

Commentary

ACIM® Text (CE)

T-2.IX, The Correction of Fear

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-2.IX

Overview

The theme of fear runs all through this chapter; it is mentioned on hundred thirty times. This section focuses on fear. Every section in this chapter reiterates the message: The remedy for fear is the Atonement.

Paragraph 1

You believe that being afraid is involuntary. ²But I have told you many times that only *constructive* acts should be involuntary.¹ ³I said that Christ-control can take over everything that doesn't matter, and Christ-guidance can direct everything that does, if you so will.²

The implication of what Jesus says here is that being afraid *is voluntary*. We believe it is *involuntary*, but that is only our mistaken belief. In fact, we *choose* to be afraid (1:1). It only seems to be something beyond our control. The only thing that *should* be involuntary are *constructive acts* (1:2). Christ-control can take over everything else (1:3), and if we are willing, Christ will direct all that really matters—our constructive acts.

¹ T-1.4.1:1: “Miracles are habits and should be involuntary.” T-1.21.2:1: “Your abilities will be very useful when they come under involuntary control rather than involuntary *lack* of control.” T-1.35.6:1: “Remember, you already have a principle about the involuntary nature of miracles.” T-1.46.11:5: “Only the last [*Able* to do] is involuntary, because it is the *application* of miracles which must be Christ-controlled.”

² T-1.35.6:2: “We have also established the fact that everything involuntary belongs under Christ-control, *not* yours.” T-1.35.8:2-3: “Christ-controlled miracles are part of the Atonement. But Christ-guidance is personal, and leads to *personal* salvation.” Thus, Christ-control pertains to miracles—in this case, behavioral expressions of love. And Christ-guidance pertains to the internal realization of salvation. In the above statement, what doesn't matter is the realm of behavior and what does matter is the realm of thought.

I believe that the “constructive acts” (1:2) which should be “involuntary” refers to miracles, because of two connections. For “constructive,” see T-2.VIII.5:4 (CE), T-2.V.5:4 (FIP). For “involuntary,” see T-1.4:5 (CE), T-1.I.5:1 (FIP). The constructive acts our minds can carry out in this world are miracles, and should not be under our conscious control, but under Jesus’ control. Jesus puts miracles in the class of “behavior” here, in the sense that they are the outward expression of loving thoughts, or acts of extension toward others, and behavior is what he desires to control. If we are willing to listen only to His guidance, He will take care of everything else. We must listen to his guidance and choose to do it. Period.

Paragraph 2

² Fear cannot be Christ-controlled, but it *can* be self-controlled. ²Fear is always associated with what does not matter, and prevents me from controlling it. ³The correction is therefore a matter of your will, because its presence shows that you have raised the unimportant to a higher level than it warrants. ⁴You have thus brought it under your will, where it does not belong. ⁵This means *you* feel responsible for it. ⁶The level confusion here is perfectly obvious. ⁷The reason that I cannot control fear for you is that you are attempting to raise to the mind level the proper content of lower-order “reality.”³ ⁸I do not foster level confusion, but you can will to correct it.

The preceding paragraph does not imply that Christ will control our fears; but that is something *we* can do (2:1). Some fears seem to be involuntary. I may believe I want the fear to go away, particularly a fear that arises while I am trying to go to sleep, or worry about the state of the world. It seems beyond my control. The message of this paragraph is that fear is not involuntary, and “can be self-controlled” (2:1), if I choose to do so (2:3). Fear, he says, “is *always* associated with what does not matter” (2:2).

Workbook Lesson 48 assures us, “There is nothing to fear.” We should realize that what “does not matter” are our non-miraculous “acts” or behavior, that is, what our bodies do; what really matters are our thoughts because they determine our behavior. (This is confirmed later. See 3:6–8 (CE), T-2.VI.2:7–9 (FIP) and 5:6–7 (CE), T-2.VI.4:6–7 (FIP).) We have tried to assume control of our behavior, placing it under our will “where it *does not* belong” (2:4). Therefore, we feel responsible for it (2:5), and that results in fear. We are confusing levels. Jesus cannot *control* fear for us because we are trying “to raise to the mind level the proper control of lower-order ‘reality’” (2:7). We are the only ones who can correct our level-confusion (2:8).

³. To “raise to the mind level the proper content of lower-order ‘reality’” means to regard the physical level as something the mind needs to engage with, by regarding it as important, feeling fear about it, and feeling responsible for dealing with it. When the mind (which *has* importance) is so consumed with the physical (which “does not matter”), we are confusing the two levels. The answer is to withdraw the importance given the physical and focus instead on taking responsibility for our thoughts. Turning our thoughts over to Jesus will allow him to *guide* our thinking and actually *control* our behavior.

