



American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality: Searching for the Higher Self, 1875-1915

Catherine Tumber

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Contrary to popular thought, New Age spirituality did not suddenly appear in American life in the 1970s and '80s. In *American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality*, Catherine Tumber demonstrates that the New Age movement first flourished more than a century ago during the Gilded Age under the mantle of 'New Thought.' Based largely on research in popular journals, self-help manuals, newspaper accounts, and archival collections, *American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality* explores the contours of the New Thought movement. Through the lives of well-known figures such as Mary Baker Eddy, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and Edward Bellamy as well as through more obscure, but more representative 'New Thinkers' such as Abby Morton Diaz, Emma Curtis Hopkins, Ursula Gestefeld, Lilian Whiting, Sarah Farmer, and Elizabeth Towne, Tumber examines the historical conditions that gave rise to New Thought. She pays close attention to the ways in which feminism became grafted, with varying degrees of success, to emergent forms of liberal culture in the late nineteenth century: progressive politics, the Social Gospel, humanist psychotherapy, bohemian subculture, and mass market journalism. *American Feminism and the Birth of New Age Spirituality* questions the value of the new age movement then and now to the pursuit of women's rights and democratic renewal.

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