

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. VERSION HISTORY IN BRIEF	6
THE MANY EDITIONS, A CONFUSING PROLIFERATION	6
TERMINOLOGY AND NOMENCLATURE.....	8
3. THE SCRIBAL VERSIONS AND EDITIONS IN DETAIL	13
THE SHORTHAND NOTES.....	13
THE THETFORD TRANSCRIPT.....	15
THE URTEXT VERSION	15
THE HLC VERSION	16
THE NUN’S VERSION (FOUNDATION FOR INNER PEACE VERSION)	17
4. THE SEVEN VOLUMES	19
5. POST-SCRIBAL VERSIONS	20
THE ECLECTIC CRITICAL VERSION.....	20
WHITMORE’S INTERPRETIVE “ORIGINAL EDITION”	22
6. DIFFERENT KINDS OF EDITIONS.....	24
7. PUBLISHER CONTACT INFORMATION.....	33

Family Tree: 5 Scribal Versions, 25 Editions

by Doug Thompson

1. Introduction

Most of the currently available editions of *A Course in Miracles* (listed on the next page) are at least honest attempts to produce a reasonably accurate copy of a particular **Scribal Version**, and, except for the **facsimile** and **replica** editions, all introduce some changes, correcting at least some of the most obvious unintentional typos, although several add a number of new ones and a few go beyond the “obvious typos” to address some more subtle problems such as apparently inadvertent omissions.

Editions which document editorial “interventions” are generally referred to as “**Scholarly Editions**” or “**Critical Editions**.” There is no single generic term for editions which fail to meet the standard of “scholarly edition” although the terms “recreational edition” and “reader’s edition” and “popular edition” are sometimes used. When dealing with a very inaccurate, sloppy and amateurish productions, and there have been some of them, a variety of unflattering terms are sometimes used.

Unfortunately for the reader, very few editions of the *Course* document the changes they introduce and several make statements indicating there are far fewer changes present than is actually the case.

One early English translation of the Bible in the 16th Century suffered from serious proofreading problems. In the Ten Commandments, for example, the unfortunate wording “Thou shalt commit adultery” appeared. It ended up being called the “*Wicked Edition*.”

The “editions” listed in the “*Family Tree Chart*” then are those which at least attempt to reproduce one of the original **Scribal Versions** with alterations limited to dealing with actual errors. They are of widely varying quality, accuracy and professionalism.

In the “*Family Tree Chart*” the five main headings list those **Primary Scribal Versions** which are known either because copies are available or there are credible published and oral reports that, in the case of the *Thetford Transcript*, it did at least exist at one time and a copy may yet surface. Under each of the five **Scribal Version** headings, there is a list of all distinct editions of that version of which I am aware which are (or at one time were) publicly available either as a file distributed on the net or as a book or CD

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

available for purchase. A number of the print editions are out of print and while copies may be found in libraries or used bookstores, there is otherwise no current commercial source for them. There is some indication that there may be yet other pre-publication manuscripts which have not yet surfaced.

There is at least one “*edition*,” a recent transcript of the *Notes*, which reliable sources indicate exists, but which is not available to the public, or even to me. Due to its unavailability, it is not listed.

In addition to the 25 editions of the historical ***Scribal Versions***, there are two other editions, one in print and one planned, which do not attempt to reproduce any one ***Scribal Version*** but draw on two or more and in that sense are ***Post-Scribal Eclectic Versions*** (see Section 5, page 12 of this Appendix). Setting out to achieve very different things than any reproduction of a ***Scribal Version*** they cannot be evaluated, for instance, as to how “accurately” they represent any particular version since they don’t attempt to represent any single version. These are discussed in section 5 (page 13 of this appendix). As serious textual scholarship on A Course in Miracles begins to be done, we can expect more “post-scribal versions.”

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

This list is current as of March 2008.

1. <u>Shorthand Notes</u> 1965-1978 (some of this remains unavailable)			
a)	MPF 5 CD Facsimile Edition		(2007)
b)	The Greene Facsimile Edition		(2007)
c)	MPF cross-referenced "Toolbox" Edition	(e-text)	(2008)
d)	MPF "Toolbox" partial transcript	(e-text)	(2008)
2. <u>Thetford Transcript</u> (little if any of this has surfaced) (1965-197?)			
a)	No positively identified copies known		
3. <u>Urtext</u> 1968? (roughly the same length as the <u>Notes</u> , some "personal material" was removed and some "dictated without notes" material was added)			
a)	Legacy Facsimile Edition		(2000)
b)	Legacy E-text	(e-text)	(2000)
c)	MPF "Toolbox" Facsimile Edition		(2008)
d)	MPF "Toolbox" 7 Volume Urtext	(e-text)	(2008)
e)	MIAP Complete 7 Volume Urtext	(print)	(2008)
4. <u>Hugh Lynn Cayce Version</u> 1972 (~50,000 words removed from the <u>Urtext</u>)			
a)	Legacy Facsimile Edition		(1999)→
b)	Legacy E-text	(e-text)	(1999)
c)	JCIM	(print)	(2000)
d)	Blue Sparkly	(print)	(2003)
e)	MPF "Corrected HLC"	(print)	(2006)
f)	MPF "Corrected HLC"	(e-text)	(2006)
g)	MPF Replica Edition	(e-text)	(2006)
5. <u>Nun's (FIP) Version</u> 1975 (~10,000 words removed from the <u>HLC</u>)			
a)	Criswell Facsimile (Xerox) Edition		(1975)
b)	FIP First Edition	(print)	(1976)
c)	FIP Second Edition	(print)	(1996)
d)	FIP Electronic ACIM	(e-text)	(1997)
e)	Legacy E-text	(based on above) (e-text)	(2000)
f)	EA Edition	(print)	(2006)
g)	Raincoast Edition	(print)	(2007)
h)	FIP Third Edition	(print)	(2007)
i)	MPF "Toolbox" FIP2 cross-referenced	(e-text)	(2008)

See section 3 for descriptions of each edition.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Legend of Nomenclature:

Blue Sparkly:	Thetford Foundation's 4 volume hardcover edition (available in Australia and N.Z. only)
E-text:	A manuscript copied to a computer text-file copy which can be searched for text strings
EA:	Endeavor Academy
Facsimile:	A digitized photocopy of an original manuscript. Usually a PDF file, may also be printed
FIP:	Foundation for Inner Peace: <i>FIP1: First Edition FIP2: Second Edition FIP3: Third Edition</i>
Greene:	Raphael Greene's publication of the <i>Shorthand Notes</i>
HLC:	Hugh Lynn Cayce (son of Edgar Cayce), the <i>HLC</i> Version was first shared with Cayce
Legacy:	E-text or facsimile first published anonymously on the net in the early days (2000)
MIAP:	Miracles in Action Press
MPF:	Miracles Pathway Fellowship publication
Nun's:	The 1975 abridged manuscript was first typed by a Nun, and thus named " <i>Nun's Version</i> "
Raincoast:	Raincoast Press
Replica:	An e-text which attempts keystroke for keystroke fidelity to source, including typos

For contact and ordering information for these editions please see the end of this appendix.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

2. Version History in brief

The Many Editions, a Confusing Proliferation

The proliferation of versions and editions of *A Course in Miracles* can be very confusing because while they differ substantially, they all **claim** a degree of “originality” few of them actually possess. To help the student navigate this very confusing scene, the “*Family Tree Chart*” chronologically traces the origins and lineage of each version. In section 3 there are brief descriptions offering an outline of the distinguishing features and major differences between them. Several of these versions are available in multiple editions, each of which is in its own way unique.

The Scribes, Helen Schucman and William Thetford, were involved in the production of five significantly different versions. Photocopies of only four of those five have come to light so far. While there is strong evidence of the fifth, little or none of it has yet surfaced. These four primary source versions reveal a great deal about how the Course evolved from the first *Shorthand Notebooks*.

