



“The Sole Responsibility of the Miracle Worker”

What Does That Line Really Mean?

by Robert Perry

“*The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself*” (T-2.V.5:1). Most every student of *A Course in Miracles* knows this statement. It is the statement we quote when someone implies that we have a responsibility to solve other people’s problems or fix something in the world. This statement gives our minds a quick reset, putting them back on the Course’s track, so that we recall that our one and only responsibility is to attend to our own thinking.

Actually, I don’t believe that last sentence. Instead, I think this line about our “sole responsibility” has been used to obscure just how focused the Course is on helping others. This is acutely ironic, because when you read the statement in context it is actually all about our function of working miracles in the lives of others.

What I’d like to do in this article is walk you through the immediate context of this sentence as it appears in the Course. Through this we will be able to arrive at a precise understanding of what Jesus really means. To facilitate this process, you might want to imagine that you have never read this line before, so that you are ready to see it through new eyes. I’ll start two paragraphs before the sentence in question, at paragraph 3 of Text, Chapter 2, section V: “The Function of the Miracle Worker”:

I have already said that miracles are expressions of miracle-mindedness, and miracle-mindedness means right-mindedness. (3:1)

Whenever Jesus says “I have already said,” it’s a good idea to go back and look up that earlier statement. In this case, it unfortunately got edited out of the FIP version of the Course, so it can’t be found there. The earlier statement is this: “The distinction has also been made here between ‘miracle-mindedness’ as a *state*, and ‘miracle doing’ as its expression.”

So in that earlier statement we have a clear distinction between a state of mind called “miracle-mindedness” and its outer expression called “miracle doing.” Our current sentence makes that same distinction—only what was earlier called “miracle doing” is now just called “miracles.” This is interesting, because it implies that, at least in this context, miracles are a “doing.” Then the sentence adds that “miracle-mindedness means right-mindedness.” We should keep this in mind, as it will be important for the discussion that follows.

The idea that “miracles are expressions of miracle-mindedness” is actually just a variation on something that Jesus says many times: that miracles are “expressions of love.” Believe it or not, Jesus has said this four times already (T-1.I.1:4; T-1.I.3:1; T-1.I.9:2; T-1.I.35:1) and will say it yet again (T-4.IV.1:11). Indeed, this is his main definition of miracles in the Course. They are a case of one person expressing love to another and thereby healing that other’s mind, and perhaps the other’s body as well.

I’ll add one thing here that’s important for what’s coming: Obviously, to *express* a state of mind you have to be *in* that state of mind.

The right-minded neither exalt nor depreciate the mind of the miracle worker or the miracle receiver. (3:2)

So, if you’re in your right mind (or are miracle-minded), you neither overvalue nor undervalue the mental state of the miracle worker *or* the miracle receiver. But hold on—who is this “miracle receiver”? Do we as Course students ever talk about the miracle *receiver*? I never hear that guy mentioned. We do say “miracle worker,” but what we mean by it is usually something like “Course student.” However, if you think about it, everyone knows what a miracle worker is: some-

one who does miracles *for others*. Those others are the recipients of his miracles—they are obviously miracle *receivers*. Therefore, to speak of “miracle worker” and “miracle receiver” clearly implies a whole picture, in which the miracle is given by the *worker* to the *receiver*. And indeed this is the very situation being evoked in the sentence above.

However, as a correction, the miracle need not await the right-mindedness of the receiver. (3:3)

Even though, as the previous sentence says, the right-minded do not depreciate the importance of the miracle receiver’s mind, the right-minded also understand that the receiver doesn’t need to be *in* his right mind. After all, the miracle is a “correction”; it is meant to *correct* his state of mind. You can’t require the receiver to already *have* the correction before he can *receive* the correction.

In fact, its purpose is to restore him *to* his right mind. (3:4)

So the receiver doesn’t need to be in his right mind because the miracle’s whole “purpose is to restore him *to* his right mind.” We now understand the part of the miracle receiver. In the next sentence we move on to the miracle worker.

