

UNITY of Central Georgia

NEW MEMBERS ORIENTATION:

THE BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT

From the SEE credit course: The Back Ground of New Thought By Rev Tom Thorpe / Unity Institute.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

Charles Braden's "Spirits in Rebellion"
Tom Shepherd's "Friends in High Places"

UNIT 1:

The ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Origen, Meister Eckhart, and Emmanuel Swedenborg and their contribution to the development of New Thought will be the basis of this unit's study.

UNIT 2:

Completes our look at the spiritual antecedents of New Thought as we explore the work of Anton Mesmer, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and the greatest of all the Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

UNIT 3:

A look at the life and work of Phineas P. Quimby, who is widely acknowledged as the father of New Thought. We'll also study the work of several of his associates. Warren Felt Evans is acknowledged as the first major New Thought writer. Julius and Annetta Seabury Dresser, and their son, Horatio Dresser, made the work of Quimby more widely available through organizing Quimby's manuscripts, teaching classes, and publishing written works of their own.

UNIT 4:

A brief introduction to Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science. We'll also be introduced to Emma Curtis Hopkins, who served for a time as an associate of Mrs. Eddy, but left to take up her own spiritual work. Then we'll look at some of the differences between Christian Science and New Thought.

UNIT 5:

A look at the work of four writers whose influence on New Thought has been profound: Thomas Troward, Ella Wheeler, Emmet Fox's and Eric Butterworth.

UNIT 6:

This unit will focus on the Divine Science and Religious Science movements, their foundation, their history, and their beliefs. Divine Science and Religious Science can be called Unity's "first cousins" among New Thought movements.

UNIT: 7

In this final unit we'll take a brief look (just enough to give us a taste) of a relatively new phenomenon called Process New Thought. Process New Thought seeks to take the New Thought tradition in a distinctly different direction.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

REQUIRED WORKBOOK: Charles Braden's "Spirits in Rebellion"

After 44 years in print this book remains the definitive text for the history of New Thought. Braden provides good information and a sympathetic viewpoint toward New Thought. His most "up to date" comments, however, are quite dated and need to be understood in that light. Spirits in Rebellion is a required text.

RECOMMENDED BOOK: Tom Shepherd's "Friends in High Places"

This book offers helpful insights into the lives and work of many of the ancestors of our modern New Thought movement, and several contemporary writers and thinkers who, though not part of the New Thought movement, definitely influence New Thought leaders and writers.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES:

Wikipedia: New Thought Movement

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Thought_Movement

Wikipedia draws its share of critics. At the same time, I've found that information in Wikipedia about the New Thought movement and also about Unity is the most complete and most accurate I've found anywhere. The above referenced web site includes links to information about many of the topics we'll be addressing during our course. A related site,

Wikipedia: New Thought

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Thought

Includes some duplicate information as well as information not included in the New Thought Movement link.

University of Virginia Library:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20060829153521/http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/Newthoug.html>

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 1

In this unit, we will explore the contributions of five great spiritual thinkers to the thread of spiritual thought that became the New Thought movement. The ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Origen, Meister Eckhart, and Emmanuel Swedenborg will be the basis of this unit's study.

Why study the ancestors of New Thought?

It is far too easy for students of New Thought to assume that New Thought beliefs had their origin in the great spiritual awakening of the 19th century. Nothing could be further from the truth. To truly understand the magnificence of New Thought we must develop an understanding of the work of at least some of the great thinkers of the past who contributed to it. Those of you who are reading *Shepherd's Friends in High Places* will have the opportunity, either during this course or at some future time, to learn about more of the contributors to New Thought than we'll have time to discover in this course.

Plato: 428/427BCE- 348/347BCE

One of the greatest thinkers of all time, Plato could quite easily become the subject of an entire course of study, or even more than one course. You can read Plato's

biography at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato>

Don't feel, though, that you have to dig deeply into ALL of the material on that site. What is of primary interest to our study is Plato's theory of forms. Plato's theory of forms is explained in satisfying depth and clarity at:

<http://www.anselm.edu/homepage/dbanach/platform.htm>

Read all of the information at that Web site.

