

New Thinking, New Thought, New Age: The Theology and Influence of Emma Curtis Hopkins (1849-1925)

DEIDRE MICHELL

School of Theology

Abstract

Emma Hopkins (1849-1925) was a feminist, teacher, writer and theologian who actively recruited women and prepared them for ecclesiastical positions through the theological seminary she established in 1888. Once a student of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), Emma Hopkins followed Eddy's lead in speaking of God as both Mother and Father, and believed that the changing roles of women indicated the beginning of a new epoch - the reign of the Mother aspect of God. A number of Hopkins' students went on to found their own churches or became prominent leaders and teachers in the New Thought Movement. This paper will introduce Emma Curtis Hopkins and her theology, and look at connections between her teaching, the New Thought Movement, the New Age Movement and Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science movement.

Introduction

In the Spring 2001 edition of *Women-Church*, Monica Dennison writes that it is time for feminists to stop "rescuing" women from the "pages of history" and giving them "retrospective esteem and status." "The job of 'recovery' of women from the pages of history and Scripture "has been done" asserts Dennison. And she further states that no amount of this feminist scholarship is going to "dissuade a fundamentalist Sydney Anglican from the belief that Eve was created second and sinned first and therefore women must only and always have a subservient role to men."¹ The latter point is perhaps true, evangelical and fundamentalist Christians with entrenched positions are probably not going to budge as a result of feminist scholarship. And Dennison is also correct in her assertion that feminist theologians need to engage with contemporary issues of reconciliation, poverty and environmental concerns. But how can the project of incorporating women into the historical records be complete when no-one I meet knows who Emma Curtis Hopkins was, let alone about her discernible influence on the 20th century mainstream Christian healing movement and the repackaging of her ideas through the New Age movement?

My doctoral work is in the area of Christian Science, and because the limited amount of scholarship about Christian Science is usually situated in studies of "sects" and "cults," my search for recent academic interest in Christian Science eventually led me to the contemporary work on "new religious movements." This is a new and less pejorative nomenclature for those religious groups marginal to or marginalized by the mainstream religions. It is in this context that I came across contemporary scholarship on Emma Curtis Hopkins and I am indebted to three scholars in particular - Gordon Melton, Gail Harley and Beryl Satter - for their work in recovering something of Hopkins' story.

I already knew the name "Emma Hopkins" as references to her are found in all biographies of Mary Baker Eddy since she was first acting editor and then editor of Eddy's *Journal of Christian Science* from September 1884. I was also aware that Emma Hopkins is something of a pariah in the Christian Science movement having been publicly denounced by Eddy in 1887 as a

¹ Monica Dennison, "Galileo's Daughter and Other Daughters. A Reflection," *Women-Church. An Australian Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29, (2001): 45.

“false teacher” who was “deluding” her students and pronounced unqualified to teach Christian Science.² What I did not know was that Emma Hopkins is regarded as the primary founder of the New Thought movement, an American new religious movement that arose in the late 19th century and continued to be influential right through the 20th century.

In this paper, I am going to introduce Emma Curtis Hopkins, look briefly at her theology and how it contrasted with “orthodox” Christian Science, and give a cursory glance at three areas to which Hopkins' influence can be traced, viz, the late 19th century women's movement, the mainstream Christian healing movement and the New Age movement. In the course of doing so, I am hoping to pique interest in Hopkins and New Thought as there is a significant gap in academic scholarship in this area. It should be both intriguing and explanatory given the predominance of women as leaders and members of the movement.

New Thought

Danny Jorgenson argues that new religions are usually protests against the established order, against traditional religions and the society they support and promote. In this case, religious innovations are a “critical response” not only to mainstream traditional religion but also to culture and society.³ New Thought was protesting against the exclusion of women from the clergy, the loss of healing from the Protestant tradition and the inevitability of poverty and sickness in the world. Although the academic community has largely ignored New Thought, many Christians have unwittingly embraced aspects of its theology.

