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New Thought.

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"We are not of the earth, earthy, but gods from heaven, for we have always been in heaven and can never get out of heaven. . . . My democracy is the democracy of divinity, for I recognize each human being as a fellow-god. . . . And, my beloved gods and goddesses, we were all there before the earth and before matter, for we are the creators and the originators and operators of this mental universe."

This is New Thought speaking through one of its prophets in *The Nautilus* of December, 1917. (pp. 23—25.) New Thought does many things. It cures a baby of constipation when you say to it, for three days, "You are no longer constipated — you are a perfect being." (p. 37.) It overcomes appendicitis without recourse to the knife. (p. 38.) By speaking "helpful little phrases" before falling into slumber at night, one devotee has become successful in business. (p. 47.) New Thought is just the thing to help one become a successful poultry-raiser (p. 49), and by "investing in an annual subscription to this unparalleled monthly" (*The Nautilus*), the mind is renewed along the line of St. Paul's counsel to "be transformed by the renewing of mind." (p. 52.) But, above all, it assures its believers of their essential identity with the God-head; not union, but identity. "We are not of the earth, earthy, but gods from heaven." Ralph Waldo Trine, one of its high priests, writes: "Man is god incarnate."

At present there are, if their statistics can be relied upon, about five million gods and goddesses in the world. Of these the greater number are said to live in what has been called the "pay-streak of our civilization," — the band of population stretching along the forty-first degree of latitude. From New York City the cult reports 700,000 adherents, from Pittsburgh 350,000, from

Cincinnati 200,000, and Chicago is said to contain 450,000. While it might appear somewhat sacrilegious to seek verification of statistics supplied by divinity itself, we made bold, on reading these figures, to look into the index of the 1919 census report (*Religious Bodies*, Part I), and were heartened to find New Thought there referred to with a notation "Page 11." However, page 11 disclosed this state of affairs: "There are certain cults which, while claiming a number of adherents, are not so organized as to make their presentation as religious bodies permissible. Among these the strongest is undoubtedly what is known as 'New Thought,' which has an international association, with headquarters at Washington, D. C., and claims large numbers of adherents. There are a number of local 'centers,' but neither these nor the general body have any distinctive membership, most, if not all, of the individuals connected with them being identified, more or less closely, with existing church organizations." Accordingly, the figures quoted above might be viewed as emanations of that optimism which is so pronounced a trait of New Thought. But a parallel with Christian Science here suggests itself. Until 1906, Mrs. Eddy reported the statistics of her cult to the Federal census officers. From 1890 to 1906 a growth of 1,000 per cent. was noted. But after the census of 1906 something happened. Since that date Christian Scientists have given out no information as to their numbers. Mrs. Eddy about that time discovered that the Scriptures command us "to turn away from personality and numbering the people." (*Manual*, Art. 8, Sec. 28.) Her opponents have ever since maintained that a decrease in the rate of growth, if not in growth absolutely, was the real reason for this change of policy, and this is the opinion also of Dr. Carroll, the religious statistician. We may not be far from the truth if we assume that a similar reason lies behind the unwillingness of New Thought to give detailed statistics. Until we have these, we cannot be expected to place any credence in the large totals reported from the greater American cities.

The similarity of New Thought to Christian Science is, however, more than superficial. Its stress on the healing of diseases and its reticence as to numbers are not the only points of resemblance. Moreover, there is an historic connection between the two cults. New Thought writers confess to a certain kinship of their system with Eddyism, not in doctrine and practise only, but through derivation and origin.

In his excellent treatise on Eddyism (*The Truth about Christian Science*), Prof. James H. Snowden has this remark on the tendencies to dissolution in Mrs. Eddy's church: "A significant fact in the history of Christian Science is that the system early began to break up into divisive groups and sects, and has already been prolific in an astonishing number of them. It is so lacking in the coherency and binding unity of rationality and attracts to itself so many peculiar people of aberrant minds and emotional temperaments and erratic individualities, it contains so many seeds of internal disharmony and dissolution, that it is sure to develop its own dissent and disruption. The terrible tyranny of Mrs. Eddy served to hold it together against all rebellion in her lifetime, and still acts as a suppressive and unifying influence, but it could not wholly prevent revolt and secession in her day." One of the movements thus originated is New Thought.

