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New Ages for All

Ralph Waldo Trine—born in 1866, the same year that Phineas Quimby died—could count himself a midwesterner by birth and most of his education. He had come from Mt. Morris, Illinois, and had attended Knox College in his home state, where, in 1891, he took his bachelor's degree. After that, came the University of Wisconsin until he matriculated at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. Drawn to history and political science, he reportedly once won a hundred-dollar essay prize for a piece on the prevention of crime through a "humane education." Before the new century, however, Trine had turned to New Thought, although the circumstances that led to his embrace of metaphysics remain unclear. Still, we know that most probably they worked in tandem with his social and political concerns. By 1902, he had become a socialist and was planning a book that linked socialism as the basis of social organization to New Thought as a religious system. For society, government, and industry, thought Trine, socialism was *the* logical deduction from New Thought teaching on the "fatherhood" of God and the "brotherhood" of humans.[1]

By then, however, five years had passed since he had produced the short book that would guarantee him perhaps *the* leading position among metaphysical authors. Writing in the early 1960s, Charles Braden assessed Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite* as the single most successful New Thought book. By that time, Braden reported, its English-language sales had "gone well beyond a million and a half copies." Translations of the work had appeared in twenty languages "including Japanese and Esperanto," and they had sold exceedingly well. A Braille edition for the blind was available, and with that version included among total sales, Trine's book had been distributed in "well over two million copies." Most important of all, buyers and readers were not limited to the New Thought community. Rather, Braden declared, *In Tune with the Infinite*—along with "three or four"

other books by Trine—had reached the public at large. People had absorbed its message without ever knowing anything of its New Thought origins.[2]

By this time, however, the old New Thought of the nineteenth century was giving way before a later version, one that—like the message brought by metaphysical Asia—was at once buttressing and liberating the enlightened body-selves of numbers of Americans. Horatio Dresser, New Thought savant and son of the well-known Dressers, did not like the new version so well as the old, and he named Trine as one of its protagonists. Trine's revised message had exalted "thought" in its human form beyond its carrying capacity, he complained. The causes of disease were spiritual, not purely mental. Trine and others had forgotten the deeper, truer tidings about divine wisdom and the "light of the divine idea" that Phineas Quimby had announced.[3] From the perspective of the twenty-first century, however, what is startling about the Dresser criticism is how much its statement of difference misses the larger paradigm shift that Trine represented. If metaphysical religion encompassed themes of mind, correspondence, and energy, in its healing/saving endeavors, arguably its earliest New Thought expressions were modeling mind and correspondence more than energy. Similarly, across the aisle in metaphysical Asia, leaders like Paul Carus and others were hailing the abiding stasis they called "truth" with an enthusiasm that was marked. By contrast, Trine glided smoothly into the twentieth century on a flow of divine energy.

In one sense, Trine was doing nothing new. Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom New Thought people loved to quote and listed proudly as their "founder," had long ago proclaimed that nature was "not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, moulds, makes it." Emanuel Swedenborg had taught the divine influx as one of his cardinal doctrines. And spiritualism's A. J. Davis had pronounced on "fountains" and "jets of new meanings" even in 1870.[4] Nor is it hard to cross-read even the most static declarations of the early New Thought metaphysicians for their energy quotient. For all that, however, stepping into the discourse world of Trine means entering a different kind of verbal territory or, closer to his own usage, stepping into a different kind of linguistic stream. For Trine's favored theme is just that—a stream, a fountain, a divine reservoir overflowing toward earth dwellers who gladly expose themselves to its flow. If "truth" had been Paul Carus's mantra, "flow" was clearly Trine's.

In Tune with the Infinite from the start proclaimed as the "Supreme Fact of the Universe" the "Spirit of Infinite Life and Power . . . from which all is continually coming." In keeping with the model—and with language anticipated by the Unity-oriented H. Emilie Cady—Trine invoked a "reservoir in a valley which receives its supply from an inexhaustible reservoir on the mountainside."

He was not slow to make the application. *"The great central fact in human life,"* he emphatically affirmed, *"is the coming into a conscious, vital realization of our oneness with this Infinite Life, and the opening of ourselves fully to this divine flow."* Here at last is the much-vaunted harmonialism of Sydney Ahlstrom and others, as Trine exhorted readers on the need for harmonizing their lives with the flow. Moreover, if mind had power—which it decidedly did—its power came from its *attractive* force, as it stimulated energies that corresponded to its own vibration. The "drawing power of the mind" meant that humans were "continually attracting" to themselves, "from both the seen and the unseen side of life, forces and conditions most akin" to their thoughts. With God not only transcendent but also immanent, openness to the *"inflowing tide"* enabled humans to become "*channels through which the Infinite Intelligence and Power can work.*" This happened through the "inner guiding" of intuition, and it worked itself out in all domains and all ways. Trine's chapters serially treated of health, love, wisdom, peace, power, and prosperity—always finding the key to the maximization of human life in openness to the divine flow.[5]

Fear and worry had "the effect of closing up the channels of the body, so that the life forces flow[ed] in a slow and sluggish manner." Emotions, passions, and mental states all had their effects, and the moral of the unhappy report was the dominance of sickness and disease. That admitted, the solution followed. Health was "*contagious as well as disease.*" All readers had to do for the contagion to spread was to clean out their muddy waters and open their troughs: "There is a trough through which a stream of muddy water has been flowing for many days. The dirt has gradually collected on its sides and bottom, and it continues to collect as long as the muddy water flows through it. Change this. Open the trough to a swift-flowing stream of clear, crystal water, and in a very little while even the very dirt that has collected on its sides and bottom will be carried away. The trough will be entirely cleansed."[6]

The message was similar in other aspects of life. Debris had to be cleared, and the streambed kept open so that the divine inflow could and would happen. Or alternately, realization of one's indwelling divine nature generated magnetic power—a formulation that, silently and without acknowledgment, subverted the order of initiative away from divine benevolence and toward personal will. Still more, when it came to the "law of prosperity," the person who lived "in the realization of his oneness with this Infinite Power" became "a magnet to attract to himself a continual supply" of things desired. As for the clearing out, it came through getting rid of the extraneous and refusing to hoard (these ideas the ideological support for later metaphysical exhortations to tithing). "Then not by hoarding but by wisely using and ridding ourselves of things as they come,"

taught Trine, "an ever-renewing supply will be ours." "In this way we not only come into possession of the richest treasures of the Infinite Good ourselves, but we also become open channels through which they can flow to others." Trine cheerfully cited the "highly illumined seer, Emanuel Swedenborg" on "divine influx" and "the inspired one, the seer who when with us lived at Concord [that is, Emerson]" on humans as "all inlets to the great sea of life." The human task, Trine counseled, was simply to open the gate for the divine inflow. "It is like opening the gate of the trough which conducts the water from the reservoir above into the field below. The water, by virtue of its very nature, will rush in and irrigate the field if the gate is but opened."[7]

The reiterative quality of Trine's prose simplified theology and practice so that readers of many persuasions could absorb and enact the message. Meanwhile, in the midst of the authorial exercise, Trine was enacting a practice of his own that distinctly separated him from the older metaphysical culture. It is no surprise, therefore, that Gary Ward Materra sees him as an embodiment of the noetic style of New Thought.[8] While Horatio Dresser dwelled comfortably in the affective New Thought that had flourished as strongly in the initial years, now the more instrumentalist version was promising mastery to denizens of a new twentieth-century world. In it, ego and Atman (or a New Thought "Christ presence") had become friends and partners instead of enemies. The instrumentalism guaranteed that New Thought was not for gazing at immutable truths and contemplating their beauty unalloyed. New Thought principles were energy formulas that got the practitioner from one inner place to another and so, often, from one outer place to another. Still further, it turned out, the most powerful energy formula was the one that proclaimed that all there was in the first place was Energy. God, in twentieth-century and later metaphysical religion, was Motion.

Two years before Trine's influential New Thought book appeared, another energy formula had begun its trajectory toward scientific fame and fortune. It was in 1895 that the German physicist Max Planck (1858–1947) began his black-box experiments that led the way to quantum theory. Earlier nineteenth-century work had explained light as a wave on the basis of then-accepted experimental testimony. Now Planck was finding, from his own experiments, that Newtonian mechanics could not account for the behavior of light. By 1900 Planck read a paper to the German Physical Society, telling colleagues his tale of the strange activity of light, which, he announced, could be emitted and absorbed not continuously but only in discrete and discontinuous energy bundles, or packets, which he named "quanta." Later, in 1905, Albert Einstein pushed the Newtonian gospel still further away, hypothesizing that the energy of light was composed of particles, or photons, repeatedly speeding and colliding into one another. Oscil-

lating atoms had a secret inner life, and that life—of mysterious particles and energies—was a life in motion even as it was a life in matter. Einstein, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, Erwin Schrödinger, and others all would refine the formula, as the early twentieth century saw the theory rise to an elegance and persuasive power that signaled the end of the Newtonian world and the dawn of a new scientific era.[9]

The mathematical language of the quantum worked to convince professionals. Nonscientists, however, had to be content with imagistic efficacy. At the level of metaphor and imagination, the quantum introduced a world in which, subatomically, electrons—which were parts of atoms—acted at times like particles and at times like waves. Matter and energy seemed to play tirelessly with one another, and—even in science, when the mass-accelerator came along to change energy back into matter—their connection could be noticed as palpable and real. While practicing scientists learned to state the behavior of electrons in terms of mathematical probabilities, metaphysical religionists—who garnered aspects of the new science from vernacular culture—began a series of ascriptions that provided them with their own elegant "scientific" theory to authorize an evolving spirituality. German physicist Werner Heisenberg's "unsharpness principle," or principle of uncertainty, by 1927 authorized the spirituality more. The observer altered the experiment; by extension, consciousness and its inquiries could change the path of metaphysics and its experience of spirit. In fact, when matter and energy played their particle-wave game, in metaphysical terms matter and *spirit* played. In the preferred language of metaphysical Asia, Prakriti and Purusha played, and when the play could not go on—when matter got too stuck in its guise as "frozen light" (to invoke the language of one twentieth-century physician-metaphysician)—the energy of spirit suffered. Moving out of the community of professional scientists the quantum took on moral dimensions that the behavior of light had not previously acquired. Energy was good; matter more dubious. At the very least, to free up matter, to make enlightened body-selves respond to spirit's impulse and message, became the new metaphysical task for consciousness, since the observer, indeed, could alter the game. There is no evidence that Ralph Waldo Trine knew about black-box experiments, but he had set an agenda decidedly congenial to the secret life of light—or better, to a reformed secret life of light. Meanwhile, light, after all, had always been a cherished category for mystics and metaphysicians. Now they could mark the speed or the slowness of its vibrations and measure their success in the world of spirit.[10]

In one sense, they had simply found a new scientific language to perpetuate the rhetorical capital of the old mesmeric world and the now-defunct nineteenth-century theory of the ether. The ghosts of Blavatsky and company could

rest content as, in the quantum, a replacement scientific world became available. Indeed, even scientists seemed to support metaphysical acts of piracy. Werner Heisenberg himself thought that, when it came to philosophical models, contemporary physicists were corroborating Plato. The most basic grid of matter was made not of physical objects in the vernacular sense but of entities that could be understood and expressed best as ideas—as mathematical variations in an ever-changing field. The world and the I could no longer be sharply separated—in fact, that was "impossible." Quantum physics functioned within a "general historical process" that moved toward "a unification and a widening of our present world."[11]

The overriding news of the twentieth century and after was that metaphysical light escaped from its own black box. Even as nineteenth-century spiritualists had created a mass movement in vernacular culture, twentieth-century and later metaphysicians would do the same, creating an *exoteric* spirituality and dissolving it so thoroughly into society at large that it became, in some versions, simply part of America as usual. We look, first, at late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century versions of the great dissolve at both ends of the matter-spirit spectrum. Here a closet metaphysics originally grounded continuing practices as varied as osteopathy and chiropractic, on the one hand, and pragmatic philosophy, with its legacy of idealism, on the other. In more condensed and consciously religious form, general New Thought principles shaped the confident living propounded by several small New Thought denominations, the largest among them Unity. By midcentury, still another path of diffusion came through the movement for positive thinking, even as theosophical lineages, then and before, transmuted into new and persisting forms. Nor did an ethnic presence disappear from metaphysics. We can find it even in the newest incarnation of metaphysical Asia, the American Daoism of the late twentieth century and after. Besides the New Age movement of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, there were many other new ages.

BODY MECHANICS AND SPIRIT PHILOSOPHY

If quantum mechanics detailed the energetic structure of the universe and all its dwellers for the twentieth century and after, there had been other mechanics—and of a metaphysical sort—in the late nineteenth. Andrew Taylor Still (1828–1917), the founder of osteopathy, taught one of them. A Virginian and the son of a Methodist circuit rider, by 1837 Still was in Missouri with his father, who was also farming and practicing medicine to supplement his income. When, in 1851, the father set out for the Kansas Territory as a missionary to the Shawnee

Indians, the son and his young family eventually joined him at the Wakarusa Mission, where he began to study medicine with his father. The younger Still's first patients were Indians. Moving beyond medicine, he became an ardent abolitionist and a Union soldier in the Civil War thereafter, but subsequently he returned to Kansas to practice as an orthodox physician. There alternative medicine flourished all around him, and—a reflective man and homespun philosopher—Still noticed (in the era of "heroic" bleedings, purges, and mercuric calomel) that alternative practice did less damage than the "drugging" regimen in which he had been trained. He was drawn to certain aspects of magnetic healing, especially its notions of health as a free and unhampered fluidic flow.[12]

By 1874, Still had broken all ties with regular medicine and was advertising himself as a magnetic healer. As his practice evolved, too, he found himself attracted to the manipulative therapy known as bone setting, by this time a mostly folk practice of forcing displaced bones back where they belonged. Next Still synthesized magnetism with manipulation in a unified-field theory and practice, and by about 1880, he began to treat patients osteopathically, focusing on bones and muscles as a way to restore a natural somatic flow. For Still and his followers, most sickness came from structural disorganization or disarrangement within the body. Repetitive strains to bones, muscles, and cartilage, small though the strains might be, could create the misalignments that osteopaths called lesions. Osteopathic manipulation was intended to correct these conditions and thus, it followed, liberate the body so that its natural processes could defeat illness. To advance these goals, Still founded his osteopathic school in Kirksville, Missouri, in 1892. At first it functioned as another alternative to the growing scientific medicine of his era, challenging class and gender norms to welcome rural students from the South and the Midwest, among them an impressive number of women. But osteopathy over the years changed, as Still's brand of healing made its slow social pilgrimage from what Norman Gevitz has called "deviance" to a more conventional state of "difference." Osteopaths gradually won licenses to practice medicine, including prescribing drugs and performing surgery; they became available in mainstream hospital settings; and there they functioned simply as physicians with a different history.[13]

That history does not concern us here. What does concern, however, is the ideational imprint that Still left on osteopathic philosophy and the vision that it imparted to practitioners and, to some extent, patients. This is because the philosophy and the vision attached them to a diffuse but unmistakable version of metaphysical spirituality. For Still, the mechanical habit of manipulating bones had its complement in an old-fashioned God of Nature who was also an orderly Great Manipulator. Translated into the language of the vernacular Enlighten-

ment, this meant a God of "truth," whose works were "harmonious" and whose law for "animal life" could be called "absolute." Translated further into the language of early osteopathy, the cure for every discomfort and infirmity lay within —"a whole system of drugs in abundance" that had been "deposited" in the body by its "Maker."[14] Here was a practical metaphysic to theorize and explain healing success, a metaphysic that combined the eighteenth-century Enlightenment's "nature's God" with the immanent deity of the Romantic era whose law and power worked from the inside out. And significantly, through his connections among practicing spiritualists Still, the former magnetic healer, almost surely had more than a passing acquaintance with the immanent God. Historian of osteopathy Norman Gevitz discovered that Still co-signed a letter that appeared in the spiritualist *Banner of Light* in 1875, appealing for help with a grasshopper invasion afflicting Kirksville. The letter alluded to "a few workers here" but complained that they were "looked upon as 'crazy' and 'worse than infidels.'" Moreover, as late as 1903 Still was in Clinton, Iowa, to attend a spiritualist meeting, and thereafter he told his osteopathic students that spiritualists' (negative) assessments of the use of drugs ran parallel to his own.[15]

Still's apparent congeniality with spiritualism is itself a clue to what his own writings thoroughly reflect. The God who grounded osteopathy was an embodied deity, and the implication—as in spiritualism's received, though obscured, Hermetic teaching—was that divinity resided in creation as its very life. More than that, a progressive quality in Still's formulation (like spiritualism but more strongly) pushed it toward its twentieth-century future. If "God had certainly placed the remedy within the material house in which the spirit of life dwells," Still's response invoked a determined agency. "With this thought I trimmed my sail and launched my craft as an explorer." The results were bountiful. "Soon I saw the green islands of health all over the seas of reason. Ever since then I have watched the driftwood and course of the wind, and I have never failed to find the source whence the drifting came."[16]

By 1897, when Still wrote these words, he could look back on twenty years of voyaging success. Meanwhile, as Still wrote them, Nature's God—for all his law-bound presence—seemed to act in ways remarkably similar to the God of flow that Trine had modeled in his own 1897 work. In one romanticized characterization, not untypical of Still, for example, he waxed expansively: "In close range, and directly in view of the most ordinary field-glass, stands the mountain of Reason, from which is rolling down in our presence the greatest nuggets of gold that the human mind ever saw coming down as from the very bosom of God Himself. All this fertility we believe is intended for the human race and benefit of man." Here was New Thought prosperity wedded to New Thought flow, both of them

the effluence of an Enlightenment God who had merged with the God of divine Supply. More than that, here was conscious rejection of traditional churches in favor of the flow. Still, son of the Methodist circuit rider and intimately acquainted with evangelical revivals, was hardly diffident about declaring that he had "no use for the churches of the world." "To be a Methodist" meant "to hate a Campbellite." "To be a Campbellite" was "to hate the Baptist, and so on." All, however, would "unite as one to fight the Roman Catholic," and he saw "rivers of blood running" from most of the churches and "more coming." By contrast, he affirmed his belief in a "principle" that was "above all churches" and that was "the law and gift of God to man." What was it? In his preferred language of agency, Still testified for "bloodless rivers of love given for man to drink in all time and eternity." Always, the model was clear: God was an Enlightenment mechanic all right, but this God had created a moving machine and fueled it—impersonally—with something more than pure reason, for all Still's plentiful talk of the same. Beyond that, the something hinted of magnetic laws. The body was "a machine run by the unseen force called life"; for its harmonious operation, there had to be "liberty of blood, nerves, and arteries from the generating-point to destination." In contrast to the wasted blood of feuding religious sects, Still taught that the conserved-but-free flow, especially, of the blood guaranteed health and prevented disease.[17]

Still's model, we know, was overlaid for many later osteopaths by mainstream medicine. Yet the energetic (and magnetic) template persisted in some osteopathic quarters. If we fast forward to osteopathy a century after Still, we can catch a glimpse of what his traditional-yet-transformed vision became in the career of Robert C. Fulford, D.O., whose near-legendary life spanned the twentieth century (he flourished well into his nineties). Known for his mentorship of others and for his own reputed gifts, Fulford found time, in later life, to reflect on his nearly sixty years of osteopathic practice. He told his readers in *Dr. Fulford's Touch of Life* that the human body was "more complicated" than conventional anatomy suggested. "Besides the systems and processes well known to everyone," he confided, "the body is also composed of a complex interflowing stream of moving energy. When these energy streams become blocked or constricted, we lose the physical, emotional, and mental fluidity potentially available to us. If the blockage lasts long enough or is great enough, the result is pain, discomfort, illness, and distress." Fulford confessed autobiographically that he liked to work with children better than adults because adults emitted "less energy" than children did, took away his own energy when he treated them, and made him feel "depleted." By contrast, children, who were "more radiant," did not absorb his energy so completely. Fulford was making the same affirmations that founder Still had made—

the universe was "run by specific laws," and osteopathy was predicated on a "philosophy" that reflected these "universal laws" and applied them to human beings. What did this mean in concrete terms? Fulford's answer is instructive, seamlessly connecting Still's original vision to late-twentieth-century energetic formulations that tell of the dominance of the agential model and of the metaphysical spirituality that promotes it. The body, declared Fulford, was surrounded by what he called a "life field."[18]

What followed brought not only Still but also Helena Blavatsky up to end-of-century speed. "This life field thoroughly permeates the physical body and actually reaches beyond it by many inches. To imagine what it might look like, you might want to think of a colored aura surrounding the body, one that might appear green or red or yellow, or any other color, depending on the individual. . . . If you could see the field, it would resemble a human shadow: the field's pattern surrounds the head, spreading out around the shoulders and becoming narrower by the waist, and then tapering down the legs to the feet. In some ways, the life field could be considered the body's other half: the spatial part is the portion we commonly think of as the material human being, while the other half is this invisible field." Fulford cited electromagnetic phenomena associated with the "aura," invoking Harold Saxon Burr, a former Yale professor of neuroanatomy, to make his case. The "life field" was "an electric field with a high frequency," and so, for a popular book, it was scientific, with a highly credentialed scientific authority to buttress it. But Fulford's way of conceptualizing life field and electromagnetic activity reveals, too, a different sort of inspiration, hinting of the older spiritualist world of the ectoplasm, the mysterious substance emanating from a medium's body that enabled the spirits to manifest themselves in perceptible ways. "In a sense," explained Fulford, "the electromagnetic pattern creates a mold, which is eventually filled by matter, giving rise to a tangible, material body." If so or not, Fulford's combinativeness suggests a mental habit that had begun with osteopathy's foundation and the evidence of Still's own comfort in the spiritualist world. But now there were new dots to connect in the combinative osteopathic universe, and Fulford turned to Asia to add in the "vital energy" of the East: "The Chinese call it *chi*, the Japanese call it *ki*, and the Hindus *prana*."[19]

In the body, the "life field" became the "life force." As a practicing osteopath, Fulford claimed that he could feel the force with his hand as a prickling sensation and that it was stronger or weaker in his patients depending on whether and how much blockage was present. It was significant that the human mind played a pivotal role in the life force's presence and distribution. Much of its "flow" was "regulated by the mind." Thoughts had "physical consequences," changing the

life field and its color radiations in terms of passing patterns and general spiritual evolution. This was because thinking caused energy to be emitted from the body—so much so that humans lived through their minds and not their bodies. It was mind that created reality, and any "discord or disharmony" harbored in the mind was "likely to produce an unfortunate effect in the physical body." As in other metaphysical systems, too, mind led to spirit and to God. What was "spiritual in the world" was "the universal source of this cosmic electrical energy, this life force that keeps us all alive." Fulford told readers that he suspected that the "universal life force" might be "another name for God." The conclusion for him was obvious: "God, therefore, exists within all of us, embodied in this energy."[20] The Hermetic gospel was back, and humans, as Fulford estimated them, should be living as gods.

More than that, as Fulford quoted from Still and clearly agreed with him, he brought to the fore the early theosophical teaching about the triune nature of humans. Body, soul, and spirit meant for Still "first, the material body; second the spiritual being; third, a being of mind which is far superior to all vital motions and material forms." This material-mental-spiritual being accorded with other sources of Fulford's knowledge in Asian thought and, especially, in Daoism. Even the material body pointed toward spirit; Fulford reiterated that it was "composed of electric waves of light" in what he had called the life field. That the same waves also brought light to houses and pictures and sounds to television sets suggested the divinized status of all material productions rather than their secularity. Indeed, Fulford could find no evil in the divinized world. Even though evil could happen, it did not exist—meaning, in effect, that it possessed no substantial reality. In tandem with the privative doctrine that marked nineteenth-century metaphysics, he called it the "absence of the spiritual force" and declared that people became evil by blocking off "that purity, that life-giving universal flow of energy, from their being."[21]

Other late-twentieth-century physicians followed Still's metaphysical lead toward energetic constructions of reality, especially in the cranial-sacral systems of manipulative therapy that arose from osteopathic roots. William Sutherland, for example, who originated the theory and technique of manipulation of the skull bones to unblock and regulate the flow of cerebro-spinal fluid between skull and sacrum, had studied under Still himself.[22] Cranial-sacral therapists claimed—and continue to claim—that freeing blockages and allowing natural flow to proceed unimpeded has corrected a host of seemingly unrelated maladies. More important here than details of the therapy, however, the old mesmeric model—sifted through spiritualist and theosophical registers, still carrying Enlighten-

ment motifs—could be seen as mingling with ideas ranging from quantum theories about light to metaphysical Asian representations. A comprehensive vernacular theory had been found, and it had become persuasive.

The process had been aided by another version of body mechanics inherited from the late nineteenth century. This was chiropractic, with roots in the Hermetic tradition even more obvious than osteopathy's. Daniel David (D. D.) Palmer (1845–1913), who founded chiropractic, immigrated from Canada, taught school in Iowa and Illinois, and tried his hand at horticulture and beekeeping. He created a national market for his "Sweet Home raspberry" (a large black-raspberry variety that bore abundant fruit), and then in What Cheer, Iowa, he began a grocery business and also sold goldfish. Eventually he settled in Davenport, Iowa, where his version of body manipulation flourished. Like Still (and like Phineas Quimby), Palmer's path to physical manipulation led through spiritualism and animal magnetism. Indeed, with spiritualist friends and earnest discussions on spiritualist themes an important part of his world, it was probably not surprising that—in an evangelically oriented nation—he decided to testify to spiritualist faith on the front and inside covers of a nursery catalog he produced. Palmer expressed his commitments to the village Enlightenment when he argued against fraud within spiritualist ranks, but the spirits did not leave when he embraced magnetism. As historian of chiropractic J. Stuart Moore has noted, "assimilating spirit to science" became a persistent theme in Palmer's professional life. "By eventually traveling a path from spiritualism through magnetic healing to his innovation of chiropractic," Moore summarizes, "Palmer tapped into the harmonial tradition . . . an impulse with certain affinities to the centuries-old hermetic tradition."[23]

Like Still and Quimby, too, Palmer's appropriation of the vernacular Enlightenment brought no conflict as it mingled with newer Romantic currents that by the nineteenth century's end had transmuted mesmerism and spiritualism into Theosophy and, more, New Thought. The brief aphorisms Palmer inscribed in his personal journal provide transparent testimony to his mental world. "Vehemently and forcibly if necessary awaken your patient from his dream of suffering." "Patients suffer only as the insane suffer, from mere belief." "Disease, disarrangement, is disturbed harmony." "Mind produces all action, conscious or unconscious." Palmer invoked the "Metaphysician the soul or spirit" and thought that "the mind must be cured as well as body," since "as the mind so is the body." In full agreement with Quimby and Christian Science, he declared that disease was "only the manifestation of error or wrong doing, wrong thots." In fact, thoughts were "real substance" and modified all they touched. Still more, Palmer kept

company with New Thought practices of affirmation and denial. "Enquire what state of mind at time of taking disease or accident," he exhorted himself in his journal, "then deny the cause."[24]

Palmer's small personal pamphlet library tells a similar story. Here titles range from mesmerism and spiritualism to Theosophy and New Thought. On magnetism, for example, there was popular healer Edwin Dwight Babbitt's *Vital Magnetism* (1874), which cited a series of maladies that could be addressed through spinal treatment and spoke the language of auras, health reform, and even something like prayerful meditation. Here, too, was magnetic doctor C. A. DeGroodt's *Hygeio-Therapeutic Institute and Magnetic Infirmary* (c. 1882–1883), which blended biblical writ with its invocation of "the grandest, the most subtile and refined force operating in human affairs—the vital Aura, the direct interpreter of life itself—the force called MAGNETISM." Professor J. W. Cadwell's *How to Mesmerize*, bound with *Is Spiritualism True?* in a revised 1885 edition, and James Victor Wilson's *How to Magnetize; or, Magnetism and Clairvoyance*, in a new and revised 1886 edition, also provide compelling evidence about Palmer's world. Straddling the line into Theosophy was *Psychometry and Thought-Transference*, written by an unidentified medical Theosophist ("N. C.") and introduced by Henry Steel Olcott himself. From the camp of Freethought and sexual radicalism came the Boston physician Charles Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy*, with its advocacy of contraception for population control, first published in England in 1832 by James Watson and now republished by Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant in 1877 to test suppression laws. (Besant would later succeed Olcott at the helm of the Theosophical Society.) Palmer's eclectic collection also contained a second work promoting "sexual self-government" (E. H. Heywood's *Cupid's Yokes*), and—although there is no evidence that Palmer himself followed free-love practice—Moore has reviewed the Palmer journal entries that suggest he was providing contraceptive advice to women.[25]

In Palmer's pamphlet collection as well were two published lectures by Juliet H. Severance, with an "M.D." duly attached to her name. Severance, from Wisconsin, was a well-known spiritualist, hydropathic (water-cure) doctor, magnetic healer, outspoken health reformer, and women's rights advocate. The presence of two of her lectures among the short list of Palmer pamphlets—one of them on spiritualist themes (1882) and one on magnetism (1883)—suggests the radical mental company he kept. As if to underline that assessment, Palmer's oldest pamphlet was Marcenus R. K. Wright's 1870 *Moral Aphorisms and Terseological Teachings of Confucius*, the work itself an early sign that Orientalism was beginning to cut a path through metaphysical vernacular culture. Moreover, from Palmer's Illinois days there was William Denton's 1872 pamphlet *The Deluge in*

the Light of Modern Science. This piece sought to make science the arbiter of the truth or falsehood of the Bible; it concluded that the scriptural account was a fable and thus assigned the Bible "its place with all other human fallible productions." "For knowledge," Denton proclaimed, "we go to Nature, our universal mother, who gives her Bible to every soul, and preaches her everlasting gospel to all people."[26]

Palmer would, indeed, go to Nature, like Still combining a metaphysical spirituality that exalted it with techniques of physical manipulation. He would acknowledge auras ("all observers realize that we are surrounded with an aura"), but also, insofar as he understood it, embrace science. The pamphlet library represented the furniture of Palmer's own mind, and its contents bespoke the mental and physical practice he promoted. That practice crystallized and took self-conscious shape in 1895, according to Palmer—the same year that, in Germany, Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen discovered the X-ray and Max Planck began his black-box experiments. While the Germans looked to energetic forms of light, in his vernacular world Palmer likewise performed experiments with energy, conceived and practiced according to his homespun metaphysical formulation. His near-legendary account of how his spinal adjustment enabled black janitor Harvey Lillard, deaf for seventeen years, to hear described a dramatically effective intervention. Like Mary Baker Eddy's account of her "discovery" of Christian Science, the Palmer story was most likely a serial "discovery," with repeated experiments on Lillard's back. Sudden or sequential, however, Harvey Lillard's cure and the new practice of chiropractic became interventions in search of an explanation. In the metaphysical world in which he had for many years happily dwelled, Palmer found it. In fact, the name he chose for his new technique—chiropractic (reportedly suggested by Presbyterian minister and Greek student Samuel H. Weed)—no doubt appealed over other choices because of Palmer's familiarity with the term *cheiromancy* or *chiromancy* (that is, palmistry) from metaphysical literature.[27] Chiropractic was surely "done with the hands," as the Greek etymological roots suggest, but it was done with hands that had held theosophical and New Thought texts.

