

## **The History of the Manuscripts of *A Course in Miracles***

**Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.**

### **Introduction**

As will be discussed in more detail below, circumstances have recently arisen surrounding the earlier manuscripts of *A Course in Miracles* that have necessitated this explanation of the history of the Course, from Helen Schucman's notebooks to its publication in 1976. What the reader is viewing is an edited and enlarged transcript from a session of a workshop, held in Atlanta in 2007,<sup>1</sup> which directly addressed this issue in response to a question from a participant. While much of what I will say is already discussed in my book *Absence from Felicity: The Story of Helen Schucman and Her Scribing of "A Course in Miracles,"* it is my hope that this will further help to answer questions, correct misunderstandings, and allay any concerns students may have about the Course—authorized by Helen herself and published by the Foundation for Inner Peace—they are reading.

### **An Overview of the Scribing**

Let me start by giving a brief overview of how the Course was written, and how what Helen took down ended up as the books we have. This will begin the process of addressing the questions that have been raised, which have largely been based on erroneous information.

When Helen started taking down the Course in October 1965, she wrote down what she heard. One of the misconceptions or myths surrounding her scribing is that this was the first time Helen had heard an inner voice. This is not the case. She had been hearing Jesus' voice at least through the latter part of the summer, and her experience was clear that this was Jesus. Incidentally, I should say that while Helen said she heard an inner voice, the traditional way this kind of experience is described, she told me years later that the experience was closer to seeing words in her mind, and then writing down what she "saw."

The early pre-Course messages she received had to do largely with helping her deal with a close colleague of hers who was dying of brain cancer, and who later died. Helen took these messages down in shorthand, in stenography notebooks. She had learned shorthand when she was in graduate school and had developed her own version, which was partially a blend of Gregg and Pitman, the two main shorthand methods.

The following day, whenever she and Bill would have time in what was then a very busy schedule, she would dictate to Bill what had been dictated to her, and he would type it out. As he would jokingly say afterwards, he would type it out with one hand on the typewriter (this was before computers) and the other hand holding Helen up, because she would be so nervous. Sometimes when she would read it to Bill, she would start to stutter or lose her voice. She was always an excellent speaker, and so this was most uncharacteristic of her.

In the first several weeks of the scribing, which consists roughly of the material up to and including Chapters 4 and 5 in the text, the dictation was much more personal than was the case later. It was as if Helen and Jesus were sitting on her living room couch having a conversation. Helen asked questions that Jesus answered, and there were also corrections to her mis-hearing, what she, Bill, and I later referred to as "scribal errors."

The Course actually began with Jesus saying: "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes. The first and fundamental thing to remember about miracles is that there is no order of difficulty among them." It does not begin that way in the published version. Some time into the scribing, Helen complained to Jesus

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1. The complete workshop is available on CD and MP3 from the *Foundation for A Course in Miracles*®

that he needed a better introduction, saying, in effect: “You know, who is going to start a book with ‘There is no order of difficulty in miracles’!” So she wrote down some things that metamorphosed into the current introduction.

Typically, Helen would write down a miracle principle and then there would be a lot of discussion about it, including the aforementioned questions. These also included things Bill had in mind that he asked Helen to ask for him. Much of the material that came during this time was clearly not meant for publication. It was obviously meant to help Helen personally, and to help Helen and Bill in their relationship, the troubled aspect of which was the original stimulus for the coming of the Course. The material was also directed toward Helen’s relationship with her husband, Louis, and Bill’s relationship with his friends (Bill was homosexual and never married).

In addition, material was given to help Helen and Bill bridge the gap between the psychology that was being offered in the Course and the psychology they both knew, which was basically Freudian. While the psychology of *A Course in Miracles* is heavily psychoanalytic, it deviates significantly from what Freud taught in many specifics, though not in the general contours or dynamics of the ego’s thought system. There was thus some material on Freud and other psychologists, like Jung and Rank.

There also was some discussion of Edgar Cayce, because Bill was quite interested in him at that time. In fact, he pressured Helen to read some of the Cayce writings. Moreover, they both went to the Association for Research and Enlightenment in Virginia Beach, the institute Cayce founded. Edgar was already dead, but Helen and Bill met with his son, Hugh Lynn Cayce, who took over leadership of the A.R.E.

Finally, there was, among other subjects, material on sexuality, statistics, and mental retardation; the last two being major interests of Helen’s.

For a number of reasons, none of this material belonged in the published version. First, much of it was personal to Helen and Bill, and had nothing to do with the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*. Perhaps even more importantly, Helen was notoriously inaccurate when her own ego was involved. A great deal of this early material was colored by Helen. She was incredibly accurate when her ego was not in the way, however, and that is why the pure teaching of the Course is what it is. One could never imagine Jesus saying, for example, what is in the Urtext on sex—not that it was anything horrific, but it obviously reflected Helen’s own values and biases. I’ll return to this later. The material on Freud is heavily weighted in favor of Freud—Jung does not come off very well. Helen did not like Jung, and neither did Bill; they did not know much about him and his work, but they did not like him. And so, when one reads these comments about Freud and Jung, it becomes clear that distinct biases are involved.

Another important point is that when the messages Helen wrote down had to do with something specific in the world, they were frequently wrong. One of the myths surrounding Helen and the scribing is that anything Helen heard had to be from Jesus, and therefore should be regarded as sacred; not too different from the fundamentalist position regarding the unerring nature of every word in the Bible. Nothing could be farther from the truth regarding the Course. Helen did not believe the words she took down were sacred; nor did Bill (or I for that matter). At the end, I will discuss what should be treated as sacred.