Until 1999 there was only one version of *A Course in Miracles* generally available. That was the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) *First* and *Second Editions* of the *Nun’s Version*. The *Nun’s Version* earned its name because the final typing was done by a nun. While it was widely known that there were “earlier versions,” there was little interest in these due to the fact that the spokespersons for FIP claimed there were “virtually no changes.” In any event, the earlier versions were not made available. In 2000 two older manuscripts, the *Hugh Lynn Cayce (HLC)* version and the *Urtext* were published on the net and in 2007 the original *Shorthand Notebooks* emerged. We now have copies of these four distinct versions distinguished by substantial differences in length, organization, and wording.

Numerous published and oral accounts strongly suggest there is at least one other version – and possibly more than one – which has not yet surfaced. The uncertainty here arises due to published accounts indicating that two typed manuscripts were made for some volumes where only one has surfaced, and that three typed manuscripts were made for the *Text* where only two are known. This indicates that there is, or at least once was, at least one additional typed manuscript for each volume which has not yet come to light. There is some difference of opinion as to whether A) these accounts are inaccurate, that all manuscripts are present and accounted for or B) we’re missing an intermediate re-typing or C) we’re missing the original *Thetford Transcript*. After a careful examination of the evidence currently available,

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

the weight of probability points to “C” that there is a missing manuscript, and the missing manuscript is in fact the original transcript Bill Thetford typed to Helen Schucman’s oral dictation of her *Notebooks*. That same evidence suggests that the published accounts indicating that the *Urtext* **is** that *Thetford Transcript* are, in fact, mistaken.

Whether one agrees with this conclusion¹ or not, in interpreting this “*Family Tree Chart*,” the *Urtext* is considered as the first known re-typing of the *Thetford Transcript* and not that original transcript itself. Should that ultimately prove to be incorrect, the labels will, of course, need adjusting.

To some extent, each of these five historical “**Scribal Versions**” is the progenitor of the next. From one version to the next the Scribes copied from the immediately previous version and while copying, they modified the material. Unfortunately, due to a lack of proofreading many of the inevitable copying mistakes from one to the next were never detected and thus never corrected. In addition, intentional changes were made, some of which were genuine corrections of earlier errors, but many of which were actually the introduction of new errors. While some have argued that the earlier versions were “rough drafts” and the last version was a “finished product,” the textual evidence lends more support to the view that they are all “rough drafts.” Each contains mistakes not found in the others. Each also contains corrections of previous mistakes, some of which are not found in other versions. In a very real way then for *A Course in Miracles* there is no “finished product” since rather obviously a “finished product” would involve thorough proofreading to identify and correct all the mistakes and would include the complete original dictation. No such version yet exists.

There are a few facts about the Course’s history on which all credible accounts agree.

- the *Notes* represents the first written form.²
- the *Thetford Transcript* is always described as a verbatim, orally proofed copy of the *Notes* and if that is true, isn’t *really* a different “version,” but just a typed copy. This can’t really be verified until a copy of that *Thetford Transcript* becomes available for study.³

¹ The evidence is briefly presented and reviewed in Appendix II.

² There is some indication that a few portions of the *Notes* may have been written twice, possibly with some editing, as we do see a few passages repeated. However these instances appear more likely to be exceptions than evidence indicating the existence of two, different versions of the handwritten *Notes*.

³ Insofar as these reports of the *Thetford Transcript* being a very accurate copy of the *Notes* are true, it may seem rather unimportant since we have the original *Notes*. There are, however, some parts of the *Notes* where legibility of available copies is poor, and generally handwriting doesn’t always provide a precise reading. One significant value of the *Thetford Transcript* lies in helping to correctly read those places in the *Notes* where legibility makes the reading questionable.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

- the *Urtext* is the earliest typed manuscript currently available.
- the *HLC* is a later abridgement of the *Urtext*, with some 50,000 fewer words
- the 1975 *Nun's Version* was an even later abridgement of the *HLC*, with about 10,000 fewer words than the *HLC*.
- the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) *First, Second* and *Third Editions* involve only minor corrections to the 1975 edited *Nun's Version* and as such can be considered as editions of that version rather than as unique versions in their own right.

To add to an inherently confusing situation, while there are only five substantially different versions involved, there are dozens of different names being used for them leading to the impression that there are many more than five. Since many editions don't actually indicate which version they are presenting, and some actually make inaccurate claims in that regard, it's not always easy to tell which version any particular copy represents.

The "*Family Tree Chart*" includes all the editions of each of these five "***Scribal Versions***" of which I am aware at the time of writing (March 2008). There are other e-text editions circulating on the net which are generally of such erratic quality as to be undeserving of inclusion in the list. It's quite possible other editions exist which deserve mention. Should you know of another edition or be preparing to release one, please let us know! We'll certainly take a look at any new editions with an eye to their inclusion in this list.

Terminology and Nomenclature

While many different names have been applied to each version and edition, only the most original, historical names used in the earliest historical records, and where applicable, those used by the Scribes themselves, are used here.

Some terminology is used in this discussion which may be unfamiliar to some, particularly terms relating to different kinds of editions. For those interested in a brief description of these various kinds of editions, the last section of this discussion (see section 6) will provide additional background information.

The words "*version*" and "*edition*" can be, and often are used interchangeably. The reader should be aware that the word "*version*" is used in this discussion to indicate ***substantive content differences*** beyond the correction of errors, which leaves us with five historical "***Scribal Versions***." The word "*edition*" is used to indicate each distinct rendition of any

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

particular “*version*.” So any given version could have any number of “*editions*.” While each edition will inevitably contain some differences from any other, the extent of those differences along with the intentions of the publisher determines whether it is classified as a new *version* or a new *edition* of an existing version.

One could almost as easily swap the words “edition” and “version” and speak of five primary historical “editions” of which there are any number of different “versions” of each available. This is not so much a matter of “correct English” as it is one of “defining our terms” for the purposes of clarity and precision in this discussion.

The model here is derived from Biblical scholarship where people speak of such things as the “*King James Version*” and the “*Revised Standard Version*” and the “*New English Version*” of the Bible. Each is a unique translation of the original Hebrew and Greek manuscript copies of the Bible. Each of those “versions” has been published in many different “editions.” While the various editions may look very different, all contain pretty much exactly the same words although they may differ substantially in terms of appendices, commentary, footnotes, etc. As soon as there is any significant modification of the actual wording, beyond “correcting typos,” however, the result is defined as a “new version.”

We find that in the many editions of the numerous versions of the Bible, there is almost no difference at all in the actual wording, punctuation, reference structure, etc. You will also find that some “different versions” are in fact very similar to each other, having introduced only minor wording differences such as modernization of archaic terminology or introducing corrections based on new primary scholarship which was not available to the original translators. In short, *any changes* beyond correcting errors lead us to define the result as a new **version** rather than a new **edition** of an existing version. This does not include *documented changes*. For instance, since 1611 when the *King James Version* was first published, primary Biblical scholarship has corrected a number of errors in the manuscripts the 1611 translators used. Modern editions of the *KJV* generally include those corrections but they are footnoted or set in a different typestyle such that the reader can readily recognize them. This kind of change isn’t considered a “new version” because we are still in the realm of “correcting errors” in an existing version rather than generating a “new version.”

Inevitably the border between “version” and “edition” as those words are defined in this discussion is going to be a bit fuzzy and some works may indeed straddle that border. How many differences do there have to be before a document ceases to be a “new edition” of an existing version and

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

becomes a “new version” entirely? It is probably impossible to achieve a precise answer. The basic indicator is the presence and frequency of intentional undocumented differences which go beyond “correction of errors.”

