

WILLIAM WALKER ATKINSON

NUGGETS OF NEW THOUGHT

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New Thought History and Principles

William Walker Atkinson

INTRODUCTION, ANNOTATION AND
STUDY GUIDE
BY M.C. MESEN

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ABOUT WILLIAM WALKER ATKINSON

Born in Maryland in 1862, he began working life at 15 in his parent's grocery store. He married at age 27, and became an attorney in Pennsylvania.

While he gained material success as a lawyer, the stress and over-strain brought him to a complete physical and mental breakdown that ended in a financial disaster. He looked for healing and in the late 1880's he found the principles of New Thought, and in applying them he restored his health, mental vigor and material prosperity.

Atkinson then began to write articles on the truths he felt he had discovered. His "A Mental Science Catechism," appeared in Charles Fillmore's '*Modern Thought*' in 1889.

By the early 1890's Atkinson moved to Chicago, then a major centre for New Thought, and became an active promoter of the movement as an editor and author. In 1900 he wrote his first book, *Thought-Force in Business and Everyday Life*, a series of lessons in personal magnetism, psychic influence, thought-force, concentration, will-power, and practical mental science. Soon after he met Sydney Flower, a well-known New Thought publisher and businessman, and in December 1901 he became editor of Flower's popular *New Thought* magazine (until 1905), and a very prolific writer of dozens of well

appreciated articles in the magazine; and later on, he was a regular contributor to Elizabeth Towne's Magazine, Nautilus.

Throughout his subsequent career, Atkinson wrote and published over 100 different books, some under his own name and many under pseudonyms such as Yogi Ramacharaka, Theron Q. Dumont, Theodore Sheldon, Magus Incognito, Edward Walker, Three Initiates and Swami Bhakta Vishita.

Among the first to develop the concept of Law of Attraction, Atkinson is considered, together with Orison Swett Marden and Wallace Wattles, the masters of self-development and positive thinking, and the real promoters of New Thought, a movement that came very much to life again with the Millennium. He died November 22, 1932 in Los Angeles, California at the age of 69, after 50 years of successful career in business, writing, occultism, and the law, and a life surrounded by mysteries, including his own death.

Introduction

This volume, *New Thought History and Principles*, is a concise yet thorough exposition of a movement that has profoundly influenced modern spirituality, self-help, and popular psychology. The book is divided into two main sections: the first traces the historical development of New Thought from its roots in American Transcendentalism and the ancient philosophy of Neo-Platonism; the second provides a clear statement of the movement's seven fundamental principles. The result is both a historical narrative and a practical guide, designed to answer the questions that have puzzled outsiders and to give adherents a coherent framework for their beliefs.

The historical account begins with the intellectual awakening in New England during the early nineteenth century. The author shows how the rejection of Lockean empiricism and Calvinist orthodoxy led to a revival of interest in idealist philosophy, especially the works of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the German idealists. Key figures such as Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and George Ripley are introduced as the founders of

the Transcendentalist movement, which the book presents as the direct precursor of New Thought. The author emphasizes the role of Emerson's essay on the Over-Soul and the influence of Neo-Platonism in shaping the movement's core ideas about the immanence of the divine and the power of the human mind.

The narrative then examines the convergence of Transcendentalism with the so-called New Psychology—the study of the mind's influence over the body and the latent powers within human consciousness. The book notes the contributions of early mental healers such as Quimby, Dresser, and Evans, and acknowledges the catalytic role of Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science, even while the author maintains a distinct position from that sect. The rise of the Emmanuel Movement, the work of Prentice Mulford, and the influence of Theosophy are all situated within the broader New Thought stream. Throughout, the author stresses that New Thought is not a single organization but a mental attitude that has permeated society, influencing literature, the arts, and even orthodox religious preaching.

The second part of the book is a systematic

presentation of the movement's principles. The seven principles begin with the affirmation of an Infinite and Eternal Spiritual Principle of Being, and proceed through the nature of that Being as pure Spirit and Mind, its oneness, its immanence in humanity, the power of mental states to determine conditions, the brotherhood of all life, and the doctrine of spiritual evolution and eternal progress. Each principle is explained with reference to authoritative sources—from the Bhagavad Gita to the words of Jesus and the Buddha—and is linked to practical applications in daily life. The author takes care to distinguish New Thought from both materialistic science and traditional supernaturalism, positioning it as a middle way that is both spiritual and practical. It concludes with an appeal to test these principles in the reader's own life.

What makes this work valuable is its balance between historical detail and doctrinal clarity. It does not claim originality for its ideas—indeed, it freely admits the ancient provenance of many of its teachings—but it does claim that New Thought represents a new application of those truths to the practical problems of modern existence.

The writing is earnest but not dogmatic, and Atkinson consistently emphasizes the unity that underlies the diversity of New Thought organizations. For the reader seeking a reliable introduction, this book remains an essential text.

Mauricio Chaves-Mesén

Author of the sagas

“The Knights of Nostradamus” & “Atlantis”

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I. THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW THOUGHT.

TO THE STUDENT of philosophical and metaphysical thought, one of the most interesting incidents in the rise of systems of thought is the rapid development and growth of the great movement known as "The New Thought." Springing into popular notice and favor a few years ago, it has permeated all phases of thought and work, and has exerted a marked effect upon the modern view of the meaning and purpose of life. Spreading far in all directions from its center, it has manifested its influence in current literature, the drama, art, and popular expression. Originally confined to a small circle of supposedly peculiar people, it has become a part of the gospel of everyday life with many of the most practical persons in the world.

