Cameo 1

“This Is Not a Selfish Gift”

In June of 1965, after years of conflict in their professional lives, Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford joined in the goal of demonstrating “another way,” which they hoped would transform their working relationships. This triggered in Helen that summer a series of startling inner visions and paranormal experiences. Then, apparently toward the end of that summer, she made what turned out to be a prescient announcement:

One day during that same summer, I told Bill I was about to do something very unexpected. I had no idea what it was, but I knew it was going to happen soon. At Bill’s urging I had been keeping a sort of diary since our visit to Virginia Beach. Now Bill suggested that if I wrote down whatever occurred to me in connection with the “unexpected something,” I might find out what it was. (41)

Therefore, sometime around October 18 or 19, Helen began writing down anything that seemed relevant. She said in her autobiography, “Nothing much came of my attempts at first, and I was on the point of giving them up” (41). But actually, these early writings clearly reveal a spiritual impulse that was trying to emerge into consciousness, like a new shoot just starting to push through the soil.

She records spiritual reflections that do not at all sound like the musings of a self-professed “militant atheist”:

I think under the projection and all that stuff is a hidden nostalgia for the soul. We want it back so we can identify with it because that is what we are really and somewhere we know it.  

This AM it occurred to me that I had no right to waste anything—money, clothes, or my own life, because thus everything has to be used right. It all has a place in the Plan. And you must not throw gifts away.

It seems clear that these thoughts are coming from somewhere beyond Helen’s conscious mind. Indeed, an insight she writes down regarding her tendency to forget names (“It may be more a fear of involvement or interaction”) is later identified by the Course’s author as coming from him ("I emphasize again that your tendency to forget names is not hostility but a fear of involvement or recognition").

She records dreams with obvious spiritual content. In one account she says:

1. All quotations with page number references in this cameo are from Helen Cohn Schucman, Ph.D., Autobiography (Temecula, CA: Foundation for A Course in Miracles, 1990, 2009).
2. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
3. See our discussion of this in Cameo 9.
The crucifixion was a total rejection of the body by others (projection) and its “destruction” which was really a purification. As a result, the soul could enter entirely into the temple, heal it, and use it only constructively.

She also records prayers, including a long, impassioned prayer for Dave Diamond, a friend who is dying from brain cancer. This prayer is infused with ideas that will later appear in the Course, as we can see in these excerpts:

Dave, don’t give in—you have a real mission—don’t lose your chance—miracles are the natural law.

Then I asked Christ to help Dave know He was there and to see Him and know the truth so he could be free....

Your spirit and mine can unite and then two of us have come together in Christ’s name. Jesus promised to be there, Dave. Your brain does not matter, if you will understand life as Jesus did.

Finally, sprinkled throughout these writings, she records statements from a voice that speaks as if it is Jesus and that Helen calls “Christ”:

I was really quite depressed this AM, which is now very unusual (I used to [be] all the time) but He says “Be of good cheer—I have overcome the world” [John 16:33].

Then on October 20, everything changed. The voice—which we will call by the name that it later gave itself: Jesus⁴—went from showing up in occasional brief statements to delivering a more extended discourse. And this discourse, which was specifically about Bill receiving guidance and Helen asking on his behalf, became the jumping-off point for the dictation of A Course in Miracles.

Earlier, Helen had written down the following items:

1) Ask what is interfering with Bill’s meditation and how to overcome this.
2) Bill’s list.

Now, on the day before the Course would begin coming through, Helen returns to these two items, the first of which is specifically about Bill’s ability to hear guidance in meditation. He has apparently been wondering how he can access a gift like the one that Helen has stumbled upon. Here is the question that she asks of her guidance:

I said He promised to come when He was called on and Bill asks [for guidance] and does not receive and has really tried to knock and it has not been opened to him. I think the door is ajar a bit, but I really wouldn’t call it very open. Is it all right if I ask you for him since he wants me to?

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4. See “The Issue of Authorship” in the CE Introductory material for more about this.
Before recording this question, Helen had actually already started to write down Jesus’ answer. She wrote, “1) If you do not get an answer it is always because you ask amiss,” but then crossed this out. Now she writes his answer down in full:

I can’t answer when he asks amiss. When he asks right I have answered. He has a tendency to get part of an answer and decide himself when to disconnect. He should ask if that’s all.

Since I don’t know when he’s going to ring off I have to be very short and even cryptic. It chops messages up too much.

The main problem, then, is that Bill is too quick to hang up the phone, so to speak. Now Jesus elaborates on further areas of “interference”:

There is also interference from three major areas [the first three items on the numbered list that follows]:

1. He doesn’t have much real confidence that I will get through. He never just claims his rights. He should begin with much more confidence. I’ll keep my promises, [the writing now apparently switches to Helen speaking to Bill] but you do not act as if you really expect him to.

This attitude of asking with confidence, as if claiming a birthright, is the same attitude encouraged in the Workbook’s instructions for listening for guidance. For example: “There is a message waiting for you. Be confident that you will receive it. Remember that it belongs to you” (W-Re.2.In.3:1-3).

2. There is another kind of related error which is illustrated by his question about “when are you going to call the hospital?” It’s not right to interfere just to check. It’s selfish, but more than that it makes things too personal, which always implies doubt.

Without knowing what the call to the hospital is about, it’s hard to be sure what this means. Jesus mentions this situation later, saying, “Remember your slip about the effect on Neurological Institute, and his [Bill’s] asking when you were going to call up.” Whatever the details, Bill is being interfering and even selfish, due to his own lack of trust. The implication may be that Bill’s asking for inner guidance at times has this same quality. This might be a clarification of the earlier idea that Bill sometimes “asks amiss.”

3. He has to learn better concentration. His mind flits about too much for good communication. Suggest a very short phrase, like “Here I am, Lord” and [now addressing Bill directly] don’t think of anything else. Just pull in your mind slowly from everywhere else and center it on these four words.

Here, Jesus gives Bill a meditation technique, which involves putting all of his attention on being fully present to God, and on nothing else. The idea is that this kind of concentrated focus on God will help Bill hear guidance. This, too, is a foreshadowing of the Workbook. It anticipates the Workbook’s meditation instructions, which sometimes involve making oneself
fully present to God (see Lesson 183, for example), and it anticipates the Workbook’s training in stilling one’s mind in order to hear guidance: “His Voice awaits your silence, for His Word cannot be heard unless your mind is quiet for a while, and meaningless desires have been stilled” (W-125.6:2).

4. Tell him to be sure not to mistake your role. If he overreacts to or overevaluates you as a person, both of you will be in danger.

Bill already feels that he lacks his own access to God. If he puts Helen on a pedestal as a spiritual idol, he will further denigrate himself and dangerously inflate her.

5. He should try to get his own list. (Armstrong) may just mean his own one [own arm?] is strong.

The nature of Bill’s list is not specified, but from what little we know, it seems very similar to Helen’s list, which is discussed in the notes just days later. Her list is a list of people, selected by guidance, who have thrown away their chalice of Atonement—their reconciliation with God—and who need Helen’s help to get it back. She has been assigned, in other words, to “hand them back their own chalice.” Like Helen’s list, Bill’s list is also apparently a list of people, in that someone named Joe Armstrong is twice mentioned in connection with it. And like Helen’s, it seems to be a list revealed by guidance, in that Helen appears to be asking Jesus who is on Bill’s list.

However, rather than hearing the names of those on Bill’s list, Helen gets a very different message: “He should try to get his own list.” The name “Armstrong” is then apparently turned into a pun, in which Bill’s “arm” is “strong” enough for him to get his own guidance. When it comes to guidance, in other words, Bill can rely on his own strength. He shouldn’t be leaning so heavily on Helen. This somewhat curt guidance may sound quite definite, but it will soon be reversed.

Jesus’ discourse on Bill’s hearing ends at this point and things take a dramatic turn. It’s as if during this guidance something has been building in the background, and it is now ready to break through. But before it can do so, Jesus needs to explain to Helen the bigger picture:

He [Jesus] thinks it’s time for some explanations which we’re probably ready for. There are always risks in speed-ups. The whole thing was undertaken because things were getting behind schedule because so many people persistently lost more than they gained.

Helen later, in her autobiography, fleshed out the thoughts that rapidly entered her mind at this point:

I was given a sort of mental “explanation,” though, in the form of a series of related thoughts that crossed my mind in rapid succession and made a reasonably coherent whole. According to this “information” the world situation was worsening to an alarming degree. People all over the world were being called on to help, and were making their individual contributions as part of an overall, prearranged plan. I had apparently agreed to

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5. See Cameo 3.
take down *A Course in Miracles* as it would be given me. The Voice was fulfilling its part in the agreement, as I would fulfill mine. I would be using abilities I had developed very long ago, and which I was not really ready to use again. Because of the acute emergency, however, the usual slow, evolutionary process was being by-passed in what might be described as a “celestial speed-up.” I could sense the urgency that lay behind this “explanation,” whatever I might think about its content. The feeling was conveyed to me that time was running out. (41)

Finally, it is clear what has been happening to Helen. Before her birth, she had agreed to enter this life in order to play her part in a global plan to restore humanity’s forward progress. And this agreement, after slumbering for decades, has at last stirred to life.

Receiving this information is a turning point, but instead of the process now rolling forward, things come to a grinding halt. Helen now writes this message from Jesus in large letters in the center of the page:

Stop

Clearly, something has temporarily gone wrong. This leads Helen to offer to tear it all up:

[Helen:] I’ll tear it up if you want.
[Jesus:] No—maybe tomorrow. Now just write this:

Remember your slip about the effect on Neurological Institute, and his [Bill’s] asking when you were going to call up.

Without more context, this is a very opaque comment. It is obviously another reference to Bill’s question “when are you going to call the hospital?” But more than that we cannot say.

Now Helen writes an even more emphatic message from Jesus:

Be Careful

We can tell this caution comes from Jesus, since he repeats it in his next comments (the reference to “Jonathan” is to Helen’s husband, Louis, whom she often called “Jonathan” in the Notes):

Also, tell Bill about Jonathan’s remark “I do not like you all sweetness and light—I like you a little sharp if you get what I mean.” And again be very careful.

Something is clearly wrong. Helen has been told with great emphasis to “Stop” and “Be Careful,” and then to “again be very careful.” Helen even offers to “tear it up if you want.” The overall implication seems to be that Helen is in danger of proceeding inappropriately. But in what way?

To understand this, we have to look at the major temptation Helen had faced up to this point. In the summer, she had discovered that she had psychic abilities. About this, she reported, “I was actually becoming rather proud of the acquisition of such dramatic abilities, and I even caught brief glimpses of fantasies of power and prestige crossing the back of my mind” (36).
This was the major obstacle she had faced in the run-up to the Course: her ego being inflated by her newfound abilities.

This obstacle was shifted by two pivotal experiences, both of which Helen marked as crucial turning points in accepting her function. In the first, she had a psychic vision of a church she was sure she and Bill would see when visiting the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. This, however, turned out to be a useless application of her abilities, as Bill discovered that the church existed but had been razed long ago to make way for the clinic itself. The true use of her abilities came out on the way home, when she was able to intuitively “feel waves and waves of misery” going through a young woman in the airport (38). This far more practical use of Helen’s psychic abilities enabled her and Bill to render critical service to this woman at a turning point in her life.

The Mayo Clinic experience was followed by, and apparently led to, an inner vision in which she discovered an ancient scroll on the floor of a cave. As she unrolled the scroll, she saw that the center panel said simply “God is.” Opening the scroll further, she saw tiny letters begin to emerge on the right and left panels. She was told that on the left side she could read all of the past and on the right side all of the future. Helen, however, chose to reject the reading of past and future and stick with just the center panel. This represented a key decision to use her abilities only for God, not for psychic feats. Helen seems to have believed that this was where she really accepted her function as scribe of the Course.

The road to accepting her function, then, had been one of repeatedly refusing to use her unusual abilities to fuel her ego and instead giving them to God to use to help others. Returning to our account of the late October dictation: It is probable, then, that as she stands on the brink of actually beginning her function, she is facing some version of this same choice again.

The particular way in which her ego wants to control her abilities becomes clear in what she writes the next morning, the morning of October 21:

AM—It crossed my mind last night that something very wrong had happened. I got mad because I thought I shouldn’t be asked to ask for you [Bill], and it was a form of exploitation that was very dangerous for me, and represented an avoidance technique for you.

I thought the whole thing was so dangerous that I had to tell you not to do it again. Briefly it crossed my mind (but with no emotional impact at all which is always suspicious) that I might just resent asking for someone else because I prefer the “exclusive” idea.

Here it is. Helen now identifies what had gone so “wrong” last night. Her suspicion that it was dangerously unhealthy for Bill to ask her for guidance was actually the voice of her ego, wanting her to keep this gift as her own private treasure, as a spring that only she could drink from. As the dictation proceeds, Jesus now elaborates on this:

Christ says I can tell something is wrong whenever I get a “snappy” answer. He wouldn’t say “Tell him to get his own list” that way. The tone is wrong.

So that fifth point, that Bill “should try to get his own list,” was in fact in error. It was a distortion introduced by the ‘exclusive’ idea.” Helen’s urge to keep her gift to herself is warping her hearing, turning Jesus’ voice into something “snappy” and even (as he will later say) “mean.”

