

The Scholar's Toolbox I - Notes for Beta Testers

When using “beta test” versions of anything, one can expect to encounter problems, malfunctions, errors and bugs which have yet to be corrected by the developers. This package is no exception! Please see the end of this document for contact information should you notice a problem.

This is a beta test release of the *Scholar's Toolbox I*, the cross-referenced primary sources. Months of proofing and checking continue to find, mostly very minor, little problems. That process of checking will go much faster if more eyes are looking at the material. Also, I've worked and re-worked some portions 50 times and I can no longer see them with fresh eyes or experience them as a “first time” reader. That being so, there are potential problems with clarity which I can't possibly detect; I'll need your help to identify them. These may not be “errors” so much as aspects of design which could be enhanced but certainly will include identifying mistakes, omissions, discrepancies, or indeed anything which could be changed to enhance the effectiveness of the package.

I could, and quite possibly will, spend another year – perhaps longer – enhancing this material. Yet it is “good enough” to be useful to some as it is so the time has come to draw the line and call it “good enough.” Before that day, however, I do wish to get as much feedback and detect as many inadvertent problems and shortcomings as possible.

Why this package?

When “earlier manuscripts” of *A Course in Miracles* first became available in 2000, differences of many sorts were quickly noticed. With the photocopies of original manuscripts, however, it was rather difficult to actually locate any particular passage to see if it had been changed. While machine searchable “e-texts” quickly showed up, they weren't cross referenced and they weren't always as accurate as we might like. The need for more accurate e-texts cross referenced not only to the original manuscript page numbers, but to other versions, was apparent to me.

Since no one seemed to be doing it, I set out in late 2002 to do so. Six years later, what you see here is the result. It's not entirely finished, and it is not entirely free of errors, but it is much more useful than the raw manuscripts and inaccurate e-texts entirely devoid of cross-referencing.

The overall goal of the *Scholar's Toolbox*, then, is to provide a collection of basic research tools to enable the Course student to identify editing changes between the various primary sources of *A Course in Miracles* in order to develop a more informed opinion of what was *originally* intended. It will surprise many, sometimes to the point of disbelief, to learn that due to a lack of proofreading in the years of repeated copying between the original dictation and the first printing in 1975, thousands of inadvertent copying errors crept in. It appears almost certain that when the Scribes presented this material as “virtually unchanged” from the original dictation, they were not in fact aware of many of these inadvertent copying errors. Sometimes the meaning of a passage is subtly or even dramatically transformed as a result of these differences. Sometimes passages were simply inadvertently omitted. When pondering a puzzling passage that has been modified over time, it can be helpful for our understanding to track the modifications.

In the years following the first release of several historical scribal manuscripts, various e-texts and print editions have emerged claiming to be accurate representations of those “original” manuscripts. As with that first printing in 1975, the accuracy achieved by some editions is sometimes less than claimed. But how can the student tell without checking the actual original manuscripts? And checking the original manuscripts can be difficult. Just getting copies can be difficult.

For the *Text* volume of ACIM we have access to four different “versions” produced by one or both of the Scribes between 1965 and 1975 which differ in a number of ways. Each contains some “corrections” of initial “Scribal errors” and unfortunately each contains apparently unnoticed and uncorrected copying errors. Each also contains “editing for style” which doesn't appear to be intended as a “correction” in that it doesn't seem *intended* to alter the meaning, but sometimes *does* alter the meaning in apparently unintended ways. Whether these are viewed as

“corrections” or “editing errors” is often rather subjective. However they are viewed, they are not always entirely unimportant.

While this beta-test edition of the *Toolbox* is not a “perfected tool” for tracking editing changes, it is still frequently a very useful one. It’s usually easier to locate a particular passage in any of the early versions with these tools than with the raw manuscript material.

Ultimately the *Toolbox* must include not only accurate and fully cross-referenced machine searchable copies of all the source material with concordances. It must also include a *Catalogue of Variant Readings* such that one can look up any passage which has experienced editing changes and instantly see just what those changes are and at what point they arose.

This first edition of the *Scholar’s Toolbox* goes only part way toward that goal and is being released at this time because “part of the way” is of more use than “none of the way.” It contains all of the primary source material I’ve been able to obtain. It includes searchable e-texts of most of it, and those are largely cross-referenced making it fairly easy to locate a particular passage in any version, so as to see for one’s self what, if anything, has been altered.

There are important source documents known or believed to exist which are not included because we’ve been unable to obtain copies. Such documents are listed in the menu and folder structure, but of course are not included because we don’t have copies. In particular, it does not yet include a complete e-text of the *Shorthand Notes*. The job of completely and accurately transcribing the *Notes* is a large one. It does not include all of the “Scribal Manuscripts” which are said to have been created. Accounts of the “editing era” of the Course suggest that the Scribes made more typed, edited copies than have so far come to light. There is also more work to be done on the cross-referencing. At the moment, in the *Text* volume, it is cross-referenced to the level of section, and it would be

useful to complete the cross-referencing to the level of paragraph. However, being able to find the correct section is much more useful than not being able to identify the correct section!

The *Scholar's Toolbox II** includes Concordances to both the *Hugh Lynn Cayce* version and the *Urtext* version.

When the complete collection of basic research tools is available, the long-awaited work on a *Critical Edition* or a “definitive edition” of *A Course in Miracles* can begin. That work will involve a careful study of all variant readings with the aim of determining, where possible, which of the variants is the most authentic and which represent either original scribal errors which were subsequently corrected or later copying and editing errors which were not corrected.

We can't compare the variant readings until we've identified them and their identification is vastly easier if we have machine-searchable e-text copies than if we try to do it manually from paper copies.

Send email to: dthomp74ca@yahoo.ca
with the Subject line: response to BETA 0.9i note

On some Windows systems, clicking the link below will load your e-mail user agent with that address and subject line.

<mailto:dthomp74ca@yahoo.ca?subject=response%20to%20BETA%200.9i%20note>

*The *Scholar's Toolbox II* (Concordances) is not included in this Beta Release of the cross-referenced primary sources.