There are some additional guidelines which are used here to answer the question. It should be remembered that all of the four available “historical versions” referred to here as **Scribal Versions** are roughly 85% identical. The intentional modifications can be classed as “corrections” or as “errors” or as “stylistic” changes which don’t actually correct or introduce any error in terms of overt content, they just fiddle with the wording. Simply generating a copy with inadvertent mistakes does not a new “version” make. That’s just an inaccurate edition. Where there are numerous intentional modifications of the material beyond simply correcting verified mistakes, well that *does* represent a new version. Of course determining whether a change is “minor” is subjective; what may seem “minor” to one might seem “substantive” to another. And how many do there have to be for us to say they are “numerous?”

The *Corrected HLC* introduces variant readings for example, but each substantive change is a “correction” based on evidence of a mistake and not a newly minted original variant, and each one is documented showing the original wording so the complete original *HLC* is intact within that edition. Being confined to “corrections” where there is genuine evidence of a likely error, the differences do not constitute a “new version.” It is thus an **annotated** or **critical** edition of one **Scribal Version**. Other changes involve spelling and capitalization standardization which aren’t classed as “substantive” changes. Many English words have variant spellings approved of by dictionaries. It’s standard publishing practice to use a single variant in any particular volume. Since Schucman often used multiple different spellings, any editor of this work has to tackle this issue, one way or another. At the Miracles Pathway Fellowship we’ve generally chosen the spelling variant which US dictionaries say is the most commonly used in the USA since this work was produced in the USA by Americans and those spellings would be the most common in that place at that time. Further, it is easy for anyone anywhere in the world to find out what the most common US spellings are so as to predict how any given word might be spelled in our editions. There are a few exceptions where clarity argued for a spelling other than the most common in the USA.

In the historical **Scribal Versions** one can be distinguished from another because, *in addition to correcting or introducing typos* from one version to the next, the editors have done some or all of the following:

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

- 1) removed and/or added and/or re-arranged a significant amount of material
- 2) made numerous adjustments to wording
- 3) made extensive changes in punctuation and/or paragraphation
- 4) introduced or altered chapter and section divisions
- 5) changed the words which are emphasized, adding or deleting emphasis

The reader will note imprecise and subjective terms such as “significant” and “numerous” here. I wish to repeat and stress that I consider “correction of error where there is solid evidence of a real error” a very different kind of editorial intervention than alterations which do not involve any error in what is being altered. Given that every version has “errors” we’d rather hope every edition would correct these, except of course for *facsimile* and *replica* editions whose unique purpose is to reproduce a manuscript as exactly as possible with *no* modifications. While I think we’d all agree that two or three changes wouldn’t constitute a new version although several thousand certainly would, just where do you draw the line? There remains a degree of subjectivity and even controversy in this.

For instance there is a “grey area” in the FIP *Second Edition* where we have the term “each other” in the original changed to “you and your brother” a number of times. Is that considered one change applied dozens of times or dozens of changes? While it can’t be considered a “correction of error” it certainly can be considered “minor.” In this case it is being judged as “below the threshold” for considering this a “new version.” It should also be noted that the changes in the FIP *Second Edition* are documented in an *Errata* which purports to list each modification. I did mention that some editions might “straddle the border” and this one does. On the other extreme, as noted already, if the *Thetford Transcript* turns out to be what is claimed for it, a precise copy of the *Notes* then it really isn’t a separate “version” it’s just another “edition” or the same material in a different form. Until we have a copy to check however, we have to assume that like all the other known copies produced by the Scribes, it has some differences and must therefore be classified as a separate version.

There is also an enormous difference between “changes” which are not documented and those which are. An undocumented change is invisible to the reader. Documented changes are obvious. Invisible differences leave most readers with the impression what they’re reading is the “original” even when it is not, and that is the source of a great deal of confusion.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

The extent of each kind of change varies greatly from version to version and section to section within versions. Some material has never been changed at all and other material is changed almost beyond recognition, when it is preserved at all. We have as many as six variant readings of some passages, when the manuscript mark-up is taken into account. This is how one can distinguish the *HLC* from the *Urtext* for instance. Most of the time they are actually identical, but the paragraphation is different, the emphasis is different and sometimes the wording is different and many pages of material from the *Ur* are not included in the *HLC*. Similarly, there is material in the *HLC* which is not found in any earlier version. These differences are how we identify which ***Scribal Version*** we're looking at.

Should someone set out to reproduce *A Course in Miracles* and intentionally modify the material in any of the five ways noted above, this would be a “new version” unless of course the instances were “few” and “minor.” For instance, if one were to reproduce the *Urtext* version but change most of the emphasis, the punctuation and some of the paragraph breaks it would be misleading to say this is still the *Urtext*, even if one left all the wording intact, because numerous of the defining characteristics of that version have been altered.

This is why Tom Whitmore's “*Original Edition*” is not considered to be an edition of the *HLC* even though the wording is mostly the same. In the *Text*, much of the punctuation and emphasis and some of the paragraph and section breaks are Whitmore's own original creative work and derive from no known ***Scribal Version***. Some of the wording isn't the *HLC*, it's the *Urtext*. Some is simply “original.” In the *Text* volume alone Whitmore has introduced over 7,000 original variant readings, none of which are documented. The *Workbook* and *Manual* in that edition draw from several versions and confine themselves to none. Regardless of how one views these original modifications, they are so numerous as to make it an “original” version and not an attempt to reproduce any particular ***Scribal Version*** with precision. I anticipate we will see many more eclectic “original editions” which are really new versions in the future as various people wrestle with the variant readings between the ***Scribal Versions*** and develop different ideas as to what it really should say.

Some have criticized this “*Original Edition*” as being a highly inaccurate representation of the *HLC*. I think that criticism is misplaced since it is very obvious that the intent here was not to produce an edition of the *HLC* but rather something “original.”

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Similarly if the *King James Version* of the Bible was altered in just that way, the result could be said to be *based on* the *KJV* but it would still be a “new” and “original version.”

If one were to adopt the emphasis, paragraph breaks and punctuation from the *HLC* while preserving the wording of the *Urtext* it would be an “*Eclectic Version*” but it would not be **either** the *HLC* or the *Urtext*. It would be a new hybrid version containing characteristics of each of its parents. Were one to invent entirely new paragraphation, punctuation and emphasis, it would be an original “*Interpretive Version*” based on, but not even attempting to accurately reproduce the *Urtext*. If, in addition to selecting readings from more than one **Scribal Version** one introduced new and original variants of one’s own, it would be an “*Original Edition*.”

However, when one takes a **Scribal Version** and inserts the *HLC* reference points, such as we have done with the *Urtext*, the fact that this overlay is documented means that the result is not a new “version” but rather a new “*Annotated Edition*.” The reader is never left in any doubt as to what derived from the manuscript and what is an editorial overlay.

There is another way of introducing extensive changes without the result being a “new version.” That is to footnote each and every change such that the original reading is preserved along with the modification. Arguably the “altered” form is a “new version” but since the edition retains the precise original material, that form is an “existing version.” This would be called an “annotated edition.”

3. The Scribal Versions and Editions in detail

The Shorthand Notes

The *Notes* is the earliest written form of *A Course in Miracles*, but is the most recent of the versions to become available. Due to the fact that it is handwritten, partly in shorthand, it is much more difficult to read and render as an e-text than the later typed manuscripts. Further, it is only within the last year⁴ that it has been generally available to scholarship. While I have been told that a complete transcript (e-text) of the *Notes* of good quality has been produced, it is not available so can’t be considered to be a “published edition.” The “partial transcript” (1d) listed is my own transcription which at the moment includes all of the *Notes* for the *Use of Terms*, *Song of Prayer*, and the first two and last chapters of the *Text*. It is my hope that anyone who is in possession of any transcriptions of any of the *Notes* will make that

⁴ The first general publications of *Notes* material took place in August 2007. This Appendix was written in March 2008.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

material public such that a complete searchable e-text can soon be available to scholarship. Such an e-text of the *Notes* is not a substitute for the original manuscript, it is more of an *index* to it since it provides a searchable text which is easy to read, a great convenience to anyone reading the *Notes*. Without a searchable text it is difficult and time-consuming to find anything in the facsimile editions.