6. See Cameo 32.
This seems to solve the puzzle of why Jesus told her to “Stop” and “Be Careful.” He can hardly proceed to dictate the Course to her if her ego is taking control of her gift and distorting his voice.

This morning it was very clear to me that in connection with you [Bill] I have not been right since I asked you what you wanted so I could really be asking for you. This was essential and except for the list, where I slipped, the answer should be respected.

Instead of asking on Bill’s behalf being “very dangerous” and “an avoidance technique,” it is in fact “essential.” And except for that point about Bill’s list, what she heard was indeed accurate and “should be respected.”

You have every right, in fact, you should, ask me to ask for you. This is not a selfish gift, and it is a real one (this upsets me, too). It has to be used for others, and particularly you.

[Jesus:] Ask Bill please to help you get over being mean about it fast.

(Note: At the moment I have serious doubts about everything. This is holding everything up.)

Here on the cusp of the Course dictation actually beginning, Helen seems to have faced another version of the choice she made in the Mayo Clinic experience and in her scroll cave vision. In the face of the temptation to keep this gift exclusively for herself, she apparently decides with Jesus that “This is not a selfish gift.” She decides to use it “for others,” and particularly for Bill. She decides to fulfill her agreement to help “the world situation.”

With this key decision made, it’s as if the final barrier has been swept aside. Helen now writes this message from Jesus:

You will see miracles through your hands through Me.

This is the first line of what would become the miracle principles. The dictation of *A Course in Miracles* has begun.
Cameo 2

“My Strength Will Support You”

On the morning of October 21, 1965, near the very beginning of the dictation of the miracle principles—right after principle 3—Helen had a revealing exchange with Jesus, one that tells us a great deal about him as a teacher:

[Jesus:] You are braking communication by thinking it’s cute. This is not wrong, but it diverts your attention. [“Braking” is either a misspelling or a pun.]

Jesus is surprisingly agreeable about Helen’s thought that “it’s cute.” The problem with that thought is not that it’s false, nor that it’s “bad.” The problem is simply that it diverts her attention away from what he is saying. Helen has something to learn from him. It’s vital, therefore, that she pay attention.

[Helen:] That’s true.

[Jesus:] Of course it’s true, and I’m really glad you got the idea. I am not angry when this kind of thing happens, but the lesson deteriorates under lack of focus. Please read these three points (with corollaries) as often as you can today, because there may be a quiz this evening. This is merely to introduce structure, if it is needed. It is not to frighten you.

There is not a trace of sternness or judgment here. Jesus is not angry when Helen’s attention is diverted, and he freely expresses his happiness when she gets what he’s trying to say. He is entirely on her side. He just wants her to learn, period. It’s not about appeasing him; it’s about her own learning.

For this reason, he urges her to read and reread the first three principles throughout the day, because there might be a quiz that evening (although there’s no evidence of such a quiz actually happening). He reassures her that this is not meant to frighten her into submission; it’s just meant as a useful structure that will help her learn.

[Helen:] Well, would You regard this as a kind of miracle, maybe?

[Jesus:] You better reread them now. There is nothing special or surprising about this at all. The one thing that happened was the Universal Miracle which was the experiences of intense love you have felt. (Don’t get embarrassed [the Urtext adds “by the idea of love”]—things that are true are not embarrassing. Embarrassment is only a form of fear, and actually a particularly dangerous form because it reflects egocentricity.)

(No, don’t think of how Bill will find this fascinating, either. I told you to reread them and you did not.)

1. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
Helen’s attention has been diverted again. Ignoring the instruction to reread the first three principles, she asks if communicating with him could be considered a miracle. This is an understandable reaction. She is, after all, having a conversation with a voice that claims to be Jesus. He finds a way to answer her question while at the same time drawing her back to his focus. He says, in effect, “If you reread the first three principles, you’ll see that the ability to communicate with me is not a miracle, that a miracle is an expression of love. Therefore, your experiences of intense love were experiences of the Universal Miracle.” This probably refers to the preceding summer, in which Helen had had a number of experiences of being in a crowd and feeling “a brief but powerful affinity” (39) with everyone there. Of one such experience, she said that “A sudden sense of deep emotional closeness to everyone there swept over me” (39).

At the mention of these experiences, Helen becomes embarrassed by the love she felt—a theme that will crop up repeatedly in the early dictation. This represents yet another diversion: Helen is pulling away from his teaching into self-concern. Rather than offering reassuring sympathy, therefore, Jesus quickly pops the bubble of her embarrassment. It is not humility, he says, but rather dangerous egocentricity.

Then she pulls away yet again, musing to herself about whether Bill will find this fascinating. Jesus again brings her back to the task at hand: “I told you to reread them [the principles] and you did not.” And finally she yields: “I am now.” This seems to set the stage for the touching communication that follows:

[Jesus:] Do not feel guilty about the fact that you are doubting this. Just reread them, and their truth will come to you. I love you. And I am not afraid or embarrassed or doubtful. My strength will support you, so don’t worry and leave the rest to Me.

Jesus now addresses what probably lurks in the background behind all her diversions: Helen is feeling guilty about doubting his teaching. As a solution, he again brings her back to what he has asked her to do three times already: “Reread them.” If she just does that, the truth of the principles will come to her and her doubts will be vanquished.

Helen’s guilt over her own doubt seems to be part of a larger feeling of inadequacy as a learner, for that is what Jesus speaks to next. Her fear, embarrassment, and doubt all erect barriers to her learning. As long as those feelings are there, how can she really learn what he’s teaching? She can, implies Jesus, because he is there, and he not only loves her, as he openly tells her, but he is also free of all the barriers that hold her back: “I am not afraid or embarrassed or doubtful.” Therefore, she can just relax and lean on his strength.

Do not run to Bill to tell him. There will be time, but don’t disrupt things. I’ll arrange the schedule. You have a lot to do today. Get dressed or you will be late.

But when you do see Bill, be sure you tell him how much he helped you through by giving you the right message. (And don’t bother with worrying about how you received it. That doesn’t matter, either. You were just afraid.)

2. All quotations with page number references in this cameo are from Helen’s Autobiography (for the full reference, see footnote 1 in Cameo 1).
Here is yet another diversion. Helen wants to run off and tell Bill what has happened. But rather than Jesus urging her yet again to reread the principles, time has moved on and the priority is now for her to get dressed and get to work. We might expect him to urge her to stay with this momentous happening—talking to Jesus!—and get to work late. Instead, however, he shows that he is concerned with the rest of Helen’s life. As important as their communication is, he doesn’t want it to get in the way of her other responsibilities. He even offers to “arrange the schedule” for her.

Then he shows his concern for Bill. Helen later wrote in her autobiography that when Jesus first began dictating the Course to her, she called Bill in a panic, saying that “the Voice” she had been hearing was now “using very specific words and seems to want to go on for some time” (41). Bill made a simple and very practical suggestion: “Try and write some more and see what happens” (41). Jesus’ comment above seems to be a reference to that phone call. If so, then Helen apparently didn’t receive that suggestion very gracefully at the time, and Jesus wants Bill to know just how apt it was. And he wants Helen to not feel guilty for responding ungracefully: “That doesn’t matter, either. You were just afraid.”

Here at the very beginning of the Course, we have a revealing glimpse of how Jesus the teacher relates to his students. Helen, as we have seen, gets caught up in various diversions: “This is cute.” “Is this a miracle?” “I feel embarrassed.” “I wonder what Bill will think.” “I’ve got to run and tell Bill.” Many of these diversions, it seems, come down to one thing: an understandable fascination with the idea of Jesus Christ dictating “a course in miracles” to her. It’s like a celebrity showing up at your class who has an important message to deliver, but all you can think about is the fact that a celebrity is standing right there in front of you.

In the midst of Helen’s very human reactions, Jesus holds fast to his single agenda: to get across his teaching. He is as focused as she is distracted. Therefore, no matter in what direction she pulls away, he keeps pulling her back to the principles he has just dictated to her, telling her again and again to reread them. He even asks her to do so throughout the day because there might be a quiz. He doesn’t ignore her questions or her doubts; rather, he tells her that she’ll find the answers in the very principles he is asking her to study.

Even though he stays firm with his agenda, he makes it abundantly clear that this has nothing to do with her doing what the authority says in order to be good, or in order not to be bad. This is only about her learning. Thus, no matter what she says, he does not get angry with her. And rather than inducing fear or guilt in her to spur her into doing his bidding, he actively tries to relieve those feelings. When he needs to correct her, he follows this with reassurance (“This is not wrong”; “I am not angry”). And when she does receive his teaching, he is quick to tell her how glad he is. He wants nothing—not her distractions, not her embarrassment or doubt or guilt, and not any needs she imagines he has—to get in the way of her learning. He is there purely for her.

His whole demeanor reinforces this impression. He is present, engaged, and clearly concerned. He tells her how he feels about her reactions (“I’m really glad you get the idea”) and he tells her how he feels about her (“I love you”). And he explains himself. He does not leave her in a state of mystery, having to trust in his almightiness, but rather tells her plainly why he says what he does: “The lesson deteriorates under lack of focus.” “This is merely to introduce structure, if it is needed.”

He even offers to make up for any lacks she may have as a learner. As he explains toward the end, he is free of all these lacks. Thus, no matter how inadequate she may feel, she can rest on his love and strength, let go of her worry, “and leave the rest to Me.”
This snapshot of Jesus’ will to teach meeting Helen’s desire to pull away surely applies to more people than just her. What student of the Course does not get drawn off in diversions and distractions? And when that happens to us, we can envision that the same teacher that was there with Helen is here with us, single-mindedly, yet patiently and lovingly, drawing us back to his teaching.
Cameo 3

“You Must Love the Children and Help Them”

Following miracle principle 16, Jesus gave Helen an extended discourse on her need to help and heal particular people in her life. In the process, he painted a picture of the overall arc of her soul’s journey, from the ancient past to the present.

[Helen:] re. Wally’s chalice: does this mean he is on my list?

This seems to be a reference to an earlier portion of Helen’s notes, in which she wrote to Bill:

Last night I was planning to type up the Course for you, but was strictly ordered not to go back to it before I got over Wally….

This morning I did ask for help with Wally. The answer seems to lie in point 6 and 7. That’s why He gave me the chalice for Wally. It belongs to him but he cannot find it.

Wally was a friend of Bill’s whom Helen intensely disliked. She at one point wrote, “I feel extremely negative toward him, and I insist that he’s a bad influence on Bill…and I think he’s a real menace to me.” Jesus clearly regards this dislike as a key obstacle for Helen, since he returns to it again and again. Here, she is “strictly ordered” by him not to go back over the Course until she gets “over Wally.” Later, Jesus tells her that she must let go of “that thing about Wally.” Finally, he tells her that the reason she hates Wally is because he shares her trait of being “embarrassed by love,” but just expresses it differently than she does. She is thus projecting onto him her own self-hatred over this same trait in herself.

In stark contrast to Helen’s hatred, Jesus has given her “the chalice” to give to Wally. This is clearly a reference to the chalice of Atonement, the cup used by Jesus at the Last Supper. Drinking from the chalice thus symbolizes taking the Atonement into oneself. In other words, it symbolizes reconciliation with God. This reconciliation “belongs to [Wally] but he cannot find it.” Hence the need for Helen to give it to him.

But how can she do this? “The answer seems to be in points [miracle principles] 6 and 7.” Principle 6 implies that before Helen can give Wally a miracle, “purification is necessary first.” She must purify her mind of her hatred. Principle 7 says that miracles “supply a lack, and are performed by those who have more for those who have less.” Helen, then, is in a position of (spiritually) having more than Wally, and out of this abundance she can supply his lack.

The word that seems to be hovering around the edges here is forgiveness, a word that is closely associated with Atonement. If Helen can forgive Wally, she will purify her own mind and supply the innocence he seems to lack. This mirrors something Helen said earlier in a letter to Bill. She reported that Wally was very anxious to give her a necklace, saying, “I knew that if I

1. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.

should accept it from him it would represent a symbol that I have forgiven him, which he needs so much.” This is what Helen needs to offer and Wally needs to receive: her forgiveness.

Jesus now answers Helen’s question about Wally being on her “list”:

Not necessarily, only [some words crossed out, possibly including “be patient”]. You of all people should know that it frightens people if you hand them back their own chalice. *

Whether he is or not depends on a three-way readiness. I am always ready. Your job is to take care of your readiness. His readiness is up to him.

At present he is a potential candidate.

But Amy is on it now. She is a child you hurt.

* The whole problem is that they threw it away and are denying it. Therefore they are now afraid of it. This should cause you no trouble at all in understanding.

The fact that Amy is on Helen’s list seems to dovetail with a dream Helen had in which Amy’s mother suddenly left the girl in Helen’s care. Helen as a result felt trapped and was trying not to get angry, because she wanted to rest after a tiring day “but couldn’t on account of Amy.”

In light of the comments about Wally and Amy, Helen’s chalice list seems to be a list of people to whom she is supposed to give the chalice of Atonement, people who have lost touch with their chalice due to their own choices and due to Helen’s unkindness. This latter point is implied when Jesus says “But Amy is on it now. She is a child you hurt.” As we’ll soon see, this hurt may have occurred in a time before the present life.