What he is saying here, then, is that if we choose to place our minds under his guidance, he will direct our behavior. That puts correcting fear back in our hands; it is a matter of *our* will. Fear is our responsibility, resulting from choices we make both consciously and unconsciously. We can “will” or choose to correct the level-confusion in our minds, but we must want to do that and actually do it if we want to bring our fear under control.

Remember, the last section assured us that our only responsibility is to accept Atonement for ourselves. *We are not responsible for the world we see*⁴. If we can let go of thinking that we are, and give ourselves over to “Christ-guidance,” we can begin to function as workers of miracles in the world, making a real difference rather than trying to figure out the external problems in our world, which is just shuffling around the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Ideally, our bodies and their activities ought to be controlled by Jesus. When we remove our bodies from his control, we become afraid. Suppose, for a moment, you were on a Boeing 767 jet with just the pilot, flying across the country, when suddenly the pilot has a heart attack. He was flying the plane, so you were relaxed and confident; now, suddenly, flying the plane is up to you! You would be terrified. Well, we feel a similar fear when we think we are responsible for controlling our bodies and what they do, because we aren't sure of how to do it.

Let me repeat for emphasis what I said before: If we will place our minds under his guidance, he will control our behavior. Doing this is the key to freedom from fear.

Paragraph 3

3 You would not tolerate insane behavior on your part, and would hardly advance the excuse that you could not help it. ²Why should you tolerate insane thinking? ³There is a fallacy here you would do well to look at clearly. ⁴You believe that you are responsible for what you *do* but not for what you *think*. ⁵The truth is that you *are* responsible for what you think, because it is only at this level that you can exercise choice. ⁶What you do comes from what you think. ⁷You cannot separate the two by giving autonomy to your behavior. ⁸Behavior is controlled by me automatically as soon as you place what you think under my guidance.

If we began to act in a way we *knew* to be insane, the sane part of us would stop it. We would not pretend that we could not help it. But that seems to be what we do with insane thinking, thinking that is the factor that creates our fear (3:1–2). There is no excuse for it, although we imagine there is, but that belief is a fallacy we need to examine (3:3). What we believe is that we *are* responsible for what we *do* but *not* for what we *think* (3:4). Believing we can correct our behavior, but can't correct our thinking, shows that we are

⁴. Clearly, there is a sense in which we are responsible for the world we see. The Course says as much: “I *am* responsible for what I see” (T-21.II.2:3 (CE)). I think we are responsible for *what* we see, but we are not responsible for *fixing* it, because what we see with our body's eyes are illusions. What is called for is a change in our thinking, not any particular physical behavior.

very confused. In reality the reverse is true. We are responsible for what we think because only at the level of thought can we exercise choice (3:5).

The clear implication is that we are not responsible for what we do (not directly, at any rate) because in truth, at the body level, we cannot exercise real choice. What we do comes from what we think (3:6) (which we *are* responsible for), and therefore actions cannot be dealt with as if they were something existing apart from mind. That, I think is what Jesus means by “giving autonomy to behavior” (3:7): treating behavior as if it were something that happens apart from our thoughts, and attempting to correct it without correcting our thoughts. This is the same thing that the second paragraph called raising “the *unimportant* to a higher level than it warrants” (2:3). Our egos are trying to maintain their illusory separation from truth (ego autonomy) by seeing our bodies as if they were autonomous (3:7).

The illusion of the autonomy of the body...is but the working of the ego's plan to establish its own autonomy. (T-15.VII.12:1)

When we try to correct things on a behavioral level—trying to change what we do without really changing what we think—it cannot work. We are confusing levels. We think we are directly responsible for our actions; in fact, we are only indirectly responsible for them. Actions come from thoughts (3:6). It is a mistake, a confusion of levels, to attempt to deal directly with behavior.

If we take responsibility for our thoughts, and place them under Jesus' guidance, our behavior “is controlled by [Jesus] automatically” (3:8). What matters is our thoughts; what does not matter is our actions. The actions stem from the thoughts. Take care of the thoughts and the actions will follow.

Paragraph 4

4 Whenever you are afraid, it is a sure sign that you have allowed your mind to miscreate; that is, you have not allowed me to guide it. ²It is pointless to believe that controlling the outcome of misthought can result in real healing. ³When you are fearful, you have willed wrongly. ⁴This is why you feel you are responsible for it. ⁵You must change your *mind*, not your behavior, and this *is* a matter of will. ⁶You do not need guidance except at the mind level. ⁷Correction belongs only at the level where causation is possible. ⁸The term does not really mean anything at the symptom level, where it cannot work.