Stated perhaps over simply, Plato's theory of forms tells us that behind everything that we see in the manifest world is the idea, or form of that thing. You can easily see, I think, how essential this theory has become to New Thought philosophy.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 1

Aristotle: 384-322BCE

As the Wikipedia article about him tells us: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>

Aristotle was a student of Plato and a teacher to Alexander the Great. Like Plato, Aristotle thought, studied, and wrote about a vast range of subjects. It's not absolutely necessary to read the entire article. Focus on the Metaphysics section, and also the Methodology section, where you'll read about some of the differences between Aristotle and Plato's thought. Shepherd's chapter 6, his discussion of Meister Eckhart, explores the differences between Aristotelian and Platonic thought in greater depth. You may also wish to review the Web site:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics#History_of_metaphysics

For an overview of metaphysics itself.

Aristotle is known by many as the father of metaphysics, although he most definitely was not the first metaphysical thinker. His definition of metaphysics as "the knowledge of immaterial being," or of "being in the highest degree of abstraction" is certainly not the definition of metaphysics we use in Unity. We do, however, owe a great debt to Aristotle as one of the early metaphysical thinkers, and the first one to use the term "metaphysics."

Origen of Alexandria: 185-254 CE

Tom Shepherd's Friends in High Places includes a fine chapter about Origen that I recommend highly. For those who don't have a copy of Friends in High Places I

recommend this Web site: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/o/origen.htm#H6>

Origen is noted as one of the greatest among Christian theologians. As you read about him, you'll clearly see his contributions in the area of Bible interpretation to the thread that would eventually become New Thought. Origen brought legitimacy to the concept of looking for "beneath the surface" or "symbolic" meaning in Scripture. All of us who take a stand for metaphysical interpretation of Scripture owe a debt of gratitude to him.

You'll also read about Origen's belief that every creature would eventually be saved, that is to say reconciled to God. That belief is known by theologians as apokatastasis or universalism. There is a brief treatment of Christian universalism at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universalism> and a more in depth discussion at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apokatastasis>

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 1

Emmanuel Swedenborg: 1688-1772 CE

The first major New Thought writer, Warren Felt Evans, had become a member of the Church of the New Jerusalem, based on the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, an 18th century Swedish scientist, philosopher, Christian mystic, and theologian. (See the Wikipedia article.) Ralph Waldo Emerson was familiar with the writings of Swedenborg. Charles Fillmore and other major New Thought leaders studied and were influenced by Swedenborg's teachings. John Chapman, known as "Johnny Appleseed," was a Swedenborgian.

The Swedenborgian church remains active today. There are several existing religious movements based on the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg. The Web site for the Swedenborgian Church of North America:

<http://www.swedenborg.org/index.cfm>

will give you enough information to develop a basic understanding of what Swedenborg taught. Focus on the section titled "Our Beliefs," and also "Tenets of Swedenborgianism." The "Tenets" section is well organized. You'll easily notice some of the similarities between Swedenborgian teaching and the New Thought teaching that followed. Pay special attention to the section titled "An Inner Meaning Within the Bible."

The Web site also offers a biography of Swedenborg, full text copies of his writings which you can browse, a list of existing ministries, a discussion of how the church operates today, and links to other Swedenborgian organizations.

Wikipedia also offers a comprehensive article about Swedenborg and Swedenborgianism, with many links to related subjects. That Web site is NOT required reading for this unit:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swedenborg>

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 1

Meister Johannes Eckhart: 1260-1328 CE

This humble German priest and mystic was truly a spiritual giant! His brilliance would not be appreciated in his lifetime (in fact, had he not died of natural causes, he might have been tried for heresy and executed by church authorities), 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. 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.

Because Eckhart's work is so important to the unfoldment of New Thought, you'll probably want to explore both:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meister_Eckhart and

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/eckhart.htm#View%20of%20God>

The second Web site listed offers a more complete discussion of his thinking. If you have access to Friends in High Places, you'll probably want to read chapter 6 of that book.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 2

This Unit in a Nutshell

In this unit, we complete our study of the spiritual antecedents of New Thought as we explore the work of Anton Mesmer, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and the greatest of all the Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Spirits in Rebellion: Chapter 2

Begin this unit's study by reading chapter 2 of "Spirits in Rebellion." Chapter 2 begins with an acknowledgment of the deep historical roots of New Thought in the Christian and other traditions. Worth noting is Braden's observation, on page 26, that New Thought combines a practical concern about physical health and how to achieve and maintain it with "an idealistic philosophy with religious overtones. As you will see, the idealism / Plato, from which New Thought evolved is a strong countercurrent to the "conventional wisdom" of the 19th century.