Individuals must, however, fulfill a key condition before they are put on the list: They must be ready to receive their chalice back; they must no longer be afraid of it. It is clear that people in Helen’s life are at various stages of achieving this readiness. Amy is apparently ready now. Chip, as we’ll soon see, is “almost ready.” And Wally, it seems, is not ready yet: “At present he is a potential candidate.” In all of these cases, their readiness is up to them. Helen therefore needs to focus on her own readiness, so that she can be an instrument of Jesus, who is “always ready.”

Is Helen the only one with a list like this? We see in Cameo 1 that Bill seems to have had his own chalice list. In material that was written about a week before the current material, Helen referred several times to “Bill’s list” or “his own list.” This was apparently a list of people (Joe Armstrong being mentioned in connection with it) who were supposed to be identified by guidance. This, of course, sounds strikingly similar to what Helen now calls “my list,” which is also a list of people who are being identified for her by guidance.

So Helen and Bill both seem to have had their own chalice lists, which of course raises the possibility that this is a general phenomenon, not limited to the two of them. It raises the possibility, in other words, that we all have a chalice list.

Jesus now continues:

You both have an identification problem, which makes you unstable but in different ways. He lacks confidence in his identification, and needs to strengthen it. You vacillate in your identification and need better control.

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3. Absence from Felicity, 123.
Both of you needn’t worry.

This will become a frequent theme in Jesus’ comments about Helen’s and Bill’s respective problems. Bill’s problem is weakness; he lacks confidence in himself. Helen, in contrast, is strong, but needs stability; she uses her strength to charge confidently off in opposite directions at different times. As Jesus says later, “Your perception is so variable that you swing from sudden but real knowledge to complete cognitive disorganization.”

Jesus now returns to Helen’s need to help others:

You must love the children and help them. You have hated them and hurt them, but remember Azra that you once loved them very much. You were a child of light. Forget the interval of darkness and be what you were. That is your real Self.

Chip’s story triggered the abandonment of the children, guilt, and a fear of God’s abandonment as justice. I told you I forgave you and that meant all hurt and hate you have ever expressed is canceled. I need the children of light now. And I am calling you to be what you once were and must be again.

The interval has vanished without a trace anywhere. You who lived so close to God must not give way to guilt.

The karmic law demands abandonment for abandoning, but you have received mercy, not justice.

Help the children because you love them and love God.

Remember a miracle is a spark of Life. It shines through the darkness and brings in the light. You must begin to forget and remember.

Jesus is clearly referring to a past life of Helen’s in which he says she was “a child of light” who loved the children very much. By calling this past identity “Azra,” he is possibly identifying Helen as the biblical scribe Ezra, sometimes spelled “Azra.” Ezra means “help” or “helper” and may be an abbreviation of “Azaryahu” meaning “God helps.” Interestingly, Jesus here not only enjoins Helen several times to “help” the children, but he also will later call her “God’s help” (“You who will be God’s help are clearly in need of help”). Ezra was a Jewish scribe and priest who has been called a second Moses. He led five thousand Jews back from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem, where he reconstituted the Jewish community based on strict observance and learned interpretation of the Torah. It is not hard to see echoes of this in Helen’s current role as a “scribe” who would bring forth a new scripture that would attract a global following.

Jesus’ message here is that in this past life (whether this was as the scribe Ezra or someone else) she expressed her “real Self.” Later, he implies that in this life Helen was surrendered to God’s will and enjoyed a high level of communion with Him. Yet however holy it was, that lifetime seems to have vanished into the distant past. It seems to have been blotted out by an “interval of darkness” that came after, in which Helen hated, hurt, and abandoned the children, thus causing her to fear God’s abandonment as her just deserts. Jesus’ liberating message, though, is that all of that darkness has now “vanished without a trace anywhere.” Jesus forgave her, “and that meant all hurt and hate you have ever expressed is canceled.” Loving mercy has replaced karmic justice. A miracle has shined away the interval of darkness. Now all that remains is the light she expressed in her life as Azra. All of the obstacles to reuniting with

that light have disappeared. She can forget everything else and remember the light, because the light is all that remains.

This is a private point, just for you. It is not part of the course.

A miracle is love—you always wanted presents, and a closed package was intolerable. Please open this one. You act like it’s a time bomb. When I said “a miracle abolishes time” [miracle principle 13], you might look back and review the point in parentheses [in miracle principle 15: “It will cease when it is no longer useful in facilitating learning.”]. You’re afraid there won’t be enough time for you. Forget it and remember that there is no real difference between an instant and eternity.

Jesus is urging Helen to open this present that he is giving her—the Course—even though she regards it as a time bomb. Then he implies it is a time bomb, since, after all, it abolishes time. She is afraid that this abolishing of time won’t leave her with enough time (which is why she reported being afraid when she wrote the earlier parenthetical remark about time ceasing). But then how can there not be enough time when each instant is really eternity?

Jesus now returns to the theme of healing the children:

I have healed the children you hurt before, but I have some I need your help in healing now.

Remember that there is no order in miracles because they are always maximal expressions of love. You did make a maximal effort for Chip, and the only reason you did it was because you loved Bill.

You might tell him to think about that sometimes, because he does need signs of love. But he does not always recognize them because he does not have enough confidence.

His statement that “I have healed the children you hurt before” helpfully clarifies what he meant earlier when he said he canceled all the hurt she has ever expressed. But now he calls her to join him in this endeavor, to become his instrument of healing: “I have some I need your help in healing now.” This, of course, is why she has the chalice list.

To make clear that he is not asking of her something beyond her strength, Jesus reminds Helen that in certain respects she is already doing this. As an example, he points out that she did “make a maximal effort for Chip”—a longtime friend of Bill’s—because of her love of Bill. In doing so, Jesus says, she was actually demonstrating the first principle of miracles, which rests on the idea that miracles are “maximal expressions of love.” In other words, she was performing a miracle—in this case, for both Chip and Bill. This, in fact, is just the kind of sign of love that Bill needs. Helen, however, probably needs to call his attention to it, since his lack of confidence blinds him to the love that he is actually receiving.

We don’t know the details of what Helen did for Chip, but this may be the same incident Jesus describes later: “But you did get Chip over his misperceptions of Wally with very creditable integrity.”5 Or it may be another instance of Helen helping Chip, one that she recorded in her notebooks the day before the Course started coming through. In this story, she was having a “session” with Chip in which he recounted a series of episodes with his father which, she said,

5. See Cameo 4.
“were really awful” and “which clearly emphasized that his father was a bastard.” Helen then sought to move him toward some kind of healing:

I said a prayer for him…and then asked him why he obviously wanted to hang on to what was obviously real and very intense hatred….
I was quite surprised with how quickly he got the idea that he was doing this part, aside from whatever his father had to answer for, which was a very different issue.
Chip said he wanted to get rid of this, and meant it, too, after I said “Why don’t you just release him from this, because you don’t need it.” And Chip said he wants to let his father rest in peace and also find salvation for himself, with which this was interfering.

This clearly fits the definition of “miracle” in the Course: an expression of love from one person that has a healing effect on another. Whatever specific event Jesus is referring to in saying “You did make a maximal effort for Chip,” it is clear that Helen is really trying to be a miracle worker with Chip. And not just with him—Jesus now returns to Helen’s efforts on Bill’s behalf:

You practically gave up your life for him [Bill] quite voluntarily, but you did not know then that what you were really giving up was death. This [is] what “in dying you live” really means. And I said Myself that greater love no man hath. [John 15:13 (KJV): “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”]

This is a reference to something Helen wrote down the day before the Course started coming through. She asked Jesus to straighten out her perception of a past event that was causing her distress. In response, he said, “In dying you live, but be sure you understand what this means.” This comment led her to think that she must be dying. This initially frightened her, but then she decided to “just relax and enjoy it.” She soon realized, however, “that this was terribly selfish,” because Bill, her husband, Chip, and presumably others all needed her. So she ended up praying, first in regard to Bill, “Please let me stay and help him a while longer,” and then more broadly: “I prayed that I could stay as long as I could help, and wouldn’t it be wonderful!”
Jesus now commends her for this, saying that in offering her life for others, “what you were really giving up was death. This [is] what ‘in dying you live’ really means.” He even likens her act to his own death, saying “And I said Myself greater love no man hath.” This lofty praise of her efforts seems to have brought her to tears, because he then says:

Stop crying or you won’t be fit to live now. Don’t worry about Susie. You are helping Chip’s readiness, and he did [?] than you with this one. This is unfair to you. Remember what you told him about Bobby. Chip is almost ready.
Review your note from yesterday that your identification is strong but erratic, and that is why you have so much will power but use it wrong at times. Bill was right about that misuse of it when you were sick, but it was a sign of superhuman will totally misdirected.
Your body does not need it, but your spirit does. And I need it too.
The guidance we have been looking at seems to jump around, but it is much more unified than it may at first appear. It paints a picture, as we said at the start, of the larger journey of Helen’s soul. Long ago, she was a “child of light” who, in pure devotion to God’s will, loved and served His children. Now she needs to return to that identity. This may seem impossible, for it was so long ago, and since that time there was an “interval of darkness” in which she hated and hurt God’s children. But that interval has been wiped away. Jesus has canceled all the hate she ever expressed. He has healed the children she hurt before. Now there is literally nothing standing in the way of her becoming that child of light again. Now she can resume her ancient role as God’s scribe.

How can she do this? The Course has come to give her the answer. She therefore needs to stop treating it like a ticking bomb and look upon it as a gift that she can’t wait to unwrap. It will teach her to stabilize her vacillating sense of identity. It will teach her to use her “superhuman will” not in service of her body or her ego, but only in service of God’s will.

This means dedicating herself to giving miracles to the people in her life. She has been given a list of those who have thrown away their chalice of Atonement and who were apparently aided in this by Helen—perhaps in her “interval of darkness.” Now she needs to hand them back their own chalice. She needs to be single-minded in giving them miracles. That is how she can fully undo the interval of darkness and become again the child of light. And she is beginning to do this very thing, as we saw with the touching story of her helping Chip release his hatred toward his father. All she needs to do is keep moving along the road that she has already started down.
Miracle principle 20 came out of a colorful, and ultimately touching, exchange between Jesus and Helen. First, he gives her a miracle principle that sounds like an impenetrable riddle:

[Jesus:] Miracles rest on flat feet. They have no arches. (Bill will be better on this than you.)

[Helen:] (He’d better be—I don’t get it at all, and I am very suspicious of it too. Bill—did communication break down, or does this mean something?) ¹

Helen’s attitude is impatient and even dismissive. It may be that, as someone who prides herself on her intelligence, she doesn’t like not being able to solve the riddle.

[Jesus:] Clue—it has something to do with “here I am, Lord.” Bill knows.

The idea is that I do not want to emphasize your special language too much. Some of them [the principles] have to be in his [in Bill’s language].

Jesus just ignores Helen’s dismissive attitude, going right ahead regardless. He has given a riddle; now he gives a clue.

“Here I am, Lord” is a prayer Jesus gave Bill the day before the dictation of the Course began.² The prayer was designed to help Bill be directly present to God rather than standing apart from Him. In a similar manner, as we’ll see, this principle is about miracles standing directly on eternity rather than above it (on the “arch of time”).

Jesus has now said three times that this principle is geared to Bill. As we see in Cameo 2 (Jesus: “But when you do see Bill, be sure you tell him how much he helped you through by giving you the right message”), he is always careful to include Bill and make sure he doesn’t feel left out.

[Helen:] My own associations here are very bad; a Rorschach response of “footprints” to the top red on 2.

Helen is referring to card 2 in the Rorschach inkblot test, on which the top two shapes (which are red) can be interpreted as footprints (the “heels” being at the very top):

[Jesus:] No—it’s all right: it’s the arch of time. There isn’t any. So it means...

Helen then wrote three versions of this principle. She first wrote, “Miracles rest on eternity, not…” Presumably, she had intended to finish that with “the arch of time.” Then she

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¹ All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
² See Cameo 1.
crossed everything out but “miracles” and continued with “do not rest on the arch of time but on eternity.” Then she crossed most of that out, leaving only “Miracles...rest on...eternity.”

The meaning is now clear: Miracles stand directly on the “flat surface” of eternity. They don’t stand above it, on the arch of time. Thus, rather than being separate from eternity, at the mercy of the laws of time, miracles are based directly on the law and order of eternity. This makes sense, since their whole purpose is to bring in the laws of eternity to overturn the laws of time.

[Helen:] I must say this is the hard way, and I’m sure this could have been done more directly. I don’t see why I should get a message in a way that makes me miss the point and then have to go into a mental coma to get it.

Helen really gives it to him here. She basically tells him that he’s not doing his job right, informing him that he should have just said it plainly, rather than clothing it in an exasperating riddle. The remark about going “into a mental coma to get it” is particularly withering. But as we’ll see, it plays right into Jesus’ hands.

[Jesus:] Answer: You’ve been doing that all along. You have not even bothered to look at the others, which are very clearly stated. I just thought I’d give you this one in a way you couldn’t overlook it.

It’s an example of the shock effect sometimes useful in teaching pupils whose attention wanders too much students who won’t listen. It compels attention.