Paragraph 4 underscores the message of the preceding ones. “You must change your mind, not your behavior” (4:5). It “is pointless” to try to control “the outcome of misthought” (4:2). Fear is a sure sign that we have not allowed Jesus to guide our thoughts (4:1). When fear arises in us, we don't need a change in our behavior or in external circumstances; we need a change of mind. Fear comes from a wrong choice of the mind (not allowing Jesus to guide it) (4:1,4:3), not from anything outside or anything we do. That choice is an act of will; that is why we feel responsible for it (4:3-4). But we deflect the responsibility away from our minds and onto the behavior of our bodies.

Over and over, Jesus tells us the same thing: “You do not need guidance *except* at the mind level. Correction belongs *only* at the level where causation is possible” (4:6–7). At the symptom level, correction is meaningless (4:8).

If we honestly examine our lives, we will see why he finds such repetition to be necessary: When troubles arise, our first question always seems to be, “What should I do?” Rarely do we find ourselves asking, “What should I think?” Yet that is the only meaningful request. Faulty behavior is just a “symptom” (4:8) of faulty thinking. If you choose to think lovelessly, you cannot behave lovingly. Heal the mind, and mind’s physical manifestation will follow suit.

Paragraph 5

⁵ The correction of fear *is* your responsibility. ²When you ask for release from fear, you are implying that it isn’t. ³You should ask, instead, for help in the conditions which have brought the fear about. ⁴This always entails a willingness on the part of your separated mind. ⁵At this level, you *can* help it. ⁶You are much too tolerant of mind wandering, thus tacitly condoning your mind’s miscreations. ⁷The particular result never matters, but this fundamental error does. ⁸The fundamental correction is always the same. ⁹Before you will to do anything, ask me if your will is in accord with mine. ¹⁰If you are sure that it is, there will be no fear.

As I noted at the beginning, the central message of this section is that fear is voluntary, and can be controlled by our accepting the Atonement. Jesus, or God, will not take away our fear; it is *our own responsibility*, so we needn’t bother praying for release from it (5:1–2). If we take responsibility for our thoughts, he will take responsibility for our bodies. Later, he actually promises to take care of our *egos* as well! (See T-4.I.13:4 (FIP), (T-4.II.24:1 (CE).)

Remember also that the fears being spoken of all through the chapter are the fears that arise for us when we think of assuming our function as miracle workers. Notice that release from fear is “your responsibility” (5:1), This point is being made over and over. In Paragraph 2 we have been told that fear “can be self-controlled” and that “correction is...a matter of *your* will.” If we ask God to release us from fear, we are attempting to avoid that responsibility. Yet the last section told us that accepting the Atonement is our “*sole* responsibility” (T-2.V.5:1 (FIP), T-2.VIII.5:1 (CE)). These two responsibilities, then, must be equivalent: It is up to us to release ourselves from fear, and the means for doing so is accepting the Atonement for ourselves. To accept Atonement *is* to correct our fear, to release us from fear, and it is a correction in our *thinking*. We have willed wrongly, and we must change our minds.

If asking for release from fear is not appropriate when we are afraid, what kind of prayer *is* appropriate? Asking for “help in the conditions that have brought the fear about” (5:3), or in other words, asking for help in correcting our thinking. Our misthought always involves a choice to be separate in some way (5:4). I believe, given the context, this means a desire to have a *separate will*, rather than allowing God’s Voice to guide us. The

correction to this mistake in 5:9–10 is choosing with Jesus, which makes it crystal clear what mistake is being corrected.

This paragraph presents a fundamental practice of *A Course in Miracles*: *watching my thoughts*. “You are much too tolerant of mind wandering” (5:6). I think I ought to post that saying on my bathroom mirror! I often let my mind follow whatever avenue of thought seems to invite my attention, without bothering to notice whether it strengthens my sense of separation or weakens it.

In private guidance, Jesus once told Helen, “The unwatched mind is responsible for the whole content of the unconscious” (*Absence from Felicity*, page 257, T-2.XI.2:1 (CE)). Once an unwatched thought falls into our unconscious, it can result in seemingly uncontrollable behavior. Watching our minds and choosing with Jesus, can prevent this.