I'm fascinated at how often a strong negative response to "conventional wisdom" opens a door to new possibilities, to new ways of looking at existing situations. Notice how Unitarianism emerged as a reaction to the rigidity of the Calvinistic Puritanism that evolved into the Congregational churches. Then notice how Transcendentalism emerged as an alternative to the sense-based, Lockean thinking of the Unitarians. Here, and in so many other situations throughout human history, an idea that irritates becomes the sand in the oyster that produces a genuine pearl of thought.

As you read the history of the Transcendentalists, perhaps you'll ponder the question of why the Transcendentalists existed as a movement for such a brief time.

As you read the chapter, you'll see that Emerson broadened his Christian perspective by studying Eastern philosophy and religion. You'll note that the work of 18th and early 19th century scientists, Mesmer perhaps most notable among them, sowed a seed that would germinate and grow in New Thought and other disciplines.

Franz Anton Mesmer: 1734-1815

Almost undoubtedly, you've heard of "mesmerism." Perhaps you already know that mesmerism is the antecedent of the modern science of hypnosis. It's worth taking a look at the life and work of Franz Anton Mesmer, the German scientist whose early work with what he called "animal magnetism" was not only instrumental in the eventual development of hypnosis but also exerted a direct influence on the work of New Thought's pioneers. All you really need to know, for the purposes of this course, about Mesmer can be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Anton_Mesmer

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 2

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: 1770-1831

“Friends in High Places” chapter 8, offers an excellent introduction to the work of Hegel, especially as his work influences the development of New Thought. I HIGHLY recommend that you read this chapter if at all possible.

Hegel is difficult to understand, and controversial. Not only are his contributions evident in New Thought, but also in politics, notably in the development of Marxism. I’m not going to suggest any particular web site for you to browse as you seek to understand Hegel. If you’re so inclined, you’ll find plenty of them. For the purposes of our study, we’re going to focus on the Hegelian concept of the dialectic. Those of you who may have studied “The Work”, or “The Law of the Three”, based on the writings of Russian metaphysicians Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, will already be familiar with the dialectic.

Hegel believed, essentially, in “one presence and one power,” although, certainly, he 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.

Shepherd writes: “... contrast is necessary in order for one to have any concepts whatsoever. Good is the only reality, but it cannot be appreciated unless it is contrasted with its absence, which humans call evil. New Thought teachers have long held this cardinal principle. Dr. Emilie Cady had 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.””

Shepherd goes on to say “How, then, does one explain the evil encountered in everyday life? Hegel has a practical yet ingenious method of incorporating the nonexistence of evil (monism) into a worldview which acknowledges that tragedy occurs. This blueprint sketches the framework of the Hegelian “weltanschauung.” It is called in philosophy the dialectic or thesis-antithesis-synthesis. In recent years, it has become popularly known to metaphysical students as First, Second, and Third Force.”

“...Because people have known both good and un-good, they can recognize goodness. Take for example the phenomena of light and dark, or heat and cold, and the problem becomes clearer. Imagine a world with two suns where there is never night. On that world the people would, of course, have no concept of night. However, they would also have no concept of day. Humans know daylight only by its contrast, night. The same would be true of heat and its absence, cold. Contrast is not only helpful but absolutely necessary to know the world better. “

“In other words, heat and cold are not two concepts at war with each other but a single concept producing a third state called awareness of temperature. The same is true of good and its absence, un-good or evil, which produce the third state called freedom. If people are incapable of choosing un-good, they are not free. This is the famous Hegelian dialectic: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.”

If you can grasp Shepherd’s explanation, your understanding of Hegel’s contribution to New Thought is sufficient for the purposes of this unit.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 2

Transcendentalism

Chapter 2 of “Spirits In Rebellion” offers a good introduction to Transcendentalism.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendentalism>

This link offers a good, concise, definition and history of transcendentalism, along with links to some of the Transcendentalists and their work. Transcendentalism may be called the most direct link to what would become the New Thought movement.

Ralph Waldo Emerson: 1803-1882

In chapter 9 of Friends in High Places, Tom Shepherd discusses the life and work of both Ralph Waldo Emerson and Unitarian minister Theodore Parker. You'll want to pay particular attention to the section, Unity is not Unitarianism: Divergent Paths, page 109.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson

This link offers a concise biography of Emerson and his work. I encourage you to browse this article, and I ask you to read two of Emerson's essays, the landmark Divinity School Address:

<http://www.emersoncentral.com/divaddr.htm>

and The Over-Soul:

<http://www.emersoncentral.com/oversoul.htm>

Both texts are reasonably easy and not overly long reading. I pray you'll be inspired by Emerson's expression of ideas you may well have been considering yourself!