At any rate, after the first few weeks, Helen’s experiences began to change. Instead of being a conversation, the dictation became essentially straight lecture, as if Jesus were standing at a podium speaking, and Helen, his devoted student in the auditorium, were writing down everything he said. As one reads the text from Chapters 4 and 5 on, one can see a real difference in the style of writing—more fluent, less inconsistent in language. The writing also becomes increasingly more beautiful, reflecting Helen’s love of Shakespeare. From about Chapter 16 on, there are an increasing number of passages in verse, and the last two chapters are all in iambic pentameter. This was unknown to Helen at first, but after a while she realized the words were coming in a definite rhythm. From Lesson 99 on, the entire workbook, including rather prosaic instructions, are in blank verse (i.e., unrhymed poetry). Finally, portions of the manual are in blank verse, as are portions of the two pamphlets that were scribed later (*Psychotherapy: Purpose, Process and Practice; The Song of Prayer*). In other words, as Helen’s hearing became clearer, the writing became clearer and more beautiful.

One of the examples I have used in the past to describe the early weeks of the scribing is how if you live in the Northeast or Midwest and leave your house for vacation and shut the water off, when you come back

and turn it on, very often you get rust because the pipes are old. You have to run the water for a while until the rust runs through, and then the water is clear again. In a sense, Helen's hearing was like that. She had a vision prior to the Course coming through her in which she saw herself on a beach with a boat, and it was her job to get the boat into the water. A stranger, whom she later identified as Jesus, arrived to help her. On seeing what she described as an ancient sending-and-receiving set in the boat, Helen said to him: "Maybe this will be helpful." But he responded: "No, you're not ready to use this yet." In retrospect, Helen understood this as a reference to the Course, which had not yet begun. She was the "ancient sending-and-receiving set," but her equipment was still entangled in seaweed, to keep to the nautical metaphor.

Helen took down the text in about three years (1965-1968). Nine months went by and she began taking down the workbook (1969), and a few months after the workbook was completed (1971), the manual for teachers came, concluding in September of 1972, almost seven years since she began the scribing.

### The Editing

Helen, Bill, and I called Bill's original typing the Urtext, from the German word *ur*, meaning "original." The word has come to refer to any original manuscript. Bill would read back to Helen what he had typed to be sure they got every word right. There were times when Helen did not read everything in the notebooks to Bill, because, as she told me later, she knew it did not belong. And sometimes she dictated something directly to Bill that was not in the notebooks. I mention all this to emphasize that she did not consider every word to be sacred; it was obvious to her that a great deal of this early material was personal, and also clear to her that sometimes she got in the way. Again, the early writings were awkward and inconsistent. One example of this is that Helen wrote down: "Miracles are cobwebs of steel." Jesus then said to her: "That's not what I said," and corrected it. A lot of that went on, for at the beginning the scribing was informal.

Helen then retyped the text twice, and in the process did some editing, per Jesus' instructions. It was something for her to do at night—a distraction in a sense. She liked to be distracted, as also seen in her paying attention to form and avoiding the content. In fact she used to say to Bill: "You pay attention to *what* it says. I'll pay attention to *how* it says it." She was always very proud of the poetic nature of the writing.

Jesus very clearly told both Helen and Bill that whatever was personal or specific did not belong in the published version, even though there was no thought then of publishing it. It was obvious at some point, though, that this was not just for Helen and Bill, so they were specifically told to take out all material that did not belong to the actual teaching. There was a wisdom to this, not only because much of it was private and not meant for anyone else to see, but also, as Helen was more than aware, because her ego definitely got in the way. The workbook needed no changes at all; it was pretty straightforward, and the manual was the same way, because by that time Helen was really in the scribal groove, as it were, the writing just flowed through her.

As I mentioned, Helen and Bill had become friendly with Hugh Lynn Cayce, who was a southern gentleman in every respect, obviously dedicated to his father's work. He was very supportive of what Helen had done and was impressed by her. There is a cute story in this regard. I think the second or third time that Helen and Bill went down to Virginia Beach to see him, they showed him some of what Helen was already taking down, and he was impressed, believing that his father had something to do with it. One of the stylistic peculiarities of the early portions of the scribing is that it sounded like Edgar Cayce, with some obvious "Cayceisms." If you think the Course is hard to read, you should try reading Cayce. There are a lot of archaicisms in the Cayce material, and Helen, having read some of Cayce's work, was influenced by him. And so you can see this influence at the beginning of the text, but it quickly falls away.

And so this one time, a very skittish and anxious Helen was leaving Hugh Lynn's office, and he said to her: "You must be a very advanced soul, but you certainly don't look it." This was part of Helen's "costume." She did not look "very advanced," I assure you, although she had a definite air of authority about her, unmistakable to anyone who knew her. Yet she acted like a typical neurotic—phobic and anxious—and was quick to judge; at the same time that this exalted piece of writing was coming through her.