Now he finally responds to Helen’s criticism, and at last we see the method behind his madness. He is still trying to get Helen to pay attention to the principles. He says that, rather than making her go into a mental coma to get it, he is trying to snap her out of the mental coma she’s been in all along. He is not being merely opaque; he is employing a carefully chosen device for compelling the attention of a student who won’t listen.

This seems to stop Helen in her tracks, presumably because she is quite aware she hasn’t been listening, and can therefore grasp the appropriateness of the teaching device Jesus has selected. And the device seems to be working. He in fact has her attention, and thus this miracle principle, unlike the other ones, promises to be one she won’t soon forget. Helen then briefly remarks, “So I got quite upset and snapped very unfairly at Jonathan [her husband Louis], then it went on...” But from this point on, the whole tone of the exchange changes.

[Jesus:] And remember to thank Bill from Me for his consistent all-out support. I need it, because you won’t listen to anything. But don’t worry, the three of us will make it.

We’re nowhere near the final. By the way, this is an example of the point on cooperation. [“Miracles are an industrial necessity. Industry depends on cooperation, and cooperation depends on miracles.”] And don’t underestimate your cooperation either. You don’t listen, and you would save yourself a lot of pain if you did. But you did get through Chip over his misperceptions of Wally with very creditable integrity.

Jesus now switches to gratitude and reassurance. He thanks Bill for his support,
which is much needed, given Helen’s resistance. And he assures them both that, in spite of Helen’s resistance, “the three of us will make it.” He then cites Bill’s “all-out support” as an example of miracle principle 19: “Miracles are an industrial necessity. Industry depends on cooperation, and cooperation depends on miracles.” The implication is that Bill’s support of this project—the writing of the Course—is an act of cooperation with Jesus.

Then his praise turns to Helen: “And don’t underestimate your cooperation either.” Jesus then backs this up with evidence of Helen’s cooperation with him: “You did get Chip over his misperceptions of Wally with very creditable integrity.” This brief line bears some attention, especially since, because we can reasonably assume that Helen’s cooperation, like Bill’s, is an example of miracle principle 19, the implication is that Helen performed a miracle. The context, as we see in Cameo 3, is that Helen can’t stand Wally. Not only that, it’s likely that she wants Bill to share her judgmental view of him, yet she thinks that Wally instead has “Bill’s unconscious backing.”

Into this stalemate comes another friend of Bill’s—Chip—with his own uncharitable view of Wally. Surely this is the time for Helen to form an alliance, so that together she and Chip can bring Bill over to their side. At the very least, it is time to privately relish Chip’s negative perceptions of Wally and give these insidious seeds whatever small encouragement they need to survive and grow. But instead, Helen does the opposite: she helps Chip get “over his misperceptions of Wally.” This may have been more than Helen trying to do the right thing. It may have been a gesture of selfless love for Bill, since this might be the incident Jesus referred to earlier when he said, “You did make a maximal effort for Chip, and the only reason you did it was because you loved Bill.”

Either way, though, Helen has made a definite choice to stick to her principles rather than give in to her baser instincts. This is why Jesus says she acted with “very creditable integrity.”

Jesus’ praise, being based on a clear-cut example, is now just as irrefutable as was his criticism that Helen is in a self-imposed mental coma. The effect on Helen is immediate. All her defenses crumble:

[Helen:] So I said, suddenly perfectly defenseless a little timid and very surprised, “You mean You think I’m nice?” and burst into tears. And He said He must think so, really, because He keeps giving me everything, and He’s not angry because I keep on rejecting Him, but He is sorry because I suffer so much for no reason. He was really very nice about it. I told him I really do love Him, but I have trouble about it (though I did mean it for a little while anyway, before I got embarrassed), and He said he understood very well, and would keep on trying.

Bill—please don’t let me down (this is very unexpected. I don’t talk this way to men).

All of Helen’s armor has fallen away. The biting criticism has gone and she is completely emotionally defenseless. This allows Jesus to tell her honestly how he feels about matters that lie at the heart of their relationship: He clearly thinks she’s nice, because he keeps giving her everything; he’s not angry with her for rejecting him, just sorry that she causes herself so much

3. Absence from Felicity, 122.
4. See Cameo 3.
needless suffering. Then it is Helen’s turn. She tells him she loves him, in spite of her embarrassment. It is a very tender exchange, all the more so because it follows what appears to be a real breakdown of communication.

Then Helen drops her armor with Bill. In her plea—“Please don’t let me down”—she is uncharacteristically exposing her real feelings. Earlier in her notes, she says, “Men are supposed to give to me, but this is not reversible.” When it comes to her relationships with men, she wants to be the one in control. But for the moment, she has dropped both her sword and shield with these two key men in her life—Jesus and Bill—and for once is completely open and undefended.
Cameo 5

The Shield Report

Directly following miracle principle 24 (“Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness which, when completed, is the Atonement”), Jesus gave a lengthy example of that principle. Such real-life examples of miracles—and there are many in the early dictation—are essential in understanding what a miracle really is, and this one is particularly telling.

A woman named Esther\(^1\) had written a report for the Shield Institute for Retarded Children. This report was apparently needed to secure a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), but the report was poorly done. Helen therefore went above and beyond her professional responsibility and rewrote the report in Esther’s name. Helen’s act may strike us as any number of things other than helpful, including meddling, insulting to Esther, lacking in trust, or overly concerned with what happens in the world. Therefore, learning what Jesus thought about this is extremely clarifying.

Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness which, when completed, is the atonement.

This process works all the time and in all dimensions of time. A very good example of how this is accomplished is the time you rewrote the entire report for Esther for the SOD [the Shield Institute].

Esther had hurt something you love, (The Shield) by writing a report you regarded as very bad. You atoned for her by writing [Urtext: in her name] one that was very good. Actually, it was not your responsibility professionally to do this, but because you do love the SOD you recognized in this case that you are your brother’s keeper. While you did not cancel Esther’s sin, you did cancel out its effects.\(^2\)

By saying that Helen’s rewriting of the report is a “very good example” of how miracle principle 24 is accomplished, Jesus is implying it was a miracle. He will go on to directly call it that no less than three times in this guidance. But how is it a miracle? Our first clue is given here. Through her carelessness, Esther had unwittingly let fly an arrow. Helen, realizing that she is her brother’s keeper, had made sure that, by the time that arrow reached its target, it had turned into a flower. This is how Atonement works. It wipes away the effects of loveless deeds, so that it’s as if they were never done.

Some day I want to tell Esther that not only is she forgiven, but that the effects of all her sins are canceled. This is what I have already told you.\(^3\) When I

\(^1\) Probably the same Esther that is Amy’s mother—see Cameo 3.

\(^2\) All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.

\(^3\) See Cameo 3: “I told you I forgave you and that meant all hurt and hate you have ever expressed is canceled.”
can tell her, she will be afraid for a long time, because she will remember many things, consciously or unconsciously, including the Shield report, a sin which you canceled out in advance by a miracle of devotion.

You would think it would be joyous news to be told that you are not only forgiven, but that all the effects of your sins have been canceled. So why would Esther respond to this by being “afraid for a long time”? The reason suggested here is that, before you can feel relief that “all your sins have been forgiven,” you first have to accept that you have sins to be forgiven. Esther had clearly denied hers, hiding them away in the vaults of her memory. But Jesus’ message about “all her sins” would open those vaults, causing her to “remember many things, consciously or unconsciously.” She would have to face what she had done before she could be set free by learning it had all been undone. And then Helen’s “miracle of devotion” with the Shield report would shine in her mind as a concrete example of this liberating truth.

It turns out that what Helen did with Esther’s sin (which will soon be redefined as merely an “absence of love”) is precisely what Jesus does with ours. He is there to make sure that when we stumble, the Everlasting Arms will always be there to catch us:

I am in charge of the process of atonement, which I undertook to begin. My atonement [which, as will be clarified later, refers to the resurrection, not the crucifixion] was for the canceling out of all sins which human beings could not otherwise correct. That is what the Biblical statement “Underneath are the Everlasting Arms” means.

Jesus, however, ideally wants to carry out this Atonement through human channels, as Helen explains at this point in the Urtext: “This [‘Underneath are the Everlasting Arms’] means that He will backstop whenever human miracles will not suffice for atonement purposes. However, it is perfectly clear that when a person can atone by miracles, both giver and receiver are atoning. It is better to atone this way because of the mutual benefits involved.” Jesus now expands on this idea:

I would have undone Esther’s sin to everyone who was affected by it myself, of course, but this would not have helped you.

The reason it was a miracle was because it not only atoned for Esther, but also for you because it kept the children from harm. I could have secured the new grant for the Shield anyway, being a Board Member of NIH. But this way I could cancel out some of your sins as well as Esther’s, and I sit on your Boards, too.

Jesus explains that he could have done it all himself. He could have made sure that the Shield got its grant from the NIH anyway, in spite of Esther’s report. After all, he sits on the Board of the NIH. But this way was better, because this way Helen could undo her own past lovelessness. We see in Cameo 3 that she had “hated and hurt” the children—apparently in past lives—with Amy being given as an example of one of these children. With the Shield report, however, she acted to protect the children—the children served by the Shield—and it looks like she succeeded. When Jesus says “I could have secured the new grant for the Shield anyway,” he implies that in the actual scenario,
Helen did that. Helen, then, had “kept the children from harm,” thus undoing her own past misdeeds. Her “miracle of devotion” had atoned for her, too.

The reason why you found rewriting that so taxing was because you resented Esther’s sin, and thought she put you in a very unfair position. But no one can really do this to anybody. If you had known that you were really performing a miracle for the Shield, for Esther, for yourself, and for Me, you would have done it with real joy. “In as much as you do it unto the least of these my children” really ends with “you do it unto yourself and Me.”

Tell Bill the reason why you come before me (as you did with Wally) is because I do not need miracles for my own atonement, but I stand at the end in case you fail temporarily.

We probably assume that, if this really was a miracle, then Helen must have been in an elevated and even transported state of mind while doing it. Here, however, we find out that in fact she felt resentful and drained, feeling that Esther had put her “in a very unfair position.” If Helen had only realized that “no one can really do this to anybody,” she could have been free of this ill feeling. And if she had realized all who would be blessed by what she was doing—the Shield, Esther, Helen herself, and even Jesus—she would have done it with joy.

I am always here to protect against Assumption failure. (That’s a special pun for Bill. He is still under the impression that he needs special signs of love).

Note also that the special language here is a combination of both yours and his. You two came together in My Name.

“Assumption failure” is most likely a takeoff on “expectation failure,” a psychological term for when our current mental model of reality leads to faulty expectations. Given that it follows the statement “I stand at the end in case you fail temporarily,” “Assumption failure” is probably a case where our judgmental assumptions about others prevent us from offering them miracles, causing us to fail temporarily on the journey to God. Jesus says that his role is to make up for this, to cancel out the errors “which human beings could not otherwise correct.”

This pun is yet another special sign of love for Bill, who was a gifted punster. As Jesus makes clear in a number of comments, he sees Bill as feeling chronically unworthy and on the outside. He therefore constantly takes care to give Bill “special signs of love” (as he does here with the pun) and to make sure he knows he is included (as he does here by using Bill’s language and not just Helen’s).

Q—Are there any corrections you want me to make in this?

A—Yes—change the word “sin” to “absence of love.” Sin is a man-made word with threat connotations he made up himself. No real threat is involved anywhere.
Just because “Nature abhors a vacuum,” which is true enough, it does not follow that a vacuum is filled with hell-fire. Nothing is gained by frightening yourself, and it’s very destructive.

Miracles need freedom from fear. Part of their atonement value involves just that.

(The word “atone” really means “undo.”)

Jesus has been using the word “sin” without correcting its usual connotations. Now he introduces what will be a major theme in the Course, that what we call “sin” is not at all what it seems. Rather than being a positive presence of evil, it is actually just an “absence of love,” just a vacuum. The response to it should therefore be love, for a vacuum of love naturally calls for being filled with love. To fill it with hellfire makes no sense.

Jesus began by calling the Shield report a “very good example” of miracle principle 24. Now we are in a position to fully understand what he meant, and thus more fully understand the principle itself. The principle reads “Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness,” and there was just such a chain involved in this event.

Jesus implies that Helen rewriting the report did in fact secure the funding for the Shield, and in the process protected the children it serves. That was the first link in the chain. This canceled out the effects of Esther’s act of not writing the report with sufficient care, thus undoing the pain this would have caused her. That was the second link. This also undid Helen’s own past misdeeds, in which she had “hated and hurt” the children. That was the third link. And finally, it blessed Jesus himself, as he feels deeply identified with all the parties involved. That was the fourth link. Here, then, is exactly what the miracle principle was talking about—“an interlocking chain of forgiveness”—in which the miracle rolled through person after person, setting free everyone it touched.

This not only clarifies miracle principle 24, it also clarifies miracles themselves. We often assume that a miracle in the Course’s sense is found entirely in the mental state of an individual person. We believe that elevated state is what blesses this person, and any effect on others is strictly secondary, or even irrelevant. This concrete example of a miracle, however, shows us a very different picture.

In this example, the crucial thing is the effect the miracle has on the people in that interlocking chain. What matters is that they are blessed. Helen’s state of mind as she did the blessing was actually surprisingly negative, but it still contained the essential ingredient: the realization that she is her brother’s keeper. And it was by acting as her brother’s keeper that she herself became blessed. By keeping “the children from harm,” she wiped away her own dark past in which she had harmed them. By canceling out Esther’s “sin,” she canceled out her own past “sins.”