To the man on the street, the most perplexing and annoying features of the New Thought movement¹ are the apparent vagueness of its

¹ A movement within the Episcopal Church founded in Boston in 1906, combining spiritual guidance and psychotherapy

general fundamental principles, and the lack of clear information regarding its origin. To such a person, it seems as if the essence of the thought continually escapes the mental fingers of him who strives to grasp it. He is also perplexed by the oft repeated remark that "there is nothing new about the New Thought." Nevertheless, he feels that there must be some firm, fixed, fundamental truths underlying the philosophy of the movement; and, in spite of the assertions to the contrary, he is impressed with the certainty that this strange thought, and the manifestations thereof, must be new, else it would have been heard of long before.

The student of the history of thought, remembering the difficulty that perplexed the followers of Emerson and the Transcendental Movement when they attempted to define their principles, and their complacency under the charge that there was nothing new in their philosophy, smiles at the repetition that history has manifested, and realizes that while it may be

for healing. The author notes it as a direct application of New Thought principles within a mainstream Christian context.

impossible to refute the charge that the New Thought is very old indeed, and that its essence is difficult to express in words, yet its power is manifesting over a wide area, and that it has all the force and initiative of an entirely new school of thought.

Someone has said that when a new and striking truth first presents itself, its opponents ridicule it, then fight it vigorously, then claim that it is not new at all, and finally assert that they themselves have always held to it and taught it. The truth of this somewhat cynical criticism would seem to be exemplified in the history of the New Thought movement. Originally ridiculed as visionary and impracticable, later vigorously opposed as heretical and revolutionary, it, in turn, was met with the charge that it was really the oldest kind of thought and that its name was unjustified and unwarranted.

Now we find it voiced by many of its original opponents, without credit being given it; these good folks claiming that they have always believed these truths and have always taught and preached them. In view of the perplexity manifested by many who find themselves

attracted by this new school of thought, we have thought that a brief consideration of its origin, fundamental principles, and general trend, might prove interesting and useful to these seekers for information.

In the first place, the New Thought has its origin much further back in the pages of history than is generally thought. The roots of its idealistic philosophy reach far back to the oldest philosophical systems of the race; its stem made its appearance in America in the first part of the nineteenth century. About 1800-25, there was manifested in New England a strange revival of transcendental thought. This revival may be traced directly to the interest in Arminianism and Arianism evinced a full century before by New England thinkers, an interest which spread out in two directions, one branch bearing the fruit of Unitarianism, the other more slowly budding into the revival of interest in Neo-Platonism which later bore the full flower of the Transcendental Movement of Emerson and his associates.

In the earlier years of the nineteenth century, New England thought began to escape from the

influence of Locke and Bentham, which had previously dominated the philosophical thought of the time and place. A new interest was manifested in the ideas of the newer schools of English and German thought. Many old ideas went by the board, and were replaced by new conceptions. In the field of literature a similar revolution was manifested. Many old idols were overthrown, and it began to be popular for persons to display a keen and lively interest in the writings of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Herder, Goethe, and others who held certain ideas fitting well into the new conceptions. But most strongly in evidence was a strange revival of interest in Neo-Platonism², that school of thought which has had a number of unexpected revivals in its history, each revival being the starting point for an upheaval in many fields of contemporary thought. Whenever and wherever Neo-Platonism is revived we may look for a renewed interest in

² A philosophical tradition that revived and developed the ideas of Plato, emphasizing a transcendent One from which all reality emanates. It had periodic revivals, influencing Christian mysticism, Renaissance thought, and the American Transcendentalists.

mysticism, idealism, and the idea of an immanent God.

These awakened New Englanders were attracted by Coleridge's idea of a higher reason or transcendental intuition, which was a manifestation of the indwelling spirit, and by means of which one might experience an immediate perception of things above the plane of the ordinary senses and reason.³ Coleridge also taught them that there was a great Universal Spirit, which was reflected in the spirits of all men. Wordsworth presented to them an attractive form of higher pantheism—a nature in which was immanent the One Spirit of the Universe; a universe animated by a Universal Mind, proceeding under Universal Law and Order. The writings of the Neo-Platonists planted many fertile seeds of future development in the rich soil of the New England mind which had been prepared for this day by the influence under way

³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge distinguished between Understanding (the empirical faculty) and Reason (a higher intuitive faculty that grasps spiritual truths). This concept greatly influenced Emerson and the Transcendentalist view of direct spiritual perception.

for a century. It is significant that the term "new thought" was used even in that early day; not, however, as indicating a cult or particular school of thought, but rather as a term describing the newly awakened tendency, and in contrast to the "old thought" of Calvinism and the old schools of philosophy. The early Unitarians also used the term "new thought" in the same way, as applied to their teachings.

This "new thought" interest and tendency began to take upon itself outward form and shape about 1830, when the various elements found themselves attracted to each other in what was afterward the Transcendental Movement. Emerson's work had attracted much attention, and his writings served as a nucleus around which sympathetic thinkers grouped themselves. Channing and Ripley, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Brownson and Hedge, all well known in connection with the "new thought" of that day, met and considered the advisability of forming a general society. For a number of years the work of these writers created great interest, and a loosely organized following gathered around them.

The Brook Farm Community⁴, founded by George Ripley, in 1841, played an important part in the work, attracting, as it did, such men and women as Hawthorne, Alcott, Curtis, Channing, and Margaret Fuller⁵, in addition to its founder. In 1840, "The Dial"⁶ was founded, with Margaret Fuller as the first editor, and such men as Emerson, Channing, Alcott, Theodore Parker, Ripley, and Thoreau, as contributors. Afterwards, Emerson became the editor. This journal was the official organ of the Transcendental Movement, and served to fasten the attention of the nation upon it and its

⁴ A utopian communal experiment founded in 1841 by George Ripley in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. It attracted many Transcendentalist writers and thinkers, including Nathaniel Hawthorne and Margaret Fuller, and was an important hub for the movement.