Early in the process of the retyping, Jesus told Helen: “Leave decisions about editing to Bill.” At that point, Bill was reasonably sane about the Course and Helen was not—she would have taken out anything that did not “read right” to her. This instruction had to do with the original version that Helen was so anxious about, and therefore her judgment would not be clear—Bill’s would be—about taking out the early material that did not belong. That certainly did not mean that Bill was the one to do all the editing. This was not his strength. Helen was the editor on their team. Bill did not have the patience for it. In fact, when Helen and Bill would write articles—they published many professional articles—Bill would write the rough draft. Helen then would tear it apart, edit, and re-edit it—still another source of tension in their already fractious relationship, for they would argue constantly. Helen was indeed an inveterate editor, and here is a funny story in that regard. There was the time when I had a luncheon appointment with a friend, which Helen knew about. When I was about to leave the office, Helen was on the phone, and so I wrote her a *very brief note*, telling her I was leaving. Without pausing in her conversation, she took out a pencil and began to edit it!

Regarding the Course, Helen never made editorial decisions on her own. She was very clear that this was not her book. While she claimed to be responsible only for the form, not the content that she knew was not hers, she did nothing with this course that she did not feel came with Jesus’ blessing, including any thoughts from Bill about what should be left in or taken out. As the editing proceeded, the text was originally put in four volumes of thesis binders. Helen would only want to show people volume IV because the writing there is so beautiful.

Helen and Bill prepared an edition of the text for Hugh Lynn (and later the workbook and manual), which we (Helen, Bill, and I) came to call the Hugh Lynn Version, to differentiate it from the earlier manuscripts. Thus, in this version there was a footnote that expressed gratitude to Hugh Lynn for his support. Though gracious and sincere, it was obviously meant only for Hugh Lynn Cayce. Also in that version, an earlier archaicism was left in, where the Holy Spirit was referred to as the Spiritual Eye, merely because Helen was nervous about the phrase “Holy Spirit.” Therefore she used “Spiritual Eye” as a euphemism—a phrase, I think, that Cayce used. It dropped away after the early sections, but it had been left in for the Hugh Lynn Version. And so Helen decided to replace it with “the Holy Spirit”.

I met Helen and Bill in the late fall of 1972.<sup>2</sup> I was in the midst of my own journey then, and was on the way to the Middle East. When I returned in May 1973, I saw *A Course in Miracles* for the first time, and what I saw was this Hugh Lynn Version. I read it through twice—the text, workbook, and teacher’s manual. After my second reading—the fall of 1973—I said to Helen and Bill that I thought the Course needed another edit, for a number of reasons. The capitalization was notoriously inconsistent. Helen felt that with very few exceptions, and I will mention those as we go along, Jesus left it to her to capitalize, punctuate, make paragraph breaks, and put in titles, because the text came through without titles or breaks—no sections, chapters, or even paragraphs. Helen, again, felt that was her job; that in effect Jesus did not care about commas, semicolons, or paragraphs, but only the message. And so Helen supplied the capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and, along with Bill, the section and chapter titles. One prominent exception was Jesus’ insistence that *Son of God* always be capitalized, to distinguish the Course’s usage from the traditional Christian one, where the term was reserved for Jesus alone, and always capitalized. Therefore, he wanted the same capitalized term to be used throughout the Course, but with the meaning extended to embrace everyone, not just him. *Atonement* had to be capitalized, too, differentiating it from the ego’s atonement.

With those very, very few exceptions, everything on the form level was left to Helen. Thus, when I read it, I felt that Helen’s idiosyncrasies needed to be smoothed out, and both Helen and Bill agreed. Let me briefly discuss some more of these. Helen went through a period where any word remotely associated with God or Heaven got capitalized. And then Helen had two comma philosophies: more and less. Moreover, she had a quaint British way of using a semicolon when a colon should be used. The section and chapter titles were also a bit strange. Helen would often entitle a section based on the first paragraph, and therefore many titles did not quite fit, and some of the section breaks seemed arbitrary as well. The paragraphing,

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2. Again, the details of our meeting and relationship can be found in my *Absence from Felicity*.

too, was very inconsistent, and I later found out why. Helen went through a period when she thought every paragraph should have nine lines. She also had two philosophies about the usage of the words *that* and *which*, and could not make up her mind which it should be; sometimes it would be *which*, other times *that*, and I often had to go back over our editing and change a *that* into a *which*, and vice versa. And the same with punctuation. Helen would frequently change her mind about the commas, and so I would go back over the manuscript and make the necessary adjustments.

What is important about this is to realize that Helen was very loose with this course—not with the meaning, to be sure, nor the vocabulary, but in the sense that the form was not sacrosanct to her. Indeed, none of us thought this was a sacred text in which every word was literally the Word of God. Helen knew what *A Course in Miracles* said, and knew the way it should say it, and she never deviated from that, despite tinkering with the form.

There also was some material that did not belong, as it seemed to be remnants from the old days—nothing that made any difference in terms of the teaching; for example, there was a discussion about Freud that did not fit, for it came out of nowhere and was out of keeping with the rest of the material.

There was a tremendous amount of punning and word-play in the dictation, some of which is still there, but nothing to the extent that it was at the beginning. Bill was a marvelous punster, and I have rarely met anyone as quick or as clever with puns as he was. And so there were all these puns that seemed designed to make Bill more comfortable. Some of these were dreadful and were removed. Here is one example: Jesus was making the point that he could reinterpret anything the ego made into a right-minded thought. And so he took some of the more prominent Freudian defense mechanisms and gave them spiritual interpretations. It seemed a bit too cute to us to keep in. One example had to do with *fixation*—we should be fixated on the divine; and *sublimation*—we should be oriented towards the sublime. Therefore, these were taken out.