New Thought commenced life as schismatic Christian Science and has been influenced by a number of people, for example, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Phineas Quimby, Mary Baker Eddy and Warren Felt Evans. However, contemporary scholarship suggests that Emma Curtis Hopkins was the primary founder. By 1902, it was estimated that the New Thought movement numbered more than a million adherents. Much of this success could be directly attributed to four individuals, all students of Emma Curtis Hopkins - Malinder Cramer (San Francisco), Annie Rix Miltz (the Pacific Coast) and the Fillmores in Kansas City, Myrtle and Charles.⁴ It is these pupils who founded every major surviving New Thought group. They were the most dedicated of Hopkins' followers who spent twenty years traversing the nation lecturing, healing through prayer, establishing seminaries and churches as well as producing journals, pamphlets and writing novels.⁵

The New Thought movement was primarily composed of women during its first generation, not surprising given Hopkins explicit feminism. By the end of WW1 more men had joined the movement and gradually the feminism and social activism disappeared. However, what remained was Hopkins' institutionalisation of female leadership.⁶

² Mary Baker Eddy, "Questions Answered," *Journal of Christian Science* 5, no. 1 (1887): 26.

³ Danny L Jorgensen, "Foreword," in *Emma Curtis Hopkins. Forgotten Founder of New Thought* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

⁴ Beryl Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom. American Women, Sexual Purity, and the New Thought Movement 1875-1920*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 80.

⁵ Gail M. Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins. Forgotten Founder of New Thought* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 90.

⁶ Gordon J Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins: A Feminist of the 1880s and Mother of New Thought," in *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 97. Melton tells us that in 1991 there were 4 out of 6 women serving as presidents – Connie Fillmore is president of the Unity School, Peggy Basset of the United Church of Religious Science, Johnni Coleman of the Universal Foundation for Better Living and Judi Warren of the International Association of Churches of Truth. This is the most recent information

Gail Harley argues that there are four possible reasons for the obscuration of Hopkins' contribution to American religious life. The first is the controversy that surrounded Mary Baker Eddy, and the disputes with former students that dominated the media and historical accounts. Second, the lack of "self-reflection" within New Thought where the focus has been on practical solutions to problems that exist in the present. Third, the neglect of the mainstream religious community to investigate New Thought. The final reason is the inadequate and only history of the movement produced early in the 20th century that excluded attribution to Hopkins of her role in founding the movement.⁷

Emma Curtis Hopkins



Emma Curtis Hopkins was born Josephine Emma Curtis in Connecticut in 1849, and married George Irving Hopkins on July 19, 1874. Apart from this, very little is known of Hopkins prior to her meeting with Mary Baker Eddy in October 1883. This meeting took place at the home of a Mary F Berry who lived in Manchester, New Hampshire. Between that first contact in October and December 12 1883, Emma Hopkins was healed of her invalidism by Mary Berry.

Excited by her experience, Hopkins wanted to learn more of this "science" and wrote to Mary Baker Eddy on December 12 1883, asking how she could become involved with this new and controversial movement. Eddy replied, and fifteen days after her initial letter, Hopkins journeyed to Boston and took a class in healing with Mary Baker Eddy. Several months later, Hopkins advertised as a Christian Science practitioner in the February 1884 edition

of the *Journal of Christian Science* as it was known then. Hopkins very quickly came to prominence in the Christian Science movement. In April 1884, she contributed an article to the journal called "God's Omnipresence" and by September had been appointed editor of that journal, the only editor until then having been Eddy herself.⁸

But thirteen months later, in October 1885, Eddy's secretary, Calvin Frye, abruptly dismissed Hopkins from her position. The reasons for the dismissal are not clear and are usually given as "ideological and financial ones."⁹ It is likely that Emma Hopkins had become one of a number of former students of Mary Baker Eddy who loved Christian Science but found it, and Eddy's leadership, too restrictive. They wanted to do their own writing, develop their own healing techniques, teach and set up in practice as healers under their own auspices. These people could not accept the exclusive Christian nature of Eddy's teaching. Rather, they found much to inspire and stimulate them in the Eastern religions as well.¹⁰

After her dismissal, Hopkins travelled to Chicago and worked as an independent Christian Science practitioner, also editing the *Mind Cure Journal*, a publication she had denounced in February 1885 when working as editor of Eddy's journal.

available.

⁷ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 54-55.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹ Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins," 91.

¹⁰ Gillian Gill, *Mary Baker Eddy, Radcliffe Biography Series* (Reading, Massachusetts: Merloyd Lawrence, 1998), 340.

