

# Background of New Thought



Mark Hicks



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Austin, Texas

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3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

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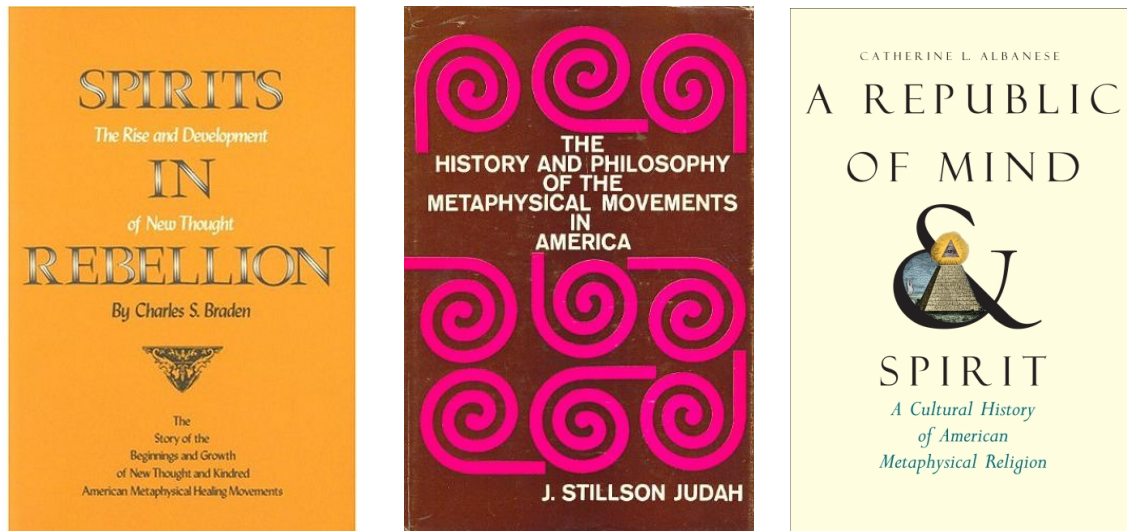
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## Introduction and Acknowledgements

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**A movement with a rich history and theology.** New Thought is a new religious movement, barely 120 years old. To date, only three comprehensive, scholarly books have been written on New Thought: Charles Braden's *Spirits in Rebellion* (1963), Stillson Judah's *The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America* (1967), and most recently, Catherine Albanese's *A Republic of Mind and Spirit, A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion* (2006). While these authors are remarkably consistent in their description of New Thought, the movement is not well understood by the general public and those who are new to New Thought are often left with the idea that the movement has no particular roots nor theology. The purpose of this book is to provide, in an accessible way, for New Thought students to gain an understanding of our rich history and world view.

**A resource for students and teachers of New Thought.** This book is neither comprehensive nor scholarly, however I have tried to draw from the best scholarship and to provide a balanced, if incomplete, introduction to New Thought. If you look at the copyright page, you'll see it's released in a way that allows students and teachers

to freely copy and reproduce the material for their classes. And I have intentionally printed this on letter sized paper to make it easy to photocopy. If you wish to make an offering to me for this work, please buy a copy for \$20 by going here:

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**Acknowledgements.** Much of the structure and content of this book comes from Rev. Tom Thorpe, faculty member at Unity Institute. As hundreds of his students know, Tom is a master teacher and an encourager to all who are hungry for spiritual growth and discovery. Thank you, Rev. Tom. Dr. Tom Shepherd, also faculty member at Unity Institute, also inspired much of the work on the antecedents and continues to inspire me and many others to deepen our understanding of our rich New Thought tradition. Thank you Dr. Tom for scholarly excellence and your devotion to the spiritual growth of us all. Rev. Phil White, in 1984 gave a six-part lecture series at Unity Institute on the Background of New Thought, which guided me tremendously in this project and which may be listened to via the Internet at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/philip-white>

Thank you Rev. Phil for a lifetime of service.

**Thank you.** To Mike Gadell, Ph.D., who combined critical thinking, writing skills and knowledge of New Thought to improve this document in many ways. To my students who helped me understand that not every idea is Divine. To Marika, Vanessa and Stephanie, who never cease to love me.

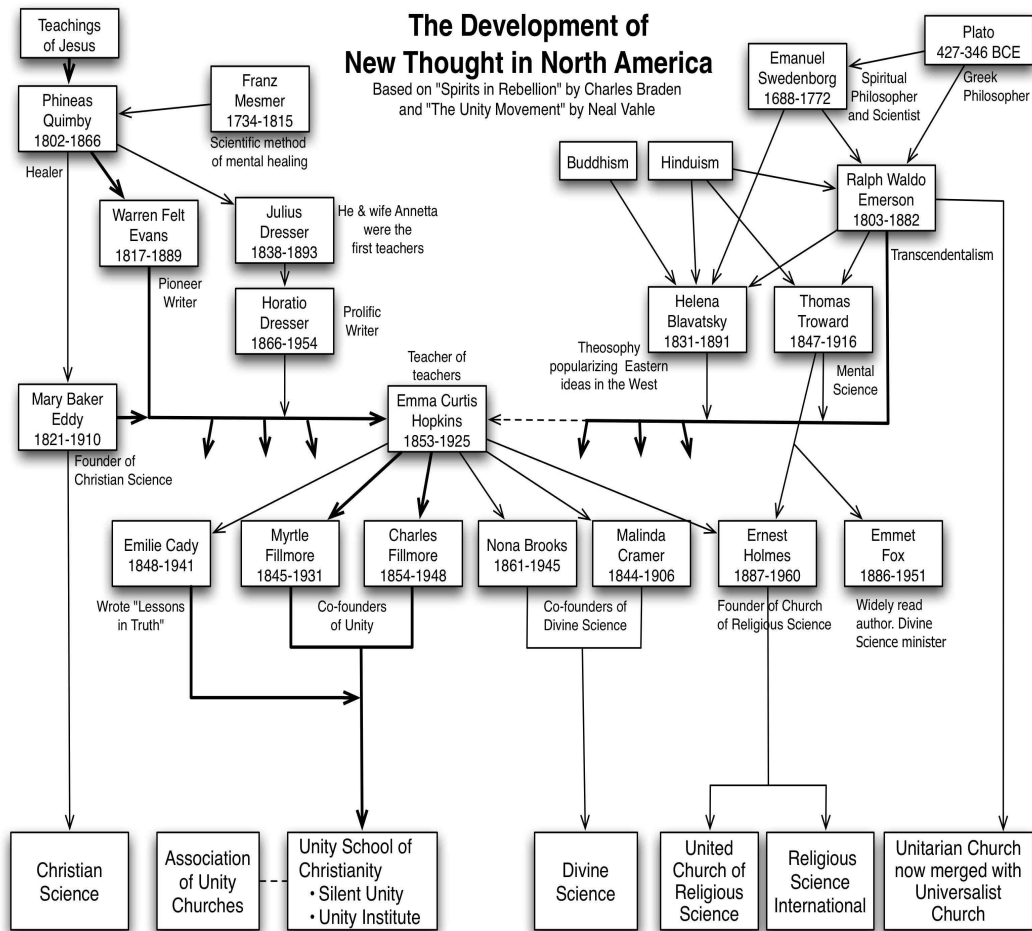
**Oops.** While I have drawn from the three scholarly authors and the three insightful teachers mentioned above, plus a variety of other sources, this book represents my own view of what material and synthesis define the movement we know as New Thought. Please let me know how this material can be improved.

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# New Thought Family Tree







# Defining New Thought

**The Spiritual Smorgasbord.** Many congregants of New Thought churches today, especially those who are new, feel that they have been given a “spiritual smorgasbord” of workshops, classes and programs. The variety of offerings is sometimes so diverse that they are not only incapable of figuring out what it is that they need but they are often unable to determine what the church is all about. This is a spiritual problem for the congregant and an organizational problem for the minister and the church.

A solution is available if the spiritual leader is able to clearly articulate what New Thought is all about, show how exploring a New Thought spiritual path leads to happiness, health and prosperity, and then show how the diverse offerings of the spiritual smorgasbord fit into the essential teachings of New Thought. The spiritual smorgasbord is okay as long as congregants are able to “get the big picture.”

This study of the background of New Thought intends to define that big picture by means of establishing a working definition of New Thought and fleshing that definition out with biographical pieces on how New Thought came to be.

The purpose is not to remove the spiritual smorgasbord, but rather to clarify it. Congregants often ask themselves questions like, “Why do we have workshops on “Finding your purpose”? They may ask themselves “Why do I need to learn centering prayer or breathing meditation”? And they may be put off by the apparent materialism in teachings on prosperity and the Law of Mind Action. The working definition of New Thought offered in this study provides the framework for congregants to get the answers to these questions.

**Outline of the study.** There are five sections to this study. In this section I will provide a working definition of New Thought. In sections two, three and four I will provide short, two-page biographies of those who laid the foundation for New Thought, those who pioneered the early movement and those who created the many branches of New Thought, some of which are still with us today. In the fifth we will come full circle to take a look at other spiritual and religious traditions that are not New Thought, but which seem to serve us in our spiritual journey.

So let's start with an understanding of what New Thought is. That will serve two purposes: to help us put in context other spiritual and religious practices that may or may not be useful on our journey and to help us better understand just what we have in what Emerson called "this new thought."

# 1 New Thought in American Religion

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**Metaphysical Religion.** Current scholarship regards American Religion as being composed of three distinct religious forces: Protestant evangelical traditions which stress a sense of separation from spiritual power, mainstream Christian denominational traditions which stress grace through communal ceremony and, finally, *metaphysical religion*, which includes what we know as New Thought, but also includes Spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, and a variety of new movements, such as New Age [Albanese, 5-15]. There are three distinguishing characteristics of metaphysical religion:

1. an emphasis on the human mind and its connection to God (**Oneness**), instead of a sense of separation from God
2. a recognition of the fluid or energetic way in which the mind serves as a conduit between the spiritual and physical world (**Flow**)
3. a pragmatic focus on comfort and healing in one's life through a correspondence between human consciousness and external phenomena (**Manifestation**), instead of an abstract focus on salvation in an after-life

**New Thought.** As mentioned above, New Thought is part of what is known as metaphysical religion, and it shares a belief in Oneness, Flow and Manifestation, but New Thought has a more distinct background. This more distinct history separates New Thought from Spiritualism, Christian Science, Theosophy, New Age and other metaphysical traditions. These other traditions will be discussed in section five.

**A confluence of metaphysics, mysticism and mind-cure.** New Thought is a religious movement that emerged in the second half of the 19th century as the result of the confluence of three great spiritual traditions, each of which seem to speak to human beings in a distinct, unique way.



- A development of Greek philosophy known as Metaphysics, which originated with Plato, has evolved into a philosophical construct known as *Mind-Idea-Expression*, and is a head-centered spiritual path that speaks to human reason and intellect.
- Christian Mysticism, which originated in the Judeo-Christian tradition, was perfected by Jesus and speaks specifically to the subconscious parts of the human soul, which we recognize as a heart-centered spirituality.
- Mind-cure, which originated with the early discoveries of Mesmer and Quimby, has evolved into what we know today as the mind-body connection and speaks to the needs of the body, restoring life and health.

**A definition of New Thought.** So we find ourselves with the following definition of New Thought:

*A spirituality with a belief system of Oneness, Flow and Manifestation and articulated by the construct of Mind-Idea-Expression, that addresses the needs of the head, heart and body and is based on the rich traditions of western philosophy, the teachings of Jesus and our understanding of the mind-body connection.*

This definition will provide the framework for distinguishing New Thought from other religious traditions and these terms will be fleshed-out as we consider the many contributions of New Thought antecedents and pioneers.

## 2 Unity and INTA Declaration of Principles

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To begin fleshing-out our defining terms of New Thought, the following are the principles of the Unity Movement and the International New Thought Alliance, which, as will be explained in a later chapter, is the oldest and most representative association of New Thought churches. The section headings of “Oneness, Flow and Manifestation” are my own and are placed in the principles to show how New Thought Principles correspond to the working framework we’ve established.

### *Five Basic Principles of Unity*

Oneness:

1. God is absolute good, everywhere present.
2. Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ spirit within. Their very essence is of God, and therefore they are also inherently good.

Flow:

3. Human beings create their experiences by the activity of their thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.
4. Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God-Mind and therefore brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity, and everything good.

Manifestation:

5. Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also called Truth, are not enough. A person must also live the truth that he or she knows

## *New Thought Alliance Declaration of Principles*

### Oneness

1. We affirm God as Mind, Infinite Being, Spirit, Ultimate Reality.
2. We affirm that God, the Good, is supreme, universal, and everlasting.
3. We affirm the unity of God and humanity, in that the divine nature dwells within and expresses through each of us, by means of our acceptance of it, as health, supply, wisdom, love, life, truth, power, beauty, and peace.