Bill had a thing about there being fifty miracle principles—he liked the round number. When the principles originally came through, there were forty-three, and this metamorphosed over the course of Helen's re-typings to fifty-three. In the original, as I mentioned earlier, a miracle principle was given, and then came a long discussion, followed by another principle. It was all very informal. Helen and Bill, and then Helen and I—which I will get to shortly—made some changes, where discussion material from the miracle principle was taken out and put into a separate section in the same chapter. Since Bill wanted fifty, and we knew this would not change the content at all, Helen and I simply followed the earlier procedure by removing three principles and incorporating them into other sections in the chapter. So these were the kinds of things we did, and Helen never made the final decision without checking first with Jesus to see if there were any objections.

After discussing these editing issues, Helen and Bill agreed that the Course should really be gone through one more time—word by word. As I have said, Bill lacked the patience for this kind of work; he would not have been able to sustain that much concentrated time with Helen over the long period this would take. In addition, Helen and I were very comfortable with each other and knew we would have no difficulty with this particular assignment. And so we all agreed that Helen and I would go through the entire Course, word by word. This took over a year, most of the time being spent on the text, as the workbook and manual required practically no editing.

We spent an inordinate amount of time on the first four chapters. It has been suggested, I know, that this editing is something I essentially did on my own, or that I influenced Helen's decisions. Anyone who knew Helen would clearly recognize the absurdity of this idea. No one, including Jesus, could ever get her to do anything she did not want to do. To think that I could have had an influence on Helen is most strange. Indeed, we were very close and she respected me—I was like her spiritual son—but in no way could that be taken to mean that something I might suggest would be seen as gospel, *unless she believed it to be true and checked it first with Jesus*.

Let me give another example of personal material that was taken out. There was a section called “True Rehabilitation” that was specifically meant for Bill, to help him with his own bodily concerns as he prepared to attend a conference on rehabilitation at Princeton University. While the message was personal to Bill, it remained in the Hugh Lynn Version that Helen and I were editing. We all agreed it did not belong in the published Course (although I did reproduce it in *Absence from Felicity*). However, the close of the mes-

sage contained a lovely prayer, which was perfect for the Course. Helen and Bill asked me to find a place for it, and “Special Principles of Miracle Workers” in Chapter 2 seemed like a perfect fit, where it is now. Among ourselves we referred to it as the “Prayer for Salvation,” and it begins with the words: “I am here only to be truly helpful.”

There were three other sections, or parts of sections, that began as personal messages to Helen, or to Helen and Bill, but fit in perfectly with the flow of the teaching material: “True Empathy” (Chapter 16), “I Need Do Nothing” (Chapter 18), and “The Branching of the Road” (Chapter 22). There is also “Right Teaching and Right Learning” in Chapter 4, which was originally meant for Bill, who was terrified of having to teach an undergraduate course in psychology at Columbia University. The personal material was removed (though, again, I cite much of this in my book), leaving the more general teaching. There was also an interesting addition. A relatively major focus of my time with Helen was her poetry, and one of my “assignments” was to rescue scraps of poems that Helen would write on little pieces of paper. If I were able to preserve these, Helen was later able to generate the rest of the poem. This was always successful, except for one fragment that Helen could never do anything with. Finally one day, she said to me that this fragment was not a poem but belonged in the Course, and she wanted me to find the right place. The verse began with the lines “There is a risk in thinking death is peace,” and it found its rightful home in Chapter 27 of the text. All these examples are discussed in more detail in *Absence from Felicity*, and they serve to illustrate the point that the scribing of *A Course in Miracles* was more informal than one might have thought.

You can see Helen’s writing on our edited pages, which remain in my safekeeping. My writing is there as well, where I rewrote something as per her instructions, or made suggestions for her to review. As often as possible during the day, Helen and I would go through the Course, and every once in a while Helen would say, “I changed this word. This is what it should be,” and we would go back to what she originally heard. Any changes that were made I would then take home with me, type up, and present the copy to Helen the next day, and we would go over it. To repeat, the first four chapters were a tremendous amount of work, so much so that I once said to Helen: “Why don’t you just ask Jesus to dictate this again; it would save us both a lot of time.” I shall not repeat her not-so-delicate response.

Thus, anything that was changed was done so, first of all, because of style—the writing, to use Helen’s word, was *clunky*, meaning awkward. And so she wanted to clarify the writing because she knew her hearing was not that clear in the beginning. We made the changes that Bill had requested—we took material out of the miracle principles and made it into sections, as I mentioned earlier, so that there would be exactly fifty.

Therefore, we kept the meaning, and the changes made it much more readable. What was originally there was not how it was supposed to be in the published version. Again, Helen’s hearing was rusty at the beginning, and her considerable anxiety colored what she heard. Students really have to be clear that these are not the *literal* words of Jesus—the meaning is, but not the actual language. As I said before, Helen’s ego got in the way of some of the more specific messages to her (and Bill).