Generally however the *Urtext* is mostly an accurate transcript of the *Notes*. It is far from perfect but using the MPF *e-text* and the MPF *facsimile* editions which use the same chapter, section and paragraph reference system, it is very easy to look up most passages in the *Urtext* e-text and then find the corresponding *Notes* page. Both of these are available in e-text form on the *Scholar's Toolbox* data disk.

The cross-referenced “*Toolbox*” edition (**1c**) organizes the *Notes* according to the volume, chapter, and section divisions used in all MPF primary source publications. The material is also cross-referenced according to the volume and page number in the “*22 Volumes of Helen Schucman's Unpublished Writings*.” This collection fits on a single CD and to squeeze it all in the resolution of the image files had to be reduced. While the resolution is generally high enough for reading on screen or printing at 100%, if greater magnification is desired, one should turn to the *5 CD Facsimile Edition*.

This material is presented in PDF format. “Bookmarks” are used to indicate all the volume, chapter, and section divisions, making this a very convenient tool for quick reference except for the high resolution *5 CD Facsimile Edition (1a)* of the *Notes* which is referenced only by the original volume and page number designations. These designations also appear in the e-text and the *Scholar's Toolbox* editions for easy cross-referencing. The images are of higher quality than any of the other known publications and maximum readability of segments with poor legibility can be found here.

The *Greene Facsimile (1b)* uses an entirely unique reference system and is not readily amenable to cross-referencing to other editions or versions. It also omits the volume identifiers and title pages from the *22 Volumes*. Otherwise it is largely identical in content. Resolution is good but contrast is excessive turning “grey areas” either white or black. This makes for a “crisp” looking image but actually degrades faint images such that areas of poor legibility lose definition although it preserves areas of good legibility quite well.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

The Thetford Transcript

The issues relating to the identification of both the *Thetford Transcript* and the *Urtext* are dealt with in detail elsewhere⁵. While positive identification is elusive, there is some evidence that the *Psychotherapy* and *Song of Prayer* volumes ***might be*** the *Thetford Transcript* as they do bear some signs of oral dictation. There is little to suggest that any of the other typed manuscripts represent an original manuscript typed to oral dictation while there is much to suggest that they are later edited re-typings. The MPF “*Toolbox*” (2a) collection contains those typed manuscripts which may be part of that original *Thetford Transcript*.

The Urtext Version

There are eight separate typed manuscripts labelled “*Urtext*”, one each for the *Text*, *Workbook*, *Manual for Teachers*, *Use of Terms*, *Psychotherapy*, *Song of Prayer*, *Gifts of God* and *Special Messages*. The word “*Urtext*” in this discussion refers to that entire collection. Some use *Urtext* to refer only to the *Text* volume. Some refer to this collection as “the typescript” but, since all the manuscripts except for the handwritten *Notes* are “typescripts” this causes more confusion than clarity.

I suspect that the Scribes may indeed have only referred to the *Text* volume as an “urtext.” However this material is categorized as “urtext” in the original and we’ve chosen to try to minimize confusion by ***not*** attempting to dream up yet another new name. The only publication to include all of this material in both facsimile and e-text editions is the “*Toolbox*” edition (3c and 3d). The MPF editions all include cross-referencing based on the original scribal chapter and section divisions of the *HLC*.

Seven of these *Urtext* volumes are widely, but not universally, considered “canonical” although the *Special Messages* are viewed as suspect by many.⁶ The *Special Messages* are not included as canonical but are included in the *Scholar’s Toolbox* on disk as an interesting supplement.

⁵ The evidence is thoroughly reviewed in Appendix II.

⁶ There are differences of opinion as to what material is or isn’t “canonical.” Initially *ACIM* appeared in three volumes, *Text*, *Workbook*, and *Manual for Teachers*. At that time, in 1975, the other material had not yet been written. Shortly thereafter a fourth volume, *Use of Terms* was added, but wasn’t called a fourth volume, it was called an appendix to Volume III. There is some dispute as to whether the *Use of Terms* should be considered canonical. Whitmore’s three volume *Original Edition*, for instance, doesn’t include it. The *Blue Sparkly* moves it to the front of the book as a kind of introduction. FIP included all four volumes in all of its editions, while still calling the fourth volume an appendix to Volume III, until the *Third Edition* in which the *Psychotherapy* and *Song of Prayer* volumes were added, but the *Gifts of God* was not added. Two of the *HLC* editions include only the *Text* volume because the *HLC* is only the *Text* volume. To date no edition has included the *Special Messages* as “canonical.”

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Beginning in the summer of 2000, portions of these *Urtext* facsimile (3a) copies were circulated on the net. Obtaining the complete collection has been a challenge and it's difficult to be sure it has all been located. To date I am not aware of anything missing in the *Urtext* collection. We can only be certain when the entire collection of original primary source material finally becomes available for scholarly scrutiny. The "*Legacy Facsimiles*" which have been circulating since 2000 (3a) are of varying quality and completeness. It is difficult to determine their number since no catalogue of such different unique collections exist, but there are at least several. The difference is in the total number of pages and the sequencing of those pages. The MPF "*Scholar's Toolbox*" (3c) and (3d) compilation includes, as far as can be ascertained, all of the material in its original sequence with two minor exceptions dealt with in the *Editor's Notes* in those volumes in which segments of the *Special Messages* are inserted into the text in the exact location the Scribes themselves inserted this material in the *HLC*. Although labelled "*Special Messages*," these segments are deemed to be later "dictated corrections and clarifications" in our view and also apparently in the view of the Scribes. In short, rather than being deemed "special" and of a personal or private nature, these segments are considered to be canonical material "dictated without notes."

In August of 2000 the "*Legacy E-text*" (3b) of the *Urtext* appeared on the net. Portions of this document are quite accurate reproductions of the *Urtext* manuscript but large portions are actually the *HLC*. The MPF "*Toolbox*" e-text edition (3d) is not 100% accurate but is vastly more accurate than its predecessor since it has all been proofed, although not proofed to the degree of thoroughness which is desirable. The proofing of that document is an ongoing project.

The MPF *Complete Seven Volume Urtext* (3e) is available in print. Including some segments of the *Notes* which were omitted in the *Urtext* apparently inadvertently, it is the most complete print edition of *A Course in Miracles* writings known.

The HLC Version

The only facsimile copy of the *HLC* manuscript which has been published is that which was found in November 1999 at the Association for Research and Enlightenment Library in Virginia Beach, Virginia, USA. (4a) The *HLC* includes only the *Text* volume. An e-text of poor quality (4b) was hastily created within weeks of the discovery and began circulating on the net on January 6, 2000. Additional proofing of that document was undertaken in the following months and it appeared in print as "*Jesus' Course in Miracles*" (*JCIM*) (4c) in March of 2000. The proofing was not

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

complete. There were several hundred typos which went uncorrected. It is otherwise a substantially accurate reproduction of the *HLC* manuscript.

In 2003 the *Thetford Foundation* in Australia produced a handsome print edition called “Blue Sparkly” (**4d**) after its cover design. This included the *HLC* text which is nearly identical to the *JCIM* (**4c**) text, typos and all. It also includes the *Workbook*, *Manual*, and *Use of Terms* derived from *Urtext* e-texts. No precise tabulation of the accuracy of this volume is available but it appears to be an honest effort to publish an accurate presentation with the inadequate proofing which is so typical of *A Course in Miracles* publishers since the beginning. Most of the *Legacy Edition* typos persist, for instance, although some have been corrected. Spelling is sometimes altered, but inconsistently.

