it *undoes* error, it *releases* from fear. Healing works at the level of mind, but it does not deny our experience as bodies.

The section is a very important one. It presents a high teaching about healing, one that is difficult for most of us to accept. And, recognizing that, it offers us a compromise approach that can serve us while we learn to strengthen our faith.

## Paragraph 1

The new emphasis will now be on healing. <sup>2</sup>The miracle is the means, the Atonement the principle, and the healing is the result. <sup>3</sup>Those who speak of “the miracle *of* healing” are combining two orders of reality inappropriately. <sup>4</sup>Healing is not a miracle. <sup>5</sup>The Atonement, or the final miracle, is purely a means, while any type of healing is a result.

“The new emphasis will now be on healing” (1:1). This is referring to the emphasis of this section of the Text, not the overall emphasis of the Course. Healing is the next major

topic. This is the logical next step, having said in the previous section that “the world *was* a way of healing the separation” (T-2.VI.12:7 (CE)).

In the following section, he says that discomfort is not the “final outcome” of looking on the defiled altar (T-2.VIII.8:5 (CE), T-2.V.7:4 (FIP)). The fear and discomfort make us *aware* that we *need* healing or correction (T-2.V.7:8). That awareness is the *positive effect* of fear and discomfort. (I’ll say more about this later.) And in T-2.XII.5:4 (CE), T-2.VII.5:8 (FIP), he points out that recognizing that there is a problem is only a temporary initial corrective procedure that must lead to “immediate correction” of the error through accepting the Atonement. I believe all of these lines are saying very much the same thing: We do need to become aware of the defilement of the inner altar, but our emphasis, our focus, should not be on digging up the ego’s junk, but on *healing* it.

Sentence 2 presents a sequence: first, the Atonement principle exists. The miracle follows, and healing is the result. Briefly, the Atonement (in the Course) is the principle that your mistakes (what you may have thought of as “sins”) never occurred except in the illusion; therefore, they had no effects on your wholeness. This can be seen in the Bible by the way Jesus frequently tells people that their sins have been forgiven. He is performing a miracle; He is *applying* the Atonement, and that application is the miracle. He has seen them as whole, and communicated that fact to them. When the person is physically healed, that is the result( 2:2 (CE)),T-2.IV.1:7 (FIP)). A miracle applies the Atonement principle and brings about healing. A miracle (applying the Atonement) is the *means*; the healing is the *result* of the miracle (1:2–5). To call a healing a miracle is a bit like confusing aspirin with the cure of a headache. They aren’t the same thing. One is the result of the other.

He repeats these general thoughts in sentences 3 through 5, which discuss the phrase “a miracle of healing,” saying it inappropriately combines “two orders of reality.” I think the two orders of reality are *actual* reality, which exists only in spirit (T-1.35.9:7), and the physical “reality” of this world, which we experience as real because we believe in it, but which is, in fact, only a dream. Healing is a change that happens to something in the dream. The miracle, on the other hand, though it is something that reaches us within the dream, is a vision of true reality, of wholeness. Thus, “Healing is not a miracle” (1:4); healing *results from* a miracle. A vision of Reality produces healing effects in the physical world. Jesus here makes a fuss over this distinction between healing and the miracle, so it is an important distinction yet much later in the Text, he uses the phrase himself several times!<sup>2</sup> It may just be a different use of the word “miracle” in those later instances.

<sup>1</sup>. Modified in FIP to read that we must “learn to look upon the world as a means of healing” (T-2.III.5:12 (FIP)).

<sup>2</sup>. (See T-19.I.14:5 (FIP), T-19.I.15:5 (CE); T-27.II.5:2 (FIP), T-27.II.4:9 (CE); T-27.V.1:3 (FIP), (T-27.VI.1:3 (CE); T-28.IV.10:9 (FIP), (T-28.IV.9:9–10 (CE)).

## Paragraph 2

2 Atonement is the *remedy*. <sup>2</sup>The degree of error to which it is applied is irrelevant. <sup>3</sup>Essentially, *all* healing is the release from fear. <sup>4</sup>But to undertake this you cannot be fearful yourself. <sup>5</sup>You do not understand healing because of your own fear. <sup>6</sup>I have been hinting throughout that you *must* heal others. <sup>3</sup> <sup>7</sup>The reason is that their healing merely witnesses to yours.

The Atonement is the remedy or the cure for error. It does not matter how great or how small the error is to which Atonement is applied. “There is no order of difficulty in miracles.” They are all the same in essence: “the release from fear” (2:1–3).