When the editing was completed, we then had it retyped. When I later saw the notebooks and Urtext, I realized that some of what I was reading was not in the published text, but clearly should have been as it came later in the scribing, an obvious result of Helen’s retypings. For example, when Helen was retyping the text, one of the pages had stuck to another. As a result, there were three paragraphs she never saw when she was typing. Therefore that material never made it into that version or any of the subsequent ones. Nothing in those paragraphs was different in meaning from what was already in the Course, but clearly should have been in. I recognized, too, other passages that had been inadvertently left out. When the written material is typed and retyped, mistakes happen, especially if the retypings are not adequately proofread, which was the case with the Course. We subsequently did proofread it at our Foundation in New York, with one group of people reading from the Urtext to be sure that we finally got everything right. We discovered there were words, sentences, and paragraphs left out, mostly in the text, and one we found had been omitted from the teachers manual. Incidentally, an errata booklet, available free of charge from the Foundation, was prepared for the second printing and lists all of the added material.

There were some other minor corrections and changes. As *A Course in Miracles* was originally written

for Helen and Bill, Jesus would frequently address her and Bill and say, *you and each other*. However, the Course is not meant to be read by anyone but one person—each of us—who is involved in a myriad number of relationships. And so *you and each other* became *you and your brother*. The change was easy, for it maintained the meter—always a concern of Helen. Yet we had missed some in our editing.

The decision made by the Foundation for Inner Peace and the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles* to put out a second edition of the Course in the early 1990s gave us a chance to restore all the omitted material. This was also the time when we instituted the numbering system, which we needed for the concordance we were working on,<sup>3</sup> as well as to provide a common way of referring to verses for the various translations that were beginning to emerge, similar to the Bible where, for example, anyone in the world can find John 5:16, regardless of the edition, pagination, or language. You just go to the fifth chapter, sixteenth verse in John's gospel. With the new numbering system, Course students all over the world could do the same thing.

### **How the Unpublished Material Became Public**

Since Helen and Bill knew I would never violate their trust, they put me in charge of what we called the archives—the notebooks and all the subsequent typings—as Helen was always misplacing or losing things, and Bill was not very organized. Thus I became the archivist, and still have this material in my possession.

As I mentioned earlier, much of what I am saying now is in my book, *Absence from Felicity: The Story of Helen Schucman and Her Scribing of "A Course in Miracles."* I included there a good part of the Urtext material that was relevant to understanding Helen and Bill's experience of the scribing. Since I was quoting this material, I felt I should copyright it, which in hindsight appears was a mistake, and indeed, my wise wife Gloria cautioned me against doing this. This was a herculean task. The Foundation staff made copies of all the material and these were sent to the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. What could be safer, I thought, than the Library of Congress?

While I had a copy of the Hugh Lynn Version of the Course—actually it was just the textbook—the original, as I stated earlier, was presented by Helen and Bill to Hugh Lynn Cayce, and was eventually put in the rare books section of the A.R.E. library at their headquarters in Virginia Beach. Many years later, when I was giving some lectures at the A.R.E., Charles Thomas Cayce, Hugh Lynn's son and the grandson of Edgar Cayce, took Gloria and me into that locked room to show us the manuscript that had been given many years earlier to his father.

As is widely known, there was a court case involving infringement of the copyright by the Endeavor Academy in Wisconsin, an action brought about by the Foundation for Inner Peace, the publisher of the Course, and the Foundation for *A Course in Miracles*, its sister organization and copyright holder of the Course. This is not the place to discuss the details, except to say that they were doing inappropriate things with the Course and we were trying to stop them. As part of the proceedings, I was deposed by Endeavor's attorney, who asked me, among other things, about the manuscripts. I mentioned that the Hugh Lynn Version, the one that Helen and I edited, was in the A.R.E. library. Armed with that information, some people subsequently and unlawfully removed the manuscript from the A.R.E., copied it, and then returned it to the library. It was later published under the name "Jesus' Course in Miracles." The contention was that I was the one who had changed Jesus' Course, and that the authentic Course was the Hugh Lynn Version that "Bill" edited. I was thus viewed as an upstart who came along with his own ideas about what the Course said and convinced Helen to make changes; a belief hard to understand because nothing was changed in terms of meaning and, as I have indicated, almost all changes occurred at the beginning of the text. At any rate, the claim was that the Course published by the Foundation for Inner Peace was not the true Course.

Then something happened I never would have thought possible: Under false pretenses, the notebooks and Urtext were taken from the Library of Congress and copied, a violation of federal law. We talked to legal authorities at the Library, who were outraged. However, it was clear that this case was very small

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3. The *Concordance of A Course in Miracles* was published in 1997.

potatoes to them. The Library of Congress is under the Department of Justice, which has other things on its mind besides someone taking a manuscript that is of no importance to anyone outside of a very small group. So nothing was ever done about it. We were assured by Library officials that this would never happen again, but of course that was of no help in our situation. The people who were now in possession of the illegally obtained material—the notebooks, Urtext and Hugh Lynn Version—had it scanned or retyped, and have made it available on the internet and elsewhere for purchase.

That, then, is how all this material got out. The court case was concluded in 2004 and the copyright was declared invalid. This, however, did not apply to the Course's Preface, the additional material added to the Second Edition, the Clarification of Terms, and the two pamphlets, *Psychotherapy* and *The Song of Prayer*. Moreover, the Foundation still owns the copyright to the notebooks, Urtext, and the Hugh Lynn Version. As a result, when you go now to *amazon.com* and call up *A Course in Miracles*, the chances are, if you are not aware of this background, that you may be selecting the Endeavor or some other version, which is being marketed as the original Course. The Endeavor group has also included Matthew's gospel in the Course, because they have always held that the Course and the Bible are the same. Thus, in that version you are not going to get the true Course at all, not even the Urtext or Hugh Lynn version. There are at least two other versions being marketed as well. Thus people now can do just about anything they want with the Course.