⁵ American journalist, critic, and women's rights advocate, Margaret Fuller was a leading Transcendentalist and the first editor of *The Dial*. Her work emphasized self-culture and the immanence of divinity in human instinct.

⁶ A Transcendentalist journal founded in 1840, first edited by Margaret Fuller and later by Ralph Waldo Emerson. It served as the official organ of the movement, publishing essays, poetry, and reviews that disseminated transcendentalist ideas.

principles. This time may be considered as the real date of the birth of the modern New Thought movement.

From the beginning, the critics were puzzled when it came to a statement of the principles of Transcendentalism, but the followers of the school smiled at the bewilderment of the critics and went on their way happy and filled with the joy of the new truth which had come to them. Some of them even went so far as to defy the critics to define their principles and beliefs, so far above the understanding of the common herd did they feel these principles to be. Transcendentalism is defined by the dictionary makers as: "The philosophical conception that there can be knowledge of transcendental elements, or matters wholly beyond the ordinary experience of the human mind." But the Transcendentalists went much further than this. Margaret Fuller, in her memoirs, says:

"Transcendentalism was an assertion of the inalienable integrity of man; of the immanence of Divinity in instinct ... On the somewhat stunted stock of Unitarianism, whose

characteristic dogma was trust in human reason, as correlative to Supreme Wisdom, had been grafted German Idealism, as taught by masters of most various schools—by Kant and Jacobi, Fichte and Novalis, Schelling and Hegel, Schleiermacher and de Wette, by Madame de Stael, Cousin, Coleridge, and Carlyle; and the result was a vague yet exalting conception of the god-like nature of the human spirit. Transcendentalism, as viewed by its disciples, was a pilgrimage from the idolatrous world of creeds and rituals to the Temple of the Living God in the soul."

The essence of the Transcendental movement may be found in the essays of Emerson, particularly in his essay on the "OverSoul," in which is sounded the dominant note of the later New Thought. Emerson was essentially an idealist and a mystic. As Cooke says of him:

"Emerson belongs in a succession of Idealists. That company he loves wherever its members are found, whether among Buddhists or Christian mystics, whether Transcendentalist or Sufi, whether Saadi, Boehme, Fichte, or

Carlyle. These are the writers he studies, these the men he quotes, these the thinkers who come nearest his own thought. He is in the succession of minds who have followed in the wake of Plato, who is regarded by him as the world's greatest thinker. More directly still, Emerson is in that succession of thinkers represented by Plotinus, Eckhardt, and Schelling, who have interpreted Idealism in the form of Mysticism."

The broadness and catholicity of Emerson's thought has descended in a direct line to the New Thought movement of today, which draws upon all sources for its truth, taking its own wherever it finds it, "whether on Christian or on heathen ground." Emerson drew largely from the fountains of ancient Greece, but the distinct flavor of Oriental idealism pervades his thought. It were as if his thought had seeped up through the deep sands of Oriental thought, rising and filling a basin of the purest Greek design, from thence bubbling and pouring forth in a way distinctively his own. In his conception of the One he is a Hindu, but in his expression of the Life of the Many he is filled with the true Greek spirit. In his message the Pipes of Pan may be

heard playing, always accompanied by the deeper and dimmer droning worship-note of the Temple of Brahm.

And this has been passed on to the New Thought—this strange mingling of the Orient and Ancient Greece—the calm, serene majesty of Brahm, and the leaping, joyous, living, loving, changing form of Pan. In the first aspect, we see Brahm the Unmanifest, brooding over his creations, breathing outward and inward, in aeonic rhythm, throughout all eternity. In the second, we see Pan, the expression of Manifest Life, who sings: "I am the joy of life! The joy of being! Today this; yesterday a pine upon a mountain crag; tomorrow a butterfly; a blade of grass; a rainbow over a waterfall; a lizard warming on a rock; the rock itself; a beam of the moon! I am nothing because I am everything; everything because I am nothing."

By one of those peculiar coincidences or correspondences which are noticed by all students of the history of thought, the rise of Emerson's Transcendentalism was accompanied by an equally striking development of what may be known as "The New Psychology." The peculiar

features of this last named phase of thought were: (1) the idea that the mind has a direct and positive effect upon the body; that physical conditions, in health and disease, depend materially upon mental states; (2) that the mind possessed many latent powers which are capable of development and manifestation along lines running above the more common natural processes; (3) that man, by the exercise of his will and imaging faculties, may transform his character and nature, and literally "make himself over." These three principles were expounded by numerous teachers, under many names, and theories, some quite scientific and others almost grotesque.

A study of the writings and teachings along these lines, in the middle part of the nineteenth century gives one an idea of the intense interest being manifested in these subjects. There was no apparent connection between them and the Transcendental Movement, except that as a rule the same persons were likely to be attracted toward both. But both movements were destined from the first to coalesce, blend together, and unite into one common and larger movement.

The first indication of the blending was the appearance of persons in various parts of the country, who met with great success in the healing of diseases by means of the methods of the New Psychology, based, however, on the fundamental principles of Transcendentalism.

The two streams united at this point, but just where or how it is almost impossible to state as the traces and records have been lost in the passage of the years. But the union and blending is unmistakable—the waters of the two streams may be clearly distinguished as they are seen flowing, side by side, along the new channel. And, here, as is always the case in new movements in which the healing element enters, the phase of healing for a time overbalanced and outshone the philosophical phase. It has been so in all new religions, and it was so in the new religio-philosophy, the New Thought. The people were first attracted by the promise of the healing of their bodily ills, and afterward remained to absorb the philosophy.

It is to be regretted that we are not able to name many more of the prominent mental healers of about fifty or sixty years ago, who were the first to

make the natural connection between the transcendental philosophy of Emerson and his followers and the application of mind-power to the healing of disease.