I am being asked to *not* tolerate wandering thoughts, but instead to ask Jesus if my thoughts agree with his (5:9). Are they thoughts of separation, or thoughts of union? Thoughts of recoil and withdrawal, or thoughts of extension and love? Is the choice I am about to make coming from truth? Does it reflect truth?

If I will watch my thoughts in this manner, “there will be no fear” (5:10).

The question arises for me: How is this watching of thoughts equivalent to accepting the Atonement? First, consider what we’ve been told: The healed state of mind is when my thoughts agree with the thoughts of Jesus. In 1896, a Congregational minister, Charles Sheldon, asked his congregation to consider the question, “What would Jesus do?” in every aspect of their lives. It resulted in his book, “In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?,” which is still in print, a timeless classic. I think the Course is asking us that same question, perhaps adapted to say, “What would Jesus *think*?” Thought determines action, so the Course’s version of the question moves us back to the level of cause: the mind.

How is accepting the Atonement the same as having my thoughts agree with those of Jesus? In this situation, I believe that Jesus is a stand-in, or exemplar, of the Sonship. The thoughts of Jesus align with the will of God and, in fact, are identical to that will. If we think of Atonement as being at one with God and the Sonship (all created beings), then there is only one will. The Workbook says it well:

Lesson 74: There is no will but God’s.

The idea for today can be regarded as the central thought toward which all our exercises are directed.²God’s is the only will.³When you have accepted this, you have recognized that your will is His.⁴The belief that conflict is possible has gone.⁵Peace has replaced the strange idea that you are torn by conflicting goals.⁵
⁶As an expression of the will of God, you have no goal but His.

To allow Jesus to guide our thinking is to align ourselves with that one will, accepting our union with him, with God, and with all our brothers and sisters. Except in our nightmare there are no enemies and therefore nothing to fear. In the dream, my brothers can injure me, hurt my body and assault my ego. In my dream, I have sinned and am forever

⁵. The conflict here is between the goals you see as reflecting God’s will and the goals you see as meeting your own needs.

guilty. But I am not a body. I am not an ego. There is no sin. Accepting the Atonement means accepting that I am neither body nor ego, but remain a pure, undefiled spirit, just as God created me. I am, and my true Self is, invulnerable. Fear is impossible.

So, if accepting the Atonement is my only responsibility, and watching my thoughts is also my only responsibility, I must be watching my thoughts for anything that contradicts my union with God and my brothers and sisters, or some belief that a will other than God's exists. This is how fear is under my control.

Paragraph 6

6 Fear is always a sign of strain, which arises whenever the *will* to do conflicts with *what* you do. ²This situation arises in two major ways:

1. ³You can will to do conflicting things, either simultaneously or successively.⁶ ⁴This produces conflicting behavior, which would be tolerable to the self (though not necessarily to others) except for the fact that the part of the will that wants something else is outraged.

2. ⁵You can behave as you think you should, without entirely willing to do so. ⁶This produces consistent behavior, but entails great strain within the self.

Paragraphs 6 to 10 explain *how* fear is born from our attempts to treat behavior as if it had nothing to do with thought. Several causes of fear have been described in the first part of the section:

1. We “are attempting to raise to the mind level the proper content of lower-order ‘reality.’” (1:6), or as the FIP puts it, raising body thoughts to the level of mind.;
2. We have “allowed [our] mind to miscreate; that is. you have not allowed [Jesus] to guide it” (4:1).
3. We “have willed wrongly” (4:3).
4. We have passively entertained a separated willingness (5:4), to choose independently of God's will.

Now we are told that fear arises because our wrongful choices have created a conflict between what we want and what we do (6:1). A conflicted mind is a natural consequence of desiring a will that is independent of God's. The supposed battle between our illusory independent will and God's Will is the hidden cause of all our fear. Consider the two ways in which “what you want conflicts with what you do” (6:1):

- Type I Conflict: You want and do two (or more) conflicting things, either one after the other, or simultaneously (6:3–4);
- Type 2 Conflict: You do what you think you *should*, but you don't completely want to. Part of your mind wants to do something else (6:5–6).

⁶. As point #2 makes clear, the conflict is between doing what you want and doing what “you think you should.”

It's easy to understand how such conflict would produce strain, resulting in fear: What if I choose the wrong thing? How can I satisfy both needs? Why am I doing this when I really don't want to?

Both types raise the same question. What is the source of this conflict? I must be listening to *two different voices*. We are quite familiar with this in ordinary situations. We often want two things that conflict so that no matter what we do, we cannot have both. This arouses fear simply because in every case, we lose *something*.