### **Helen and *A Course in Miracles*: Form and Content**

What is most important to consider about the public exposure of these earlier manuscripts is that regardless of the version you read, you will receive the essential *teaching* of the Course. In that sense, no real harm has been done.

In another sense, however, the situation is unfortunate because people could be misled, and at this point nothing can be done about it—the horse is out of the barn, as it were; Pandora's box is open and can never be closed again—except, perhaps, to clarify what inquiring students may be reading. Let me cite some examples. There is material in the Urtext about sex and sexuality, an area that will almost certainly pique the curiosity (if not prurient interest) of students. Thus, for example, one will read that homosexuality is essentially a pathology (the traditional psychoanalytic view), and that the only purpose for sex is procreation, two positions that are antithetical to Jesus' own teachings in the Course about seeing *all* forms of the ego's world as the same, the correction to the ego's first law of chaos that *there is a hierarchy of illusion* (T-23.II.2). To believe that these would be the words and thoughts of Jesus is as preposterous and unthinkable an idea as to believe that I could influence Helen as to what belonged in the Course and what did not. It should be obvious that these beliefs belong to Helen and not to Jesus. Helen had her own biases about sex, and unfortunately they came through in these early passages. Yet those who believe that every word in the Urtext is sacred and are Jesus' words can use statements like these to support their own preconceived notions. This same issue holds, though perhaps with less emotionality, with material related to Edgar Cayce, Freud, and other psychologists (Helen, as I mentioned, did not like Jung), etc.

It would be helpful to digress a moment to speak about Jesus, the scribing, and Helen's relationship to it. Again, this is discussed in much greater depth in my book and also CDs. To begin with, Jesus does not speak words. It is really important to understand this. I remember when we are at an airport, a very sincere woman came up to Helen after hearing us speak, and asked: "How could Jesus have dictated the Course; he didn't know English?" I don't recall Helen's response to this sweet question, except that she was gracious in providing a brief reply (we had to catch a plane). The question, however, reflects an important point. Again, Jesus does not speak in words. To say it differently and succinctly here, his is the *content*, our minds (and brains) supply the *form*. Therefore, Helen's decision-making mind identified itself with the non-ego presence that is in everyone. This non-judgmental thought system of love was represented for her by Jesus, as it is for so many of us. Her mind took that non-specific love and translated it into words, in much the same way as our brains translate the upside-down image cast on the retina into right-side-up perceptions.

And so, as I have said many times, *the form of the Course is from Helen*. Here are some illustrative examples of the *formal* qualities of *A Course in Miracles* that can be directly attributable to its scribe:

1) *It is in the English language.*

2) *Its idiom is American.* There is even a reference to the Declaration of Independence and American currency of “green paper strips.”

3) *Helen philosophically was a Platonist.* The philosophy of *A Course in Miracles* is Platonic, and there are even references to Plato’s famous Allegory of the Cave from the *Republic*. Moreover, the statement that “words are but symbols of symbols. . . [and] are thus twice removed from reality” (M-21.1:9-10), is also directly taken from the *Republic*.

4) *Helen loved Shakespeare.* The Course is Shakespearean in its language. Much of it is written in blank verse (unrhymed poetry) and in iambic pentameter, the form of Shakespeare’s poetry. One can also find allusions to *Hamlet*, Helen’s favorite play.

5) *Helen was enamored of the King James version of the Bible.* She did not like the content of the Bible at all, but loved the way it was written. Thus, in the Course one finds biblical “archaicisms”—the Elizabethan way of speaking.

6) *Helen was fiercely logical.* She had one of the most logical minds I have ever seen, and *A Course in Miracles* develops its thought system—the ego’s and the Holy Spirit’s—in a strictly logical manner. In addition, one finds that the syllogistic form of argument is both implicitly and explicitly used.

7) *Helen was an educator.* The Course’s curricular format is clear: text, workbook for students, manual for teachers; the Holy Spirit is our Teacher; and the language throughout reflects the learning aspects of the curriculum.

8) *Helen was a psychologist.* Her psychological background was Freudian and she had a great respect for Freud’s work. As I have been saying for over thirty years: without Freud, one would not have *A Course in Miracles*, as the presentation of the ego thought system is heavily based upon Freud’s remarkable insights, which were second nature to Helen.

9) *Helen had a love-hate relationship with Jesus.* Of course there is no hate in the Course in terms of Jesus, but no one can mistake his loving and non-judgmental presence throughout.

And so, we can see how the *form* of the Course is all Helen’s. Interestingly, however, the style of the writing was not Helen’s, who wrote in an almost spartan style, appropriate for scientific writing, in contrast to the more poetic and (at times) grammatically loose sentence structure one finds in the Course, which used to, incidentally, drive Helen up a wall. The *content* of *A Course in Miracles*, however, is clearly not Helen’s, at least not the Helen the world knew or the person she consciously identified with. This explains why she felt at liberty to change the form, though never the content. Helen knew what the published Course ought to be. One could make recommendations, and Bill and I did from time to time, but *Helen had the finished form already in her head*. And so the Course published by the Foundation for Inner Peace is the way its scribe knew it should be.