To grasp why the distinction between means and result is important, we need to look at this in the context of interpersonal miracles—a miracle giver who gives to a miracle receiver—that has been prevalent in recent sections. Consider how each of the last three sections have ended (in FIP; quotes below are from FIP):

Inner peace...enables you to remain unshaken by lack of love from without and capable, through your acceptance of miracles, of correcting the conditions proceeding from lack of love in others. (T-2.I.5:11–12 (FIP), T-2.I.26:7 (CE))

The miracle turns the defense of Atonement to your real protection, and as you become more and more secure you assume your natural talent of protecting others, knowing yourself as both a brother and a Son. (T-2.II.7:8 (FIP), T-2.V.9:2–3 (CE))

He gave them His peace so they could not be shaken and could not be deceived. Whenever you are afraid you are deceived, and your mind cannot serve the Holy Spirit. (T-2.III.5:8–9 (FIP), (T-2.III.5:1-6:2 (CE))

While the third quote isn't the last sentences of its section, it comes very near the end. At the end of each section Jesus speaks of serving the Holy Spirit, protecting others, and correcting the conditions in others that proceed from lack of love. He has told us that we were created to create or extend; he reminds us that he has asked us to perform miracles, but that we cannot do so if we are fearful. He has been explaining how we can deal with *our* fears so as to free ourselves to serve the Holy Spirit as miracle workers, extending love and freeing others from *their* fears.

The Atonement principle is expressed first by my reception of a miracle for myself. That releases me from my fear, and allows me to extend that miracle to others. The result is the healing of the miracle receivers, releasing them from *their* fear.

The reason we do not understand healing is because of our fear (2:4–5). Why is there such an emphasis on healing others in the Course? Because we can only know *we* are healed when those around us also experience healing. Their healing “merely witnesses to yours” (2:7).

<sup>3</sup> These hints began with the miracle principles in Chapter 1, many of which frame miracles as something we give to others to *heal* them. For instance, “Miracles are a form of healing. They supply a lack, and are performed by those who have more for those who have less” (Miracle Principle 7).

### Paragraph 3

**3** A major step in the Atonement plan is to undo error at all levels. <sup>2</sup>Illness, which is really “not-right-mindedness,” is the result of level confusion in the sense that it always entails the belief that what is amiss in one level can adversely affect another. <sup>3</sup>We have constantly referred to miracles as the means of correcting level confusion.<sup>4</sup> <sup>4</sup>In reality, all mistakes must be corrected at the level at which they occur.

### Paragraph 4

**4** Only the mind is capable of error. <sup>2</sup>The body can act erroneously, but this is only because it has responded to misthought. <sup>3</sup>The body cannot create, and to believe that it can, a fundamental error responsible for most of the fallacies already referred to, produces all physical symptoms.

The message of these paragraphs, basically, is that only the mind can make errors, and its errors cannot have *real* effects on either the level of the spirit or of the body; nor can the body actually impose suffering on the mind. One level cannot affect another. Only the mind is capable of error, and therefore only the mind needs correction.

“...undo error at *all* levels” (3:1) Coupled with the earlier reference to orders of reality, I believe this means that “a major step” of the plan of Atonement is to undo error in the outer realm as well as the inner realm. This section is talking about healing, which here refers to bodily healing or healing illness; this is one of the “*all* levels” (3:1). There is no question about it; he is speaking of healing the body. He says that illness “is really ‘not-right-mindedness.’” It is the result *in the body of the mind's* “belief that what is amiss in one level can adversely affect another” level. Notice the implication here that this belief is false, which he makes quite clear as he continues.

Sickness is both a mental state (3:1) and a physical condition (4:2). In either case, it is a result of *confusing* the levels of mind and body—that is, of believing one level *can* affect another (3:2). Neither level “can adversely affect another” (3:2). Although misbehavior and physical illness may seem like the mind is adversely affecting the body, this is not actually so.

To understand this, consider what we think happens in what is called psychosomatic illness, when the mind “makes” the body sick. Even if we acknowledge that the mind started the problem, once that problem moves to the body, once the body becomes sick, we now believe the body is in charge. The body has power to make us suffer. The body

<sup>4</sup> T-1.26.1:1-2: “A miracle rearranges the order of perception, and places the levels in their true perspective. This heals at all levels, because all sickness comes from confusing the levels.” See also T-1.21.1:1, T-1.28.1:1, T-1.30.2:3, and T-1.36.2:1.

seems to be exerting control over the mind. The mistake we make is believing that the mind's miscreations in the body are independently real so that they exist apart from the mind. We believe the body is capable of turning back and miscreating (causing pain) in the mind. And that is a confusion of the levels.

What seems to be at the root of things here is the Course's underlying conviction that the mind cannot *actually create something not of God* beyond itself. It tells us that the solution to the fundamental error (believing the body can create affect the mind (4:3)) is realizing that the *mind* cannot create beyond itself. (This comes up again as a definition of accepting the Atonement in T-2.VIII.5:1-4 (CE).) Therefore, the apparent effects—bodily misbehavior or illness—are not real; they are illusions.