Please know that I do respect your investment of time and energy in this course, and I pray that you're finding it worthwhile.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 3

This Unit in a Nutshell

In this unit, we'll study the life and work of Phineas P. Quimby, who is widely acknowledged as the father of New Thought. We'll also study the work of several of his associates. Warren Felt Evans is acknowledged as the first major New Thought writer. Julius and Annetta Seabury Dresser, and their son, Horatio Dresser, made the work of Quimby more widely available through organizing Quimby's manuscripts, teaching classes, and publishing written works of their own.

Phineas P. Quimby

The first pages of chapter 3 of "Spirits in Rebellion" are devoted to a biography of Quimby, including information about the illness that led him to begin his study of healing. An important piece of information on the first page is the fact that Quimby was not a well-organized writer and did not document his information at all well. Warren Felt Evans, an early client and student of Quimby, made up for Quimby's casual style with his own carefully documented work.

You'll see in the chapter that Quimby worked for a time with mesmerism, then with Lucius Burkmar, a young clairvoyant before making his great discovery about the power of mind as it relates to illness. Throughout his healing career, as you will read in the chapter, Quimby continued to use his own clairvoyant gifts, especially as a diagnostic tool. Pay particular attention to page 53, where Quimby's discovery of "the basis of all mental healing" is discussed.

For Quimby, the basis of all disease is an error belief. The remedy, then, is to replace the error belief with Truth. See page 58 for Quimby's comments about his method.

Braden tells us, beginning at the last line on page 59, that "Quimby's two pet peeves were priests and doctors." Quimby believed that the work of both medicine and traditional religion caused more disease than it healed. It's emphasized on page 70 and the pages following that Quimby sees the creeds of the day, rather than religion itself, as the cause of the problem.

Braden tells us that Quimby was scrupulously honest in his dealings with his patients, refusing to accept any payment unless and until a healing was realized, and refusing patients he believed he could not help. Quimby used a variety of treatment methods, including "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.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 3

Phineas P. Quimby: continued ...

I was intrigued by Braden's discussion of the question of whether there is a religious or spiritual basis to Quimby's theories. You might want to look at the quotes from Quimby's work on pages 68 and 69 as you consider this question. Braden discusses Quimby's personal religious beliefs in some detail. What do you make of Braden's statement about Quimby's view of Jesus' resurrection and his view of death? Both found on page 76. You'll note also, that Quimby sometimes made use of the term Christian Science. See page 77. Whether Mary Baker Eddy first heard the term from Quimby is not clear.

Quimby's method of Bible interpretation, while not the same as Unity's metaphysical approach, did employ symbolism. See page 79. Quimby's view of human nature is described on page 80.

As would Mary Baker Eddy later on, Quimby asserted that "there is no Wisdom in matter." See page 82.

Quimby literally wore himself out in service to his patients. Evidently, caring for those who came to him took a higher priority for Quimby than caring for his own physical needs.

In the final pages of the chapter, Evans discusses the response of later New Thought leaders to Quimby and his work.

You can find numerous references to Quimby on the Internet, including reproductions of his manuscripts and other works. I hope you'll want to make a note of:

<http://ppquimby.com/online.htm> and

<http://phineasquimby.wwwhubs.com/>

Both are excellent starting points for any further study you might decide to undertake.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 3

Warren Felt Evans

Chapter 4 of “Spirits in Rebellion” addresses the work of New Thought’s first major writer in considerable detail. Warren Felt Evans was the only New Thought writer, aside from Mary Baker Eddy who is considered outside the New Thought stream, “who attempted to work out a consistent and philosophically supported system of what may be called mental or metaphysical healing, during the first two decades after the death of P.P. Quimby.” (page 127) Evans served as a Methodist minister, later leaving the Methodist church to become a Swedenborgian. His interest in healing was motivated by his own experience with serious illness.

You can safely give this chapter a less intensive reading than the previous chapter.