I do believe it is a violation of hers and Bill’s privacy to read the Urtext (or any other version) when she only sanctioned the Foundation’s publication. Helen and Bill wanted me to read it, but it is like reading someone’s private diaries. Why would you want to do that, especially when asked not to, unless you are looking for conflict and guilt? Recall these words from the introduction to the clarification of terms:

**“All terms are potentially controversial, and those who seek controversy will find it. Yet those who seek clarification will find it as well. They must, however, be willing to overlook controversy, recognizing that it is a defense against truth in the form of a delaying maneuver” (C-in.2:1-3).**

Once again, the personal and private material in the Urtext does not belong in any published version. Most writers destroy all the earlier versions when they finish a manuscript. I do that when I complete a book and it is published. In reading the Urtext, students of *A Course in Miracles* are not going to find “Jesus’ authentic words,” but the writings of a woman struggling (at first) with the scribal process, and thus are reading what was never meant to be read. Now, if you do read it, I am not saying Helen will strike you dead with a thunderbolt, or that it is sinful, but you should at least ask yourself why you are doing so. As Jesus emphasizes throughout his course: purpose is everything; we need to ask only one question of anything: *What is it for?* I can guarantee you one thing, however: the Urtext will not enhance your understanding of the Course. If anything, it will confuse you because, as I have indicated, you will come across specific things that were not meant to be read by the public and will seem to contradict what the Course itself teaches, not to mention its use of words and terms that suggest the opposite of what the Course’s teachings are.

Therefore, a question that I think should be asked by students of *A Course in Miracles* who are interested in this material is: “Why would I want to read something that might be construed as teaching something different from what the Course is actually saying, not to mention that Jesus, Helen, and Bill in effect asked me not to?” It is also helpful to remember that the material that some focus on came during the very early weeks of the scribing, and what followed was hardly changed at all. We thus are speaking of what happened when Helen’s hearing was not that accurate. It was during this time, as I mentioned, that Helen was still influenced by Edgar Cayce, and this was reflected in what she wrote down. However, this interference was short-lived. Yet if readers of the Urtext are not aware of this aspect of Helen’s scribing, they can easily be confused and misled into thinking, to give one instance, that the Course is teaching that the world is real. To be sure, there are intimations of this at the beginning—in marked distinction from the rest of the Course—which reflects the Cayce influence, wherein this great psychic stated that God created the world as a classroom, after the separation. Again, this is hardly the position of *A Course in Miracles*.

I remember on one occasion that Helen and I were with someone who was prominently associated with the Course, but did not really know what it said. Helen said to him that he would never understand this course unless he recognized that this world is an illusion. She was very emphatic: *This world is an illusion. God had nothing to do with it, and you will not understand this course that way.* Again, no one understood this course better than Helen.

There is an interesting story about Helen when we were going through the editing process—it was actually quite funny. Helen would frequently become anxious during our editing, and one of the ways she would express her anxiety was that when we would read a paragraph, she would start to laugh and then say: “This makes absolutely no sense to me.” So the first teaching I actually did was “teaching” Helen, knowing full well that she knew full well what the passage meant. And I also knew that if I had said something that was wrong, she would have corrected me on the spot. Helen knew the Course from the inside out. She hardly ever read it, but could quote it at will. In the years we were together, we would always quote lines back and forth, when we weren’t quoting *Hamlet*. She would get quite judgmental and angry with people who pretended to know what it said but did not. She was very clear that she was never going to teach it formally, but she did not want anyone else teaching it who was obviously expressing his or her ego, and not Jesus.

Returning to this important point, there is a prominent idea that what Helen took down are Jesus’ literal words, and are therefore sacred and should never have been altered. This is as patently absurd as the lady who wrote to me after the second (and numbered) edition was published, accusing me of changing Jesus’ course by adding numbers to it. Helen did not think that way. A lot of what she heard at the beginning was just wrong, and she of course knew that. Again, I had many personal experiences with Helen of her writing down messages she said were from Jesus. This, by the way, occurred during the same time period when she was writing down the pamphlets, which are certainly pure in their teaching. Inaccuracies were frequently

the result when she was involved with specifics. Here are some additional examples.

I think it was 1976, a year after we met Judith Skutch, the eventual publisher of the Course through the Foundation for Inner Peace. Helen, Bill, Judy, and I were discussing what we thought was going to happen with the Course and our work with it. As was typical during this period, Helen wrote down a message for us, probably somewhere in the summer, and it said that “This year will end in blazing glory.” The meaning was that there was to be some magnificent breakthrough; perhaps, we thought, Helen and Bill’s relationship would be healed and we would all ride off into the spiritual sunset together—i.e., wonderful things would be happening. Well, weeks and months went by, and no blazing glory. Finally, it was December 31st and we were still waiting. Judy was giving a New Year’s Eve party in her apartment, which overlooked Central Park and provided a beautiful view of the sky. Sometime later in the evening, New York City put on its New Year’s Eve fireworks display, and we turned to each other and said: “There’s the blazing glory!” Obviously, Helen had been wrong.

Another instance of Helen’s inaccuracy with specifics was when she saw her own tombstone, indicating that she would die when she was 72. Well, she died when she was 71. It was close, but if you are Jesus’ scribe, you should not be off even a little. She also said Bill would die within a year of her death, which became a big concern for Bill. But he lived another seven years and died in 1988. Finally, Helen said that her husband Louis would die within five or six years of her death, but he lived for almost another nineteen years! And so Helen was frequently wrong when it came to specifics—the ego loves specifics—or when her messages related to areas in which she was conflicted, as with sex and death. She was not wrong, however, when her ego was not involved. This is why you can trust what the published Course says.