Moreover, if the hands that played on the spinal vertebrae in Palmer's chiropractic were metaphysical ones, the theory Palmer evolved to support his new technique combined the age-old doctrine of correspondence with magnetic models of tides and their blockages. These models were now updated in a theosophized New Thought universe in which, with Trine and others, divine reservoirs were flowing and human troughs and dams needed to be cleaned and unblocked to receive the waters. Even here, though, there were remnants of evangelical theories of sin, original and directly made, for how else to explain the blockages?

In Palmer's version of the discourse, what flowed into human embodied spirits was the end-century/new-century successor to magnetic tides that he called "Innate." In its new monism and—in the words of H. Stuart Moore—chiropractic's "impulse to reinvest science with spirit," Palmer's Innate cut a path between the rationalism of mainstream science and the Christian Science practice that effaced matter totally for spirit. *Innate* meant "born with," explained Palmer, and it was shorthand for the "individualized intelligence" that ran "through all the functions of our bodies during our wakeful and sleeping hours." As such, it was a "part or portion of that All Wise, Almighty, Universal Intelligence, the Great Spirit, the Greek's Theos, the Christian's God, the Hebrew's Helohim, the Mahometan's Allah, Hahneman's [homeopathic] Vital Force, new thot's Divine Spark, the Indian's Great Spirit, the Christian Scientist's All Goodness, the Allopath's Vis Medicatrix Naturae—the healing power of nature." Meanwhile, Palmer's theosophical Innate was not unrelated to Still's osteopathic conceptions. Palmer had visited Kirksville and learned from what Still was doing there, although later he denied that he had done so. Yet there were differences: Still was interested in the free flow of blood; Palmer, more in the flow of nerve force. Still operated on bones and muscles and promoted massage; Palmer's focus was the spine and its "subluxations," using the spinal and transverse processes as levers to correct slippages and abnormalities.[28] However, it was on the level of theory that Palmer's statement refined and elaborated the fluidic model with a sophistication that marked its greatest difference from Still's work—and perhaps contributed to the nonmedical future of chiropractic.

Palmer's Innate ran through healthy bodies on the path of freedom, but it did so in tandem with another energy called Educated. With "spirit, soul, and body" as an identifying tag to mark the connection of his ideas to Theosophy and New Thought, Palmer declared that the three composed "the being, the source of mentality" and that "Innate and Educated, two mentalities," attended to "the welfare of the body physically and its surrounding environments." By contrast to Innate, Educated was intimately connected to the life history of the individual, shaped by education and experience. It started out knowing nothing "except as it [was] acquired." Innate was part of a metaworld; it had "been thinking ever since spirit and matter began an existence." Educated began and ended with a person's historical existence. But, perhaps surprisingly, Innate took back to eternity what Educated had learned. In the life trajectory of an individual, the two worked together, one tending to the body's inner welfare and the other to "outer well-being." Still, the mutual assistance between Innate and Educated was only "more or less," and they could be "antagonistic." A "displaced portion of the osseous structure" could, for example, press "against a sensory nerve caus-

ing the information received by Educated, which is transferred to Innate, to be abnormal." It was no wonder, then, that in a short text that still read as a mission statement for chiropractic, Palmer legitimated his work by testifying that "our physical health and intellectual progress of this world and the next depends largely upon the proper alignment of our skeletal frames."[29]

In Palmer's expansive vision of the role of chiropractic, fixing a spine and physical body could mean fixing an eternity. The chiropractor, as Hermetic priest, released the stuckness and freed the spirit. Not only did the chiropractic intervention allow Innate to move everywhere in the physical frame, guaranteeing health and well-being. It also operated as a moral and spiritual practice to affect the future of the spirit, whose acquired learning during an earthly lifetime could change spiritual status in the life to come. In fact, oral tradition among Palmerites had it that D. D. Palmer initially pondered whether he should present his new system of spinal adjustment as a religion. Still more, discourse on the spiritual would continue to characterize the tradition. Palmer's son B. J. (Bartlett Joshua) Palmer (1882–1961) pointed the way for twentieth-century changes. The son was clearly a more thoroughgoing materialist than his father, localizing the operations of Innate to the physical brain and dwelling on the materiality of the spiritual process. By 1907, he had purchased his father's struggling school in Davenport, paid its debts, and incorporated it. Expansive and charismatic, he drew students and staff to him and promoted loyalty among the devout. He also had a bitterly contentious relationship with his father, and the two became rivals in the evolving trajectory of chiropractic.[30] All the same, the son built on the metaphysical religiosity of his father.

We gain perhaps the most succinct statement of these connections and differences in an essay by Joy M. Loban, D. D. Palmer's associate and teacher at his school, later teacher and head of B. J. Palmer's rival Universal Chiropractic College, and eventual executor of the father's estate. Here the "philosophy" expressed became clearly a philosophy of religion. Chiropractic had "investigated and explained that mysterious and elusive thing men call[ed] the Soul," and it elucidated "the 'Nature' which [had] been used for generations as a name for the unknowable." The model that Loban unfolded was thoroughly agential. He wrote expansively that chiropractic had "taken the forces and energies which move and wield and reconstruct the elements" and had shown how they acted "in absolute obedience to an Intelligence" that was "all-pervading." It ventured "into the realm of (so-called) occult phenomena" and proved them "to be simply action in obedience to easily understood laws." Chiropractic philosophy was, in Loban's words, "the Philosophy of Cause." "The study of Chiropractic properly begins with a knowledge or conception of the ABSOLUTE and proceeds by suc-

cessive steps through the various steps that intervene before we arrive at a consideration of the ultimate expression of Energy in the tissue cells of man."[31]

What followed in Loban's exposition seems thoroughly Blavatskian. Each "individualized intelligence, or Entity called Ego, soul, etc." appeared to develop "only" through education, and it was "only through knowledge" that perfection could be reached. That stated, Loban thought that the "Entity" needed to "inhabit, in turn, the various stages of physical development (for the physical body of man has passed through ages of evolution) in order that it may reach perfection." Why would not one physical body suffice? Loban answered sententiously, invoking the "law that no portion of matter exists forever without changing from one state to another"; the physical, thus, had to "be dissolved and scattered." In keeping with D. D. Palmer's notions of the role of Educated in transforming Innate, Loban declared that as the mind passed from physical life to the "void" to physical life again it retained "all the knowledge it [had] already gained in previous existences." It used the knowledge "in the operation of the new medium for the acquisition of more knowledge." "Just as matter is dependent upon the Mind for its existence in organized form, so is the Mind dependent upon Matter for its development."[32] In Hermetic and theosophical vein, always, humans would walk the earth as gods, but the twist on reincarnation was unmistakably Palmerian. Now they would walk as enlightened body-selves, with perfected flesh the prerequisite for perfected spirit.

As Loban went on to track the action of Innate Intelligence in "the creation, transmission and expression of Power," however, the new physicality and energy emphasis of B. J. Palmer became apparent. First, purpose had to be present, but then "energy," which was "gathered in the brain" and "akin to electricity" but with "a higher rate of vibration." "Mental impulses" traveled through the nerves from brain to body and were there "expressed as life," impulses that were "sent out in a series of vibrations—a current continually flowing from the brain outward." The only thing that could interfere would be an obstacle in the path of transmission; in other words, a subluxation of the spine that interfered with the exit of the nerve from the spinal column. Thus the task of the chiropractor was clear and specific—to remove the blockage or the slippage. Chiropractic *philosophy*, by contrast, was grand and "all-comprehensive." It encompassed "all things created, and back of all the ABSOLUTE." In it could be found "the germs of every truth which is now and always has been." From this perspective, the "true Chiropractor" was "neither a Mental Scientist nor a Physicist"; the healing discipline included "both Physics and Metaphysics—and the relation between the two."[33]

Loban was not shy about invoking B. J. Palmer, and his words to that effect were effusive in their overinvestment, astounding in their silence. He had quoted

freely, he said, "from the utterances of B. J. Palmer," even engaged in "bold plagiarism" of the younger Palmer, whom he acclaimed as the "originator" of chiropractic philosophy. About D. D. Palmer, Loban had nothing to say, even though later, as executor of the elder Palmer's estate, he would file suit against the son on grounds that he had maliciously driven his auto into his father during a parade in 1913. Meanwhile, B. J. Palmer was as caught as Loban between confession and silence. The father thought the son's brain theories to be "anatomical nonsense," according to Moore. These theories, in effect, reduced the role of Innate and turned the body into a machine run by the brain. From a historical perspective, however, it is not hard to see that the shift between father and son restated the shift between the older, more "spiritualized" and affective New Thought that Horatio Dresser admired and the newer, more mentalistic and noetic version exemplified by Trine and later New Thought writers. Meanwhile, although B. J. Palmer's valorization of the brain was probably not original (Moore pointed to its sources in a 1906 textbook), the younger man did love machines.[34]

By 1909, Palmer was promoting the use of the X-ray, and by 1923 a device called the Neurocalometer, which he claimed could find spinal subluxations by detecting changes in nerve transmission. Mechanical electricity was replacing the sensitized palm of the chiropractor. Whereas D. D. Palmer had insisted that no electrical gadgets should be used for adjustments, now a series of new tools beckoned the enterprising chiropractor. Yet, arguably, the gadgetry fed seamlessly into a chiropractic worldview premised on metaphysical notions of energy, and chiropractors operated them to open conduits and generate streams of power ultimately spiritual. By 1937, for example, chiropractors could employ the Chromoray, using spectral colors in an instrument developed in keeping with the *Principles of Light and Color*, the 1878 work of Edwin Dwight Babbitt, whose magnetism had influenced D. D. Palmer. Chromopathy, as the therapy was called, turned on the metaphysical notion that each color in the spectrum vibrated according to a signature pattern corresponding to that of a particular illness. By selecting and mixing appropriate colors, the causes of illnesses—not just their consequences—could be addressed by employing "the higher forces of nature." Similarly, other devices used electricity to provide stimulation to ailing patients and thus unblock the healing forces of nature.[35]

Some chiropractors were "straight," adhering strictly to the protocols of spinal adjustment advanced from the first days of chiropractic. Others were "mixers," freely combining spinal adjustment with other modalities including instruments, nutritional supplements, (homeopathic) flower remedies, and the like. Intersecting these divisions, however, some became mechanics who aspired to membership in the modern scientific community. Others, with or without acknowledg-

ment, were metaphysicians, continuing to subscribe to notions of blockage and flow and thus to the spiritual model behind the ideas. The changes that these twentieth-century chiropractors embraced returned them, again and again, to their origins. Thus, when the New Age came along and they freely joined, they did so in touch with their own roots. To cite but one example, California chiropractor John F. Thie and his "Touch for Health" technique (a kinesiological approach based on the work of chiropractor George Goodheart) revisited the Palmer model in New Age dress. Using acupressure (finger pressure to acupuncture points) along with chiropractic, Thie taught a practice that combined metaphysical Asia with metaphysical America. He explained to readers of his textbook/workbook that the chiropractor believed "that the innate intelligence that runs the body is connected to universal intelligence that runs the world, so each person is plugged into the universal intelligence through the nervous system." Turning to Goodheart's work that had preceded his own, he read the development of kinesiology for the restoration of muscular balance as a blend of Western and Eastern modalities. Goodheart had used "earlier chiropractic work and the ancient Oriental practices in the activation of energies in the body." Adopting the methods that Thie now taught would "help prevent malfunctions and pains from developing, as well as correct the reason for the pain and allow the life force to flow uninterrupted throughout the body." Always, he saw his patient/client holistically—"as a whole structural, chemical, and psychological or spiritual being."[36]

Spirit philosophy, however, was the property not only of chiropractors, osteopaths, and other denizens of the vernacular world. At the other end of the cultural spectrum, among the elite, another brand of metaphysics thrived. As early as 1872, a group of young intellectuals began meeting in the shadow of Harvard University at Cambridge, styling themselves, apparently, the Metaphysical Club. The logician and scientist Charles Sanders Peirce was the only one of the group who actually used the name—chosen, he said, "to alienate such as it would alienate"—as he recalled the fortnightly meetings of the club many years later. Still, the name rang historically true. Metaphysics, for the conventional intellectual society of the era, was a pariah term, and—as Louis Menand has written—"agnosticism was then riding its high horse, and was frowning superbly upon all metaphysics." Besides Peirce, members of the "club" included a roster of later luminaries in American intellectual history—men like lawyer and jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., mathematician and philosopher Chauncey Wright, historian and philosopher John Fiske, and psychologist and philosopher William James. The club soon dissolved (in less than a year), and members went their separate ways, although intersections and friendships continued among them at various points in their careers. Like the earlier Transcendental Club, the talkers

in this one (as their putative name suggests) had wanted in their own way to rattle cultural sabers, arming themselves with ideas that challenged the orthodoxies of the day. In science, religion, and philosophy, the Cambridge metaphysicians had found the themes of their discourse. They sought to retain the values associated with traditional religious culture but threw their energies into the confrontation between religion and science and a martial reconstruction of the relationship between the two. Looking for a basis for certainty, they could no longer find it in received religious formulas nor in scientific theories. Rather, it was in scientific *method* that they found the best resource for approaching certainty. They parried with the Darwinian theory of evolution in the midst of their discussions, and out of their discourse came the beginnings of pragmatism in philosophy.[37]

Charles Peirce (1839–1914) had used the term *pragmatism* in a paper for club members, operating on a cue he received from reading Immanuel Kant's classic *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). He had told them that the intellectual significance of belief lay in its impact and effect on their actions. Very much later, in the first decade of the twentieth century, he would explain that the term *pragmatism* was "invented to express a certain maxim of logic," which would "furnish a method for the analysis of concepts." The method involved tracing out imaginatively "the conceivable practical consequences . . . of the affirmation or denial of the concept" and acknowledging that "herein lies the *whole* of the purport of the word, the *entire* concept." By that time, Peirce's reflections had been stimulated by his felt need to distinguish his ideas from those of his longtime friend William James, who in a lecture in 1898 had used the word *pragmatism* and credited it to Peirce.[38] It is on James's reading of pragmatism and, more, on his deployment of the idea in his encounter with the metaphysical religionists he met that my narrative dwells. As the Cambridge-trained and then Harvard professor James left the earlier Metaphysical Club behind and met the vernacular metaphysicians of his late-century, new-century era, he found that they were worthy enough partners for parrying and that out of the interaction something good could come. His philosophical construct of pragmatism, in fact, was an ideational tool that reflected the religious labor in which they and others were engaged.

William James (1842–1910) had been shaped from childhood to be a religious seeker. His father, Henry James Sr., had been converted in the Second Great Awakening and then reconverted to Swedenborgianism in 1844. The elder James was friends with Ralph Waldo Emerson, knew (the poet) Ellery Channing and Henry David Thoreau, and could match words with Amos Bronson Alcott. He was also a Platonist and had read his share of Charles Fourier, whose thinking probably influenced him enough to name Plato's invisible world of ideas the realm of Divine Love—for a time the elder James was, in fact, an advocate of free

love.[39] His oldest son spent his life re-answering the questions his father's seeking raised. But, ironically, William James's contrary answers to his father's world ended by affirming what they denied.

Years before that, however, Henry James Sr.'s religious questing demonstrated for his son the authority of a self uninhibited by received convention. In the educational experience that he gave his son, he replicated the lesson. James Sr. moved William and his brother Henry James Jr. in and out of a series of schools, so that the two together had been enrolled in ten different institutions by 1855. After that, William James experienced several versions of Continental schooling until, in 1861, he matriculated at the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. It was 1869, however, before he lasted through an entire degree program and received his M.D. from Harvard (he never practiced as a physician). The effect of what Louis Menand calls this "international hopscotch" was profound. James never learned what it was like to think inside a box. He approached intellectual problems, as Menand argues, "uninhibited by received academic wisdom."[40] Indeed, James had been primed, in the midst of elite culture and with the respected and credentialed status that it gave him, to acknowledge in some ways his simultaneous participation in vernacular culture. Like the New England Transcendentalists who played so important a role in the coalescence of American metaphysical religion, he operated as a professional nonprofessional in religion, cutting a path identifiably separate from received and inherited orthodoxies.

It was at Harvard that James met Peirce and Holmes, with whom he became close friends and with whom he took the initial steps that led to his later philosophy of pragmatism. But after he received his medical degree, he was dogged by depression and illness, both to be chronic visitors in James's later life. Personal psychology thus continued to push him to raise existential questions, using the methods of science to forge a philosophy that could enable him (and others) to live in a world in which the old order no longer held. By 1872 he had begun his long career at Harvard (until 1907), joining the Harvard faculty ostensibly as a lecturer in physiology and anatomy. With an interest in physiological psychology, however, he transferred into philosophy, there creating the charter psychological laboratory in the nation. When his *Principles of Psychology* appeared in 1890, its central concept of a nonseparable link between body and mind, with the mind functioning (pragmatically) as the body's tool, enabled him to achieve his academic reputation. Already the germ of his later philosophy was visible in the textbook, and his later works—often the written versions of his frequent invited lectures—established his authority as the leading voice in American philosophy in his era and perhaps afterward. If so, it was a philosophy that took on the religious questions his culture was asking. *The Will to Believe* (1897), *The Varieties of*

Religious Experience (1902), *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909) all suggest in their titles the spiritual tenor of his work and ideas.[41]

Important here, the religious questions that James was asking—questions that intersected complexly with the spiritual seeking of his own life—reflect the agenda of American metaphysical religion as it turned toward themes of energy and agency. James had clearly noticed metaphysical religionists before the nineteenth century's end, and he was almost a quiet fellow traveler in their world. Ann Taves notes that James "shared much with new religious movements, such as Spiritualism, Theosophy, and, especially New Thought." She assesses, too, that with "metaphysically informed efforts at mediation" that were "vastly more sophisticated than theirs," he gave "a new legitimacy and prestige to these popular movements." More specifically, as Henry Samuel Levinson remarks, James gleaned his knowledge of the World's Parliament of Religions through Paul Carus's exuberant reports in the *Monist*, a journal that James read "thoroughly." Levinson also notes James's literary acquaintance with Phineas Quimby, about whom he read "curiously." James had apparently made his way through Ralph Waldo Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite*, and he liked it enough to give the book to his son Henry as a birthday present. In 1898, when a medical licensing bill would have prevented mental healers from practicing in the state of Massachusetts, James testified in court on their behalf, arguing that the bill would quash the acquisition of a new kind of medical experience. For all this, he possessed a certain wariness in the face of the new religious orientation, especially when it presented itself with an Asian overlay. He never, for example, visited the Young Men's Buddhist Association when he was in San Francisco, and he continued to express a fear that Asia was a cultural threat to the West.[42]

Yet the metaphysical version of Asia clearly fascinated James. Late in his life, in a lecture significantly titled "The Energies of Men," he cited his own guardedly positive rendition of its spirituality. He thought the "most venerable ascetic system," and the one with "the most voluminous experimental corroboration" for its results, was "undoubtedly the Yoga system in Hindustan." He could bandy yogic terms—Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga (had he read Blavatsky and/or Swami Vivekananda?), and Karma Yoga—and could declare that the practice of yogic discipline "for years" brought "strength of character, personal power, unshakability of soul." Even further, he told readers about a "very gifted European friend" who for several months fasted "from food and sleep," performed yogic "exercises in breathing and thought-concentration, and its fantastic posture-gymnastics." Thereby he "succeeded in waking up deeper and deeper levels of will and moral and intellectual power in himself" and escaped from a chronic brain condition

that had troubled him. But James's friend was a man of "very peculiar temperament," and James judged that few would have the will power to begin his kind of practice.[43]

Hence James himself backed away from metaphysical Asia and turned to metaphysical America to mark the role of ideas in unblocking energies: "We are just now witnessing a very copious unlocking of energies by ideas in the persons of those converts to 'New Thought,' 'Christian Science,' 'Metaphysical Healing,' or other forms of spiritual philosophy, who are so numerous among us to-day. The ideas here are healthy-minded and optimistic; and it is quite obvious that a wave of religious activity, analogous in some respects to the spread of early Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, is passing over our American world. The common feature of these optimistic faiths is that they all tend to the suppression of . . . 'fearthought.'"[44]

By the time he wrote these words, James had already, since 1902 and his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, established his definition of healthy-mindedness and explored New Thought under that rubric. There, as in "The Energies of Men," his inquiry operated on the premise of his pragmatism, and in his philosophical stance he modeled, in a sharper, clearer formula, what New Thought people were thinking and doing. James's achievement in *Varieties* was such that the work stood at once as a highly impersonal and highly personal book. As Ann Taves summarizes, it abstracted the mystical core of Christianity.[45] It operated studiously out of scientific canons of disciplined inquiry in psychology, and it used a series of examples to reach its general conclusions. But the intimacies of its lengthy narratives of religious experience belied its scientism, and James's forays into meaning as he assessed his confessional data, especially in his conclusion and postscript, led him to candid revelations of his own religious quest. For unmistakably, what James found in the experiential narratives of his subjects spoke to more than his rationalism.

As a psychologist James had at hand the new category of the subconscious to take the place of the magnetism of trance states and the mediating world of spirit visitors as conduits for revelation. He could explain clairvoyance and suggestion without recourse to supernaturalism or even the blurry naturalism of earlier intellectualizing theories. But James's subconscious—his "transmarginal or subliminal region"—was the gateway to a vaster, larger realm, and it functioned as a container for the kind of material that had formed the substance of religious and mystical revelation. It was "the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved." It was "also the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion." "In persons deep in the religious life," he concluded, "the door into this region seems unusually wide open;

at any rate, experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history." The language of "reservoir" and "fountain-head" was striking in James's formulation. These were, as we have seen, the chosen metaphors of Ralph Waldo Trine and H. Emilie Cady, at least, and James had used them, in New Thought fashion, to posit a divinizing force and source of revelation within. As he had declared, "metaphysical revelation" was the "farther office of religion."[46]

James's general understanding of religion replicated the theory of correspondence so cherished by metaphysicians. "Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto." Moreover, as his conclusions about the subliminal already reveal, like the New Thought writers whom he read, James's God was immanent. In a passage that began with a consideration of God in nature and the world around, he turned abruptly to a God-haunted world within: "It is as if there were in the human consciousness *a sense of reality*, *a feeling of objective presence*, *a perception* of what we may call 'something there,' more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed." When he turned specifically to New Thought in what he called the "religion of healthy-mindedness," he cited and quoted New Thought authors Horatio Dresser and Henry Wood, quoted Horace Fletcher on "fearthought," and excerpted several lengthy passages from Ralph Waldo Trine.[47]

Following Francis W. Newman's distinction between the "once-born" and the "twice-born," James identified the mental healers of his day with the once-born.[48] They were optimists, he thought, even in some cases cut off from sadness by a "congenital anaesthesia." They experienced "no element of morbid compunction or crisis," and hence they did not require another and better world to make sense of the one in which they lived. Although this summary ignored the way that metaphysical religion decreed the presence of divine power and plenitude in situations that were often quite the reverse, it did distinguish a habit of discourse in the New Thought community. As James noted, the "advance" of liberal Christianity over a fifty-year period could "be called a victory of healthy-mindedness within the church over the morbidness with which the old hell-fire theology was more harmoniously related." But he was clearly drawn to the "Mind-cure movement" as his case par excellence. Within it, he had noticed "various sects of this 'New Thought'" but found their agreements "so profound" that their differences could be "neglected." (Although he cited Christian Science only once —for its radical denial of evil—he missed the Calvinist-leaning exclusionism of

Mary Baker Eddy's church and linked it, generically, with New Thought as a species of mind-cure.)[49]

James thought the New Thought movement impressively large—"a genuine religious power." He added astutely that it had "reached the stage, for example, when the demand for its literature is great enough for insincere stuff, mechanically produced for the market, to be to a certain extent supplied by publishers." More than that, he could begin to trace the process of cultural diffusion. "The indirect influence of this has been great. The mind-cure principles are beginning so to pervade the air that one catches their spirit at second-hand. One hears of the 'Gospel of Relaxation,' of the 'Don't Worry Movement,' of people who repeat to themselves, 'Youth, health, vigor!' when dressing in the morning, as their motto for the day." James could play the intellectual historian, too, and he cited origins in the Christian Gospels, in "Emersonianism or New England transcendentalism," in "Berkeleyan idealism," and in "spiritism, with its messages of 'law' and 'progress' and 'development.'" Likewise he pointed to "optimistic popular science evolutionism" and Hinduism as movement sources. (In a specific turn to New Thought teachings of divine immanence, he found within them "traces of Christian mysticism, of transcendental idealism, of vedantism, and of the modern psychology of the subliminal self.") But the bottom line, for James, was the sheer practicality of the movement. Mind-cure had spread because of its results, its "practical fruits," which suited the "extremely practical turn of character of the American people." So much so that "their only decidedly original contribution to the systematic philosophy of life" was "intimately knit up with concrete therapeutics."[50]

James quoted the aphorisms of the movement to point to New Thought's message of agency. "'Pessimism leads to weakness. Optimism leads to power.'" "Most mind-curers here bring in a doctrine that thoughts are 'forces,' and that, by virtue of a law that like attracts like, one man's thoughts draw to themselves as allies all the thoughts of the same character that exist the world over. Thus one gets, by one's thinking, reinforcements from elsewhere for the realization of one's desires; and the great point in the conduct of life is to get the heavenly forces on one's side by opening one's own mind to their influx." Yet the paradox of the agency and the flow was that, at its epicenter, it required stillness, "passivity." James had posited a mystical core that implicitly countered the "Don't Worry Movement." Success came through surrender and letting go; it meant resigning "the care of your destiny to higher powers" and "the passage into *nothing* of which Jacob Behmen writes." Mind-curers had, without a conviction of sin, ended in religious states similar to Lutherans and Wesleyans, demonstrating "regeneration by relaxing, by letting go"; giving their "little private convulsive self a rest, and finding

that a greater Self is there." Always, though, thoughts were suggestions; they were ideas *with power*, ideas that assumed for individuals "the force of a revelation." For James, the point was that the revelation worked. "The mind-cure movement spreads as it does, not by proclamation and assertion simply, but by palpable experiential results." Totally unscientific and at war with scientific positivism, it yet adopted scientific method in adhering to rule and expecting concrete effects.[51]

Was New Thought then true thought? Were the purveyors of metaphysical Truth, in everyday terms, correct? These questions push the argument into a Jamesian corner where pragmatism sits waiting. For in his pragmatic theory of truth, James in effect gave carte blanche to New Thought practitioners and a host of religionists of other and distinctive stripes. He had told them to keep on doing what they were doing because it led them somewhere that they experienced as good. It would be half a decade more before James's lectures on pragmatism appeared as a book, but he had clearly been thinking and writing under the aegis of pragmatism in his *Varieties* already. When the lectures on pragmatism did come, they captured succinctly his actional theory of truth, which in its outline reflected the agency-based universe of metaphysical religion. In James's theory, as in metaphysical religiosity, energy abounded if a person opened out to it and allowed it to carry the individual to further regions of the mind and back again to this-worldly blessing.