Therefore, even though she rewrote the Shield report with resentment, it was still a miracle. And if she had just appreciated that fact, the resentment would have evaporated. Indeed, according to Jesus, if she had only been aware of the interlocking chain that would go forth from her act, if she had only known that, as he put it, she was “really performing a miracle for the Shield, for Esther, for yourself, and for Me,” she “would have done it with real joy.”

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4. For further comments on this passage, see Appendix II.
Cameo 6
Letting Him Take Charge of Minutiae

Miracle principle 25 (“Miracles depend on timing”) was originally guidance to Helen, in which Jesus told her that if she would let him guide her through the trivia of her life, he could save her a great deal of time, which she could then devote to its proper use: giving miracles.

The specific bit of “trivia” in question was Helen’s purchase of a winter coat. Ken Wapnick told the story in Absence from Felicity. He said that Helen was accustomed to shopping in New York City’s finer stores, yet Jesus told her to shop for the coat at Klein’s, a bargain store. Wapnick said, “Not only did Helen find exactly the coat she wanted, but the salesman who waited on her needed Helen’s help very badly. He had a retarded child and was at a loss at what to do, and Helen was able to be extremely helpful to him.”

Helen found this guidance quite threatening, because in it Jesus asked to be let into a very personal part of her life, one that she hardly considered trivial: her shopping. Let’s look closer at this guidance. Jesus begins by saying, “If you need a coat, ask me where to find one. I know your taste well, and I also know where the coat is that you would eventually buy anyway.” Then he explains what happened regarding the coat in a shopping process that he and Helen have clearly already gone through:

If you do not like the coat afterwards, that is what would have happened anyway. I did not pick out the coat for you. You said you wanted something warm, inexpensive, and capable of taking rough wear. I told you you could get a Borgana, but I let you get a better one because the furrier needed you.

Note, however, that it is better in terms of the criteria you established. I could do this because you saw the coat more that way than in terms of a particular material.

You thought of Klein’s yourself a few days ago, and then you decided against it because Borgana is price-fixed. Then you remembered a coat Grace once got there that was much cheaper, and seemed pretty much the same, and asked yourself whether it was really right to be sold on a particular trade name through advertising. That opened your mind.

Helen is obviously unhappy with the coat she got as a result of Jesus’ guidance. But he explains that it was not only inexpensive, but better than the one he originally said she could get “in terms of the criteria you established.” Further, she was able to use her professional expertise to render valuable help to the salesman. How could she possibly object? The likely answer will become clear as we proceed.

We can see her difficulty with the fur coat guidance in the pages of dictation that follow it. First, her resistance apparently distorted some dictation she took down. Jesus says the day after that distortion:

5. Absence from Felicity, 230.
6. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
The first part of what you wrote last night is right. Check this now. (Corrected under advice.) The second part was put in by you, because you didn’t like the first. It was an attempt to re-establish your own control over time. Remember, you cannot stand not knowing what time it is.

I am not intruding on your will, but I am trying to free it.

Unfortunately, it is not clear what these first and second parts are. What is clear, though, is that Helen saw Jesus controlling her use of time as such an intrusion that she then wrote something down that gave control back to her, not realizing that this part was from her own subconscious, not from Jesus.

This same resistance then apparently triggered disturbing dreams once she went to bed. Helen writes, “In the morning I remembered two indistinct dreams which upset me very badly.” We only get details about the first, in which someone tells her “that I have done something very poorly, and that he thought that they would have to let me go. But he promised me a perfectly fair investigation. You [Bill] were assuring me it would be all right, but I was by no means sure.” Jesus then comments:

Do not get bogged down in those dreams of last night. They are reflections of old learning patterns, and arose because you did not like what I said about leaving minutiae to me. They merely illustrate your unwillingness to [not] get bogged down because you are afraid of the course. So don’t use them that way. If you are tempted to do this, ask Bill to stop you.

This course is about willingness, not unwillingness. Unwillingness has to be replaced by willingness, because willingness is part of readiness, without which learning cannot occur.

Apparently, Helen was so resistant to the idea of “leaving minutiae to” Jesus that this triggered upsetting dreams that night. These dreams came, Jesus implies, so that she could get “bogged down in” them, thus nicely diverting her attention from Jesus’ uncomfortable teaching. Yet, he says, she can choose to not use these dreams as the diversions her subconscious had intended them to be.

A bit later, Helen writes something down that seems to be her paraphrasing of further guidance about not getting bogged down. The key, she says, is to “leave everything to him—my feelings re Gary, Art, etc., all of which I can simply refer to him and not get bogged down. This is the real secret of not wasting energy.” After this, Helen says, “I asked him [Jesus] to stay with my unconscious while I slept, and just passed out.”

The fur coat guidance, then, ended up sparking massive resistance in Helen. This resistance caused her to blame Jesus for her dissatisfaction with the coat she got, even though it met her specifications. It caused her to take down false guidance that gave her back control. And it caused her to unconsciously stage a diversion in the form of upsetting dreams. She perceived letting Jesus direct the minutiae as an intrusion on her free will. He countered this, saying that he was trying to free her will by keeping it from getting bogged down in the trivia of daily life. His help could actually speed her through that trivia, so that she could release her will to do what it was meant to do—give miracles. And this, he said, was what she was really afraid of. She
wanted to get bogged down in trivia. She wanted to be upset and to waste her time and energy, so that she had nothing left over for miracles. But that meant keeping her true will in prison.

In light of all this, it is interesting to note that Helen did not dictate any of this guidance to Bill to be typed into the Urtext. This includes everything under miracle principle 25 and everything recounted in this cameo. None of it left her notebooks.
Cameo 7
An Experience of Revelation

Shortly before miracle principle 28, Helen records an important experience that opens up a new topic: revelation. The process that leads to her revelation begins, according to a note in the Urtext, with “experiences at the visionary level.” These experiences inspire Helen to write the following prayer, either to God or to Jesus:

[Helen:] Lord, I will leave my desire to help him in Your Hands. If you will tell me what to do I will to do it.¹

The person she desires to help is Bill (Jesus later says, “you asked for something that would help him”—referring to Bill). She ends up turning this desire over to God in the form of the above prayer, thus making it a purely egoless impulse. As it turns out, she writes the final line of the prayer differently than she had consciously intended. A note in the Urtext explains: “She had not known that the word ‘to’ was inserted, and had merely intended to write ‘I will do it.’” This is quite likely an example of what Jesus talks about when he says that some Freudian slips “come from the superconscious, which is in communion with God.”²

With this slip, the mere consent to do what God asks has now become the unequivocal will to do it. This signifies, in other words, a complete joining of her will with God’s. Jesus’ response is dramatic:

[Jesus:] And that, Azra, is the answer.

Jesus now authoritatively confirms the vital importance of this joining with God’s will. In the process, he calls her “Azra,” as he had earlier,³ implying that this union with God’s will also signifies stepping into her former identity as a “child of light” (possibly as the biblical scribe Ezra), the very thing he was calling her to do earlier.

This prayer of Helen’s is so important that Jesus later calls it “the door that leads out of the desert forever” (T-1.46.9:4) and then intensifies it even further:

If you will tell me what to do,
Only that I will to do. (T-1.46.12:7)

Helen now reports the impact of her prayer and Jesus’ confirmation:

[Helen:] The impact of this was incredibly intense, like a great burst of unexpected clarity. It was briefly so compelling that it seemed as though there was nothing else at all. The whole world just disappeared.

¹. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
². See Cameo 8.
³. See Cameo 3.
When it faded out there was no after effect, except a dim sense of wonder which also faded out, though a trifle slower.

I was told to write nothing else that evening, but we’d pick up the course again in the morning. It was also explained that that kind of experience is at the Revelation level, which is different [than the Course’s emphasis on miracles] but not by any means out of accord.

Helen had experienced what Jesus now calls a revelation. In this context, the term refers not to God revealing teachings or prophecies to us, but to God revealing Himself to us. Revelation is the Course’s term for the wordless, formless experience of union with God, usually called the mystical experience. More specifically, revelation is the introverted mystical experience, in which all sensory experience is withdrawn (Helen: ‘The whole world just disappeared’) and the mystic experiences undifferentiated unity with the spiritual Ground of being.

Helen’s experience of revelation now becomes the catalyst for Jesus’ first discussion of this topic, which begins directly after miracle principle 28. In the middle of that discussion, Jesus interjects these personal comments about Helen and Bill:

Tell Bill that miracles do not depend on Revelation. They induce it. He is quite capable of miracles already, but he is still too fearful for revelations. Note that your revelation occurred specifically after you had engaged at the visionary level in a process of denying fear.

Then, at the end of the revelation discussion (right before principle 30), we find these concluding personal remarks:

Tell Bill that your propensity for Revelation, which is very great, is the result of a high level of past communion. It’s transitory nature comes from the descent into fear, which has not yet been overcome. His own “suspended” state mitigates against both extremes.

This has been very apparent in the course of both of your recent developmental patterns.

Miracles are the essential course of action for both of you. They will strengthen him and stabilize you.

In the above remarks, Jesus elucidates a core principle: Experiencing revelation requires an absence of fear. He says that “your revelation occurred specifically after you had engaged at the visionary level in a process of denying fear.” This refers to the “visionary experiences” that led to the prayer Helen wrote. And that prayer, as we saw, implies a joining with God’s will, which obviously entails a lack of fear of God. So her experience of God apparently came out of a temporary cessation of fear of God.

He then describes Helen’s and Bill’s respective relationships with revelation. Helen, he says, is unusually open to revelation, because of “a high level of past communion,” possibly as the biblical scribe Ezra. Yet she can only experience it fleetingly because of her “descent into

4. Urtext omits “against.”
5. The Notes have an extra “your” here, which the Urtext omits.
fear.” In other words, she has the ability to swing from extreme fear all the way to genuine revelation, but the revelation experience is “transitory”—she inevitably falls back down into her previous state of fear.

Bill’s condition is quite different. He finds himself suspended between the two extremes. This leaves him in a much more stable state than Helen, but that state is essentially one of fear, even if not as extreme as Helen’s. This means that, for the time being, he is cut off from revelation altogether.

The way out of both of their respective problems with revelation is to give miracles to others. This will stabilize Helen, allowing her to eventually stay at the revelation side of the spectrum. And it will strengthen Bill, giving him the security to shed his fear. Miracles, in other words, are for both of them the road past fear and into revelation.

Note that the much more personal than usual notes you are taking today reflect the revelatory experience. This does not produce the more generalizable quality which the course is aimed at. They may nevertheless be of great help to Bill personally, since you asked for something that would help him personally. It depends on how he listens and how well he understands the cooperative nature of this your joint experience. You can help only by reading the note first.

Ask him later if this should be included in the written part of the course at all, or whether you should keep these notes separately. He is in charge of these decisions.

Revelation, as Jesus says elsewhere, is “intensely personal.” And so, in the afterglow of that experience, Helen took “more personal than usual notes.” The drawback of this is that such notes are applicable more to Helen than to others, and it is that very “generalizable quality” of applying to everyone “which the course is aimed at.” This elucidates a key editing principle: Material included in the Course should be applicable to readers in general, not just to Helen and Bill.

This material “may nevertheless be of great help to Bill,” if Bill understands “the cooperative nature” of their “joint experience”—if, in other words, he understands that whatever Helen experiences is relevant for him.

Jesus then leaves it in Bill’s hands whether this material should be “included in the written part of the course at all.” Indeed, Jesus here placed Bill in charge of all decisions about what material was meant for the Course and what was meant just for them. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Bill ever truly assumed this role. As we say in Appendix II, Helen seems to have been the primary editor throughout the various editing processes. As a result, her tendency to exclude material operated throughout, so that with each version, the Course became shorter and shorter.

Overall, Jesus’ comments about Helen’s revelation mark the mystical experience as a key theme in the Course. Permanent revelation is the ultimate goal toward which the Course is leading us. Yet it is a course in miracles, not in revelation. “Miracles are the essential course of action” for all of us—for those with a high propensity for revelation and for those not yet ready for revelation. Miracles are what will lead us beyond fear, and going past fear is the only way to

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7. Urtext: this.
enter and at last permanently abide in revelation, the state in which God reveals Himself to us in
direct union.
After the teaching following miracle principle 35, Helen took down a series of personal comments, beginning with these about a Freudian slip that Bill had made:

Tell Bill that his slip about “rivet” should be noted. Some slips reach consciousness from the un-Christ-controlled subconscious, and betray a lack of love.

But others come from the superconscious, which is in communion with God and which can also break into consciousness.

His slip\(^1\) was an expression of a Soul gaining enough strength to request freedom from prison. It will ultimately demand it.\(^2\)

We don’t have the actual story of Bill’s slip, but Jesus seems to refer to it in at least four separate places, three in Chapter 1 of the Text and one in Chapter 5. From those references we gain the following picture.

Jesus told Bill (either directly or through Helen) that there was just “one more river.” Based on later clues, this “one more river” seems to be the last thing standing between Bill and his release. The question then arose of what this one more river was. At one point later on, Jesus explains that the ‘one more river’ is related to sex (this then kicks off the lengthy discussion of sex that begins under miracle principle 43 and continues under 46).

