



# GEMS OF WISDOM

from Black Leaders of New Thought



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Black leaders have been integral to the growth and development of the New Thought spiritual movement. Although the early organizations—Unity and Religious Science—were founded by white leaders, newer incarnations are largely the work of African-American ministers.

A single booklet cannot begin to name or honor them all. Black History Month is becoming a larger celebration each year among the branches of New Thought, and more leaders will be featured as awareness and gratitude for their work grows.

New Thought is based on ancient spiritual teachings that emphasize the divine within every person and the creative power of thought. Each minister or teacher tends to have a signature saying, a particular gem of wisdom for which they are remembered.

In this booklet, we have assembled some of those gems. Some are historical and others are from today's thinkers and teachers. Many have overcome prejudice and setbacks to carry on their spiritual work. All have inspired the practical use of spiritual principles to bring about healings, financial restoration, deeper love, and better living for so many.

We honor them in Black History Month and every month.

Your Friends in Unity

The Legacy of Johnnie Coleman



*It Works  
If You Work It*

Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon arrived in a limousine. She walked into the Church of Today in Warren, Michigan, looking proud, self-assured, elegant, and confident.

She was to be our guest speaker that Sunday, and I thought, "Whoever this lady is, she must have an awesome message."

Nothing prepared me for the soul-stirring, uplifting, mind-expanding message she delivered with authority. I recognized authority. On that day, I heard it, I saw it, I felt it. Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon spoke as one having authority.

She was easy to listen to. Her message was clear, relatable, and down to earth. She seemed to be speaking especially to me and delivered the words that grabbed my attention: *It works if you work it!*

I had heard Johnnie Colemon's story about breaking the barrier of segregation at Unity Village in the 1950s. She was the first African-American student to be allowed to live on Unity grounds, but only after she threatened to leave the ministerial program.

Ordained by Unity, she went on to success and acclaim, establishing Christ Universal Temple in Chicago in 1956 then creating a new organization within New Thought called the Universal Foundation for Better Living (UFBL) in 1974. Working with Rev. Mary Tumpkin in Miami, Florida, she also created the Johnnie Colemon Theological Seminary for UFBL.

**It works**  
*if you work it!*  
—Rev. Dr. Johnnie Colemon

Celebrating Black History Month would be incomplete without remembering Johnnie Colemon for her impact and contributions.

Not only because of her long list of service and community involvement.

Not only because she overcame racial and social roadblocks.

Not only because of the hundreds of thousands of lives she touched and changed with her bold and dynamic messages, providing clear, practical, inspirational instructions.

Not only because she was the first African-American president of the Association of Unity Churches.

Not only because of all the major accomplishments she demonstrated as an example of a life well-lived.

But because every person who stays on the Unity grounds stands on her shoulders. Her courageous act of love and service left a legacy for all.



# THEY BLESSED ME

By Rev. Sheila R. McKeithen, J.D.

*God*  
is absolute good.  
—Rev. Mary Tumpkin

In 1982, the voice on the other end of the phone declared, “You are going to be a great New Thought teacher!”

*New Thought? What is it?*

The man who had called was Les Brown, a radio personality in Miami, Florida, who, through his radio program, reminded me daily how much I disliked my job. So I resigned.

“You’ve got something special” was his mantra.

After I had attended one of his public meetings and read two books he recommended—*You* by Frances Wilshire and *Key to Yourself* by Venice Bloodworth—Les telephoned to ask my reflections on the books.

My response prompted him to prophesy about my future in New Thought. He then invited me to church at the Universal Truth Center for Better Living (UTC) in Miami. My life would change forever.

I accepted the invitation to attend UTC's worship service where a woman, Rev. Mary A. Tumpkin, preached from the first chapter of Genesis. I had never heard the creation story taught as symbolism. She was both powerful and convincing.

She taught me that the Bible was my story and God's nature is absolute good. She said that because I am a part of God's creation, my nature is also absolute good.

I wanted to believe her because I was tired of being unhappy.

She taught me that I could give up the concept of a mean and vicious God and envision a God of compassion whose nature is absolute good. I believed her and chose to accept the goodness of God and the good within myself.

UTC is affiliated with the Universal Foundation for Better Living, Inc. (UFBL), founded by Rev. Johnnie Coleman of Chicago, who visited UTC in Miami at least once a year.

Her testimony was that she was healed in the early 1950s of an unnamed but incurable condition. She stood tall and was very elegant. She spoke with conviction and said, "God can heal anything, anytime, anywhere."

She boasted that "God is the source of my supply." Again and again she proclaimed, "The healer is inside of you. You and the Healer are one. Oneness means sameness. You are just like the Healer. What is true of the Healer is true of you."

This information was foreign to me even though I had attended church from a young age. I decided to embrace the teaching and try it on as I would a dress.

Dr. Coleman chose Rev. Alberta Ware of Chicago to teach all of the classes in the Master Certificate Program at UTC. I enrolled and began my spiritual studies with *Lessons in Truth* by Dr. H. Emilie Cady.

After years of study, I was accepted into the Teacher Training Program at the Johnnie Coleman Institute in Chicago. Rev. Ware taught me that study was not enough; I also had to serve as a way of releasing back into the universe what was being given to me.

I was blessed by many other teachers:

- Rev. Helen W. Carry, who was Johnnie Coleman's assistant minister and director of the Johnnie Coleman Institute in Chicago, taught me the importance of standing on spiritual principle at all costs. In her classroom, jolts of electricity passed through my body as she taught spiritual principles



## *The Melting Pot*

**the melting pot**  
**never worked for me**  
*and so I made my own—*  
*pot, that is.*  
and instead of melting,  
it's cast in bronze ...  
**that glows!**

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