Thus, what needs to be noticed most about James's pragmatic theory of truth is its moral character. It is, quite simply, a moral theory of truth, and as a moral theory of truth it carries the implicit quality of agency. In his essay "What Pragmatism Means," from the collection he called simply *Pragmatism*, James associated his concerns with "the pragmatic method"—a way of "settling metaphysical [here meaning "philosophical"] disputes that otherwise might be interminable." In this context, pragmatic method meant trying to "interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences." What difference would it make if one thing were true rather than another? Citing the Greek derivation of the term *pragmatism*—from the word for "action"—and citing, too, his friend Charles Peirce as the first to introduce the term, he said that, for Peirce, beliefs were "really rules for action." They led to certain forms of conduct, and conduct was their "sole significance." James took Peirce's belief about belief (or at least his understanding of it) and made his own promotion of it something of a cottage industry after 1898. Now he was summarizing his position. In a reading of metaphysics that straddled the worlds of professional philosophy and American metaphysical religion, he linked historic metaphysics (philosophy) to magic because of the power of incantatory words to control a situation—a "spirit, genie, afrite, or whatever the power may be." In the presence of a mysterious universe,

words operated to resolve its enigma and so to control and bind, leading the mind to rest. Words like "'God,' 'Matter,' 'Reason,' 'the Absolute,' 'Energy'" were "so many solving names."[52]

By contrast, James pushed toward science and away from what he regarded as magic and its (seductive) restfulness. If a person followed James's pragmatic injunctions, there would be no closing of the metaphysical quest. "You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed*." Theories thus understood became *"instruments not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest."* Here was a resoundingly Protestant reading of value—associated not with contemplation and quietistic gaze but instead with forthright action toward a goal. Drawn to mystical acts of mind that fused far goals with present endeavors, James spoke them in the cultural language of action and effort. Philosophy, like religion, was hard work. The work appeared more spacious, however, when James cited the (later often-noted) corridor theory of truth, borrowed from Italian pragmatist Giovanni Papini. Pragmatism, like a hotel corridor, opened out into numbers of dramatically different "chambers." There could be an atheistic writer in one, a devotee in prayer on his knees in a second, a chemist in a third, an idealist metaphysician in a fourth, an anti-metaphysician in a fifth. All, however, owned the corridor and had to go through it to get to their rooms. Hence James wanted to look away from first things and origins to "*last things, fruits, consequences, facts.*"[53]

That established, he went on to call pragmatism not only a method but also "a certain *theory of truth*." Summarizing the position of other logicians as well as his own stance, James was ready now to define: *"Ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience."* James was also ready to carry his view into the bastions of theology. *"If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life,"* he declared, *"they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have be to acknowledged."* Still more, James was bent on conflating the age-old Platonic ideas of the good and the true. Truth, he insisted, was "*one species of good*, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and co-ordinate with it. *The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons.*"[54] It was patently clear that value—the good—was primary. Psychologist and philosopher James was working as an ethicist.

Read against James's profile of the New Thought universe in *Varieties*, it is

likewise clear why James could endorse the New Thought position and run with it. New Thought people were quintessential pragmatists in method and behavior, and James had anyway concluded in *Varieties* that God was "real" because he produced "real effects." Moreover, James's own philosophical method, from one point of view, had mimed the metaphysical reflections of New Thinkers: His subliminal self was their immanent God; his instrumentalism in method was their practice of affirmation and denial; his moralism matched theirs; his option for action resonated with their unblocked energies; his typologizing echoed their theories of correspondence; his mentalism sat easily beside theirs. In the end, though, and ironically, the once-born world was not a place in which he personally—with his life of chronic depression and unease—could reside. His long account of the religion of the "sick-soul" and "morbid-mindedness" plumbed the religion of those who had deeply experienced the evil of their worldly plight and been reborn into a nonnaturalistic realm. Whatever their religious background (but especially in the American revival tradition), he declared for the greater completeness of their world. "The completest religions would therefore seem to be those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed."[55]

Still, at the very least, James had taken a vernacular culture that other professionals of his time and later were ready to discard, had found it worthy of his curiosity, and had begun to investigate its categories and to use them as his thinking tools. The seriousness of that endeavor was revealed in the last two decades of his life in his connection with the London-based Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 with an Anglo-American following. James, in fact, had helped to form an American branch of the society in 1884, and by 1890 he was issuing a call to researchers to study trance comparatively. Impressed by the complexity of psychic phenomena, he also, by 1909, acknowledged that the study of psychics themselves was "tedious, repellent, and undignified." That, however, did not stop him from persisting. He was willing to estimate that "in good mediums *there is a residuum of knowledge displayed* that can only be called supernormal." And he thought that there was "a cosmic environment of *other consciousness* of some sort," which was "able to work upon them." He had, he wrote, arrived at "one fixed conclusion" from his experience with psychic phenomena. Humans were like "islands in the sea, or like trees in the forest." Whatever their surface connections, the trees joined roots "in the darkness underground," and so did the islands "through the ocean's bottom." "Just so," there existed "a continuum of cosmic consciousness, against which our individuality builds but accidental fences, and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir." James had reversed the New Thought metaphor. But he went on to diagnose the separate selves of his own society and to link his findings to a wider

investigative field that reversed his reversal. "Our 'normal' consciousness is circumscribed for adaptation to our external earthly environment, but the fence is weak in spots, and fitful influences from beyond leak in, showing the otherwise unverifiable common connection. Not only psychic research, but metaphysical philosophy, and speculative biology are led in their own ways to look with favor on some such 'panpsychic' view of the universe as this."[56]

Seven years earlier, in *Varieties,* James had speculated on the "*farther*" side of human consciousness after he had explored its nearer side in the personal aspects of the subconscious mind. He had spoken of "over-beliefs" and confessed his own. Invoking the common testimony of the religious people who had been his subjects and provided his data, he posited the axiom that they had identified their "real being" with a "germinal higher part." In turn, he had linked the higher part to "*a* MORE *of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside.*" James wanted to know whether the "more" was "merely our own notion" or if it really existed, and he had rested the case for its reality on his pragmatism. The "more" produced effects, and his own over-belief in the God of Christian culture could proceed apace. Strikingly, like Trine and his New Thought deity, this God was a God of Energy and Action. The "divine facts" that James could acknowledge concerned "the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state." But there was still a beyond. "The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in."[57]

More than that, it followed from the pragmatic rubric that there were plural worlds of meaning that different people tapped and so that there were different truths that could be owned. In his exposition of healthy-mindedness, James had already pronounced the universe "a more many-sided affair than any sect, even the scientific sect, allows for." He wondered "why in the name of common sense" he and others needed to "assume that only one such system of ideas can be true." "Truth *happens* to an idea," he had written in *Pragmatism.* "It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events." He had gone on to notice that his narrative was "an account of truths in the plural, or processes of leading," with only the common quality that they paid off. It was only the drawing out of the obvious, then, when James published his Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College under the title *A Pluralistic Universe.* Countering, on this point, the monisms of metaphysical Asia and metaphysical America alike, James yet ultimately affirmed metaphysical believers. His brief for pluralism and distributiveness ("pluralism lets things really exist

in the each-form or distributively") was also a brief for the habitual practice of combinativeness so cherished among religious metaphysicians.[58]

James was, in one sense, ahead of their game. He was playing affirmatively with the notion that the "each-form" might be "the eternal form of reality no less than it is the form of temporal appearance." And he was finding his "multiverse" still a "coherent world," not a "block-universe" but instead "a universe only strung-along, not rounded in and closed."[59] In so doing, he was, in fact, playing out the premises of his pragmatism, guaranteeing to each and all an equal place in the heavenly kingdom. Unlike Andrew Taylor Still and the Palmers, father and son, who believed that there was only one truth and they had it, James had discovered a metaphysical manyness at the heart of things. If he also smuggled in another monism in the monism of his pragmatic method, he had still played his game memorably. Whatever the philosophical conundrum of circularity with which he contended, his spirit philosophy, like the spirit philosophy of body mechanics, bore the mark of encounter with American metaphysical religion and suggested tellingly its diffusion in national culture and society. The twentieth-century-and-after story was the story of how far the metaphysical flow actually did extend.

CONFIDENT LIVING AND POSITIVE THINKING

"Confident living rights every wrong; / Dynamic power helps me be strong. / Confident living comforts my heart; / From such a blessing I can't depart." "Confident living fulfills my way, / Opens my channels without delay." So runs the refrain and part of one verse of a favorite hymn in Unity churches. The practice-oriented cast of the words, with their references to "dynamic power," comfort, and open channels, points to the payoff that James had found in New Thought metaphysics. That payoff was appropriated by a series of New Thought institutions in the twentieth century and after. These were small denominations, by any measure, and by 2004 they had, quite startlingly, neither been acknowledged nor included in the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches.* (Christian Science is also nowhere present.) This in itself is blatant testimony to cultural invisibility. (In recent volumes a "Directory of Selected Faith Traditions in America" lists Jews, Muslims, Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and even Native American spiritual traditions.)[60] Moreover, it is testimony that may speak to the sociological myopia of the editors or to the apparent unconcern of these groups about being known—or to both. Yet the strongest among the groups—Divine Science, Religious Science, and Unity—all thrived through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, bringing their versions of confident living to pragmatically tuned metaphysical believers and practitioners.

Divine Science—officially Divine Science Federation International—is based in Denver, Colorado, and is the smallest of the three denominations, with, by the last decade of the twentieth century, only thirty plus congregations in the United States and some centers in Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa.[61] A strong example of the facile networking that characterized New Thought from its beginnings, Divine Science could boast a series of founders—the three Colorado-based Brooks sisters, Alethea Brooks Small, Fannie Brooks James, and, foremost, Nona Lovell Brooks (1862–1945), as well as Malinda Cramer (1844–1906), who gave the movement its name. In 1885 in San Francisco, Cramer, who had been an invalid for twenty-five years, gave up on doctors and determined to get well on her own. After that, according to her own report, she had a felt experience of the omnipresence of God and experienced, too, a sense that she herself was in God. She got well and by 1887 began teaching and also attended a class offered by Emma Curtis Hopkins in the Bay City. Cramer had likewise formed an association with a former Mary Baker Eddy student named Miranda Rice, so she must have been aware of Eddy's teaching.

The same year that Cramer took the Hopkins class, in Pueblo, Colorado, two of the Brooks sisters—Nona and Alethea—became students of Kate Bingham, a teacher who had returned from Chicago, where, she claimed, she had been healed by Hopkins. Bingham's classes, too (and not surprisingly in light of the Hopkins connection), stressed the omnipresence of God. Nona Brooks, who had a troubling throat condition unresponsive to medical treatment, took the Bingham classes and in the course of one of them claimed an experience of white light and sheer presence that left her instantly and completely healed. Meanwhile, the third sister, Fannie Brooks James, studied under Mabel MacCoy, a former Chicago Hopkins student who had first sent Bingham to her teacher there. Immersed in Hopkins teaching and teachers, the three at the same time moved away from the denials of the reality of the material order characteristic of Christian Science and Hopkins-style New Thought, affirming the creation as an expression of God that shared in the divine substance. When Cramer traveled to Denver to teach New Thought classes, Nona Brooks attended, and the two women felt a connection. The name Divine Science came from Cramer, and the Brooks sisters received permission to use it for their teaching. The two streams converged. To the Statement of Being found in one form or another in both Christian Science and New Thought groups (there is no reality but God), Divine Science added the Law of Expression—an agency-oriented formula that stressed the *act* of the creator as manifested in creation. The shift was subtle, but it suggests once again the preoccupation with energy that Trine had signaled and that marked the twentieth-century-and-continuing version of metaphysics so strongly.

In 1892, Nona Brooks formed the International Divine Science Federation, and in 1898 the Divine Science College was incorporated in Denver. With networking intrinsic to its style and with Brooks a prominent speaker at New Thought conventions, by 1922 Divine Science had become part of the International New Thought Alliance. By then, too, its churches were flourishing in West Coast cities and also in midwestern locations like Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, and Ohio, while, in the East, Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C., all became sites for Divine Science churches. The relatively independent congregations in the movement became more formally organized in 1957 with the creation of the Divine Science Federation International. Meanwhile, Divine Science publications kept coming. In former Irish Catholic and Jesuit-trained Emmet Fox (1886–1951), with his metaphysical readings of the Bible and his "Golden Key" of reflecting on God instead of present difficulty, the movement produced one of the most well-known New Thought authors of the Depression years. Tantalizing hints in earlier Divine Science publications, however, suggest extrabiblical sources for its affirmations. Although Cramer—a former Quaker—insisted on personal spiritual experience as the origin of her teachings, J. Stillson Judah long ago pointed to evidence of her acquaintance with Christian Science, Kabbalah, Hermeticism, Theosophy, and Indian philosophy. For Nona Brooks, Hazel Deane's biography cited her awareness of the writings of Phineas Quimby, Warren Felt Evans, Helena Blavatsky, H. Emilie Cady, Ralph Waldo Trine, Henry Wood, and similar authors. But the official story, once again, was that Brooks and her sisters operated with personal experience primary: They picked and chose what supported their intuitions and their work.[62]

By contrast to Divine Science, the roots of Religious Science lay in the experience and teaching of one man. Ernest Holmes (1887–1960), however, in his combinativeness thoroughly reflected the New Thought desire for synthesis that Divine Science also hinted. Holmes, like a series of metaphysical religious leaders before him, did not come to his task equipped with professional training. He never went to college, although his brother Fenwicke Holmes graduated from Colby College in Maine, went on to Hartford Theological Seminary, and became a Congregationalist minister on the West Coast. Fenwicke Holmes, however, would eventually leave the ministry to work with his brother, and it was Ernest Holmes who took the lead in the movement that became Religious Science. Important here, from early on he was apparently an insatiable reader. J. Stillson Judah detailed a series of authors whom Holmes knew, including Emerson and especially his classic essay "Self-Reliance." The future Religious Science founder was familiar with Eddy's *Science and Health*, had read New Thought authors like the affective Hopkins and Cady and the more noetic

Christopher D. Larson and Orison Swett Marden, and was drawn as well to the "Hindu" mysticism of Swami Ramacharaka. By 1915, he had turned his attention to Hermetic materials, the Bhagavad Gita, and even the Persian Zend-Avesta. He was also seeking to synthesize these widely different materials with an Anglo-American literary tradition of reflection that included Emerson, Walt Whitman, William Wordsworth, and Robert Browning. Most of all, he found himself attracted to the English metaphysical writer Thomas Troward (1847–1916), with his triadic understanding of body, conscious mind, and spirit as the stuff of human existence. For Troward and for Holmes, spirit represented both the Universal Mind (God) and the subjective, or unconscious, mind of humans. This subjective mind mediated God's creative power, and it responded to suggestions from the conscious mind to manifest health or illness. Indeed, there was a mechanical quality to the divine operation in this activity, since Universal Mind produced a form in the objective world to match each idea—in Troward's conscious application of what he saw as the Swedenborgian law of correspondences.[63]

As the rationalism of this statement already suggests, Holmes—unlike Cramer and the Brooks sisters—represented a noetic version of New Thought. For him "science" functioned like clockwork and yielded expected results in what Religious Science practitioners later liked to call "scientific prayer." At the same time Holmes had reportedly experienced what was by then being called—after the appearance of the work of Richard Maurice Bucke—"cosmic consciousness." Moreover, by 1924 when he moved to New York for a brief period, he began to visit the elderly Emma Curtis Hopkins and became her last student. Hopkins had by this time, of course, turned thoroughly toward the mysticism that had attracted her throughout her long career, and her mysticism confirmed and intensified the direction in which Holmes was already headed. Charles Braden wrote, in fact, that Holmes considered Hopkins, alongside the thirteenth-to-fourteenth-century German Meister Eckhart, the "greatest of the mystics."[64]

Meanwhile, Holmes's pen had not been idle. He and his brother had early begun the magazine *Uplift*, and they also published their share of books. Ernest Holmes's ambitious work that would become the textbook of Religious Science, however, appeared in 1926, after his turn to mysticism; in its revised and expanded version of 1938 it grew to well over six hundred pages. The work systematically used Holmes's synthesis of Troward and a series of other sources in his own combinative religious declaration. From the start, he had ratcheted up the degree of abstraction in a mode characteristic of noetic New Thought writers. Scriptural quotations and text citations, while present, were minimal. (Much later, in 1957, when J. Stillson Judah asked Holmes if he considered his teaching to be Christian, Holmes hesitated before replying that he was not sure that

this was the case.) "There is nothing supernatural about the study of Life from the metaphysical viewpoint," Holmes announced in his introduction. Hailing the "subconscious mind" as the "mental law of our being, and the *creative factor* within us," he affirmed to readers that there was "a *mental law*, working out the will and purposes of our conscious thoughts. This can be no other than *our individual use of that Greater* SUBJECTIVE MIND, *which is the seat of all mental law and action*, and is 'The Servant of the Eternal Spirit throughout the ages.'" Holmes had read Sigmund Freud, and that was apparent. But the formulation was also, in its own way, Jamesian—emphasizing agency, with the subjective, or subliminal, self opened out to an All (although I am aware of no direct evidence that Holmes read William James). At the same time, there was a will-power gloss on the access a person could have to the subliminal, or subjective, and it iterated the message of the enlightened body-self, the enhanced and divinized ego-self that an exoteric American Hermeticism was constructing.[65]

"No mystery" obscured the operation of the Subjective Mind and its mental law, and the "road to freedom" lay "not through mysteries or occult performances, but through the intelligent use of Nature's forces and laws." "Conscious intelligence" marked the spiritual world, and the Subjective functioned as "a world of Law and of mechanical order." It worked in peoples' lives as "largely a reaction, an effect, a way."[66] It was not a person (there went the biblical God), even though often it seemed to act personally. Mind, then, could be approached scientifically because it worked by (old-style, Newtonian) laws. Learn the law and how to manipulate it, and you learned a miracle. Distinguishing between the conscious mind and the subjective mind, Holmes thought that both echoed the "'Eternal Thing' Itself," and he was willing to accord to it the qualities that had traditionally been associated with a divine Person; indeed, he was quite willing to call it God. But God was Energy, and Energy existed to be used: "This Universal Life and Energy finds an outlet in and through all that is energized, and through everything that lives. There is One Energy back of all that is energized. This Energy is in everything. . . . Our thought and emotion is the use we make—consciously or unconsciously—of this original creative Thing that is the Cause of everything." With the "seed of perfection" hidden within, Spirit worked for people by working through them. Surrounded by Mind or Intelligence, humans also existed within it and might "draw from It." However, what was drawn had to come "THROUGH THE CHANNEL OF OUR OWN MINDS." Holmes added that Emerson had advised others to get their "*bloated nothingness* out of the way of the divine circuits."[67]

How did people use these seemingly rarefied propositions? The answer is that they gave themselves "treatments"—with each treatment a strategy of mental

interruption and reversal that was expected to alter the course of external events and circumstances. (Both Religious Science and Divine Science practitioners—but not Unity students—spoke of treatments, although people in all three worked in much the same mode.) Holmes explained that a treatment was "a spiritual entity in the mental world" and was "equipped with power and volition." "Operating through the Law," it knew "exactly how to work and what methods to use and just how to use them." The methods, it turned out, were strenuous denials (of undesired conditions) and affirmations (of desired ones), but—and this was the difficult part—experienced not through a clenched determination put into the word but through the opening that the word produced. "*We do not put the power* into this word, but we do let the power of the Law flow through it, and the one who most completely believes in this power will produce the best results."[68] Holmes, for all his abstraction, was willing to provide an example:

> One finds himself impoverished. He wishes to change this condition. He knows that it is not in accord with Ultimate Reality; that the Spirit imposes no limitations. . . . First, he realizes that the Law of Life is a Law of Liberty, of Freedom. He now states that this Law of Liberty is flowing through him and into all his affairs. But the image of his limitation persists. . . .
>
> Right here, he must stop and declare that these images of limitation are neither person, place nor thing; that they have no power, personality nor presence and no real law to support them. He does not believe in them and they cannot operate through him. He is free from their influence, forever. He then begins to fill his thought with the idea of faith, the expectancy of good and the realization of plenty. He senses, and mentally sees, right action in his life. He puts his whole trust in the Law of Good, and It becomes very real to him as he definitely speaks It into being—into his being and into the being of his affairs.[69]

What had happened? For Holmes and Religious Science practitioners, science had triumphed over sense. Looked at from another point of view, though, mental magic had happened—the manipulation of consciousness (instead of the maneuvering of material ritual accoutrements) to obtain a desired result *in the material world*. At the same time, Holmes was recommending mystics to his followers—calling a mystic "one who intuitively perceives Truth and, without mental process, arrives at Spiritual Realization." For nonmystics, (spiritual) evolution advanced similar goals in the "awakening of the soul to a recognition of its unity with the Whole." Its aim was to produce an individual who might "completely manifest the whole idea of life," thus bringing "Unity to the point of particularization." And like Helena Blavatsky and Theosophists, Holmes saw material evolution as the effect of this spiritual evolution. "This reverses the popular belief,

declaring that *evolution is the result of* intelligence, rather than intelligence being the result of evolution!"[70] Holmes and his students were having life both ways—drawing energy from mystical systems and, through the mental transformers of will and intent, lighting up lives for enhanced ego-selves. On grounds like this, living could, indeed, be confident, and Religious Science did grow confidently through a series of organizational changes.

As early as 1917, Holmes and his brother had begun what they called the Metaphysical Institute, and Ernest Holmes was ordained to carry on his work by the Denver Divine Science Church. A year after he published *Science of Mind*, however, he established the Institute of Religious Science and Philosophy in Los Angeles. Affiliated institutes sprang up in a loose organizational structure, and eventually the groups began to call themselves churches and the Religious Science Church. By 1949, the International Association of Religious Science Churches was incorporated. However, as the Church of Religious Science took shape out of the older Los Angeles institute alongside other groups and centers, divisiveness erupted over issues of democracy versus central control. Should all—on a Christian Science model—be legal affiliates of the Los Angeles Religious Science Church? Or should a more congregational polity persist? Some—the larger group—chose the first model, and others the second, so that separate organizations resulted and continued. By the last decade of the twentieth century, those in the International Association of Religious Science Churches, which had resisted formal affiliation with the Los Angeles Church of Religious Science and insisted on local control, had become Religious Science International. This organization included over one hundred churches in the United States and five in Canada as members, and it offered enthusiastic support to the International New Thought Alliance. Meanwhile, the Religious Science Church, organized along the lines desired by Holmes and now known as the United Church of Religious Science, had become the majority body. Like Religious Science International a strong supporter of the International New Thought Alliance, it claimed some 270 churches and related groups not only in the United States and Canada but also in thirteen other countries from Central and South America and western Europe (including Britain) to Africa, India, Australia, and the Philippines.[71]

The Unity School of Christianity, however, was at least twice as large. Moreover, the size of its formal organization—both as Unity School and, from 1966, as the Association of Unity Churches—was only a minimal statement of its influence by the last decade of the twentieth century. Melton reported that the Association of Unity Churches could count approximately seventy thousand members, with nearly 550 congregations and over one hundred affiliated study groups in North America alone, while in other countries there were fifty-five congrega-

tions and fifty study groups. Still, Unity—even in the early twenty-first century—remained uncomfortable thinking of itself as a denomination. Local churches often pronounced themselves "nondenominational," and the national leadership preferred to think of Unity as a movement.[72] Such ambivalence toward, and even rejection of, denominational status only reiterated Unity's early history. From the first, Unity had invented itself as a broadcast beacon for the printed word, and with its numerous publications—most notably its *Daily Word* (from 1924)—it reached a far wider audience than self-conscious metaphysical believers. Unity's message of confident living, innocuously presented, made its way even into evangelical and fundamentalist households without causing alarm or concern. As we have seen, Unity was the late-nineteenth-century creation of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in Kansas City, Missouri, and thus—like Divine Science—considerably older than Holmes's movement. It also shared with Divine Science a set of identifications that continued, throughout the twentieth century, to place it squarely within the affective, Hopkins-style New Thought community. Beyond that—unlike Holmes and many Religious Scientists—it always understood itself as thoroughly Christian. Yet, with Charles Fillmore, it absorbed teachings from nineteenth-century Theosophy to turn-of-the-century metaphysical Asia and then, in Fillmore's style, the late-twentieth-century-and-continuing New Age and new spirituality movements.

For all Charles Fillmore's theological facility later, Myrtle Fillmore (1845–1931) led in bringing the pair into the Hopkins orbit and, so, into New Thought (although, like Hopkins, they originally called themselves Christian Scientists). Born Mary Caroline Page of Methodist parents, a graduate of Oberlin College, and later a teacher in Clinton, Missouri, she was nine years Charles Fillmore's senior. The two met in Texas, married, and settled in Colorado in 1881. They moved to Kansas City, Missouri, three years later, and Charles Fillmore began selling real estate there. By 1886, according to her recollection, Myrtle Fillmore believed that she was dying of an inherited tubercular condition along with intestinal and related problems. Medical remedies failed, and Fillmore thought her prospects bleak. Then, however, Eugene B. Weeks, a non-Eddy Christian Science practitioner, came from Chicago to Kansas City to present a course of lectures. Both Fillmores attended, but it was Myrtle Fillmore who was riveted by what she heard. Instead of a familiar tale of family genetics and health weakness, she listened to a new and different account of her ancestry. She was God's child, and that was her "hereditary parentage." "The truth came to me—a great revelation, showing me that I am a child of the one whole and perfect mind, created to express the health that God is." She took the message and, instead of being healed by Weeks, did with it what later became central to Unity teaching: She

"applied" it—in a series of persistent affirmations that straddled a line between the will-power teaching of noetic New Thought and a warmer, more affiliative brand of Christianity. "It flashed upon me that I might talk to the life in every part of my body and have it do just what I wanted. I began to teach my body and got marvelous results. . . . I told my heart that the pure love of Jesus Christ flowed in and out through its beatings and that all the world felt its joyous pulsation. I went to all the life centers in my body and spoke words of Truth to them—words of strength and power. . . . until the organs responded."[73]

Charles Fillmore was initially more skeptical, but—already a student of Theosophy and Hermetica—he was impressed by his wife's improvement and gradually came to accept the new metaphysics. He began using affirmative-style prayer for a hip dislocated since a skating accident in his childhood and a stunted leg that had plagued him afterward. (He was later to point to a slow improvement over the years in the condition of the leg and the hip, until, he said, both legs were nearly the same length.) By 1889, he had left his real estate business and begun publishing the magazine *Modern Thought.* The next year he invited Emma Curtis Hopkins to Kansas City to lecture, and then both Fillmores went to Chicago to study at her Christian Science Theological Seminary. They were ordained by Hopkins in 1891. By then, Charles Fillmore had renamed his magazine *Christian Science Thought* and, soon thereafter, simply *Thought*, because of Eddy's legal objections to generic uses of the Christian Science name. By this time, too, Myrtle Fillmore, who had been operating as a spiritual-healing practitioner since her own restoration to health, had thrown herself into the work of prayer ministry, becoming co-central secretary to the Society of Silent Help, which her husband had founded as early as 1889. The pair took the name Unity for their work; a new magazine called *Unity* was begun (*Thought* was incorporated into it four years later); and the prayer ministry became the Society of Silent Unity and later simply Silent Unity. The Fillmores encouraged the formation of local societies of Silent Unity (there were some six thousand members by the mid-1890s), and a message of affirmative prayer and study became the business of Unity. With a growing list of publications and other experiments (the Fillmores started the vegetarian Unity Inn, for example, in 1905), the Unity School of Christianity was incorporated in 1914. By 1922, Unity was on the radio, and two years later it had purchased its own radio station, which operated for a decade, with Charles Fillmore devoting considerable time to radio lecturing. (A radio and television program would be launched again in 1969.) By 1949, Unity headquarters had been shifted to a fourteen-hundred-acre location outside Kansas City, which was developed as Unity Village and continued into the twenty-first century.[74]

If Unity people did not think they belonged to a denomination, they thought of

themselves as students, and what they thought they studied in their metaphysical (that is, allegorical) readings of the Bible was practical Christianity. For example, the Unity churches that sprang up considered themselves to be dedicated not to Jesus Christ but to the *teachings* of Jesus Christ. The low Christology of the Unity movement rendered it difficult, anyway, to focus exclusively on the person of Jesus. The man from Nazareth was an elder brother and way-shower, and Unity students believed that the living Christ presence had anointed him and could take over their lives as well. Still more, the discourse community of the movement emphasized that practitioners were, indeed, students. Ministers wore no ministerial robes for Sunday services and provided "lessons," not sermons, for their congregants. Church bulletins sometimes conveniently supplied space for taking notes. Within the churches, organs were out, and pianos and other, lighter instruments were in.