In 2006 the *Corrected HLC*, (**4e**) a thoroughly proofed edition of the *HLC Text* volume was published. It is available in both print and e-text formats. This includes a number of “corrections” of apparently inadvertent omissions and other errors which arose in the scribal copying from the *Urtext*. All deviations from the manuscript are footnoted and explained such that the reader can readily distinguish between the original scribal text and editorial “correction.” This volume also includes two complete reference systems. One is based on the traditional “chapter/section/paragraph” numbering and one is based on the original manuscript page numbers. This makes it very easy to check the manuscript facsimile against either the e-text or paper editions and facilitates cross-referencing to other editions and versions. The MPF “*Toolbox*” contains a significantly enhanced PDF format facsimile edition (**4f**) which includes bookmarks for all the chapter and section breaks in order to assist quick cross-referencing with other editions.

Also in 2006 MPF released an “*HLC Replica*” (**4g**) edition which attempts to reproduce the original manuscript keystroke for keystroke with no corrections. All of the original spelling mistakes and other typos are preserved. This was initially created as a proofing tool and can be used to quickly check any e-text of the *HLC* to see where differences exist. It is currently available as an e-text only.

The Nun’s Version (Foundation for Inner Peace version)

From 1975 until 2000 this was the only version of *A Course in Miracles* generally available and was advertised as, and widely but mistakenly believed to be, “virtually unchanged” from the original dictation. In fact it is about 60,000 words shorter than the *Urtext* in the *Text* volume and roughly 10,000 words shorter than the *HLC*. After chapter eight of the *Text* the

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

magnitude of the differences declines dramatically such that later portions can fairly be described as at least “substantially unchanged.”

Portions of the original *Nun’s Version* manuscript in facsimile form have been circulated on the net. (5d)

In June of 1976 the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP) undertook the first large-scale printing of this book in what has become known as the “*First Edition*.” (5b) In fact the first printing of several hundred copies occurred in August of 1975 in what is known as the “*Criswell Edition*” sometimes nicknamed the “*Xerox Edition*.” (5a) This was a facsimile edition in which the manuscript pages of the *Nun’s Version* were photocopied at 50% of their original size. In each of the multiple re-printings of the FIP *First Edition* minor differences involving corrections of typos appeared, making each slightly different. In 1992 FIP released its *Second Edition* (5c). This involved even more corrections of earlier typos and was the first to include a reference system printed in the margins. It was also the first known attempt to proofread any version against the original manuscripts. While hundreds of errors were detected and corrected, hundreds more, including some glaringly obvious ones, were missed. It was “proof-reading” but it wasn’t “thorough proof-reading.” This is meant less as a criticism than an observation intended to draw attention to the very large need for thorough and more professional proof-reading.

Recently FIP has produced a *Third Edition* (5g) which includes the *Psychotherapy* and *Song of Prayer* volumes.

Since 2003 at least two other publishers, *Endeavor* (5e) and *Raincoast* (5f) have introduced print editions of at least portions of the *Nun’s Version*, although without the FIP reference system.

In editing the *HLC* into the *Nun’s Version*, some chapter and section breaks and names were changed from the original *HLC* values. To facilitate cross-referencing all other versions an e-text of the FIP *Second Edition* was created which restores the original reference points where that was possible. In the early chapters it is not always possible due to the massive removal and re-arrangement of the material in that version. The only reason for restoring these reference points was to provide a research tool to make it easier to check material in the FIP edition against other versions. This edition is the complete text of the *Second Edition* with references from the *HLC*. (5h)

There is one additional edition which is worthy of mention but doesn’t readily fit into any of our categories. That is the *Sonship Gift* three-column parallel edition of the first eight chapters of the *Urtext*, *HLC*, and *FIP2* produced by Raphael Greene in 2002. The first eight chapters are where

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

most of the editing took place. This edition, distributed as a PDF file, allows for a text search of all three of those versions across the first eight chapters and makes it easy to tell at a glance whether a given passage was ever altered. The base texts Greene used were carefully proofed near-replicas of the respective manuscripts which attempt to reflect not only every original keystroke, but also the handwritten mark-up.

4. The Seven Volumes

Just to make it a bit more confusing, each of the seven volumes included in the Urtext collection has a somewhat unique history of its own. The previous discussion of “versions” applies primarily to the Text volume. The HLC version includes only the Text volume. There is no reliable evidence that the HLC ever included any other volumes.

The other volumes were all scribed later, in the case of the Gifts of God, several years later. Here’s a brief summary of the other volumes.

In the first printing of *A Course in Miracles*, the 1975 *Criswell Edition* of the *Nun’s Version*, we find the first three volumes, *Text*, *Workbook* and *Manual for Teachers*. In 1976, the FIP *First Edition* was published as three separate books, and a fourth volume, which Schucman scribed after the *Criswell* publication, called *Clarification of Terms*, was added to the smallest of the three, the *Manual for Teachers*. We call the *Clarification of Terms* by its original name, *Use of Terms* except when dealing explicitly with the FIP version.

In subsequent FIP editions this fourth volume is treated as an appendix to Volume 3, rather than as a separate volume. However, in the FIP Concordance, it is treated as a separate volume. Since it was written two years later than Volume 3, and is no more related to Volume 3 than any other volume, we’ve opted to deal with it as a distinct volume rather than as an appendix.

Subsequent to the *First Edition*’s publication in 1976, Schucman scribed or completed the scribing of three additional volumes, *Psychotherapy*, *Song of Prayer* and *Gifts of God*.

In 2005 in the *Six Volume Concordance* published by MPF, volumes 5 and 6, *Psychotherapy* and *Song of Prayer*, were included in the *A Course in Miracles* canon as they are in the FIP Concordance.

In its 2008 *Third Edition*, FIP followed this practice and included its own edited versions of volumes 5 and 6. Previously these were published as separate “pamphlets” by FIP.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

In 2008 the *Gifts of God* was added as a seventh volume. This has also previously been published by FIP in a collection of Schucman's own poetry under the same name. In the view of many this is also "scribed" material rather than Schucman's own composition and it is a thoroughly fitting "conclusion" to *A Course in Miracles*. No *Notes* material for this seventh volume has yet been located. Unlike the other volumes, we have only a single primary source for Volume 7. That is the collection of *Urtext* manuscripts in the *22 Volumes of Helen Schucman's Unpublished Writings*.

Opinions do vary on the "authenticity" of some of the later volumes, most notably *Use of Terms*. Some do not consider it "canonical" at all while the Thetford Foundation includes it as a preface to their *Blue Sparkly* edition. We adopted an inclusive policy. Where there is a substantial body of opinion viewing material as authentic, despite the fact that opinions do vary, we chose to include it.

And this concludes the brief descriptions of the 25 editions of the five ***Scribal Versions*** which are currently known outlined in the "*Family Tree*" on page 3.

5. Post-Scribal Versions

As noted previously, a distinction is made between editions of *A Course in Miracles* which honestly attempt to reproduce an historical ***Scribal Version*** with no changes beyond correcting apparently inadvertent mistakes and those editions which differ frequently in any of five ways: wording, punctuation, paragraphation, reference divisions, or emphasis. The two versions discussed here do indeed differ in all five ways from any known historical ***Scribal Version***. Thus neither can be called an "edition of this version" or an "edition of that version." Each is a unique, original, new version with a particular relationship to one or more of the historical ***Scribal Versions***, or as is the case with one, no relationship to any historical ***Scribal Version*** at all at many points.

The Eclectic Critical Version

While not yet complete, the "*Eclectic Critical Version*" is a goal towards which some of us have been working for years. A group is being formed to coordinate this work.⁷ It will not be an "edition" of any existing version although nearly every word, comma and paragraph break in it will likely derive from at least one of the historical ***Scribal Versions***. The plan for this *Critical Edition* is to examine all variant readings between all historical

⁷ Should you be interested in lending a hand, e-mail dtthomp74@hotmail.com

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Scribal Versions and using the methodology of textual scholarship, attempt to establish which of the variants is the most authentic. The objective is not to invent entirely new readings or “change” the content. Rather, where the content has already been changed, the intent is to sift through the changes and at least clean up the inadvertent errors. In short, where the respective **Scribal Versions** differ, the objective of a *Critical Edition* is to determine which variant is the best; which is the “correction” and which is the “error.”