Independence

Less than twelve months after leaving Eddy and Boston, Hopkins founded the Emma Curtis Hopkins College of Christian Science in central Chicago, with Mary Plunkett (another former student of Eddy's) as president and Hopkins as teacher. The Hopkins Metaphysical Association was founded in June 1886 after the first class of students had graduated.¹¹ According to Gordon Melton, there were thirty-seven students in that first class and at least four of them went on to become key figures in the New Thought movement.¹²

In April 1887, Hopkins taught in San Francisco, in October Milwaukee and in November New York. Students from across the country also journeyed to Chicago to attend Hopkins's monthly classes. By October 1887, Hopkins was being recognized as a "rising star" in the metaphysical movement outside of orthodox Christian Science and by which time she is said to have personally taught six hundred students, with seventeen branches of the Hopkins Metaphysical Association in operation.¹³

During 1888, Mary Plunkett, after a successful partnership of three years, left Chicago and set up a rival association and periodical in New York. Hopkins then became president as well as teacher of her college and decided that she wanted her work to be more distinctive. Hopkins viewed her mission as a sacred one and concluded that "Christian Science is not a business or a profession, it is a ministry." As a result, Hopkins transformed her school into the "Theological Seminary for the Preparation of Students for the Christian Science Ministry."¹⁴

Hopkins believed that students needed both a "structured" learning environment and a place to gather as they were able to do in mainstream theological seminaries. The seminary was also Hopkins' way of embarking on universal missionary activity, with freedom from exploitation and oppression the goal. Gordon Melton has been able to recover some of the history of the Christian Science Theological College. Up to 1893, he found that 350 students had completed the basic course in healing, while 111 had taken the entire course and been ordained as ministers.¹⁵

Satter suggests that it was the healings that occurred during the course of the 12 week courses that helped promote the New Thought movement. But it is also possible that the rapid spread of New Thought occurred because healing, writing and teaching were profitable. Prices charged varied, and Hopkins was charging \$50 for both individual and group instruction. In addition to fees from teaching, practitioners received payment for "treatments." Some of Hopkins' students became prolific writers and so would have generated a modest income from that as well.¹⁶

On Sundays, Hopkins office was transformed into a church and she preached to students and those who came for healing.

The Christian Science Theological Seminary is supported by the CSTS Church... The Bibles of all times and nations are compared: Their miracles are shown to be the results of one order of reasoning, and the absence of miracles shown to be the result of another order of reasoning... It is restored by the theology taught here. With its restoration we find health, protection, wisdom, strength, and prosperity... Ministers of all denominations, professors of every department of thought, teachers of every science, artisans, home keepers, are warmly urged to attend our twelve o'clock daily

¹¹ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 38.

¹² Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins," 92.

¹³ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 82.

¹⁴ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 85.

services, and see for themselves what is in the divine Truth freely expressed.¹⁷

In addition to running and teaching at her Seminary and preaching on Sundays, Hopkins also began writing Bible lessons which were published for nearly ten years by the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* newspaper. She also established a new periodical called *Christian Science*.

According to Beryl Satter, Mary Baker Eddy was at least partially responsible for the development of New Thought because during the early part of the 1890's she copyrighted the term "Christian Science" and began to sue those using the Christian Science name. Satter does not supply a source for this statement and Eddy biographer Robert Peel mentions only that Hopkins became increasingly independent. Whatever the real story, by the mid-1890s the Christian Science nomenclature was dispensed with and Hopkins' *Christian Science* magazine became *Universal Truth*, and her association the *Truth Students Association*.¹⁸

In 1890, one of Hopkins' students said that Emma Hopkins was "undoubtedly the most successful teacher in the world...in many instances those who enter her classes confirmed invalids come out at the end of the course perfectly well...her very presence heals and those who listen are filled with new life."¹⁹

Theology

I have only been able to obtain and read one of the eight books written by Emma Hopkins. This one, *Scientific Christian Mental Practice*, was first published in 1888 and Hopkins has structured her teaching so that it emulated Eddy's, ie, there were a series of twelve lessons given.²⁰ During these lessons, Hopkins elaborates on her theology and provides readers with practical ways to implement it, believing, as Eddy did her own theology, namely, that it was the method used for healing by Jesus Christ. Although Hopkins refers to a number of theologians, philosophers, religious leaders and traditions to support her arguments - Plotinus, Plato, Spinoza, Augustine, Emerson, William Channing, Buddha, Thomas Carlyle, the Zend Avesta - she does not acknowledge Eddy as the source of a number of her key ideas. Yet, given her connection to Mary Baker Eddy, and the fact that she continued to admire Eddy subsequent to her dismissal from the *Journal of Christian Science*, it is not surprising to find that Hopkins' theology is consonant with much of orthodox Christian Science.²¹