It is essential, however, that the miracle worker be in his right mind, however briefly, or he will be unable to re-establish right-mindedness in someone else. (3:5)

This sentence is crucial. The miracle *receiver* doesn’t need to be in his right mind, but the miracle *worker* does. Why? The whole point of the miracle is for right-mindedness to pass from the worker to the receiver, thus bringing the receiver back into his right mind. How can the worker give right-mindedness if there is no right-mindedness in him to give?

This, then, is really a restatement of the very first line we looked at. If the miracle is an expression of miracle-mindedness, then you need to *have* miracle-mindedness in order to *give* a miracle. And if miracle-mindedness is right-mindedness, then you need to be in your *right mind* in order to give a miracle. If miracles are expressions of love, how can you express love if there is no love in you?

The healer who relies on his own readiness is endangering his understanding. (4:1)

The preceding lines could understandably make us a bit nervous: “Am I in my right mind? Am I ready to give a miracle?” However, that actually is not a right-minded state. What, then, is the right-minded way to approach the issue of readiness? The next sentences will tell us.

You are perfectly safe as long as you are completely unconcerned about your readiness, but maintain a consistent trust in mine. (4:2)

To be in your right mind, you must consistently think, “I’m unconcerned about my readiness. Jesus is always ready, and his readiness is mine.”

If your miracle working inclinations are not functioning properly, it is always because fear has intruded on your right-mindedness and has turned it upside down. (4:3)

If you’re not in your right mind, what has happened? You have allowed fear into your mind. Indeed, the thought “I’m worried about being ready to give miracles” is itself a fearful thought. Without fear, miracles would naturally flow out of you, which is the sense one gets from the phrase “miracle working inclinations...functioning properly.” It’s as if you have a natural inclination to work miracles, and when fear is out of the way, that inclination simply functions.

All forms of not-right-mindedness are the result of refusal to accept the Atonement for yourself. (4:4)

Earlier, we were told that miracle-mindedness and right-mindedness are the same thing. Here, we are essentially told that fear and refusal to accept the Atonement are the same thing. Both of them chase right-mindedness out of the mind and thereby block the operation of our “miracle working inclinations.”

If you do accept it, you are in a position to recognize that those who need healing are simply those who have not realized that right-mindedness *is* healing. (4:5)

If instead of refusing the Atonement you accept it, you will then see that those who need healing are those who have refused right-mindedness, not realizing that right-mindedness *is* the very healing they are looking for.

The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself. (5:1)

Here, of course, is our key line. Notice how we have virtually everything we need to understand its meaning. First, now we know the meaning of a key term we probably just brushed over before: *miracle worker*. What is a miracle worker? One who gives right-mindedness (or expresses miracle-mindedness, or expresses love) to miracle receivers. How, then, can this sentence mean that I have no responsibility toward others? It's talking about someone whose whole job is to restore others to their right mind. Indeed, the original wording of this line states that the miracle worker's responsibility is "to accept Atonement himself." This subtly implies that his job is to help *others* accept it, as you can see if we reword the line in this way: If the miracle worker is to bring Atonement to others, he first must accept it *himself*. Indeed, we saw this same idea earlier, only stated in terms of right-mindedness: "It is essential, however, that the miracle worker be in his right mind, however briefly, or he will be unable to re-establish right-mindedness in someone else" (3:5).

The first half of the sentence, then, means: "The sole responsibility of the one who gives miracles to miracle receivers..."

What about the next half of the sentence? What does it mean "to accept the Atonement for himself"? That has many answers, as the Course invests those words with many different shades of meaning (all compatible with each other) in different places. But the sentences we have already looked at give us enough to go on for now. They tell us the following:

To accept the Atonement is to be in a state of miracle-mindedness.

To accept the Atonement is to be in a state of right-mindedness.

To accept the Atonement is to be in a state of freedom from fear.