### Flow

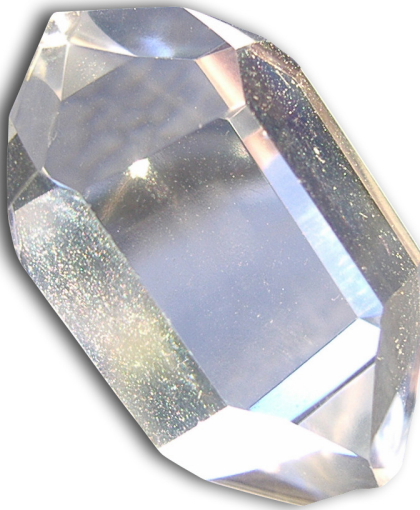
4. We affirm the power of prayer and the capacity of each person to have mystical experience with God, and to enjoy the grace of God.
5. We affirm the freedom of all persons as to beliefs, and we honor the diversity of humanity by being open and affirming of all persons, affirming the dignity of human beings as founded on the presence of God within them, and, therefore, the principle of democracy.
6. We affirm that we are all spiritual beings, dwelling in a spiritual universe that is governed by spiritual law, and that in alignment with spiritual law, we can heal, prosper, and harmonize.

### Manifestation

7. We affirm that our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living.
8. We affirm the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven here and now.
9. We affirm expression of the highest spiritual principle in loving one another unconditionally, promoting the highest good for all, teaching and healing one another, ministering to one another, and living together in peace, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and other enlightened teachers.
10. We affirm our evolving awareness of the nature of reality and our willingness to refine our beliefs accordingly.

### 3 Metaphysics

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**Metaphysics, a head-centered spirituality.** The term “metaphysics,” as used in New Thought, must be distinguished from how the term is used in philosophy. Both metaphysical philosophy and New Thought reach back to metaphysics, as established by Plato, but the philosophers have followed a path of open inquiry with no boundaries, leading to a wide variety of conclusions. In contrast to philosophy, New Thought has adopted Plato’s ideas (Idealism) and developed a working formula for spiritual insight known as *Mind-Idea-Expression*. This formula has established an understandable boundary from which New Thought students are able to pursue their spiritual path.

**Mind.** The term *Mind*, as used in New Thought, is synonymous with the term God and is often replaced by “God-Mind” to distinguish Mind from “human mind.” Although New Thought is in agreement with orthodox religions that God is all powerful, all knowing and everywhere present, New Thought emphasizes that God-Mind does two crucial things: *it creates and emits Divine Ideas*.



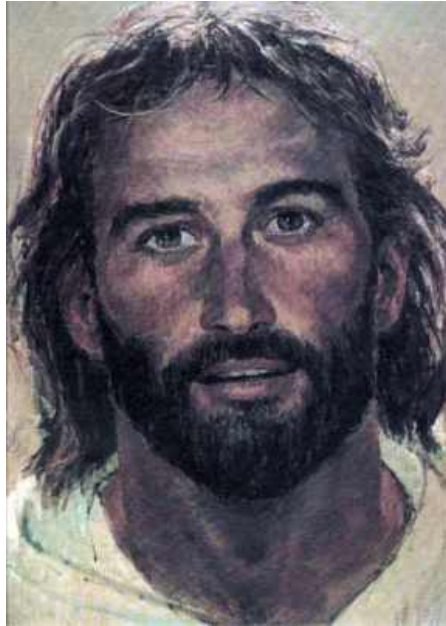
**Idea.** One who is an “idealist” looks for the true, perfect nature of all things. That true, perfect nature is what metaphysical thinkers know as an idea. Behind a flower is the idea of a flower and, while the flower may fade and die, the idea is both perfect and eternal. The Divine Idea for human beings is given a special term in New Thought, *the Christ*. Divine Ideas form the “pattern” from which things in the material world are expressed.

**Expression.** According to New Thought thinking, nothing in the physical world is “created.” Rather, that which we know and experience in the physical world has been “expressed.” What have been created are Divine Ideas from God-Mind. These Divine Ideas are then the basis for the *expression* of all that which we see in the physical world. The flower we see is an expression of the divine idea of a flower. “Ideally” all things, since they are expressions of God’s ideas, are also both perfect and eternal.

**Metaphysical Work.** The work of the New Thought metaphysician is to establish a unity of human-mind with God-Mind (Oneness), relax the soul enough so it is able receive direct inspiration from God-Mind (which is known as *truth* and is why New Thought people refer to themselves as “truth students”) in the form of Divine Ideas (Flow) and, using the thought process of the human mind, cause the expression of Divine Ideas into the physical world (Manifestation). The quality of our physical world, as we experience it, is based largely on the purity of our metaphysical work.

## 4 Mysticism

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**Mysticism, the religion of Jesus.** New Thought distinguishes the religion *about* Jesus from the religion *of* Jesus. New Thought and traditional Christianity agree that Jesus experienced the full range of human emotions and thinking. And they share the belief that, at some point, he achieved a full awareness of his divine nature. This awareness of one's divine nature is what we know as *mysticism*, and New Thought teaches that all of Jesus' works and teachings were expressions of this awareness. Mysticism, or awareness of one's divine nature, was the religion *of* Jesus. New Thought attempts to follow Jesus in his religion. Traditional Christianity has built upon the religion of Jesus a new religion *about* Jesus, based on various creeds and religious practices, which New Thought has generally rejected.

**Mysticism, a heart-centered spirituality.** New Thought teaches that we also can have an awareness of our divine nature, just as did Jesus. In New Thought, Jesus is often referred to as the way-shower, *he who shows the way*. What is this way that

Jesus taught? New Thought teaches that it is fundamentally an *opening of the heart* accompanied by a sense of *oneness* with God and all creation, a sense of gratitude and joy for all things that *flow* into one's life and a willingness to *manifest* that which God wants to express through one's life.

**The role of faith.** New Thought shares with traditional Christianity an understanding of the critical importance of faith. They differ, however, in what faith actually does. In New Thought, faith does not restore a connection to God nor change our status from lost to saved, for we are expressions of the Divine Idea of Christ, perfect and eternal, just as we are. We are never separate from God. Rather, faith serves to open up a channel in our soul for the reception of all good that God has prepared for us. In short, faith serves as a conduit for flow, not for oneness.

**A mysticism based on intuition, not doctrine.** Mysticism has always been part of the Christian tradition, as you will see in the chapter on Meister Eckhart. However the type of mysticism found in New Thought today has been impacted by the Enlightenment, which was an eighteenth century era in which reason was advocated as the primary source for legitimacy and authority. Prior to the Enlightenment, Christian mystics achieved awareness of their divine nature through the teaching and sacraments of the church; they came to know God because the church told them to do so. The Enlightenment set mystics free from the constraints of the church and tied their experience of God to rational thought. However early New Thought thinkers, beginning with Swedenborg and culminating with Emerson, reacted negatively to a mysticism of rationalism. They looked beyond reason and found *intuition* to be the reliable pathway to know one's divine nature. So mysticism, as practiced by New Thought, is a direct perception of the reality of God, free of any church teaching or sacrament. New Thought has a name for this direct perception of God — Truth — and that is why New Thought mystics are known as *truth students*.

## 5 Mind-Cure

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**Early experiments in magnetism.** It was Sir Isaac Newton who was able to prove that the planets followed predicable orbits that were governed by a magnetic force known as gravity. This led to the idea that magnetism could be used for other purposes as well. As you will read in the chapter on Mesmer, early attempts were made to apply magnetic force to heal ailments of the body.

**From magnetism to mind-cure.** Despite promising early success, Mesmer's attempt to use magnetism to heal the body was not successful. However his work led to other experimentation which revealed that what success Mesmer did achieve appeared to be related to the mental state of both the doctor and the patient. This new understanding has come to be known as mind-cure. It is important to note that mind-cure is a doctor-patient practice and the activity of mind-cure is often known as a "spiritual treatment." You will read more about this in the chapters on Quimby, Evans and the Dressers.



**From mind-cure to Christian Science.** In the years running up to 1890 it became apparent that the success of mind-cure did not depend on the active participation of a doctor; one could achieve healing by oneself through mental means. Instead of a visit to a doctor, one needed only to attend a class to learn the mental healing techniques. It was Mary Baker Eddy who pioneered teaching healing techniques by mental process and her student Emma Curtis Hopkins who made those techniques accessible to thousands. Both Eddy and Hopkins came from traditional Christian roots and they never fully abandoned those roots. They combined their understanding of the principles of mind-cure with traditional Christianity to form what we know today as Christian Science.

**From Christian Science to New Thought.** Emma Curtis Hopkins broke with Mary Baker Eddy in 1887 and set up shop in Chicago as an independent teacher. She taught nearly all the founders of the branches of New Thought, including Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, Ernest Holmes and the Brooks sisters and influential writers, such as H. Emilie Cady. These founders and thinkers began looking for a deeper understanding of how Christian Science worked. They found answers in the writings of the Transcendentalists, specifically those of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was Emerson's synthesis of metaphysics with the mystical understanding of the human ability to perceive the divinity in all things that provided the answers and led to the confluence of mind-cure with metaphysics and mysticism. Emerson referred to the ideas of the Transcendentalists as "this new thought" and it is from him that New Thought has adopted its name.

**A body-centered spirituality.** The healing process as practiced by New Thought today is based on achieving a mental awareness of the body's true, perfect nature and its unity with God-Mind (an awareness of Oneness). The objective is to open the human mind wide enough (permitting Flow) to allow that perfect nature to emerge (Manifestation). This is often accomplished by use of affirmations, such as "perfect health flows through me now." It is perhaps this body-centered spirituality that most distinguishes New Thought from traditional Christianity.

# Antecedents of New Thought

**Antecedents: balancing head and heart.** Western metaphysics and Judeo-Christian mysticism have been entwined since the time of Jesus. In fact, it may be claimed that Christianity was never free from the influence of the Greek philosophers. As much as we would like to think that the roots of the Christian movement are entirely grounded in the Jewish culture and religion, they were, at least from the time of the Apostle Paul, inextricably entwined in western philosophical concepts which we know as metaphysics. As we will see, it was the work of Plato, Origen, Meister Eckhart, Swedenborg, Hegel and Emerson that helped stabilize Christianity so that it could stand on the dual legs of metaphysics and mysticism, a religion of both the head and the heart. These thinkers are known as the *Antecedents of New Thought* and I discuss them in this section.

**A drift to a domination of the heart.** Theological conversations, like human conversations, can sometimes become one-sided. The influence of late 20th century psychology and twelve step programs, the rise of the New Age movement and the influence of the women's movement have shifted the head-heart conversation in favor of the heart. We live in a time where the analytical capacity of the head is all too often branded and depreciated as ego and the body is construed as an *illusion* of that ego. In many ways, New Thought has lost its grounding of the mind, which is body and soul, to a small part of the soul, known as the subconscious and felt as the heart. We need to rebalance the conversation.

**Restoring the balance by a study of biography.** Rebalancing the conversation won't occur by buttressing the voice of analytical thought, nor by deprecating the voice of the heart. To put it in good, western dialectical terms, we need a third voice. That voice is biography. *Biography is both a study and a story.* As a study of historical

facts it appeals to our conscious intelligence. As a story it appeals to our myth-loving intuition. While we began in the first section with a heady exploration of the principles that define New Thought, we now continue with a series of biographies that convey those principles in the form of stories about how those principles came to be understood. It is from these stories that the subconscious desire of the soul to understand is satisfied.

## 6 Plato

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### *Plato 428/427 – 348/347 BCE*

Most of us have heard of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Socrates taught Plato, Plato taught Aristotle and Aristotle taught Alexander the Great, who conquered nearly all of the known civilized world and caused the spread of Greek philosophy to the middle east. This influence of Greek thought is known as *hellenism* and it is important to know that the environment in which Christianity spread was hellenist. While the apostle Paul traveled in Roman territory and chose to speak in Jewish circles, the cultural environment was hellenist and the ideas we get from Plato were present in early Christian circles.

We can thank Plato when a prayer chaplain says “I see you whole, healthy and perfect.” How can this be said when my physical body is obviously less than perfect? It is so because my essential nature is in fact perfect, but is being expressed as something less. There is an ideal which is perfect and that ideal is what Plato called a

*form*. As explained by David Branch of St. Anselm College (Branch, 2009, Plato's Theory of Forms), Plato tried to solve the problem of living a fulfilling, happy life in a world that always changes and ultimately takes away everything that I come to love and cherish, such as my body.

**Transcendent Realm of Forms (Divine Ideas).** Plato approached the problem by splitting up existence into two realms: the material realm and the transcendent realm of forms. Humans have access to the realm of forms through the mind. This gives them access to an unchanging world, invulnerable to the pains and changes of the material world. We perceive a different world, with different objects, through our mind than we do through the senses. It is the material world, perceived through the senses, that is changing. It is the realm of forms, perceived through the mind, that is permanent and immutable.