This project is modeled on the work of Biblical scholarship in dealing with the many variant readings which arise in ancient manuscript copies of the Bible. The variants are catalogued and carefully studied with the aim of establishing which variant is the most authentic. The result is a “consensus text” of the Hebrew and Greek Bible. It is not entirely an exact copy of any particular original historical source but if the scholars have done their work well, it is actually closer to the “original” than any of them.

When dealing with material of extraordinary spiritual and religious significance such as *A Course in Miracles* or the Bible, it can be *important*, even if not *crucial*, to establish as closely as possible what the authentic wording really is.

When this methodology is applied to the Course, the result will be a version with the most authentic reading which scholarship can achieve. Every instance of variant readings will be documented so that the reader can see what the variants are and why the scholars came to the conclusions they did. All available historical versions and relevant primary source materials will be consulted and compared. In that process at the very least, all the inadvertent copying errors should be detected and corrected. In all cases the reader will be able to see each variant and make up her own mind. Where it is unclear whether a given change was a correction of a previous mistake or the introduction of a new mistake, the editorial board will have to determine relatively probabilities and inform the reader of the residual uncertainty.

Rather clearly a work with such attributes cannot be considered an “edition” of any particular historical “version” but rather an entirely new, post-scribal version even though every word and comma might derive from one or another of the historical **Scribal Versions**. Relative to any particular **Scribal Version** it will differ in number of words, specific wording, emphasis, paragraphation and punctuation. It is “post-scribal” because while it will consist entirely of the Scribes’ own words and introduce no variant not found in one of their versions, it won’t have the benefit of their direct participation and consultation. Although **based** on their work it will not actually **be** their work since they aren’t here to consult with. The overriding objective will be to ascertain the “author’s intent.”

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

In time any number of such “versions” may appear in which publishers draw on two or more of the historical versions and combine elements from each.

Whitmore’s Interpretive “Original Edition”

One “*Interpretive Eclectic Version*” already exists in Tom Whitmore’s *Original Edition*. Now by the working definitions of “*edition*” and “*version*” used in this discussion, this would be called an “*Original Version*” since it is not in fact an “*edition*” of any of the historical ***Scribal Versions***. This is not to say it’s a mistake to call it an “*edition*” just to point out that these two words can be and are often used interchangeably and to be clear as to which meaning is intended. Whitmore calls it an “*Original Edition*” but within the definitions of this discussion, it is an “*Original Version*.”

Whitmore’s “*Original Edition*” includes entirely original ***eclectic interpretive*** versions of the *Text*, *Workbook*, and *Manual for Teachers* which differ significantly from any known historical ***Scribal Version***. It truly is “original” in that the paragraphation, punctuation, and emphasis are frequently Whitmore’s own original creative work. It is this introduction of original new unexplained and undocumented variant readings, roughly seven thousand of them in the *Text* volume alone, that makes it an “*interpretive*” version and its selection of variants from more than one ***Scribal Version*** which makes it an “*eclectic*” version. It draws both on several ***Scribal Versions*** and introduces unique original material, some examples of which are discussed below. If the variations from any particular version were merely accidental, and were few in number, one might call any of these volumes “editions” of an historical version with inadequate proofing. But while there appear to be a few hundred such inadvertent changes, there are many thousands of apparently intentional changes. Since none of them are documented, it is a matter of guesswork to determine which changes are copying mistakes and which are intentional editing changes. Either way, it’s not an “*edition*” of a ***Scribal Version*** nor does it appear that the editors aspired to the goal of accurate reproduction, despite what they say in their *Preface*.

By and large the *Original Edition* contains the *HLC* wording in the *Text* volume, and includes, but doesn’t document, some of the error corrections from the earlier *Corrected HLC* (4e) derived from the *Urtext*. Many of the words emphasized in the *HLC* are not emphasized in the *Original Edition* and many of the words emphasized in the *Original Edition* are not emphasized in the *HLC* or, for that matter, in any ***Scribal Version***. Punctuation is significantly transformed, apparently at random, which, in some cases, changes the meaning. Again this is done with no reference to any

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Scribal Version. In some cases “spelling” changes alter the tense or disrupt contractions which were needed for iambic pentameter. Spelling, capitalization, grammar and emphasis are largely Whitmore’s “original” creative work and sometimes, so is the wording. Subjunctive verbs are changed to past tense or past conditional tense, for instance. None of the 7,000 plus deviations from the original *HLC* manuscript in the *Text* volume are documented or explained except in the cryptic phrase in the *Preface* which states that

“The only changes that have been made to the edition [or version] of the Course as completed by Shucman [sic] and Thetford have been to correct obvious typographic errors and misspellings, to modernize and render consistent punctuation and capitalization, and to format the material for print publication.”

While that could be a description of a *Critical Edition* of a **Scribal Version**, what Whitmore produced is in fact a highly original *Interpretive Eclectic Version*. This is truly an “original” way of using the words “modernize” and “consistent” since the spelling, capitalization and punctuation modifications introduced in this work are neither “modern” nor “consistent.”

For instance in the case of commas being used with conjunctions, at one time “newspaper style guides” dictated getting rid of commas since they generally aren’t strictly necessary. In newspapers every bit of space counts and reducing commas saves space. It can also encourage reporters and editors to write more succinctly and avoid complex compound sentences that require commas. It’s possible that removal of commas beside conjunctions could be considered “modernizing” in that sense. Recent research has shown however that the average reader can read faster and with higher comprehension if the commas are left in, since they provide visual cues to the clause structure within a compound sentence. It’s almost always possible to parse the clauses *after* reading the sentence with no punctuation. The commas allow one to identify clause divisions *before* reading the sentence, which increases reading speed and comprehension. In the case of the sometimes highly complex sentence structure of ACIM, removing commas often introduces ambiguity in material that was originally quite clear.

“Modern” style guides advise the use of commas wherever they enhance clarity and readability. Whitmore has removed many of the commas that appeared alongside conjunctions, but did not do so consistently. While that is usually not a hugely significant alteration, it’s not reasonably described as “modern.” Kenneth Wapnick, who helped Schucman in the final editing, describes how comma usage was discussed and the decision was made to go

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

heavy on the commas in order to enhance readability, which as noted, is exactly what it does. Interestingly, in the four ***Scribal Versions*** we have to compare, we can see that the Scribes rarely made any changes to the original punctuation in the *Notes*. When they do it is usually the replacement of one “pause” mark for another, such as the replacement of a comma with a period, colon, or semi-colon, which changes would not influence “how it sounds.” And remember, this work began as an oral dictation, and if the Scribe taking it down inserted a “pause mark” where the Voice paused, then is a strong case for leaving it there because it is part of the “original” oral content. In most cases it is clear from the character spacing in the *Notes* that Schucman usually inserted the commas as she wrote the words and did not often go back later to figure out where the punctuation should be. Given that, I see no reason to suppose the punctuation was Schucman’s arbitrary decision rather than her recording actual pauses in what she “heard.”

In the case of poetry, and much of the Course is blank verse poetry in iambic pentameter, rare indeed is the editor who would presume to alter or “modernize” any poet’s suggested punctuation according to the dictates of ***any*** prose style guide! There are no “style guides” for the punctuation of blank verse poetry and the attempt to edit any poet’s punctuation can certainly be described as “original.”

The *Original Edition* also includes an entirely original reference system of paragraph numbers within chapters rather than the conventional technique of counting paragraph numbers within sections. Sadly, the original manuscript page numbers are removed making it extremely cumbersome to cross-reference this version to ***any*** other. Due to the fact that Whitmore did not always maintain the same paragraph structure as that found in the *HLC* manuscript, these references are not amenable to use on any other edition or version of *A Course in Miracles*.