Thus, it became very clear to me in the years I knew Helen that I should take with a grain of salt some of the things she said or wrote as coming from Jesus, and this clearly included the early Urtext material. Unfortunately, there are also some things there that if you do not know the context, you will not understand what they refer to, or what they mean. This inevitably means that those who were not present and did not know Helen or Bill will misunderstand much of what is found there.

Finally, I can assure all students of *A Course in Miracles* that they have not been cheated, and Helen, Bill, and I worked very hard to be sure that the book published by the Foundation for Inner Peace was the way Jesus meant it to be, and certainly the way Helen knew he wanted it.

## Conclusions

It goes without saying that I do not want people to feel guilty if they buy or read the other versions. People should do whatever they want, as long as it is not hurtful; and contrary to what some people might say, there is no “Pope of the Course.” So, whatever you do with the Course, what is most important is that it be done without anger, judgment, or feelings of unfair treatment. Those responses are always of the ego. Thus, whatever you do, try to have the motivation be ego free. In that way, whatever you do will be loving.

While some may be tempted to argue about the merits of the different versions, all that is really important is where the Course comes from: everyone’s right mind, which each of us can choose at any point. If you find yourself getting caught up in controversy, thinking the arguments mean something, you will argue and see differences, where in truth there are none. Differences undoubtedly exist in form (the body), but never in content (the mind). Thus there can be no significant differences among those who represent different positions. Seeing differences and making them into something serious is when the ego catches us, for we are remembering not to laugh at the “tiny, mad idea” of separation (T-27.VIII.6:2).

What motivates people to stir up controversy is the need to have there be conflict; and when there is conflict, you know the ego has been invited in. There can be no conflict in one’s right mind, because there everyone is perceived to be the same. Whatever differences exist, again, are only on the illusory level of the body. Bodies differ. People write different books and say different things; but if you make these differences significant and the object of controversy and conflict, if not war, then you know which voice you are listening to. Our only responsibility is to hear the Voice of peace, and when we do, we recognize that con-

troveries are like boys and girls playing in a sandbox. But you cannot get sand in your eyes unless you sit down with them and play in the sand. If you stand up as an adult, with Jesus by your side, then whatever is happening in the sandbox is of no consequence to you, which means that nothing that goes on in the world can change the experience of God's Love in your mind.

Whether or not you agree with the issues generated by the differing versions of *A Course in Miracles* is irrelevant. Obviously everyone has a position, but that position should not affect your peace, nor your vision that sees everyone involved in the issue as the same. That means that what is going on now with the Course is just another classroom; another way of seeing whether you want to get your hands, feet, and eyes filled with sand, or to be able to stand with Jesus and be at peace. When you choose vision instead of judgment, as Jesus is always asking us to do, you will see that everyone is involved in the same quest for returning to the mind and choosing again, and that everyone is tempted to be afraid of this journey. When people are afraid, they get caught in the sandbox and start playing with its toys as if they were weapons.

The point here is that people should take whatever stand they think is right, but to try not to let it amount to anything. The only position that is truly right is that we all made the same mistake of choosing the wrong teacher, and now we can make the correction by choosing again. That is the only thing that is important. What is happening now is just another opportunity to choose differently—to see shared instead of separate interests.

Your perspective on *A Course in Miracles* will be warped if you see it in any way as part of the world of separation and form. It is said that the Buddha once remarked: "What are known as the teachings of the Buddha are not the teachings of the Buddha." And the same can be said for the Course. In other words, *A Course in Miracles* is not really a book, nor even a body of specific teachings. It is a symbol for the Atonement, the correction for the thought of separation that is in everyone's mind. When we recognize this, it would be impossible to judge other students, teachers, or the Course vis a vis itself or other spiritualities. We would not accord it any meaning that is fragmenting or separating. This means that we realize that what is holy is not the book, or Helen—her notebooks, pen, or the fingers that held the pen. It is the thought system in our *equal* minds that is holy. Otherwise the Course becomes just another symbol of specialness and a means of justifying the ego's projection of guilt in the form of judgment, division, and conflict. Just as Christianity ended up as a religion of hate and even murder, this course could end up like that, too. Unfortunately, its short history already reflects some of the same dynamics of separation, judgment and exclusion. Yet what else would one expect from the ego? In other words, *A Course in Miracles* is written by the mind, for the mind—that it correct itself.

Yes, it is important that this communication from Jesus be transmitted accurately, as accurately as is possible, although perfect communication is impossible within the illusion. Yet keep in mind, to say it one more time, that the true communication is not the words, but the love with which Helen joined in her mind, and which is in our own as well—a love that reflects the perfect love and oneness of Heaven. And so, work with whatever symbols are meaningful to you, but do so in such a way that you have no investment in the outcome. Fulfill your function of forgiveness as purely as you can, and what happens after that will not be your concern; otherwise you fall into the ego's trap of substituting form for content, one of the prime characteristics of special relationships. That is why I keep insisting that *A Course in Miracles* is not *A Course in Miracles*—at least not the book or its words. If we can remember the love that *is* the Course, we will not be taken in by the ego's seductions of differences and controversy. And when we are able to keep that love pure in ourselves, we will not make the seeming purity of the form so important, recognizing that we are one in content, albeit different in form. And learning to remember that shared content of love in *all* God's Sons is the sum and substance of *A Course in Miracles*.