**Perfection.** The forms are the archetypes or perfect models for all of the properties that are present in material objects. The forms are the perfect examples of the properties they instantiate. The form of roundness, for example, is the perfect model of roundness. All round material objects are merely copies or imitations of this most real form. Thus it is the forms that are ultimately real.

**Manifestation.** In virtue of the fact that all objects in this world are copies of the forms, *the forms are the causes of all that exists in this world*. And, since humans have access to the world of forms through the mind, we have the capacity to cause the expression of a pure form into the manifest realm.

## 7 Origen

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### *Origen of Alexandria 185-254 CE*

Origen was one of the most distinguished theologians and scholars of the early Christian Church ("Origen", [New World Encyclopedia](#)). He is thought to have been born at Alexandria around 185 C.E., and died at Caesarea around 254 C.E. Known for his brilliant and extensive writings, Origen also became famous for his voluntary castration and championing of the ascetic lifestyle. His writings represent one of the first serious intellectual attempts to articulate and defend Christianity.

Tom Shepherd, in chapter two of *Friends in High Places* (:19-22), speaks of Origen's three great contributions to New Thought: "his *Christology*, or theology of the nature and person of Jesus; his concept of universal salvation, or *universalism*; and his use of *allegory* to interpret the Bible."

**Christology.** Origen, trained in the school of Clement of Alexandria and by his father, was essentially a Platonist and was thus a pronounced *idealist*, regarding all things

temporal and material as insignificant and indifferent, the only real and eternal things being comprised in the *idea or form*. He therefore regarded as the purely ideal center of this spiritual and eternal world, God (one power, one presence), the pure reason, whose creative powers call into being the world with matter as the necessary substratum. Shepherd writes “Origen believed Jesus of Nazareth was the earthly manifestation of the Divine Mind or Logos. He saw Jesus Christ as preexistent, i.e., having lived before incarnation in this world as Jesus of Nazareth ... For Origen, Christ consciousness was attained, not ordained.”

**Universalism.** Perhaps the most widely known—and subsequently widely denounced—idea proposed by Origen is that of *apokatastasis*, or universal restoration. Origen, for many years an educator by profession, likened the Creator to a divine teacher. Being divine, this teacher is unable to fail in instructing its students, and thus Origen concluded that in time all students (that is, all creation) will be restored to their former status, perfect and in the midst of God. Hellfire is not eternal, and it is a purifying fire that consumes and cleanses evil from sinners and restores them eventually. This idea of Origen was eventually condemned alongside other heretical teachings.

**Allegory.** When we interpret the Bible metaphysically, we can thank Origen and his predecessor, Philo of Alexandria, who came out of the same hellenist, Alexandrian school. New Thought congregants are often embarrassed by some Bible stories, such as Abraham's near sacrifice of his son, God's wiping out of Sodom and the virgin birth narrative. These stories, however, are mild compared to some stories in Greek mythology and many hellenists of the day, specifically the stodgy Stoics, were also embarrassed by the immorality of Greek gods. So Origen, and Philo before him, convinced of the absolute Truth of scripture, had no choice but to abstract away the physical reality of the stories in favor of the underlying Truth. We in New Thought carry on this allegorical interpretation, taking a Platonist view to uncover the metaphysical meaning.



## 8 Meister Eckhart

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### *Meister Johannes Eckhart – 1260-1328 CE*

In the syllabus for Unity's class in the Background of the New Thought Movement, Tom Thorpe writes, "Eckhart brought together the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas, a Christian monk and father of the school of thought known as Scholasticism, adding his own insights to present a view of God, humankind, and the relationship between God and humankind which thrills the minds and hearts of New Thought students" (Thorpe :20). Eckhart's writings on metaphysics and spiritual psychology drew on mythic imagery, and seems to have centered on three great themes that echo those of New Thought: *abundance*, the *spark of the soul* and *oneness with God*.

**Abundance.** In Eckhart's vision, God is primarily *fertile*, which is a Neoplatonic notion of the "overflow" of the One that cannot hold back its abundance of Being. Eckhart taught that the fertile God, through an overabundance of love, gives birth to the Son,

the Word in all of us (“Meister Eckhart” [Wikipedia](#)). In a powerful and astonishing statement, Eckhart says that God the Father who “gives birth” is constantly doing so, that *God the Father is “eternally begetting” the Son*. Metaphysically, we know this fertility as “God-Mind” which is constantly emitting Divine ideas, which includes the Son, the Divine idea of the Christ. Eckhart referred to this Christ idea as the “spark of the soul.”

**Spark of the Soul.** The nature of this spark of the soul is powerfully described in an anonymous article (“Meister Eckhart” [The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)):

All creatures have part in the divine essence; but this is true of the soul in a higher degree ... The soul is an image of God, in so far as its chief powers, memory, reason, and will, answer to the divine persons. Just as there is the absolute Deity, which is superior to the persons of the Godhead, so in the soul there is something that is superior to its own powers. This is the innermost background of the soul, which Eckhart frequently calls a “spark,” or “little spark.”

The spark of the soul is known in Unity as the second basic principle, “Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ spirit within.”

**Oneness.** Thorpe continues, “Eckhart’s view of God is quite similar to the view we now call *panentheism*, the belief that all of creation exists in God, but that the total of creation does not begin to exhaust what God is.” This is known in New Thought as oneness, which recognizes the unity of all things while at the same time acknowledging their unique expression. Uniqueness and oneness are not in conflict when the expression turns to God. The anonymous article continues,

In its real nature this basis of the soul is one with the Deity. But it is not in this original unity with God that the soul finds its perfection and bliss. As it has a subjective being, it must turn to God, in order that the essential principle implanted in it may be truly realized. It is not enough that it was made by God; God must come and be in it. But this has taken place without hindrance only in the human soul of Christ.

An excellent audio recording by Eric Butterworth describing his understanding of Eckhart's view of oneness is available at

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/eric-butterworth/great-teachers/eckhart>

## 9 Emanuel Swedenborg

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### *Emanuel Swedenborg 1688-1772 CE*

Swedenborg was a Swedish scientist, philosopher, Christian mystic, and theologian who lived during the Enlightenment which describes a time in Western philosophy and cultural life in which reason (and not faith) was advocated as the primary source and legitimacy for authority (“Emanuel Swedenborg”, [Wikipedia](#)). Swedenborg had a prolific career as an inventor and scientist but at the age of fifty-six he entered into a spiritual phase in which he experienced dreams and visions. This culminated in a spiritual awakening, where he claimed he was appointed by the Lord to write a heavenly doctrine to reform Christianity. He claimed that the Lord had opened his eyes, so that from then on he could freely visit heaven and hell, and talk with angels, demons, and other spirits.

According to J. Stillson Judah (Judah 1967: 33-38) Swedenborg's ideas influenced New Thought partly through his influence on Emerson and partly through Warren Felt Evans, who belonged to a Swedenborgian church.

**The primacy of consciousness over doctrinal faith.** Swedenborg, a product of the Enlightenment, rejected doctrinal faith and embraced truth as revealed directly to him via intuition and reason. He and others like him loosened the grip of both Catholic and Calvinist belief systems on the spiritual life of people and ushered in an independent mindset that we see in the American and French revolutions. This contributed to the freedom of our founding fathers to reject monarchy in favor of democracy, it contributed to the freedom of Emerson and the transcendentalists to reject revealed religion in favor of intuition and it contributed to the New Thought movement's rejecting orthodox belief systems in favor of the need for a higher state of consciousness.

**Metaphysical Bible Interpretation.** Swedenborg believed that there was an interior spiritual sense revealed to him by the scriptures when his spiritual sight was opened. Therefore, according to Judah, he reinterpreted many books of the Bible, giving to each a spiritual or inner meaning, which allowed him to comprehend the Bible as agreeing with his understanding of science. This same spiritual interpretation of scripture was done by Mary Baker Eddy when she wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Charles Fillmore when he compiled the *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary* and by The Theosophical Society which produced the allegorical *Mystery Language*. If you would like to pursue Metaphysical Bible Interpretation, the following resource may be helpful: <http://www.truthunity.net/texts/mbd>

**Mind-Idea-Expression** Judah says that Swedenborg believed in a spiritual world and a natural world *corresponding* to one another as cause and effect. The natural world was the image of the spiritual one, and both received an influx from the divine. Similarly, both natural and spiritual man were recipients of the divine by influx. Each was a *correspondent* of the higher, and the higher was the cause of the lower, its effect. From these ideas New Thought understands Mind-God emanating divine ideas, which, when combined with our thinking capacity, are expressed in the physical realm. This latter part is what we know in Unity as the *Law of Mind Action*.

## 10 Franz Anton Mesmer

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### *Franz Anton Mesmer 1734-1815*

The origin of the term “mesmerize” dates back to Franz Anton Mesmer, an 18th century physician in Vienna who founded a therapeutic movement called mesmerism. Mesmer proposed the existence of an invisible fluid in the body that reacts to the gravitational force of the planets (“The History of 'Mesmerize' and 'Hypnotism'”). Human health, said Mesmer, is affected by the interaction between this invisible fluid and the planets. He called his theory “animal gravitation.”

**Animal Magnetism.** A few years later Mesmer shifted his attention from gravity to magnetism. Animal gravitation became *animal magnetism*. The body’s invisible fluid, Mesmer now claimed, obeyed the laws of magnetism, and could be manipulated by any magnetized object. Stemming from this theory, Mesmer based his medical practice on the notion that disease resulted when the flow of the invisible fluid through the body

became blocked. To unclog the fluid Mesmer devised treatments that involved putting his patients in trance-like states. ("Franz Mesmer" [Wikipedia](#))

**Scientific Psychotherapy.** Although mesmerism is now classified alongside other pseudo-sciences such as alchemy and phrenology, its use eventually led Scottish surgeon James Braid to develop hypnosis in 1842. Charles Braden (:40-44) says that Braid confirmed that the phenomenon was genuine but concluded that no fluidic theory was necessary to account for it; that it was really only the result of suggestion. Braden concludes that this may well be said to be the beginning of scientific psychotherapy.

**Mind-Cure.** According to Braden, the discoveries of these early investigators led to the conclusion that many so-called physical disorders were mental, and could therefore be cured by nonphysical, non-chemical, non-medicinal means. They labored hard to discover the cause of the disturbance and employed what would become psychotherapy as a means of treatment. But Braden notes that, for Christian Science and New Thought healers, the diagnosis was unnecessary. If all disease is unreal or non-existent, it doesn't really matter which one of the unreal diseases the practitioner is called upon to treat. Disease may appear to be real but it was in fact all a matter of wrong thinking.

Despite a lucrative practice and apparent success at curing certain nervous disorders, Mesmer was accused of fraud and forced to leave Vienna in 1778. He reestablished his practice in Paris, but soon came under suspicion there as well. Officially labeled a fraud by a scientific commission including American inventor Benjamin Franklin, Mesmer lost his practice and the mesmerist movement faded away.

## 11 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

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### *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel - 1770-1831*

Tom Shepherd's *Friends in High Places* (:79-88) offers an excellent introduction to the work of Hegel. For the purposes of our study, we're going to focus on the Hegelian concept of the *dialectic*.

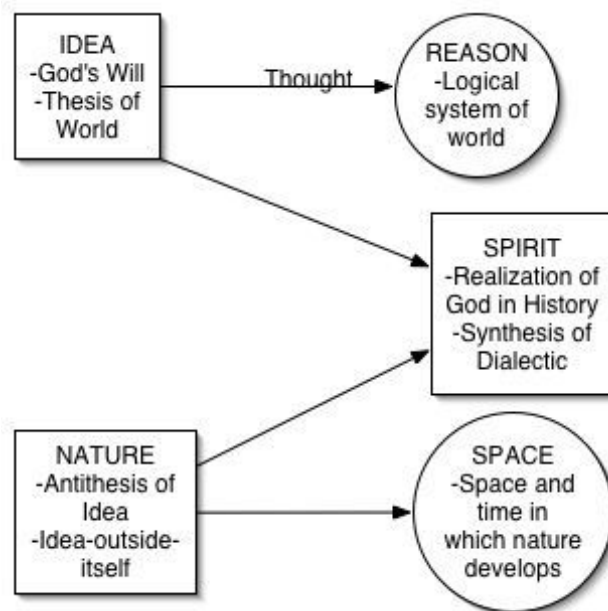
**Monism and the problem of evil.** Hegel believed, essentially, in “one presence and one power,” although he certainly did not describe this belief in terms quite like those we use today. In theological terms, the belief in one presence and one power is called *monism*. While monism satisfies both the New Thought mind and heart in most respects, it does leave us with the problem of evil. If there is only one presence and one power, then does God create evil? If God did not create evil, then who or what did? To say that God created evil makes God monstrously cruel. To say that God did not create evil but does nothing to prevent it makes God weak, ineffectual, powerless, even non-caring. The idea of “justifying God’s actions” is called *theodicy*.