Make note of these main points:

Evans’ early belief in the efficacy of laying on hands as part of healing treatment. (pages 95-96)

The strong influence of Swedenborg’s ideas on Evans’ work. (pages 96-97)

Evans’ view of the relationship of mind and matter. (pages 99-101)

Evans’ view of God and his evolving view of Jesus and the relationship of humankind to the Christ idea. (pages 104-109)

Evans’ views about death and human immortality. (pages 111-112)

The relationship between mind and matter. (pages 112-114) Note Evans’ use of the word “substance” as Braden describes it on page 113.

Evans’ view of disease and how disease is healed. (pages 115-126) Note Evans’ use of affirmations and denials, his view of the relationship of sin and disease, and the repeated emphasis on ideas translating into expressions in the body. On page 121, pay special attention to the paragraph beginning “Two things...”

I hope you’ll make note, though, of:

<http://warrenfeltevans.wwwhubs.com/> and

http://newthoughtlibrary.com/evansWarrenFelt/bio_evans.htm

Both of which offer biographical information and readings from Evans’ works.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 3

Julius Dresser, Annetta Seabury Dresser, and 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:

<http://jadresser.wwwhubs.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* (page 131)

For this unit's work, you'll need to read only pages 129 through 136 of chapter 5. Here you'll find additional commentary about the work of Julius and Annetta Seabury Dresser. You'll also be introduced to their son, Horatio Dresser, who continued their work of promoting Quimby's teachings. Note the quote on page 135 where Horatio Dresser writes of the advantage of being told of the Christ within at a young age.

A brief summary of the life and work of Horatio Dresser may be found at:

<http://horatiodresser.wwwhubs.com/>

Note that Horatio Dresser, not his parents, finally published "The Quimby Manuscripts." Horatio Dresser's "A History of the New Thought Movement" is a text you'll want to remember, and perhaps browse when you have the time.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 4

This Unit in a Nutshell

In this unit, we'll begin with a brief introduction to Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science. We'll also be introduced to Emma Curtis Hopkins, who served for a time as an associate of Mrs. Eddy, but left to take up her own spiritual work. Then we'll look at some of the differences between Christian Science and New Thought as they are described in *Spirits in Rebellion* and other places. We'll take a brief look at a controversy that will probably never be settled. Did Mary Baker Eddy essentially "borrow" the Christian Science teaching from her own teacher, Phineas Quimby, or did the Christian Science teaching come directly through Mrs. Eddy?

Mary Baker Eddy / Christian Science and Emma Curtis Hopkins

It is undisputed that Mary Baker Eddy was a patient of Phineas Quimby from 1862 to 1865. It is further undisputed that Mrs. Eddy wrote a tribute to Quimby after his passing. What IS disputed is whether Mary Baker Eddy's teaching of Christian Science was derived without acknowledgment from the work of Quimby or whether it was an original revelation or discovery on her part. *Spirits in Rebellion* discusses this controversy in chapter 5, on pages 137-138.

I believe, and *Spirits in Rebellion* seems to agree, that, without intending to do so, Mary Baker Eddy made one of the most significant contributions ever made to New Thought. I use the word "contribution" advisedly, since I'm referring to the fact that Emma Curtis Hopkins, an associate of Mary Baker Eddy for a time, left Mary Baker Eddy and Christian science after a fairly short time and went on to found her own institution in Chicago, where she became known in New Thought circles as the "teacher of teachers." Mrs. Hopkins was not the only one of Mrs. Eddy's talented associates to disagree with her, part company, and found a work of her own. See *Spirits in Rebellion*, pages 138-147.

Braden's treatment of Mrs. Hopkins, her work, and her influence is reasonably complete. I hope, however, that you'll also want to consult:

<http://emmacurtishopkins.wwwhubs.com/index.html>

which offers excerpts from some of her books in addition to a summary of her life and influence.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 4

Mary Baker Eddy / Christian Science and Emma Curtis Hopkins: continued ...

Braden addresses the work of Mary Baker Eddy in a number of places throughout the book. For a clear, focused article about the life and work of Mary Baker Eddy, I recommend:

<http://marybakereddy.wwwhubs.com/>

Note that some of the assertions in this article, especially the assertion that Georgine Milmine's 1907 article about Mary Baker Eddy's life and work is accurate, are disputed.

The Wikipedia article about Mary Baker Eddy is controversial:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Baker_Eddy

If you read the article, please also read the discussion about the article, to which you can link from the top of the page.

