

**THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF EMMET FOX IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
NEW THOUGHT MOVEMENT**

by

MARÉ VENTER

**submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

PROMOTER: PROF J S KRÜGER

30 NOVEMBER 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of the study and interpretation of Emmet Fox's religious thinking as portrayed in his published books. Inspired by his simple, yet universal and comprehensible beliefs, the enthusiasm for a project of this nature was further supported by those in the New Thought movement. Many individuals endorsing this belief system have played a significant role in my own development and understanding of such concepts and I am eternally grateful to them. In loving memory I acknowledge Dr June Jones, considered the 'mother' of New Thought in South Africa, for training and qualifying me within this line of thought. My heartfelt thanks to Dr Margaret Stevens for her involvement in New Thought in South Africa and her continuous support and friendship throughout the years.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the following people who have taken a more active part in the compilation and completion of this project:

Professor Kobus Krüger, for his interest in the subject, and who, through his unique way of enthusing, guiding and encouraging one, gave form and structure to it.

Liz Stewart, for her skillful and professional editing.

My mother, *Marie*, for her unconditional love throughout my life.

My late father, *Duggie*, for his motivation.

Ludi for believing in me and initially encouraged me to undertake such a project. And together with our boys, *Wicus* and *Jaco*, provided the balanced, supporting and loving family environment to work in.

SUMMARY

The religious significance of Emmet Fox (1886–1951), a pioneer in the New Thought movement, is the focus of this study. The relevance of Fox's religious thought will be determined in reference to and in the context of contemporary theorist Ken Wilber's theoretical framework of integral hermeneutics. On the basis of Fox's primary writings, biographical information, the ideas and philosophy of modern New Thought scholars and Wilber's literature, Fox's religious thought was interpreted and evaluated. Aspects of Fox's belief, such as creative mind, scientific prayer, meditation and healing, concepts such as God, Jesus Christ, death, reincarnation, karma and end times, as well as his method of biblical exegesis are discussed. It becomes apparent that Emmet Fox, preacher and teacher, had never intended to provide a scientific or academic structural doctrine in which to deliver his teaching. His non-conformist, simple, yet well thought-through beliefs, which include esoteric, eastern and universal truths, focused on the fundamental truths that are necessary for humanity's evolutionary development. This approach made Fox's teaching valuable to his audience of the time, a changing American consciousness, as well as appropriate to a transformational South Africa, where it is relevant in bridging the various cultures, languages, and religious beliefs within a continuously changing spiritually minded population, and most of all, beneficial to every person's inner spiritual journey towards ultimate enlightenment.

Fox's underlying religious belief is that 'the thought is the thing' and this endorses the whole of the New Thought teaching, which states that 'whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve' or 'be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind'. Probably the most remarkable feature of his religious thinking is his popular allegorical interpretation of the Bible, which he interprets spiritually.

It is apparent that there is an affinity between the religious thought of Emmet Fox and that of Wilber. Although the intent of this study is not to compare these scholars, it is interesting and valuable to Fox's interpretation that they advocate a similar underlying belief in the holistic Kosmos and the importance of having an integral vision.

KEY TERMS

New Thought

Fox, Emmet

Wilber, Ken

Alternative religion

Power of the mind

Creative thought

Metaphysical teaching

Healing

Allegorical interpretation of the Bible

Integral hermeneutics

Theory of everything

Divine Mind

Scientific prayer

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Summary	ii
Key Terms	iii

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Topic, approach and relevancy	1
1.2 Method	7
1.3 Survey of Literature	8
1.4 Structure of the thesis	11
Notes	13

Chapter 2

THE LIFE OF EMMET FOX	14
2.1 His life	14
2.2 His publishers and publications	38
Notes	44

Chapter 3

NEW THOUGHT HISTORY	45
3.1 What is New Thought?	45
3.2 History, roots, forerunners and founders	47
3.2.1 History, roots and forerunners	47
3.2.2 Founders/leaders of organisational movements	51
3.3 Theology, philosophy and subsequent challenges for New Thought ...	53
Notes	62

Chapter 4

KEN WILBER: THE SPIRIT OF EVOLUTION	66
4.1 Growth and evolution	66
4.2 The great chain of being	72
4.3 Thanatos and eros	78
4.4 Fall from source: involution and evolution	80
4.5 The path of return to wholeness	84
4.6 A theory of everything	87
4.7 Conclusion	93
Notes	96

Chapter 5

THE INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR INDIVIDUAL	98
5.1 Upper-right quadrant: exterior individual	99
5.2 Upper-left quadrant: interior individual	100
5.3 Creative mind	102
5.4 Prayer, meditation and healing	114
5.4.1 Prayer and meditation	116
5.4.2 Healing	133
Notes	140

Chapter 6

THE CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONCEPTS	143
6.1 Lower-left quadrant: interior collective (cultural)	143
6.2 Lower-right quadrant: exterior collective (social)	144
6.3 The God concept	146
6.3.1 To define God	153
6.3.2 The personal God	154
6.3.3 The seven main aspects of God	157
6.3.4 The names of God	161
6.3.5 A jealous God?	165
6.3.6 Closing thoughts on God	166
6.4 Jesus Christ: a metaphysical revolution	168

6.4.1 Jesus and Christ: the human and the divine	171
6.4.2 The Jesus Christ teaching	175
6.5 Socialising concepts	177
6.5.1 Church and structure	177
6.5.2 Tithing	178
Notes	182

Chapter 7

DEATH, REINCARNATION AND THE END TIMES	185
7.1 The process of dying and death	186
7.1.1 Death defined	186
7.1.2 The next world	188
7.1.3 The bardo experience	194
7.1.4 Preparation for life here-after	198
7.2 The concept of reincarnation	200
7.2.1 Immortality	201
7.2.2 The doctrine of reincarnation	201
7.2.3 Karma	209
7.2.4 Liberation from the cycle of rebirth	211
7.3 The end times	212
Notes	218

Chapter 8

BIBLICAL EXEGESIS	221
8.1 Biblical exegesis in the New Thought tradition	221
8.2 Emmet Fox’s method of Biblical interpretation	223
8.3 Allegoric and symbolic scriptural analysis	228
8.3.1 The Sermon on the Mount	228
8.3.2 The Ten Commandments	233
8.3.3 The Lord’s Prayer	239
8.3.4 The Good Shepherd	244
8.4 Conclusion	247
Notes	250

Chapter 9

CONCLUSION	253
APPENDIX A	264
APPENDIX B	265
APPENDIX C	266
APPENDIX D	267

APPENDIX E 268

BIBLIOGRAPHY 269