**Evil as absence of Good.** New Thought writers have long held that Good is the only reality; but it cannot be appreciated unless it is contrasted with its absence, which humans call evil. Dr. H. Emilie Cady said “apparent evils are not entities or things of themselves. They are simply apparent absence of the good, just as darkness is an absence of light.”

**Idea and Nature combined as Spirit.** But Emilie Cady's statement that evil is just an absence of Good is not truly satisfying for the victims of the Holocaust or for one who has lost a child to cancer. Nor are channeled statements such as “Nothing real can be threatened; nothing unreal exists.” Hegel's dialectic explains how both Being and Nothing are united into Becoming (“Dialectic” [Wikipedia](#)). *They are inherent in and internal to things.* Hegel's answer to Holocaust victims would be an acknowledgement of the reality of suffering, but also an understanding that from this tragedy, combined with the Truth of God, human beings have an opportunity to create a greater, more perfect Reality, which he calls *Freedom*.

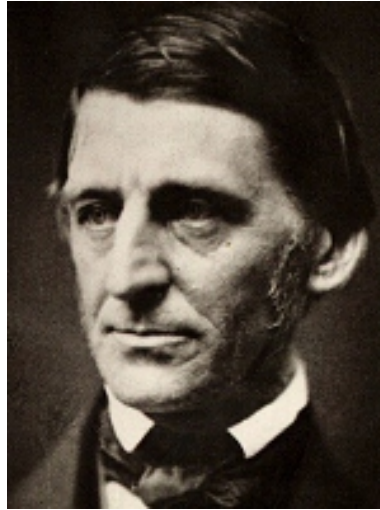
This opportunity to create a more perfect reality means that our power rests, not in our ability to *prevent* all evil things from happening, but rather in our unlimited capacity to *transform* any and all evil into a greater good.



This transformative process is known as Hegel's Triad, which is described in the Illustration 2. Note that SPIRIT, or the Realization of God in History, requires both the Divine IDEA, which is God's will of our perfect expression, and NATURE, which appears as evil, or that which is outside of the will of God. Nature can be found in space and time, while the Idea is found only in reason.

## 12 Ralph Waldo Emerson

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### *Ralph Waldo Emerson – 1803-1882*

By the age of thirty Emerson had become a well-respected Unitarian minister in Boston. Broken hearted after the death of his young wife and disillusioned with the cold beliefs of the Unitarianism of his day, he resigned the ministry, sold most of his belongings and sailed for Europe in 1832. He achieved a spiritual rebirth of sort from two discoveries made in his European visit. When visiting the Museum of Natural History in Paris and contemplating the variety and majesty of biological life he saw there, he began looking to nature for truth, rather than the doctrines of revealed religion. When he visited Thomas Carlyle in Scotland, who introduced him to the work of the German transcendentalists, he found a new grounding for his spirituality in Neoplatonism and he began to rely on the inner process of intuition for the source of truth, rather than the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Free from the doctrines of Christianity and the dead rationalism of the Enlightenment, he returned to Boston and delivered three pieces which would complete America's independence from Europe and give birth to the American Renaissance.

**The World as a grand, benevolent paradise.** In 1836 he wrote a book of essays called *Nature*, which would provide the basis for the Transcendentalist view of the world as being a grand, benevolent paradise, free from the arbitrary dictates of God taught by the church but also free of the distant rationalism of Enlightenment thinkers. In *Nature* he was free to lose himself, become free of all egoistic character and to become a “giant eyeball” observing as nature flowed through him. *Nature* became the manifest for Thoreau and the small band of writers centered in Concord who would become known as the Transcendentalists.

**Man as Free Thinker.** In August 1837 Emerson delivered a speech entitled *The American Scholar* to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard in which he called for a higher use of the mind and thinking capacity. Freedom is achieved by the willingness to reject old concepts and to explore for oneself the veracity of all claims. This speech, which Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. declared to be America's “intellectual declaration of independence,” can be said to be New Thought's basis for pure individual discovery of truth, free from revealed religion and doctrinal theology.

**The Divinity of Man.** In July 1838 Emerson delivered the the commencement address to Harvard Divinity School, known as *The Divinity School Address*. The opening paragraphs of this speech were more than controversial. They were in fact incendiary, challenging the supernatural character of Jesus and his miracles, critiquing the dead, dry, rationalist preaching of the day and, most important, raising the status of human beings to divine status.

Emerson was essential to the development of New Thought. Marcus Bach says that Charles Fillmore read Emerson endlessly, attempting to understand why metaphysical religion worked (:18). Tom Shepherd once shared with me that one can't really understand Unity without understanding Emerson and Transcendentalism. All the wisdom of the antecedents of New Thought were channeled in some form through Emerson and, combined with the unique contributions of their new appreciation of Nature, they provide the philosophical basis for New Thought thinking.

An excellent audio recording by Eric Butterworth describing his understanding of Emerson is available at

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/eric-butterworth/great-teachers/emerson>

# New Thought Pioneers

**Pioneers: bringing the body into a healthy spirituality.** Beginning with what we now know as the Enlightenment, a new voice entered into the dialogue of metaphysics and mysticism, and that voice was *mind cure*. It may be said that the same historical impulse that gave rise to western democracy and to western science also gave rise to western medicine. We observed that the sun does not revolve around the Earth, that humans have intrinsic rights and that sickness does not occur because of the will of God or of the will of demons. This historical impulse, that moved us from Salem witch trials to the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights and from the influence of Calvinist predestination to the right to the pursuit of happiness also moved us from bondage of the body to freedom of the body.

In this section I talk about those *New Thought Pioneers* who carried forth this process of freeing the body from superstition and uniting mind cure with metaphysics and mysticism.

**Trends to watch for in this section.** Braden devotes all of Chapter 5 of *Spirits in Rebellion* to “the developing movement” of New Thought. He begins by describing the controversy between the Dressers and Mary Baker Eddy and the pioneering work of Ursula Gestefeld and Emma Curtis Hopkins. Braden writes (:150) “at this period there was the greatest divergency of thought among the various leaders.” Braden then goes on (:151-4) to identify some general trends that seem to have occurred around 1890.

**Mental Science to New Thought.** Braden says (:151) that Horatio Dresser distinguished quite sharply between what he calls the *Mental Science period* and the *New Thought period* and he makes the dividing line about 1890. For Dresser the shift

was from a predominant emphasis on the mental or psychological nature of mind cure to an increased emphasis on the spiritual or religious nature of the healing. Braden disagrees with Dresser and says it is more accurate to say that both interpretations are evident in the earlier period.

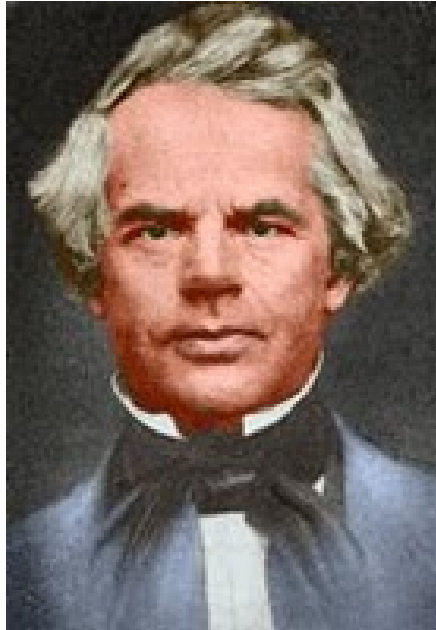
**Later emphasis on prosperity.** Braden highlights (:152) that in the earlier period the primary interest was on health. He says that one looks in vain to Quimby or Evans for any preoccupation with what fills a rather large place in the later years, the emphasis on prosperity, "supply," or abundance.

An excellent audio recording by Rev. Phillip White describing his understanding of these pioneers is available at

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/philip-white/lecture6>

## 13 Phineas Quimby

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### *Phineas Parkhurst Quimby 1802-1866*

Phineas Quimby was a watch and clockmaker with a scientific, analytical mind who is credited by most as being the “Father of New Thought.” In 1836 Quimby was introduced to mesmerism by a traveling practitioner who traveled through Belfast, Maine. He left his job and traveled with the mesmerist for two years until he became proficient at the trade (“Phineas Quimby”, [Wikipedia](#)). Quimby eventually came to work with an uneducated youth named Lucius Burkmarr, who exhibited an amazing ability to diagnose disease and to prescribe a remedy by clairvoyant powers when hypnotized by Quimby. Quimby's work with Burkmarr led to his conclusions about the cause of all illness, the source of error beliefs and the mental basis for healing.

**Error belief as cause of disease and Truth as the cure.** Quimby eventually came to understand that the cause of the cure was not the remedy prescribed by Burkmarr but rather that Burkmarr's remedies were removing erroneous beliefs in the mind of

the person being healed. This led Quimby to see that the cause of disease is an erroneous belief. Braden writes (:53) “Man is made up of truth and belief; and if he is deceived into a belief that he has, or is liable to have a disease, the belief is catching and the effect follows it.” The cure for the erroneous beliefs that cause disease is the Truth. Braden (:58) quotes Quimby as saying “Disease is what follows an opinion, it is made up of mind diverted by error, and Truth is the destruction of this opinion.”

**Priests and doctors as cause of error beliefs.** Quimby condemned priests and doctors for causing these error beliefs. He is quoted (Braden: 60) as saying that they “are the foundation of more misery than all other evils, for they have a strong hold on the minds of the people by their deception and cant. They claim all the virtue and wisdom of the nation, and have so deceived the people that their claims are acknowledged in war and peace.”

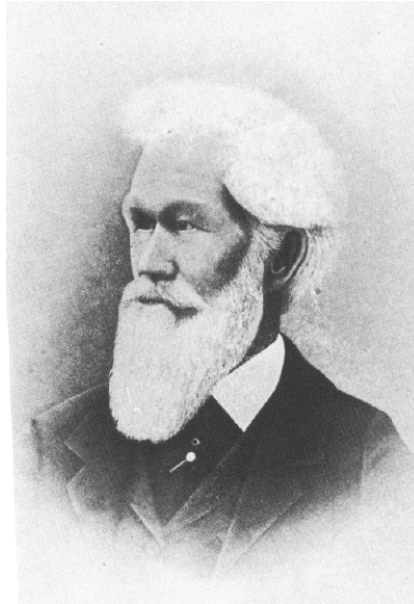
**Absent treatment.** Quimby learned that the mind is not subject to limitations of time or space and, therefore there was a basis for absent treatment. The discovery that healing work could be effective even when the patient and healer were not in the same physical location is one factor that made the healing ministry of Silent Unity possible (Thorpe :28).

**Christian Science.** Braden devotes fifteen pages (:68-83) to an inconclusive summary of Quimby's spiritual beliefs which seem to be summarized as “there is no Wisdom in matter” (:82). While his manuscripts were not released until many years after New Thought took root, Quimby did treat and teach Mary Baker Eddy, who developed a spiritual basis for healing and may have gotten some of her ideas from Quimby. But Quimby should be viewed as a scientific healer. Braden (:55) writes, “the basis was now laid for mental healing ... Quimby had come to his conclusions not from the Bible or from any religious considerations ... thus they had been based upon observation, experiment, and reflection. One might conceivably operate as a healer in entire disregard of religion or religious faith ... There is a distinct secular mental healing movement which has worked upon the basis of Quimby's theory of disease and cure.”



## 14 Warren Felt Evans

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### *Warren Felt Evans 1817-1889*

Neal Vahle writes (:57) that Warren Felt Evans “was the first American writer to give literary form to the ideas and methods of spiritual healing. His book *The Mental Cure*, published in 1869, is considered to be the first of all the New Thought books.” Vahle continues (:58) that “Evans combined the work of Franz Anton Mesmer, who illustrated the beneficent impact of the mind on the body for purposes of health, with the spiritual teaching of Ralph Waldo Emerson, which addressed the value of becoming one with the divine Indwelling Presence. Deepening the mental healing movement by demonstrating its spiritual basis, Evans provided the basis upon which Charles [Fillmore] developed his teaching.”

Educated at Middlebury College and Dartmouth, he became a Methodist minister in 1837 and continued in the ministry until 1863 when he left to join the Swedenborgian church. There is a scholarly dispute whether at this point Evans had become an

independently trained healer or whether he was a patient and student of Quimby (Valhe :82-88). Most likely his principal training came from his study of Swedenborg, Mesmer and Emerson, but a visit to Quimby enhanced his thinking. Regardless, he eventually opened an office in Boston in 1867 where he practiced and taught the principles of mental healing for twenty years. (“Warren Felt Evans” New Thought Library). Braden (:103) says Evans “did not develop anything strikingly new but he did in his numerous writings define and give wide currency to these central ideas; and he consciously ... sought to buttress them by finding support for them among the great recognized thinkers of the past.”

**Dissemination of Swedenborg's Correspondences to New Thought.** Evans' study of Swedenborg is evident in the chapter headings in *The Mental Cure* and the popularity of this book has spread Swedenborg's ideas of the correspondence between the spiritual and physical worlds all through New Thought (Braden: 97). Evans is quoted as saying “Matter is the form of spirit, or that which gives substance or underlying reality of the body ... a change of mental state is followed by a corresponding alteration of the bodily condition, either in the direction of health or disease” (:114).