6. Different kinds of editions

A Course in Miracles is a different sort of book than those most of us usually deal with. Most new books are written by a human, edited to some extent, submitted to a publisher, edited a bit more by the publisher with the collaboration of the author, and then they appear in print more or less exactly as the author wishes them to appear. It’s fairly rare for a book to go to a second printing and rarer still to go to a second edition. For most books no question ever arises as to what the “authentic text” is, it is what is on the page! But then most books don’t claim authorship by Jesus of Nazareth.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

That fact, if no other, demands that every effort be made to precisely and accurately reproduce the original with no undocumented deviations.

Then there are “classics” whose authors have passed away which, while they also always begin with a manuscript and then are printed in a “First Edition,” end up becoming available in numerous editions and versions of various kinds, some of which are briefly mentioned below. In a few cases multiple early “versions” with variant readings of a classic emerge making it less than immediately obvious what the “authentic” or “original” text actually is. Where such questions arise, textual scholarship begins. Where the author is not available to consult and multiple “versions” of a text turn up, questions inevitably arise as to which of the variant readings should be considered most “authentic,” which result from later copying mistakes, and which results from later corrections introduced by the author.

Different versions and editions are generally intended for different audiences and different applications as discussed below.

Facsimile Editions are essentially photocopies, often in colour and of very high quality, of original historical documents. Good ones are almost as useful for many purposes as the originals themselves and can save scholars a great deal of travel to inspect the originals. Especially with handwriting, there is “content” in the original manuscript page that no typed copy can fully capture. Facsimiles can capture most, but never all of that. For instance, it is sometimes only possible to tell whether a “dot” is an original pen stroke or a speck of dirt by microscopically inspecting the original manuscript, but not from any photographic copy. Similarly, if dating is an issue, the original medium is more helpful than any photocopy. Short of those physical issues with the original medium, facsimile editions are exceedingly useful for many purposes. Facsimile editions are of primary interest to serious scholars who want to check and double-check against the most primary of sources for previously undetected interpretive clues, or indeed simply to check a given copy’s accuracy. Given that there are known inaccuracies in every extant edition, “checking accuracy” is a regrettable necessity.

Replica Editions are a character by character typed e-text representation with original typos preserved. Nothing is changed; it is a “slavish copy” as exact to the original in all regards as possible. Being “machine searchable” these can be useful as “indices” to a facsimile and for analysis with pattern recognition software. They are principally research tools of interest to primary textual scholarship. Few readers want the spelling mistakes preserved, but some do! The spelling inconsistencies may themselves contain information.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

Critical (or scholarly) **Editions** include an “annotation apparatus” in which any “problem readings” are subject to scholarly commentary. These annotations are basically compendia of previous scholarship and are useful to subsequent scholarship. They provide the reader with some of the results of previous scholarship on these “problems” and may identify areas of uncertainty which require further research. These are generally produced by scholars for scholars, but “scholars” aren’t confined to professionals who get paid for it. Anyone seriously interested in investigating possible nuances of meaning in any passage will find such a resource to be useful. Good **Critical Editions** form the basis for all serious secondary scholarship and subsequent primary scholarship.

Interpretive Editions may or may not be scholarly, although those which achieve significant influence usually are. They are characterized by a degree of “editorial intervention” beyond merely correcting apparent errors. Rather than works of primary scholarship intended to reproduce an historical version accurately, these are “interpretive works” of secondary scholarship, are generally based on the best available primary scholarship, and are intended to mine subtle nuances of meaning. They reflect the **opinion** of their editors on the intended meaning rather than trying to capture the precise original text. Their objective is not reproduction; it is “interpretation.”

It should be understood that the purpose of an **Interpretive Edition** is entirely different than that of a **Critical Edition**. Each reflects a very different approach. **Interpretive Editions** tend to be more accessible and easier to tackle for those new to the material while **Critical Editions** focus on precise accuracy, and sometimes this is at the expense of readability. With any book, if you just want to quickly skim through it to get a sense of it, you certainly will find footnotes distracting. When it comes time to delve into a particular passage in depth, however, those footnotes can prove helpful.

Popular Editions are generally based on a scholarly edition but omit the scholarly apparatus such as footnotes, marginalia and explanatory essays. This makes it possible to publish a less expensive, more compact product for a non-professional audience. The same attention to accuracy is expected, but they are “stripped down” for a general readership.

Urtext Editions (“urtext” is a German word meaning literally “pre-text”) are common with classical musical scores and the word is applied to some editions of literary works. The term “**urtext edition**” is often used as an approximate synonym for a kind of “**scholarly edition**” which draws from multiple primary sources with the intent to reproduce the author’s original intent. This can also be, and often is, referred to as an “**eclectic edition**.” Again, it is not intended to reproduce any single source, but is intended to

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

capture “the intended meaning” as deduced from a rigorous comparison of multiple primary sources.

Eclectic Editions compare multiple primary sources and select from the variant readings according to some set of editorial principles, rather than attempting the direct reproduction of a single historical version. Those who select among variants rather obviously have as their intent the selection of the best or most authentic of the known variants. If the editorial principles are sound, and if their application is rigorous and methodical, and if the editors are skilled, the result can actually be a more authentic and accurate rendering than any of the individual primary sources. In the absence of sound scholarship, the result can be mere subjective whim which tells us more about the editor than the material being edited.

Of course any particular edition may reflect more than a single category.

Perhaps there is no better example than the Bible. The “original manuscripts” of Biblical books were all written well over 1800 years ago, in some cases much more. None of the original autographs has survived. Some Biblical material may have originated orally and have been passed down through many generations before ever being written down, during which time any number of variants might have arisen and been lost. What has survived from antiquity is a large collection of manuscripts and manuscript fragments, mostly ***at least*** several hundred years removed from their first being written down, all of which are copies of vanished copies through an unknown number of generations of vanished copies of a vanished original. In the process of repeated copying over centuries, variant readings arise both by mistake and by design. This results in a large number of variant readings or differences between various copies of the same material.

Primary Biblical scholarship is the discipline which, using techniques sometimes reminiscent of crime scene investigators, sifts through the archaeological evidence for the clues these fragments can provide as to what the “original text” might have been.

Virtually all contemporary Bible translations, for instance, work from “***eclectic critical editions***” of the *Hebrew Old Testament* and *Greek New Testament* known as a “***consensus text***.”⁸ A consensus text is created by a panel of scholars who evaluate variant readings and discuss and debate their merits until they establish a “consensus” as to which is the most authentic variant.

⁸ Unfortunately for Course students, no such “consensus text” of *ACIM* yet exists, rather there are several different versions which vary enormously in length and wording. Hopefully this discussion will at least provide the student with some critical awareness of what the differences, strengths and weaknesses of each are.

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

This represents the consensus among many scholars as to the best (most original and authentic) of the known variant readings for any passage in the Bible rather than any particular ancient manuscript. Such “consensus texts” are the fruits of primary textual scholarship and are the raw materials for secondary textual scholarship, two closely related but very different branches of textual scholarship. Primary scholarship has as its aim the establishment of the authentic text and comes into play wherever there are variant readings or questions about textual authenticity. In the case of the Bible it is a vast field because there are so many variants among available ancient source materials. Secondary scholarship seeks to interpret the text and, of course, starts with the best and most authentic text primary scholarship can produce. Of course there is some spill-over between the two. In the process of interpreting a passage a secondary scholar may delve into primary scholarship issues and question the authenticity of particular variants and in the process of sifting variants, primary scholars may well look at “interpretive clues” which derive from secondary scholarship.

The situation of the Bible is very similar to that of *A Course in Miracles* although it is often perceived very differently. Course students debate “which version is best” but rarely do Christians debate which ancient “version” of a Biblical passage is the best, when there are differences. Rather they look to primary scholarship and such things as scholarly “consensus texts” for the “most authentic reading.” Course students don’t do that for one simple reason: there is, to date, almost no respectable primary textual scholarship on *A Course in Miracles*. Instead there are multiple reproductions of historical versions with varying degrees of accuracy, all claiming, some quite misleadingly, to be “authentic.”