In her first chapter, Hopkins explores the word "God" enumerating a number of alternative names because, she explains, many people rebel at that word. "It has become bruised by trouble and disappointment" whereas everyone agrees that Good is for everyone.²² Hopkins follows Eddy's lead by her references to God as Mind, as Good, Spirit, Life, Truth, Love, but includes some different synonyms as well - Substance, Health, Support, Defence, Protection, Intelligence. Hopkins, as Eddy had done, also referred to God as both female and male. While there is no evidence that either Mary Baker Eddy or Emma Hopkins were aware of Ann Lee's doctrine of Mother-God, it is clear that Hopkins did adopt Eddy's radical concept of a Father-Mother God, believing that it is "proper to use the masculine, feminine or neuter pronoun when referring to Deity." Inclusion in divinity elevated women to a position denied them in traditional

¹⁷ Emma Curtis Hopkins (1888) in Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 67.

¹⁸ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 96.

¹⁹ Martin Larson, "Chapter VI. The Great Popularizers.," in *New Thought Religion. A Philosophy for Health, Happiness, and Prosperity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986), 145.

²⁰ Emma Curtis Hopkins, *Scientific Christian Mental Practice* (Marina Del Rey, California: DeVorss & Company, 1888; reprint, 1970).

²¹ Larson also notes this, see 145.

²² Hopkins, *Scientific Christian Mental Practice*, 21.

patriarchal Christianity, and the concept of female-male equality flourished among Hopkin's students.²³

Following Eddy, Hopkins also believed that the only reality is spiritual, not material. Everything is illusory, what we see is not really the way things are. Both women stressed the lack of ontological reality in evil, because there can be no power apart from God, and they taught that the solution to human problems like sickness and poverty lie in comprehending this. Both women protested against the doctrine of the Fall, and against the idea that sickness originated with God.²⁴

But it was the universality of Hopkins' teaching that marked her as different from Eddy. Hopkins believed that Truth was not limited to Christianity, rather it could be found in all forms of religiosity. It is certainly evident from Hopkins' writing, and Frances Lord after her, that Hopkins was familiar with a number of religious traditions and philosophical treatises, and used them to support her position. While Hopkins did adopt Eddy's unique "argument" as a healing technique, ie, affirming the goodness and all presence of God and denying the existence and inevitability of sin, sickness and death, she believed that the healing principles were ancient ones. Hopkins asserted that even the process of inaudible communication with a sick person was based on "ancient Eastern system of instruction." For Emma Hopkins, Christian Science was a "restatement of age-old truths" found not only in the Eastern tradition, but also in the Western thought of Bishop Berkeley, Plotinus and Plato.²⁵

My thoughts are that both women were correct. What came to Mary Baker Eddy was a "discovery" for her, she believed that what had been revealed to her was the method by which Jesus was able to heal. Hopkins was also correct. Eddy's healing method was a synthesis of East and West, albeit an unconscious one.

A second key difference between Eddy and Hopkins is that whereas Eddy emphasized inspiration in healing, Hopkins formulated specific healing "arguments" or "affirmations and denials" that could be used by her students and readers of her book, *Scientific_Christian Healing Practice*, in order to heal themselves and others. Hopkins in fact promulgated five specific denials for students to regularly make, balanced by five specific affirmations, and recommended setting aside a morning each week to meditate upon them.

Denials:

There is no evil.

There is no matter.

There is no absence of life.

Sensation is not a physical or material experience.

There is no sin, sickness or death.

Affirmations:

My Good is my God. My God is Life, Truth, Love, Substance,

Intelligence - omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent.

In God I live and move and have my being.

²³ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 62.

²⁴ Also see Harley, 59 & Melton, 93.

²⁵ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 58, 60, 82. According to Emma Hopkins, Christian Science was another revelation of "Life, Truth, Holiness-Health" and that there was "Truth in every religious system of the world." See Harley, 41.

I am Spirit, Mind, Wisdom, Strength, Wholeness.
 The I AM works inevitably through me to will and to do that which
 ought to be done by me.
 I am governed by the law of God and cannot sin or fear sin, sickness
 or death.