Unity's basic textbook came to be—perhaps surprisingly—not the work of one of the Fillmores but instead the production of the homeopathic physician and student of Emma Curtis Hopkins, H. Emilie Cady (1848–1941). Cady's *Lessons in Truth* began in an invitation from the Fillmores in 1894 to publish a course of lectures on "truth principles" in *Unity* magazine. By 1901, because of a steady demand for the material, it appeared as a book, and so began a history of enduring demand and reprinting. According to Russell A. Kemp, by 1975 it had been translated into eleven languages as well as Braille, and according to Neal Vahle by 2002 it had sold more than 1.6 million copies, thus outselling every other Unity book. Through the years, Unity played fast and loose with the text, altering the order of the chapters and removing material—like a section on "chemicalization" (an Eddy term that signals an agitation and aggravation of old beliefs on their way to dissolution)—that seemed unsuited to a changed and changing time. Unity likewise supplied chapter and verse for biblical texts (which left their King James English for the New Revised Standard Version), whereas Cady did not, and Unity editors even transformed references like "man" to more politically correct language in the late twentieth century.[75]

The somewhat old-fashioned title *Lessons in Truth*, with its suggestion of a fixed order of the universe and an absolute reality, substantial and unchanging, belied to some extent its message of action and energy. Cady, in keeping with metaphysical idealism, did her share of affirming a divine unchangeability, calling God "the underlying substance of all things" and a "principle" that was "unchanging" and "forever uncognizant of and unmoved by the changing things of time and sense." That acknowledged, the reader needed only to turn to Cady's first lesson, "Statement of Being," to find another version of the divine. "God is Spirit, or the creative energy which is the cause of all visible things," Cady

announced. "Man," in turn, was "the last and highest manifestation of divine energy, the fullest and most complete expression (or pressing out) of God." Meanwhile, the moving waters Cady had invoked as early as 1891 were there, too. The "one Source of being" was the "fountainhead" and "the living fountain of all good." In metaphors and images that had initially preceded Trine's, God was a "great reservoir"—one that led into "innumerable small rivulets or channels," each of which opened out "into a small fountain." "Continually filled and replenished from the reservoir," each fountain was "itself a radiating center." "The love, the life, and the power which are God," Cady emphasized, were "ready and waiting with longing impulse to flow out through us in unlimited degree." "Stagnation," by contrast, was "death."[76]

Parallels in Cady's language to Trine's images of cleaning out a trough suggest more than a simple transference from one to the other but instead a metaphysical discourse community widely congenial to these metaphors. "A pool cannot be kept clean and sweet and renewed unless there is an outlet as well as an inlet. It is our business to keep the outlet open, and God's business to keep the stream flowing in and through us." "Your greatest work," Cady counseled, "will be done in your own God-appointed channel." Unity students who pored over these agency-oriented dimensions of "Truth" had learned from the start Noah Webster's definition for *spirit* in the contemporary dictionary that Cady was using. "'Spirit is life. . . . It is vital essence, force, energy, as distinct from matter." Studying these lessons with the aid of "Question Helps" for each of the chapters, they could arrive at a perception of metaphysical teaching in which the unchanging was yet the ever-moving.[77] They would be primed for the active work of prayer.

For besides studying, Unity students prayed. For them, prayer meant, first, "entering the silence," in which—as in the hymn—they sought to have their "channels" opened and receptive to a divine presence within. Only after they experienced a felt sense of connection were they instructed to continue to the next stage of prayer—the denials (of what was undesirable) and affirmations of the desired outcomes that they considered to be aligned with Truth. Like other mental healing practitioners, they decreed what they regarded as good and expected outworkings and manifestations. On these terms, Silent Unity was drawn into a national prayer ministry, using a developing technology to advance its work. By the late twentieth century, a twenty-four-hour prayer telephone line was available (and more recently a website), and people who had no formal relationship to Unity were often users. A cadre of Silent Unity prayer workers held requests in prayer for thirty days, sent letters to callers, and encouraged people in general to engage in prayer, as in the annual World Day of Prayer that by the end of the century was being promoted. Prayer workers, from the time of the Fillmores,

stopped all activity to engage in regular periods of prayer throughout the day. There were legendary tales about how May Rowland, director of Silent Unity from 1916 to 1971, refused to leave the Silent Unity prayer tower during a tornado alert. Prayer, for Rowland and other students of Unity, was the chief vehicle for harnessing their own divine energy and bringing it to bear on practical situations.

Unity's *Daily Word*—a small monthly pamphlet with a daily affirmation, short related discourse, and scriptural verse—above all promoted affirmative prayer and practice. From the first, it touched a popular core, with a circulation totaling over 144,000 by 1928, some 182,000 a decade later, and nearly 400,000 in 1948. By 2002, according to Neal Vahle, it had 1.2 million subscribers and was available in eight languages and in Braille. These readers, obviously, had to be mostly non-Unity students, since, as we saw, the membership rolls of Unity churches have been vastly smaller. English-language editions of the *Daily Word*, at least, came in regular and large-type versions, and subscription rates were nominal. Always, the telephone number for the Silent Unity prayer line was prominently printed on the inside front cover, along with, in the computer age, the Unity website address. One recent "word," for example, begins with the affirmation "God's healing love is flowing through me as forgiveness." Providing the word "Forgive" as a brief marginal keyword for practice, the short affirmative meditation—written in the first person—ends with the declaration "My heart is once again a clear, unobstructed channel for God's healing love that flows through me and from me." The scriptural verse that follows (Luke 23:34) quotes Jesus asking his father to forgive his persecutors.[78] Clearly, the reader is being asked to emulate Jesus the teacher, putting the message into practice for the day at hand.

Indeed, a short list of Unity beliefs—ideas about the one presence and power of God everywhere, about a living Christ presence within, about the creative power of thought and the demonstrable effects of prayer—always includes an emphasis on practice. Unity principles *work*, devotees have insisted. Their insistence has linked them to the energy metaphors and preferences of twentieth-century New Thought even if, for most of the century, their official organization had no formal connection with the International New Thought Alliance. Charles Fillmore, for example, thought the divine energy within to be so powerful that physical immortality could result, and early Unity students embraced reincarnation beliefs as a first step toward their immortal futures. After the smashing of the atom and the demonstrated power of the bomb, Fillmore wrote that "the next achievement of science will be the understanding of the mental and spiritual abilities latent in man through which to develop and release these tremendous electrons, protons, and neutrons secreted in the trillions of cells in the physical organism. . . . It is through release of these hidden life forces in his organism that man is to achieve immortal life, and in no other way."[79]

Fillmore read the Gospel accounts of Jesus in analogous terms, using notions of the atom that he had conceived at least as early as 1912 and interpolating them with theosophical ideas. For the resurrection, Fillmore could explain the narrative in natural terms because Jesus had "simply unloosed the dynamic atoms of His whole body and released their electrical energy. This threw Him into the fourth dimension of substance, which He called the 'kingdom of the heavens.'" (The "*fourth dimension*," reported Fillmore, was "a state of existence that popular material science says must be, in order to account for the effects that are being expressed on every side.") At the same time, in a theosophical gloss on Christian teaching, Fillmore invoked the "twelve powers of man"—what he called aspects of the "Subconscious realm" that were correlated to twelve centers in an idealized male body, much on the order of occult renditions of Kabbalistic charts depicting the power centers of the Sephiroth. Always, Jesus provided the metaphysical template, and the "soul development" of Jesus demonstrated what human growth and development should be. The highest center in Fillmore's Christian scheme was an "I Am" center at the crown of the head ("where phrenology locates spirituality," he explained). Humans could look toward the "second coming of Christ" in "the awakening and the regeneration of the subconscious mind through the superconscious or Christ Mind."[80]

The sacred technology for awakening and regeneration, in turn, came through the power of words. In Fillmore's first book, *Christian Healing* (1909), he pointed to the Genesis account of God's "original creative Word" and declared that humans could not know "how the thought, or Word, works" except through their own consciousness. From there he invoked the spoken word, which, he told readers, "carries vibrations through the universal ether, and also moves the intelligence inherent in every form, animate or inanimate." This power of the word, he said, was given to be used, and humans had the power "to deny and dissolve all disintegrating, discordant, and disease-forming words." "It is your duty as expresser of the divine law," he enjoined, "to speak forth the Logos, the very word of God, and cause the Garden of Eden, the everywhere present Mind-Substance, to manifest for you and in you in its innate perfection." Always, in circular fashion, the word led back to prayer. Writing about her long experience as director of Silent Unity, May Rowland remarked in 1961, "We feel that our prayers are effective because we speak the truth about you." Fillmore himself had long before written that "the secret of demonstration is to conceive what is true in Being and to carry out the concept in thought, word, and act." Thus Fillmore's prayer became, in the terms of this narrative, the highest form of mental magic: "If I can conceive a truth, there must be a way by which I can make that truth apparent. If I can conceive of an inexhaustible supply existing in the omnipresent ethers, there is a way by which I can make that supply manifest." Again and again,

the path to realization came through the articulated word, the word of prayer: "Every word is a thought in activity, and when spoken it goes out as a vibratory force that is registered in the all-providing substance."[81]

Fillmore could have added, by extension, the printed word. Unity's steady supply of the same—often, as we have seen, to an audience only peripherally related to Unity School—became an important factor in the spread of New Thought belief and practice in society at large. It did so by providing a word with an identity tag that could not be recognized, a word that consorted amicably with whatever else resided in peoples' minds. But in this Unity was not alone. If all of New Thought was thoroughly inept in producing denominations, in the end it found a better way to spread its spirituality. It disappeared. It became a part of general culture, so that by effacing its own logo it successfully shaped American mentality in marked and continuing ways. This is not to say that, through some vast conscious or unconscious missionary plot, it benumbed and beguiled an unsuspecting populace. Rather, New Thought had goods for sale that Americans wanted. It told them what they were inclined to hear, confirming them in their already-present suspicion of the divine status of their secret selves. Now New Thought was inviting them to make the secret public. Thoroughly discounting the dark recesses of the Freudian unconscious, New Thought's inner halls of light only confirmed the exoterics of American identity. Purveyors of democracy and freedom for all, leaders of the world's first and most successful revolution, Americans thought well of themselves, and the message of inner divinity and outer power supported their self-conceptions.

Positive thinking took over where confident living left off. Gradually, outside the denominations especially, the affective side of New Thought began to yield to an aggressive noetic presence, as New Thought authors and their imitators did exactly what William James said they were doing: Because of the size of the demand, they flooded the market with readily available and repetitive instruction manuals for success, "mechanically produced" and driven by the pecuniary desires of publishers. Whether or not it was "insincere stuff," as James alleged, is more difficult to tell. There was an easy glide from conviction and enthusiasm into the comfortable company of a cash cow. At the same time, drawing the line from the perspective of the twenty-first century for authors about whose lives little is known seems perverse and wrongheaded. Still, early-twentieth-century contemporaries were certainly making their judgments about right and wrong, with affective and Christian-identified metaphysical religionists casting critical glances at their brasher neighbors. Charles Fillmore, for example, warned against selfish use of his "electronic fire." Employed for self-serving purposes, it became "destructive" because of the "crosscurrents" that it set up "in the nervous system."

He adamantly opposed encouraging "those who still have worldly ambitions to take up the development of the twelve powers of man." Readers would be "disappointed" if they sought "to use these superpowers to gain money" or "control others" or "make a display of . . . power."[82]

One of the brasher New Thought neighbors was surely William Walker Atkinson, whom we have met before with his Anglo-American surname and also as Swami Ramacharaka. His titles did indeed flood the market of his day as commodities selling other commodities—success, happiness, and health achieved through the power of thought and will. Even at this writing Amazon.com advertises twenty-one works by Atkinson (as Atkinson) readily available in inexpensive reprints through Kessinger Publishing. A master of combinative discourse, Atkinson in his agency-oriented titles and their contents straddled lines between New Thought, Theosophy, magical practice, metaphysical Asia (here as Atkinson *without* the Ramacharaka pen name), and what would later emerge as positive thinking. Consider, for instance, his *Thought-Force in Business and Everyday Life*, evidently his first published book and suggestive of a background that included business. Published in both Chicago and London in 1901, it was reprinted in Chicago and New York in 1903, reprinted again in 1911 and 1913, and available in Russian by 1910. According to Atkinson's counting, the New York edition of 1903 was the eighteenth. Be that as it may, the short work of just over one hundred pages announced itself to be a "Series of Lessons in Personal Magnetism, Psychic Influence, Thought-Force Concentration, Will Power, and Practical Mental Science." Its partial contents included the topics of vegetarianism, celibacy, and deep breathing (suggesting a yogic influence), but also sections on the power of the eye and magnetic gaze as well as "volic force" (that is, will power) and direct and telepathic "volation." Atkinson wanted to show readers how "thought force" could aid them, and he was interested in "character building" by the use of "mental control" gained through the "art and practice of concentering." His notions of gaze and will hinted, too, of an older mesmeric model transformed for new times and situations.[83]

Atkinson's *Thought Vibration* (1906), subtitled evocatively enough *The Law of Attraction in the Thought World*, in another short work (less than 150 pages) aimed to instruct readers on thought waves and their reproduction, conflating notions of "mind building" and secrets of the "will."[84] Using the law of gravity as model, Atkinson explained thought waves in the context of waves of light, heat, magnetism, and electricity, finding the difference that marked these diverse waves of energy to be in their vibratory rates. For Atkinson, hidden frequencies existed in the world of light and sound vibration, and humans had only to wait the day when better honed scientific tools could locate them. Against this back-

drop, the task became to raise the level of one's inner mental vibrations through the exercise of will power. Training was required to attain mastery, and mastery would mean that the "I" could command the mind with the will as its tool. How did a person do that? The answer came through the New Thought technique of affirmation. It all worked by law, and by working in concert with law a person could become immune to injurious thoughts and negative feelings.

Atkinson's habit of combination had led him to a remarkable synthesis between Theosophy and New Thought. The theosophical disdain for control of trance mediums by spirits had transmuted into an active war against control of the mind by an undisciplined and destructive internal dialogue. The New Thought weapon to still the assault was the practical technique of affirmation. Between the two—Theosophy and New Thought—lay a universe of blended discourse about magnetism and science and also about the occult and magic. For Atkinson was headed toward a conscious espousal of mental magic—the manipulation of (subconscious) mind by the overt control and intention of the (conscious) mind to attain ego goals and desires. The enlightened body-self of metaphysical Asia and its erstwhile enthusiasts were being led seductively down a primrose path of desire, vulnerable to the goals of a self-aggrandizing and less-than-enlightened ego even as it understood itself to be building "character."

Atkinson rendered the magical ambience of his work still more explicit in the title of a book he published the following year. *The Secret of Mental Magic* provided seven lessons to teach readers how to become mental magicians, experts at mental healing and suggestion. He speedily followed up the same year with *Mental Fascination*, which declared itself a "supplement or sequel" and purported to give "special instruction" to "students" of the earlier book. It was in *Mind-Power* (1912), however, that Atkinson produced probably the most comprehensive work (it was nearly 450 pages long) that dealt with his version of mental magic. Here the energy quotient was raised to new heights as he invoked the "mental dynamo," explained the nature of mental power and "mentative induction," and pursued the issue of "mental magic" in animal and human life. Atkinson was interested in "personal magnetism" and "channels of influence," and he offered readers four varieties of suggestion to assist them. As in other works, he traveled with an awareness of danger. The "malicious animal magnetism" of the late-nineteenth-century world had entered a new domain of occultism, and Atkinson solicitously provided a "glimpse" of the "occult worlds," even as he taught self-protection in dangerous territory and gave instruction on mental healing and "mind-building."[85]

"Entering the silence" did not function as a rhetorical trope in Atkinson's world. Nor did lengthy disquisitions on the divine source of all. Instead, he had

discovered divinity at first hand, and it was mostly male and pointedly operative in a world of ego-driven goals and successes. If Hermeticism had gone exoteric in the mass spiritualism of the nineteenth century, it was becoming thoroughly secular in Atkinson's rendition, in which the secrets of revelation had become affirmations of agency and control. The ego-friendly manipulation of success would continue as other and later business enthusiasts latched onto his formulas and those of a small army of similar New Thought authors. Together they provide one expression, at the margin, of what happened to New Thought. In fact, the experience of Ralph Waldo Trine when he visited Henry Ford in 1928 already suggests what could result. Trine, the old socialist, found himself swept into the orbit of the charismatic capitalist and reported billionaire who had read *In Tune with the Infinite* and declared for its efficacious support when he was struggling to build the Ford Motor Company. Trine's published account of their meeting shows that he was transfixed—even mesmerized—by the objectified emblem of what his book had apparently done.[86]

We gain some insight into the runaway transformation of the New Thought gospel if we contrast the Depression-era work of Charles Fillmore called simply *Prosperity* (1936) with Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* (1937), which promised to reveal the (Andrew) Carnegie "secret" of getting rich. Like his teacher Emma Curtis Hopkins, Fillmore remained essentially unconcerned about acquisition but expected the divine Supply to provide all that he needed, with some to spare. In a covenant that he and Myrtle Fillmore had signed as early as 1892, they had dedicated themselves and their money to the "spirit of Truth" and the "Society of Silent Unity." They understood and agreed "that the Said Spirit of Truth shall render unto us an equivalent for this dedication, in peace of mind, health of body, wisdom, understanding, love, life and an abundant supply of all things necessary to meet every want without our making any of these things the object of our existence." In 1936, Fillmore's teaching was much the same, if elaborated considerably more. The lessons in his book *Prosperity*, he volunteered, were intended "to explain man's lawful appropriation of the supplies spiritually and electrically provided by God." "When we understand and adjust our mind to the realm or kingdom where these rich ideas and their electrical thought forms exist we shall experience in our temporal affairs what is called 'prosperity.'" It was all scientific, and it was all based on vibratory laws, as Fillmore saw it. The ether existed as an "emanation of mind," and Jesus had anticipated these discoveries of modern science, calling the ether the "kingdom of the heavens," which it was the divine "good pleasure" to bequeath to humans.[87]

What did all of this mean in practice? With "man" as "the inlet and outlet" of the divine mind, humans needed to begin to liquidate their debts first mentally.

Debts had been "produced by thoughts of lack, impatient desire, and covetousness." When these thoughts were "overcome," a new train of events would be set in motion. Avoiding "'easy-payment plans,'" a debtor should bless creditors "with the thought of abundance," knowing that God was the "unfailing resource" and "infinite and unfailing supply." Change your thinking, Fillmore instructed, and you changed your outer situation, since "outer things" conformed "to the inner pattern." Still more (and suggesting the evangelical world from which many New Thought converts no doubt came), one should tithe, providing one tenth of one's resources "for the upkeep of some spiritual work or workers. . . . set apart first even before one's personal expenses" were "taken out." Far from it being "unthinkable to connect the teaching of Jesus with the counting house and the market place," the "lofty teachings" of the Gospels were "the most practical rules for daily living." In that context, an idea had "the power of building thought structures, which in turn materialize in the outer environment and affairs and determine every detail of . . . existence." In Fillmore's version of the by-now-familiar New Thought metaphor, he told readers, "Your consciousness is like a stream of water. If the stream is in any way dammed up, the water settles in all the low places and becomes stagnant. The quickest way to purify and reclaim the low, 'swampy' places in your consciousness is to let in the flood from above by opening the dam." Nor, once the waters came, should people try to contain them. In his own theoretical expression of the socialism of the early Trine and a series of other early New Thought leaders with affective leanings, Fillmore cast his vote for an economic order that went considerably beyond Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. "The divine law holds that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. If this truth were thoroughly understood, men would begin at once to make all property public, available for the use and enjoyment of all the people."[88]

By contrast to Fillmore's law of flow and electrical energy with the (tithed) abundance of the kingdom distributed to all, Napoleon Hill gave his "Andrew Carnegie" version a year later in *Think and Grow Rich*, a book that, according to Donald Meyer, in twenty-one years went through twenty-eight printings. Meyer, calling the Hill work an example of a drift toward "magical psycho-science," has pointed to a "matching audience" of "men on the fringe" for this and similar efforts.[89] If these men were down, author Hill was decidedly upbeat. He had from early life been drawn to the achievements of Carnegie as well as other icons of the times such as Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell. Hill's Hermetic secret had been confided to him over half a century before by Carnegie and had also been passed to thousands of others.

The secret was a secret for success at *accumulation*. It concerned the basic idea behind a series of techniques and strategies that would enable practitioners to

acquire "vast fortunes through the aid of the Carnegie secret." Like Fillmore and all of the New Thought metaphysicians, Hill considered thoughts to be "things" and things with agency. They were "powerful things" when they were "mixed with definiteness of purpose, persistence, and a burning desire for their translation into riches, or other material objects." Indeed, desire represented the "starting point of all achievement" and the "first step toward riches." But the second step, perhaps surprisingly, was faith, and it was here that the metaphysical overlay of Hill's method became apparent. If faith was the "head chemist of the mind," as he declared, when it was "blended with thought," the "subconscious mind" got the "vibration" and transmitted it to "Infinite Intelligence, as in the case of prayer." More than that, when faith was blended with the emotions of love and sex, the three together had "the effect of 'coloring' thought" so that it immediately reached "the subconscious mind, where it [was] changed into its spiritual equivalent, the only form that induces a response from Infinite Intelligence." The Almighty, or its New Thought equivalent, was, in effect, being programmed to respond according to (business) plan. How was faith developed in order to start the action of the Infinite? The answer was familiar: It was accomplished by "autosuggestion," and autosuggestion happened through the disciplined use of affirmations. *"Repetition of affirmation of orders to your subconscious mind is the only known method of voluntary development of the emotion of faith."* When emotions were mixed with faith or any other feeling, Hill told readers, they got "magnetized" and attracted harmonizing vibrations, an assessment with which Fillmore could agree.[90] Always, however, Hill's plan was a plan of accumulation.

Hill invited readers to lie in their beds at night envisioning how much money they wanted to acquire, seeing it already in their possession, and stating, as a kind of contract with the universe, what service or merchandise they would provide in return. Meanwhile, what was needed for the successful execution of the dream was the "power of the master mind." Here knowledge and effort were to be coordinated "in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people" for attaining the financial goal. The human mind was "a form of energy," Hill explained, and part of it was "spiritual in nature." Coordinating the "spiritual units of energy of each mind" formed an "affinity," and that constituted the "'psychic' phase of the Master Mind." Why was that important? It brought the power of the many to the service of the self. In a bow to vernacular Freudianism, even sexuality could be transmuted to the service of the self's acquisitive goal, fueling it with a stimulus and energy that could provide "a super power for action." In the midst of this, prayer functioned as a necessary assist for the subconscious mind, provided that it broadcast, like a well-tuned radio, the right radio waves for Infinite Intelligence. The brain, as the "broadcasting and receiving station," could pick up the

thought vibrations not only of the Infinite but also of other minds, and Hill endorsed the principle of telepathy, seeing it at work at successful conference tables. Even, for all the manipulation, there was a "sixth sense"—a "door to the temple of wisdom"—by means of which "Infinite Intelligence" might and would "communicate voluntarily, without any effort from, or demands by, the individual."[91]

Basic fears—and especially the fear of poverty—needed to be abolished. Always, however, the Carnegie secret lay in the idea.[92] And the idea, as Hill would have it, was the idea of having and holding. Arguably, metaphysical "energy" had been dammed in the Hill preoccupation with acquisition, and—while the Infinite still supervised the project—for the most part the Infinite was now subject to ego control. A balance had tilted, and the precarious enlightened body-self, with its enhanced ego goals, had been nudged toward a more focused mode of activity and toward less metaphysically oriented ego goals. Hill, in effect, had flirted with metaphysical religion and in the end kidnapped it for a marginal enterprise. Metaphysics, however, could travel a less purely acquisitive path in mid-twentieth-century America, one that looked more broadly to a series of goals that included material prosperity but also peace and tranquility of mind for millions. The purveyor par excellence of this brand of metaphysical spirituality was Norman Vincent Peale (1898–1993).

Born in small-town Ohio of Methodist parents (his father was a Methodist circuit minister), Peale graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University and, after a stint in journalism, went back to school at Boston University School of Theology. In the middle of his studies, he was ordained to the Methodist ministry in 1922 and after five years at a church in Brooklyn, New York, accepted a call to University Methodist Church in Syracuse. Then, with a growing reputation and offers from both a Methodist church in Los Angeles and the (Dutch) Reformed Church in America's Marble Collegiate Church in New York City, Peale in 1932 chose Marble. He remained there for a long and distinguished career until he retired in 1984. However, as his biographer Carol George has observed, even though Peale switched denominations officially, the traditional Methodist culture in which he had thrived never really left him. His mature message, as it took shape at Marble, brought the liberal (Arminianized) Methodist tradition together with Calvinist language, an evangelical style, and conservative politics. As important, Peale would gradually bring to the combination a clear orientation to metaphysical spirituality. As long before as his years at Ohio Wesleyan, he had been drawn to Emerson and James. Already the mystical theology of the divine presence, mediated by the personalism of Borden Parker Bowne, was part of Peale's background; in his Boston seminary days Bowne was in the ascendant. Later, by 1928 while he was at the Syracuse church, Peale became acquainted with New Thought lit-

erature, gradually moving, as George explains, "from a mystical Methodism to a form of New Thought." It would be 1949, at Marble, however, before he would publicly come to endorse positive thinking along metaphysical lines.[93]

Nor was Peale secretive about his sources. In *Spirits in Rebellion*, for example, Charles Braden recalled the rumors he had heard from New Thought friends that Ernest Holmes had once visited Marble Collegiate. According to Braden's hearsay evidence, after the service Peale greeted the founder of Religious Science "as one he knew and deeply respected from the reading of his writings." Braden had also heard of Peale's "at least indirect contacts" with Unity. With these pieces of information as background, he wrote Peale a letter querying him about his New Thought connections, and, to his surprise, he received not a letter in answer but a telephone call. Peale owned that he had read the New Thought material and had found much that he felt was valuable but—in the same combinative fashion preferred by metaphysicians—had worked it into his own system. He referred Braden to his book *The Tough-Minded Optimist*, in which one of the chapters ("Never Be Afraid of Anybody or Anything") provides autobiographical reminiscences on Peale's formation. Yes, as the account reveals, Peale had discovered a certain kind of "'spiritual literature' which he found was increasingly getting into the homes of his people." It was emanating, among other places, from Unity, Religious Science, Science of Mind, Christian Science, and a series of metaphysically inclined teachers.[94]

Marble Collegiate Church, like Peale's previous two churches, grew spectacularly during his tenure; he brought a small and declining congregation into a situation of overflow, with crowds coming to hear his preaching. He traveled, he formed organizations, and he started to write. His *Guideposts* magazine, a monthly in the style of *The Reader's Digest*, from 1945 gave what has been called "Pealeism" a public face throughout the country. With "More than a magazine" as its motto, by the 1950s it had created a national prayer center with Silent Unity as its model. Subscriptions grew apace: 200,000 before the publication of *The Power of Positive Thinking* in 1952; 500,000 in 1953; a million in 1961; 2 million in 1973. "Through contacts in religion, politics, business, and industry, he was creating circles of supporters that collectively formed a vast national network, essentially the constituent part of the Phenomenon of Pealeism," says George. "It was indeed a phenomenal creation: Like an octopus, it gradually developed tentacles that reached deeper into new areas of popular culture." Peale's career was, as George assesses it, a "bellwether for major cultural realignments in the twentieth century, his priorities more symptom than cause of great subterranean shifts at work reconstituting the social landscape." Ironically, the shifts at work had brought to Peale's huge, far-flung congregation not the solitary busi-

nessmen living out their "motel theory of existence" whom he had hoped to reach. Instead, after 1952 his audience became predominately middle-class and middle-aged women, and they mostly counted themselves mainstream evangelical Protestants.[95]

In time Peale would author well over forty books. But far and away the most widely known was his inspirational best seller *The Power of Positive Thinking*, the work accorded first-place status in Louis Schneider and Sanford Dornbusch's classic study of major American inspirational books from 1875 to 1955. (Trine's *In Tune with the Infinite* held second place.) From a set of statistics published in 1956 by Alice Payne Hackett, Schneider and Dornbusch cited 2 million copies of Peale's book sold. These mid-1950s statistics on the sales success of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, however, would be thoroughly eclipsed by the data of later years. According to Carol George, by the late 1980s the book had reached sales of over 15 million copies, and it still could be counted one of the top ten books on self-improvement on the market.[96]

What had so moved readers to keep buying the book and to recommend it, apparently, to others? To note, as J. Stillson Judah did, that—like the books with, usually, the "greatest appeal" in the Schneider-Dornbusch study—it "contained concepts like those of New Thought" is perhaps to posit a truism. It is also to miss the agential and pragmatic nature of what Peale was delivering. He was offering seekers from mainstream churches a set of simple, practical techniques that, presumably, they could readily use to change their lives miraculously. He was claiming not a theological breakthrough but an easy way to efficacy and power. In a book that he declared was written "for the plain people of this world" and "with deep concern for the pain, difficulty and struggle of human existence," Peale hoped to show them how they could cultivate "peace of mind" not as "escape" but as "a power center out of which comes driving energy for constructive personal and social living." Moreover, in a discourse style that made him seem like a veritable student of Unity, he testified that the book was conceived and delivered in a context of prayer. "This book is written to suggest techniques and to give examples," Peale had begun in his introduction. He was offering readers "simply a practical, direct-action, personal-improvement manual." Still further, the how-to principles he provided were not of his invention but given "by the greatest Teacher who ever lived and who still lives."[97]

The principles abounded. So did the examples, and—strikingly for a book that came to have a largely female audience—the examples betrayed a decidedly male bias. It did not seem to matter, though. Anecdotes ambled their way through the pages of the book as just-so stories of good times come out of bad, peace out of turmoil, success out of failure, self-discipline out of addictive behavior. For-

mulaic and pat, they recommended a tripartite approach to any problem: affirm the desired good; visualize it; believe it. And it would come. The metaphysical preference for affirmative prayer—with affirmations repeated many times over—controlled these pages, and so did New Thought metaphors of God as an in-streaming, activating energy that moved through individuals when they called on higher power or had it mediated to them by another. In one story of his encounter in a midwestern city with a depressed and lethargic man in a hotel room, Peale remembered a remarkable turn of events: "I sought for guidance and found myself, quite to my surprise, standing beside him and placing my hand upon his head. I prayed, asking God to heal the man. I suddenly became aware of what seemed to be the passing of power through my hand which rested upon his head. I hasten to add that there is no healing power in my hand, but now and then a human being is used as a channel, and it was evidently so in this instance, for presently the man looked up with an expression of the utmost happiness and peace and he said simply, 'He was here. He touched me. I feel entirely different.'"[98]

The Unity prayer practice of entering the silence was here: People who lacked peace of mind were enjoined to "practice emptying the mind," and they were urged to the "daily practice of silence." "Everyone should insist upon not less than a quarter of an hour of absolute quiet every twenty-four hours," Peale insisted. After the silence, or in it, came prayer and visualization. "Do not always ask when you pray, but instead affirm that God's blessings are being given, and spend most of your prayers giving thanks." In meditation, "sit relaxed," and "think of your mind as the surface of a lake in a storm" until "now the waves subside." Then "spend two or three minutes thinking of the most beautiful and peaceful scenes you have ever beheld," and "repeat slowly . . . words which express quietness and peace." After that, he told readers, they should repeat the words of Isaiah 26:3: "'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.'" Meanwhile, the New Thought habit of denial accompanied the Peale advice: "Never mention the worst. Never think of it. Drop it out of your consciousness."[99]

Peale recommended Emerson, James, and Thoreau to his readers, and he especially noted as Emerson's "fundamental doctrine" the idea that "the human personality can be touched with Divine power and thus greatness can be released from it." Similarly, James had pointed to the power of belief, and Thoreau had evoked as the "secret of achievement" holding "a picture of the successful outcome in mind." Again and again, Peale repeated to readers his New Thought message of higher power. "This power is constantly available. If you open to it, it will rush in like a mighty tide. . . . This tremendous inflow of power is of such force that in its inrush it drives everything before it, casting out fear, hate, sickness, weakness, moral defeat, scattering them as though they had never touched

you, refreshing and restrengthening your life with health, happiness, and goodness."[100]

Yet for all his embrace of metaphysical discourse and his reiteration of what were essentially Hermetic and mesmeric metaphors, Peale was careful to circumscribe them to the pragmatics of method. He made no announcement of direct divine presence within, no testimony to God living within you as you, no affirmation of the great "I Am" thriving at the crown of the head and within one's being. Peale was stealing mystical results, like a latter-day Jason stealing a golden fleece, but the full mystical union in which humans felt themselves to be God—the union so precarious and problematic for orthodox Christianity—was evaded and suppressed. Instead, a doctrinally conventional biblical God came from outside to offer help and salvation to the floundering individual who called upon him. All was, on that score, evangelical and even Calvinist, and Peale could feel that all was well. The critics, however, could not. Clerical and academic alike, they issued a hue and cry when Peale's book appeared seemingly everywhere and became wildly successful in vernacular culture. What George calls a "savage critical attack" nearly convinced him to resign from Marble Collegiate: Only his dying father's wish persuaded him to stay.[101]

Like Mary Baker Eddy, whose Christian Science brought her the wrath of orthodox churchmen and other contemporaries, Peale faced the disdain of the sophisticated in church and not-so-church contexts for his plebeian efforts, deemed corrosive to (their) culture and to theological thought. Indeed, Peale's hard times raise questions about the easy feminist assumption that Eddy faced the lash of culture mostly because she was a woman speaking and acting with authority. Instead, placed beside the experience of Eddy, Peale's similar problems suggest that what drove critics was that both authors saw their work as faithfully within the bounds of a larger orthodoxy. Both hybridized their metaphysics to older, existing constructions within Christianity—for Eddy her Calvinist heritage, however much she rejected Calvinist predestination; for Peale his Methodist warmth and evangelicalism in a traditional Gospel culture. In Peale's case, those outraged by the wolf within the sheepfold said that Pealeism did not really represent religion at all but, instead, a masquerading secularism or, in George's words, "a kind of shadow religion" that was a "distorted and dangerous adaptation." Practical Christianity could be an end in itself rather than a means to final glory. Practice could become the center instead of existing in the service of basic Christianity.[102] Beyond that, both Eddy and Peale, as theologians, had been distinctly lowbrow, and as lowbrow they had, manifestly and undeniably, trumped the learned of their respective times. Their success could not go un-

noticed among the cultured despisers of acknowledged vernacular participation. Finally, for both (and for New Thought, in general), a closet anti-Catholicism may have played a role in their rejection. Did the metaphysical invitation to the depths of the self in Protestant America smack of Catholicism, in however heterodox a variant? Was there a way in which even the invocation of an inner world, or of metaphysics, or of entering the silence raised subliminal fears of a nonrational religiosity against which the Reformers of the rational Protestant world had struggled? Could Protestant exotericism remain safe if ordinary people looked too long and too comfortably into their private selves?