I think the dichotomy in mind goes even deeper. One voice I hear seems to be my own independent voice; it seems to tell me what I *want* to do, which is some action of grasping, based on fear. This voice is the ego. The other voice is God's, which seems to tell me what I *should* do (6:5), an act of giving and love. In this section, Jesus represents God's Voice.

If I outwardly do what I think I *should* without correcting my thinking, I am doing what I believe *God* wants at the expense of what I think I *want*. In Type I Conflict, I obey both voices simultaneously or successively; sometimes I "do good" and sometimes I "do evil." That results in fear because I feel as though I am angering God. In Type II Conflict, I behave consistently as I "think [I] should" (5:4). I end up feeling coerced, forced into doing something I do not want to do under threat of God's anger. (This has been called being "phony holy.") In both cases, I feel fear. As T-2.I.4:1 told us, we fear because we think we can usurp God's power.

Paragraph 7

7 If you think about it, you will realize that in both cases the will and the behavior are out of accord, resulting in a situation in which you are doing what you do not will. ²This arouses a sense of coercion, which usually produces rage. ³The anger then invades the mind, and projection in the wrong sense becomes likely.⁷ ⁴Depression or anxiety is virtually certain.

We end up doing something we do not want to do (7:1). We feel coerced and become angry about it (7:2). Our behavior is "nice" but our will is struggling to keep still. This anger "invades the mind." What an image of internal conflict! I believe we all have had this experience of feeling as if our minds had been "invaded" by anger. It seems to come from outside of us, and we end up projecting the cause onto someone or something else. "You make me so angry!" You feel guilty because you are angry; you want to be "nice" but people are making it so damned hard! Your will and your behavior are out of sync. You will almost certainly become depressed or anxious (7:4).

⁷ Projection in the wrong sense has been defined as "hurling something you do not want, and regard as dangerous and frightening, to someone else" (T-1.35.3:1). What you project here, therefore, is probably the anger you are feeling over not getting to do what you want. In other words, the anger that has just *invaded* the mind, anger that you regard as "dangerous and frightening," you now hurl *out* of the mind. The result is that you would now see anger threatening you from the world outside, causing you "depression or anxiety."

Paragraph 8

8 Remember that whenever there is fear, it is because you have not made up your mind. ²Your will is split, and your behavior inevitably becomes erratic. ³Correcting at the behavioral level can shift the error from the first type to the second, but will not obliterate the fear. ⁴It is possible to reach a state in which you bring your will under my guidance without much conscious effort, but this implies the kind of habit pattern which you have not developed dependably as yet.

“Whenever there is fear, it is because *you have not made up* your mind” (8:1). This means more than, “Make your goal clear and you will not fear.” It is really saying, “You are afraid because you have not chosen to listen unequivocally to one voice; you are still trying to nurture your separate ego self.” “Your will is split” (8:2). It does no good at all to *imitate* loving behavior. You can’t be a miracle worker just by *acting* like one. That just turns Type I Conflict into Type II Conflict, and does nothing at all to “obliterate the fear” (8:3).

The final sentence gives us a goal to work toward: “a state in which you bring your will under [Jesus’s] guidance without much conscious effort” (8:4). The clear implication is that, for the time being, we *need* “much conscious effort.” We need to develop a dependable “habit pattern.” He says, “as yet,” so he believes we will do so eventually. What kind of habit pattern do we need? He has already mentioned, back in 5:6, that we are too tolerant of mind wandering. He has told us we are responsible for what we think. So one dependable habit we need to develop is watching our minds for thoughts that are out of accord with our oneness with God, thoughts not aligned with “What would Jesus do or think?”

As we shall see, Section XI begins by taking up the issue of the “unwatched mind” and the problems that may arise in watching it, but it devolves into an extended discussion of Freud and his errors. We’ll face that when we get to it. Here, I think, just be aware that the habit of watching the mind is what is being called for. We need to correct our minds, not our behavior. We need to bring our dark thoughts to Jesus and ask him to help us correct them until loving behavior is the natural expression of our state of mind.

We may aspire to bring our minds under Jesus’ guidance without conscious effort, but we are not there yet! In our condition, it *does* require conscious effort because our willingness isn’t developed sufficiently (8:4). Of course we want our spiritual walk to become effortless. It eventually *will* be. But—and this is a note sounded often in the Course—it *will take effort to arrive at effortlessness*.

This seemingly paradoxical idea is actually quite commonplace. A pianist plays some complex Liszt concerto apparently without effort, and yet we know that behind the virtuoso display lie years of practice. We speak our native tongue without conscious effort, but we have forgotten the monumental effort we put forth as infants to master the language.

