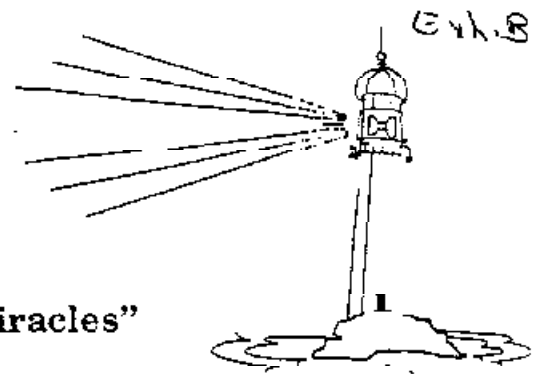


# THE LIGHTHOUSE

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A COURSE IN MIRACLES COMES OF AGE

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*(This article is a departure from our usual ones. It is co-authored with us by Judith Skutch Whitson and Robert Skutch, President and Vice-President of the Foundation for Inner Peace. Judith, Robert, and Kenneth comprise the Executive Board of the Foundation for Inner Peace.)*

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Recently, the Foundation for Inner Peace, publisher of *A Course in Miracles*, along with its licensed sister organization, the Foundation for "A Course in Miracles," announced a significant change in policy regarding permission to quote from *A Course in Miracles*. As the members of the Executive Board of the Foundation for Inner Peace, and founders of the two Foundations, we would like to take this opportunity to present these changes, and address the reasons behind them so that students of the Course may have the chance to consider for themselves all of the many factors involved.

We begin with some background. When *A Course in Miracles* was originally published in June of 1976, we made a firm commitment to seek out and listen to the Voice of the Holy Spirit before making any decisions related to the Course. None of us was prepared, however, for one particular instruction from Jesus to Helen Schucman, scribe of the Course. He wanted *A Course in Miracles* copyrighted and, she stated emphatically, he was quite adamant about this. Although Helen and William Thetford, her partner in scribing the Course, had known from the beginning that the Course was not intended for them alone, they could not imagine that it would ever become popular enough to require copyright protection. Also, the idea of a copyright struck all of us as somewhat out of character when applied to a spiritual teaching such as *A Course in Miracles*. Nonetheless, even though we could not envision a need for the Course to be copyrighted, we of course listened to Jesus and proceeded to contact the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

We were informed that a copyright could not be granted to a non-physical author such as Jesus, nor

to "Anonymous." On the other hand, Helen's name could not appear on the Course's copyright page because Jesus had cautioned her against publicly associating her name with it, lest people confuse her role with his and the Holy Spirit's. Therefore, our guidance was that the copyright registration should be filed with the author listed as "Anonymous," followed by Helen's name in parentheses, while the copyright itself was officially assigned by Helen to the Foundation for Inner Peace.

The Foundation has always taken very seriously its stewardship of the Course. Bill once described our task as a "sacred trust" and that indeed is how we have always seen it. Our instructions relating to the publication and distribution of the Course, right from the start, set the tone for us: namely, that *A Course in Miracles* should always be treated with dignity and respect, and that this "sacred trust" should be safeguarded. As a result, we have consistently refrained from all advertising, and have actively discouraged any would-be proselytizers. The promulgation of *A Course in Miracles* was left to the Holy Spirit and obviously did not need our help, nor anyone else's.

Our trusting attitude carried over to our enforcement of the Course's copyright, and so for approximately six years we maintained a very liberal stance regarding permission to quote from the Course. Our lenience also reflected in part our feeling that very few people would be interested in *A Course in Miracles* because of the profound nature of its teachings. There seemed little reason to carefully scrutinize all published Course references when for so many years the material remained relatively unknown, without widespread acceptance.

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One result of our lax policy was the appearance of a number of abridgments and poetic compilations of passages excerpted from the Course. In fact, these directly contravened Jesus' very specific instructions to Helen that the three books should never be separated from each other, nor should any of the material appear out of context in abridged form. The Course's curriculum is by its very nature an integrated and self-contained one. Therefore, any attempts to abridge or "short cut" the process of teaching and learning forgiveness could only prove detrimental, and would alter the very essence of the Course both as a theoretical thought system and a process of spiritual development. Yet we did not recognize the need to intervene at that point.

It was not until the early 1980s that we began to appreciate the wisdom behind Jesus' insistence on obtaining a copyright. At that time a number of unauthorized translations of *A Course in Miracles* were beginning to appear worldwide. Many of these were, to say the very least, inaccurate, leading to unacceptable distortions of the Course's central teachings. Because the Foundation for Inner Peace held the copyright to the Course, we could closely supervise the process of translation to ensure that the Course's message was preserved intact for foreign readers. We also had the legal means to put a stop to any unauthorized translations (i.e., mis-translations). It is precisely because of the Foundation's staunch commitment to preserving the integrity of *A Course in Miracles* that it is taking so many years for the official translations to appear in print. Yet when they do, we can rest assured that Jesus' teachings have been respectfully and accurately conveyed.

In part because of our experience with the translations, and in part because of the Course's increasing popularity (there are now almost one million copies in circulation), we were gradually led to reconsider our policy regarding enforcement of the copyright. As *A Course in Miracles* has gained an ever greater following, students have begun to produce a wide assortment of products based on it, in addition to the many newsletters, pamphlets, tapes, and related books. We have found, for example, many instances in which passages from *A Course in Miracles* were quoted out of context to support half-truths about the Course, resulting in inadvertent distortions of its message. When we consider the full implications of the Course's thought system and the ego's inherent resistance to it, this is not all that surprising. However, we were now faced with a dilemma. Should we continue our lenient policy with regard to excerpts and quotes, and risk a continuing and

serious dilution and distortion of the Course's message? To what extent were we charged with preventing just such an occurrence? What exactly did our "sacred trust" require of us?