They did their work well, and others followed in the steps without thinking it worthwhile to record the names of the original teachers. Quimby, Dresser, Evans⁷, and a few others are remembered—the others are forgotten. All served their purpose in the great plan, however, and made the connecting link between the two schools of thought.

Mrs. Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, undoubtedly did more than any other one person to make popular the healing of the body by metaphysical methods, and her insistence upon her basic philosophy was an inspiration to others who agreed with her in the main, but who differed from her regarding certain points of doctrine and organization.

⁷ Phineas Quimby, Horatio Dresser, and Warren Felt Evans were pioneers of the mental healing movement in the 19th century. Quimby is often credited as the father of New Thought, while Dresser and Evans wrote influential works that bridged Transcendentalism and practical healing.

Many of Mrs. Eddy⁸'s pupils separated from her organization, and formed schools of their own, or else practiced and taught independently. Others, not her pupils, but influenced by the movement which she has initiated, also founded similar organizations and associations. Many while retaining allegiance to the orthodox churches, nevertheless availed themselves of the benefits of mental or spiritual healing, their work being known as "faith healing," "mind-cure," "mental science," "divine science," etc. Differing widely regarding details of theory, all made cures and attracted a following. In New England, especially, the healing of disease by the power of the mind assumed the nature of a "fad," and became widely known as "the Boston craze⁹."

⁸ Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science. Though her theology diverged from New Thought in key respects (e.g., denial of matter), her emphasis on metaphysical healing and the power of spiritual understanding helped popularize the broader movement.

⁹ A dismissive term used by conventional medical practitioners in the late 19th century to describe the widespread popularity of mental healing and mind-cure practices in Boston, especially those associated with the New Thought movement.

The investigators of psycho-therapy in the ranks of the medical fraternity in France and other European countries, added new interest to the subject, and many physicians sought an explanation for the wonderful successes of the mind-healers in the new theories and methods of Suggestive Therapeutics. Writers began to publish magazine articles and books showing that diseases had been cured by mental methods, in all times and in all ages, regardless of special theories or doctrine. This, however, did not discourage the new movement as intended, for its own writers soon pointed out that these ancient cures, as well as many modern ones, were made by reason of a great natural principle of Mind which many had stumbled upon and used in ignorance of its real nature. These discussions, however, served a useful purpose in informing the public that these strange cures were based upon perfectly natural, and not super-natural, principles; and that they did not depend upon any special creed or dogma for successful application. Accordingly, the workers in the independent field increased rapidly in number, and thousands of earnest persons who were cured helped to spread the tidings

of the New Thought as it then began to be called the old term being given a new application.

The influence of Theosophy also must be taken into consideration when we look back over the history of New Thought. While not adopting the doctrines of Theosophy, the adherents of the New Thought found much in the new Theosophical teachings to corroborate their own ideas. This is not to be wondered at, considering that both schools drew freely from the same original ancient sources. In the same way, the renewed interest in the teachings of certain sects of the Early Christian Church, brought to light many points of resemblance between some of the beliefs of the old Fathers of the Church and the New Thought teachings. This, also, was to be expected, in view of the fact that both teachings were largely influenced by Neo-Platonism. The popular works of Prentice Mulford served to bring into still wider prominence that phase of the New Thought teaching which deals with the influence of the mind regarding one's environment, success, etc. His essay, "The

Drawing Power of The Mind¹⁰," opened a new world of thought to many. Many magazines devoted to the subject were published, and quite a number of books dealing with the question were written and circulated.

Gradually, but steadily, the interest of New Thought people was extended to the spiritual phases of the philosophy, and to the phase of self-help and character-building, the healing phase, however, maintaining its original importance. A new interest in the philosophies of the past and present was shown by a large portion of the public, and a marked increase in the production and sale of metaphysical books was noticed. One of the most striking manifestations of the new spirit abroad in the land was the rise of the Spirit of Optimism. People who never heard of the New Thought found themselves impressed with the importance of Being Cheerful, Looking on the Bright Side, and Keeping Sweet. "Don't "Worry" signs and motto-cards were

¹⁰ A key essay by Prentice Mulford that articulated the idea that the mind attracts circumstances and objects to itself. It helped popularize the New Thought teaching that one's thoughts determine one's reality.

noticed on all sides. And, also, a new spirit of Self-Reliance and Self-help was manifested. It is difficult for a young person to realize the change in the public opinion regarding these things from that of twenty-five years ago. A new spirit animates the people, and, although many know it not, they owe it all to the New Thought teachings.

The wonderful success of the Christian Science Church is an indication of the great interest in the new philosophy manifest on all sides. But the bulk of the New Thought following are not connected with any organization whatsoever. Many are independents; many retain their relations with the orthodox churches. New Thought is not an organization—it is a MENTAL ATTITUDE. Many manifest "New Thought" principles with success in their everyday lives—and yet do not realize that New Thought has had anything to do with their views. They have simply absorbed the New Thought spirit which surrounds them on all sides. The orthodox pulpits echo New Thought sermons every Sunday, although the term is never mentioned—and this, too, is well,

for New Thought is, and should be, as free as air, and the property of all.

The very name, "New Thought," may even pass away—but the spirit will remain, and the work will be done. The Emmanuel Movement," which is really an application of certain New Thought principles, has been instituted in certain churches, and thousands have been healed thereby. The theology of the day has been strongly influenced by the New Thought teachings, and the rapid about-face noticed by all students of the Protestant Churches, is due almost entirely to this general spirit set into activity by the New Thought movement. Professor William James¹¹ says:

"Those of us who are sexagenarians have witnessed in our own persons one of those gradual mutations of intellectual climate, due to innumerable influences, that make the thought of a past generation seem as foreign to its

¹¹ Influential American psychologist and philosopher, author of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The author quotes James on the shift away from external theism toward a pantheistic vision of an indwelling divine reality.

successor as if it were the expression of a different race of men. The theological machinery that spoke so livingly to our ancestors, with its finite age of the world, its creation out of nothing, its judicial morality and eschatology, its relish for rewards and punishments, its treatment of God as an external contriver, an 'intelligent and moral governor,' sound as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion . . .

The only opinion quite worthy of arresting our attention will fall within the general scope of what may roughly be called the pantheistic field of vision, the vision of God as the indwelling divine rather than the external creator, and of human life as part and parcel of that deep reality." Prof. Charles W. Eliot¹², late President of Harvard, in his celebrated address on "The Religion of the Future," says:

"The New Thought of God will be its most characteristic element. This ideal will

¹² President of Harvard University from 1869 to 1909. His address on 'The Religion of the Future' envisioned a monotheistic, immanent God consistent with modern science, a theme closely aligned with New Thought.

comprehend the Jewish Jehovah, the Christian Universal Father, the modern physicist's omnipresent and exhaustless Energy, and the biological conception of a Vital Force. The Infinite Spirit pervades the universe, just as the spirit of man pervades his body, and acts, consciously or unconsciously in every atom of it. The twentieth century will accept literally and implicitly St. Paul's statement, 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.'

The new religion is therefore thoroughly monotheistic, its God being the one infinite force; but this one God is not withdrawn or removed, but indwelling and especially dwelling in every living creature . . . This central idea of a new religion will therefore be a humane and worthy idea of God, thoroughly consistent with the nineteenth century revelations concerning man and nature, and with all the tenderest and loveliest teachings which have come down to us from the past."

NOTES

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF NEW THOUGHT

And now for a brief statement of the general principles of New Thought, ignoring the disputed details of doctrine and theories existing in the various schools and organizations embraced within the limits of the all-inclusive general body of affiliated thinkers—principles sufficiently general to include the main, essential, and fundamental beliefs. For, differ as may, and do, the various branches of the New Thought regarding some of the details of the teaching, there are certain basic principles which are common to them all.

I. AN INFINITE AND ETERNAL SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE OF BEING.

The fundamental principle underlying all New Thought ideas is that there exists AN INFINITE AND ETERNAL SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE OF BEING. This Principle of Being, it is affirmed, is without beginning and without ending; without limits of time, space, or power; absolute; unconditioned; and alone without a

second, a rival, or a companion. The qualities of Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience—all-power, all-presence, and all-wisdom—are attributed to it.

II. THIS PRINCIPLE OF BEING IS PURE SPIRIT.

This Principle of Being is regarded as non-material and spiritual in its nature. It is thought of as Pure SPIRIT. The essence of Spirit being regarded as MIND, the Principle of Being is spoken of as Universal Mind. Its substance is regarded as Mental Substance. Its power is regarded as Mental Power. From this arises the statement that "All is Mind," including the manifestation, emanation, or expression, of Mind.

III. THIS PRINCIPLE OF BEING IS HELD TO BE ONE AND ONE ONLY.

This Principle of Being is held to be ONE and one only. There being nothing in existence other than this One Principle, the universe must be regarded as necessarily an emanation, manifestation, or expression of the One Principle of Being. And, we, being a part of the universe, must also be an emanation, expression or

manifestation of that One Principle of Being. There is nothing else for us to be. Moreover, the One Principle of Being must be immanent in everything, in different degrees of expression and manifestation. By "immanent" is meant "staying or remaining in; not passing out; inherent; internal; not transient."

In these above stated first three fundamental principles of the New Thought, we find a fundamental truth of Idealistic Philosophy, as old as the history of philosophic thought. There is nothing new about this truth. The same thing has been said by the ancient philosophers of India, five thousand years ago; by the philosophers of Greece, twenty-five hundred years ago; by Berkeley, Hegel and Kant, and their followers. Then, where does the newness of New Thought appear?

IV. MAN IS AN EXPRESSION, EMANATION, OR MANIFESTATION OF THE ONE PRINCIPLE OF BEING

The New Thought, reasoning from the first three principles of belief proceeds as follows: It being conceded that man is an expression,

emanation, or manifestation of the One Principle of Being; and that that Principle must be immanent in him, just as he is contained within it; then it follows that its power, its presence, its mentality—its Spirit, in fact—must abide within his being, limited only by his own limitations of power and ability to express it.

Its nature being essentially mental, it must follow that man's power to apply and manifest its qualities must lie in the region of his own mentality—his only real power must be Mind Power. Therefore, in the degree that he is able to express and manifest this indwelling power must be his individual power. There is no other power to be; no other place from which it may be drawn. From this arises the simple but clear definition of New Thought: "The recognition, realization, and manifestation of the God in me."

V. OUR MENTAL STATES, ATTITUDES, IDEAS, IMAGES, AND ACTIONS, DETERMINE OUR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CONDITIONS AND STATUS

Proceeding from the above, New Thought holds that our mental states, attitudes, ideas,

images, and actions, determine our mental and physical conditions and status. This agrees with the old Biblical saying: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he"; and the equally positive statement of the Buddha that: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts." Not only is our character the result of our thoughts, but so also is our environment, our health, our physical condition, our degree of success and attainment.

The New Thought holds with Prentice Mulford¹³ (and Swedenborg before him) that: "Thoughts are THINGS." It holds that "Right Thought" expressed in "Right Action," will enable a man to realize all of his ideals. He may make real his ideals in this way. Health, Happiness, and Prosperity, belong to man by right, and may be realized by his recognition, realization and manifestation of the Principle

¹³ American author and humorist known for his essays on mental power, especially "The Drawing Power of The Mind." His work deeply influenced the New Thought emphasis on thought as a creative force in shaping one's life and environment.

within him, by the proper exercise of his mental powers.