Hopkins argued that women were being poisoned by the belief in original sin, and that they could transform themselves through this process of affirmation and denial. Denial did not mean denial of the existence of a problem, but rather, it was a counselling process by which a patient was first encouraged to speak of their concerns, identify an offending “belief” or “construct,” and then deny the existence of this belief in the realm of God. This was a six-stage process developed by Hopkins culminating in the affirmation of the patient as “the perfect creation of the living God - spiritual, harmonious, free, fearless.”²⁶

The third significant difference between Eddy and Hopkins was Hopkins' view of the Trinity. Whereas Eddy had retained the traditional Trinitarian formulation but included “Mother” alongside the Father, Hopkins asserted that God was a “threefold Principle” composed of Father, Son and Mother or Holy Spirit, where Mother and Holy Spirit are interchangeable. Hopkins saw history moving through three distinct periods, the first being that of God the Father. The second period is that of the Son, and this was marked by efforts to overcome oppression and the beginning of democratic instead of patriarchal structures. According to Hopkins, the third period is that of the Holy Spirit, the Mother-Principle or the divine Comforter. Hopkins wrote that the increasing public activity by women was indicative of the beginning of this new age, and the women she ordained were special messengers of “the new era of the Holy Mother Spirit.”²⁷

Among all the indications of change nothing strikes the old-fashioned mind clinging to past ways, with more horror, than to see how woman, the silent sufferer and meek yoke bearer of the world is stepping quite out of her old character or role, and with a startling rebound from her long passivity is hurling herself against the age with such force and bold decision as to make even her friends stand aghast.²⁸

A fourth distinctive difference between Eddy and Hopkins was the frequency with which Hopkins referred to “prosperity.” For both Eddy and Hopkins, poverty is disease that is to be healed. But according to Hopkins, and different from Eddy, Jesus was the first teacher on prosperity, because prosperity is an acknowledgement “of the presence of God.” Frances Lord then added her own touch to the theme of abundance, devoted five pages to the treatment of it, and promoted it as a pivotal concept in New Thought.²⁹

19th Century Women’s Movement

Hopkins had already experienced a primarily female environment in Boston, as most of Eddy's students and practitioners were women, and Eddy had approved of several of the women's causes but she was not actively involved in them.³⁰ Although Hopkins' priority was the promotion of her spiritual ideas, unlike Eddy she did take steps to align herself with the woman's movement.³¹ Hopkins did not want the healing ministry dominated by men as the medical profession was.³²

²⁶ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 90, 93.

²⁷ Melton, “Emma Curtis Hopkins,” 93, 94.

²⁸ Quoted by Melton, 93.

²⁹ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 73, 74.

³⁰ Melton, “Emma Curtis Hopkins,” 92.

³¹ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 84.

³² Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 76.

At the first graduation ceremony of the Christian Science Theological Seminary held on January 10, 1889, the guest speaker was suffragist Louise Southworth. Southworth was an officer in the National Women's Suffrage Association, and during her speech declared that Christian Science "has come at last to give woman her proper status in the world."³³ The presence of suffragists at this graduation ceremony was not a coincidence. Of the 22 graduates, 20 were women. All of these graduates had been trained by Emma Curtis Hopkins, and were subsequently ordained by her to Christian ministry. Gordon Melton argues that in this ceremony Hopkins exercised the office of bishop and therefore became the "first woman to assume such powers in modern times."³⁴

We know now that Quaker women were prominent in the 19th century women's movement. What is less well known is that Christian Science and New Thought women were also in the vanguard of that movement. Hopkins brought the idea of the feminine in the divine and merged it with the feminism of the nineteenth century in a manner that was empowering to her and to the women she gathered around her.³⁵ Satter argues that Hopkins' "convoluted and ambiguous" writings were aimed at making women whole through the development within of "masculine" qualities like strength and power and certainly Hopkins' deputies were women who taught, published and became social activists.³⁶

It is also clear that Hopkins empowered women to seek positions of authority within the New Thought movement. For example, Eliza Barton Lyman was founder and principal of the Hopkins School in Milwaukee, Adelle M Harper was president and founder of the Hopkins College of Christian Science in St Paul, Mary J Butler was president of the Hopkins School in Denver, Angela Crippen-Davis was president of the Louisville College of Christian Science. *Christian Science*, *Universal Truth*, *Truth*, and *Harmony* were all periodicals founded between 1888 and 1890 with women as publishers and editors.³⁷