Finally, spend some time browsing the official Christian Science web site:

<http://www.churchofchristscientist.org/>

Here you will find a good introduction to the Christian Science church of today, including its worship practices and method of organized weekly study.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 4

Comparing Christian Science and New Thought Teaching

Tom Shepherd offers an interesting comparison of Christian Science and New Thought in chapter 10 of *Friends in High Places*. Braden offers a detailed comparison in chapter 1 of *Spirits in Rebellion*. There are definite similarities between the two teachings. These are what I consider the most significant differences:

1. Christian Science denies the reality of matter, whereas New Thought, while it does not view matter as permanent, does not deny its reality.
2. 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.
3. Christian Science, in general frowns on the use of "material 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.
4. 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 (RSV, NRSV and other more modern translations had not been published when Mary Baker Eddy wrote the Church Manual.) A First Reader and Second Reader conduct the service. The readings are listed in *The Christian Science Quarterly*. This web page offers a more detailed explanation of the Christian Science method of study.

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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 5

This Unit in a Nutshell

In this unit we'll look at the work of four writers whose influence on New Thought has been profound. Thomas Troward is not widely known in today's Unity movement. His explanation of how the individual cooperates (and must learn to cooperate, if human evolution is to continue) with "the ultimate principle of intelligence" in the creative process is fascinating. Troward is still widely read and studied in Religious Science groups.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox is well known for her poetry, which often works with New Thought ideas and principles.

Emmet Fox's "The Sermon on the Mount" remains a classic of New Thought spirituality, and is also widely read outside New Thought circles. Members of 12 Step groups are very likely to have learned about "The Sermon on the Mount" at 12 Step meetings.

The influence of Eric Butterworth, well known and beloved Unity minister, extends far beyond Unity and the New Thought movement. Eric Butterworth's work, especially his "Discover the Power Within You", expresses New Thought ideas in a way that has drawn the attention and favorable comments of Oprah Winfrey, among others.

Thomas Troward: 1847-1916

Read pages 415 to 428 of "Spirits in Rebellion" for a good discussion of Troward's life and work. Pay special attention to the section, beginning in the final paragraph of page 421 and continuing to page 428, where Braden discusses Troward's view of the creative activity of cosmic intelligence and the individual's part in it. I hope you'll be fascinated by Braden's description of Troward's view of universal mind, how it works, its quality of "personalness," and how humankind interacts with it.

Those who want to experience Troward's prose for themselves can access "The Edinburgh Lectures", which are the basis of most of Braden's comment about Troward's work, on this web site:

<http://thomastroward.wwwhubs.com/>

The site also includes a concise biography of Troward. I recommend everyone read chapter 13 of the "The Edinburgh Lectures", which you can access here:

<http://thomastroward.wwwhubs.com/teloms13.htm>

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 5

Ella Wheeler Wilcox: 1850 -1919

Begin reading Braden's discussion of Ella Wheeler Wilcox on page 356 of "Spirits in Rebellion" and note his opening statement about her as one who "gets a wide hearing or reading for New Thought ideas by the general public." Ella Wheeler Wilcox created both prose and poetry. She was an associate editor of "New Thought Magazine" and had a number of her essays published in "The Heart of New Thought." You'll note, in this reading that ends on page 360, that Mrs. Wilcox's interest ranged beyond New Thought to include oriental thought and spiritualism.

<http://ellawheelerwilcox.wwwhubs.com/>

Here we learn that Ella Wheeler Wilcox attended classes taught by Emma Curtis Hopkins, that she dreaded mathematics, and that, like Myrtle Fillmore, she was staunchly opposed to the consumption of alcohol. A quick look at the excerpts from Mrs. Wilcox's writings included on the web site will prove interesting. I suggest you give them at least a glance.

I found the two essays included from Heart of the New Thought:

<http://ellawheelerwilcox.wwwhubs.com/thotnt.htm>

Both essays inspiring and practical, dealing with issues that are still important to us today.

<http://ellawheelerwilcox.wwwhubs.com/ntcs.html>

In "New Thought Common Sense" she draws parallels between Eastern teaching and New Thought ideas in the section titled "The Ancient Lineage of New Thought." You might also enjoy "The Anti-toxin of Common Sense," a commentary on the abusive ways which metaphysical religion may be practiced.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 5

Emmet Fox: 1886-1951

Braden devotes several pages to Emmet Fox, beginning on page 352 and continuing to page 355, of “Spirits in Rebellion.” Most notable in Braden’s discussion is his recounting of his experience at a worship service at Carnegie Hall in May, 1947. Emmet Fox, at that time, was speaking to one of the largest, if not the largest congregations in New York City. You’ll read in the text how Emmet Fox sought ordination through Unity but was denied by Lowell Fillmore because he hadn’t attended Unity’s training program. Many have wondered over that decision. Emmet Fox’s value to Unity, certainly, has not been damaged because he was ordained in Divine Science instead of Unity.