Mr. Horatio W. Dresser, a leader of the new cult, in his recent *History of the New Thought Movement*, gives an account of many of these divisive movements. He says that there was a reaction both against the personality of the "revelator" and against the claims made in her supposed "revelation." "Increasing numbers have departed from her organization to set up for themselves, meanwhile keeping such ideas as had proved of" (commercial) "value."

These movements and societies have sprung up most thickly in the track that Christian Science followed, the "pay streak" running from Massachusetts through Illinois and Colorado to California, through "the regions of wealth and luxury and leisure, of cities and high-tension living, of nervous affections and health resorts." (Snowden.) Mr. Dresser mentions an astonishing number of ephemeral magazines, born to live their little lives in their propagation of these new ideas, bearing such titles as *The Metaphysical Magazine*, *Practical Ideals*, *Mind*, *Unity*, *The Revealer*, *The Healer*, *The Truth Seeker*, *Eternal Progress*, *Power*, *Harmony*, and *Immortality*. Only a very few of these sixty or more publications now remain, the most prominent among the survivals being *Unity* and *The Nautilus*.

The seepage from Christian Science to New Thought continues to the present day. In the *Nautilus*, Miss Elizabeth Towne, a prominent leader of the younger cult, recently reported the defection of four persons who had been Christian Science practitioners for twelve years. They had given offense by *expounding Science and Health*, which is only to be read. Miss Towne says

that others are restive under the limitations imposed by the Mother Church. The same authority thus sets forth the difference between Christian Science and New Thought: "New Thought includes all the constructive metaphysical truth that Mrs. Eddy taught, and it includes the realm of common-sense as well" — which is about as clear as pea-soup. But the following is plain enough: "Christian Scientists everywhere are waking up to the fact that revelation is personal and continuous, that revelation did not end with Mrs. Eddy. At present Christian Science is trying too hard to shut off the continuous flow of revelation through all its individuals. All Christian Scientists who are finding the gag rule of the church intolerable may immediately find in the International New Thought Alliance a new home and wider forum." Sometimes the matricidal temper of these propagandists is less reserved in its expression, as when "T. J." (T. J. Shelton of Denver — the Sun-phoner) writes: "Christian Science is one of the shrewdest systems of patent mental medicine that has been promoted on this planet for at least three or four centuries. . . . It is a wonderful achievement in advertising," etc. (*Scientific Christian*, May, 1920.) However, there is a persistence of ideas (or substitutes for ideas) that are characteristic of Eddyism. E. C. Hoffmann of Kansas City, Mo., in one of his tracts refers to the "All-loving Father-Mother God." Sometimes there is a denial of sin and sickness as realities, — "dead beliefs of sorrow, sickness, sin" (*The Light*, St. Louis, May, 1919), and the misbegotten hermeneutics of Christian Science is very evident in passages like these: "Jesus Christ cleansed the lepers (impure minds and desires), raised the dead (dead to the Truth of their Being), and cast out devils (evil, error-thoughts, beliefs, and influences)." (E. C. Hoffmann, tract.) Matt. 21, 39 ("And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him") is interpreted thus, in a German publication, *Das Wort* (St. Louis, May, 1918): "Die Realisation des grossen *Ich Bin* kann nicht aufrechterhalten bleiben, sondern schwindet schliesslich"! Examples might be multiplied indefinitely.

New Thought stresses in all its modifications the doctrine that thought is a *thing*, and that thinking is identical with its object. This is the central teaching of the system. It is developed from such truisms as: "Our mental actions determine our mental and physical conditions and status." (W. W. Atkinson.) This self-evident truth is the one good dollar on which the cult has issued

its debased currency of thought. By a process of dishonest word-juggling, covered over by metaphysical and semireligious verbiage, this principle is made to assert the identity of thought with its object. Think yourself happy, and you are in a state of happiness, because the thought of happiness is happiness. Think yourself healthy, and you are healthy. Think prosperous thoughts, and money is yours. The terms "demonstrate" and "affirm" are sometimes used as in the Eddyite dialect. A tract says: "AFFIRM: 'I am Prosperous and Successful in all that I undertake to do.' 'Henceforth I seek not good fortune, for I myself am good fortune.'" Then the inevitable: "Thoughts are THINGS." Thus diseases are cured. R. L. Smith was a nervous wreck when he went to see a New Thought practitioner. "I was very weak, and when I went for a walk, my knees would shake, and my head would feel as if I was intoxicated. And when I would walk a block, I would get the feeling as if I wanted to run. He told me that when I had that feeling come over me, I was to stop still and say 'Damn,' and be determined to be master of myself. With a few trials of this I got stronger." (*The Nautilus*, Dec., 1917.)