**Christian influence on New Thought.** Braden summarizes many passages where Evans' training as a Christian minister are evident: the efficacy of laying on of hands (:95), the Christian basis for mental healing (:101), the belief in both a transcendent and immanent God, the perception of God as both a person and Principle (:104), his understanding of the Christ Principle as the Living Word or Divine Logos (:106) and the saving power of predominant holy love (:111).

**Mental Healing.** Braden highlights Evans' view of disease and how disease is healed (:115-126), his use of affirmations and denials (:123), his view of the relationship of sin and disease, and Evans' repeated emphasis on ideas translating into expressions in the body. According to Braden, Evans believed that two things are necessary “if a patient would receive a spiritual sanative influence, whether through self-treatment or at the hands of another. One is the desire to get well. The other is a faith in the efficiency of the remedial agent. Without these two things the cure of disease by any mode of treatment is, to say the least, if not impossible, exceedingly difficult” (:121).

## 15 Julius, Annetta & Horatio Dresser

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Annetta G. Seabury Dresser  
Lent by Dorothea Reeves



### *Julius Dresser, Annetta Seabury Dresser & Horatio Dresser*

Julius Dresser and his wife, Annetta Seabury Dresser, were patients and students of Phineas Quimby. In fact, they met in Dr. Quimby's office. Later, both became healers and teachers using Dr. Quimby's methods. An excellent summary of their lives and work can be found at [www.hubs](http://www.hubs.com) ("Annetta and Julius Dresser" [www.hubs](http://www.hubs.com)). An interesting observation in that article is that Mary Baker Eddy, after suffering the fall in 1862 that led to her discovery of Christian Science, first asked Julius Dresser to heal her using Quimby's methods. This request is also mentioned in chapter 5 of *Spirits in Rebellion* (Braden :131).

Braden's story of the Dressers is fun to read (:129-135) because of the drama it presents. Sixteen years passed after Quimby had died when the Dressers and Mary Baker Eddy found themselves living in the same city, Boston, in 1882. The Dressers had set up shop as healing practitioners and teachers of Quimby's methods and Mary Baker Eddy had finally established her Christian Science church and was publishing the Christian Science Journal. The Dressers complained about Eddy's claim to have

been the discoverer of Christian Science and their complaint provoked Eddy to intensify her denial of Quimby's influence upon her teachings. As Braden explains (:137), historians view this controversy as a positive factor in the dissemination of Quimby's methods and ideas.

**Dissemination of Quimby's methods and manuscripts.** Braden's discussion of the Dressers (:129-135) underscores that their primary contribution to New Thought was the dissemination of Quimby's methods and manuscripts. This was accomplished in several ways. As described by Braden (:134), to augment their healing practice in Boston, the Dressers taught classes which were closely based on Quimby's methods. Also, in 1895, Annetta Dresser wrote a book entitled *The Philosophy of P.P. Quimby*, giving a historical sketch of the life and works of Quimby and outlining the healing methods that he taught. This book would later strongly influence Charles Fillmore (Vahle :81).

But also important for the dissemination of Quimby's discoveries was the work of their son, Horatio W. Dresser (1866-1954) who became the publisher of the Quimby manuscripts in 1921. In 1884, at the age of 18, he began to practice mental healing along with his parents. He traveled widely, wrote several books, most notably *A History of the New Thought Movement*, edited several journals, undertook graduate studies at Harvard with William James and received a Ph.D in 1907. Quimby's manuscripts, which he received from Quimby's son, George, may be read online at [ppquimby.com](http://ppquimby.com).

**Influence on William James.** Horatio Dresser's position as the assistant in the philosophy department at Harvard may have influenced professor William James in his insights into the New Thought movement, which he classed among "the religions of healthy-mindedness" in his classic work *Varieties of Religious Experience* ("Horatio W. Dreser" [www.hubs](http://www.hubs)).

## 16 Mary Baker Eddy

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### *Mary Baker Eddy 1821-1910*

Mary Baker Eddy was the youngest of six children raised on a farm in New Hampshire. Because of numerous periods of sickness, she was given little formal education but she read and studied a great deal at home, writing prose and poetry from an early age. Raised in a deeply religious Congregational home, she rebelled against the Calvinist doctrine of predestination at an early age, and regularly turned to the Bible and prayer for hope and inspiration.

Struggling with chronic illness, she sought help from Phineas Quimby and her health improved dramatically under his treatment. She remained with Quimby for a number of years to learn more about his healing methods. In 1866 she was injured and found herself in critical condition. Quimby had died just one month earlier so she could not turn to him. At that point she asked for her Bible and, while reading an account of

Jesus' healing, found herself suddenly well. She later referred to this as the moment she discovered Christian Science.

As you have read in the section on the Dressers above, there has been significant controversy over whether Mrs Eddy's healing methods are derived from Quimby or if they are her own discovery, a controversy that was instigated by Julius Dresser and aggravated by Eddy's defensive response and her tenacious hold on the term "Christian Science." Regardless of the validity of these criticisms, she is credited with the development of New Thought in three ways:

**Bridging Congregationalist Calvinism with Quimby Mind Cure.** White, Judah and Albanese agree that Eddy "utilized more Christian categories than any other metaphysical organization" in her teachings (Judah, p.257). Albanese quotes scholar Stephen Gottschalk who characterizes Eddy's belief as "essential Calvinism" and "metaphysical dualism." "In Christian Science as in Calvinism one is clearly confronted with the Pauline antithesis of the Spirit and the flesh." (Albanese, p.290). Her teachings include acceptance of the Bible (as interpreted by Eddy), belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, that Jesus suffered for sins, belief in the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus and the virgin birth. Eddy's interpretation of these Calvinist beliefs placed her outside the orthodox church, but she at least retained the basic beliefs.

**Development of the first true New Thought organization.** Eddy was the first to establish a lasting organization despite repeated dissension and, 100 years after her death, it continues to be a strong, vibrant church. Many attribute her organizational success to her tenacity in defending her teachings and the trademark name "Christian Science," however it may be that two other factors have been important: her adoption and reinterpretation of orthodox beliefs in lieu of outright rejection and her development of courses, classes and teaching to augment the work of healing practitioners.

**Ursula Gesterfield and Emma Curtis Hopkins.** Braden (:138-149) discusses how Eddy trained two important people who subsequently made tremendous contributions to New Thought. Gesterfield's work is outside the scope of this study. Hopkins is discussed in the next section.

## 17 Emma Curtis Hopkins

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### *Emma Curtis Hopkins 1849-1925*

Braden writes (:138) that one way in which New Thought was debtor to Mary Baker Eddy was that certain persons, once they reacted to her “authoritarian possessiveness,” broke with Eddy and became teachers of others who later led the major branches of New Thought. One of them was Emma Curtis Hopkins, who had been the editor of the *Christian Science Journal* under the direction of Eddy and who was dismissed in October, 1885, reportedly for reading other metaphysical books besides Eddy's writings (:141). Braden writes that “she was an extremely able individual, with ideas very much her own, and with the ability to communicate them to others. She could not accept the role assigned to her by Mrs. Eddy, and so became an independent teacher.”

**Teacher of Teachers.** After her dismissal in Boston, Hopkins moved to Chicago in 1887, and opened what would later be called the Emma Hopkins College of



Metaphysical Science. She was called the "teacher of teachers," because a number of her students went on to found their own churches or to become prominent in the New Thought Movement. Among her students were Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, founders of the Unity School of Christianity; H. Emilie Cady, author of the Unity textbook "Lessons in Truth;" as well as Frances Lord; Annie Rix-Militz; George Edwin; Malinda E. Cramer, co-founder of Divine Science; Ella Wheeler Wilcox, New Thought poet; Elizabeth Town; and considerably later Ernest Holmes, founder of the Church of Religious Science.

**Meager formal training of ministers.** Braden writes (:146-7) that the seminary declined to have "chairs of Church History, or Homiletics, or Ethics, or Dogmatic Theology, as is usual in Theological Seminaries" and comments that this set the "fundamental characteristic of the whole teaching philosophy of the metaphysical movement in general, one that probably accounts for the meager formal training required by all the groups of those who minister or who teach in them."

**Enlightened Leadership.** However Hopkins was way ahead of her times in the freedom offered students in a group activity which the faculty of the seminary became. Her innate teaching quality shows in the leadership her teaching quickened in students who established independent movements now ministering to mankind ("Emma Curtis Hopkins" [wwwwhubs](http://www.whubs.com)).

**Leadership role of women and feminine theology in New Thought.** In the first graduation ceremony of the Emma Hopkins College of Metaphysical Science in 1889, Hopkins graduated a total of twenty-two individuals of which twenty were women. According to Gail Harley (:1) she actively assigned women a prominent place in her ministry as ordained pastors and she taught that the third person of the Trinity was the Holy Mother or Comforter. Harley says (:74-78) that although the concept of *Father-Mother God* originated with the Shakers and was used by Eddy, Hopkins "was the first religious teacher of her time to break away from the dominant Protestantism of the nineteenth century, create an alternative feminist theology, and attract a sizable following for this new theology."

An excellent series on the Mysticism of Emma Curtis Hopkins is available at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/john-rankin/the-mysticism-of-emma-curtis-hopkins>

## 18 Thomas Troward

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### *Thomas Troward 1847-1916*

Thomas Troward was born in 1847 of British parents in India, where his father was a full colonel in the Indian Army. He was brought back to England in 1865 to attend school and the study of law. In 1869, at the age of twenty-two, he returned to India where he served as a judge for twenty-five years until his retirement at age fifty-five in 1902. He then returned to England where he devoted himself to the study of scripture, metaphysics and painting until his death in 1916 at the age of sixty-nine.

In 1904 he delivered the famous Edinburgh Lectures on the topic of Mental Science. These lectures became the basic pattern for his thought (Braden :416-7).

**Theoretical basis behind philosophy of Science of Mind.** In April of 1958, in addressing a group of students at the Institute of Religious Science Dr. Ernest Holmes stated that he had read every book that Troward had written because “they are the

fundamental books, and everyone in our field should understand them because I would say twenty-five percent of our philosophy came from Troward.” (Sannar).

**Influence upon William James and British Clergy.** Braden says (:418-9) that Troward's ideas strongly influenced William James who characterized Troward's work as “far and away the ablest statement of the philosophy I have met, beautiful in its sustained clearness of thought and style; a really classic statement.” He also describes Troward's influence on a prominent clergyman, Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce of Westminster Abbey, whose sermons were constantly quoting Troward.

**The great cosmic intelligence and the necessity for human cooperation.** Braden (:421-2) describes Troward's belief that things which appear to have great “quality of livingness” seem to have great intelligence and that increased levels of intelligence provide increased control over motion, thereby reducing randomness and enabling the forward evolution of things. Our task, says Troward, is to consciously cooperate with the intelligence that is being expressed in law. He writes that it is a fact that “Nature obeys us precisely in proportion as we first obey Nature.”

Troward believed that human cooperation was done by both objective and subjective mind, or what we would today call conscious and subconscious mind. “The subconscious mind accepts uncritically whatever suggestion may be impressed upon it, and works out in great fidelity whatever may logically follow from the suggestion. For example, if a hypnotized person is told that he is a dog, he acts like a dog” (Braden :423). Braden's summary of Troward's teachings continues with his understanding of the individual personality and the “universal Life principle” (:424), the philosophic basis for denials (:425), the function of the healer (:426), “the silent power of evolution” (:427) and the relation of the person and Divine mind (:428).

## 19 Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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### *Ella Wheeler Wilcox 1850-1919*

Ella Wheeler Wilcox was born and raised in Wisconsin where she gained a reputation as an excellent writer of poetry. At one point she was a student of Emma Curtis Hopkins, with whom she shared a strong belief in total abstinence of alcohol. She was also an associate editor of *New Thought Magazine* and had a number of her essays published in *The Heart of New Thought*.

When about 28 years of age, she married Robert Wilcox. They had one child, a son, who died shortly after birth. Not long after their marriage, they both became interested in Theosophy, New Thought, and Spiritualism. They moved to Connecticut where she lived until her death in 1919.

The following statement expresses Wilcox's unique blending of New Thought, Spiritualism, and a Theosophical belief in reincarnation: "As we think, act, and live here today, we build the structures of our homes in spirit realms after we leave earth, and we build karma for future lives, thousands of years to come, on this earth or other planets. Life will assume new dignity, and labor new interest for us, when we come to the knowledge that death is but a continuation of life and labor, in higher planes."