Because the conditions in the body are not real, they cannot create suffering in the mind. What's happening when our bodies get sick? An error of thought has occurred in our mind, the only place error *can* occur (4:1). "The body can *act* erroneously." It can make itself appear to be sick, "but...only because it has responded to misthought" (4:2), a response that apparently is not necessary. The body is just dumb; it cannot correct the error in the mind. The mind is the problem. It has believed that the body *can* create, and that error is what "produces all physical symptoms" (4:3).

The Course's shorthand phrase for this whole concept is, "Ideas leave not their source." It does not occur until much later in the Text, but let me quote its first occurrence. I think it states the same concepts as this paragraph, but much more plainly:

Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them. Ideas are of the mind. What is projected out, and seems to be external to the mind, is not outside at all, but an effect of what is in, and has not left its source. (T-26.VII.4:7-9 (FIP), T-26.VII.4:6-8 (CE))

## Paragraph 5

5 All physical illness represents a belief in magic. <sup>2</sup>The whole distortion which made magic rested on the belief that there is a creative ability in matter, which can control the mind. <sup>3</sup>This fallacy can work either way; that is, it can be believed either that the mind can miscreate in the body or that the body can miscreate in the mind. <sup>4</sup>If it can be made clear that the mind, which is the only level of causation, cannot generate effects beyond itself, then neither confusion need occur.

This is what Jesus calls "magic." The practice of what is called magic is just this same "belief that there is a creative ability in matter, which can control the mind" (5:2). This belief is the source of all physical illness (5:1). Thus, by this definition, taking pills to cure a disease is magic because of the belief that both the disease and its solution are purely physical. To excuse unloving behavior because we have a headache or the flu is a belief in magic, because it says the body can miscreate in the mind.

Sentence 5:3 is puzzling at first, when it says "this fallacy can work either way," referring to "the belief that there is a creative ability in matter, which can control the

mind.” How is the belief that *the mind can miscreate in the body* a form of that same idea? I think our discussion above covers this point: When we believe the mind’s miscreations in the body are *real*, we believe those physical miscreations have the power, independent of the mind, to injure or cause pain to the mind. Thus, the belief that the mind can miscreate in the body results in the belief that matter has creative ability independent of the mind.

We can erase these false beliefs—this confusion of levels—if we realize that the mind is the *only* level of causation and *cannot* generate effects beyond itself (5:4). The passage from Chapter 26, quoted above, helps me understand this idea that the mind can’t generate effects beyond itself. The mind certainly *appears* to generate external effects.

It says, “What is projected out, and seems to be external to the mind, is not outside at all, but an effect of what is in, and has not left its source.” My own shorthand for this is: There’s no world outside my mind. The Course compares it to a dream we have while sleeping:

Dreams show you that you have the power to make a world as you would have it, and that because you want it, you see it. <sup>2</sup>And while you see it, you do not doubt that it is real. <sup>3</sup>Yet here is a world, clearly within your mind, that seems to be outside. (T-18.II.5:1–3 (CE))

It then explains: “And what you seem to wake to is but another form of this same world you see in dreams.” (T-18.II.6:5 (CE)) So, when it says that the mind “cannot generate effects beyond itself,” it does not mean that the mind can’t cause effects in the world we see, including our own bodies. Indeed, it can! But the world we see, including our bodies, is *in our minds and never left*.

Paragraphs 6 and 7 explain further, in an extended sidebar in why the central focus is on the mind, not the body. We’ll return to the topic of healing after the sidebar.

## Paragraph 6

6 The reason why only the mind can make or create is more obvious than may be immediately apparent. <sup>2</sup>Spirit has been created. <sup>3</sup>The body is a learning device for the mind. <sup>4</sup>Learning devices are not lessons in themselves. <sup>5</sup>Their purpose is merely to facilitate the thinking of the learner. <sup>6</sup>The most that a faulty use of a learning device can do is to fail to facilitate learning. <sup>7</sup>It does not have the power in itself to introduce actual learning errors. <sup>5</sup> <sup>8</sup>The body, if properly understood, shares the invulnerability of the Atonement to two-edged application. <sup>9</sup>This is not because the body is a miracle, but because it is not inherently open to misinterpretation.

Jesus recognizes that we may not find it “immediately apparent” that only the mind can make or create (6:1). He relates several points, each easy enough to understand when you think of yourself as composed of spirit, mind, and body:

<sup>5</sup> “It” refers to the *learning device* (rather than the *faulty use* of the learning device). Thus, the learning device is what “does not have the power in itself to introduce actual learning errors.”