Quashing Peale, however, would not end the experienced comfort of Americans with the world within. New Thought had leaked out of its community container all over American culture. Among evangelical Christians, for example, clerical leaders like Phineas F. Bresee, who founded the (Holiness) Church of the Nazarene, preached with conviction the God who was divine Supply and the source of true abundance. Robert H. Schuller (like Peale of the Reformed Church in America), built the flamboyant Crystal Cathedral from whence he televangelized his "Hour of Power," testifying for a systematic theology of self-esteem and the secret of successful living. And (Granville) Oral Roberts—the former pentecostal preacher who subsequently got ordained a Methodist minister, built the City of Faith, and televangelized to the nation—brought to mainstream notice healing powers as dramatic as those of early Christian Science and New Thought practitioners.[103] Meanwhile, outside the ranks of the clergy, New Thought made its way among physicians as notions of the psychosomatic origins of disease grew and medical professionals came to recognize stress as a factor in illness. For the holistic among them, the New Thought world became an invitation to a new kind of magical thinking—in which the power of mind imagined the body into a restored situation of health, well-being, and even spiritual transformation. To take but one late-twentieth-century example, there is holistic medical guru Deepak Chopra's popular book *The Way of the Wizard* (1995). Offering readers, as the work's subtitle promises, "twenty spiritual lessons for creating the life you want," Chopra's book hails Merlin—the renowned magician of King Arthur's legendary court—as the greatest teacher in the civilization of the West. Chopra, an Indian immigrant with an M.D. and former ties to the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of Transcendental Meditation, encourages readers not to embrace either medicine or Asia but instead the path that Merlin trod. Chopra would show them, through Western Hermeticism, how to go beyond ordinary reality by shifting their perception and opening themselves to the spiritual transformation possible in everyday life. Such transformation, his book testifies, rep-

resents the true alchemy that the wizard possesses. Thus, if readers followed the path of Chopra, who followed Merlin, they would go questing for their wisest selves. The path to this wise self lay, not surprisingly, within: It entailed entering the silence (once again), observing the mind, awakening it, and then using it to transform everyday reality. It was all there—the action, the agency, the flow of power, the pragmatics, the mysticism, and the magic. "*A wizard,*" Chopra announced, "*can turn fear to joy, frustration to fulfillment. A wizard can turn the time-bound into the timeless. A wizard can carry you beyond limitations into the boundless.*" Always, "*the cave of the heart*" was "*the home of truth,*" while, simultaneously, all humans lived "*as ripples of energy in the vast ocean of energy.*"[104] And if the wizard was there and all of metaphysics was there, so—in the background—was Theosophy.

THEOSOPHICAL LINEAGES AND LEGACIES

Katherine Tingley, the "Purple Mother" (she was fond of the color), stepped into the vacuum left in the Theosophical Society in America with the death of William Judge in 1896. Her Raja Yoga School at Point Loma, California (see the preceding chapter), would be only one of a series of experiments that she carried forward. Tingley (born Westcott) came from old Massachusetts stock with, on one side, "strong members of the Congregational Church, and on the other side . . . materialists." She would later recall a childhood "spent largely with nature," in which she "realized its mystery" even as she felt repelled by the religious conservatism of New England and its "revengeful" and "punishing" God. Significantly, she had enjoyed the company of a grandfather who was a Mason. She had come to Theosophy after two failed marriages, with a background already in spiritualism and Eastern occultism. But she also brought with her the influence of the American Protestant social gospel and the utopian expectancy that characterized parts of late-nineteenth-century American culture. Indeed, after she married Philo B. Tingley in 1888, she opened—by the 1890s—her Do-Good Mission on New York's East Side. "Crowds used to come there daily for soup and bread," she recollected, "and what else I could provide to help them." She felt overwhelmed by the suffering all around her, especially during a strike of the period, remembering a baby who had died in its mother's arms at the door of her mission. It was in this context that William Judge noticed her work and came calling, telling her that he could offer her something "that would go much deeper, removing the causes of misery and not merely relieving the effect." Thus, from the first, she was Judge's "convert," and she became a close and trusted ally, even nursing him during illness in his final year. She had come to believe that karmic patterns from the

past explained a person's present circumstances and that present ignorance could be corrected by education to alter and prevent what gave rise to suffering.[105]

After Judge's death and the charismatic Tingley's assumption of control—not without political maneuvering and the use of mediumship to claim contact with Judge's spirit—she announced her proposal for a "School for the Revival of the Lost Mysteries of Antiquity." This was a thoroughly Blavatskian idea, but what was new was Tingley's vision of the school as part of a utopian society she would create. With a world crusade already initiated to win members for the Theosophical Society, she obtained land at Point Loma on the tip of the peninsula that forms San Diego Bay. Other Theosophists were already primed to join her. In the midst of widespread utopian interest, they had read, for example, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888), the popular utopian novel that argued for a new cooperative social organization based on the collective power of the state. Theosophists—like a number of New Thought people (see chapter 5)—had joined the Nationalist clubs that were spreading the Bellamy vision. Amid their shared enthusiasm, in 1897 the Point Loma Community's cornerstone was laid, and Tingley proclaimed the future. Utopianism and a subtle Masonry blended as she dedicated "this stone: a perfect square, a fitting emblem of the perfect work that will be done in the temple for the benefit of humanity and the glory of the ancient sages." Tingley's Theosophy would join a social-reform ideal to the inner quest, following the impulse of spiritualists and New Thought people but giving new concreteness to the linked projects of outer and inner work. The Point Loma Community aimed to become a new American "city upon a hill," a metaphysical showcase to advance the earthly and spiritual healing of humanity.[106]

With a Tingley lodge in Buffalo sponsoring a home for "unfortunate women" and California Theosophists holding meetings in prisons, Tingley herself began an International Brotherhood League that historian Emmett Greenwalt called "a sort of DoGood Mission on an international scale." As troops returned from the Spanish-American War in 1898, she involved herself and other Theosophists in providing medical relief, earning praise from laggard government officials who were embarrassed into recognizing theosophical efforts. Thus she was able to secure transport to Cuba from the government to continue her relief work. Meanwhile, at a theosophical convention in 1898, she secured her control by reorganizing the society as the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society with a new constitution conferring extensive power on her as "Leader and Official Head" for life. Theosophists who supported her and moved to Point Loma read the convention as a millennial event, inaugurating a new world cycle with the close of the first and most terrible period of the Kali Yuga, which Blavatsky had predicted would come before the end of the century (see the previous

chapter). For them, Tingley had become equal to Blavatsky and Judge, and, as W. Michael Ashcraft notes, "one of a great trinity of leaders appointed by the Masters."[107]

In the next six years, Tingley would close almost all of the lodges to focus theosophical energies on Point Loma—a move that led to a shrinking membership base and, in the end, the demise of her colony as it staggered under the weight of financial burdens. Still, in the years in which it flourished in the early twentieth century, the community became a place to notice. With two public buildings, the Temple and the Homestead, or Academy (their aquamarine and amethyst glass domes as dramatic as Tingley), community members themselves lived in assorted bungalows and tents. But they also boasted a Greek theater in the open—the first in the nation—and impressive orchards and gardens. The theosophical residents had come from middle- or upper-middle-class backgrounds, and at the community's height they were five hundred strong (with three hundred students in the Raja Yoga School). Child rearing practices were innovative: Children spent their time in a community nursery after the first few months of their lives, and parents were visible only as Sunday visitors. Like the Brook Farm and Oneida experiments of the nineteenth century, early-twentieth-century Point Loma fostered music and the arts with enthusiasm. (Tingley linked music to a "science of consciousness" and found an "immense correspondence" between music and "thought and aspiration"; similarly, she thought that "true drama points away from unrealities to the real life of the soul.") Residents could point to their horticultural achievements and the California agriculturalists who were acknowledging the community's research. They could also feel satisfactions about a Woman's Exchange and Mart and a series of crafts that recalled the Shakers. The community's print productions gained notice when Point Lomans produced the first linotype printing of Sanskrit in the United States. And at an exposition in Leipzig, Germany, in 1914, the community's exhibit of printing and graphics earned a gold prize.[108]

Always, and in the tradition of William Judge, what drove Point Loma Theosophy was moralism. This, of course, fit hand in glove with the reform commitments of Tingley, but it also expressed the particular character that the Judge foundation had already imprinted on the American movement. The moralism also kept time with Blavatsky's own ideal construction of the occult world, for she distinguished it from magic: Occultism, Blavatsky thought, was altruistic, whereas magic manipulated externals for self-centered aims and goals.[109] Tingley's own synthesis combined themes of divine transcendence and immanence, drawing on theosophical and American sources. It invoked nature as the Great Mother and yet turned clearly to a God within—and this with an outright lan-

guage of the Self that bespoke the changes that metaphysical Asia was bringing. It taught a Puritan discipline of social behavior even as it commended to other Theosophists the spiritual discipline of meditation and a contemplative life. In the midst of this, it pushed Theosophists toward compassionate care for the world as the fruit of an inner life. It read a commitment to the world in American patriotic terms that smacked of a civil religion of the left even as it heralded, with Tingley apparently in charge, the millennial dawning of the new cycle.

As much as the New England Transcendentalists, Tingley had found God in nature, and her Point Loma existence overseeing the Pacific from the bluff of the spectacular theosophical property confirmed her in the habit. Nature was the "Mighty Mother" and the "Great Mother," and, as such, the place where divinity resided. "We lost touch ages ago with the Mighty Mother, Nature," she wrote, "and now need to go to her again." She hailed nature's "shining silences" and thought it the place to go to "seek aid." "Look up into the blue sky or the stars; catch in the air the feeling of her universal life." At the same time, the universe was "the outgrowth, the expression, of an infinite scheme proceeding from an Inmost Source beyond our comprehension." Humans, in turn, flowed out from it and followed "evolutionary law, passing through the many lives ordained for our growth towards perfection—we are here to work out the purposes of existence." Tingley knew about human suffering—her own, especially—and affirmed that she found in it "treasures of experience." With a complexity that belied the seeming glibness of her millennialism, she kept harking back to discipline and saw "meeting the trials from without" as a form of the same.[110] But unlike William James's twice-born souls who were sick, Tingley proclaimed a Hermetic gospel: Humans, in fact, were divine. "Godlike qualities lie sleeping within us, the spiritual things that mark us immortal. For here with the heart is the Kingdom of Heaven, and the only recompense a man needs is to become aware of his own divinity. It is there, a creative power within us, by whose virtue he who has patience to endure and work shall behold the fruit of his efforts—the human family glorified and brought to the goal his heart tells him may be reached. An order of life shall yet be established by those who have gone through the schools of experience, birth after birth, round after round, until they lifted themselves out of the strain and sorrow."[111]

For Tingley, Theosophy, with its message of inner divinity, gave the "highest law of conduct," and it led her, as ever, to the social order and to reflections on criminals, prisons, and capital punishment. Those who committed crimes lacked "the sovereign knowledge of the god within." "How then dare we condemn any man?" she asked. "How do we know what we ourselves might have done if placed as they had been, in other lives long since forgotten?" Prisons were "monuments

of iniquity," since they brought no "moral correction" to their inmates. Still more, capital punishment was a "form of murder," because a person's life did not belong "only to the community" but was "part of the universal scheme of life." It was "the crime against the Holy Ghost, the higher law." Nor were matters different in the collective life of nations. "Separateness," she wrote sententiously, was the "curse" of nations, which should instead be built "on the rock of that enduring wisdom which belongs to the divine soul of man." Tingley decried the "fear and apprehension of war" that she saw as "becoming a chronic disease" and found war in the "lower" selves of humans gone collective. "Shame on the people that so distrusts its higher self and godlike abilities as to feel unable to resist invasion by any other means than brute force!" But war for her could also be righteous. There was "one true and legitimate battlefield," she declared, "the mind of man, where the duality of our nature keeps us constantly at the only rightful war there is—the war of the god in us against the lower self."[112]

America, though, had a higher destiny. It was, she believed, "the chosen spot for solving some of life's greatest problems." She could urge young people to "study the Constitution of the United States; go back to the spirit that actuated the formation of that Constitution." Yet the future of possibility that she saw at the end of 1897 when she wrote these words was inextricably bound up with her Blavatskian expectation of the new cycle dawning. An "opportunity" had been "given to humanity" that it had not experienced "for thousands of years." The "cycle" had "reached its point of swiftest momentum." In an invocation that she gave some time later, she declared that "the crucial point of the cycle" was "past" and the "fiercest ordeal . . . over." "No powers in heaven or hell can longer stay the onward progress of humanity," she proclaimed. "The hosts of Light are already victorious."[113]

The "white city" of Point Loma, however, unlike the White City at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago just a few years earlier, was a city in relative isolation. If it was a city upon a hill, it did not bring millions—or thousands—to its doors. Despite favorable press coverage and the presence of Cuban children and orphans from Buffalo at its school, it could not sustain itself economically. By 1942, the Point Loma site was abandoned and, under Tingley's successor Gottfried de Purucker, the communitarians moved to Covina, east of the city of Los Angeles. Eventually, they made their way to Altadena, near Pasadena.[114] It was other theosophical voices, however, whose messages made larger impacts on the metaphysical religion of the twentieth century and continuing. The most significant of these voices, perhaps ironically, was the textual voice of the English Theosophist Charles W. Leadbeater. It was Leadbeater's promulgation of the chakras that generated a new, more focused discourse on access to higher ener-

gies among Theosophists and reached out to a vastly larger audience. By the end of the twentieth century, the language of chakras had become taken-for-granted discourse among countless Americans who had never heard of Theosophists but who knowledgeably filed chakras away on their shelf of just-so tools for thinking.

At first glance, talk of (Indian) chakras evokes metaphysical Asia. The chakra system rests on the notion of energy centers in the physical body that function as sites for energy exchange between inner and outer. According to the lore that entered the West, there are seven major ones, and—in the context of the blended Asian-theosophical discourse—they register not merely in the physical body but in the other subtle bodies that Blavatsky's metaphysical Asian schema identified. In the twentieth century, more and more, these subtle bodies came to be seen as energy bodies, with Charles Leadbeater's book *The Chakras* first giving currency to the energy-body concept.[115] What is so surprising about the language of the chakras, however, is how quickly and easily it spun away from its Asian roots. Indeed, it became a free-floating, general discourse on energy—used by the end of the twentieth century, for example, interchangeably with talk of Chinese acupuncture points and energy meridians. Far more than the discourse of yoga—which stayed contained in sets of body-discipline and meditation practices continually fed by infusions from Asia—the chakras became an independent enterprise.

Already in 1927, when it first appeared, Leadbeater's book signaled the cultural detachment and reattachment that transformed the language of chakras into a Hermetic and metaphysical lingua franca. The publishing history of the short work (under 150 pages including front matter and index) is instructive. It includes at least twenty English-language printings with some six Spanish versions and even a Japanese one. Significantly in the case of the English-language reprints, only six of them (two in 1927 and four thereafter) were available before 1965. Beginning in 1966, however, *The Chakras* went through fourteen printings, with the last—in 2003—not by a theosophical press at all but by Kessinger Publishing of Whitefish, Montana, essentially a metaphysical reprint service that photocopies older works and binds them in softcover format. Meanwhile, by 1980 Quest Books, the imprint of the Theosophical Publishing House in Wheaton, Illinois, was claiming that "hundreds of thousands of copies" of the theosophical classic had been sold.[116] All of this, of course, suggests that the lingua franca came into its own particularly when the New Age movement and new spirituality, in general, began to make their way in American culture.

In that context, Leadbeater's book, as the virtual first word in the new discourse, pushed it strongly in a direction that encouraged its detachability from Asia. Leadbeater used Sanskrit terms in identifying each of seven chakras (and,

it could be added, like Blavatsky before him thus mystified readers and added authority to his own discourse by its exotification). In the opening page of his first chapter (titled, tellingly enough, "The Force-Centres"), he also squarely situated chakras in South Asia, citing the Sanskrit meaning of the term *chakra* as "wheel" and alluding to Buddhist sources and even the Orientalist scholar T. W. Rhys Davids, so well loved by Theosophists. But South Asia swiftly fell away in favor of a short tour of the theosophical language of the "etheric double," summarizing the work of fellow Theosophist A. E. Powell in his book *The Etheric Double* (1925). The etheric double was an "invisible part of the physical body," and through it flowed the "streams of vitality" that kept the body alive. It also brought "undulations of thought and feeling from the astral to the visible denser physical matter." Then—in a reference that became transparent as the work progressed—Leadbeater explained that the etheric double was "clearly visible to the clairvoyant as a mass of faintly-luminous violet-grey mist, interpenetrating the denser part of the body, and extending very slightly beyond it." It turned out that the chakras, too, could be "easily" seen by anyone who possessed "a slight degree of clairvoyance," because they appeared "as saucer-like depressions or vortices" in the surface of the etheric double.[117]

Leadbeater could be counted among the gifted. In a work that contained ten vivid color reproductions on glossy paper, his plates and textual descriptions presented not the chakras of any classical Indian text or texts but the psychospiritual material of his own visionary experience. The circumspection was thin, and the fig leaf exquisitely transparent: "These illustrations of ours show the chakras as seen by clairvoyant sight in a fairly evolved and intelligent person, who has already brought them to some extent into working order." Leadbeater obligingly offered a few Asian, but non-Indian, allusions to images and statuary depicting, for example, the crown chakra (Borobudur in Java; Nara in Japan) and devoted a final chapter ("The Laya Yoga") to "the Hindu books." Along with some name dropping of Hindu texts, prominently in evidence were Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe in collaboration with Atul Behari Ghosh)—a theosophically favored author—along with the ubiquitous Rama Prasad (*Nature's Finer Forces*), Helena Blavatsky, and even Mabel Collins. Meanwhile, Leadbeater's comparativist inclinations in a Hermetic mode surfaced from the first. He nodded to "frequent" descriptions of the chakras "in Sanskrit literature, in some of the minor Upanishads, in the Puranas and in Tantric works" and to the use of the chakra system "today by many Indian yogis." Then he quickly turned to Europe, confiding to readers that "certain European mystics were acquainted with the chakras."[118]

Leadbeater spent ten paragraphs on one of them—Jacob Boehme's student Johann Georg Gichtel, whom he associated with the "secret society of the Rosi-

crucians." Gichtel's *Theosophia Practica* (1696), with—by the 1720s—the reproduction of clairvoyantly perceived "chakra" images, proved conclusively for Leadbeater that "at least some of the mystics of the seventeenth century knew of the existence and position of the seven centres in the human body." Just to be sure that readers understood, he reproduced one of Gichtel's plates, and it, indeed, looks strikingly similar to contemporary twenty-first-century representations of the energy centers. It was not a far stretch from there for Leadbeater to go to Freemasonry, claiming chakra knowledge among Freemasonic "secrets" and arguing that, in ritual, Freemasons "by utilizing them [the secrets] actually stimulate certain of these centres for the occasion and purpose of their work." Leadbeater added authoritatively that Freemasons generally knew "little or nothing" of what was occurring "beyond the range of normal sight" and alluded to his own book *The Hidden Life in Freemasonry* (1926), in which he had "mentioned as much of the matter" as was "permissible."[119]

In one sense, Leadbeater had only done as much as other Theosophists, beginning from Blavatsky and A. P. Sinnett, in offering a thoroughly metaphysical Asia to English-language readers. But by introducing the experimental data of his own subjective experience, arguably, he had gone further. He had shown more clearly how portable and culturally detachable the South Asian concepts actually were. Indeed, if we move quickly to late-century times, by 1987 in the midst of now-periodic reprintings of Leadbeater's book, at least three influential works in New Age and new spirituality circles were also trumpeting the good news of the chakras. They did so in largely, if not entirely, universalist terms that read chakras as synonyms for energy centers on the human body. Significantly, all three books arose out of personal experience, with chakras used to authorize the subjective impressions of the authors as a kind of metalanguage. For a first, Anodea Judith's *Wheels of Life* (with Judith's "Ph.D." designation prominently tagged to her name) went through seventeen printings of its initial edition in 1987 and appeared in a second, expanded version in 1999 claiming over 100,000 copies sold. It announced itself the work of a "somatic therapist, counselor, yoga teacher, and workshop leader." The preface to the first edition began with a description of how Judith came to chakras. "Once upon a time, while sitting on my sheepskin rug in deep meditation, I had a strange experience. I was quietly and consciously counting my breaths when suddenly I found myself outside of my body—looking at another me sitting here in full lotus. No sooner did I realize who I was looking at . . . than I saw a book fall into her lap. As it landed, it jarred me back into my body and I looked down and read the title: *The Chakra System* by A. Judith Mull (my name at the time)."[120]

Mull/Judith went for confirmation not to Leadbeater's work but to a remem-

bered passage in a book by well-known New Age guru Ram Dass (the former Richard Alpert associated with Harvard University's Psychology Department). But she was later to discover Leadbeater's book and understand its significance, calling it "the standard Western classic on chakras" and "for a long time . . . the only Western book on the subject." Because information was so scarce, she explained, she had needed to develop her own theories "through self-experimentation and the scrutiny of others" in her yoga teaching and bodywork practices. "Before long, everything I saw seemed to fall into this neat little pattern of 'sevenness': colors, events, behaviors, days." She had continued to develop her theories from the "hundreds of clients" whom she had seen, and she had also "delved into Sanskrit literature, quantum physics, theosophy, magic, physiology, psychology, and personal experience to patch together a coherent system." Judith gave each of her seven chakras English names (which became quasi-canonical in the late-century, new-century metaphysical world): "survival, sex, power, love, communication, clairvoyance, and wisdom." She had forged through all of this a user-friendly tool to think energy patterns in physical, emotional, and spiritual registers. Chakras, wrote Judith, were "*organizing centers for the reception, assimilation, and transmission of life energies.*"[121]

Judith, moreover, had decidedly rationalized the older model of chakras provided by Leadbeater's trance productions. The body, she explained, was a "vehicle of consciousness." Chakras were the "wheels of life" that enabled the vehicle to move "through its trials, tribulations, and transformations." For the vehicle to run "smoothly," what was needed was "an owner's manual as well as a map that tells us how to navigate the territory our vehicle can explore." With each chakra being "a step on the continuum between matter and consciousness," bridging "the gulf between matter and spirit" meant accepting one's identity as "the Rainbow Bridge that connects Earth and Heaven once again." Judith did keep Sanskrit language and terminology, made a few references to Asian sources, resurrected the much-favored Arthur Avalon, and—by the second edition, especially—dwelled to some extent on Tantrism and the kundalini experience. All of this, however, had become a convenient rhetorical instrument for a Western metaphysical spirituality that, by now, was preaching and teaching the enlightened body-self. In fact, so much was this the case that Judith included physical exercises to develop and regulate each of the chakras. She wanted open chakras if they were closed and cleared chakras if they were blocked so that they could work better, and she wanted to integrate their activity. Even further, she devoted a chapter to the interactions among chakras in dyadic relationships and in relationships with the culture as a whole. In keeping with the New Age community, she read the future in millennialist terms, invoking the "new evolutionary order"

that "must encompass and combine the planes and stages of all levels of consciousness." The present age, she said, was a time of "tumultuous changes and limitless possibilities."[122]

By contrast to the ambitious Judith book, Rosalyn L. Bruyere's *Wheels of Light* was briefer and more limited. First published in a homegrown version by her Healing Light Center Church in Glendale, California, in 1987, by 1989 it was picked up for mass-market publishing by Simon and Schuster. It was Bruyere, and then Barbara Ann Brennan, who introduced a focus on the human aura into the discourse of the chakra system. With a background in spiritualism, Bruyere said that she remembered seeing auras as a young child, suppressed the seeing, and then resurrected it as an adult when her children began to talk about the "colored fuzz" surrounding people. Encouraged by a medium at the (spiritualist) Universal Church of the Master in West Hollywood and then by spiritualists in the Church of Antioch in Santa Ana, she began "reading" auras and, by 1971, was also ordained a spiritualist minister. In the end, however, it was energies and not ghosts that won her. According to her own report, "I would scan the aura, find holes, put my hands there and pump them up." Even before she spoke of chakras, she claimed to see colors, to sense "congestion," and to "run energy" to clear it.[123]

Enter, at this point, science—in the person of Valerie Hunt, a tenured professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, who was metaphysically inclined. With a grant to study a series of "energy" phenomena generated through "structural integration," or rolfing (the deep-manipulation bodywork systematized by Ida Rolf), Hunt employed Bruyere as an aura reader. Bruyere, by this time, had acquired a reputation for such work in Los Angeles, and Hunt wanted to use her for experiments to ascertain the frequencies produced by the human energy field. With electrical equipment and Bruyere working simultaneously, Hunt sought to correlate human energy frequencies with those of visible light. "From that, we concluded," wrote Bruyere, "that what science had been calling the human energy field, or the mind field, and what religious traditions had been calling the auric field were one and the same." Thereafter Bruyere began to think increasingly in terms of the chakra system. From the first her reflections were expansively comparative. India was but one port of call in a series of cultures and peoples who knew about chakras—Hopis, Egyptians, Greeks, Chinese among them—and the fact that a *Sanskrit* term defined tiny energy vortices on the body was, for Bruyere, more or less irrelevant. (She casually cited "the Reverend Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant" in a somewhat confused historical account that also named Alice Bailey.) Bruyere was much more interested in identifying the colors of chakras; in characterizing, sometimes, entire cultures in terms of chakras that predominated (as defined by color); and in correlating

what she was finding with New Age science. "When we refer to 'color of energy' (or, sometimes, *frequency*)," she declared authoritatively, "we mean the color of the energy or chakra, as defined by the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation being emitted at that location, as perceived by those who have second sight."[124]