Many of the people Hopkins taught were suffragists. They included physician Alice Stocknam, editors Helen Wilmans and Elizabeth Boynton Harbert, poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and educator and president of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union in Boston, Abby Morton Diaz.³⁸

In addition, Emma Curtis Hopkins trained several of the women involved in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible* - Lucinda Chandler, Clara Colby, Louisa Southworth, Elizabeth Boynton Harbert and Sara Underwood. Stanton herself, influenced by Frances Lord, also investigated New Thought but decided that she was of "too solid flesh," although she did occasionally have treatments from New Thought healers and admitted to being inclined to take it more seriously as she approached the end of her life.³⁹ In fact, it was Hopkins' student, Frances Lord who was, aside from Stanton's daughter, the first woman to encourage Stanton to proceed with and assisted her at the outset with the *Woman's Bible*.⁴⁰

We find the *Woman's Bible* being re-read in the 1970's by feminist scholars and references to it turn up for example in Phyllis Trible's 1973 article "Eve and Adam" in the *Feminist Reader*

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Melton, "Emma Curtis Hopkins," 88.

³⁵ Ibid., 97.

³⁶ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 84.

³⁷ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 77.

³⁸ Ibid., 76.

³⁹ Kathi Kern, *Mrs Stanton's Bible* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 146-47.

⁴⁰ Kathi L Kern, "Rereading Eve: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and "the Woman's Bible," 1885-1896," *Women's Studies* 19 (1991).

Womanspirit Rising.⁴¹ More recent scholarship suggests that the importance of the *Woman's Bible* was that it challenged then conventional notions of a separate woman's sphere. Kathi Kern argues that this concept of "separate spheres" in the 19th century has been "liberally imposed on histories of women," and that the *Woman's Bible* in fact points to a diversity of thought among white, middle class women. According to Lisa Strange, the *Woman's Bible* not only helped to broaden the agenda of the first wave feminist movement, but also "foreshadowed the theological revisions" of the second wave feminist movement.⁴²

Feminist scholars as yet have not drawn out the implications of the New Thought association with the *Woman's Bible* and what influence these women may have inadvertently had on the feminist theology of the 20th century.

Feminist Missionary Activity

Frances Lord is believed to be the first of Hopkins students to take the ministry offshore, publishing her version of Hopkins' lectures in England in 1888 but she was teaching classes there from October 1887. Gail Harley believes that the effect of Lord's missionary activity was to prepare Britain for the advent of orthodox Christian Science, Eddy's students arriving and teaching from November 1888.⁴³

In 1886 in Chicago, Frances Lord purchased a monthly journal called *Woman's World* which she said was "devoted to the advancement of women, socially and industrially." According to Lord, the only way that this could come about was through the "spiritual evolution of the individual" and in 1887 she began in her publication to give "a regular course of instruction" in Christian Science healing, with the approval of her teacher, Emma Hopkins.⁴⁴ Although I have no circulation information for *Woman's World* according to Frances Lord in the Preface of her 1888 book, the "instruction" about Christian Science proved so successful that she was unable to keep up with demand.

The success of this led to the publication of Lord's book, *Christian Science Healing*, an overtly feminist text including references to God as "she."⁴⁵ For example, "when you take Truth into your mind, she makes herself at home; she turns out all the gaudy and untrue pictures, and in their stead, you find her own lovely form and face, at every turn."⁴⁶ One of the fundamentals of Christian Science healing, asserted Lord, was the removal of limits and fear, and she cites the example of the "modern woman" as a case in point. For Lord, the new freedom being experienced by women was the direct result of "casting off a belief in limits."⁴⁷

One of the distinguishing characteristics of New Thought is that, unlike Christian Science, it encouraged openness to other religious traditions. In her list of suggested readings, Frances Lord includes the Hindu mystical text, the Bhagavad Gita, along with Christian writers like Augustine, Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg and Leo Tolstoy. Lord also includes writings by women. For example, a 19th century Theosophical work by Lady Caithness, writings of Dr Anna

⁴¹ Phyllis Trible, "Eve and Adam," in *Womanspirit Rising*, ed. Carol P Christ & Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

⁴² Lisa Strange, "Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Woman's Bible & the Roots of Feminist Theology," *Gender Issues* 17, no. 4 (1999): 3.

⁴³ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 59.