- Spirit has been created (“by God” is assumed).
- The body is a learning device for the mind (as seen by the Holy Spirit).
- Learning devices are not lessons in themselves; their purpose is merely to facilitate the *thinking* of the learner (that is, to repair the mind’s thinking).
  - Any failure on the part of the learning device (body) can do no more than fail to facilitate learning. The body can fail to heal the mind, but it cannot *hurt* the mind by introducing “actual learning errors.”
  - In this sense, the body shares the invulnerability of the Atonement in that it can only be used positively, not negatively. It cannot make or create. Just as we cannot misuse Atonement (though we can refuse it), we cannot misuse the body to harm the mind, but we can fail to properly use it as a learning device.
  - It’s not that the body is a miracle; it just isn’t open to misinterpretation.

We’ve seen earlier that we *can* fail to use the body as a positive learning device. We may seek to use our own body or the body of another to meet our imagined needs. The instructions about sex have made that clear. But that misuse does not harm the mind. In fact, it is the mind doing the harm by misperceiving the purpose of the body.

The central point of the section so far, I believe, was indicated at the end of Paragraph 3 and the start of Paragraph 4. Let me repeat those two sentences, but in reverse order:

“Only the mind is capable of error.” “In reality, all mistakes must be corrected at the level at which they occur.” It’s the mind that is the key here. It is our thinking that must be changed. This is a section that deals with healing of the body. The point here is that physical healing *comes from the mind*.

The medical profession calls healing that comes from the mind “the placebo effect.” Even though people are given a completely neutral “medication,” they get healed *because they believed they would be healed*. We invest billions of dollars in developing and testing physical medicines, which the Course claims are never really the cause of healing. Why don’t we spend at least as much on studying how the mind heals the body?

One of the most startling accounts of mental healing that I have read is in the book, *Dying to Be Me: My Journey from Cancer to Near Death, to True Healing*, by Anita Moorjani. The title is a plot outline. She was diagnosed with terminal cancer and died, but after death she experienced being told she had a job to do back on Earth. She woke up, and her cancer was gone. I think you would all enjoy reading this book. It’s about a lot more than just the healing of the cancer. Miss Moorjani isn’t the only person who has been miraculously healed during a near-death experience and there are certainly many other stories of non-medical healings. They cannot be denied.

As we’ll see later in this section, it asserts that healings from medication occur *because we believe in them*. Clearly, this isn’t “immediately apparent” to us, but that’s what the Course is trying to get across, as I understand it. Because this is so hard for us to believe we need “a compromise approach,” that will be described in what follows.

## Paragraph 7

7 The body is merely a fact in this world. <sup>2</sup>Its abilities can be, and frequently are, overevaluated. <sup>3</sup>However, it is almost impossible to deny its existence in this world. <sup>4</sup>Those who do are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial. <sup>5</sup>The use of the word “unworthy” here implies simply that it is not necessary to protect the mind by denying the unmindful. <sup>6</sup>There is little doubt that the mind can miscreate. <sup>7</sup>If one denies this unfortunate aspect of its power, one is also denying the power itself.<sup>6</sup>

We do have bodies in this world. That’s a fact; we can’t deny it (7:1). We can, and do, give the body way too much importance and we overestimate its powers (7:2). But denying the existence of the body is almost impossible (7:3). “Those who do are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial” (7:4). We need to remember this.

We have to keep in mind that there are two levels of reality, what you might call absolute reality and relative reality, or Heaven and the world. In absolute reality there is no body. In relative reality, the body exists. To deny the existence of the body in the world is another example of level confusion. We might think that if the body is not real it does not matter what happens to it. We might cease to take care of it, or to take care of our children’s bodies. We might suppose that whatever we do with our bodies does not matter, which could excuse all kinds of unloving behavior.

I love Jesus’s explanation of what “unworthy” means: “it is not necessary to protect the mind by denying the unmindful” (7:5). The unmindful is the body. We may think that since the body is an illusion, becoming involved with it in any way is wrong. This can lead to asceticism. We are not going to become awakened beings by denying food, sleep, alcohol, or other things we can be addicted to. This isn’t to deny that addiction can be a problem, either. Addiction stems from a problem in the mind, an addiction to guilt, and that is the problem that needs solving. Denying the body isn’t going to solve that problem.