Bruyere's chakras, experientially based and scientifically "proven," had departed far indeed from their Asian context. At the Healing Light Center Church that she founded after the spiritualists indicated their displeasure with her direction, she began to teach her healing techniques, using aura reading and the laying on of hands. One of the people who sat in her classes was Barbara Ann Brennan, an erstwhile employee of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration from the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. Brennan, who styled herself a former "NASA physicist" (she had earned an M.S. in atmospheric physics at the University of Wisconsin and at NASA had studied the reflection of solar light from the earth), came to Bruyere as part of a professional and personal quest. Like a series of metaphysical leaders who have been cited in this narrative, she arrived as a self-made and entrepreneurial spiritual seeker. She went on to shape personal and professional answers that made a noticeable mark on the new metaphysical culture of the late twentieth century. Raised on a Wisconsin farm without books (except the Bible), central heating, or indoor plumbing, she, like Bruyere, spoke of seeing auras in childhood around "trees and the small animals," and, like Bruyere, as an adult she sought to reclaim her remembered experience.[125]

After she left NASA, Brennan pursued mind-body studies, worked in "bioenergetics" (predicated on the work of Freud's one-time disciple Wilhelm Reich), then "core energetics" with John Pierrakos, and later "Pathwork Helpership Training." Along the way, she gained knowledge of a variety of alternative therapies. As her own counseling work continued in this and later contexts, she became convinced that, as in childhood, she was seeing auras again—now around the bodies of her clients. Brennan went on to identify layer upon layer of energy fields in a theosophized account that ended with nine (instead of seven) energy bodies. Her *Hands of Light* (1987)—a textbook to teach the form of energy healing that she was practicing—provides a succinct account of her nonconventional scientific sources as well as her theosophically oriented spiritual ones. In its Bantam popular format of 1988, the book became a best seller and, by early 1996, with Brennan's later *Light Emerging* (1993), had sold 750,000 copies worldwide. According to the Brennan website in 2004, *Hands of Light* by then had more than a million copies in print and had been published in twenty-two languages. Moreover, alongside the books, Brennan produced audiotapes, lectured nationally, maintained the website, and had established a school—by then in South

Florida—to train other healers in her work. Nonaccredited but licensed by the State of Florida's Commission for Independent Education, the Barbara Brennan School of Healing boasted of more than one thousand graduates by June 2000, with the 2004 student body ranging in age from eighteen to seventy-five, two-thirds of them from various states throughout the United States and the remaining third from twenty-nine foreign nations. According to the website, over 15 percent of students worked in the health-care profession as physicians, registered nurses, physical therapists, psychotherapists, and nutritionists. Still more ambitiously, a Barbara Brennan School of Healing EUROPE existed in Mondsee, Austria.[126]

Given this background and the Brennan focus on auras, what is especially interesting about chakras in the Brennan account—in which they function prominently—is how much they are taken for granted. They are, as tellingly, almost completely detached from South Asia. Indeed, Brennan's first two references to chakras in her text glided over the term without any attempt at definition—as if speaking a language that readers used and understood. It was only on the third use, in a discussion of the "seven layers of the auric field," that she told readers how in the structured layers of the field (the odd-numbered layers) a "vertical flow of energy" pulsated "up and down the field in the spinal cord." She added that there were "swirling cone-shaped vortexes called chakras in the field" and that their "tips" pointed into "the main vertical power current" while their "open ends" extended "to the edge of each layer of the field" in which they were located. Brennan's explanation included a "Universal Energy Field," with "each swirling vortex of energy" (that is, chakra) sucking or entraining energy from the field, and thus engaging in processes of exchange. Exposing the combinative habit that had, by now, lost all touch with national cultures, she added that "all the major chakras, minor chakras, lesser chakras and acupuncture points are openings for energy to flow into and out of the aura."[127]

Brennan cited Leadbeater on the chakras in her bibliography (in a 1974 printing), but her text itself was innocent of references to him. Still more, nothing she had written located chakras in South Asia or in Sanskrit textual sources. At the same time, Brennan did—however briefly—give a passing nod to ancient spiritual traditions with which she felt her own work to be connected. Mystics throughout the world, she declared, had practiced "traditions" that were "consistent with the observations scientists have recently begun to make." She pointed to "ancient Indian spiritual tradition" with its discourse on "a universal energy called *Prana*." And although her rare references to kundalini were devoid of cultural context, Brennan alluded vaguely, in one place, to "Tantric tradition." She noticed Chinese "chi" (qi) and observed that the "ancient art of acupuncture

focuses on balancing the yin and the yang." Moreover, she (as vaguely) acknowledged the Jewish Kabbalah (dating it, without explanation, to "538 B.C."), connected it to the language of energies as "astral light," and pointed, too, to auras in religious paintings depicting Jesus and "other spiritual figures." "Many esoteric teachings—the ancient Hindu Vedic texts, the Theosophists, the Rosicrucians, the Native American Medicine People, the Tibetan and Indian Buddhists, the Japanese Zen Buddhists, Madame Blavatsky, and Rudolph Steiner, to mention a few—describe the Human Energy Field in detail," she affirmed. Brennan went on to cite representatives of the Hermetic energy tradition, naming Pythagoreans and other figures familiar to this account, including Paracelsus, Jan Baptista van Helmont, Franz Anton Mesmer, and Count Wilhelm von Reichenbach.[128]

She argued that diseases (her concern) for the most part originated in the body's energy system, and she sought to teach students how to identify problems in the subtle bodies and to repair and restructure them, thus preventing or reversing disease in the physical body. Brennan thus had been brought to the language of chakras to elaborate her rather elegant model—a spirit anatomy of energy bodies transferring energy from the individual to the Universal Energy Field and taking it back again, with chakras as the vehicles of transfer. If there were structured layers to these auric energy fields or bodies, there were also fluidic ones (the even layers) characterized by color and motion. Still more, Brennan instructed students on the role of chakras at birth and death, offering metaphysical glosses on reincarnation. "If the metaphysics disturbs you, please take it as a metaphor," she counseled students tolerantly. She told them, anyway, how at death people left their bodies through their crown chakra (an observation with which Andrew Jackson Davis would have agreed) and how she had "often seen them resting, surrounded by white light for some period of time after death. They appear to be taken care of in some kind of hospital on the other side."[129]

On the earthly side, energy blocks (now long familiar) closed the chakras and created illness. Healing thus meant opening the chakras. With psychology a strong suit in light of Brennan's counseling background, it was not surprising when she identified the sources of energy blocks as emotional. However, for her the emotional ultimately pointed the way to the spiritual, and problems on one register corresponded to problems on the other. The therapist functioned, in reality, as a spiritual healer, doing a work of love with a theology that smacked of Theosophy and New Thought. "The healer reaches into . . . painful areas of the soul and gently reawakens hope. S/he gently reawakens the ancient memory of who the soul is. S/he touches the spark of God in each cell of the body and gently reminds it that it is already God and, already being God, it inexorably flows with the Universal Will towards health and wholeness." Still more, the emotional work

that would bring the rewards of spirit was predicated on the healing of self in human relationships. In the post-Freudian discourse community in which Brennan functioned, failed relationships pointed toward the chronic malady of "self-hatred" and led back again to more failure between self and other. If the Brennan logic is extended, unblocking and healing the self meant, in the end, building effective community—even if Brennan herself never took her ideas very far in a social direction. What is clear, though, is that, for Brennan, people failed themselves and others for a reason that was finally spiritual. They could not extend their unconditional love to the "Godself within."[130]

With chakras as channels and conduits in the free flow of energy to and from the "Godself," Brennan had arrived where Theosophists always arrived—at the divinity within themselves. Outside the discourse on chakras, other Theosophists in the early twentieth century—spin-offs from the Blavatskian tradition—created lineages that carried forward theosophical ideas in the decades that followed. Closest among them to Theosophy was Alice Bailey (1880–1949), a former Theosophist who came late to Leadbeater's language of chakras but who, in her preoccupation with "centres" and divine rays of energy, effectively demonstrated similar concerns before the appearance of his book. Born Alice La Trobe-Bateman in an upper-class British family, she went to school under private tutors and went to church in the Church of England. Her mother died when she was a child, and with a troubled adolescence and suicidal tendencies (she tried to commit suicide at least three times), she was drawn to religion and spirituality. She was also educated to a social conscience, remembering that "from the earliest possible time we were taught to care about the poor and the sick and to realise that fortunate circumstances entailed responsibility." Still more, according to her later recollections from at least 1895 the teenage La Trobe-Bateman began to experience the uncanny. On a Sunday morning that year, while she was seated in the drawing-room of her aunt's house instead of going to church, a "tall man," dressed in well-cut European clothes "with a turban on his head," visited her. She was, as she later wrote, "scared stiff," but he sat beside her and told her that work had been planned for her in the world. To do it, she needed to change her "disposition considerably." She needed to "give up being such an unpleasant little girl" and "try and get some measure of self-control." He would visit her again at intervals. Later she felt that he had done so and eventually that she knew who he was. The visitor, for whom she claimed to work in the years that followed, was "the Master K.H., the Master Koot Hoomi." He was "very close to the Christ."[131]

To be sure, Theosophists would know that Koot Hoomi counted as a theosophical mahatma with solid Blavatskian connections, but his closeness to the

"Christ" pointed toward—and prognostically resolved—another world of experience. Drawn to the high-church ritual of the Anglican part of her family, Bailey had also experienced the narrower low-church version of the Church of England, with its foreboding visions of hellfire for the damned. She grew into something of a fundamentalist, working, in conjunction with the Young Women's Christian Association, as a missionary to British army soldiers in places ranging from Ireland to India. Eventually, the fundamentalism dropped away, but the figure of the Christ remained.[132] Even in the midst of the fundamentalism, in the Himalayan Mountains and at the Wesek commemoration of the birthday of the Buddha, she claimed a vision of the Christ standing at the apex of a "triangle" formed with two other figures. The crowd below, she recalled, seemed in "constant movement," modeling the symbols of world spirituality with their bodies—various forms of the cross, the circle, the five-pointed star, triangles. But the ecumenical Christian focus of the vision gave way before something else: As the three figures stretched out their arms, another and different one came toward the rock. She "knew in some subjective and certain fashion that it was the Buddha," but she "knew at the same time that in no way was our Christ belittled." There was a "Plan," and "all the Masters" were "eternally dedicated" to it.[133]

More conventional events were happening in La Trobe-Bateman's life. She met her future husband, Walter Evans, in India, and after their marriage in 1907 moved with him to Cincinnati, Ohio, and then—after he completed his studies at Lane Theological Seminary and was ordained an Episcopal priest—to California. Evans was physically abusive and emotionally troubled, and he left her in 1915. But around this time she was introduced by friends in Pacific Grove to Theosophy and eventually drawn to the American headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Krotona, California (this a branch of the Adyar-based original Theosophical Society, not the Judge-Tingley Theosophical Society in America). At Krotona, she became editor of the journal of the society, *The Messenger*, met her future husband Foster Bailey (national secretary), and claimed still another mysterious visitation in 1919. Djwhal Khul, "the Tibetan," she later confided, had asked her to be the human conduit for his books. Initially reluctant, she agreed when she came to believe that Koot Hoomi was supporting the project. So began her involvement in the production of a series of metaphysical books (some twenty of them), heavily drenched in theosophical terminology and lore but increasingly distinctive in their thrust. The first, *Initiation, Human and Solar* (1922), saw a few of its chapters published in *The Theosophist*, but tensions were growing and Bailey's claim to revelation was setting other theosophical nerves on edge. Bailey, in turn, was becoming more critical of the Esoteric Section of the society, which she had joined. In the midst of highly politicized dissension,

both she and Foster Bailey were dismissed from the Theosophical Society. They married in New York and, in 1923, organized the Arcane School there. Yet Bailey was still a Blavatskian devotee, teaching classes on *The Secret Doctrine*, even as she worked, as she believed, as the amanuensis for the Tibetan.[134]

Initially, three aspects of theosophical teaching attracted Bailey. First, the belief that there was "a great and divine plan" for "return to God" drew her. Second, she "discovered" that there were "Masters" who were "responsible for the working out of that Plan and Who, step by step and stage by stage" had "led mankind on down the centuries." Significant for her future work, she "found that the Head of this Hierarchy of spiritual Leaders was the Christ" and so "felt that He had been given back" to her "in a nearer and more intimate way." Third, she encountered the teaching that "pulled" her "up short for a long time"—the "dual belief in the law of re-birth and the law of cause and effect, called Karma and Reincarnation."[135] She did not like the Sanskrit term *karma*, favored by "Theosophists who, so often, like[d] to sound learned." But she came to accept the idea. As her teaching evolved through the Tibetan's books, however, it became clear that a sense of the ultimacy of energy and its entry into the human world—the hallmark of twentieth-century and later metaphysical religion—shaped her vision as much. The Plan was a plan about charging the world, inundating it with divine radiance. The Masters worked fervidly to accomplish the goal, and the laws of karma and reincarnation guaranteed that there would be enough time for humanity to be saturated with the sacred and so brought back to God.

As Bailey wrote through these ideas (and with her disdain for Sanskrit name-dropping), she used the language of "centres" to refer to what Leadbeater, in 1927, called chakras, although after 1927 the term *chakras* became more frequent in her writings. As early as 1922, in her first book, she thought of these "centres" as the stuff of ordinary occult knowledge: "It has been said that in the head of every man are seven centres of force, which are linked to the other centres in the body and through which the force of the Ego is spread and circulated, thus working out the plan." She made at least one passing reference to the "utilisation of the chakras (or centres) in the palms of the hands" and, employing the language of "centres," offered readers a detailed description of their awakening in "initiation." In her later and often-cited *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1925), Bailey's text underlined the energy dimensions of the centers. They were "formed entirely of streams of force." "When functioning properly," they themselves formed the "body of fire," which she identified as "'the body incorruptible' or indestructible, spoken of by St. Paul" (1 Cor. 15:53). Decades before Barbara Brennan, she was affirming, too, the presence of the "centres" on subtle bodies. In humans, she testified, centers were "found on the mental plane" and could be traced from

there "to the astral level, and eventually to the etheric levels, to the fourth ether." On the physical body, Bailey placed the centers in the traditional major chakra locations. She also provided readers, in her *Treatise on White Magic* (1934), with a close analysis of their working. "Each centre or chakra is composed of three concentric interblending whorls or wheels which in the spiritual man upon the probationary path move slowly in one direction, but gradually quicken their activity as he nears the portal of the Path of Initiation. On initiation, the centre of the chakra (a point of latent fire) is touched, and the rotation becomes intensified, and the activity, fourth dimensional."[136]

Beyond the centres or chakras, though, what drew Bailey—and distinguished her reading—was her attention to "rays." Blavatsky had introduced the discourse on rays from her own occult sources in *The Secret Doctrine*; the twentieth-century comprehensive and separately published *Index* to the mammoth work lists close to twenty-five citations. Thus the germ of Bailey's work as, she believed, the amanuensis of the Tibetan lay in Blavatsky's volumes. But Bailey and her Tibetan surely ran with what she had learned. Bailey's *Treatise on the Seven Rays* appeared in five volumes over a series of years (1936, 1942, 1951, 1953, 1960), with the last three published posthumously. The first two dealt with esoteric psychology, the third with esoteric astrology, the fourth with esoteric healing, and the fifth with the rays themselves and initiations.[137]

A ray, Bailey explained in the glossary to *Initiation, Human and Solar*, was "one of the seven streams of force of the Logos," one of the "seven great lights." Divided into three "Rays of Aspect" and four "Rays of Attribute," the rays included, for the former, "Will, or Power," "Love-Wisdom," and "Activity, or Adaptability." For the latter, they encompassed "Harmony, Beauty, Art, or Unity" (as one ray), "Concrete Knowledge or Science," "Abstract Idealism or Devotion," and "Ceremonial Magic, or Law." Bailey thought that there were "seven major types of people" and that they were related to the "seven great Rays or Energies," which she also identified as the book of Revelation's "'seven spirits before the throne of God'" (Rev. 1:4). With each ray expressing "a peculiar and specialised type of force," for Bailey "all people" were "units of consciousness breathed forth on one of the seven emanations from God." Hence "even their monads or spiritual aspects" were "inherently different just as in the prism (which is one) there are the seven differentiated colours."[138] In prose that was often well nigh impenetrable and dense with occult terminology (despite Bailey's own castigation of theosophical linguistic habits), she probed the dimensions and distinctions of spiritual energy that the rays represented. Her language would continue into the late twentieth century and on, as New Age and new spirituality aficionados spoke of what rays they had "come in" (to the planet) on and how that distin-

guished them as persons. Whatever the ray, though, Bailey had taught them—as had twentieth-century metaphysicians across the board—that they were energy beings.

Energy, moreover, was moving toward one great goal, and Bailey advanced the theosophical message of the millennium and specified it further. Blavatsky and other Theosophists—among them, Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater—had declared for a "new age" to come, with Besant promoting her young Brahmin protégé Jiddu Krishnamurti as that age's "World Teacher" and Leadbeater calling him the vehicle of the Lord Maitreya and of the Christ. Before Krishnamurti eventually disavowed the role in 1929, Bailey remembered that "Mrs. Besant's pronouncements about Krishnamurti were splitting the society wide open."[139] Still, Bailey's own new-age pronouncements were even more emphatic, if more ideal. More than Leadbeater, she conflated the identities of the Buddha of the endtime—the Lord Maitreya—and the eschatological Christ of Christianity, fusing the figures in ways that her early vision in the Himalayan Mountains had already prefigured. Always, though, it was the Christ who was central in Bailey's account.

Indeed, one of her volumes with the Tibetan, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1948), drew together an occultized South Asian discourse on the coming of avatars with the Christic focus that was Bailey's own.[140] Still more, it inserted both of these into a cosmology of the stars and planets in the linguistic terms of Western astrology and the action-oriented language of world service. Here Bailey bequeathed to the later New Age movement the expectation of the coming age of Aquarius. She announced the end of the age of Pisces and the dawning of the Aquarian era, with the coming Christ providing Aquarian service to all of humanity. In concert with the reappearance of the Christ, predicted Bailey, would come a major evolutionary event in the development of consciousness as humanity would be drawn away from individual needs and toward the needs of the whole. Anxiety over personal salvation would yield before the drive to world service, even as materialistic concerns would fall away before a new spiritual order. The Christ who would come, for Bailey, would arrive not only as the first Son of God but also as a kind of world executive, head of a spiritual hierarchy that represented the inner government of the earth. The example of the Christ would provide the model for a united world in which interdependence and interaction would bring a new material and spiritual order for the culture and civilization to be.

In this meeting between West and East, Bailey thought, humans had a significant role to play: It was their responsibility to advance the coming age. By 1935, the Arcane School was promoting the use of the so-named Great Invoca-

tion, a prayer believed to have potencies that were, in effect, sacramental and, as J. Stillson Judah wrote, "almost magic and divine." The Great Invocation called for the Christ who would return to earth, prayed that the "purpose" of the Masters would "guide the little wills of men," affirmed the working out of the "Plan of Love and Light" that could "seal the door where evil dwells," and prayed that "Light and Love and Power" would "restore the Plan on Earth." Later, Arcane School teachings announced that Christ himself had given humanity the Great Invocation on the full moon in June 1945, in the context of the ending of World War II. Full-moon meditations, culminating in the solemn recitation of the Great Invocation, have continued to be a practice of the Arcane School and other Bailey devotees. Meant to raise spiritual energies and to set up conditions that will bring the coming once more of the Christ, the meditations employ various ritual techniques—music, dance, speech, and gesture. They turn on the Bailey invocation, recited while visualizing the descent of the power (energy) of the hierarchy of masters.[141]

Other social-oriented programs created by Bailey's Arcane School promoted the notion of world service. As early as 1932, World Goodwill was established as the "New Group of World Servers" to bring right human relations to the world and to use the constructive power of goodwill to prepare for the return of the Christ anticipated by Bailey followers. Its work has been, in the large sense, educational, and it has functioned as an "accredited non-governmental organisation" with the Department of Public Information of the United Nations. By 1937, Triangles joined World Goodwill to carry on the work of the Bailey-affirmed "hierarchy." Considered a "service activity" for those who "believe in the power of thought," Triangles has linked groups of three individuals who each day unite mentally in "creative meditation" to radiate the light energy of goodwill to the world. At the center of the meditative action of each group stands the Great Invocation.[142] Bailey's theosophical tilt toward the figure of the Christ has thus been accompanied by a Western-style organized commitment to service, however mental the form it takes. More than that, Bailey—perhaps more than any other single teacher from the theosophical world—set the stage for the New Age movement. Her Great Invocation, her expectation of the astrological Age of Aquarius with its profound spiritual shift, her full-moon meditations, her preoccupation with continuing revelation through Masters, her incoming rays with distinctive divine energies for humans and society all have found their presence in New Age belief and practice.

Alice Bailey—or her Tibetan—however, seemed doubtful about other theosophical innovations. "The Masters portrayed in the many theosophical movements (since the time of H. P. B.) are not distinguished by intelligence and show

little judgment in the choice of those whom the organisations claim are initiates or important members of the Hierarchy," the Tibetan deplored in an appendix to Bailey's autobiography. In this, the Bailey-Tibetan view accorded with that of older theosophical organizations. But like New Thought, Theosophy had spun out of (organized) control. As Bailey's words hinted, a plethora of small groups appeared and disappeared. They announced through one figure or another their corner on continuing revelation, and—with assured access to a world of spirit and ascended mastership—taught their message to whoever would listen for as long as they would listen. J. Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, with its seemingly endless catalog of groups in the "Ancient Wisdom Family," suggests the extent and diffusion of these theosophical offshoots and lineages in American general culture. To cite but one influential case, consider the I AM movement. With a name that in itself points to the presence of New Thought in the theosophical world (even as we have seen the reverse), I AM hailed its masters as enthusiastically as older Theosophists had done. By contrast, Bailey's Tibetan condemned the masters who had been "brought before the general public by such movements as the I AM movement" as a "travesty of the reality."[143]

Perhaps what Bailey and the Tibetan found so objectionable in the I AM Ascended Master Religious Activity was its easy conflation of New Thought with these theosophical masters. The I AM account of its origins, *Unveiled Mysteries*, from the first signaled hybridism. According to Guy W. Ballard (1878–1939), the author and mining "engineer" who established I AM, he had encountered the "ascended master" Saint-Germain on the slopes of Mount Shasta, in northern California, while hiking there in 1930. (The figure was identified with the Comte de Saint-Germain, an eighteenth-century French necromancer, alchemist, and mystic claiming to be several centuries old. He had been hailed by Blavatsky as "the greatest Oriental Adept Europe has seen during the last centuries" and was likewise highly esteemed by Henry Steel Olcott.) Ballard, with a background in spiritualism and mediumship and a history of poverty, was already heavily invested in occult and metaphysical lore, studying it in the "occult" library in Los Angeles in a milieu saturated with Hopkins-style New Thought. Here Annie Rix Militz, a Hopkins student, had established her Home of Truth center before the end of the nineteenth century and had used it as a base to establish other Homes of Truth on the West Coast until her death six years before Ballard's hike. Meanwhile, in Atascadero, in central California, by the 1930s William Dudley Pelley was elucidating his Liberation-Soulcraft philosophy after a claimed out-of-body experience in the Sierra Madre Mountains. He had received messages from masters, or "mentors," who taught that all humans participated in the Godhead and so were bound and connected to one another. Pelley became still more well-

known, as the decade progressed, through the right-wing Silver Shirts that he founded—anti-Communist, anti-New Deal, and anti-Semitic. Ballard and his wife, Edna Ballard—a student of metaphysics and the occult, too—would maintain close contact with Pelley. It was no doubt through his influence that an exaltation of the American nation and a right-wing superpatriotism emerged in their teaching.[144]

Guy Ballard had climbed the mountain because he had heard rumors that the Great White Brotherhood—the theosophical masters—maintained a branch lodge there. So it was that Ballard's account of what transpired on a day in 1930 combined remnants of Theosophy with other remnants of New Thought in a new synthesis of his own. He had knelt to scoop some water, felt something like electricity rush through his body from head to foot, and turned to see the mysterious hiker who later revealed himself to be Saint-Germain. Significantly, the young man offered Ballard a creamy liquid that repeated the electrical effect on Ballard's mind and body. He told Ballard that the drink had come from "Universal Supply," which was everywhere available to those who loved sufficiently. Themes of poverty and prosperity intertwined in this essentially New Thought message that came in tow with the Ballard autobiography. Moreover, New Thought teaching was as generously supplied as the Universal Supply of the drink. In effect, Saint-Germain instructed Ballard in leaving behind the outer busyness of mind and body and entering the silence. In this and later reported visitations, too, after reviewing some of Ballard's previous lives, Saint-Germain began to teach that reincarnation could be avoided. (Belief in reincarnation had been taught not only by Theosophists but also by many—like Charles Fillmore and Unity students—in New Thought.) Saint-Germain himself was an *ascended* master, and the I AM Religious Activity came to teach that ascension was possible—and, indeed, the true goal of humans, instead of reincarnation. Here, again, there were New Thought connections. The Saint-Germain teaching accorded strikingly with the radical view advanced by Annie Rix Militz in her late Los Angeles years, when Militz moved away from Fillmore and began to teach "ascension," or "translation." "Like Jesus," she had written, "this can be your last incarnation, that is, the last one which has had its beginning in a flesh-birth." "The God-Self" was "never incarnated and therefore cannot be reincarnated." "Truth undeceives the ego when it gives itself up to the great Ego," Militz affirmed, "and then it begins its journey back to the Path which it left so long ago, and its arrival is the realization of Being-what-it-is, called the Ascension."[145]

Still more, the silence of a stilled body and mind—a spiritual strategy toward the growth that would bring ascension—led on into a distinctly New Thought terrain. Saint-Germain taught the use of affirmations. He also taught the use

of decreeing, a practice that, according to J. Gordon Melton, had begun with Emma Curtis Hopkins during her New York years. Here a decree was a statement distinguished by its energy and focus, its concerted investment of will, in commanding—or demanding—certain outcomes for good. It was spoken from the stance of the high Self that was God within. In the I AM context, a decree came to be used for destructive as well as constructive ends, in acts of "warfare" against what believer-practitioners deemed as evil. Since decrees were, in effect, especially forceful affirmations, it followed that the denials (of negative conditions) that were also part of New Thought prayer practice could be tweaked. They could become, in the emphatic form of the decree, what looked like old-fashioned curses. Ballard's ascended masters—Saint-Germain and Jesus the leading ones, but there were others—had supplied a continuing revelation that put Ballard himself in charge. He was Saint-Germain's "Accredited Messenger," and Edna and Donald Ballard (his son) were soon added, so that the trio became the only "Accredited Messengers" of the ascended masters. As they began to teach and develop their revelation, abundance replaced their former poverty. Edna Ballard, particularly, became a commanding presence. Charles Braden wrote of the movement's appeal to "enormous numbers of people in all the great cities" with claims of "more than a million followers" (even three million in the estimate of some members). "It is a fact," he wrote, "that in the late thirties they gathered huge crowds, filling the great auditoriums of the larger cities of America, night after night, for a week or more each."[146]

With continuing revelation from ascended masters and the practice of affirmation and, especially, decreeing, the I AM Religious Activity flourished. Meanwhile, the name by which it was known—I AM—also signaled New Thought presence in the midst of Theosophy. With hints of the "I Am" language in mid-nineteenth-century spiritualism, Warren Felt Evans later promoted its use, bequeathing the verbal formula to early New Thought, as we have seen. For the Ballards, the name did not come at once. Charles Braden remarked that he had "found no single reference to the I Am in *Unveiled Mysteries*, the original text, the first revelation made by St. Germain to Guy Ballard." However, as they grew into use of the name, what the Ballards evoked in the "I Am" or the "Mighty I Am Presence" straddled the line between personal and impersonal: I Am was an "It" but also displayed personal qualities like love, wisdom, and knowledge. More than that, I Am also straddled a line between supreme source and individualized God-Self within. Again, it was Emma Curtis Hopkins—who had hybridized Christian Science with the teaching of Warren Felt Evans—who taught her students, like Annie Rix Militz in Los Angeles, to think in terms of the "radiant I Am." As Melton has summarized, "In connection with her decreeing, Hopkins

and her students also used the term 'I AM' in the peculiar manner later to be identified with the 'I AM' movement." She had written a pamphlet *The Radiant "I AM,"* and one of her students—Thomas J. Shelton—developed her ideas even further in his book of *I Am Sermons.* In Los Angeles, by 1904 Militz's *Primary Lessons in Christian Living and Healing* carried a similar "radiant" message.[147]

If the radiant I Am Presence pointed toward New Thought discourse, the I AM movement's developing language of light told of abiding connections to Theosophy and, notably, to twentieth-century Theosophy, with its themes of powerful light and energy. The Ballards' Saint-Germain had taught the visualization and cultivation of a sense of the body's envelopment in a "Dazzling White Light," this as part of the process of uniting self with God. The "threefold truth" he and other ascended masters revealed included use of a violet consuming flame of divine love (the other two truths were the "Mighty I Am Presence" within and invocation of the "I Am" name for God). This violet flame was seen as a light cylinder surrounding a person as a mark of the divine presence. When a believer called forth the personal "I Am Presence" from within, taught the Ballards, they released the flame to burn up impurity and discord in the world—an activity intimately bound up with the practice of decreeing. In a declaration reminiscent of, especially, Alice Bailey's rays, I AM promoted the belief that each one of the ascended masters radiated a specific color representing a particular aspect of the divine. According to Edna Ballard, "clean, clear, bright colors" were "rivers of blessing from the realms of light, the source of all perfection." By contrast, some colors were deeply problematic: the color red "cut off the White Light," Saint-Germain warned, and black reflected hate as well as destruction and death. Members of I AM neither wore them nor kept objects in these colors close to them.[148]

In this blended Theosophy–New Thought world, lineages and lines of connection were everywhere. One formulation led to the next and on to the next; it was hard to tell when and where the line would be crossed that would lead some to object—and object strenuously—to the religious thought and practice of believers. I AM clearly crossed the line and became controversial. It experienced a prolonged period of litigation leading to two Supreme Court rulings (1944 and 1946)—in an often-cited case that raised issues regarding sincerity in religious belief and the dissemination of materials deemed fraudulent through the mails. The Court overturned lower-court convictions of Edna and Donald Ballard (Guy Ballard had died in 1939), but it was 1954 before the group could use the mails again and 1957 before its tax-exempt status returned. I AM's troubles, however, were not over. As it rebuilt—with an office building in the Chicago Loop and a retreat center near Mount Shasta—it also faced significant internal discord.