Here then we find what makes the New Thought new. It is the practical application of these world-old truths. It is the characteristic spirit of the age—the Western spirit—bringing into the field of practical everyday life the great truths of the past. Bringing these great truths down from the realm of idealistic dreamings and mystical musings, the New Thought has placed them in the midst of our actual, practical, busy life, and set them to work. It has harnessed the spiritual forces, just as it has the material forces, and pressed them into service in the affairs of man. It has placed within the hands of man the machinery for working out his own destiny—for mastering his own fate.

It has discarded the old idea that man is a "worm of the dust," a creature of Fate, and a pawn of Circumstance. It bids him lift his head and gaze with unfaltering eyes upon the universe saying: "I am the Captain of my Soul; the Master of my Fate; the Ruler of Circumstances!" And, this in no egotistical, vainglorious spirit, but rather from the knowledge that immanent in him

is "all the wisdom there is; all the presence there is; all the power there is;" and that the degree of his attainment is limited only by the degree of his ability to express and manifest those immanent, indwelling qualities.

It teaches man that he is not an alien or a machine, but rather a Son of God, made not in the physical image of an anthropomorphic Deity, but rather in the mental and spiritual image of a Mental and Spiritual Father—begotten and born of Spirit; not "created" from the dust of material substance.

This is the Message of the New Thought to Man. In the degree that he recognizes, realizes, and manifests its Truth, does he become that which it tells him he really is. Is this not a NEW MESSAGE of hope, faith and courage to Humanity? IS this not a new thought for the race?

But this is not all of the Message. New Thought does not stop with informing man of the means whereby he may become healthy, happy, and prosperous. It shows him his newly-realized relation to his fellowman and to the universe of Life. Let us proceed with our consideration of its principles.

VI. THE NEW THOUGHT TEACHES THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN,

The New Thought teaches the Brotherhood of Man, as well as the Father hood of God. It shows that since we are all expressions and manifestations of the One Principle of Life, then indeed are we all brothers and sisters in that Life—each, substance of the One Substance; each, mind of the One Mind; each, spirit of the One Spirit.

It teaches that there is no real separateness — that "separateness is but the working fiction of the universe." It teaches that the One life runs through all creation's veins"; that, as the poet has sung:

"For the All is One, and all are part, And not apart as they seem to be; And the blood of life has a single heart, Beating through God, and clod, and Me." And this realization must awaken love in all hearts for all life. The pain of the world becomes the pain of all; its joy, the joy of all. One's neighbor is indeed one's self, and one can love him even as one's self, if one accepts this Message. And the message also causes one to love the One with all the might and power of his mind and his soul. The

essence of all true religions, of all times, and all names, and all lands, is expressed in this Message of Love. Love then is seen to have a new meaning and reason and purpose and intent—the reconciliation and uniting of the many apparent parts of the Whole, which are indeed but one at the last. LOVE then, is the Heart of the New Thought! Its spirit is well expressed by William Marion Reedy, when he says:

"Love is the only law. Love is spirit, and matter the child of spirit. All this any man who reads may know . . . But where does it end —this intelligent love? There is a limit to the finite. But the finite is part of the Infinite. It would seem that the pursuit of the law of love would bring one only to the unknowable, pushing it only a little further back. Love may follow where love leads—unto the essence of God even—for God is Love. The material aspect of love need not deter us from pushing 'farther North.' To those who believe in the Oneness of Matter and Spirit, there is no unknowable. The end of the law of Love, and of the spiritual faculties for its perception, can be the knowing of this unknowable—union with the Infinite. Let us make a flight."

And this, then, is the basis of the ethics of New Thought—the recognition, realization and manifestation of the Brotherhood of Man, based upon the Oneness of Life, and the Fatherhood of God. Can there be any higher Message, any more valid basis of ethics?

But even this is not all of the Message of the New Thought—there is a still higher truth contained within it. It bids man look onward, and upward, while lending a helping hand. There is a seventh principle to be added to the foregoing six.

VII. WE ARE IN A STAGE OF SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION—PURSUING THE PATH OF ETERNAL PROGRESS.

The New Thought teaches that man is in a stage of Spiritual Evolution—pursuing The Path of Eternal Progress. It teaches that he, in his unfoldment of the Divine Essence within himself, is opening himself to the expression of his spiritual powers—ever facing the Central Sun. Slowly, but surely, does the awakened soul disentangle itself from the illusion of separateness and mortality, and take upon itself the qualities of oneness and immortality.

Looking ever upward, onward, and forward, does it press forward on the Path of Attainment. Sheath after sheath of mortal illusion does it cast aside on the journey, and reveal itself in more beautiful and rare, and still more beautiful and rare form and appearance. Like the hand discarding the glove, it becomes better adapted to feel the real things of being. It looks not behind—its gaze is fixed on the scene before it. The past belongs to the past—the soul lives in the Now. Each moment is a new moment to it—each experience a new experience—each place a new place. And all are seen as good, and as a part of its spiritual life. To the awakened soul, it is always: I AM; HERE; NOW! And so it proceeds, ever advancing on the Path of Eternal Progress—ever pressing on, and on, and on, to higher and still higher planes of existence and activity. Led by the Voice of the Spirit, listening to the Song of the All-Life, it rises higher and higher, and higher; on, and on, and on. Such is the final Message of the New Thought. It is beautifully expressed by Holmes, in "The Chambered **Nautilus**":

"Build thee more stately mansions, oh, my soul; As the swift seasons roll! Leave thy low-vaulted past! Let each new temple nobler than the last, Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast, Till thou at length art free, Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

Regarding the details of the life of the soul after it discards the material frame that has sheltered it, the New Thought utters no dogmatic dictum. All shades of belief and theory regarding immortality are found among its followers. It leaves to the individual, or the congregation of individuals, the privilege of speculation. The New Thought is not an organization, creed, cult, or church—merely a body of affiliated thinkers, in sympathy regarding fundamentals, though perhaps differing as to interpretation. But as its fundamentals are based upon the One Spirit, in which all expressions of spirit must exist as the drop exists in the ocean, it must declare for the indestructibility of spirit. It must, and does, voice the truth contained in the ages-old "Bhagavad Gita":

"Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never. Never was time it was not; end and beginning are dreams.