<http://emmetfox.wwwhubs.com/>

A website devoted to the life and work of Emmet Fox. On it, you’ll find a document,

“Emmet Fox Speaks”: <http://emmetfox.wwwhubs.com/foxspks.htm>

Eric Butterworth: 1916-2003

“Spirits in Rebellion” was written more than 30 years before Eric Butterworth’s passing and doesn’t mention him. When we study prominent New Thought writers, however, we must not fail to include Eric Butterworth. I was blessed to have met and spoken with Eric Butterworth, to have spoken at his center in the summer of 1989, and I’ve read and studied many of his works. As I said in the introduction to this Learning Guide, Butterworth’s influence extends far beyond the Unity movement. Butterworth’s recordings and writings will continue to bless Truth students as our new century unfolds.

<http://ericbutterworth.wwwhubs.com/>

This website offers a biography of Eric Butterworth, a list of his books.

Special note: read an excerpt from “Life Is For Living”:

<http://ericbutterworth.wwwhubs.com/lifl.html>

Read, also these two short essays from the official Eric Butterworth web site “The Truth in a Nutshell”: http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio_transcripts/truth.php

and “A New Look at Jesus”: http://www.ericbutterworth.com/html/radio_transcripts/jesus.php

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 6

This Unit in a Nutshell

This unit will focus on the Divine Science and Religious Science movements, their foundation, their history, and their beliefs. Divine Science and Religious Science can be called Unity's "first cousins" among New Thought movements. After examining both movements, we'll explore some differences and similarities among Divine Science, Religious Science, and Unity.

Divine Science

Chapter 8 of "Spirits in Rebellion" offers an engaging account of the two separate beginnings of the Divine Science movement and traces the history of Divine Science through the early 1960's.

Divine Science was founded at almost the same time as Unity. The Brooks sisters, Nona, Fannie, and Alethea, good Presbyterians all, began the work in Denver. As was the case with the Fillmores, the Brooks sisters' initial explorations of New Thought teachings were motivated by healing needs. Nona Brooks' healing of a longstanding throat ailment, facilitated by a Mrs. Bingham, marked the beginning of what would be a lifelong commitment to spreading the teaching of Omnipresence. Mrs. Bingham had been a student of Emma Curtis Hopkins, the "teacher of teachers" whom Charles and Myrtle Fillmore revered.

In San Francisco, Mrs. Malinda Cramer had been an invalid for 25 years. She, too, was healed by a realization of Omnipresence. One of the questions the text brings up is whether Mrs. Cramer, as she claimed, arrived at her understanding of Omnipresence purely through her own spiritual work, or whether, and to what degree she was influenced by Christian Science and earlier New Thought writers. We do know that Mrs. Cramer had some acquaintance with Eastern spiritual teachings and scriptures, as did other early New Thought leaders including Charles Fillmore.

Malinda Cramer and the Brooks sisters met when Mrs. Cramer, after corresponding for a time with Nona Brooks and Fannie James, visited Denver and taught there. The long distance cooperation between Malinda Cramer and the Brooks sisters is unusual in the history of New Thought movements.

As you read the chapter, look for the many insights into the Divine Science teaching that Braden includes. Also note how the Divine Science movement unfolded, never as a very large organization, but with centers in a number of major cities.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Science

The Wikipedia article devoted to Divine Science offers a good summary of the history and current status of the movement.

<http://www.divinesciencefederation.org/>

This is the official web site of the Divine Science Federation International, and offers good information about what Divine Science is doing today. Divine Science is a MUCH smaller movement than either of the Religious Science organizations or Unity, but it does show some signs of renewed vitality. On the website, you'll see samples of the divine science Daily Studies. Daily Studies in Divine Science pre-date Unity's Daily Word by a number of years, and are still published. You'll also see a list of member organizations, including 18 ministries and study groups, and three member schools.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 6

Religious Science

Braden's discussion of Religious Science, in chapter 9 of "Spirits in Rebellion", offers a good overview of how Ernest and Fenwicke Holmes were inspired to develop the teaching that became known as Religious Science or Science of Mind. Religious Science like Unity in some ways but very different from it in others, is a very practical teaching. It was the last of the three major New Thought movements to emerge.