Continuing revelation meant that ascended masters could talk freely to whom they chose, and new groups and lineages could be created. Out of the splintering came, for instance, Mark L. Prophet's Summit Lighthouse, and—after his sudden death in 1973—the creation the following year of the Church Universal and Triumphant by his widow, Elizabeth Clare Prophet (the designated "Messenger" of the ascended masters), and the Summit Lighthouse's board of directors. Both I AM and spin-off groups like the now fairly well-known Church Universal and Triumphant contributed to the discourse community that became the New Age movement.[149] As we will see in this narrative's conclusion, ascended masters, once they started visiting, kept coming and—in the space age—came under new guises and assumed new roles.

ETHNIC SCRIPTS AND SUBSCRIBERS

There were, however, other new ages in which the white majority culture stood on the sidelines or entered only fitfully. We have already encountered the presence of "others" in Anglo-American spiritualist culture. Native Americans, for example, had haunted white minds from the earliest days of contact, and from the time of the Shaker manifestations of the late 1830s Indians had taken their place among the spirits who showed up for spiritualist seekers. By the heyday of séance spiritualism, their appearances had become organized, and by the end of the century the protocols for native visitors had been set. But they also visited more informally. We gain a brief glimpse in Clara Whitmore's fictionalized account of her childhood in the South in the late nineteenth century. Whitmore remembered that when she was six or seven, small and sensitive Nellie Reynolds came as a live-in helper for her mother. Reynolds, not herself well-liked, in the evenings turned medium for Indian Jo, who was large, strong, and much-liked. He brought news of relatives when snowstorms blocked communication, entertained family members who were there, and healed them. Jo was a "Christian Indian" and "friend of the Pale Faces," at a time when all the other Indians were gone. Indeed, "he seemed like a neighbor who dropped in, often three or four evenings a week." In the twentieth century, in the old and established spiritualist community Indians continued to come and go, almost like old friends and like Indian Jo. In the resident spiritualist camp at Cassadaga, Florida, for example (the oldest such religious community in the Southeast), some of the residents in the 1990s clearly favored Native American images and artifacts, while Indian guides still came by to assist mediums.[150]

Outside white minds, however, Native American metaphysicians thrived. Living Indians, in a mingled context of traditionalism and hybridism, pursued ana-

logs to white activity on their own or with whites. Oblivious or indifferent to the blanket condemnation of Indian-white spiritual enterprises by Native American academics, some Indians accepted white clients and acted as spiritual mediums on their behalf, in effect playing the role of counselor. After she was ordained a spiritualist minister, for example, Rosalyn Bruyere's second teacher had been a Hopi elder named Grandfather David Monongya, who confided Hopi prophecy to her. Later, as a New Age healer, she regularly visited reservations for healing work, assisted clearly by her former spiritualism and the affinity it gave her to Native Americans, whose practices she sometimes adopted. However, such instances (and there were many) existed as the surface manifestation of a pervasive reality. Whether traditional or mingled with New Age beliefs and practices, Native American religiosity in the twentieth century and beyond clearly tilted toward metaphysics. Even in the strong Christian communities that flourished on the reservations and in cities with sizable American Indian populations, inherited structures of belief and practice altered the character of native Christianity. Sometimes these habitual patterns and practices existed alongside Christian practice, as in the much-reported case of the Oglala Sioux Black Elk, who was both a Catholic catechist and a Sioux traditionalist (and, later, a leader in the pan-Indian Ghost Dance). In a cultural world of combination, Indians subtly or not so subtly reinvented Christianity to accommodate their own sensibilities. Traditional ritual and ceremony had always been strongly marked by symbolism—in object, gesture, and sound—whether esoteric or transparent. Synthetic and blended ceremony operated similarly.[151]

Among African Americans, the tradition of continuing revelation, alive and well from colonial times, did not depart and leave blacks spiritless. Habits of practice flourished in the rural South, in northern and southern cities, and elsewhere throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth and twenty-first. Anthropologists, sociologists, litterateurs, and religious studies scholars have provided windows into this dense culture of haunts and spirits and into the belief and practice systems that arose, paralleling white metaphysical endeavors and sometimes crossing over into them. After the Civil War, older black traditions of conjure (that is, hoodoo or root doctoring) were attacked by preachers and educators who sought to improve the lot of the freed slaves in the South. But as Yvonne Chireau has observed, anthropologists and ethnologists by the end of the century began to look again at these inherited beliefs, seeing their "mystical traits," their "unrefined spirituality," and their "racial and religious sensibility." For the twentieth century, the prominence of metaphysical religion among blacks is clear in the typology developed by Hans A. Baer and Merrill Singer to characterize all black religion in the United States. Alongside mainstream denominations and

established sects, messianic-nationalist groups, and conversionist ones (like holiness and pentecostal practitioners), Baer and Singer identify "thaumaturgical sects." For them, thaumaturgy means "magico-religious" ceremonies and rituals, or the acquisition of "ecstatic knowledge" that promises seekers who come to these groups "spiritual power over themselves and others." Baer and Singer consider thaumaturgical activity expressive only, but in the terms of this narrative it is easy to see a magical instrumentalism in the quest for spiritual power.[152]

Important for the instrumentalism, rural and southern magical beliefs traveled to urban and northern areas. In his study of the survival of hoodoo beliefs and tales in northern Indiana, for example, Gilbert E. Cooley found that former southern root doctors, as northern and urban professionals, now called themselves "psychics," or "spiritualistic readers," or "prophets." "Most urban root doctors work under the guise of another name," Cooley reported. "Furthermore, they associate themselves with a particular church or at least assume the title of minister." To accommodate their practice, candles, oils, incense, roots, and other paraphernalia appeared in "religious candle shops," creating an economy predicated on magical and metaphysical work. Not only in Gary, Indiana, but also in cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, black storefront churches and, especially, spiritualist churches supported a small army of mediums, psychic readers, and spiritual healers. As Chireau has summarized, "techniques such as numerology, palmistry, hypnotism, and astrology gave a veneer of legitimacy to these supernatural professionals, as did their titles: 'Professor' or 'Doctor.'" Metaphysical Asia surfaced, too, as some newspaper advertisements acquainted the public with exotic specialists who knew "Hindu" or "Oriental" secret lore. Even Christian ministers could function as entrepreneurial dispensers of magic and the occult. By the 1920s, too, blues songs sometimes carried conjure references in their titles, as in Ma Rainey's "Louisiana Hoodoo Blues," Bessie Brown's "Hoodoo Blues," and Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Low Down Mojo Blues."[153]

Nor had matters changed by the late twentieth century. Based on extensive fieldwork beginning from 1983 as she traveled the country by bus, Joyce E. Noll's *Company of Prophets* uncovered what she called "substantial and definitive psychic abilities" in a broad range of native-born blacks. Prophets came not only from the ranks of the poor but from a variety of socioeconomic classes and educational backgrounds. The range of claims and practices that Noll identified is extraordinary—mediums, spiritual healers, exorcists, ceremonial performers skilled in tarot and the use of crystals as well as in astrology and numerology, out-of-body travelers, recounters of past lives. Many of the "prophets" were still content to practice traditional Western religions, even as others turned to Asia

and still others joined "New Age religions and groups." All, however, "believed in a Supreme Spirit consciousness," and their practice showed the same pragmatic and agency-oriented stance that could be found in mainstream metaphysical culture. Here was Mother Susie Booth, who lived to be 106 years old and who talked to powerful spirit guides and gave messages from the pulpit of the Upper Room, her church in Chicago. And here was Eddie Cabral, who aligned himself with three "entities" in order to create what he called a "triangular energy." More in keeping with New Thought categories and with what he knew of the East, here, too, was Chicago's Walter Nathaniel Thomas Jr., who established the Divine Light Temple and taught meditation in person and through his books *Divine Light Meditation* and *Spiritual Meditation*. In the midst of a financial struggle over a barely profitable building with a mortgage on it, he felt himself lifted into the air while meditating and decreed that he would sell the building that very day. He got a long distance phone call about two hours later with an offer to buy.[154]

In this plethora of individualized and small-group expressions, spiritualism clearly stood out. Like white spiritualists in the twentieth century, blacks found themselves in congregational settings. As early as 1913 Mother Leafy Anderson had organized the Eternal Life Spiritualist Church in Chicago, and Spiritual churches—complexly combinative groups based largely in spiritualism—began in earnest in the 1920s. Leafy Anderson herself apparently came to New Orleans around 1920, where Spiritual churches especially grew with female leadership, not unlike Christian Science and New Thought. New Orleans, however, was not alone as a spiritualist mecca, and in various cities in the nation—Chicago, Detroit, New York's Harlem, Houston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia among them—a network of congregations sprang up. Although most of them maintained a connection with a parent church if they had one, they were also highly decentralized. Beginnings often seemed informal and haphazard—typically as private businesses to advise people seeking jobs, heal them, help in their love affairs, or protect. Spiritualist advisors would eventually form congregations with their clients as members and then pastor them in storefront churches. In the Depression era, spiritualists became the fastest growing among the small and intense religious groups that arose throughout the black population. On Chicago's Southside, in "Bronxville," for example, in 1928 one church in twenty—or seventeen churches—was a Spiritual congregation; by 1938, one in ten—a total of fifty-one—could claim the same. As high as the numbers stood, they excluded a large group of unchurched spiritualists who kept home altars or worked as spiritualist advisors (thought to be over one hundred just before World War II). Meanwhile,

in Harlem during the 1920s 15 percent of black churches were likewise Spiritual.[155]

Joseph Washington has described the combinative and agency-based religious culture of groups such as these as he identifies what drew people to them. Their "straightforward utilitarian use of religion" clearly appealed with its ready access to magical tools to protect from evil and attract desired good. "Spiritualists," Washington says, "combined the instinct of voodooism with Roman Catholic holy objects; Baptist and Methodist hymns were borrowed but not their fever-pitched preaching; their spiritual healing was taken over from the Holiness, Pentecostal groups, as well as their ritual of jubilant worship through swinging gospel tunes driven by the beat of secular rhythm and blues." In New Orleans, where Spiritual churches achieved special prominence and where scholars beginning with Zora Neale Hurston have paid more attention, prophecy and healing—as elsewhere—have functioned as hallmarks. Understood as biblical "gifts of the spirit," they have also conformed to major themes in metaphysical religion, and they have appeared not only in public worship but also in private client-centered therapy situations. As anthropologists Claude Jacobs and Andrew Kaslow have summarized, rituals range from conventional Christian ones like communion, baptism, and ordination to more distinctive practices like a "helping hand service," a "candle drill," and saint-day feasts. Jacobs and Kaslow point especially to the complexity of spirit possession in these churches, describing how "members may be filled by the Holy Spirit, as in Pentecostal churches, or 'entertain' spirits or spirit guides, as in Voodoo and Spiritualism."[156]

It is significant that the chief spirit guide in the New Orleans churches was—and continues to be—the Indian Black Hawk. Jacobs and Kaslow have noted the frequency of services dedicated to him as well as the number of altars and the many people who call him their spirit guide. They have also pointed to the prominent presence of representations of Black Hawk and Native Americans in the churches. Mother Leafy Anderson had begun the Black Hawk tradition, and report had it that she herself was half Mohawk and had called Black Hawk a "saint for the South." The historical Black Hawk had been a leader among the Sauk and Fox peoples of the upper Mississippi Valley in the early nineteenth century. He supported the British in the War of 1812 and later, in 1832—soured by Indian Removal west of the Mississippi and by poor land and shortages of food—led some one thousand men, women, and children to the east bank of the river. His rebellion failed, he ended up in a U.S. jail, and he was subsequently returned to Fox and Sauk loyal to the federal government. After that, he purportedly dictated his autobiography, although the authenticity of the document that claimed to be

his work has been questioned. That, however, has not stopped him from occupying a ritual place of honor in Spiritual churches.[157]

Jacobs and Kaslow probe the meaning of the elaborate ritual and preeminent place accorded Black Hawk, suggesting that he has functioned as a complex symbol identified with Saint Michael (the Archangel) and also with Martin Luther King Jr. Indeed, they conclude that he was "more than an Indian spirit or powerful guide" but instead a "master symbol" like the Virgin of Guadalupe for Mexico. "As the symbol of the Virgin integrates a diverse nation," they write, "we suggest that the symbol of Black Hawk does the same for the assorted membership of the New Orleans Spiritual churches." Even, it seems, blacks had their own African American Black Hawk because, at the dawn of the twentieth century, a black bandit named Black Hawk harassed people in the Mississippi delta. Still, Jacobs and Kaslow point back again to the Indian identity of Black Hawk. For blacks separated from Africa and its ancient gods, Black Hawk, as a Native American, offered a non-European model of identity. More than that, in the Louisiana and New Orleans area the history of the two races was clearly intertwined, and mixed-race offspring were ubiquitous.[158] If blacks, like whites, experienced Indian hauntings, the haunts functioned differently and for different reasons. Blended lives were not the creations of fantasy but lived situations, and they could be celebrated.

This kind of unity between peoples—so much a part of the theoretical expression of American metaphysical religion—became a historical reality, too, in the Peace Mission Movement of Father Divine (1879–1965). In a formation that, for Baer and Singer, defies easy categorization into any one of the major types of black religion they propose, Divine's Peace Mission—like the Spiritual churches—displayed its fair share of metaphysical presence. Divine himself had been born as George Baker Jr., and he experienced the religiosity of Baltimore's storefront churches even as he grew to know something of Methodism and Catholicism there. His synthesizing habit led him to the pentecost of Los Angeles's famed Azusa Street Revival in 1906. But as Ronald White has shown, he was also strongly attracted to New Thought. Divine took the message of the God within seriously and literally, so that—in his first exploration of religious leadership—he took his place as the "Messenger," God in the degree of Sonship, in a spiritual triumvirate. Besides the mild-mannered Father Jehovia (Samuel Morris), the trio included Reverend Bishop Saint John the Vine (John A. Hickerson) whose homegrown theology displayed his familiarity with aspects of New Thought. In this, he was supported by Father Divine, who as the organizing power of the group taught the others the metaphysics he already knew.[159]

Familiarity with metaphysics existed identifiably in the black community, but

George Baker, who loved books, probably first absorbed New Thought through some of its extensive literary productions. He was especially influenced by the Unity teachings of the Fillmores and in his later life publicly expressed his admiration for Charles Fillmore and for Unity. Later, in Los Angeles in 1906, the twenty-seven-year-old Baker had still more opportunities to read metaphysical literature and to interact with whites in the movement. The message of oneness with God, of the power of mind, of God as infinite Supply, and poverty as the result of wrong thinking proved powerful, and he took it and reshaped it to his own evolving and eminently practical theology. As Jill Watts has written of blacks in general, from a New Thought perspective "blacks possessed just as much divinity as whites and, by applying mind-power, could overcome oppression and reap the benefits of American enterprise. Positive thinking allowed African Americans to assert control over their destiny and to combat their feelings of powerlessness in white America."[160]

As for Father Divine, he not only read New Thought books but he also turned to metaphysical Asia. He absorbed Jiddu Krishnamurti's *The Kingdom of Happiness* and also Baird T. Spalding's *Life and Teaching of the Masters of the Far East*, a work that had strongly influenced Guy Ballard and the I AM movement.[161] It was Charles Fillmore who affected him most deeply, but it was distinctly Fillmore in combination. Divine fused the mind-cure and prosperity teachings of Fillmore and New Thought, the reinforcements that came from the intuitionism of Krishnamurti, and the purported mind-power thinking that Spalding found among isolated Indian masters in the Himalayas. He wove them seamlessly into his own combinative religion that—like the Spiritual churches—brought together the perfectionism of holiness religion and the exuberance of the revival tradition with what New Thought had given him. Armed with his new religious synthesis, the Messenger broke from his Baltimore ministry, traveled in the South as a preacher and religious teacher, and then made his way to New York. There, in Sayville, Long Island, in 1919, he began a religious community. He had become convinced of the presence of God within each person, and he believed that spiritual and material wholeness went together. So began a long era in which he led enthusiastic devotees in a Depression-era haven of prosperity supported by his near-legendary generosity and hospitality. In a ritual that became central to the community's practice, he presided over a laden banquet table supplied with course after course and hours in which to consume them, and he even weighed his followers to be sure that they were growing fat. In the implicit theological message of the daily banquet occasions, he was the Messiah present for the messianic banquet. When his followers took the message of his divinity literally, Father Divine—whose adopted name said it all—did not deny that he was God. Accord-

ing to some (and like Charles Fillmore), he claimed that he would not die, and he held that the same good news could apply to the devout among his followers.[162]

Divine's enthusiastic banquets and mystical claims to divine identity, however, stood side by side with a pragmatism that also smacked of New Thought. His followers should know peace—and heaven—on earth, and he would guarantee that. He supplied food and shelter to followers at a nominal price, found employment for those who had no work, and often encouraged the formation of cooperative businesses. Nor would he abide racial segregation and disharmony. After the death of his first wife, in 1946 he married the Canadian-born Edna Rose Ritchings, who was white, and so he modeled black-white unity for devotees. God, though, was clearly black, since Father Divine was God present in the community. Blacks and whites could live in harmony, but the message was one of black priority and power in an African American liberation theology predicated on New Thought. Indeed, if we juxtapose the Father Divine message of the black empowered Self with the culture of spirit dependency embodied in Spiritual churches and a plethora of independent spiritualists, the central paradox of American metaphysical religion emerges clearly—a paradox that would be brought home sharply by the later New Age movement. On the one hand, metaphysics has spread the good news that humans are gods or gods-in-the-making. On the other, it has provided dramatic and performative scripts to ensure salvation by turning to Higher Powers—spirits, masters, mediums, and seers.

Even as Father Divine combined New Thought with other elements and reflected metaphysical paradox, in the American West and Southwest, Latinos were habitually practicing their own combinative versions of the faith. In a culture that, before recent inroads by pentecostalism and general Protestant evangelicalism, was at least nominally Catholic, several versions of vernacular metaphysics flourished throughout the twentieth century and on. In individualized forms of *curanderismo* (healing) and in organized ones as spiritualism and spiritism that emphasized curanderismo, Latinas and Latinos revealed metaphysical assumptions and enacted metaphysical scripts. They combined indigenous elements with European-derived ones to create authentic and independent versions of Mexican American metaphysics. Curanderismo—the religious folk healing system of Mexico and the American borderlands—depends on charismatic and prophetic figures who can channel more-than-natural energy into a series of corresponding registers—material, mental, and spiritual. Based on the claimed possession by the healer of a special gift for the work (*el don*), it functions in a universe of symbolic material discourse. Here the markers are such elements as the use of herbs and teas, midwifery and massage therapy, forms of divination such as card reading, and numerous spiritual cleansings, or sweepings—with

food items like lemon, garlic, purple onions, and eggs. Studying its south Texas expression in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, anthropologists Robert T. Trotter and Juan Antonio Chavira have traced its historical sources to a panoply of ideas and practices. In various and fluid formations these can also be tracked in curanderismo elsewhere, and so the Trotter-Chavira statement of sources is broadly instructive: "Judeo-Christian religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals, early Arabic medicine and health practices (combined with Greek humoral medicine, revived during the Spanish Renaissance); medieval and later European witchcraft; Native American herbal lore and health practices; modern beliefs about spiritualism and psychic phenomena; and scientific medicine." "None of these influences dominates *curanderismo*," they report, "but each has had some impact on its historical development."[163]

The Spanish-Moorish engraftment on native tradition meant, already, the blending of two cultures with strong metaphysical components: We explored the metaphysical substrate in Greek theories of the four humors in the first chapter, and certainly Arab-Moorish medicine was predicated on notions of correspondence in which balance was primary and disharmony with the environment (social, spiritual, and physical) caused disease. Similarly, a native metaphysic, expressed in symbolic action, formed the basis of Mesoamerican culture. Bernard Ortiz de Montellano, who has pointed to the culture's homogeneity and paid special attention to the Aztecs, notes its strong shamanic elements and cites themes—and temple architectures—that represent connections between the human body and the universe. As in Spanish-Moorish medicine, good health reflects states of balance and equilibrium understood in the widest context and including the gods. In both systems and also in biblical ideas of healing that came through Christianity, material substances—largely botanical—provide strong assists. In curanderismo, their metaphysical properties supply a poetry of alliance with bodies in pain, as when—in the many *limpias*, or purifications, that a healer prescribes—eggs are passed over the body to absorb negative vibrations and energies.[164]

The explicitly magical universe of witchcraft also came into curanderismo through the contact culture that brought Europeans to Mesoamerican terrain. Rafaela Castro has called *brujería* (witchcraft) "an integral part of the culture of Mexico and the Southwest" and has pointed to the role of sixteenth-century conquerors and colonists in imparting European witchcraft beliefs. Here, missionary friars played a significant part with their denunciations of witches in a universe of sin, evil, and the devil. In the case of curanderismo, Trotter and Chavira cite the strong support for correct incantatory formulas, prayers, and rituals that medieval and later witchcraft bequeathed across the Atlantic—magic that

the two say dated "back to Egypt, India, and pre-Christian Europe." They also note its encouragement of human attempts to control the spirits. In this regard, a *curandero* or *curandera* could acquire a reputation for power. In many cases, too, the negative reading of witchcraft that came as part of the baggage of Christian culture meant that healing power was seen as emanating from the devil. Healers would help, but healers were also to be feared. Not themselves witches (that is, *brujos* or *brujas*)—who are understood to function independently from healers and stand as "accepted facts of life" in Chicano culture—healers could still be confused with witches. Conversely, people often sought them to undo the harm that they believed a witch had caused.[165]

Combination, though, did not simply fuse multiple pasts. Emergent discourses from Europe continued to move westward and to enter Mexican and Mexican American cultural conversations. They modified the healing scripts of curanderismo and also came to function more separately in spiritualist contexts. In a Mexican American culture that Romantic glosses typically depict as isolated from Europe and Anglo-America, ideas and writings supporting "modern" spiritualism and psychic research flourished. Especially notable were the works of Allan Kardec (Leon Denizarth Hippolyte Rivail), the nineteenth-century Frenchman whom we have met briefly before. Kardec, who for semantic reasons called his beliefs about contact with spirits "spiritism" (he thought that the term *spiritualism* might be applied to any antimaterialist or extramaterialist belief), published seven works on spiritist themes as midcareer productions. Son of an old and distinguished family, he had been educated in Switzerland and returned to France to dabble in various semi-learned pursuits, translating books into German for young people, lecturing on various sciences, and participating—significantly—in the Phrenological Society of Paris and the Society of Magnetism. Like others in the evolving metaphysical community of the era, he was drawn to investigations of clairvoyance and trance, sleep walking, and similar mesmeric phenomena. When, after 1848, news of the Hydesville happenings across the Atlantic brought new excitement and interest to these and related themes, Rivail (he was not yet Kardec) engaged in a series of séance sessions. Through two young female mediums, he believed, he contacted the spirits who gave him his pen name and dictated the contents of his spiritist books.[166]

Especially, these spirits countered the anti-reincarnationist version of spiritualism that Andrew Jackson Davis and others had advanced in America earlier. For Kardec, in fact, as Frank Podmore summarized, the "leading tenet" of the "new gospel" was reincarnation, with multiple incarnations allowing the soul to progress from life to life. (This turn toward reincarnation, it should be noted, already signaled—or perhaps helped to create—the climate for the appearance of

Theosophy.) Although its English-language translation had to wait until 1875, Kardec's ground-breaking *Le Livre de Esprits* (The Spirits' Book) had appeared in French as early as 1853, and it was published again in a revised French version in 1857. As a textbook for Kardec's brand of reincarnational spiritualism, it went through at least fifty-two editions, and Kardec himself created the monopolistic journal *La Revue Spirite* to support the work. Kardec's books, in general, were popular; Podmore noted that they "sold by tens of thousands, and were translated into nearly every European language." By the later twentieth century, they were surely being translated into Spanish, as even a cursory review of the Internet WorldCat database shows. Meanwhile, June Macklin has noted that by this time simplified digests of Kardec's teachings appeared in paperback throughout Latin America.[167]

In the United States, Kardecist spiritism and a more generalized spiritualism could be found in places as varied as south Texas, California, and Indiana, where migrant laborers came. There is confusion in the anthropological literature about what counts as spiritism and what as spiritualism, but generally the acceptance or rejection of the theological tenet of reincarnation locates a spirit-believer in the spiritist or spiritualist camp respectively. More than that, as Luis D. León has observed, based on the work of Silvia Ortíz Echániz, spiritists may have come from higher social classes than spiritualists. In Mexico, Kardec's work—which turned on the creation of spiritual healing centers and explicit ritual directions for prayer and incantation in temple ceremonies—led to the organization of spiritual temples. These grew rapidly in the late twentieth century, some explicitly spiritist and others more broadly spiritualist. They also spread across the border, as León's representative account of one such (spiritualist) temple in East Los Angeles—with its fifty mediums at various levels of training—shows.[168]

At the same time, charismatic healers came to take their places as the saints of Mexican American curanderismo, among them El Niño Fidencio, Don Pedrito Jaramillo, and Teresa Urrea. Tellingly, they are figures who in devotional following—and for Jaramillo and Urrea in their lives as well—have straddled the Mexico–United States border. In doing so, they embody the individual and collective histories of Latino immigrants and the ritual "dramas of salvation" that Macklin found in the work of curanderas and curanderos. Moreover, as León insists, the "truly charismatic" healing gift (*el don*) was "*revealed*, not conferred." In the case of José Fidencio de Jesús Constantino Síntora, popularly called El Niño Fidencio (1898–1938), the famed healer became so strong an object of cultus that, after his death, temples sprang up in Mexico and the United States, including Chicago. Here trance mediums brought his spirit back to consult, cure, and even predict the future. According to El Niño lore, the future healer—like Alice

Bailey—received his own version of a visit from a master: Once, when he was caring for his sick younger brother, the door of his shack opened and a stranger (Jesus, he later thought, standing in the Sacred Heart position of Catholic devotionalism) handed him a book that detailed the plant and herb remedies that would cure his brother. In a second, separate incident, another calling came when he saw in vision a "tall, bearded man with a luminous halo around his venerable head" who told him of his "high destiny" as a healer. Later, from 1925 to 1927, El Niño was employed in Mexico by a German from whom he learned European spiritism. A controversial figure who alternately was accused of unwittingly creating harm and hailed as an effective healer, he kept up his healing work from his bed in 1935 when his own health declined. After his death, two annual three-day festivals sprang up to honor him, and according to an anthropological team who filmed the El Niño devotionalism in 1972, as many as fifty thousand people participated. Most of the devotees were women.[169]

With regard to the more general spiritualist movement, in the United States Luis León has pointed to the existence of "at least three highly public *espiritualista* [that is, spiritualist] temples—each with several hundred members and many more 'visitors'—in East Los Angeles alone." Numbers of temples also appeared in Southern California and in the American Southwest, where in 1981 Trotter and Chavira reported that spiritualism was growing in south Texas. They reported, too, that for the healing work of curanderismo the concept of energy functioned as the central unifying idea. Indeed, if the material, mental, and spiritual levels of healing that they detailed are scrutinized, the metaphysics of energy becomes clearly apparent. At the material level, the numerous *limpias* that they recorded (they themselves were subject to nine) absorbed the vibrations of negative energy, as we saw in the use of the egg. According to the larger theory—Trotter and Chavira call it "one prevailing theory"—all persons and animals as well as some objects could give out or take in "vibrating energy." This energy assumed either positive or negative form and led to positive or negative outcomes. The counter energy of incantation and sound could disrupt negative patterns that were concentrated in an individual's body, there to cause illness. Meanwhile, substances like water and oil could be prepared with "mental vibrations" giving them "magnetic properties" that supplied strength on contact.[170] Thus, in a real sense, healing became a process of energy balancing, using ritual accoutrements in order to perform new scripts of equilibrium for the client-patient.