Birthless and deathless and changeless, remaineth the spirit forever; Death hath not touched it at all; dead though the house of it seems." And under all its beliefs, there is a general agreement that after aeons and aeons Have passed, and the individual spirit has reached higher and still higher planes, there may, and probably will, come a time, when it will once more seek the Bosom of the Father, and find there that Eternal Peace and Rest which the Infinite alone can supply—that blessed Union of which the mystics of all ages, lands and all religions have fondly dreamt, and of which the Buddhistic poets sing: "The dew is on the Lotus!—Rise, Great Sun! And lift my leaf and mix me with the wave. Om mani padme hum, the Sunrise comes! The dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea!" The Message of the New Thought is for YOU. Why not apply its teachings in YOUR everyday life just as thousands of others have done? You can never tell what you can do until you TRY.

ABOUT “THE *NAUTILUS*”¹⁴¹⁵”

The **Nautilus** is a monthly magazine that carries the message of self-help and self-healing into nearly 50,000 homes with every issue. This is the message of the New Psychology or New Thought. The **Nautilus** teaches and inspires health and success in every department of life. It helps its readers to realize for themselves, in their own lives, the soundness and beauty and practical usefulness of the New Thought teachings.

The **Nautilus** is the leading magazine of the New Thought movement. It is edited by Elizabeth Towne¹⁶ and William E. Towne. The story of the origin and growth of the magazine, and of Mrs.

¹⁴ A monthly magazine founded by Elizabeth Towne that became the leading periodical of the New Thought movement. It featured contributions from many prominent New Thought writers and helped spread the movement's ideas nationwide.

¹⁵ A poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., used here as a metaphor for spiritual growth. The line 'Build thee more stately mansions, oh my soul' expresses the New Thought ideal of continual self-expansion and evolution.

¹⁶ Publisher and author, co-editor of The Nautilus with her husband William E. Towne. Her books, including 'Just How to Wake the Solar Plexus,' sold hundreds of thousands of copies and were instrumental in popularizing New Thought practices.

Towne's Work, reads like romance. It is a practical demonstration of New Thought Principles. The **Nautilus** was started on a borrowed capital of \$30. A like amount was available each month for six months. After that it was sink or swim. And strange as it may seem, the magazine was self-supporting from the first issue. Its influence rapidly grew. Famous people were attracted to it. Some of these were later engaged as writers for the magazine. The **Nautilus** and its work gradually became known in foreign lands. It became a greater and greater power for practical helpfulness. And now there is hardly a country on the face of the earth, where the mails of the postal union penetrate, that the **Nautilus** does not visit each month of the year. The **Nautilus** has made two moves. The last move took it to the opposite side of the continent from where it was started. And once its home was burned down. Yet the magazine has never missed an issue. Has never been late an issue. Ella Wheeler Wilcox¹⁷

¹⁷ American poet known for her optimistic and inspirational verse, such as 'Solitude' (famous for the line 'Laugh, and the world laughs with you'). She was a regular contributor to 'The

and Edwin Markham¹⁸ are among the famous world-helpers who contribute some of their best work to the **Nautilus**. **Orison Swett Marden**¹⁹, Horatio W. Dresser²⁰, Ph.D., Edward B. Warman²¹, A.M., William Walker Atkinson²², Paul Ellsworth, Thomas Dreier²³, Lilian

Nautilus.

¹⁸ American poet, best known for his poem 'The Man with the Hoe' (1899). He contributed to The Nautilus and was associated with the New Thought movement's emphasis on social justice and spiritual uplift.

¹⁹ American author of self-help books and founder of Success magazine. A contributor to The Nautilus, Marden's writings on positive thinking and personal achievement were heavily influenced by New Thought principles.

²⁰ Author of several books on New Thought and mental healing, including The Power of Silence. He was a son of Julius A. Dresser, an early follower of Quimby, and helped document the history of the mental-healing movement.

²¹ American author and lecturer on mental science and personal magnetism. His books, such as The Technique of the New Thought, focused on the practical application of mental power for success.

²² American attorney, author, and occultist who wrote extensively under his own name and pseudonyms (e.g., 'Yogi Ramacharaka'). His works on mental science and New Thought were widely read and helped define the movement's canon.

²³ American author and lecturer on success and New

Whiting²⁴, are contributors. The writers of **Nautilus** are skilled in man culture as Burbank is skilled in horticulture. While the **Nautilus** was growing and expanding, Mrs. Towne's books were selling by the hundreds of thousands. In every little hamlet, in every large city, in the remotest corners of the country you will find people who have read these books. One book, "Just How to Wake the Solar Plexus," has circulated by the hundreds of thousands.

Thousands of letters have been received by the publishers saying that the writers have been helped, inspired and often healed of serious diseases by practicing the methods of the New Thought as explained in the **Nautilus** and Mrs. Towne's other publications. The files of the **Nautilus** contain hundreds of statements like these:

"By the time they (gout and rheumatism) had controlled me a year and a half I was almost

Thought. His writings emphasized the power of the mind to overcome obstacles and achieve goals.