Enough effort *can* achieve effortlessness. “What you take, takes you,” my teacher Norman Grubb used to say. Learning a new language requires a long period of conscious

effort, but eventually you arrive at using the language without consciously thinking about it. The same is true in spiritual practice. If we want our minds to come to the place where they spontaneously operate in the main current of God's Will, we must train them to do so. We must choose God's Will again, and again, and again. We must develop our willingness. "This course is a *mind-training* course" (T-1.VII.4:1 (FIP), T-3.I.1:2 (CE)).

Paragraph 9

9 Although people say that God will never ask you to do more than you can, they do not understand it themselves. ²God *cannot* ask more than you will. ³The strength to do comes from your own undivided will to do.⁸ ⁴There is no strain in doing God's will as soon as it is also your own.

Jesus amends the idea that some people have that "God will never ask you to do more than you can." The proper idea, which people do not really understand, is, "God *cannot ask* more than you *will*" (9:1–2). It isn't what you can *do* that is the limit, it is what you *will*" Your "undivided will to do" is what gives you strength to do it (9:3).

When our minds have been purified from all conflict, when doing God's Will is all we want because we have recognized It as our own, then "there is no strain in doing God's Will" (9:4). That is *true* effortlessness. Jesus states it succinctly in a later passage:

Once you accept His plan as the one function that you would fulfill, there will be nothing else the Holy Spirit will not arrange for you without your effort. (T-20.IV.9:4 (CE), T-20.IV.8:4 (FIP))

A mind with such a unified purpose has no fear. The early stages of our spiritual path are generally spent in ridding ourselves of our divided loyalties. We want God, but we still want our toys too. We want to discover our holy, loving nature, but we are afraid to give up the comfort of our familiar ego self. "You believe that without the ego, all would be chaos" (T-15.V.1:5 (CE), T15.V.1:6 (FIP)).

The conflict cannot be ignored, suppressed, or run away from. There is only one way out: through the conflict (see footnote⁹). The dark thoughts must be brought into the presence of the Light. Don't suppress the dichotomy of mind. Recognize it, bring it into sharp focus, and end it with a firm choice for the truth. "The way out of conflict between two opposing thought systems is clearly *to choose one and relinquish the other*" (T-6.V(B).5:1 (FIP), (T-6.VII.7:1 (CE))). Turn to the Holy Spirit and let Him lead you

⁸ In other words, God does not ask more than you will, because unless the will to do something is present, you literally do not have the strength to do it. The larger idea here seems to be that, as the next sentence says, your will and God's are one. This has two implications: one, that He cannot go against your will (by asking you to do things beyond your will/strength), and two, that you can effortlessly do His will (when you realize it is also your own).

⁹ Conflict must be resolved. It cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind, if it would be escaped. It must be seen exactly as it is, where it is thought to be, in the reality which has been given it, and with the purpose that the mind accorded it. For only then are its defenses lifted, and the truth can shine upon it as it disappears. (W-333.1).

through the conflict. You would condemn yourself for the dark thoughts in your mind; He will not condemn, He will bring forgiveness and healing.

Paragraph 10

10 The lesson here is quite simple, but particularly apt to be overlooked. ²I will therefore repeat it, urging you to listen. ³Only your mind can produce fear. ⁴It does so whenever it is conflicted in what it wills, thus producing inevitable strain because willing and doing become discordant.¹⁰ ⁵This cannot be corrected by better doing. ⁶But it *can* be corrected by higher willing.

Just to be sure we get it, Jesus repeats it with a succinct summary. It is a simple lesson but we are likely to overlook it (10:1). He starts by urging us to *listen* (10:2). Nothing but your mind can produce fear (10:3). That excludes everything external to your mind! The world, the Nazis, the Evening News, your malicious neighbor or mean-spirited family member...none of it can produce fear! *Only* your mind produces fear.

It is easy to overlook that, isn't it? We *want* the cause of fear to be outside of us, but it's not.

How does our mind produce fear? It becomes conflicted in what it wills (10:4). It wants to listen to the ego and also to God, and that just will not work. Our will and our behavior "become discordant" (10:4). We feel our will is being violated by what we are being "forced" to do. Maybe you are "straining to do the right thing in the face of a hidden wish to do something else," as Robert explains in his footnote. You are afraid of that hidden wish, afraid of the "dark side" of your nature. Or, perhaps you sense within yourself the thoughts of "light," the way Jesus would guide you, and you fear that something your ego cherishes must be sacrificed. Either way, the divided will generates fear.