At the mental level, which Trotter and Chavira reported as the least prevalent and in fact rare, the curandero or curandera worked to channel mental energy to the specific somatic site where illness existed. Healers thought that the power of their own minds could transform, at the cellular level, what was wrong—discour-

aging the spread of diseased cells and accelerating the growth of healthy ones. Finally, at the spiritual level—less common than material healing but more pervasive than mental energy channeling—healers entered trance states, in which they felt that they were projecting their own souls outward to make room for the entry of benevolent spirits. Especially, for the spiritual level, Trotter and Chavira noted beliefs that sickness and disease could be "caused, diagnosed, and cured by spiritual forces called *corrientes espirituales* (spiritual currents)." What constituted healing, then, was the manipulation of spiritual currents.[171]

Mexican American curanderismo and spiritism have shown no sign of abating in recent years. Quite the contrary, in the politicized climate of Chicano consciousness of *la raza* (the "race"), traditional practices and beliefs have provided scripts to perform not only the Chicano and Chicana body but also the spiritualized body politic. In the words that León applies to one healer—Don Pedrito Jaramillo—but that, arguably, may be extended to all, "healing the body . . . served as a microcosm for repairing the nation that was dismembered in colonization." There were, however, other ethnic scripts and dramas being enacted on American soil, and to notice what is perhaps obvious, some of them came as the property of different European immigrant groups. Throughout the twentieth century, for example, the Pennsylvania Dutch (that is, Germans) kept on marking their barns with hex signs to ward off evil, and pow-wowing has continued to thrive among them. Later immigrants, like Italian Americans, passed on their fear of the "evil eye" and, as late as the mid-twentieth century, some in the first generation still used garlic and various assigned objects as talismans for protection. When the garlic was abandoned, plastic evil-eye protectors and similar devices remained.[172]

Other performances, however, came from new twentieth-century embodiments of metaphysical Asia, this time metaphysical *East* Asia. Unlike African Americans, Mexican Americans, and to a considerable extent Continental Euro-Americans—and somewhat like Native Americans but much more than they—ethnic East Asians shared their dramas of salvation with non-Asians. Still more, East Asians not only shared: They missionized. In acts of religion that also functioned as acts of entrepreneurship, they sold a reconstituted and even newly invented Daoism (Taoism) to mainstream American buyers. The performances that resulted point unmistakably to the twentieth-century metaphysical themes we have been exploring. They exhibited high energy concerns—so that energy, in fact, became a mantric term. They promoted experiences of personal power in a context that exalted an enlightened body-self. They taught, if you will, a Vedanta of East Asian provenance, in which yin and yang were resolved in the harmony of the unifying principle, the Dao. All things were one thing, but the

one thing lay at the service of individual need and desire. And if there were exalted teachers (the other side of the equation), the teachers never became ascended masters, and the teachers were, in some cases, subject to criticism.

Daoist practitioners did not become a noticeable presence in the United States until after the change in the immigration law in 1965 brought a visible increase in the numbers of Chinese immigrants and especially of the well-educated and privileged classes. Perhaps ironically, though, one of the first conspicuous expressions of American Daoist themes came not from China at all but arrived secondhand from Japan as part of the cultural baggage that shaped (Japanese) American macrobiotics. To complicate matters further, from almost the first macrobiotics was intimately connected to the New Age movement. Indeed, J. Gordon Melton has argued that in 1971 the Boston macrobiotic community's *East West Journal* became the first national periodical to explore the issues and themes that were being identified with the New Age.[173] Michio Kushi (1926–), a Japanese immigrant and the foremost teacher of macrobiotics in America, however, had a different, more Asian self-understanding. So, too, did the early macrobiotic community. In a metaphysical context that extended from food ways to a general religious philosophy of life, the macrobiotic movement embodied for them a distinctive spirituality with roots *not* of the New Age.

Kushi himself had not originated macrobiotics (literally, "great"—or "long"—life). Its creator was Yukikazu Sakurazawa (1893–1966), who adopted the Westernized name Georges (and later George) Ohsawa. He had shaped macrobiotics from the ideas of a lineage of Japanese food philosophers, the most immediate being his own teacher, Sagen Ishizuka. The founder of the Shoku-Yo movement in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, Ishizuka taught a self-conscious and systematized restoration of traditional dietary habits. Still further, from at least the time of Shoku-Yo, the food philosophy functioned, too, as a sociopolitical philosophy with distinctive spiritual overtones. On the inside cover of Ishizuka's second book, for example, an inscription announced the foundation of the world to be the nation, the foundation of the nation to be the home, of the home to be the body, of the body the spirit, and, finally, the foundation of the spirit to be food.[174] The metaphysical reversal that Ishizuka's inscription signaled continued to mark macrobiotics. Now the body was not so much in the mind (that is, controlled by it) as the mind was in the body, being shaped by it and what it was fed. Still, there would be enough inconsistency in macrobiotic circles to support the classic metaphysical position, so that even as the macrobiotic body fed the mind the metaphysical mind enjoyed its share of macrobiotic notice and privilege.

Ohsawa had become the central figure in the Shoku-Yo, and he spent years

as an indefatigable lecturer and writer, organizing a Western network of macrobiotic centers. After World War II, he maintained a study house—his Student World Government Association—and it was here that Michio Kushi, a student in politics and law at Tokyo Imperial University, found him. "Have you ever considered the dialectical application of dietary principles to the problem of world peace?" Ohsawa asked Kushi when they met. Kushi was persuaded and then, encouraged by Ohsawa and endorsed by Norman Cousins, he immigrated to the United States and continued his graduate work at Columbia University in New York City. Absorbed in his experiential studies of macrobiotics, he never obtained a degree but instead moved to Boston and began a center. He had married a Japanese macrobiotic student (Tomoko Yokoyama, who became Aveline Kushi). With help from her, from the Japanese immigrant pair Herman and Cornellia Aihara on the West Coast, and from other Ohsawa students like Shizuko Yamamoto in New York City, he worked to make a movement grow. The *East West Journal*, begun in 1970, reached a circulation of near 80,000 by 1985, and by the late 1980s, conservatively, there were close to 100,000 adult macrobiotic adherents in the nation.[175]

What had these subscribers obtained through the new scripts they read and were now performing? Ohsawa had already bequeathed to his fledgling movement a religious philosophy. He taught the "order of the universe" and the "unique principle" that grounded it. He began to invoke the "Tao" (read as "way," or "spiritual path," or "practice," or "cosmic absolute" that was both transcendent and within the self), identifying his ideas with the Chinese Daoist philosopher Lao-Tsu (Laozi). But he also identified them with a world catalog of sages and seers. And as they stood, his teachings were remarkably poised to enter American metaphysical discourse. In his *Zen Macrobiotics*, Ohsawa offered readers "twelve theorems of the unique principle." He affirmed that yin and yang were the "two poles of the infinite pure expansion," that they were "produced infinitely, continuously, and forever," and that everything was "restless" because "things and phenomena" were "constantly changing their Yin and Yang components." He also propounded his "seven stages of judgment" with the "supreme" (highest) stage one of "absolute and universal love that embraces everything and turns every antagonism into complementarism." More concretely, yin and yang became a taxonomy for the classification of food, because the beginnings of spirituality lay, for Ohsawa and his movement, in human biology and its transformation through food. In a variation of conventional representations of Chinese teaching, Ohsawa had identified yin as a centrifugal, expanding energy. It was earth's force and associated with rising seeds and plant growth; it was also female, cold, (paradoxically?) passive, and spiritual (all—it should be noted in the context

here—associated with mediumistic activity). By contrast, yang represented centripetal, contracting power. As heaven's force and the energy of the contained, sheathed seed, it carried the germ of potential life within; it was—like the familiar gendered understandings—male, hot, active, and physical. In keeping with the order of the universe, foods should be locally grown and used in season; in the late-twentieth-century American community, the teaching soon incorporated the notion that they should be organically grown, free from chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Grains and vegetables, as the most balanced foods (with equal proportions of yin and yang) got preferential treatment, and not surprisingly, brown rice—the staple of traditional Japan—was acknowledged as the most balanced food of all. It was these substances that could create good health and lead on and beyond to supreme judgment and spiritual wholeness.[176]

Eating macrobiotically became a delicate balancing act. It took account of an individual's constitution (given genetically and present from birth), condition (what eating habits and other stresses had done to the basic constitution), location and climate, and even "dream" or purpose (a monk should eat differently from a day laborer or business executive). More than that, macrobiotic dietary choices were only the beginnings of a life journey predicated on a metaphysical superstructure that, as Ohsawa's "twelve theorems" and "seven stages" already suggest, ambitiously explained all aspects of the cosmic and human worlds. After Ohsawa's death, Michio Kushi expanded and embellished his teaching, offering theosophical readings of his own from his Japanese past and, it seems virtually certain, from contact with American New Age students and American metaphysical culture in general. The combinative product of past and present, Kushi's teachings proclaimed a new-old spirituality, reinvented and reconstructed in patterns supportive of American projects of its time. Whereas Ohsawa had only touched on themes such as Chinese traditional thought and its practical application in a macrobiotic way of life, Kushi taught more. He was interested, for example, in Chinese "five-element" or "five-transformation" theory, and he used it to intersect the canonical teachings of yin and yang. With ideas based on *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (dating probably from around 500 B.C.E.), which—not without help from the macrobiotic community—would become a popular text in American vernacular "Taoism," Kushi taught five changes of the primal energy of life. Fire, earth, metal, water, and wood all stood as elements, or "phases," to which seasons of the year, times of the day, physical organs, food, and even tastes (salty, sour, and so forth) corresponded. Under Kushi's tutelage, practitioners ate for constitution and condition, taking note not only of yin and yang but also of the phases of energy transformation.[177] In other words, someone in whose basic constitution one element or transforma-

tion was weak or who, through a current condition, presented a weakened profile in one element or transformation would eat to heal the problem. Someone with a weak liver or gall bladder, either because of genetics or personal history, for example, would eat foods said to strengthen and support the liver or gall bladder.

Whatever it did for diseased livers and gall bladders, the American Daoist rhetoric of Kushi's teaching—easily available because of the plethora of inexpensive books that Kushi, with the aid of his students, published—brought familiarity with Daoist language to America. (For a time, macrobiotic literature was even sold and distributed under the imprint of Tao Books.) It also taught a combinative mixture that Ronald E. Kotzsch, the leading historian of the movement, has called the "gospel according to Kushi." As one example, using the concepts of yin and yang as arbiters, Kushi taught a traditional sexuality that brought the unique principle in touch with family values. Sexual pleasure was greatly to be desired, but only in marriage. More than that, children were to be desired, and artificial restraints on childbearing carried not only moral but also and especially physical consequences. These caveats, from one perspective, could keep company with even a Roman Catholic natural-law ethic. From another—with its celebration of sensuality as an assist to and result of optimum health, and with its preoccupation with the physical consequences of obstructing the natural order—the Kushi way parted practical company with Catholicism and similar orientations quickly.[178]

In terms of metaphysical religiosity, though, the theosophizing speculations of Kushi deserve notice. Kushi himself was attracted to Gnosticism, as his growing endorsement of the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas* shows. Kushi knew, too, about such staples of the American metaphysical discourse community as auras and chakras. In his *Gentle Art of Making Love*, for example, he advised on "stimulating" the chakras and activating them during sexual play. Far and above all of this, however, he theorized on a grand scale about cosmogony and anthropology, building on Ohsawa's synthesis but going well beyond it. For instance, he took Ohsawa's gnostic diagrammatic statement of the order of the universe depicting its evolution as a logarithmic spiral and—in the shadow of the New Age appropriation of quantum physics—elaborated it further. Now Kushi invoked everything from DNA helices, star formations, and seashell construction, to hair-growth patterns and the direction of water down the kitchen sink. "The substance of the Great Life / completely follows Tao," he quoted from Lao-Tzu (Laozi), and he declared for "spirals of everlasting change."[179]

Kushi's expansive narrative of cosmic, earthly (that is, natural), and human history emerged as a gnostic tale of grand proportions, intricately thought through and thought out, with myriad correspondences between material, historical, and spiritual stages of development. It included attention, for example, to a prehis-

toric period in which extraterrestrials bolstered the level of cultural achievement, both technological and spiritual, and in which, as Venus moved closer to the sun, emigrants from that planet were forced to make their way to our earth. In a variation of the master theme that linked earth to space beings (as we shall see later, a characteristic New Age marker), he also thought that intelligent visitors had come to our planet to teach and intermarry with earthlings. (He has continued to be interested in unidentified flying objects—UFOs—to the present.) Kushi's extraterrestrials knew the laws of yin and yang and so could control natural energies and use mind powers like clairvoyance and telepathic communication. Meanwhile, in the Kushi account ancient architectural remains, like the pyramids and other megaliths, had been designed to attract and control the energies of the cosmos. Kushi knew about Blavatsky's lost continents of Atlantis and Lemuria and pronounced them destroyed by the flooding that attended a shifting earth axis. Moreover, he taught that humans had manifested themselves through stages, coming from the "one infinity," or "universal spirit," through a world of "radiation," where spirits dwelled, and then a world of "vibration," or "energy," inhabited by souls, ghosts, and astral bodies. From there, soon-to-be humans entered the atmosphere, the waters of embryonic life, and finally the earth. "Our roots as human beings are in heaven," Kushi wrote, "and the *ki* or electromagnetic energy that animates us comes primarily from above through the chakras before branching out to the [acupuncture] meridians and then to trillions of cells. Each cell has spirit, nourished constantly by energy and vibration from heaven and earth. We are fully spiritualized when these cells are activated."[180]

What did humans come for? In Kushi's optimistic reading (not far from New Thought formulations), they came to live out a dream and to be "trained" on the "playground" of earth. Those who ate macrobiotically and shared the "same blood quality" could "act and play together to realize humanity's common dream of building One Peaceful World" and continue their "endless journey through the stars." "We play in this universe, living our eternal life, transforming ourselves constantly, manifesting ourselves into various forms," he summarized. If the element of tragedy seems missing, those who know Kushi can point to his often dire prognostications for the future and his warnings of peril in the first decade of the twenty-first century. He has counseled personal transformation through "meditation, self-reflection, and prayer," but the more elementary—and collective—message was to work to transform the planet by beginning with its biological base, missionizing for food in order to missionize for spirit.[181]

Spirit, though, always seemed to register as energy in American Daoist circles, as in twentieth-century and later metaphysical religiosity in general. If Kushi and the macrobiotic movement had provided early introductions to what American

and metaphysical Daoist themes could be, it remained for a series of Chinese immigrants to supply their own performances. They did so on different stage sets and with a different, albeit sometimes overlapping, cast of characters. Elijah Siegler, who has studied American Daoism, has called it a "new religious movement that may have some connection to the Daoist tradition in China, but has less connection than claimed from within the movement itself." His evidence for the assessment has come largely from examining self-conscious statements of Daoist identity as expressed through a series of practices. These include reading and study of ancient texts believed to constitute the foundations of Daoism—the *Daodejing* (*Tao Te Ching*) and the *Yijing* (*I Ching*). They also encompass performance of the physical movements taught in taijiquan (t'ai-chi ch'uan) and qigong (ch'i-kung), and use of traditional Chinese medicine with its acupuncture and herbalism. And, it could be added, they extend to the cultivation of distinctive types of meditation practice that aim, like the physical movements and the medicine, to augment and direct the flow of *qi*. (The mysterious and much-sought qi signals something like South Asian prana and something like Western "breath" that opens out toward spirit—suggesting, again, the enlightened body-self.) For Siegler, American Daoism originated from a confluence of Western intellectual and East Asian immigrant histories, from a "collaboration between progressive elements in American society, and elite, lettered Chinese immigrants, nostalgic for their own displaced childhoods." (The "Tao," in popular parlance, was mother of us all.) As in the case of metaphysical South Asia, the metaphysical East Asia of American Daoism arose in a world in which the West was hardly absent from the East. Like a series of reflecting mirrors, each culture replayed again and again what the other had constructed it to be—in a combining of images that endlessly reproduced themselves to create the fluid set of practices deemed in America to be Daoist. American Daoism, says Siegler, was "not merely influenced by moments of contact but constituted by them."[182]

With Daoism for the West, in the words of intellectual historian J. J. Clarke, "not so much a living tradition as a collection of writings," it was the vernacular entry of culturally facile and educated ethnic Chinese that brought Daoism into the territory of the body and, so, the enlightened body-self. What Siegler calls a "statistically miniscule" but "culturally significant" number of American spiritual seekers found in a Daoist vocabulary of correspondence a discourse that satisfied. It conformed for them to long-held American metaphysical notions of correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm. Especially, in concert with the twentieth-century and later emphasis of American metaphysical religion, they could read it in terms of energy, for qi was but another term for the ubiquitously desired metaphysical "energy." Here their views of Daoism derived

from older, romanticized Western representations of Daoism in an Orientalist mode—work unsupported by current critical scholarship. Uninformed by that knowledge, their new American Daoism became a nonexclusive religion recognizing Lao Tzu (Laozi) as its founder and promoting few written texts. Unspecific geographically (no central shrines; portable sacred space in nature and the self), it remained historically indifferent and uninvolved in politics or social ethics. Its only divisions arose from traditionalist or more free-floating readings of what constituted Daoism.[183]

The Daoism in the minds of American seekers had been shaped not only by an older cohort of Western scholars and their popularizers but also by enthusiasm for the "perennial philosophy" and the human potential movement. As in the case of American yoga, Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, played a significant role. So did the idealized figure of the Oriental monk, part of American vernacular culture through such images as that of the Dalai Lama and fictive portrayals of martial arts mastership and of inscrutable Daoist masters with magical powers. In this climate of expectation, the new ethnic Chinese Daoist masters of America, sometimes with bona fide acting backgrounds, simply performed themselves. Teachers claimed lineages (a Chinese requirement for authenticity) or invented them. They cultivated personal followings but did not create institutions. Curricula could not be replicated because the master, in effect, was the curriculum. The Chinese masters thus cultivated mystification, and their students cultivated practice—in a discourse community in which the "energy" of qi became both the desired good and the fluid and ever-changing absolute.[184]

American Daoists in the late twentieth century and after have been well-educated, middle class, white, and about equally divided between genders. Their introduction to Daoism usually comes through taiji or qigong or similar disciplines, through contact with acupuncturists or Chinese herbalists because of health problems, or through "Daoist" texts, often read in college or even high school. Age has varied widely, with no particular bias toward youth. (This last is unsurprising, since taiji and qigong are particularly well-adapted to seniors and alternative medicine is often favored for the chronic diseases that especially plague older people.) Figures for the number of Daoists in the late-century United States and Canada range from a low of just over 11,000 to more ambitious estimates of 30,000 and even 45,000. Still these are small numbers, even if a huge traffic in Daoist websites exists on the Internet (Siegler cites "hundreds if not thousands"). If scholars could not link this American Daoism to a Chinese counterpart, U.S. practitioners remained oblivious. They were innocent of an evolving scholarship that painted Daoism as exclusivist and intolerant, distinct from the vulgarities of ordinary culture, and related to a specific Chinese geog-

raphy of sacred mountains. Nor did they seek to recover and periodize a history of Daoism, going beyond the time of Laozi and Zuangzi (Chuang Tzu) to explore a later saga during a series of Chinese dynasties. They were unaware that Daoism was a religion of books, which in its first (fifth-century) canon numbered more than 1,400 titles in some 5,305 volumes—larger than the canon of any religion save Buddhism. And they had no idea of the political role that Daoist sects played in China as revolutionaries who succeeded in creating a theocracy for at least several decades during the Han dynasty. They did not know that for a large part of Chinese history Daoism had been state-sponsored. Nor did they know anything of the rigor of its conventional moral precepts and the elaborateness of its ritual life. Americans drawn to Daoism have dwelled instead in a Daoism of their minds and imaginations.[185]

The Daoism of their imagining, though, like the New Thought universe of a century earlier, has been inherently unstable. Its nonsectarian universalism pushed it toward a larger metaphysical community, in which Daoism became a Daoism of language and the Daoism of language blurred into the general rhetoric of spiritual "energy" in contemporary American metaphysics and especially the New Age. Taiji, qigong, and traditional Chinese medicine had other takers besides self-conscious Daoists. Moreover, even the writings of charismatic Daoist teachers were read widely by sympathizers who never assumed Daoist identities but instead maintained more hybrid and combinative ones. Take, for example, the work of Mantak Chia (1944–), a Thai businessman in Hong Kong and China with a diverse educational background, much of it in meditative and martial arts techniques. Chia has pitched his teaching to Americans with a national seminar circuit since 1981. He has also advertised widely in New Age publications, developed an international organization, created a network of healers working under him, and—with American Michael Winn directing—offered instruction regularly at a summer camp/retreat in upstate New York.

In 1981, Chia's book *Awaken Healing Energy through the Tao* appeared in its first edition. Billed as "Taoist Esoteric Yoga," it succeeded so well that it appeared only two years later in a more widely marketed imprint. With direct and textbook style, Chia immediately positioned what he offered as a third alternative to Zen silent sitting and Hindu mantric meditation. Instead, he presented a "system stressing the circulation of energy called 'chi' along certain pathways inside the body." "These pathways," he informed readers, "help direct the 'chi'—also known as prana, sperm or ovarian power, the warm current, or kundalini power—to successively higher power centers (chakras) of the body." Secret knowledge of this system had been "transmitted for thousands of years in China," and there it had brought "extraordinary improvements in health and life." "Chi" was the

"primordial life force itself," and its flow proceeded in ideal order in the human fetus, with its navel point the starting place for the movement of energy and "the point of strongest energy storage and circulation in the adult." Age, however, brought blockage, and the "perfect energy circulation we enjoyed as babies" was disrupted. What could adults do? They could turn to the specific type of meditation that Chia taught, which would bring reawakening so that the "healing power of the Tao—the life energy in its original, pure, undivided form"—would flow unimpeded once again.[186]

Chia had evoked a combinative catalog of buzz words and ideas from American metaphysical religion, and he had announced a meditative form that involved the mind in the (mysticized) physicality of the body in order to heal and enliven it. With theosophical acumen, he pointed to the "etheric body." Still more, he introduced the language of the body's "microcosmic orbit"—its route for the flow of energy that seemed like a vastly simplified acupuncture meridian (Chia, in fact, acknowledged the same in the subtitle to the first edition of his book and in the text of his second edition). The microcosmic orbit began at the perineum and moved up the back of the spine to the tongue, with its tip on the roof of the mouth acting like a "switch" to send energy back down the front of the body. This seems like a decidedly esoteric technique—except that it was being mass-marketed to a sizable audience of American readers. (In fact, Michael Winn, who wrote an introduction to the second edition, reported that "students of various Chinese arts" were "shocked to see his book sold in a store." The "circulation of the microcosmic orbit was the 'highest secret' to gaining internal power in the mind and body.")[187]

With all of this preparatory cultivation of the sophisticated would-be Daoist, what Chia taught next was a seemingly childlike instruction in the "inner smile." After creating a calm and quiet environment in which to begin the practice of meditation, after relaxing mentally and taking thirty-six (a multiple of nine and a favored Chinese number) deep abdominal breaths, the meditator needed to relax the internal organs. So the "ancient Taoist masters" recommended the exercise of smiling "love" into the vital organs. With closed eyes, the meditator smiled "sincerely" into them and proceeded from there to smile down a "front," "middle," and "back" line, thus reaching all major organs and even the inside of the vertebrae of the spine. What the meditator smiled was "chi energy," and when the task was about to be finished he or she collected the energy at the navel—so that there would be no excess energy to cause trouble in the head. How could a person be sure? "To collect the energy simply concentrate your mind on your navel and imagine your energy spinning like a slow top inside, spiralling outward movement." Men should spiral first in a clockwise direction; women counter

clockwise.[188] In effect, Chia was recommending putting the mind in the body. He was selling acts of disciplined imagination that came from a mentalist perspective, and he was teaching metaphysics, using breath and sensation as magical tools halfway between the mental and the material.

With already its open "secrecy" in a popular book, Chia's inner smile meditation gained a decidedly exoteric following. It became a friendly New Age practice that crept into settings as varied as acupuncture offices, Unity churches, and secular-seeming relaxation workshops. It smiled beckoningly, and people bought it. Inner smiles were so easy to perform and, at the very least, so nondenominational and so harmless. They did not seem occult or esoteric at all. Like Norman Vincent Peale's positive thinking, inner smiles and other energy practices spilled out of their cultural containers to become anybody's property who wanted them. If there were "nightstand Buddhists"—people who kept a Buddhist book beside their bed and sometimes dipped into it—there were also numbers of nightstand or workshop Daoists. Still, the message of the power of mind in a set of ostensibly physical practices bears scrutiny for its metaphysical content. Chia's performative strategy was hardly isolated. It came with a long prehistory, and throughout the cultural world that touched a self-conscious American Daoism, the message of the mind in the body was seemingly everywhere.

To take an example from the practice of taiji, we need only look at a canonical text for the Yang-style taiji that has become the most practiced style in the United States. The classic *Tai-Chi Ch'uan* (1947) was putatively the work of Chen Yen-lin, a wealthy Chinese merchant—known in the West as Yearning K. Chen—who had studied under the transmitter of the Yang family's style. Indeed, in the climate of exalted regard for lineage claims, the report was that he had, in effect, stolen Yang family secrets by borrowing transcripts one evening, hiring seven transcribers to copy them all night long, and then in 1932 publishing the results in Chinese. But Chen's text contained entire sections, not present in the original Chinese, that were probably the work of his translator Cheng Man-ch'ing. Moreover, the solo form instructions and explanations did not match up identically with the Chinese, and the work had probably been reshaped to tell Western students what the translator thought would appeal. Still, with its intricately precise directions and figures for the performance of the long-form (108-posture) "right side" movements, the text began with a crisp and slightly quaint introduction to orient readers and about-to-be doers. "T'ai-chi Ch'üan," the translated Chen told readers, would rebuild their "spirit and body," and it was "closely related to Meditation." In fact, it was better, because the long practice of meditation could "hinder blood circulation," but the "t'ai-chi" movements helped to "quicken it." "T'ai-chi" was predicated on a "subtle system of Chinese philosophy" called the

"Grand Terminus." "From the Negative Terminus to the Grand Terminus," the text explained, were "comprehended the theories of all created things in the universe, and the principles of the formation of *Yin* and *Yang*." Since all things in the universe were composed of yin and yang elements and since science itself agreed (Chen cited the "electron theory" of "positive and negative electricity"), the practitioner enacted the "theories of the Grand Terminus." In so doing, he or she entered upon a moving meditation: "Give up all thoughts. Set your eyes forward, directed to the spot just in front of the outgoing hand. Close your mouth and breathe through your nose. Press your tongue against your palate. . . . Raise your spirit and breathe down from the navel psychic-centre, so that you may feel at ease in every part of your body and the blood may circulate smoothly."[189]

Even more explicit for metaphysically inclined Americans was the taiji instruction on mind-intent ascribed, once more problematically, to Chen—this time under his pseudonym Chen Kung. Published originally in Chinese in 1932, according to compiler and translator Stuart Alve Olson, the text in which this instruction formed a part had mostly emanated from Wu Ho-ching, a student of the founder of the Yang family style. Here discourse on "ch'i" mingled with discourse on mind and "mind intent." The "efficacy of the T'ai Chi Ch'uan exercise" was "very great." The movements nourished the "ch'i," which purified the blood. Purified blood made the body strong, and the strength of the body brought strength to the mind. But the mind likewise had its master, and that was "mind-intent." In fact, the mind acted "as only an assistant to the mind-intent," and—in a reversal—the quality of the mind governed the quality of the "ch'i." All three were "interconnected" and worked "in a rotational manner," Chen Kung told readers. "When the mind is confused the mind-intent will disperse. When the mind-intent is dispersed the ch'i will become insubstantial (weak)."[190] The message was one of constant circulation, constant changing—all points responsible, all points creating. It beckoned with a promise of late-breaking metaphysics with an East Asian veneer.

Clearly, the Chen-ascribed texts were telling some Americans what they wanted to hear and know. If American Daoism and its attendant practices were growing and thriving in late-twentieth-century America and after, success had come in large part because the energy discourse of East Asian teachers and their followers replicated a longstanding, and now especially emphasized, discourse habit of American metaphysicians. In exotic (for non-Asian Americans) dress—a dress performatively enhanced by ethnic masters who had newly discovered and/or invented themselves—American Daoism replayed American metaphysical religion with substance and style. In so doing, American Daoism was part of an explosion of variants of old-style American metaphysics. A large number of

these variants came to be recognized, however loosely, as part of what the media began calling the New Age movement by the 1970s. But even the New Age movement could not contain the spiritual efflorescence and overflow of American metaphysical religion—an efflorescence and overflow that kept Pealeism company and that went even further in colonizing American minds and hearts. Still, the New Age movement became a phenomenon to be noticed, and in itself it provided useful instruction on the dimensions and dilemmas of American metaphysical religion in the late twentieth century and on. Like all of American metaphysical religion, it rested on combinative notions of the power of mind and the pervasiveness of correspondences, both in quests to heal and save. Like all twentieth- and twenty-first-century American metaphysical religion, it discovered that the no-longer-secret name of God was Energy.