⁴⁴ Frances Lord, *Christian Science Healing: It's Principles & Practices with Full Explanations for Home Students* (London: George Redway, 1888), vii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

Kingsford in 1881, the writings of George Fox's contemporary Jane Leade (1623-1700) and mystic Madam Guyon (1648-1717).⁴⁸

In reading Lord's book, I found myself astonished at its contemporary nature, which results of course from Lord's feminism. How widely read this material was, or what impact it had on women in England outside of the suffrage movement, has not yet been adequately investigated.

Mainstream Christian Healing Movement

Preliminary investigations suggest that the threads of the New Thought movement have also become entangled with the 20th century Christian healing movement. New Thought inspired at least two influential 20th century healers, Agnes Sanford and John Gayner Banks.

Indications are that the influence of New Thought on Agnes Sanford was indirect. Her 1947 bestseller *The Healing Light* launched Sanford's career as a writer on Christian healing and she went on to become a popular lecturer in this field for more than thirty years. Publication of Sanford's book happened with the assistance of Dr Glenn Clark. Although not a New Thought leader himself, Glenn Clark had studied and implemented the ideas of two New Thought writers Frank Rawson and Walter Lanyon in his own writing and ministry. Agnes Sanford was also influenced by New Thought minister Emmett Fox (1886-1951) and his 1934 best selling book *Sermon on the Mount*.⁴⁹ It is impossible to read Agnes Sanford's writings and not wonder about connections back to the New Thought movement once the seed as been sown that there was an influence here. But more discussion and analysis on this is beyond the scope of this paper.

The influence of New Thought on John Gayner Banks was more direct. John Gayner Banks, an Episcopalian priest and founder of the International Order of St Luke the Physician studied with Emma Hopkins in San Francisco according to both Frank Darling in his history of Christian Healing and Mary Baker Eddy biographer and scholar Robert Peel.⁵⁰ Gail Harley found a 1947 copy of the *Truth that Heals*, Bank's teaching manual for the Order of Saint Luke, and discovered that Hopkins' metaphysical ideas were both acknowledged and implemented.⁵¹ In another book, *Healing Everywhere*, Banks quoted from Emma Hopkins directly, giving both an excerpt from Hopkins' book *Studies in High Mysticism*, and a Self-treatment on forgiveness.⁵² According to Robert Peel, as late as the 1960's Hopkins' book *High Mysticism* was being advertised in the Order of St Luke's official journal *Sharing*.⁵³

To my knowledge, the mainstream Christian healing ministry has never acknowledged the contributions made by the New Thought movement to their practices, and unpacking this could prove to be an academic treasure trove to any scholar interested in the area.

New Age Movement

While the New Age movement has perhaps more in common with Spiritualism and Theosophy, some ideas do resonate with New Thought and New Thought had of course always been open to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 323-33. Dr Anna Kingsford (d 1888) obtained a medical degree in Paris in 1880 and advocated a vegetarian diet for humanity. Jane Leade (1623-1700) wrote *The Wars of David* in 1700, *Revelations* in 1683, *The Wonders of God's Creation* in 1695 and *The Heavenly Cloud now Breaking* in 1681. Madame Guyon (1648-1717) was a mystic poet.

⁴⁹ Frank C Darling, *The Restoration of Christian Healing. New Freedom in the Church since the Reformation* (Colorado: Vista Publications, 1992), 76.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 461. Robert Peel, *Mary Baker Eddy: The Years of Trial*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), 360.

⁵¹ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 132.

⁵² Darling, *The Restoration of Christian Healing*, 471-72.

⁵³ Peel, *The Years of Trial*, 360.

diversity of belief.⁵⁴ It is not surprising therefore to find that Emma Hopkins' influence, as the founder of New Thought, extends to the New Age movement.⁵⁵

According to Gordon Melton, the New Age movement is a revivalist one that has drawn most of its inspiration from Theosophy, Spiritualism and the Eastern religions, but he also argues that the presence of New Thought provides an explanation for the speed with which the New Age movement spread from the early 1970s. Rather than create new organizations, the New Age was able to utilize the membership of older groups and “a cordial relationship” commenced between New Thought and the New Age, exemplified by the proliferation of classes devoted to *A Course in Miracles*. By the middle of the 1980's, most New Thought churches were holding study groups.⁵⁶