When Jesus said “one more river,” however, Bill misheard this as “rivet.” Jesus later calls this an “intelligent mishearing”—a Freudian slip. He says in the passage we’ve quoted above that this mishearing was “an expression of a Soul gaining enough strength to request freedom from prison.” This request for freedom, however, was somewhat weak and ambivalent. It meant that, as Jesus later says, “even though [Bill] wanted release, he was not able to cope with it at the time.” However, as Bill’s soul gains more strength, it will go from merely requesting freedom to demanding it. Then his desire will be unequivocal and freedom will be his.

Since this slip was about “freedom from prison,” we might speculate that the meaning of “rivet” is that there was only one more rivet holding Bill’s prison cell together. If this interpretation is correct, it means Bill unconsciously saw himself as close to release (“just one more rivet”), but believed his prison cell was still held together by something too strong to break. This reflected his inner ambivalence: he wanted release but wasn’t sure he could handle it.

We often think of Freudian slips as betraying “a lack of love,” as Jesus says here. However, Jesus goes beyond Freud in explaining that some slips—including this one—are actually a case of a holy part of the mind breaking into consciousness: “His slip was an expression of [his] Soul.” The term “Soul” is sometimes used in the early chapters of the Course

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1. Urtext adds: (“rivet”).

2. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
to denote a spiritual element in ourselves that retains its heavenly purity but experiences itself as imprisoned by our mind’s illusions, like a heavenly creature pulled down to an earthly cage.\(^3\) Because of the experiences Bill and Helen have been having, his soul is no longer content with its cage. It wants freedom, though it is still too weak to resist Bill’s attraction to his comfort zone. But that is temporary. As his soul continues to grow in strength, the day will come when it reasserts its will and simply exits the cage, leaving it behind forever.

This picture of Bill’s soul is clearly similar to a vision that Helen had some months before. This was the first inner vision she had in the series of experiences that culminated in the beginning of the Course dictation. In this vision, she saw herself as an ancient priestess, wrapped in chains and kneeling. Then, as the vision recurred over weeks, the chains slowly fell away and the priestess began to rise. This vision seems to have been a portrayal of Helen’s soul, which means that both her soul and Bill’s soul, as a result of their recent experiences, were going through the same process of slowly rising from imprisonment.

As the dictation continues, the writing suddenly switches in both tone and content, as Helen takes down this soaring praise of who she really is:

> You are wholly lovely—a perfect shaft of pure light. Before your loveliness the stars stand transfixed, and bow to the power of your will.
>
> What do children know of their creation except what their Creator tells them?
>
> You were created above the angels, because your role involves creation as well as protection.
>
> You who are in the image of the Father need bow only to Him, before whom I kneel with you.

This picture stands, of course, in stark contrast to how we normally view ourselves. In traditional Christianity, we stand beneath the stars, “a little lower than the angels,”\(^4\) and should humbly bow before Jesus. Here, however, Helen is told that, being the created, she cannot know the manner of her creation. Only her Creator knows, and what He tells her is that she was created so high that the stars and even the angels bow before her, and that Jesus himself kneels beside her before God. Being in the very “image of the Father,” Helen should bow only to God Himself.

Yet why was this given to her? As beautiful as it is, it seems entirely without context. Jesus now explains why this “revelation” (using the standard meaning of the word, not the Course’s special meaning) came through at this time:

**Note:** This revelation was permitted because you did not project onto Bill the blame for your omission to ask me if you should transcribe the notes. The fact that he should have done so does not exempt you from your own omission.

Thanks for blessing him with a miracle instead of cursing him with projection.

Apparently, Helen and Bill had both neglected to ask Jesus if they should transcribe “the notes”—type up the recent dictation she had received. Helen could easily have shifted all the blame for this onto Bill. After all, he should have remembered to ask. Had she blamed him,

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3. The Course actually uses this image; see W-128.6.
4. Psalm 8:5 (KJV).
however, Helen would have been projecting her responsibility onto him in an attempt to offload her guilt.

But she didn’t. And this seemingly minor act of refusing to blame Bill meant that, according to Jesus, she blessed “him with a miracle instead of cursing him with projection.” Here, then, is another concrete example of a miracle in this early material. And like the other examples, it is an ordinary expression of love from one person to another.

But why did giving this miracle allow Jesus to give Helen that revelation about her true identity? According to the Course, giving miracles is what opens our minds to who we really are. Whenever we see holiness come through us, we become open to receiving a holy vision of ourselves, which is exactly what happened to Helen in this case.

**Note further**—he needn’t feel concerned about it, either. So he forgot! Happens all the time, until the habit of asking becomes involuntary.

Now Jesus reassures Bill. Helen has let him off the hook for forgetting, and Jesus urges Bill to let himself off. Jesus in essence says, “Don’t worry about it. So you forgot to ask? This is perfectly normal—*until* asking becomes an involuntary habit.” In other words, while letting Bill off the hook for his error, Jesus lays out the goal that, when accomplished, will ultimately correct such errors. His comment implies a process in which we first voluntarily choose to ask for guidance. Yet as we repeatedly exercise this choice, it becomes a habit. This habit then continues to solidify until it becomes so ingrained that asking is no longer a voluntary act; it happens as involuntarily as breathing.

Now comes a somewhat puzzling exchange between Helen and Jesus, made more puzzling by the fact that it is very difficult to transcribe (the angle brackets indicate words that we are uncertain about):

[Helen:] Jonathan [Helen’s husband, Louis]—check and bank book. He said he would find it at home, in the leather <holder>. Not there. Call back? [Jesus:] No—want to <because> your Revelation? *You* have thrown away more money than he ever had. Now call, but just ask him gently to look in his coat again.

[Helen:] Found it among a lot of letters—[Louis says] “do not know <how> they got there.”

Louis, it seems, has lost the check and bank book, and is at home looking for it. Helen appears to be anxious over this. Jesus is clearly trying to get her to go easy on him. He first tells her not to call back, and questions her motives for wanting to do so. He also says, “*You* have thrown away more money than he ever had”—presumably through her love of shopping. Jesus then recommends that she call back with the gentle suggestion that Louis look in his coat again. But it turns out that Louis has found what he had lost. This, however, as we will see, is not the end of the subject.

In the midst of this mundane exchange, material keeps coming through about the loftiness of Helen’s real nature and role. First there was the revelation about her true identity, and now she is likened to Mother Mary:

Blessed are you with Mary as the mother of the children.
Jesus then tells her to “Put in insert now” and Helen adds “which I did.” This refers to the comment “You have thrown away more money than he ever had,” which Helen writes at the top of the page with an arrow indicating where it should go. This comment has clearly gotten her attention, because she then writes:

Then I asked for forgiveness for having thrown away all that money; but he said “it’s all right. You lived in scarcity then, but now you are forgiven, so you live in abundance. There is no longer any need to throw anything away, or to want for anything, either.”

Helen is feeling guilty about “having thrown away all that money.” Jesus tells her “it’s all right,” saying that that’s just what you do when you live in scarcity. When you believe you are lacking inside, of course you try to fill your lack with things from the outside. But that’s all behind her now. He has forgiven her, and as he told her earlier, “when you have been forgiven, you have everything else” (T-1.26.4:2). Thus, the lack inside is gone, and with that, her whole relationship with material things will be healed. She won’t need to throw money away to fill her inner lack and she won’t need to worry about outer lack—Jesus implies that her inner abundance will actually protect her against outer lack. So being forgiven leads to the realization of inner abundance, which leads to a right relationship with outer things.

Interestingly, Jesus reassures Helen in a manner very similar to how he has just reassured Bill for forgetting to ask. In both cases, he says, “Don’t feel guilty about what you did. It’s just the natural outgrowth of the mental state you have been in.” Yet he doesn’t leave it at that. He then speaks of a new mental state from which a new, corrected behavior will automatically flow.

At this point, Helen seems to have had some kind of inner experience, and then writes the following:

Infant Christ reference or Child Christ—

Behold the handmaid of the Lord—be it done unto me according to Thy will.

This last statement is quite a dramatic thing for Helen to write. It is a quotation of Mary’s statement in the Gospel of Luke in which she accepts her role as mother of the savior: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.” Based on a later comment, it is clear that Helen inwardly heard this quotation rather than merely thought it up. But Jesus thinks that something has gone wrong, that Helen’s interpretation of this statement is from her ego. He does not mince words:

Egocentric is right! I do not need another physical mother, and she was the only one who conceived without any lack of love. But I told you before that many are born who have not been reborn. I mentioned it to you and Bill in connection with your own parent... [the sentence ends unfinished]

Based on this response, it seems that Helen may have entertained the thought that Jesus would be physically born again through her. Indeed, shortly after this, Jesus refers to Helen’s

“false pregnancy notions,” which were an unconscious attempt to fill her sense of inner “scarcity.” Jesus clearly thinks that Helen’s ego has taken ownership of the references to Mary she has been hearing. In Cameo 12, we will see that Helen learns from this experience, because the next time she hears this biblical quote she is able to interpret it in an egoless way.

While putting Helen in her place, Jesus reveals some important things about his physical life. First, he says he will not be born again into a physical body; he has transcended that. Second, he appears to clarify the manner of his birth two thousand years ago. His reference to Mary conceiving “without any lack of love” seems to be an allusion to his recent statement that “Sex is often associated with lack of love.”7 The “lack of love” comes from using sex for personal gratification, whereas it should be used as a selfless channel for bringing children into the world. To say that Mary “conceived without any lack of love,” then, is to imply that she used sex properly—to imply, in other words, that she did conceive Jesus through sexual intercourse, but that she did so with a singularly high state of mind, one that was free of any lovelessness whatsoever. If this interpretation is correct, then here is the same purity that we find in the concept of the virgin birth, only in this case expressed in the act of sex. This was such a high accomplishment, apparently, that “she was the only one” who achieved it.

If Helen is not to give birth to Jesus physically, then why is she hearing things that liken her to Mary, things like “Blessed are you with Mary as the mother of the children” and “Behold the handmaid of the Lord”? The clue lies in Jesus’ comment “I told you before that many are born who have not been reborn.” This is a reference to his first discourse on sexuality.8 His point there is that Helen does not need to be a physical mother. Rather, she can be a spiritual mother to those who have been physically born but have not yet been spiritually reborn.

By referring to that statement in the current context, Jesus is implying that the way Helen can be this mother is by being a spiritual version of Mother Mary. Like Mary, she can bring Jesus into the world, but in this case what she will bring in is not his body, but his teaching. This is how she can manifest the “Child Christ.” This is how she can achieve motherhood and fill her sense of lack. She can give birth to A Course in Miracles.

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7. See T-1.28.5:1.
8. See T-1.18.3-6.
Cameo 9
Mrs. Albert, Miracle Worker

After a discussion of the Golden Rule and “Golden Rule behavior” (T-1.42.4:4), Jesus says to Helen, “Bill and you need considerable clarification of the channel role”\(^9\)—the role of channeling miracles. To provide this clarification, he points to the example of Mrs. Albert, whom Helen has apparently just run into at the hospital bedside of Dave Diamond, a close colleague of Helen’s who is dying of brain cancer:\(^{10}\)

Look *carefully* at Mrs. Albert. She is working miracles every day because she knows who she is.

After this pregnant comment, Jesus turns to Helen’s tendency to get people’s names wrong:

I emphasize again that your tendency to forget names is *not* hostility but a fear of involvement or recognition.

You had misinterpreted human encounters as opportunities for magic, rather than for miracles, and so you tried to protect the name. This is a very ancient and primitive way of trying to protect a person.

*Note* the very old Jewish practice of changing the name of a person who is very ill, so that when the list is given to the Angel of Death, the person with that name will not be found.

It could easily seem that Helen’s forgetting of names expresses an underlying hostility, but Jesus assures her that instead, she is actually trying to protect people from her hostility. By limiting her involvement with them, she is trying to limit their exposure to a destructive element in her—much like keeping your distance from others so that you don’t infect them with your cold. And getting their names wrong does just that: it creates a distance, a buffer, that keeps her “germs” from reaching them. This was actually the very first thing that Helen had written about when she started her notebooks two days before the Course began coming through (hence, Jesus’ above comment, “I emphasize again”):

*I think* there is an error about this not noticing and not remembering names, etc. *I do not* think it’s only or even primarily, projection. *It may* be more a fear of involvement or interaction due to an interpretation of interaction as one above and the other subservient or one getting and the other losing. You avoid this if you don’t meet. Or even see.

The reference in her current guidance to “the very old Jewish practice” expresses the same basic view. Somewhere inside, she believes that if she gets people’s names wrong, the

\(^9\) All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.

\(^{10}\) See Cameo 1.
“Angel of Death” in her mind cannot find them. As this analogy implies, Helen’s attempt to protect others from her destructive desires is quite primitive, almost childlike in nature, a point which Jesus then makes:

This is a good example of that curiously literal regression which can occur in very bright people when they become afraid. You and Bill both do it. Actually, it is a device closely related to the phobias, in the sense that they [Urtext: both] narrow fear to a simple aspect of a much larger problem in order to enable them to avoid it.