Each of these four things—accepting the Atonement, miracle-mindedness, right-mindedness, freedom from fear—is clearly equated with at least one of the others in the sentences we have examined.

We now have almost all we need in order to understand our sentence, but continuing with several more sentences in this paragraph will provide us with a key missing component.

This means you recognize that mind is the only creative level, and that its errors are healed by the Atonement. (5:2)

To "recognize that mind is the only creative level" means (in the context of this chapter) to recognize that mind is the only causative influence in our experience. The body doesn't actually cause anything. It is purely an effect. Instead, everything is in the hands of the mind. If the mind makes the right choice, everything goes well. If the mind embraces error, then pain and illness are spread all around it.

So, based on this sentence, to accept the Atonement for yourself means to realize that the only thing that really needs correction is the mind, and that that correction is found in the Atonement.

Once you accept this, your mind can only heal. (5:3)

The miracle worker has already been called "the healer" (4:1). Therefore, when this sentence speaks of a mind that "can only heal," it means "can only heal others." What this sentence means, then, is that once you allow the Atonement to come into your mind, your mind can only *heal* others—it is incapable of hurting them. Put differently, all it can do is give miracles to them.

This provides us with that missing component I mentioned above: Why is accepting the Atonement the *sole* responsibility of the miracle worker? What about our primary responsibility of extending miracles to others? The answer is that once we accept the Atonement, we naturally begin extending miracles. Our "miracle working inclinations," which have been dormant for so long, begin "functioning properly" again. In short, once we accept the Atonement, our "mind can only heal."

This doesn't mean that we kick back and do nothing, trusting that our TV watching sends waves of healing out to the world. If we have truly accepted the Atonement, then miracle impulses will automatically arise in us. We will feel

the impulse to extend love to others, and our job will be to give this impulse expression, as guided by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Course promises that when we are *fully* miracle-minded, doing miracles will be so natural that it will actually be “involuntary” (T-1.I.5:1). It will just happen, as naturally as breathing. Until then, however, it will have to be *voluntary*. We will need to voluntarily put time and effort into extending love to others.

By denying your mind any destructive potential and reinstating its purely constructive powers, you place yourself in a position to undo the level confusion of others. (5:4)

Another way of saying that “your mind can only heal” is that your mind is now “purely constructive.” It never tears people down. It only builds them up. In particular, it undoes their confusion in which they think that the physical level is cause and the mental level is effect. It turns their minds right-side up again.

The message you then give to them is the truth that their minds are similarly constructive, and their miscreations cannot hurt them. (5:5)

Having rediscovered the purely constructive nature of your own mind, you can now convey to others that this is the nature of their minds too. You can let them know (through your words, your actions, your demeanor, your expression) that in their true nature they don’t actually have a destructive fiber in their being, and that none of their mistakes have in any way changed this innate purity.

Now that we have closely explored these three paragraphs, we can answer our beginning question: What does the Course mean when it says “The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself”? Like I said, these few paragraphs have told us everything we need to know. Let me try to encapsulate it:

As a miracle worker—one who gives miracles to miracle receivers—all you need to do is accept the Atonement into your own mind, be in a miracle-minded state yourself, be in right-mindedness yourself, be free of fear yourself, “however briefly.”

Why is this your *sole* responsibility? Because once you allow the Atonement to clear your mind of errors, your mind will recover its purely constructive, healing nature. Cleansed of all destructive impulses, your mind will shine with pure healing. And everyone touched by its healing rays will be healed.

Being in a purely constructive state, you will naturally build people up. Being in a right-minded state, you will naturally give right-mindedness to them, restoring them to their own right mind. Being in a miracle-minded state, you will naturally express yourself in miracle doing. Having done the one key thing, all you can do now is heal.

In short: To fulfill your function of giving miracles to others, all you need do is accept the Atonement into your own mind, however briefly, for once you do that, your mind can *only* heal.