Rather than denying the existence of the body, we need to *use* the body as our learning device. WE must realize that the Course speaks of the Holy Spirit’s *purpose* for the body:

Yet we have learned that the Holy Spirit has another use for all of the illusions you have made and therefore sees another purpose in them. To the Holy Spirit, the world is a place where you learn to forgive yourself what you think of as your sins. In this perception, the physical appearance of temptation becomes the spiritual recognition of salvation. (W-64.2:2–4)

Remember that the Holy Spirit interprets the body only as a means of communication. <sup>2</sup>Being the communication link between God and His separated Sons, He interprets everything you have in the light of what He is. <sup>3</sup>The ego separates

<sup>6</sup> The “unfortunate aspect” of the mind’s power is its ability to miscreate, which it has exercised in making the body.



through the body. <sup>4</sup>The Holy Spirit reaches through it to others. <sup>5</sup>You do not perceive your brothers as the Holy Spirit does, because you do not interpret their bodies and yours solely as a means of joining their minds and uniting them with yours and mine. (T-8.VI.2)

## Paragraph 8

**8** All material means which you accept as remedies for bodily ills are simply restatements of magic principles. <sup>2</sup>It was the first level of the error to believe that the body created its own illness. <sup>3</sup>Thereafter, it is a second misstep to attempt to heal it through noncreative agents. <sup>4</sup>It does not follow, however, that the application of these very weak corrective devices is evil. <sup>5</sup>Sometimes the illness has sufficiently great a hold over an individual's mind to render him inaccessible to Atonement. <sup>6</sup>In this case, one may be wise to utilize a compromise approach to mind and body, in which something from the outside is temporarily given healing belief.

Resuming the topic of healing, Jesus returns at first to the idea stated in 5:1, that all physical illness is a belief in magic. Here, he *expands* that to include “all material means which you accept as remedies for bodily ills.” Physical illness is a belief in magic, and trying to heal it with material means such as medicines, surgery, physical manipulation (chiropractic, massage, Reiki), or any other external means “are simply restatements of magic principles” (8:1). We may find it easier to apply this to such New Age healing modalities as crystals or aromatherapy, but “*all* material means” isn’t a phrase we can exclude anything from.

Our mistake here is on two levels: first, believing that the body is what created the illness, and second, trying to heal the body “through noncreative agents” (8:2–3). At first, it seems as if Jesus is saying all these “noncreative agents” are useless and should be avoided. But that isn’t where he goes next!

Instead, he says we cannot draw the conclusion from this that it is somehow evil to make use of “these very weak corrective devices” (8:4). Now, pay attention to the next two sentences. I think you will probably find yourself here:

“Sometimes the illness has sufficiently great a hold over an individual's mind to render him inaccessible to Atonement. In this case, one may be wise to utilize a compromise approach to mind and body, in which something from the outside is temporarily given healing belief.” (8:5–6)

Sometimes our minds are just not up to total faith healing! Do you find yourself here? I know I do. When I found myself almost unable to breathe, my lungs filling with fluid (as I found out in the Emergency Room), and was told I needed heart surgery, it never occurred to me to think I could just believe myself well. The illness had “a sufficiently great hold” over my mind. At that moment I was “inaccessible to Atonement.” I opted for the surgery. And the surgery healed me—and according to this passage, it did so because “something from the outside,” surgery in my case, was “temporarily given healing belief.” Was it then *surgery* that healed me, or *my belief* in the surgery?

The Course's assertion that all healing stems from the mind isn't disproved because some "material means" are involved in the healing process. I think on this basis, we can say that modern medicine's phenomenal successes have come about because, collectively, we believe in it.

## Paragraph 9

**9** This is because the last thing that can help the non-right-minded (or the sick) is an increase in fear. <sup>2</sup>They are already in a fear-weakened state. <sup>3</sup>If they are inappropriately exposed to a straight and undiluted miracle, they may be precipitated into panic. <sup>4</sup>This is particularly likely to occur when upside-down perception has induced the belief that miracles are frightening.

Why is it that this "compromise approach to mind and body" is "wise: (8:6)? It's wise" because the last thing that can help the non-right-minded (or the sick) is an increase in fear" (9:1). To offer healing without a visible means might seem like walking a tightrope without a safety net; it might increase the person's fear level. Healing, however, is always a *release from fear*. Anything that increases fear is thus ruled out; "the last thing that can help [them]...is an increase in fear" (9:1). Giving them a physical means to believe in, although the healer may know it is completely unnecessary, will be a help in this case. People who are sick are not in their right mind. It's good to remind ourselves of this when *we* get sick! In such a state, the last thing we need is more fear. Why does it say "more"?

Clearly, this implies that whenever we are sick, fear is somehow behind it. We are "in a fear-weakened state" (9:2). Why is it "fear-weakened" to be sick? Go back to the second paragraph, second sentence: "Essentially, *all* healing is the release from fear." Somehow, fear is what causes sickness.