Helen is so afraid of her desire to exploit others that she regresses and comes up with this childlike solution. She reduces the larger problem of her destructive tendencies down to the specific issue of people’s names. By narrowing the problem down to a smaller, more manageable package, she thinks she can now magically control it: Just get their names wrong and they’ll be safe.

Jesus then likens this basic strategy to phobias—specifically, it seems, to the Freudian view of phobias. Freud’s most famous example of a phobia was the case of Hans. Hans was a boy who feared his father and wanted him to die, but then displaced this fear and aggression onto something safer: horses. He thus developed a phobia of horses. Now all he had to do was avoid horses and his problem was solved. Both Hans and Helen, then, narrowed a larger problem down to something simpler and more manageable in order to magically solve it. Jesus sees still more examples of this same basic strategy:

A similar mechanism works when you get furious about a comparatively minor infraction by someone to whom you are ambivalent. A good example of this is your response to Jonathan, who does leave things around in very strange ways. Actually he does this because he thinks that by minor areas of disorganization he can protect his stability. I remind you that you have done this yourself for years, and should understand it very well. This should be met with great charity, rather than great fury.

The fury comes from your awareness that you do not love Jonathan as you should, and you narrow your lack of love by centering your hate on a trivial behavior in an attempt to protect him from it. You also call him “Jonathan” for the same reason (see previous reference.)

Here we have two new examples of the same principle. Helen is frightened by her general lack of love toward her husband, Louis (whom she calls “Jonathan” for the very reasons already discussed). To protect him from the full weight of her anger, she reduces it to anger about something quite trivial—his behavior of leaving “things around in very strange ways.” For instance, Helen shared in a letter to Bill how she “got absolutely wild” when she saw that Louis had left his socks on the living room table.11

Ironically, this “trivial behavior” of Louis’s comes from him employing the same basic strategy. He thinks he can avert general chaos by purposefully setting up “minor areas of disorganization” and then convincing himself the chaos is literally corralled in those tiny areas. Helen should be able to understand this, Jesus says, since she has done this same thing “for

11. Absence from Felicity, 164.
years.” He then offers this gem of marital advice: “This should be met with great charity, rather than great fury.”

Jesus now returns to the subject of names:

Note that a name is the human symbol that “stands for” a person. Superstitions about names are very common for just that reason. That is also why people sometimes respond with anger when their names are spelled or pronounced incorrectly.

Because they “stand for” a person, names can easily become a kind of verbal voodoo doll, so that mistreatment of the name seems to be magically transferred to the person herself. Jesus then explains (in teaching that is included in Chapter 1 of the Text) that “the Jewish superstition about changing names was a distortion of a Revelation.” This revelation actually said “that those who ‘change their mind’ (not name) about destruction (or hate) do not need to die.” In other words, the original revelation claimed that if you can solve the real problem, if you can change your mind about hate, you can actually transcend death. This sounds extreme, but then as proof Jesus offers his own resurrection. He implies that this is how his resurrection came about—through him letting go all of his hate: “That is why I demonstrated that death does not exist.”

This, then, is the path that Helen needs to take. Rather than reducing the problem of hate down to a trivial matter of changing names (something the interpreters of the original revelation seem to have done as well), she needs to face and solve the problem itself. If she does, she will experience her own resurrection.

After some further teaching (also included in Chapter 1), Jesus came back to Mrs. Albert:

Returning to Mrs. Albert (not Andrews), she corrected your error about her name without embarrassment and without hostility, because she has not made your own mistake about names.

She is not afraid, because she knows she is protected. She made the correction only because you were inaccurate, and the whole question of embarrassment did not occur to her.

Clearly, Helen had done it again, calling Mrs. Albert “Mrs. Andrews.” Mrs. Albert, however, did not take this personally. She didn’t see mistreatment of her name as mistreatment of her. How could she, when she saw her identity as secure, safe, and unassailable? In her eyes, then, the issue wasn’t about her; it was just a simple matter of correct terminology. This allowed her to rise above both hostility and embarrassment, which often seem to us like the only two options. She was able to respond without hostility (aggressively asserting her correct name) and without embarrassment (feeling too shy to speak up). She corrected Helen purely as a matter of factual accuracy, and remarkably, “the whole question of embarrassment did not occur to her.”

She was also quite unembarrassed when she told you that everything has to be done to preserve life, because you never can tell when God may come and say “Get up, Dave,” and then he will.
She did not ask what you believed first, and afterwards merely added, “and it’s true, too.” The right answer to the SCT [Sentence Completion Test] item is: When they told me what to do, I: “referred the question to the only Real Authority.”

Helen later offers this clarification in the Urtext:

(Helen Schucman note: If you ask somebody what he believes before you tell him what you believe, then you are implying that you will say what he approves. This is not “the real authority.”)

Just as Mrs. Albert was unembarrassed in correcting Helen about her name, so she was equally unembarrassed in declaring her convictions about the power of God to heal the dying. Jesus praises her for this, framing it as the correct choice on the issue of authority. If before speaking she had first tested the waters to see if Helen would agree with her, then she would have made Helen her authority. Instead, she openly expressed her convictions without knowing what Helen would think, because (it is implied) she felt prompted by God. Thus, when faced with the question of what to say, she “referred the question to the only Real Authority.”

Jesus implies (in teaching included in Chapter 1) that by referring the question to the Real Authority, Mrs. Albert was witnessing for him rather than being ashamed of him. She was standing up for her belief in Jesus and in his teaching. He concludes:

Those who witness for Me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned belongs to them.

This clearly implies that Mrs. Albert’s statement about God’s power to heal Dave was a miracle. Thus, we have yet another concrete example of a miracle in this early dictation.

To understand why this was a miracle, you need to put yourself in Helen’s shoes. Here you are, getting this woman’s name wrong in order to put distance between the two of you so that your hostility can’t reach her. You might also be holding back your own spiritual beliefs and experiences, because (as Jesus tells Helen more than once) you are embarrassed by your love of Jesus. Overall, then, you are keeping your distance out of “fear of involvement,” fear that is rooted in a sense of your own identity as being flawed and shaky.

And now here is Mrs. Albert, sweeping that distance away. As you stand at the bedside of a dying friend, she innocently declares, “You never can tell when God may come and say ‘Get up, Dave,’ and then he will.” She affirms, in other words, that God’s love has power over even the most “terminal” disease, including the one right in front of you. She doesn’t bother to first check out if you’ll agree, and afterwards, instead of apologizing for her directness, she merely adds “and it’s true, too.”

Imagine the effect on you if (as Jesus implies) she says all this without a hint of hostility, without any attempt to force her beliefs on you. Would it not lift your mind into new possibilities? And would it not model to you a new way of being? In this new way, you could feel secure in an identity that is pure and protected. And out of this security you could fearlessly share with others what gives you that security: the power and love of God. This clear and direct channel from your heart to their ears would replace the neurotic “fear of involvement” that crippled you before.
No wonder Jesus told Helen and Bill to “look carefully at Mrs. Albert.” She had already become the kind of channel that he was trying to train them to be. This does not mean that she held any unusual metaphysical beliefs. Indeed, the clues in this material suggest she may well have been a traditional Christian. Yet she had what Jesus saw as the key ingredient: She was “working miracles every day.”
Cameo 10

“Under Instruction”

After the teaching that follows miracle principle 43, Helen took down some personal notes. These show her being extremely conscientious in giving miracles and in asking which miracles to give.

These notes begin with her receiving the news of the death of Dave Diamond. In the notes leading up to the beginning of the Course dictation, Helen had made an impassioned prayer that Dave accept the healing of his cancer by identifying with his spirit, not his brain.

Dave then appeared in her notes twice more. Right after taking down the first three miracle principles, Helen was thinking about how impossible the healing of Dave’s cancer seemed, and Jesus asked her to “Remember point 1,” referring to the first miracle principle, “that there is no order of difficulty among them.” And, as we see in Cameo 9, Jesus approved when Mrs. Albert voiced a very similar sentiment, saying “you never can tell when God may come and say ‘Get up, Dave,’ and then he will.”

Yet though it may have been possible, Dave’s healing did not happen, as Helen now records:

Esther called to say that Dave Diamond died. Maybe that was his way of leaving the desert. [Jesus has just likened the world to a desert and has said, “The thing to do with a desert is to leave.”] Dave loved Esther, and Arnie Gold, and the children he taught. I don’t know about his own children, but I do know (from Esther) that he did not get along with Terry [presumably his wife]. A while back, she [Esther] told me that Dave would not let her [Terry] into the room and kept telling her to get out, and she just hung around all day in the hallway or the lounge nearby. I went into the room (under instructions), and spoke to Dave, who was very groggy. Every time he opened his eyes I said, “we all love you, so don’t be afraid.” Not aloud, I prayed that he would be able to love everybody in return, (this too was under instruction), having been told, (I think on Great Authority) that his only real danger came from lacks in this connection.

It is a touching scene—Helen telling Dave out loud “We all love you, so don’t be afraid,” and then praying silently “that he would be able to love everybody in return.” This is how Jesus had instructed her to pray, saying that Dave’s “only real danger” came not from being unloved, but from his own failure to love.

I did not visit him on Friday, but I am sure this was right, because I was very careful to ask. I was going over, too, after the lecture, and was told not to. Perhaps there was no “need to know” involved [a reference to Jesus’ version of

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1. See Cameo 1.
2. All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
the CIA’s “need to know” principle—that we are only told how to find peace when we truly want peace.

I am upset about it, and am leaving my notes for a while. I think I’d rather pray just now.

Esther said Terry was talking about giving away the baby. I jumped to the conclusion that I was supposed to take her, but that may easily be an indiscriminate miracle impulse. I think I’d better just stop now.

Helen is being astonishingly careful in asking which miracles she should give. The content of her prayer for Dave (that he “be able to love everybody”) was “under instruction.” The visit in which she prayed for him was also “under instructions.” She did not visit him on Friday because she asked and was told not to. And she was actually on her way to visit him after a lecture when again she “was told not to.”

Finally, she wonders if she should take the baby that Terry is considering giving away, but then she realizes this may not be under instruction. It may be “an indiscriminate miracle impulse”—an impulse to express love that, though well intentioned, is not truly guided, and thus not best for all concerned. In this case, the impulse may have been influenced by her desire for a child to fill her sense of lack, something Jesus refers to on a couple of occasions.\(^3\) She now continues:

I prayed for Dave, and said that whatever miracles I could do for him even now, or any of his family, I would will to do. I also asked Jesus to help Dave with the course.

Notice how she corrects her earlier mistake of jumping to the conclusion that she should take the baby. She now broadens her miracle impulse, making it much more general and leaving the specifics up to Jesus. Her new prayer is a variation on the prayer that sparked her earlier experience of revelation: “Lord, I will leave my desire to help him in Your Hands. If you will tell me what to do I will to do it.”\(^4\)

She even asks Jesus “to help Dave with the course.” This implies that, even though Dave is no longer in the body, Jesus can still help him learn that crucial lesson of loving “everybody in return” via the same principles that he is imparting to Helen.

Then I was told to go in and visit with Jonathan [her husband, Louis], and pray for him, particularly if he was asleep, which he was. It was the only time so far I prayed intensely for him. When this happens, I am strongly aware that I am not praying alone. We told Jonathan that he should forget about the Alexandrian library and all the rest, because it does not matter. He showed a lot of love this time, and should claim his forgiveness. He does not need to hurt himself, and must stop these symptoms of disequilibrium and establish his freedom. He woke up, and said he was feeling better but hungry.

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3. See Cameo 8 for one.

Now Helen is told to pray for her husband while he sleeps. It’s as if, during his sleep, the wall of his conscious defenses comes down, allowing her to get a message through to a deeper level of his mind. Interestingly, she had earlier written down the same idea in regard to praying for Dave: “Maybe while Dave is sleeping our unconscious minds can reach Christ and He will unite us in prayer.”

Louis has apparently taken a nap because he is not feeling well; he is experiencing “symptoms of disequilibrium.” Helen’s prayer implies that this disequilibrium is a case of needless self-punishment over past-life transgressions. Actually, her earlier prayer for Dave had implied the same thing about Dave’s cancer: that it was the result of Dave in the past somehow interfering with the progress of someone he met again in this life.

Helen’s prayer implies that Louis’s transgressions involved the Alexandrian library, the repository of the wisdom of the ancient world that was famously destroyed (possibly on four separate occasions). One is tempted to speculate that Louis’s career as a bookstore owner selling used, rare, and out-of-print books was an unconscious attempt to make up for whatever role he may have played in the destruction of the Alexandrian library.

Helen reports that she prays for him “intensely,” and that she is “strongly aware” of being joined by Jesus in this. Her prayer for Louis is strikingly reminiscent of the earlier prayer for Dave, which lets us glimpse a unique approach to praying for others. In both cases, Helen silently addresses the prayer not to God, but to the person himself. She speaks to him at an unconscious level, about beliefs that he is not conscious of but that are the real source of his problem. The prayer is an intense and impassioned one, in which she earnestly tries to persuade him to let go of those beliefs. And, as mentioned earlier, she does not do this on her own. Rather than her thoughts being formulated by her, they are apparently being inspired by Jesus, who, in Louis’s case, actually joins her in the prayer.

