Any authentic and in-depth look into the New Thought Movement must lead the seeker to the Judge Thomas Troward. For many, his name comes up as being a major influence on Ernest Holmes. In fact, Dr. Tom Sannar says in his book “New Complete Works, Life, and Summaries of Thomas Troward,” that Troward was the second great influence on Holmes and Ralph Waldo Emerson was the first. Knowing that he was one of the top two influences isn’t enough for the serious metaphysician. To truly grasp what that influence was, requires one to know and understand that not only how this man came to be such an influence on Holmes, which is where many stop in their studies, but even more importantly is finding out how Judge Troward become one of the most influential people in New Thought overall. Anyone serious about New Thought today must take a look behind the veil of history to glean from his teachings directly. This brief document will give you a taste of just how relevant his influence can be today and how it came to be.

In 1847 Thomas was born. His parents, Albany and Frederica, though British were living in India where his father Albany was serving as a full colonel in the Indian Army. In 1857 the first major large scare uprising as part of the rebellion against British rule and occupation began. Thomas now 10, most certainly would have been seeing and hearing about these events, as both general news and due to his parents being British. His father’s military service most certainly impacted his young life as well. Not much is stated about his young life but imagine the internal conflict of knowing you are in a country where some people do not want you because you and your parents are British, and the crown is the enemy. At some point however, he returned to England for school. The exact time that he returned to England isn’t stated but he graduated college in 1865. After graduating, he went back to school to study law. I suspect that part of his early childhood experiences in India are what inspired Thomas to study law. Well versed in literature, having received honors and medals, on a path to a law degree, and one who was skilled as an artist and painter, Thomas was a young man with what we today refer to as well rounded. His left brain of analytical skills and his right brain of visual and intuition were both being actively engaged.

In 1869 at the age of twenty-two, he returned to India where he began working as an assistant commissioner. This was after having taken an extensive and difficult Indian Civil Service Examination. It is reported that people were shocked by his test, by the originality of his answers on one section in particular; that section happened to be, “metaphysics.” Continuing to demonstrate his superb work ethic and knowledge, he was promoted rather quickly to the level of Divisional Judge. He remained and served in that position for the 25 years. During this time he also married his first wife and together they had three children. With his second wife, whom he married after his first wife had died, he had another three children. Without the foresight and work of Sarah Ann, his second wife, the written works of Judge Troward, may very well have been lost. After his death, it was Sarah Ann who helped to get his works published.

Through a forward written in “Troward's Comments On The Psalms,” she says of her husband, "When he retired from the Bengal Civil Service in 1896, he decided to devote himself to three objects -- the study of the Bible, writing his books, and painting pictures... He believed that the solution to all our problems was there (in the Bible) for those who read and meditated with minds at one with its Inspirer.” Her commentary about her husband give us a huge glimpse behind that veil. We see a man with a vision not simply a curiosity. This was a judge, a man of law, and pragmatic thinking and he believed the problems of man found solution in the bible. That is quite an insight and based upon how he did with the metaphysics section of the assessment years earlier, it is safe to assume that the solutions he was referring to were not seen or knowable by the casual Christian but by one, as Annie Troward said, one “who read and meditated with minds at one with its Inspirer.” Through the reading, the meditating, and aligning the mind with its Inspirer, the metaphysical meanings of the Bible would then be known, and it was there that the solutions would also be found.

Rumor has it that during a vision he was given insight into the development of a philosophical system of practice that would give peace of mind to those who studied it as well as offering practical results of physical health and happiness as well. Whether this vision theory is accurate or not is not really relevant because what is known is that Judge Troward was an avid reader. He consumed a great many texts during his lifetime and many of them were the various sacred texts of the world’s religions and systems of philosophy. Despite the time of their births, it is most auspicious that both the writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, painter Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) lived during the time of Judge Troward. Keeping in mind that Troward lived from 1847-1916 and considering the scope of his reading, it would not be such a fanciful leap to believe that he read the works of each of these men when they came of an age that their works were part of the public consciousness. This leap is made even more credible since it is known that he read various texts of raja Yoga which is the system of Yoga practiced and taught by Swami Vivekananda.

The philosophy that Judge Troward created, Mental Science, was well established before his now famous Edinburgh lectures were delivered at Queens Gate in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1904.

It is important to note that the term mental science had already existed as it was used by Quimby however the difference being that Quimby’s does not rest on religious doctrine and as we have seen Troward believed the Bible contained the solutions for mankind’s troubles.