In this manner the familiar face of autosuggestion, which has a legitimate place in mental therapeutics, reappears in its New Thought guise. For all its "cures," the cult depends upon this single factor, which is continually reenforced by affirmations of the *Science and Health* type: "There never was any reality in sin, disease, or death." "The greatest lesson man has yet to learn is that all things are good; that evil is no thing; that it seems to be, but in reality is not." "In reality there is neither sin, sickness, nor death. God's law can neither be broken nor set aside." (*In the Sunlight of Health*, Patterson.)

The pseudo-metaphysical trappings in which this simple principle (Thought = Object of Thought) clothes itself vary with the different demonstrators. With T. J. Shelton it is "sun-phoning." With others, it becomes a spiritistic séance, in which the hypnotic power of the demonstrator, through the mental "currents" and "flashes" set up in the circle of sitters, causes a momentary trance state in which those present appear to themselves as divested of corporeity. This is called the demonstration of man's Spiritual Being. Others, more crude, explain that they cause "the oil of God to permeate the lungs" of their patients, and "the great, white light of God to enter their bones." But in whatever form presented, and whatever the verbiage employed, the processes of

suggestion, and the obscure relations of mind and body generally, are the substratum both of the doctrine and practises of the cult.

Frequently, the methods of New Thought are invested with the subtle appeal of the occult. Theosophy bulks large in the system. The astral body, astral radiations, telepathy, spirit communication, are topics frequently treated in its literature. In 1913 a New York "center" advertised: "During the war our special work will be to protect the soldier. BULLET-PROOF THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS! If you want your boys protected from bullets and sickness, give us their names. No charges. We will protect a limited number in camp or at the front." Absent treatment is given also to persons in financial difficulty and, of course, to the sick, and in the literature there are lessons on "direct healing" and on "nerve force exercises" through "rhythmical breathing." Throughout, "magnetism" and the functions of the "astral body" claim attention. The Hindu doctrine of reincarnation, or transmigration of souls, has a congenial basis in points of view characteristic of New Thought. While not enumerated in the list of acknowledged tenets, it crops out here and there, as appears in the following sentences: "This little earth-life is not the beginning nor the end of man's destiny." "Children in this life without doubt are being rewarded or punished for things done or left undone in a past life." (Quoted by Henry C. Sheldon, in *Theosophy and New Thought*.)

In its optimistic outlook and its emphasis on success as achievable by means of thought, this new religion finds its appeal to the common man, who is readily attracted by such pleasing assurances as this, from Atkinson's *New Thought*: "Health, Happiness, and Prosperity belong to man by right, and may be realized by his recognition of the Principle within him, by the proper exercises of his mental powers." The occult garnishments are intended for the semi- and supereducated, and the result, in bankable papers, is very satisfactory. One St. Louis practitioner is said to have an income of \$12,000 a month. Another has openly boasted that he had "made a million" by lecturing in the fashionable hotels. It is distinctly a religion for revenue only.

But it has a more sinister side. While asserting the freedom of their followers to remain in connection with any church of their choice, and while disclaiming any antagonism to the Christian denominations, the leaders of New Thought at times plainly reveal their antichristian bias. We find one writer making the bold

statement that the Church of to-day stands as a barrier to all really advanced religious, philosophic, and scientific thought. "It has become a lifeless organism, a dead body without any real or vital belief in its own teachings." In his excellent little treatise *Theosophy and New Thought*, Prof. H. C. Sheldon correctly states the attitude of the cult as being virtually, if not formally, "Come out from among the churches and find your needs in the new religion now starting upon its course." Prof. Sheldon continues: "In their view the Bible is in no preeminent sense a divine revelation. They see no reason why God should not be supposed to have spoken through Emerson and Walt Whitman as truly as through Moses and Paul. . . . The conception of Christ characteristic of New Thought is purely humanitarian. To be sure, entire readiness is shown to ascribe to Him divinity or deity. But that form of description is not regarded as bespeaking for Him any exclusive distinction. He may be characterized as a God-man, but not as *the* God-man. He may have been somewhat extraordinary in the clarity of His recognition of his oneness with God; in this, however, He simply put on exhibition the normal man. There is no ground whatever for believing that His personality differed from that of other men. He stands before us as the moral ideal, and fulfils the office of Savior by example." This summary is very accurate and just.