Notice that the overall context here seems to be that of one person, the miracle giver, offering healing to another person, the miracle receiver. The giver seems to have a higher level of understanding; the receiver is often trapped in fear. The advice here is primarily to the miracle worker, in answer to the question: Should I attempt to heal this person by purely miraculous means, or should I use (or recommend the use of) some physical medicine? The latter compromise approach is preferred when the receiver's ability to receive the Atonement is blocked by fear or when a miracle might even be found frightening, but the miracle worker needs to remember that it *is* a compromise (the medicine has no intrinsic healing powers), and is used only as a weak corrective device (8:4).

## Paragraph 10

**10** The value of the Atonement does not lie in the manner in which it is expressed. <sup>2</sup>In fact, if it is truly used it will inevitably be expressed in whatever way is most helpful to the receiver, not the giver. <sup>3</sup>This means that a miracle, to attain its full efficacy, *must* be expressed in a language which the recipient can understand without fear. <sup>4</sup>It does not follow by any means that this is the highest level of communication of which he is capable. <sup>5</sup>But it does mean that it is the highest level of communication of which he is capable *now*. <sup>6</sup>The whole aim of the miracle is to *raise* the level of communication, not to impose regression (in the improper sense) upon it.

The first sentence means, in simple terms, that the *way* a healing occurs does not matter. If you are truly expressing the Atonement, that is what matters. That is what heals. The form in which you express the Atonement may be prayer, or it may be performing (or recommending) surgery. What is important is that we are expressing the Atonement, not that we express it in a particularly spiritual-looking form. This means we can express a true miraculous impulse in our mind by handing someone a pill.

The best form is whatever form is “most helpful to the receiver” (10:2). If I am functioning in a healing capacity, I need to remember this criterion! The best form is not what I *think* it is, nor what medical science says it is, nor what my very pure and holy spiritual teaching says it is. *The best form is whatever helps the sick person*. The miracle has to be expressed in a language the recipient understands *without fear* (10:3). If I am trying to be helpful to my ailing Grandfather, who has never heard the word “metaphysics” and who is deeply comforted by holding his rosary, then let me bring him his rosary. Whatever reduces his fear level. The aim of the miracle is never metaphysical correctness. The aim of the miracle is always to raise the level of communication and open the heart to love.

When I offer a miracle it must communicate on the highest level that the recipient can understand without fear. He or she is capable of much higher levels of communication, but perhaps not yet without fear. Our aim should be to communicate at the highest level the person can hear *now* without fear (10:4–5). Achieving higher levels of communication is always the aim of the miracle, but we cannot do that if we induce fear by going beyond the patient’s capabilities (10:6). If we make that mistake, we may trigger regression, resulting in an immature response to our offering. If your patient starts resisting what you are doing, like a stubborn child, you’ve probably fallen into this error.

## Paragraph 11

**11** Before it is safe to let miracle workers loose in this world, it is essential that they understand fully the fear of release. <sup>2</sup>Otherwise, they may unwittingly foster the belief that release is imprisonment, which is very prevalent. <sup>3</sup>This misperception arose from the attempted protection device (or misused defense) that harm can be limited to the body. <sup>4</sup>This was because of the much greater fear (which this one counteracts) that the mind can hurt itself.<sup>7</sup> <sup>5</sup>Neither error is really meaningful, because the miscreations of the mind do not really exist. <sup>6</sup>That recognition is a far better protection device than any form of level confusion, because of the advantages of introducing correction at the level of the error.

All of us are meant to become miracle workers. Why else would we take a course in miracles? Why else would Jesus offer it to us? But Jesus does not want us rushing out into the world to try to heal people. Before we can be sent out into the world safely, there is one essential thing we must “understand fully”—“the fear of release” (11:1). He’s already touched on this in the preceding paragraphs of this section. It began by saying that “*all* healing is the release from fear” (2:3), but now he flips the words to focus on “the fear of release.”

This may be one of those subtle plays on words that Jesus says he used because Bill Thetford loved them. The thought here is that people who wish to function as healers *must* be aware (“it is essential”, 11:1) that people are *afraid of being healed*. He says the same in at least one other place (see T-27.II). If we don’t understand that people fear healing, we may do unintentional damage by trying to force a healing on them they are not ready to accept. This person sees sickness as a positive thing. He thus perceives being released from his sickness as being put in a kind of prison (11:2, compare with 2.IV.4:9 and M-5.I.1–2). It could even cause them to panic. Imagine the reaction my grandfather might have if I took away his rosary and advised him to go with blind faith?