In a nutshell, primary scholarship deals with “what it says” and secondary scholarship deal with “what it means.” Rather obviously the two are complementary and also rather obviously you can’t begin to analyse “what it means” without first knowing “what it says!”

The four available historical **Scribal Versions** of *A Course in Miracles* present thousands of “variant readings.” No one has yet identified all of them or made a *Catalogue of Variant Readings* although many variants have been identified and studied to some extent. Many of the variants are corrections of earlier scribal errors. Yet other variants involve re-working previous material for style. Some involve the deletion of “too personal” material whose removal was directed by the “Voice.” A huge proportion, however, are simply inadvertent copying mistakes resulting from frequent recopying of the material without proofing. It is unlikely that the Scribes were even aware of most of these inadvertent errors although in some cases

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

they were noticed and “fixed,” but frequently not by restoring the material to the original, rather by “re-writing” the material to correct a grammar flaw resulting from the omission. While such editorial interventions cured the grammar problem, they did not restore the material to its original wording, and frequently they did not restore the original meaning either.

The first task of primary scholarship for *A Course in Miracles* is simply to gather and sort and index all of the available source material and develop that *Catalogue of Variant Readings*. The variant readings have to be identified before they can be analysed.

It seems clear that in the years of recopying and editing those involved were sincerely trying to “clean up” and “perfect” the material while preserving its “purity and integrity.” However it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that due to inadequate proofing, although they did in fact “fix” some earlier problems, they introduced even more new ones, and they were almost certainly *unaware* that they had done so in many if not most cases.

In some cases their deletions are highly questionable and it is not always possible to be certain if they were intended or inadvertent. It is difficult to explain the removal of the huge section on sex and possession as “inadvertent.” It’s also impossible to explain the removal as “directed by the author” since the material is so clearly *intended* to be part of the Course and even says so explicitly.

Each of the several versions, then, contains “correct” material not present in any other and no single one of them is without mistakes. Yet in comparing all of them, the mistakes tend to show up readily enough and the “original intended reading” is often not at all difficult to discern from among the variants. There are only a few cases where it’s not reasonably clear which of the available variants is the “best.” However, what is obvious to one observer is not always obvious to all. This is where “scholarly consensus” comes in. Various opinions may exist but as many scholars examine, study and debate the issues, a “consensus” usually emerges, and if not a consensus, at least a clear majority opinion.

In order to produce a “consensus text” or an “eclectic version” of *A Course in Miracles* in which all of the mistakes are identified and corrected, and all the variants compared and analysed, it is exceedingly useful to begin with entirely accurate machine-readable copies of each of the versions to be compared.

Of course consensus texts were being made long before there were computers, but computers are much more efficient at identifying small differences between two texts than are humans. We don’t yet have a single

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

complete collection of thoroughly proofed texts. From a complete and accurate collection of source material, a *Catalogue of Variant Readings* can be compiled, and with the help of computers, it can be compiled quite quickly and easily. It essentially involves a list of all passages for which there are variations between versions, and what those variations are. This will make it simple to identify all variants in the extant sources for any passage which does, in fact, have variants. And there are thousands.

Any edition may appear as a printed book or an “e-text” edition or both. An “e-text” is generally a computer file in one of several formats which can be searched for text strings, displayed on a computer screen, or even printed. This mechanical searchability is enormously useful for reference purposes and for scholarship.

In the case of *A Course in Miracles* there are at least four “authorities” or “primary sources.” These are the documents in which the Scribes themselves had a hand. These are the “**Scribal Versions**.” These include the first print editions and several radically different manuscript versions, both hand and typewritten, some portions of which are well endowed with handwritten mark-up indicating editorial changes suggested some time after the document was first written. Where a typed manuscript has substantial mark-up there are really two versions on a single sheet of paper, the “pre-mark-up” version as originally typed or written by hand and the “post-mark-up” version as emended by the handwritten editing instructions. These instructions frequently suggest the movement of paragraph breaks and sometimes involve wording changes. The evidence suggests there have been five principal versions, of which copies of four are presently available. Each of these four has at least two different variants, one with and one without mark-up. In the case of the *HLC* the mark-up is very minor and almost entirely involves corrections of typos. There is so little it can be largely disregarded. In the case of the *Urtext Workbook* by contrast, the mark-up is extensive but mostly relates to paragraphation. In the case of the *Nun’s Version* there are multiple editions, each of which contains corrections of some typos in the earlier editions, and some which contain entirely, albeit mostly minor, original new variations. Indeed, each of the several printings of the *First Edition* included some corrections of earlier typos.

So, within several of the “four versions” there are in fact **two or more** “sub-versions.”

In all the primary sources there are typos, obvious spelling and punctuation mistakes and other inconsistencies and every editor of a new edition has to decide how these will be handled. They can be ignored, as would be the case in a **replica edition** or some of them may be corrected

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

according to strict or lax editorial principles which will vary depending on the kind of edition being prepared. Alternatively, as we can see in some editions, editors may simply “correct” material according to subjective whim.

One of the problems with some editions of the *Course* is that the “editorial principles” used to define errors and the methodology applied for correcting them appear fuzzy and are inconsistently applied. Part of the explanation for this is that many of the publications were produced by people with little if any publishing experience and with resources which were inadequate to the task. Brimming with “good intentions” and an eagerness to make the *Course* more available, they sometimes lacked the discipline and skill or simply the resources required to produce a result of consistently high quality.

The early publishing history of the Bible reveals some rather similar problems including a lack of proof-reading. Often the problem is simply lack of resources. Thorough proofreading is a labour-intensive process and small mistakes are very easy for humans to miss. When dealing with a huge book like *A Course in Miracles* we are talking about many thousands of hours of labour to achieve “thorough proofreading.” One either has to mobilize, organize and train a substantial team of volunteers or one needs a budget adequate to hire professional proofreading services. Many of those involved in *A Course In Miracles* publishing since its beginnings in 1975 had neither!

Once you set out to correct even one error, however obvious, you need some guidelines to determine what is an “error” and what is an *intentional* idiosyncratic wording, or even spelling. “Correcting obvious typos” sounds simple until one encounters those situations where in one opinion it is a typo and in another it is perceived as intentional use of an unusual grammatical or literary form. Determining just what is really an error in the original and what is an intentional form is by no means always simple, nor is there always unanimous agreement. Various editions reflect various different ways of understanding “error.” Some editions explain their guidelines and even document the changes they chose to make, while others make no visible distinction between precise replication of the original and their own editorial modifications.

I can sympathize with these problems because when I first set out to “edit” a *Course* manuscript I wanted to change a great deal. Having worked as an editor I think I know what “good English” is and what “proper grammar” is and my instinct was to make the text I was looking at conform to me ideas of “good style.”

Appendix I: The ACIM Version/Edition Family Tree

I can also empathize with Schucman's comment "I wanted to change everything." The style and structure and vocabulary in the Course is unique and conforms only to its own "style guide." Anyone with editorial experience or inclinations is itching to use that orange editor's pencil a great deal. In my first editing pass on the *HLC* for instance I had a huge list of proposed changes. As these were discussed back and forth among a number of people the list kept getting smaller and smaller as I became convinced that what was on the page, while very **unusual** was also usually very much **intended**. Based on comments made on the first edition of the *Corrected HLC*, the list has grown smaller still.

Any team producing a contemporary edition of *A Course in Miracles*, then, has a lot of decisions to make and as can be seen from the great variation in the several editions, these can be made in a variety of different ways. Each edition reflects a particular set of 'editorial principles' which range from 'subjective whim' to clearly articulated and well-recognized standards of textual scholarship which are applied with some degree of rigour.

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