Healing within New Thought also began to expand to include modalities such as massage, shiatsu, yoga, rebirthing. Although some of the New Age activities such as channelling are now being removed from the New Thought churches as leaders recognized an essential incompatibility with their teachings, teaching *A Course in Miracles* remains on the agenda. *A Course in Miracles* is most obviously synchronous with New Thought beliefs through its teachings that what we know as the material world is a dream, an illusion from which we will awaken and find ourselves already in heaven.⁵⁷

The largest New Thought group today is the Unity School of Christianity in Missouri. This was founded by Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, both students of Emma Hopkins and ordained by her on June 1, 1891. Marianne Williamson is a well-known figure in the New Age movement, and she is also the spiritual leader of the Renaissance Unity Interfaith Fellowship in Missouri, a Unity Church. Williamson helped to popularise *A Course in Miracles* through her 1992 best-selling book and subsequent appearances on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

Ernest Holmes, who was the founder of the youngest New Thought group, the Church of Religious Science, studied with Emma Hopkins in 1924. According to Martin Larson, Holmes adopted “virtually intact” Hopkins' method of healing.⁵⁸ The most famous exponent of Religious Science is Louise Hay. Louise Hay was a prominent and immensely popular figure in the New Age movement during the 1980's and 1990's touring and speaking with other New Age luminaries such as Deepak Chopra, Stuart Wilde and Wayne Dyer. Hay began her career in 1981 as a practitioner and minister for the Church of Religious Science, and her 1980's best seller *You Can Heal Your Life* contains affirmations reminiscent of those provided by Hopkins and Holmes.⁵⁹

New Thought may have been marginalized by the mainstream Christian community but associations with the New Age movement are an indication of the widespread popularity of some of its ideas. This is yet another area worthy of further academic interest.

⁵⁴ Gordon J Melton, "New Thought and New Age," in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. James R Lewis & J Gordon Melton (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 18.

⁵⁵ Australian historian Jill Roe notes that the New Age in Australia can be traced to Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought, Anthroposophy, the Baha'i and Scientology. Jill Roe, "Dayspring: Australia & NZ as a Setting for the 'New Age' from the 1890's to Nimbin," *Australian Cultural History* 16 (1997-1998).

⁵⁶ Melton, "New Thought," 18, 25.

⁵⁷ Arnold S. Weiss, "A New Religious Movement and Spiritual Healing Psychology Based on a Course in Miracles.," in *Religion & the Social Order. Between Sacred & Secular: Research & Theory on Quasi-Religions* (London: JAI Press, 1994), 198.

⁵⁸ Larson, "Chapter VI. The Great Popularizers," 147.

⁵⁹ Satter, *Each Mind a Kingdom*, 252.

Conclusion

In 1895, Hopkins closed her seminary and relocated to New York, from which base she continued to give public lectures, travelled to Europe and England, and wrote prolifically. Most of her teaching was done individually over the next thirty years, but Hopkins also continued her private healing practice, including as clients influential socialite Mabel Dodge Luhan. Luhan saw Hopkins for treatment three times a week and referred friends to Hopkins as well. These included artists Maurice Sterne and Andrew Dasburg, theatre set designer Robert Edmond Jones and Isadora Duncan's sister, Elizabeth.⁶⁰

By the time of Hopkins' move to New York, power had disseminated throughout the country as missionary branches of Hopkins' seminary had been established, and according to Gail Harley, "a new feminist religious movement of international importance" had been created.⁶¹ Yet Emma Curtis Hopkins receded in status to that of outcast in the Christian Science movement.⁶²

In this paper I have sketched a biography of Emma Hopkins and outlined three areas requiring further research. That is, the impact and involvement of New Thought with the first wave feminist movement and connection to and influence on the feminist theology of the 20th century; just how has New Thought and Emma Hopkins informed the practice of mainstream Christian healing; and finally, unravelling the intricate connections between New Thought and New Age. This scholarship is needed to tease out the many ways in which New Thought ideas have changed our thinking, and to investigate how the once marginalized transformed the mainstream.

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⁶⁰ Most of the biographical information about Hopkins during her time in New York has been taken from correspondence between Luhan and Hopkins.

⁶¹ Harley, *Emma Curtis Hopkins*, 140.

⁶² Millions of people have heard of Norman Vincent Peale and his 1952 bestseller *The Power of Positive Thinking*. But few people know of Emma Curtis Hopkins and that two New Thought groups – Unity School of Christianity and the Church of Religious Science – were primary sources of inspiration for Peale's book.

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