Many people today say that reading his works is difficult and rest assured it is said that the small and very attentive audiences he spoke to, hardly understood what he was saying to them. Considering his very intellectual and well-versed nature it would be easy to see that he may have been speaking in terms that they were not at the time ready or able to truly comprehend. He was a man with an eclectic background that many of his listeners would not be able to directly relate. He spoke the native language of India and had read texts about subject matter that the average man or woman of England would have had no knowledge of even existing let alone understanding or applying to their lives.

Having seen the challenges occurring in both India and England during Victorian rule (June 1837 to January 1901), his philosophy most certainly was developed to address some of the ills of society. The rebellions in India to end British rule, classism, and discrimination in India coupled with the poverty, the high moral standards and battles against such things as prostitution which came to be known as, “The Great Social Evil,” slavery had been abolished in 1838 but the effects, both the positive and the negative, of a post slavery system continued. Not only did this new era bring greater “freedoms” but it also brought greater overall health and lower mortality rates. “With a healthier environment, diseases were caught less easily and did not spread as much. Technology improved because the population had more money to spend on medical technology (for example, techniques to prevent death in childbirth, so that more women and children survived), which also led to a greater number of cures for diseases. However, there was a cholera epidemic in London in 1848–49, which killed 14,137 people, and another in 1853 killing 10,738. Reformers rushed to complete a modern London sewerage system. Tuberculosis (spread in congested dwellings), lung diseases from the mines and typhoid remained common.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian\_era#Mortality\_rates)

Apart from the challenges, Troward was most certainly influenced by the Ideology that came to exist during the Victorian era. The previous era, the Georgian period, was defined by rationalism which the Victorian era demonstrated a marked resistance with an increasing turn towards romanticism and mysticism with regard to religion, social values, and arts.

In the Roads to Truth, Sherry Evans says, “Troward writes that the purpose of Mental Science is to discover the relationship between the individual power of volition and the cosmic law that maintains and advances humanity. He believes that mental science provides a sensible basis for believing that we can each have power over our life.” (Evans 145) This sounds very similar to two of the We Believe statements that Holmes penned in 1927. “WE BELIEVE that the Universal Spirit, which is God, operates through a Universal Mind, which is the Law of God; and that we are surrounded by this Creative Mind which receives the direct impress of our thought and acts upon it. WE BELIEVE in the healing of the sick and control of conditions through the power of this Mind.” Troward’s idea of a spiritual prototype and the idea of the mental equivalent which Holmes spoke of, both outline the idea that whatever it is that we seek to manifest or demonstrate, be that physical health, a relationship, finances, etc. before it can become a physical experience in the external plane, it must first be conceived in the internal or spiritual plane. History certain identifies that Holmes was influenced by Judge Troward, however as Charles Braden says, “Just how much of what Holmes teaches is from Troward it is difficult to say. . . [Holmes] has digested Troward’s thought so completely and made it so much his own that it is doubtful if he himself could have told precisely when or where in his own teaching he was setting forth Troward’s thought.” (Braden 420)

For me the biggest difference between the teachings of Holmes and Troward lies in their use of the Bible. Troward, as stated before, believed that the Bible contained the solutions for what ailed mankind and Holmes, while using the Bible as “a” source text, did not place it on such a high pedestal. Holmes, being the great synthesizer, seems to be more “interfaith” in his perspective and approach to this thing called New Thought.

Thomas Troward:

“My mind is a center of Divine operation. The Divine operation is always for expansion and fuller expression, and this means the production of something beyond what has gone before, something entirely new, not included in the past experience, though proceeding out of it by an orderly sequence of growth. Therefore, since the Divine cannot change its inherent nature, it must operate in the same manner with me; consequently, in my own special world, of which I am the center, it will move forward to produce new conditions, always in advance of any that have gone before.”

“The action of Mind (thought) plants that nucleus which, if allowed to grow undisturbed, will eventually attract to itself all the conditions necessary for its manifestation in outward visible form.”

Holmes:

“Life is a mirror and will reflect back to the thinker what he thinks into it.”

“Life is infinite energy coupled with limitless creative imagination. It is the invisible essence and substance of every visible form. Its nature is goodness, truth, wisdom and beauty, as well as energy and imagination. Our highest satisfaction comes from a sense of conscious union with this invisible Life. All human endeavor is an attempt to get back to first principles, to find such an inward wholeness that all sense of fear, doubt and uncertainty vanishes.”

For me, Troward’s scope of experience is of major impact. Rather than myopically looking at one philosophy or religious path, he looked at many and did his own synthesis of what he found to be the relevant truths to helping mankind. This encourages me to take up the mantle and keep the evolving of thought moving higher and higher; there is no reason that I should stop and “take his word for it,” but rather read his works just as he read both ancient and modern texts and formulate them in a way that is practical and applicable to the people of today just as he did during his era.

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