Although the founder, Ernest Holmes' brother Fenwicke was an ordained Congregationalist minister and divinity school graduate, Ernest Holmes, like Charles Fillmore, had no college education. Like Charles Fillmore, Ernest Holmes' education was largely self-directed. Both leaders were students of Emma Curtis Hopkins; Fillmore near the beginning of Mrs. Hopkins' career, Holmes nearer its end. Braden explains Ernest Holmes' reluctance to found an organization that would call a church, and offers the most complete discussion of how there came to be two "official" Religious Science movements. Pay special attention to the section beginning on the bottom of page 296 and continuing to page 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. I'm happy to report that, 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. A third organization, Global Religious Science Ministries, has also emerged.

Our study of Religious Science needs to be augmented by an exploration of several important

web sites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_Science

And <http://www.religiousscience.org/xindex02.html>

As you explore the United Centers for Spiritual Living site, click on the "Holmes Institute" tab and browse the graduate level and ministerial education programs offered.

<http://www.rsintl.org/>

Is the web site of Religious Science International. I recommend that, while you're visiting this site, you look at RSI's online education offerings at: <http://www.religiousscienceonline.com/>

If you have about half an hour to invest, you can experience a very nice introduction to Religious Science as RSI teaches it by clicking: <http://www.religiousscienceonline.com/som100intro/>

And <http://www.grsm.org/seminary.htm>

Finally this link offers an introduction to the Global Religious Science Ministries organization. The July Newsletter of that organization, available on the web site, announces an upcoming name change from Global Religious Science Ministries to Alliance for Spiritual Understanding.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 6

Unity, Divine Science, and Religious Science Compared

You might enjoy browsing chapter 7 of “Spirits in Rebellion” as you work with this section of the unit. You probably know quite a bit about Unity and its teaching already. Braden adds some observations and insights you might find interesting.

Unity and Divine Science are both 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, 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 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.

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.

BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT: Unit 7

This Unit in a Nutshell

In this final unit we'll take a brief look (just enough to give us a taste) of a relatively new phenomenon called Process New Thought. Process New Thought seeks to take the New Thought tradition in a distinctly different direction.

New Thought Continues to Evolve

Just as, in traditional Christianity, numerous sects began to develop, each with somewhat different beliefs, so also in New Thought we see the ongoing emergence of new sects.

You'll recall how disagreement with Mary Baker Eddy led Emma Curtis Hopkins to found her own metaphysical school. You'll remember that Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, founders of Unity, Malinda Cramer, founder of Divine Science, and Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science were all among Mrs. Hopkins students. You have seen how the Religious Science movement divided into two organizations, and how some Divine Science churches have not affiliated with the Divine Science Federation International, and how United Divine Science Ministries has emerged as a movement to return to the original teachings of Malinda Cramer.

Process New Thought

Process New Thought is an emerging belief system within the New Thought movement. Stated perhaps over simply, Process New Thought defines reality as an ongoing series of creative processes, believing that even God is in a process of change and growth. Dr. Alan Anderson and his wife, Dr. Deb Whitehouse, are the primary spokespersons for Process New Thought. Their web site is <http://www.neweverymoment.com/index.html>

Here you can find articles by both Whitehouse and Anderson on a variety of Process New Thought subjects. This web site <http://www.websyte.com/newthoughtalliance/process.htm> offers a more substantial summary of Process New Thought beliefs. Finally, this flash file, (click here) an excerpt from Alan Anderson's Healing Hypotheses, compares traditional Christian Thought, New Thought, and Process New Thought views on a variety of subjects.

Closing Thoughts

We've reached the end of our course. You've been exposed to more information about the background and development of the New Thought movement than even most scholars. I pray that you've found the exploration engaging and informative.

The New Thought movement has entered its adolescent years, as religious movements are measured. Expect to see MANY changes during the coming years and decades, as New Thought either takes its rightful place among the world's religious traditions or quietly fades away.

Which direction will New Thought take?

This lesson on the BACKGROUND OF NEW THOUGHT was compiled from the writings of: Rev Tom Thorpe.
SEE / Spiritual Enrichment Education.
Unity Institute.