**Disseminator of New Thought ideas.** Braden writes (:356) that Ella Wheeler Wilcox may not have been one of America's greatest poets, but in her time she was one of the most popular. It is for this popularity and the ability of her poems and prose to get a "wide hearing or reading for New Thought ideas by the general public" that Braden includes her in *Spirits in Rebellion*. Her works, filled with positivism, were popular in the New Thought Movement and by 1915 her booklet, *What I Know About New Thought*, had a distribution of 50,000 copies, according to its publisher, Elizabeth Towne. Braden believes that it was probably as regular contributor to newspapers that she reached her widest public, for she wrote syndicated articles for the Hearst papers (:360). Thus New Thought ideas found an outlet to the public they could never have gotten through specifically New Thought channels.

In the walkway along side City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco (home of the beat generation and perhaps the world's best known shop for poetry) there is a plaque quoting Ella Wheeler Wilcox which reads, "Love lights more fires than hate extinguishes."



## 20 Emmet Fox

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### *Emmet Fox 1886-1951*

Emmet Fox was a New Thought spiritual leader of the early 20th century, famous for his large Divine Science church services held in New York City during the Depression. Fox was born in Ireland. His father, who died before Fox was ten, was a physician and member of Parliament. Fox attended Stamford Hill Jesuit college near London, and became an electrical engineer. However, he early discovered that he had healing power, and from the time of his late teens studied New Thought. He came to know the prominent New Thought writer Thomas Troward. Fox attended the London meeting at which the International New Thought Alliance was organized in 1914. He gave his first New Thought talk in Mortimer Hall in London in 1928. Soon he came to the United States, and in 1931 was selected to become the successor to James Murray as the minister of New York's Divine Science Church of the Healing Christ. Fox became immensely popular, and spoke to large church audiences during the Depression, holding weekly services for up to 5,500 people at the New York Hippodrome until 1938

and subsequently at Carnegie Hall. He was ordained in the Divine Science branch of New Thought ("Emmet Fox" [Wikipedia](#)).

**Alcoholics Anonymous.** The 2<sup>nd</sup> reference note in the Wikipedia entry on Emmet Fox links to an article by Igor S. (S Igor) about Emmet Fox's influence on Alcoholics Anonymous. Fox's secretary was the mother of one of the men who worked with Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill W., and partly as a result of this connection early AA groups often went to hear Fox. S writes that it was the simplicity and power of basic principles of *The Sermon on the Mount* that drew alcoholics to Fox. According to Igor, Fox's teachings on God as the only power, that evil is insubstantial, love, forgiveness, living one day at a time, the trap of resentments and the correspondence of thoughts to the kind of life we live have contributed to an AA philosophy that has transformed the lives of literally millions of recovering alcoholics.

**Association with Divine Science.** One interesting story about Emmet Fox and Unity School is described by Braden (:352). When Fox began attracting large crowds in New York he felt that since he was ministering he should be ordained. When he sought ordination from Unity School he was turned down by Charles Fillmore because he hadn't attended Unity's training program. Nona Brooks of Divine Science was quite willing to waive the formal requirements and so Emmet Fox was ordained as a minister of Divine Science. This incident illustrates how individual New Thought churches and ministers will often wind up associating with one or another branch for reasons other than specific belief or teaching.

**Bridge to many.** Braden (:355) underscores that the influence of Emmet Fox in the spread of New Thought ideas and emphasis lies not simply in the large number of his readers, but in the fact that he is so widely read by ministers of all denominations, who in turn are heard and read by the general public.

**Most important works to read.** This website <http://emmetfox.wwwhubs.com/> is devoted to the life and work of Emmet Fox, which includes a document, "Emmet Fox Speaks," <http://emmetfox.wwwhubs.com/foxspks.htm> a 29-page compilation of excerpts from Fox's works. This document includes an excellent section on "Forgiveness," which is taken from *The Sermon on the Mount*, and "The Golden Key to Prayer," which has been published as a pamphlet by Unity.

## 21 Eric Butterworth

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### *Eric Butterworth 1916-2003*

Eric Butterworth was among the leading spokespersons in modern times on "practical mysticism." Butterworth is considered a legend and spiritual icon in the Unity movement. He was the author of sixteen best-selling books on metaphysical spirituality, a gifted theologian, philosopher, and lecturer, and for over fifty years a teacher of "practical Christianity," helping thousands of people to help themselves to a more abundant life by the study and application of Truth. He possessed a unique ability to render the most complex metaphysical teachings in simple sound bites of awareness. He mastered the art of the brief "essayette," of which he wrote thousands, and is often described as "The twentieth century Emerson." ("Eric Butterworth", [www.hubs](http://www.hubs))

Born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1916, Butterworth attended Fresno State University and Capital University in Ohio, where he studied music. He began training for the ministry at Unity Village in Missouri during WWII. He left to join the army and, as a lieutenant



in the Medical Corps, trained medical personnel and also served as chaplain and counselor. After the war, he returned to his ministerial studies and graduated from Unity Ministerial School.

Butterworth established three powerful Unity ministries. The first was in Pittsburgh. He then moved to Detroit, where his teaching resulted in the growth of the Detroit Unity Temple, the largest Unity church at that time, where more than 2,000 people attended his Sunday Services each week. While in Detroit, he authored his first book, *Unity: A Quest for Truth*. In 1961, Butterworth began his ministry in New York City. He lectured every Sunday at Carnegie Hall, then Town Hall, and after 1976, Avery Fisher Hall, where the weekly attendance grew to several thousand.

His devotees included people from all walks and stations of life, all of whom state that his teachings helped to change their lives. Butterworth was the first Unity minister to appear on Oprah, and speaking about his book *Discover the Power Within You*, she said, "This book changed my perspective on life and religion. Eric Butterworth teaches that God isn't 'up there.' He exists inside each one of us, and it's up to us to seek the divine within."

Butterworth reminded us, "Prosperity is one of God's greatest gifts to us. A loving Father/Mother God would not want Its children to be in poverty, and it is an axiomatic universal law that prosperity will occur when we do put spiritual practices into business!" Eric Butterworth passed away peacefully on Thursday, April 17, 2003.

**Three important pieces to read.** Unity School highly recommends reading the following in order to appreciate the work of Eric Butterworth:

- Life Is For Living.  
<http://ericbutterworth.wwwhubs.com/lifl.html>
- The Truth in a Nutshell  
[http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio\\_transcripts/truth.php](http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio_transcripts/truth.php)
- A New Look at Jesus  
[http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio\\_transcripts/jesus.php](http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio_transcripts/jesus.php)

Audio recordings of Eric Butterworth's talks may be heard at

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/eric-butterworth>

# New Thought Branches

**New Thought establishes itself in American religion.** What distinguishes New Thought from New Age and other esoteric and metaphysical movements is the development of churches based on the work of New Thought pioneers. New Thought is far more than a movement; New Thought has achieved denominational status in American society. In this section, New Thought Branches, I highlight the founders of New Thought churches and the organizations they created.

**Unity, Divine Science, and Religious Science Compared.** Tom Thorpe provides the following things to note as we study the three remaining branches of the New Thought movement (:46-7).

- Unity, Divine Science and the Homes of Truth are late 19th-century American spiritual movements in the New Thought tradition. Religious Science had its beginning in the second quarter of the 20th century, and is also considered a New Thought teaching.
- Both Unity and Divine Science emerged out of a healing need by one or more of the founders. Religious Science was born, it could be said, out of Ernest Holmes' ongoing fascination with spiritual ideas.
- Except for Fenwicke Holmes, who was an ordained Congregationalist (now United Church of Christ) minister, Annie Rix Militz, who was a school teacher, and Myrtle Fillmore, who completed a one year "Literary Course For Ladies" at Oberlin College, none of the founders of these three movements had any extensive formal education.

- Religious Science and Unity's founders acknowledge many of the sources upon which they drew for inspiration in developing their teachings. The founders of Divine Science acknowledge no sources other than their own inspiration from Spirit.
- Unity calls itself a Christian movement. Some in Divine Science call their movement Christian, others do not. Religious Science does not call itself Christian.
- NONE of the founders of these three movements except Annie Rix Miltz set out to start a church. In fact, it could be said that all of the founders were at least mildly opposed to the idea of starting a new church or religious denomination, at least at first.
- Only one Home of Truth exists today. Divine Science ministries worldwide can be counted as less than two dozen. Religious Science ministries can be counted in the hundreds. Unity ministries number about 1000 worldwide, a number that is definitely growing, although not spectacularly.



*Illustration 3: INTA Logo*

### *International New Thought Alliance*

The International New Thought Alliance (INTA) is an umbrella organization for New Thought adherents "dedicated to serving the New Thought Movement's various branches, organizations and individuals."

The antecedents of the International New Thought Alliance date back to an 1899 New England convention of the Metaphysical Club, one of the first New Thought organizations, formed in Boston, Massachusetts in 1895 by, among others, L. B. Macdonald, J. W. Lindy and Frederick Reed. The first public lecture sponsored by the club was an address by Julia Ward Howe. This convention led to the founding of the International Metaphysical League the following year. This League held the "International New Thought Convention" in Chicago in 1903, which was followed by similar conventions in 1906 and 1907. In 1908, the organization was renamed the "National New Thought Alliance." This organization held national conventions annually through 1914. The first international convention, held in London, England June 21-26,

1914, saw the renaming and re-organizing of the National New Thought Alliance into the International New Thought Alliance. The New Thought Bulletin was the newsletter for the organization. ("International New Thought Alliance", [Wikipedia](#)).

Braden devotes all of chapter six of *Spirits in Rebellion* (:170-229) to the history of the INTA, detailing the nature of the annual conventions and the differences between New Thought as it developed in the eastern United States compared to those of the mid-west and the west. He describes the struggle for the INTA to adopt a *Declaration of Principles*, which it was finally able to do in 1917 and which have been revised only a few times. The existing *Declaration of Principles* is shown on page six of this document.

**An umbrella organization.** It is important to note that the INTA is an umbrella organization. As Braden writes (:208), "Most of the effective work of New Thought is done, of course, within and through the various constituent groups. As we have said, there are no local branches of the INTA."

**The INTA today.** The organization continues to conduct an "Annual World Congress", publishes New Thought magazine, and asserts that it houses the largest New Thought Archives known. Its website is at

<http://newthoughtalliance.org>

## 23 Charles & Myrtle Fillmore – Unity

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### *Myrtle Fillmore 1845-1933 and Charles Fillmore 1854-1948*

Unity is a religious movement within the wider New Thought movement and is best known to many through its *Daily Word* devotional publication. It was founded in Kansas City, Missouri in 1889 by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore after Mrs. Fillmore had been cured of her tuberculosis, she believed, by spiritual healing. This resulted in the Fillmores' studying spiritual healing, and being influenced by Emma Curtis Hopkins. This gradually developed into the Unity movement as the Fillmores attempted to share their insights through magazines, books, and pamphlets and through "Silent Unity," a telephone and mail service that offered people help through prayer and counseling. This growth led to several moves within Kansas City, and eventually, after World War I to the development of Unity Village, 15 miles from Kansas City. The movement was led, after Charles Fillmore's death, by the Fillmores' sons and grandchildren. It describes itself as a "positive, practical Christianity" which "teach[es] the effective daily application of the principles of Truth taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ" and

promotes "a way of life that leads to health, prosperity, happiness, and peace of mind." (Wikipedia, "Unity Church").

**Unity School of Christianity.** Charles Fillmore wrote "Unity is a link in the great educational movement inaugurated by Jesus Christ; our objective is to discern the Truth in Christianity and prove it." The work of the Fillmores and much of what we know today as Unity is properly named the Unity School of Christianity and commonly known as the "Unity School." Unity School has three main areas of work: publishing, education and prayer ministry, all centered at Unity Village. A fourth area of work, SpiritPath, is being developed to provide spiritual events and retreats, with an emphasis on prayer and healing, using the extensive facilities at Unity Village. It is important to note that the work and mission of the Unity School of Christianity is non-denominational, intended to convey the Fillmores' teachings in a manner acceptable to members of all Christian denominations as well as the wider society.

**Unity Worldwide Ministries.** Within 20 years of the founding of the Unity School there emerged what was known as "field ministries," which were meant to be extensions of the work done by the Fillmores in Kansas City. These were run by ministers ordained by the Fillmores. These ministries later developed into "Unity Centers" and, eventually, "Unity Churches." Today there are approximately 1,000 Unity "ministries," which range from small to corporate sized churches. Most, but not all, of these churches coordinate their work through Unity Worldwide Ministries, formerly known as the Association of Unity Churches. Unlike the Unity School, Unity Worldwide Ministries and its member churches are denominational in nature. Another thing to note is that Unity churches are run at the local level, which has led to a significant number of churches not associating with the Unity Worldwide Ministries and has also given the churches great freedom to offer teachings that extend beyond that of the Fillmores.

Extensive resources on Charles and Myrtle Fillmore and the Unity Movement are at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/audio/tom-witherspoon/essence-of-unity>

<http://www.truthunity.net/books/james-dillet-freeman-the-household-of-faith>

## 24 Malinda Cramer & Nona Brooks – Divine Science

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### *Malinda Cramer 1845-1906 and Nona Brooks 1861-1945*

Divine Science is unique in that it came to be from the spiritual healing of two women, who did not know each other, one in San Francisco and the other in Colorado, who separately began their healing ministries and only later met and chose to combine their organizations, becoming what we know today as *Divine Science*.