Changing your behavior won't help (10:5). What is needed is "higher *willing*" (10:6). What that means, the "corrective process," is explained in the following paragraphs.

¹⁰ To understand how this conflict causes fear, you need to remember that the conflict is between what you *want* to do and what you think you *should* do. ("You can behave as you think you should, without entirely willing to do so.") In other words, you are straining to do the right thing in the face of a hidden wish to do something else, a wish you are trying desperately to keep from being expressed. This suggests that you are afraid of the destructive potential of your hidden wish. That this is the source of fear that Jesus is referring to here is made explicit in the next section, where he speaks of people being "afraid of their own death wishes" (T-2.X.5:1) and links that fear with the current section: "see previous notes on will conflicts" (T-2.X.5:7).

Paragraph 11

11 The first corrective step is knowing it is fear. ²After taking this step, you might benefit temporarily by adding another step before going on with the corrective process: Try saying to yourself that you must have willed not to love somehow or somewhere, or the fear which arises from behavior-will conflict could not have happened. ³Then follow the previous instructions.¹¹

In this paragraph and the next, Jesus is generalizing a process he outlined previously in T-1.48.13:3-8 in a discussion of handling inappropriate sexual impulses. He begins with the first step in the process: recognizing the problem as fear.

When I experience this kind of strain (when my wanting and doing are out of accord, especially when I think I am doing God's will, but reluctantly), "The first corrective step is knowing it *is* fear" (11:1). "It" in that sentence is the mental conflict I feel. My mind is conflicted in what it wills. *This is fear*. This discord is the content of my fear. Fear in my mind shows up as a discord between wanting and doing. I don't normally identify that as a symptom of fear, but that is what I need to learn: This is fear! And fear can only arise if I've chosen not to love (chosen to separate my mind from that of Jesus). I need to correct *that*, rather than to try to perfect my behavior.

An intermediate step may be useful, an adaptation of something he included before as a part of the first step (see T-1.48.13:3-4). "Try saying to yourself that you *must* have willed not to love somehow or somewhere" (11:2). Unless this were true ("you *must* have willed not to love") "the fear which arises from behavior-will conflict could not have happened" (11:2). Somewhere is your mind you chose not to love. If you had clearly chosen to love your will and your behavior could not have come into conflict, and fear would be impossible. Identifying the root cause behind the fear will help us understand the remaining steps of the process.

He tells us to follow "the previous instructions," which refers to the passage in Miracle Principle 48 I mentioned above (see footnote 11 below). In the next paragraph he rewords those steps.

Paragraph 12

12 If you consider what the process really means, it is nothing more than a series of pragmatic steps in the larger process of accepting the Atonement as the remedy. ²From this viewpoint, the steps can be reworded as follows:

1. ³Know first this is fear.

¹¹ The "previous instructions" appear to be the exercise given near the end of Chapter 1 (T-1.48.13:3-8): "*Know first* that this is an expression of fear. Your love toward each other is not perfect and this is why the fear arose.... Turn immediately to me by denying the power of the fear, and ask me to help you replace it with love.... Then acknowledge the true creative worth of both yourself and the other one."

2. ⁴Fear arises from lack of love.
3. ⁵The only remedy for lack of love is perfect love.
4. ⁶Perfect love *is* the Atonement.

⁷The final procedural step is inherent in the last statement.¹² ⁸We have emphasized that the miracle, or the expression of Atonement, is always a sign of real respect from the worthy *to* the worthy.¹³ ⁹This worth is reestablished by the Atonement.

Taken together, these steps describe what it means to accept the Atonement as the one essential remedy (12:1). If you've had difficulty in understanding just what accepting the Atonement means, here is the answer.

First, as has been explained above, recognize the mental problem as *fear*.

Next, realize that fear is produced by lack of love.

The only remedy for a lack of love is perfect love.

Perfect love *is* the Atonement.

Fear can only arise if I have chosen not to love in some situation. This is the same choice as choosing not to allow Jesus to guide my thoughts, since he will always guide me to love. That choice is what I must correct, not any resulting behavior; my thoughts determine my behavior. Uniting my mind with that of Jesus, choosing to express only love because that is what I am, *is* the Atonement.

The fourth "step," Sentence 6, is really a statement, not a step in the process (12:7). It means that when I choose perfect love I *have* accepted the Atonement. The result will always be some form of "real respect from the worthy to the worthy" (12:8). I will recognize that both my brother and myself are equally worthy of love. I will see him as I see myself, and realize we are one. That equality of worth is what the Atonement establishes as true (12:9).