As you can see, Jesus provides the context that contains all the clues we need to discern what he really means by that famous line. And having examined that context, we now know more or less exactly what he was trying to say. I don’t know about you, but I find that there’s something deeply satisfying about this—about seeing all the clues line up in one direction so that I know the meaning that Jesus intended to convey. Even if that meaning is different than what I had previously believed, it still feels good. It’s like my feet are finally on solid ground. To paraphrase St. Paul, before I saw in a glass darkly, but now face to face.

However, even while enjoying this new clarity, we do need to look back on the old meaning. In particular, we need to concede that the old meaning is almost 180 degrees off. “I accept the Atonement because my only responsibility is my own mind” is virtually the exact opposite of “I accept the Atonement so that I can fulfill my true role of helping others.” How could we have gotten it so wrong?

There is, however, an even more pressing question, one that might require patient reflection: To the extent that the old meaning has been the lens through which we have seen *A Course in Miracles*, how should we see it now?



E-mail your comments to the author at: robert@circleofa.org

Robert Perry. He is the author or co-author of over twenty books and booklets, including *Path of Light: Stepping into Peace with ‘A Course in Miracles’*.

CIRCLE MAILBOX

The following are reader responses to Greg's article in A Better Way #135, "I Need Be Anxious Over Nothing: The Course's Promise of a Carefree Life."

I loved reading this. Thank you. Not that I'm biased or anything, but I especially love the connection you've made between accepting God's care and our special function: You say, "In my experience and that of many others I've known, there is no better path to a happy and carefree life than to walk the path of finding and fulfilling your special function."

You know I share your faith that there really is a greater plan and that each of us has a specific part in that plan. For me, that idea is at the heart of what I've found here in the CCC, and what I want to share with others here—to be surrounded by people who want this to be true, who honor it and go in its direction every day, and who have seen evidence in their own lives and the lives of others.

I teared up when I read this: "But the carefree caregiver joyously says, as Robert sums up the stance of the historical Jesus, 'My needs are taken care of. How can I help you along the way?' (*Entering the Kingdom: What the Historical Jesus Teaches Us about the Kingdom of God*, by Robert Perry, p. 68)."

That's the Jesus I've come to know through my relationship with the Course. I hear his voice in my mind and my heart. And I see his caring ways in all my friends, teachers, and colleagues here, including you.

— Amy Speech

•••

Recently, our Circle-affiliated San Diego study group reviewed your article "I Need Be Anxious Over Nothing" with amazing success. Anthony, a subscriber to *A Better Way* newsletter and study group member, brought in the article and suggested we discuss it. This wonderful suggestion served a twofold purpose for the study group. First, all members were instructed how to navigate the Circle of Atonement website, and successfully printed the article. Several of the members subscribed to receive *A Better Way* newsletter, including myself. Second, and more important, everyone was inspired by your brilliant writing. People were impressed with how you accurately describe the state of the lives we live and what we can do to improve our lives by applying the *Course in Miracles* principles. The entire article is a resource of prayers and inspiration.

Chris, a friend and study group member, was also deeply inspired by the article. She had been thinking about joining the Circle Course Community for over a year. I believe this article and navigating the website helped her to make the decision to join the Circle. Yesterday, November 1, she received her welcome letter from Amy Speech.

What I really appreciated about the article was your comprehensive approach to dealing with the topic of resistance. You really tackled resistance well. I refer to your article as "the resistance dissolver," because you give us a step-by-step process that will help us gradually let go of our resistance to God throughout our journey, and you back it up with Course evidence. Jesus understands our resistance, and he tells us what to do about it. I have listed a few of my favorites: We accept this care by spending the day with Him and embracing His care. We accept His care by trusting that He will give us the guidance we need. We accept His care by trusting that He has a plan for our lives. We accept His care by caring for others. We accept His care by forgiving. And, we accept His care by accepting our special function in His plan for salvation.

Thank you Greg. This article has been a treasure for me.

— Mary Bajza