**Malinda Cramer.** Malinda Cramer was born in 1844 and moved to San Francisco for health reasons in 1870. Her health problems persisted for twenty-five years when, fed up with the inability of doctors to provide a cure, she declared “I will not see another physician.” Asked by her husband what she would do, she replied, “Get well, of course.” (Braden :268). Thus, she wrote in *Divine Science and Healing*, “the ax was laid at the root of the tree and the old conditions passed away as fast as I disowned the old habits of belief.” Friends began asking her for treatment and she was soon setting aside one afternoon each week for treatments. By 1888 she was teaching and healing full time and had called her program *Divine Science*. That same year she launched the monthly magazine Harmony. She was injured in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and died from the injuries in 1907.



**Nona Brooks.** Nona Brooks was born in 1861 into a family that had had numerous health problems and had moved to Colorado for an improved health climate. Nona developed a serious throat ailment that made it difficult to eat, causing her to lose weight. A friend of her sister, Althea, met Mrs. Frank Bingham who had sought and obtained a cure from Emma Curtis Hopkins. They attended classes taught by Mrs. Bingham, who *stressed the Omnipresence* and had the sisters repeat “God is my health, I cannot be sick.” Initially the Brooks sisters discounted the practice but continued with the classes and eventually, but suddenly, Nona Brooks was healed. She declared that the whole room was filled with light and that evening ate a regular supper with the rest of the family.

**Divine Science.** A third sister, Fannie Brooks James, began teaching the same classes Mrs. Bingham had been teaching, while Nona began providing healing treatments in her free time. Fannie's classes rapidly grew and eventually all three sisters were teaching and healing full time. This opened a college in 1898, began holding Sunday services in 1899 and launched their monthly magazine, *Fulfillment*, in 1902. The publication attracted a visit from Malinda Cramer to Denver, at which time the women met in person and discovered the similarity of their paths. The Brooks sisters decided to adopt *Divine Science* as their name and, according to Braden (:272) “the understanding between Mrs. Cramer and the Brooks sisters was complete, and they willingly co-operated throughout the years.” After the unfortunate death of Mrs. Cramer in 1906 the movement became centered in Denver and was led by Nona Brooks until her death in 1945.

**Omnipresence.** Dr. Irwin Gregg, Divine Science leader interviewed by Stillson Judah (:198-9), said, “Divine Science teaches complete faith and intelligence of the Universe. We differ from some of the other groups, who are doing very fine work, because we do not go in for visualizing or outlining what is our highest good. We believe that God knows best for us. Our belief is in the Omnipresence and our expression of it.”

**Divine Science Federation International.** Although Nona Brooks did much to expand the organization, there was no formal organization until 1957, which resulted in there being only a few dozen Divine Science churches, most of them existing in major cities. The official website is at: <http://www.divinesciencefederation.org>

## 25 Annie Rix Miltz – Homes of Truth

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### *Annie Rix Miltz 1856-1924*

Annie Rix Miltz was another student of the “teacher of teachers,” Emma Curtis Hopkins. During her study with Hopkins, she was healed of deafness of one ear and, after the third day of the class told her sister, Harriet Rix, that she had found her life-work.

**Homes of Truth.** She had been a school teacher in San Francisco and, after the class with Hopkins, left school teaching and joined with the owner of a metaphysical bookshop in San Francisco owned by a Mrs. Gorey. The store gave Miltz the opportunity to read a wide variety of spiritual books, which left her with an appreciation for the diverse pathways to spiritual development. The bookstore grew from a one-room shop to eventually take over the entire building, giving them the opportunity to hold classes. This eventually was named the “Home of Truth” and Miltz

continued there for three years until she was called by Emma Curtis Hopkins to teach with her in Chicago, which she did until 1896.

**International evangelist for the Truth of God is all.** When she left Chicago, Militz started another Home of Truth in Los Angeles. It was there that she started publication of a successful magazine, *Master Mind*. This extended her influence far beyond Los Angeles and she became sought as a lecturer and teacher. Militz's name appears time and again in Braden's account of the INTA; she traveled internationally and at one time entirely around the world, speaking on behalf of New Thought. Her message was consistent and clear: "that God the Good is All in All, the only power and intelligence ... there can therefore be no reality, no truth, power or intelligence in materiality, sin, evil, sickness, poverty, sorrow or death." (:315)

**Contributions to Unity.** John Simmons wrote a scholarly article, *The Forgotten Contribution of Annie Rix Militz to the Unity School of Christianity*, that introduced Annie Rix Militz as a key figure in the formative years of Unity, from 1893 until 1910. Militz was ordained with the Fillmores at the Hopkins Theological Seminary in 1891. In 1893 Unity published an article by Militz entitled "*Manifestation of God Through Judas Iscariot*," which spoke of Judas as the metaphysical name for the same generative center that Charles Fillmore would later refer to as one of the twelve powers. Simmons then described the "long intellectual relationship between her and Fillmore." Other books by Militz followed, including *The Renewal of the Body*, a piece on regeneration of the body and a long series of Bible lessons which were expanded into *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing*, printed by Unity for over a decade.

**Growth of Homes of Truth.** In 1910 Militz shifted her focus to the establishment and growth of Homes of Truth. By the time of her transition in 1924 there were dozens of such homes, from San Diego to Vancouver and in a dozen other cities across the United States. Braden explains that she never established a tight organization (:315). The *Master Mind* journal was carried on by her sister for a time but eventually the publication and all but one of the original churches disappeared. The sole remaining church is in fact the second church, in the original building, located in Alameda, California. The website for this church is at:

<http://thehomeoftruth.org/>

## 26 Ernest Holmes – Religious Science

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### *Ernest Holmes 1887-1960*

Ernest Holmes founded the International Religious Science movement, wrote *The Science of Mind* and numerous other books on metaphysics, and originated the international periodical *Science of Mind* magazine, which has been in continuous publication since 1927. Holmes' Science of Mind teaching, recognized today as one of the leading viewpoints in modern metaphysics, is a spiritual philosophy that has brought to people around the world a working cosmology - a sense of their relationship to God and their place in the Universe - and a positive, supportive approach to daily living ("Ernest Holmes" [www.hubs](http://www.hubs.com)).

**Platform speaker of metaphysical truth.** Holmes combined an endless enthusiasm for understanding and synthesizing metaphysical truth with excellent skills as a

platform speaker. In 1914, at the age of 25, Ernest moved to Venice, California. He discovered the writings of Thomas Troward, which fed the flame ignited by his earlier studies of metaphysics. Almost casually, he began speaking on Troward's writings to small but ever-growing groups. Braden's chapter on Religious Science (:285-292) describes Holmes' reading of Emerson, Thomas Troward and others. Braden says (:289) that "the first lecture he ever gave was to a group of people in a private home in Venice, California, in which he explained passages in *The Edinburgh Lectures* by Troward." When he began his public speaking it was evident that he combined the understanding of Troward with the enthusiasm of Emerson. Emerson's influence on Holmes is evident in his desire to travel and to reach audiences through dynamic platform speaking, as Emerson had done a century earlier. Without ceremony, his lifetime ministry had begun. Later, as his audiences grew, he was ordained as a minister of the Divine Science Church.

**Religious Science/Science of Mind.** In general, the term "Science of Mind" applies to the teachings, while the term "Religious Science" applies to the organizations. However, adherents often tend to use the terms interchangeably. Ernest Holmes stated "Religious Science is a correlation of laws of science, opinions of philosophy, and revelations of religion applied to human needs and the aspirations of man." Braden (:292-294) has a short summary of the RS/SOM beliefs, which is based on an ultimate objective Mind, which expresses an individual subjective mind in man, who can "make use of Universal Law of Mind and cause It to do things for us."

**Two Official Religious Science Movements.** Religious Science is the last of the three major New Thought movements to emerge. Ernest Holmes did not originally intend for RS/SOM to be a "church", but rather a teaching institution. Braden (:294-311) discusses how there came to be two "official" Religious Science movements. On pp.296-301 you'll note that the differences that led to the schism in Religious Science have nothing to do with belief but rather with polity, the way power and authority are shared among members of the organization. Although there are two major Religious Science organizations today, the United Centers for Spiritual Living (formerly known as the United Church of Religious Science) and Religious Science International (originally known as the International Association of Religious Science Churches), communication and cooperation between them are both friendly.

## 27 Johnnie Colemon (UFBL) – Barbara King (Hillside)

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### *Johnnie Colemon*

Johnnie Colemon was born in Columbus, Mississippi and raised in a spiritual environment by her parents, who were active members of the church and encouraged their only child to participate. She graduated valedictorian of her class at Union Academy High School and received her B.A. at Wiley College in Marshall, Texas and then she taught a few years in Mississippi and Chicago. After learning that she had an incurable disease in 1952, Colemon enrolled in the Unity School of Christianity, Lee's Summit, Missouri, where she received her teaching certificate and became an ordained minister.

**Christ Universal Temple and the UFBL.** She returned to Chicago and founded Christ Universal Temple in 1956, a thriving, spirited and progressive New Thought Church. The sanctuary seats more than 4,000. In 1974 she established the Universal Foundation for Better Living, an organization of affiliated New Thought churches and study groups. Colemon had at one time served as president of the Association of Unity Churches. She chose to end her affiliation with the Association of Unity Churches not

because of differences in belief, but because she disagreed with the way Unity's principles were being applied in certain situations. UFBL publishes a prayer journal that serves a purpose similar to *Daily Word*. UFBL operates the *Johnnie Coleman Institute*, which is roughly equivalent to Unity's SEE program, and the *Johnnie Coleman Theological Seminary*, which offers degrees and preparation for ordination to the ministry.

**Open Your Mind and Be Healed.** Coleman's book, *Open Your Mind and Be Healed*, published in 1997, gives her personal story and an introduction to the universal principles of healing. The book has a foreword by Della Reese and five chapters that define ourselves as God's creation, with a birthright of health, which is manifest in us through faith and the power of our thinking. The final chapters call us to release fear and affirm the healing power of God.

## *Barbara King*

Barbara King was born in Houston, Texas to a father who was an activist who fought to bring African-American motion picture operators into the AFL-CIO. She was raised by a grandmother who provided spiritual and emotional fulfillment and strengthened King's self-confidence. Soon after enrolling at Texas State University in 1948, she was diagnosed with tuberculosis. While convalescing at a sanatorium she was introduced to the teachings of the Unity School of Christianity. Although doctors were skeptical that King would recover from her disease, she claimed that she was miraculously healed after hearing a radio preacher's instruction to put her hands on the radio ([answers.com](http://answers.com)).

She eventually met and studied under Rev. Johnnie Coleman who inspired King to establish her own ministry. She completed her study and was ordained in 1971. She moved to Atlanta and, while a member of the faculty of Atlanta University, started a Bible study group. From this small group of 12 people, King began to create a ministry. By 1974 the Bible study group had grown into a church-sized gathering and by 1985 it had grown large enough to launch a fundraising campaign which was completed in 1991 with the large facility known as the "church in the round" with a reported congregation of 10,000 people. ([Hillside Chapel Bio](#))

# Other Metaphysical Movements

**Revisiting the spiritual smorgasbord.** Our spiritual path of Oneness, Flow and Manifestation may cause us to reach out to a variety of books, workshops and teachings. For example, if we seek a sense of oneness we may select a workshop on “finding your life purpose,” or “communication with the ascended masters.” If we seek a sense of flow we may look to books and classes in art therapy, compassionate communication, heart-math, health and healing or meditation and prayer. Finally, if we seek better manifestation in our life we may read books on prosperity, the Law of Mind Action, “manifesting your dreams” or empowerment. None of these is inherently wrong; all of them can be useful along one's spiritual path.

**The problem of religious syncretism.** Syncretism is the attempt to reconcile disparate or contrary beliefs, often while melding practices of various schools of thought. *Religious syncretism*, as practiced in New Thought churches, is the spiritual leader's attempt to make sense of the spiritual smorgasbord by mixing it all together and saying that New Thought is “open and flexible,” “non-dogmatic” and “unlike those in traditional Christianity.” It may be a convenient way to sneak the guru of the month onto the church calendar but, as explained in chapter one, it leads to long-lasting harm in the spiritual journey of those who come on Sunday believing in Mind-Idea-Expression and seeking oneness, flow and manifestation. Mixing the meat and potatoes of New Thought, however one defines it, with the extras confuses and frightens many.