¹² A handwritten note in the Urtext lists the "final procedural step" as "3"—the third step. This makes sense if we realize that the third step asks us to *accept* the remedy, while the fourth step is simply a comment *about* that remedy. In other words, the third step is an action step, while the fourth step is not.

¹³ T-1.18.1:4: "The doer recognizes his own and his neighbor's inestimable value simultaneously." T-1.47.3:3: "It [the miracle] contains nothing but an acknowledgment of equality and worth." T-1.48.13:7: "Then acknowledge the true creative worth of both yourself and the other one." (This is the final step in translating sexual impulses into miracle impulses.)

Paragraph 13

13 It is obvious, then, that when you are afraid, you have placed yourself in a position where you need Atonement because you have done something loveless, having willed without love. ²This is precisely the situation for which the Atonement was offered. ³The need for the remedy inspired its establishment. ⁴As long as you recognize only the *need* for the remedy, you will remain fearful. ⁵However, as soon as you *use* the remedy, you have also abolished the fear. ⁶This is how true healing occurs.

Fear arises when I have made an unloving choice and have done something loveless. I have put myself in a place where I *need* Atonement, and being in that position produces fear (13:1). This is the whole reason God offered the Atonement: “The need for the remedy inspired its establishment” (13:2–3).

Becoming aware of unloving thoughts and choices is good; it awakens your awareness of a need for the Atonement. But don’t stop there! Don’t wallow in self-loathing. Never postpone coming to God because you don’t feel ready. As the old gospel hymn says, each of us should come “Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot.” The Atonement welcomes you just as you are; it was *made* for your seeming deficiencies; it is the *remedy* for your unworthiness. It will wash away all fear. (13:4–6)

Paragraph 14

14 It may help if you say this prayer to me:

²*I would like to pray that my will be united with thine, recognizing that thy perfect love will suffice (or correct) for my imperfect love.*

³*I pray that I may accept the Atonement with conviction, recognizing its inestimable worth, and my own divine worth as part of this identification with thine.*

⁴*I pray that my fear be replaced by an active sense of thy love, and thy continual willingness to help me overcome the split or divided will which is responsible for my difficulty with this.*

⁵*I accept the divinity of the messages I have received,¹⁴ and affirm my will in both accepting and acting upon the Atonement principle.*

⁶*Here I am.*

The prayer given here was originally given to Bill Thetford. It needs no explanation, but can be useful to any Course student seeking to apply the teaching of the Course.

¹⁴ This referred to the messages that Bill and Helen had received from Jesus; i.e., the teachings of the Course.

Paragraph 15

15 The major problem that you have is the continuing split will, which naturally interferes with your true identification. ²To the extent that you hold onto this split, it will take longer to get through and will markedly interfere with your own integration efforts. ³Reliance has to be placed on me, which is sufficient once you do this without distantiation or division in loyalties. ⁴This will be strengthened through a continual affirmation of the goal you want to achieve and an awareness of its inevitability. ⁵In this way, you will perceive and know your true worth, and the importance of maintaining a complete identification.

Jesus has referred above to the way fear is produced by a mind conflicted in what it wills, especially in Paragraph 6, where he spoke of two types of conflict. One is being torn between two or more conflicting things; the other is doing the thing you know you should do while part of your mind still wants to do something else. The prayer just above contains a request for help in overcoming “the split or divided will.” Here, he says that holding onto the split will “naturally interferes with your true identification” (15:1). Perhaps you want to attack someone or act in some other unloving way, but you also want to behave “properly.” Fear arises because you don’t want to unleash your desire to attack, and are afraid it will leak out somehow and destroy your relationships or get you fired. We are trying to achieve a unified identity, and we cannot so while holding onto this split will (15:2).

The solution is “higher willing” (10:6), a unified willing. How? “Reliance has to be placed on me” (15:3). As Jesus has often said, we have to place our will under his guidance—not our behavior, but our will in regard to others, that is, how we think of them and what we want intend toward them. It has been a main point of this whole section:

Place what you think under my guidance. (3:8)

You do not need guidance except at the mind level. (4:6)

Before you will to do anything, ask me if your will is in accord with mine. (5:9)

It is possible to reach a state in which you bring your will under my guidance without much conscious effort. (8:4)

This is another way of expressing what it means to accept the Atonement. It’s accepting that “God is but love, and therefore so am I.” (W-rV.4:3). It’s recognizing that Jesus’s will *is* our true will.

Comments on 15:3b-ff.

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.