The message that she and Jesus give to Louis is one of freedom from the past. They tell him that he should forget about any wrongdoing from long ago, “because it does not matter.” He has shown “a lot of love” in this life and he should just “claim his forgiveness.” Rather than continuing to hurt himself over ancient misdeeds, he “must...establish his freedom.”

The prayer may indeed have worked, since Louis wakes up “feeling better.” He’s hungry and so Helen apparently makes him some dinner. She then says:

I was going to wash my hair after fixing his dinner, but I was told to visit his mother. Am not too enthusiastic about this, but am going now. It occurred to me while waiting for the elevator that I was glad I was going, because it was a way of atoning to Jonathan for my being so nasty to him (He is always happy to have me visit his mother) and in a way of atoning for Dave, too.

Helen has planned to wash her hair, perhaps to have some nice “me” time. But Jesus has other plans, telling her instead to go and visit her mother-in-law. Miracle working apparently takes precedence over hair washing! She is understandably “not too enthusiastic about this,” but to her credit, she goes anyway.

Then, while waiting for the elevator, she has a surprising change of attitude. She decides she is actually glad to be going, since it is “a way of atoning” to her husband “for my being so nasty to him.” This does not mean that she is paying off a debt through enforced labor. In this early material, Atonement often takes the form of wiping away the past by giving love where we once gave hate. The light of love in the present shines away the imaginary darkness from the
past. Thus, as the Workbook will say later, each gift we give a brother “allows a past mistake to go, and leave no shadow on the holy mind [our] Father loves” (W-316.1:2).

Then Helen has an additional thought: Visiting her mother-in-law doesn’t just atone for her own past lovelessness; it atones for Dave’s as well. But how can her actions atone for Dave? At this point, Jesus apparently steps in and explains why:

The *impersonal* nature of miracles is because atonement itself is *one*.

By being one, it unites all creations with their Creator. Miracles arise from a miraculous state of mind. This state of mind goes out to *anyone*, even without the awareness of the miracle-worker himself.

Helen’s loving act can wipe away Dave’s past lovelessness because of what miracles really are. A miracle may be given to a particular person, but it arises from a state that holds in mind everyone’s equal worthiness. That is why it is “*impersonal*.” It goes out to someone not because of anything that is personal to her. It goes out because of the universal in her. In a very real sense, then, it goes out nonspecifically, and can be channeled to wherever there is openness and need: “This state of mind goes out to *anyone*, even without the awareness of the miracle-worker himself.” Helen’s miracle may seem to be aimed at Louis and his mother, but in truth it is aimed at *everyone*. That is why Dave can benefit too.

Here, as in the cameo about Mrs. Albert, we see a real-life snapshot of a miracle worker in action. Yet while Jesus presents Mrs. Albert as a contrast to Helen, here the miracle worker *is* Helen. She comes off as an inspiring source of blessing to the people around her. We see her visiting a dying friend, praying that this friend can truly learn to love, praying to help his family however she can (to the point of wondering if she should adopt their baby), praying intensely for her husband to stop punishing himself, and visiting her mother-in-law instead of staying home to wash her hair.

All of this flows from a remarkable conscientiousness in Helen regarding following her inner direction. The visits to Dave and her mother-in-law come from her following her guidance, as do her prayers for Dave and her husband. She is even careful *not* to try to give miracles where she is not told to. If Helen is an object lesson for us here, the lesson is that miracle working comes from being “under instruction.”
After she had received a lengthy discourse on sex,¹ Helen paused to express her doubts about the validity of the material she had just taken down:

* Bill—I got very uneasy here, and thought maybe I was just writing all this (which has been very time-consuming and quite irksome at times) because I was jealous. I’m still not sure and need your help about this. But I went on anyway because it did not seem finished. Please help me evaluate it, because I don’t want scribal errors to enter too much into the course. Though I guess they’ll be corrected when they do. What do you think about all this? I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex. (see * above)

It just occurred to me that the doubt may come from something I don’t want to give up. Should I tell you about it? It’s kind of embarrassing, really. But I just remembered the “one more river” with which this started. [The recent discussions of sex began with “Tell Bill the ‘one more river’ is related to sex.”]²

Helen’s sincerity is unmistakable. She is completely transparent here in her uncertainty and self-questioning, her desire to keep the Course free of her influence, and her appeal to Bill for help. On the one hand, she suspects that all of this commentary on sex is just the bubbling up of her own jealousy (in relation to Bill?). Yet on the other hand, the material seems to have a life of its own (“I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex”), making it seem as if it’s coming from beyond her. She just can’t discern where the material is coming from, and so she’s asking Bill to help her sort it out.

Students of A Course in Miracles have been gripped by this same question since 2000, when the Urtext became public, and along with it, the notes on sex. Since this material is absent from the familiar FIP version, the presence of it in the Urtext came as quite a surprise. Students faced a crucial question: Is this material valid or is it a product of Helen’s biases? Little did they know that Helen had faced this same question before they did.

The first discussion of sex comes quite early, just after miracle principle 18. This fairly brief discourse (260 words) is the foundation for what comes after. It announces many of the main themes that are repeated later and is then referenced twice in later discussions. (“I told you before that many are born who have not been reborn.” “We said before that all real pleasure comes from doing God’s will.”)

Helen seems to have had problems with this first discussion. As soon as it was done, she said, “This upsets me.” Jesus’ response is telling: “Sometimes I can get through anyway.” The implication seems to be that even though Helen was upset about what he was teaching her, he

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¹ See T-1.46.3-8.

² All quotations without page numbers in this cameo are from Helen’s Notes. Throughout these cameo essays, we have corrected spelling errors in the Notes for ease in reading.
wanted to get his teaching on sex through anyway. Helen, however, chose not to dictate this first discourse to Bill to include in the Urtext. It stayed in her notebooks.

Yet now that further teachings on sex have been given, Helen’s brief comment about being upset has mushroomed into full-blown doubts about what has now become a miniature treatise. Yet it is important that she expresses her doubts so openly, for doing so evokes an answer.

First, she herself suspects the resolution. She wonders if she is doubting the material because of “something I don’t want to give up.” This is associated with her remembering Bill’s slip about “one more river,” which Jesus commented on as he began this whole discourse on sex (“Tell Bill the ‘one more river’ is related to sex”). As is discussed in Cameo 8, the “one more river” seems to have been the one more thing standing between Bill and his release. By referencing Bill’s slip and Jesus’ identification of it as “related to sex,” Helen seems to be saying that something similar is going on with her. She suspects, in other words, that she has an attachment related to sex which is keeping her from seeing the truth of this material.

These suspicions are suggestive, but what really answers her doubts is a comment from Jesus. There is a stray notebook page which is found over 150 pages later in her notebooks, but which must have been misplaced, because it is clearly the answer to her question. You will recall that she said, “I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex.” Then after that she wrote, “(see * above).” The asterisk is clearly a reference to this exchange on that stray notebook page:

* This morning this was slightly corrected [by Jesus] to read “God knows I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex.

Answer—He does indeed.

The meaning of this correction from Jesus hits one immediately on an intuitive level. Helen’s original comment, “I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex,” already suggested the possibility that the impetus for this dictation came from beyond her. Now Jesus’ corrected version intensifies that. He has Helen say “God knows I hadn’t intended to write a commentary on sex,” and he then answers “He does indeed.” This clearly frames God as the knowing One in the process and Helen as the innocent channel. Think of how you would interpret a similar statement about something you did. If, for example, you said “God knows I hadn’t intended to buy A Course in Miracles at the bookstore that day,” and Jesus then responded “He does indeed,” you would have no doubt of the point of Jesus’ remark.

Jesus’ correction, then, is an unmistakable answer to Helen’s doubts about this material. As such, it is extremely important. It settles this whole question of the validity of the teachings on sex.

It is also part of a pattern. It is in line with the suspicions Helen herself voices here, that her doubts about the material may “come from something I don’t want to give up.” It is also similar to the brief exchange she had with Jesus after the first discourse on sex, where she said “This upsets me,” and he said “Sometimes I can get through anyway.” In both that case and this, we have a discourse on sexuality followed by Helen voicing discomfort, followed by Jesus framing the discourse as coming from beyond her.

Helen’s discomfort with this material, however, apparently did not go away. With each editing pass, she took more of it out, until there was essentially nothing left. Some of the teaching on sexuality in her Notes did not even make it into the Urtext, including that
foundational discourse after miracle principle 18. By the time we get to the Hugh Lynn Cayce Version (often called the “HLC”—the version prior to the FIP First Edition), what was originally 3,300 words on sex has been cut down to about 300, and even in this, the word “sexual” has been replaced with the more general “physical.” As a result, the original approximately sixty references to cognates of the word “sex” (sex, sexual, psychosexual) have been reduced to a single aside (“The confusion of sex with aggression…serves as an example.”). Finally, even the brief amount that remains in the HLC is mostly removed from the FIP edition, which does not contain a single reference to the word “sex.”

Many students assume that this material was taken out because Helen saw it as inconsistent with the later teaching of the Course. Yet in Appendix II we see that Helen’s editing focused on stylistic concerns, not on theoretical consistency. She herself said, “I assumed the attitude of an editor whose role is to consider only form and disregard content as much as possible.” As we see in Appendix II, her editing showed an across-the-board bias against specifics, so that references to concrete phenomena in the world were either removed or reworded so as to be more general. And that is exactly what we find here: References to the concrete phenomenon of sex were either removed or made more general by changing “sexual” to “physical.” Further, Helen seemed to be particularly uncomfortable with the sex discussions, as she states in her Notes, giving her even more motivation to remove it.

Helen’s general editing tendencies, along with her specific discomfort with this topic, then, give us all the explanation we need to understand why this material was removed.

Is this material inconsistent with the later Course? Rather than making hasty assumptions, this is a question that needs to be carefully examined. In this examination, what is especially striking are the many parallels between the early teaching on sex and the later Course teaching on special relationships and the body:

The early teaching that sexual pleasure “is not truly pleasurable in itself” (T-1.46.6:2) is mirrored by the Course’s later teaching that physical pleasure is ultimately painful, for it identifies us with the body (see T-27.VII.1:4-5).

The early teaching that in sex we view another as a “sex object” (T-1.46.6:5) is mirrored in the later criticism that in romantic relationships we view others as mindless bodies: “For relationships to the ego mean only that bodies are together...and it does not object where the mind goes or what it thinks, for this seems unimportant.” (T-15.VII.8:2-3).

The early teaching that sex is not for achieving closeness (“You have misunderstood sex, because you regard it as a way of establishing human contact for yourself”—T-1.18.4:3) is mirrored in the later teaching that sexual union does not establish real closeness: “The union of bodies thus becomes the way in which you would keep minds apart.” (T-15.VIII.2:1).

The early teaching that sexual attraction itself must be undone (“The underlying mechanism must be uprooted”—T-1.43.6:5) is mirrored in the later idea that we must get beyond attraction to bodies: “When the body ceases to attract you…” (T-15.IX.7:1).

Finally, the practical instructions for dealing with sexual attraction and fantasy are strikingly similar in both the early dictation and the later Course. In Chapter 1 of the Text (T-1.46.7 and T-1.48.13), we are told that “in a situation where” you “experience inappropriate sex impulses,” you should “invite me [Jesus] to enter,” and then he will “replace it [the sexual attraction] with love.” In Chapters 16 (T-16.VI.12) and 17 (T-17.III.13), we are told that “Whenever your thoughts wander to a special relationship which still attracts you,” you should

3. Absence from Felicity, 316.
allow Jesus to “enter” and “step between you and your fantasies,” and then the Holy Spirit will “release you” from your sexual attraction. The pattern could hardly be more similar.

Like Helen, we may find this material uncomfortable, but the evidence that the author of the Course genuinely intended it is sizable. For one, there is the sheer length of it: 3,300 words woven throughout the foundational material on miracles are not to be dismissed lightly. There is also the emphasis on it. At one point, Jesus says, “I want to finish the instructions about sex, because this is an area which the miracle worker must understand” (T-1.46.3:1).

Then there is the fact that Jesus never corrected any of it. At this early point in the dictation, he would sometimes tell Helen to correct something she had misheard. She even references this in her comments above: “I don’t want scribal errors to enter too much into the course. Though I guess they’ll be corrected when they do.” Yet none of the material on sex was ever corrected.

On the contrary—as we saw, when Helen wondered if Jesus should correct these notes, he stepped in to instead correct her doubts. This was important, not only to put those doubts to rest, but because he wasn’t finished. Over forty percent of the material on sex was still to be dictated.

Finally, as we saw above, there are strong echoes of these notes later on in the Course. The later Course’s teachings on physical pleasure, treating others as physical objects, “the union of bodies,” physical attraction, and the prescriptions for dealing with sexual attraction and fantasy are all markedly similar to the early teachings on sex.

There comes a point at which, regardless of any discomfort on our end, we just need to step aside and let the author do what he wants with his book. It is, after all, his book. That point has clearly been reached in the case of the notes on sex. When we first started editing this version, we had a different plan. We corralled all the material on sex in one place, cut it down to less than two thousand words, and moved it from Chapter 1 to Chapter 2. That way, rather than being hit with it repeatedly throughout the very first chapter, the reader would encounter just one little fenced-off area in Chapter 2. However, we eventually recognized what we were doing: we were attempting to override the author’s wishes for his own book. We have therefore included the discourses on sex and have left them in their original order and placement.