

Introduction to the Complete and Annotated Edition

A *Course in Miracles* has become a contemporary spiritual classic. It stands by itself, not part of any larger tradition and with no centralized movement behind it. The strength of its popularity can in large part be attributed to one reason: the power, beauty, and wisdom of its words. Since it was originally published in 1976, readers have recognized in those words truths that they had never heard before, yet somewhere inside seemed to have always known. As a result, those words have inspired profound and lifelong devotion in thousands of students around the world.

At the heart of that devotion is the belief that those words came from beyond the human level, that rather than being conceived by Helen Schucman, they were *received* by her, perhaps from the very place they claimed to have come—from the mind of Jesus.

What students did not know for many years, however, is how much human input went into the published work. The original dictation that Helen took down was run through a lengthy editing process that produced a new version with each editing pass, and during each new editing pass, the editors apparently consulted only the most recent version, rather than going back to the original. By the end of this process, roughly forty-five thousand words had been edited out, mostly from the first seven chapters of the Text, and the wording of the first four chapters had been edited to the point where only about a fifth of their sentences retained their original wording.

Some of this editing of the early Text chapters was genuinely needed, given that some of the early material was too personal for a published edition. Indeed, Helen Schucman received general guidelines (and, in regard to some passages, specific instructions) for how the editing was to be done.

Yet the editing appears to have gone beyond what was instructed. As a result, the author's attempts to clarify his new ideas with illustrations, analogies, real-life examples, and comparisons to existing ideas were largely edited out. And so, a vital bridge into his new and unfamiliar world of thought was essentially removed.

As the earlier versions of *A Course in Miracles* came to light in the beginning years of the twenty-first century, it became clear to us that there was a need for a new edition—an edition created by going back to Helen's shorthand notebooks and then editing afresh, retaining the original words to the maximum degree possible.

The Complete and Annotated Edition, then, is based directly on Helen's original handwritten Notes. By going back to the words that Helen Schuman heard in her mind and wrote down in her notebooks, it attempts to bring the reader into a more direct encounter with the power of those words. It includes, either in its main body or in appendices, the approximately forty-five thousand words that had been removed in the original published edition.

As the basis for this edition, we have carefully transcribed Helen's Notes, which were written in a combination of shorthand and handwriting that can be difficult to read. Our transcription involved producing a key of her shorthand symbols, figuring out unclear words, and reading beneath strikethroughs (to detect original wording, which is sometimes preferable). Starting with an accurate transcription of her Notes, we then re-edited *A Course in Miracles* from the beginning.

Our focus on inclusion of all material has resulted in a work with a number of key features:

- The first four chapters of the Text are roughly twice as long as they are in the familiar Foundation for Inner Peace edition.
- Material whose meaning had been changed by editing is now presented in its original form. For instance, we have restored the original statement "Prepare you *not* for the undoing of what never was," which had been changed in the FIP edition to "Prepare you *now* for the undoing of what never was."

- Material that had been rearranged and placed in a different order by editing has, in almost all cases, been restored to its original order.
- Extensive footnotes have been included to clarify difficult passages, identify unclear pronouns, define psychological terms, point out allusions to things in the general culture, and list Course references and Bible references.
- Thirty-three cameo essays have been written, and are included in Appendix I. These essays comment on personal guidance given by the source of the material to the scribes (Helen Schucman and William Thetford). This guidance, while too personal for the Course proper, clarifies the application of Course principles to the lives of the scribes, and by extension, to the lives of all students.
- Material that never made it out of Helen's notebooks is included, such as this passage: "Love him steadily, whatever he does, whatever he says, and *he* will see the miracle of God and *you* will learn of salvation. If this seems hard to do, remember it is what you want of *me*."
- Dictation that is too personal for the Course proper but too short to be the subject of a cameo essay is commented on in the Editing Notes. (These can be found online at <http://www.acim.circleofa.org/editing-notes/>.)
- All original emphasis of words is retained (either as italics or as gray underlines), as this helps illuminate the meaning.
- Most of the Text section titles and many of the Text section divisions are new.
- Documentation (and often explanation) of editing changes is included. (Again, these are online at <http://www.acim.circleofa.org/editing-notes/>.)

The teaching in this edition does not contradict the teaching found in other editions of *A Course in Miracles*. However, we believe that this edition, through its inclusion of additional teaching and restoration of original wording and order, will allow the Course's true meaning and character to shine through a little more clearly. And we hope that this will enable students to better see the Course for what it is, relate to it as it is, and apply its profound truths to their lives.