More to the point, it’s clear that many people *choose to be sick*. Many people do things known almost universally to cause illness: smoking, eating too much sugar or not enough of healthy foods, failing to get enough exercise, and so on. People use sickness to get sympathy, to manipulate others, and even to make them guilty:

“The sick are merciless to everyone, and in contagion do they seek to kill. Death seems an easy price if they can say, ‘Behold me, brother, at your hand I die.’ For sickness is the witness to his guilt, and death would prove his errors must be sins.  
“ (T-27.I.4:5–7)

<sup>7</sup> In other words, the potential miracle receiver unconsciously believes that his errors have harmed, or defiled, his mind. This belief is so fearful that he tries to displace the defilement to the body, where it becomes physical illness, in order to convince himself that only the body has been damaged. Now, if the miracle worker heals this person’s body, this will remove his defensive shield, leaving him face to face with the terrifying damage he thinks he has done to his mind. He will therefore feel imprisoned, even if he in fact has been released.

When Jesus addresses the reason for the fear of release here, the sequence of thought runs something like this:

Somehow, he must see salvation in sickness. Deep in his mind, the sick person believes that his mind's errors can hurt his mind. He believes he has sinned, and thus corrupted his very being—a belief that is extremely frightening. He tries to defend himself against just punishment for this “sin” by deflecting the guilt away from his mind, onto his own body. There, it takes the form of illness. He deceives himself into thinking his mind is safe; the harm is limited to the body.

What will happen now when his body is healed? His body was his defensive shield, and its sickness told him the problem was in the body, not the mind; now, that is taken away. Nothing is left to divert him from his belief that he has hopelessly corrupted his mind's nature. He is left face-to-face with what he thinks he has done to ruin his soul.

“Neither error” (one, that harm can be limited to the body; two, that the mind can hurt itself) “is really meaningful” (11:5). The mind’s miscreations don’t really exist, so they can’t cause harm anywhere. The best protection we can have is the realization that the mind cannot miscreate; our belief that it can is a fundamental mistake. It is our mind that needs to be healed (11:6).

As sentence 11:6 should make quite clear, the recognition that miscreations of the mind do not exist is identical to accepting the Atonement. It is a “protective device” which introduces “correction at the level of the error” (1:6), which is exactly what has been said about the Atonement (T-2.II.2:1–2 (FIP), T-2.III.2:4–5 (CE); T-2.IV.2:1–3 (FIP), (T-2.VII.3:1–3 (CE)). The Atonement *is* the thought that the miscreations of my mind do not exist; the separation never happened. Atonement is what T-2.II.1:1 (FIP), T-2.III.2:4 (CE) called “true denial,” which means to “deny any belief that error can hurt you.” Applying that truth to a particular ego thought in my mind is what it means to accept the Atonement in that respect. It is what it means to bring the darkness to the light, the illusion to the truth.

## Paragraph 12

**12** It is essential that the remembrance remain with you that *only* mind can make or create. <sup>2</sup>Implicit in this is the corollary that correction belongs at the thought level and *not* at either level to which correction is inapplicable. <sup>3</sup>To repeat an earlier statement, and also to extend it somewhat, spirit is already perfect and therefore does not require correction. <sup>4</sup>The body does not really exist, except as a learning device for the mind. <sup>5</sup>This learning device is not subject to errors of its own, because it was made but does not make.<sup>8</sup> <sup>6</sup>It should be obvious, then, that correcting the maker (or inducing it to give up miscreation) is the only application of creative power which is inherently meaningful at all.

<sup>8</sup> T-2.VII.6:2-3, 6-7: “Spirit has been created. The body is a learning device for the mind....The most that a faulty use of a learning device can do is to fail to facilitate learning. It does not have the power in itself to introduce actual learning errors.”

Only mind can make or create; therefore, correction belongs only at the thought level and not with body or with spirit (12:1–2). Jesus reminds us that this correction of thought is the only correction worth its salt, because spirit is already perfect and the body exists only as a reflection of the mind, incapable of either creation or error (12:3–4).

Healing the body, then, cannot be the primary aim; healing the mind's errors must take precedence. If someone is afraid of physical healing, you don't push physical healing on them; you do what you can to alleviate their fears. You seek to bring healing to their mind, which is the *only* level on which healing is meaningful (12:4–5). The mind makes the body; the body does not make anything.

## Paragraph 13

**13** We said before that magic is essentially mindless, or the destructive (miscreative) use of mind.<sup>9</sup> <sup>2</sup>Physical medicines are a form of “spells.” <sup>3</sup>In one way, they are a more benign form, in that they do not entail the possession fallacy, which *does* enter when a mind believes that it can possess another. <sup>4</sup>Since this is considerably less dangerous, though still incorrect, it has its advantages.<sup>10</sup> <sup>5</sup>It is particularly helpful to the therapist who really wants to heal, but is still fearful himself. <sup>6</sup>By using physical means to do so, he is not engaging in any form of enslavement, even though he is not applying the Atonement. <sup>7</sup>This means that his mind is dulled by fear, but is not actively engaged in distortion.