²⁴ American journalist, poet, and author of works on spiritual themes, including *The World Beautiful*. She was a contributor to *The Nautilus* and an advocate of New Thought ideals.

helpless. Feet swollen, joints enlarged, hands drawn and swollen. I could not lie on either side on account of sciatica. In six weeks from the time I began to study New Thought I was not suggestive of rheumatism. In three months I was entirely healed. I wore shoes one size smaller and three widths narrower. The swelling was all gone from my feet. They were again normal in size and shape." . "I was physically, mentally and financially a wreck nine years ago when **Nautilus** was brought to my attention. I am now in the best of health, and financially I have had great success in my work and general business interests."—Pauline E. Towne, 512 Healy Building, Detroit, Mich.

"The lessons have helped me much physically. My flesh firmer, my form more symmetrical, and my nervous dyspepsia is slowly disappearing. I am also more self-reliant and cheerful."—Miss Grace Bradbury, Grand Island College, Neb.

"I have gained four pounds of flesh and sleep 10 per cent better. I had slept but little for several years. Am gaining in strength all the time."—Mrs. M. A. Douglas, Greensboro Bend, Vt. "Not for anything that could be offered me would I go back

to what I was two months ago. The one fault I can find is that my throat and chest have so rounded out that my clothes no longer fit." — Aldis Dunbar. (Miss Dunbar is a well-known writer. Her work has appeared in many of the standard magazines, including Century and Harper's.)

Who knows what New Thought may do In the way of helping YOU solve YOUR problems. Surely it la worth a trial.

Glossary

Arminianism and Arianism: Theological positions that influenced New England religious thought. Arminianism emphasizes free will and universal salvation, while Arianism denies the full divinity of Christ. Their resurgence in the 18th century contributed to the rise of Unitarianism and later to the transcendentalist interest in Neo-Platonism.

Higher pantheism: A term describing William Wordsworth's portrayal of nature as animated by a divine spirit. This pantheistic view, where the universe is seen as an expression of God, resonated strongly with the Transcendentalists.

The Over-Soul: Central concept in Emerson's philosophy, referring to the universal spiritual essence that permeates all individual souls and connects them to the divine. The essay "The Over-Soul" is considered a foundational text of New Thought.

The Bhagavad Gita: A 700-verse Hindu scripture that is part of the Mahabharata. It discusses the nature of the self (Atman) and ultimate reality (Brahman), and is frequently cited in New Thought literature as supporting the idea

of the indestructible spirit.

Om mani padme hum: A widely recited Buddhist mantra often translated as 'The jewel is in the lotus.' In the concluding poem of the book, it symbolizes the soul's union with the infinite, a theme common to both Buddhist and New Thought mysticism.

THE ESOTERIC COLLECTION



STUDY GUIDE NEW THOUGHT: ITS HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES

A Study Guide for Reading and Practicing
New Thought Principles Today

By M.C. Mesen

Introduction

This guide accompanies Atkinson's most thoughtful exploration of New Thought, tracing its historical roots and practical teachings for spiritual and mental cultivation. Rather than proposing fixed dogmas, the text invites self-inquiry and conscious transformation. The aim of your reading is not to acquire external certainties but to develop an inner grasp of unity, self-reliance, and the unfolding of thought. Bring each idea into daily experience: theory becomes alive when it interrogates your own habits, beliefs, and reactions.

How to use this guide

Read slowly and take notes. The guide is meant to activate the reading, not replace the book.

Work with a journal. Copy the questions that make you pause: they are often the most useful.

Do not try to do everything in one session. Choose one practice and repeat it for several days.

STUDY PATH

1. The Core of New Thought

Core teaching: Atkinson explains that New Thought is, in essence, the oldest thought: the enduring truth kept alive by awakened minorities in every age. Its key is the intuition of the underlying unity of all existence..

Working question: Can you recall moments when you felt a deep sense of connection with others or with life itself? What shifted in your perception?

Practice: Throughout the day, silently repeat: 'All is one.' Notice how this idea colors your judgments, relationships, and inner states.

2. Beyond Creeds: Direct Experience

Core teaching: The book emphasizes that New Thought does not impose fixed dogmas; rather, it calls for the direct, personal experience of great spiritual truths. Everyone interprets and lives these principles in their own way

Working question: What inherited beliefs might you be relying on unconsciously? Where can you experiment instead of simply accepting?

Practice: Pick a central idea from the text and test it by observing your responses, without forcing any outcome. Jot down any observations that emerge.

3. The Power of Thought and Attitude

Core teaching: Atkinson stresses the creative force of thought: the mind attracts and shapes experience according to the quality of its ideas and emotions. He cautions that this is a gradual, profound process—not a superficial trick.

Working question: Which recurring thoughts shape your day? Do they nourish or deplete your vitality and sense of purpose?

Practice: Three times a day, pause and check in on your prevailing thought. If it's restrictive, consciously replace it with a broader, more generous formulation, even briefly.

4. Self-Discovery and Service

Core teaching: As Atkinson sees it, the culmination of New Thought is not just individual development but the radiating of goodwill and understanding toward others. The awareness of unity naturally becomes compassion and genuine collaboration.

Working question: Do you notice a difference between seeking self-improvement only for yourself and growing so that you may benefit others too?

Practice: Think of a concrete way to show kindness or offer help today, without seeking recognition. Observe how it uplifts your own state of mind.

Closing

As you finish the book, review your notes and select a single practice to cultivate for the next seven days. New Thought is not exhausted by novel ideas: its true power unfolds when understanding becomes behavior, and personal growth nourishes everyone around you. —M.C. Mesen

*More guides and information at
MauricioChavesMesen.com*