It is a well-established habit to designate man as a part of God. The following are characteristic statements: "All minds are substantially parts of one omnipresent mind, which is the basis of all manifestation." "There is no difference between the great universal Soul and the individual soul." The instances in which the divine name is given to man are almost without number. The following quoted by Prof. Sheldon from Trine and Newcomb are fairly characteristic: "Man is God incarnate." "Cast thyself into the will of God, and thou shalt become as God. For thou art God if thy will be the divine will." "God is Love. God is Law. We are Law. God and Love and Law are One. We are Love. We are One. We are God." E. C. Hartmann has this, addressed to God: "Thou art I, and I am Thou." "In the name of Jesus Christ, my Divine Self—," "My Being, my Divine God-made Christ-Self," etc. Atkinson gives this definition of New Thought: "The recognition, realization, and manifestation of the God in me."

The *moral* corollaries of this self-deification are thus pointed out by Prof. Sheldon: "The inclusion of man in God, the making

him a veritable part of Deity, prepares a difficult situation for the champions of New Thought when they address themselves to the question of the reality of sin, sickness, suffering, and death. It is somewhat enigmatic that a veritable part of the perfect and Holy One should be a subject for any form of evil, and especially of moral evil. In dealing with this difficulty New Thought expositors have been pushed into a kind of apology for evil, moral delinquency included. They are led to define sin as a means to something higher than itself, or as purely negative, or as a lack of development, or as a partial expression of life, or as a product of ignorance. Their writings abound in such sentences as these: 'When fully interpreted, evil ceases to be evil, and becomes educational experience.' 'Good and evil are merely comparative terms — labels, one might say, for different degrees of attainment.'"

"On the New Thought basis the publican made a fool of himself when he prayed, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' He ought rather to have said: 'O Lord, I gladly recognize that I am as good as you are. I am God incarnate.' As for the Pharisee, he was perfectly right in so far as he took a high view of himself. His mistake was that he did not clearly recognize his own essential divinity, and the equal divinity of all men. In neither the publican nor the Pharisee could a broken and contrite spirit properly be required."

The limit of blasphemy is reached in the writings of the "Sun-poner," Thomas J. Shelton of Denver. He says in his organ, the *Scientific Christian* (!): "Man is an Autocrat! Self-ruling and self-existing Autocrat of the Universe!" But this is mild. Hear him rave: "My office is in the Sun! It does not matter where my satanic" (material?) "self may happen to be; you can always find me in the sun." "My satanic body is in three dimensions; it is the devil, has always been the devil, and will always be the devil. My satanic vibrations are essential to the health of the universe." Worse is to come. Shelton invariably refers to himself (as do other New Thought writers occasionally) as the I AM, and he identifies himself with Christ to such a degree that he continually cites sayings of Christ without quotation marks. He assures his Sun-poners: "You are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. You are he who was, and is and is to be, the Almighty." Concerning the Christ of the gospels he says: "Throw that picture into the waste-basket; you think of the meek and lowly Jesus that was crucified when you look at the picture mortal

mind has placed before our eyes as Jesus." Then he identifies himself with the true, the cosmic Christ: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. The I AM that I AM speaks to the I AM that you are. This Word is sometimes the very lightning of the satanic. You are to be awakened to your own divinity. The Word was made flesh! Do you get that statement? The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The flesh is not a non-reality; it is the devil, but it is a real devil" —!! Pages and pages of this, in small type. Not even the *Doctrine and Covenants* of Mormonism, possibly the most blasphemous book ever written, rises to such horribly grotesque defilements of the Son of God.

New Thought is not interesting. Its literature nauseates with its ceaseless repetition of *banal* commonplaces and sweetish optimisms. The commercial appeal is blatant, shameless. Its fake occultism deserves the term which Thomas Huxley applied to spiritualism: "Intellectual whoredom." Its blasphemies are blood-curdling. But its dulness and its pointless chattering are, after all, its outstanding feature. Yet even in this there is a deep Satanism. As in the case of *Science and Health*, the reader who forces himself to the task and pores over the pages of New Thought literature soon falls into a condition of mental dizziness, the reasoning faculties are benumbed, and *suggestion* dominates the intellect. New Thought will pass away; but while it lasts, it looms a maleficent upas-tree, with flowers of evil and its leaves glistening with sensuousness.