This paragraph begins by equating physical medicines with magic (13:1–2), which has been defined as “mindless, or the destructive (miscreative) use of mind! The earlier quote qualified this somewhat by adding that the mindless aspect is due to using attempting healing ”without conviction” (T-1.14.1:3 (CE), T-1.I.14:3 (FIP)). Here, too, the equating of physical medicines to magic is qualified by saying that they are “a more benign form,” since the earlier reference to magic was talking about the idea of a person being possessed by another mind or spirit (13:3). Because the use of physical medicines are “considerably less dangerous” than possession, it “has its advantages” “though still incorrect” (13:4).

When can the use of medication be advantageous, and to whom? It can be helpful “to the therapist who really wants to heal, but is still fearful himself” (13:5). What is remarkable here is that while the previous two paragraphs speak mainly about fear in the patient, this one and the next quite clearly talk about fear *in the healer* (13:5; 13:7; 14:1–2). The therapist who really wants to heal, but is too fearful or doubting to use a miracle, applying the Atonement, can still do something that at least seems helpful to himself and the patient. The advantage in this more benign form of magic is that it isn't engaging in mental enslavement or distortion. His mind may be ”dulled by fear” and “he is not

<sup>9</sup> T-1.14.1:3: “Without conviction, they deteriorate into magic, which is mindless and therefore destructive, or rather, the uncreative use of mind.”

<sup>10</sup> What is “considerably less dangerous, though still incorrect” is the use of physical medicines.

applying the Atonement” (13:6), but at least he is avoiding the mistake of trying to use his mind to perform a miracle while his mind is fearful about doing so.

## Paragraph 14

**14** Those who are afraid of using the mind to heal are right in avoiding it, because the very fact that they are afraid has made them vulnerable to miscreation. <sup>2</sup>They are therefore likely to misunderstand any healing they might induce and, because egocentricity and fear usually occur together, may be unable to accept the real Source of the healing. <sup>3</sup>Under these conditions, it is safer for them to rely *temporarily* on physical healing devices, because they cannot misperceive them as their own creations. <sup>4</sup>As long as their own vulnerability persists, it is essential to preserve them from even attempting miracles.

If we are afraid of using our minds to heal someone, we are right to avoid it (14:1). Fear makes us “vulnerable to miscreation” (14:1). If we actually succeed somehow in healing the patient, our egos will probably claim credit. We will think *we* healed the person, and the patient may think the same thing, causing them to become dependent upon us (14:2). It’s best, given the circumstances (fear in the healer) “to rely *temporarily* on physical healing devices, because they cannot misperceive them as their own creations” (14:3).

What strikes me is the word “temporarily.” The proper method for healing is *mental*. I may be speculating here, but I don’t think this implies some kind of psychokinesis, where my mind somehow manipulates another person’s body. My mind confers healing on another by virtue of my *faith* in God as the Source of all wholeness. My mind recognizes and *knows* that the illness or infirmity cannot be real because God did not create it. We see with Christ’s vision which sees only wholeness. By the strength of my faith, shared with another, their mind is healed, and their body, always the effect of their mind, follows.

Do not, then, be deceived in your brother, and see only his loving thoughts as his reality, for by denying that his mind is split, you will heal (T-11.IX.8:1–2 (CE))  
If that deep faith isn’t yet true of me or you, we should, for the time being, rely on physical healing devices.

Paragraph 14 ends by saying that we should not attempt to perform miracles while we feel vulnerable. Therefore, it refers to the miracle *worker’s* fear, not the miracle *receiver’s*. This brings back a theme begun in T-2.II.1:3 (FIP), T-2.III.3:4 (CE) (where we were told miracles could not be performed in a spirit of fear), and repeated later:

All healing is essentially the release from fear. To undertake this you cannot be fearful yourself. (T-2.IV.1:7–8 (FIP), T-2.VII.2:3–4 (CE))

Where fear is, there is the ego, so when we are fearful, we are prone to see from the ego perspective and mistake the Source of healing (14:2). We think we are the source of healing, or (if we are the patient), the healer is the source. Under these circumstances, it’s better to use “physical healing devices” such as medicines, whether traditional or

alternative. All are magic, but using them is better than feeding our egos directly. In simple terms: If we are “afraid to use the mind to heal,” use some physical form of medication. He says doing so is really important as long as we remain vulnerable (fearful); he is advocating this “to preserve us from even attempting miracles” (14:4). To *preserve us.*”

But this is only *temporary*. Jesus wants us to be miracle workers, not pharmacists! Recall that line that opens the Text:

*You will see miracles  
through your hands through me.*

I believe this is his goal for all of us. If it seems to be taking a very long time to get us there, we need to recall that time is just an illusion. Be encouraged by what he says here, not dismayed. He assures us repeatedly that the outcome is as certain as God. You *will* awaken. You *will* be healed, and you will heal.



**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.*