After several years of conferring with each other, and much prayer, we received very clear guidance from the Holy Spirit to adhere to the prevailing practice of the publishing industry regarding permission to quote. This meant a significant tightening of our policy. Of course, we have no wish to discourage students of *A Course in Miracles* from expressing themselves in whatever way they feel guided by the Holy Spirit. However, when it comes to publishing such expressions (including printed matter, audio and video recordings, or any other material), we do feel it is our responsibility to ensure that the Course is presented in a manner consistent with our guidance and Jesus' original intent.

Therefore, applications to use material from *A Course in Miracles* will be evaluated and screened most carefully. Students wishing to use quotations taken from the Course, including paraphrasing and borrowing its ideas, must first be granted permission from the Foundation for Inner Peace to do so. That permission will require attribution for each quote or paraphrase, using the conventional way of referencing. Further, the Foundation reserves the right to charge either a fee or a small percentage of royalties for extensive excerpts, in accordance with prevailing publishing-industry standards. Such monies will be used to further the Foundation's activities in support of the Course, including financially supporting the translators who are also students of the material.

The Foundation for Inner Peace has also received permission from the United States Trademark Office to use the title *A Course in Miracles* as a service mark, similar to a trademark. This will allow us to appropriately limit public use of the title. The proliferation of groups and organizations using the title *A Course in Miracles* in their names, however well-meaning their intent, has proven confusing to many students, especially those new to the Course.

We are certainly aware that these changes in policy could prove distressing to some students. We would at times prefer to believe that *A Course in Miracles*, because of its source, occupies a special atmosphere, somehow set apart from the capricious "slings and arrows" of the world. However, this is not the case. The Course, like all of us, exists in the everyday world of time and space. And so we must take into account "worldly" factors when determining Foundation policy.

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This should come as no surprise. After all, the principles of the Course only become meaningful when they are applied to the practice of our daily lives. It is our day-to-day experiences that provide the Holy Spirit with the classroom in which He teaches us His lessons of forgiveness. The goal is to live in the world, but not be of it. Workbook lesson 184, for example, reminds us that we still have need to use the symbols of the world because we have a teaching function to perform. And we cannot truly teach if we are not comfortable in the world, utilizing its many forms.

The very origin of *A Course in Miracles* reflects this emphasis on seeing the ego's world as the Holy Spirit's classroom. Jesus was always quite specific in his instructions and guidance to Helen and Bill regarding the direct application of the more abstract principles to their personal and professional lives. Helen and Bill were thus never asked to leave their worldly jobs in the highly competitive university setting in New York City in order to practice the Course. The scribing of *A Course in Miracles* was always integrated with their daily duties and responsibilities in the world.

Thus it seems that with the Foundation's change in policy we have come full circle, back to where *A Course in Miracles* would have us be: using the laws of this world to serve the purposes of Heaven, applying the Course's copyright judiciously and fairly, in accordance with the Holy Spirit's guidance, to preserve the integrity of the material for all students, present and to come.

If the Foundation erred in the past, it was in relying on our own reasonableness, disregarding Jesus' guidance. It seemed less reasonable to us somehow, certainly less "spiritual," to strictly enforce the copyright. And so we mistakenly allowed our judgment to preempt his. However, as the Course repeatedly makes clear, we are not to rely upon our own judgment in any decision, no matter how seemingly obvious it may appear at first glance. Rather, we are asked to live our lives making no judgments by ourselves, turning instead to the Holy Spirit's vision for our understanding and interpretation of events. And in this instance, time has again borne out the truth of the Course's teaching. We now understand that we were incorrect in our judgment about copyright policy.

As if to underscore this point, we have since learned that, according to copyright law, if the

holder of a copyright consistently fails to enforce it, then the copyright may be judged null and void. The principle here is one of "use it or lose it." Had this in fact come to pass, the Foundation would have been in the very unacceptable position of abrogating its "sacred trust" to the Course. It is our deep hope that students of *A Course in Miracles* will understand the motivation behind the Foundation's change in copyright policy. We are reminded of the important section in the text, "The Healed Relationship," which treats the shift from the special to a holy relationship. In his discussion, Jesus comforts his students with the thought that "the only difficult phase is the beginning." He explains further:

It would not be kinder to shift the goal more slowly, for the contrast would be obscured, and the ego given time to reinterpret each slow step according to its liking. Only a radical shift in purpose could induce a complete change of mind about what the whole relationship is for. As this change develops and is finally accomplished it grows increasingly beneficent and joyous. But at the beginning, the situation is experienced as very precarious (text, p. 338; T-17.V.5:1-4).

We would like to think of this shift in the Foundation's policies as being part of the ongoing process of our developing a holy relationship with students of the Course.

In this article, we—the Foundation for Inner Peace and Foundation for "A Course in Miracles"—have attempted to illuminate the way in which we work together, speaking with one voice, and to convey some sense of the many, many hours of prayer and consideration that have gone into the formulation of these new policies. If some students have difficulty with our decision, we understand, but hope that it will not detract from their study and practice of the Course. We can only urge these students to apply the Course's principles to this situation as well, as we have done, and to seek out forgiveness instead of attack. We hope that this period of transition will make us all even more mindful of our shared goal of internalizing the Course's principles of forgiveness, accomplished by relinquishing the ego's specialness and choosing the Love of God as our only desire. In this way we can all learn together, and together take one more giant step along the road back Home, as Jesus intended for all of us through *A Course in Miracles*. ■