**Stating what is metaphysical and what is New Thought.** A far better solution to mixing the smorgasbord all together is to identify that which is metaphysically useful, but not essentially New Thought. Doing so honors the rightful place of metaphysical pathways. What is the Divine Idea behind *A Course In Miracles*, and how might it help me to more fully see that my mind and the Mind of God are one? How might this workshop on angels help me to see that the Divine Ideas that seem to flow into my life while I sleep are pure, unadulterated messages from the Divine Mind? How might this Napoleon Hill study group enable me to make the connection between the activity of my thinking and that which I experience in life? And how might this Holographic Sound workshop help me to enter into a more relaxed state so I may more easily enter into the stillness of the Christ Mind?

In this section I describe other movements that are often associated in some way with New Thought and that find their way into the worship and programs of New Thought churches. I hope to show their metaphysical usefulness to one's exploration of Oneness, Flow and Manifestation and also to describe why placing them on the same platform with New Thought can be confusing to the spiritual seeker.

Depending on your point of view, it may be said that New Thought is “adaptive” and “flexible” or it may be said that New Thought has “unhealthy boundaries.” I look at these other movements from the perspective of the New Thought’s historical principles, which were defined in the first section and I do this to give New Thought clarity. It is up to you, the reader, to pass judgment on the wisdom of New Thought’s tendency to easily embrace “new thoughts.”

## 28 Spiritualism

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### *New Thought and Spiritualism*

Both Judah (:51-91) and Albanese (:220-253) have extensive sections on Spiritualism, or communication with the dead. Braden, concerned with New Thought, rather than the larger focus on metaphysical religion, does not discuss Spiritualism.

**Rappings in Hydesville.** As Judah notes, the practice of communicating with the dead goes to ancient times and is found in many cultures. However in America Spiritualism can be traced to rappings heard in Hydesville, New York, in 1848, in a small house reported to be haunted, and inhabited by the Fox family with three daughters, Leah, Margaretta and Kate. Judah says “the rappings at Hydesville were a sound heard around the world. Much publicity was given to them in the press, and people came from far and near to witness them” (:57). As Spiritualism developed, many different kinds of mediums appeared, exhibiting a wide variety of physical phenomena, all based on the supposed presence of disembodied spirits. Many mediums were caught in fraudulent practices and some confessed. The most dramatic

and important confession was that of the Fox sisters who revealed in 1888 that they had colluded in making the rapping sounds with their feet to scare their mother.

**Spiritualism as a movement.** A major reason the rappings in Hydesville spread so quickly was the work of Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), who is said to be the philosopher of American spiritualism. Davis was also familiar with the work of Mesmer and the philosophy of Swedenborg and he apparently had clairvoyant powers that allowed him to peer into the spiritual planes beyond the physical.

**Quimby rejects Spiritualism.** Although Davis' main contribution to Spiritualism was his philosophical writings, he, like Quimby later, developed a healing practice. This attracted the notice of Quimby, who, according to Albanese (:286), was quite familiar with the writings of Davis. She writes that Quimby attended seances frequently and declared himself to be a “healing medium.” However Quimby admitted that what generated “mesmeric success and spiritualist manifestation” were not “elementals” but simple human belief and opinion.

**Spiritualism rejected by Charles Fillmore.** Braden notes that in the first issue of Unity's original publication, *Modern Thought*, the Fillmores were quite interested in a variety of occult practices, including Spiritualism (:332-3). However Charles Fillmore, without condemning the practice, soon questioned its usefulness. In an April 1928 article in *Unity Magazine* (p.302) he explained “The principle objection to Spiritualism as a cult is that it advocates communion between souls that are in the body and souls that are out of the body, assuming that souls out of the body have super-wisdom. Those souls that are out of the body do not know any more than they did when they were in the body; consequently they are unsafe guides. Dying does not change the mind; it simply changes the form of environment from the physical into the psychical.” Albanese (:328) says that “Fillmore had gone beyond spiritualism, but clearly he regarded spiritualists as metaphysical cousins who had gotten things at least half right.” His principal objection to the Spiritualists, Albanese says, was their “tendency” to “materialize the spirit world, instead of spiritualizing the material world.”

**INTA reluctance to embrace “fringe” type ideas.** Braden also notes that Spiritualism has presented a problem for the INTA in determining what type of advertising to accept in their publication (:215). He notes that the INTA feared losing their credibility by allowing “fringe” ideas to appear in their publication.

## 29 Church of Christ, Scientist

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### *New Thought and Christian Science*

Tom Thorpe (:34-6) offers the following reflections about how Christian Science differs from New Thought.

#### **Christian Science differences from New Thought teaching:**

- Christian Science denies the reality of matter, whereas New Thought, while it does not view matter as permanent, does not deny its reality.
- Christian Science believes that revelation ceased with Mary Baker Eddy. Nothing in the belief or practice of orthodox Christian Science can be changed without Mrs. Eddy's explicit approval. Christian Science publishes and claims to adhere to an official Church Manual originally written by Mrs. Eddy.
- Christian Science, in general frowns on the use of "materia medica." In practice, this usually means that a Christian Science practitioner will not treat a person who is also consulting with physicians. Going to a physician DOES

NOT mean that one will be excommunicated from the First Church of Christ, Scientist. New Thought has no such restriction and has never had one.

- Worship in a Christian Science church is essentially the same throughout the world. There is no sermon, nor are there ordained clergy. (One CAN achieve the status of Christian Science Practitioner, however.) *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures*, is referred to as “the Pastor.” Worship services consist primarily of hymn singing, prayer, special music, and readings from both the King James Bible. There is no such uniformity of worship, of course, in New Thought churches. New Thought churches ordain clergy as well as licensing practitioners or, in the case of Unity, Licensed Unity Teachers.
- All local Christian Science churches are branches of the “mother church,” or First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston. Just as the teaching and worship are closely regulated by the Church Manual, so also is church governance.
- Although celebrations are held for milestones in the life of a congregation, there is usually no fellowship hall in the church, nor are there regular fellowship activities of any kind. You won’t see a kitchen or perhaps even a coffee pot in a Christian Science church. Most New Thought churches consider fellowship and food an important part of their congregation’s life. Generally, weddings and memorials are not part of church life in Christian Science.

## 30 New Age

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### *New Thought and New Age*

J. Gordon Melton (:16-29) describes a few characteristics of New Age and then describes how New Thought and New Age have worked in a somewhat symbiotic relationship.

**Characteristics of New Age.** While New Age is a term that covers a broad group of groups, Melton identifies various aspects of New Age, based on similarities found in New Age literature:

- **Channeling.** Melton distinguishes channeling as it appeared in the past 30 years from Spiritualism as it existed 150 years ago. Rather than communication with the dead through an intuitive process, channeling today receives knowledge from *ascended masters* for the purpose of transformation. Examples include the *Seth Material*, *A Course in Miracles* and the *Abraham-Hicks* revelations.
- **Crystals.** Melton says that “the occult attention to gem stones and crystal substances goes back many centuries, however, through the medium of channeling, crystals have been assigned an unprecedented central role in the transformational process.”

- **An apocalyptic movement.** An additional characteristic of New Age, according to Melton, is that New Age is an apocalyptic movement with a focus on the betterment of society caused by external forces outside of human control. An example, as this is written in 2010, is the 2012 Mayan Calendar year phenomenon.

### **Symbiotic relationship of New Thought and New Age.**

- **Religious Movement vs Revivalist Movement.** According to Melton, there has not been any direct clash between New Thought and New Age because they are essentially different movements. New Thought was established as a new and separate religious movement which has grown into a religious family tradition much like other denominations. He characterizes New Age as a revivalist movement, similar to the healing movement or the ecumenical movement.
- **New Thought support of New Age.** Melton says that one explanation for the rapid spread of New Age was its ability to mobilize the resources of New Thought churches rather than build a new organization. Melton says “the New Thought churches were especially valuable assets for the New Age movement ... Not only were there weekly worship services and Sunday school classes in which to make guest appearances, the New Thought church had facilities which could be borrowed or rented and in which weekly New Age classes could be held. They also had a potential audience of somewhat sympathetic church members.”
- **New Age attracts new members to New Thought.** The New Thought churches, in turn, welcomed New Age teachings because they brought in large numbers of new people and the expectation was that they would be soon converted to New Thought ideas. Melton says that “by the mid-1980s, New Thought leaders began to see in the New Age a movement with a distinct new clientele of its own. It was growing and attracting the rich and famous. They began to see that it had more to offer them than rental fees for the use of their facilities and an enriched program for church members. The many non-New Thought people attracted to the New Age could become an expanded audience for New Thought.”

## 31 Association of Global New Thought

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### *Association of Global New Thought*

The Association of Global New Thought distinguishes itself from New Thought by declaring that it has a far broader intention than that of the early New Thought movement. The broader agenda includes planetary healing through self-realization. Those in AGNT spread a vision of planetary transformation that is based on the conviction that there are universal spiritual truths which represent the emerging spiritual paradigm for the new millennium. The Association of Global New Thought website provides its own introduction ([agnt.org](http://agnt.org)):

*"Once called the "religion of healthy-mindedness" by the philosopher William James, the New Thought movement was born almost 150 years ago as a revolt against the negative dogmas so prevalent in the churches of that day. The early New Thought movement was driven by the discovery that physical healing was possible through the power of mind and spiritual awareness. As that initial idea unfolded into successful application, practitioners of New Thought began to see that the power of an uplifted consciousness could also bring healing to negative*



*circumstances and conditions in one's personal life. As it evolves today, twenty-first century New Thought is driven by a far broader intention. Planetary healing through self-realization is emerging as the new promise of these teachings."*

Another introduction to the AGNT is given on the Wise Earth website:

*New Thought is a spiritually motivated way of life that embraces the ancient wisdom traditions of east and west. We embody the belief that consciousness is elementally creative, reciprocates thought, and thereby shapes all manifestation. Our principles reflect a universal conviction that the community of all life is sacred; our practices of meditation and prayer enhance a worldview promoting reverence for, and service to, humanity and planet earth. New Thought is committed to global healing through personal transformation, community-building, interfaith, intercultural, and interdisciplinary understanding, and compassionate activism.*

*The Association for Global New Thought was co-founded in 1996 to represent the leading edge of the New Thought lineage. Its constituent member churches and centers (700-800 in network) among Unity, Religious Science, and nondenominational New Thought spiritual communities are called forth by a deep commitment to bring the principles and practices of cocreation to a sacred and troubled world.*

AGNT's decade-old programs in spiritually motivated action directly support caring and informed citizens in their emerging role as moral and ethical community leaders. Spiritual activism is a term pioneered by the Association for Global New Thought and like-minded organizations to guide groups and individuals that are spiritually grounded, and who fully understand the need to take trans-category, meta-level action in our communities in order to embody change in this nation and beyond.

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## Appendix – TruthUnity.net

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TruthUnity.net is an online discipleship program. Here you will learn more about Unity's classic teachings and how to apply them in your daily life.

Here are some major sections of *Truth Unity*:

### *Inspiration*

Listen and watch streaming audio and video of classic Unity teachings from the past forty years. These recordings include Eric Butterworth on Practical Metaphysics, May Roland on prayer, Frank Giudici and Ed Rabel on The Bible, Vera Dawson Tait on Lessons In Truth, Phil White on The Background of New Thought, Tom Witherspoon on the history of Unity and much more.

### *Texts*

Every chapter of the Bible is hyperlinked to the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, which means you can do Bible Interpretation much more efficiently and that you will notice references that you had previously overlooked. Also, many of Unity's classic texts are provided, such as the Fillmore's writings, tracts and early copies of Unity Magazine. Finally, Unity's complete Correspondence Course will (eventually) be available. The Correspondence Course was Unity's education program for the laity for over sixty years. The course is itself a first-class curriculum in Christian Metaphysics.

### *Lessons*

In Spring 2013 we have begun to live stream lessons from the best of Unity and New Thought teachers. The intent is to connect Truth students with Truth teachers.

More information at:

<http://www.truthunity.net/courses/background-of-new-thought>

[www.truthunity.net](http://www.truthunity.net)



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In less than 120 years, New Thought has grown to be one of the most influential spiritual movements in our time:

- It's publications are read by millions of people, including evangelicals, mainstream Protestants and Catholics, as well as those who are "spiritual but not religious."
- It's best known minister was praised by Oprah, who said "his book changed my perspective on life and religion."
- It's congregations are filled with members of AA, who find its teachings on love, forgiveness, living one day at a time and living free from resentments crucial to recovery.
- It is perhaps the only American denomination that has fully embraced the spiritual teachings of Emerson and Thoreau.
- It's history was crucial to the discovery of what we now know as the mind-body connection.

Background of New Thought explains the basic beliefs of its membership, describes how this movement originated and grew, and helps to place New Thought in the context of mainstream Christianity, western culture and American history.

[www.truthunity.net/classes/background-of-new-thought](http://www.truthunity.net/classes/background-of-new-thought)



Mark Hicks is the founder of TruthUnity, an online discipleship program for those exploring Metaphysical Christianity. TruthUnity streams audio and video of many classic Unity teachers and provides an easy-to-use Metaphysical Bible Dictionary hyperlinked to the Bible.

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