

GNOTHI SEAUTON (Know Thyself)

1831

Ralph Waldo Emerson

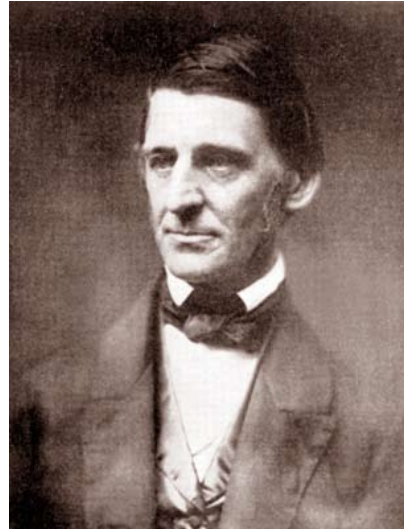
Boston-born Emerson (1803-1882) was the leader of the Transcendentalist movement in the United States during the early- to mid-nineteenth century, and through his essays, poetry, and philosophical writings, exerted considerable influence on the New Thought and related movements. Inspired by the saying "Know Thyself" above the portal of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, in this excerpt he poetically describes the astounding reality of what will be discovered by following this ancient axiom, so central to the Rosicrucian Tradition.

I

If thou canst bear
Strong meat of simple truth
If thou durst my words compare
With what thou thinkest in my soul's
 free youth,
Then take this fact unto thy soul,—
God dwells in thee.
It is no metaphor nor parable,
It is unknown to thousands, and to thee;
Yet there is God.

II

He is in thy world,
But thy world knows him not.
He is the mighty Heart
From which life's varied pulses part.
Clouded and shrouded there doth sit
The Infinite
Embosomed in a man;
And thou art stranger to thy guest



And know'st not what thou doth invest.
The clouds that veil his life within
Are thy thick woven webs of sin,
Which his glory struggling through
Darkens to thine evil hue.

III

Then bear thyself, O man!
Up to the scale and compass of thy guest;
Soul of thy soul.
Be great as doth beseem
The ambassador who bears
The royal presence where he goes.

IV

Give up to thy soul—
Let it have its way—
It is, I tell thee, God himself,
The selfsame One that rules the Whole,
Tho' he speaks thro' thee with a stifled
 voice,
And looks through thee, shorn of his beams.
But if thou listen to his voice,
If thou obey the royal thought,
It will grow clearer to thine ear,
More glorious to thine eye.
The clouds will burst that veil him now
And thou shalt see the Lord.

