

# Unity School of Christianity

By Rick Branch

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**Founder:** Charles and Myrtle Fillmore

**Founding Date:** 1889

**Official Publication:** *The Daily Word* a monthly circulation of 1.14 million is a daily devotional magazine. The *Unity* magazine carries articles on metaphysical topics.

**Organization Structure:** The current president of Unity is Connie Fillmore Bazzy, great-granddaughter of the founder. Charles R. Fillmore, is the grandson of the founder and acts as Chairman of the Board for Unity.

**Unique Terms:** *Metaphysical interpretation* is the spiritualizing of biblical terms.

**Other Names:** Often simply called Unity.

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## HISTORY

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The history of the Unity School of Christianity actually begins long before the organization itself began. Married in 1881, Charles and Myrtle (Page) Fillmore were simply products of their time and personal spiritual quests.

As a young man, one of Charles' first interests had been spiritualism. He had a friend who felt that he had the powers of a medium. Also, "from the first issue of his magazine *Modern Thought*, we know that Charles Fillmore also had a knowledge of such teachings as Buddhism, Brahmanism [Hinduism], Theosophy, and Rosicrucianism." In fact, Charles Fillmore admits that he and Myrtle had taken "more than forty courses (in metaphysical subjects)."<sup>1</sup>

Real interest in Metaphysical Thought came in 1886 for the Fillmores after attending a "New Thought lecture by Dr. E.B. Weeks."<sup>2</sup> Because Myrtle was "desperately sick," she attended Weeks' lecture hoping for some type of healing. At this seminar she heard the statement, I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness. Because of this proclamation, she was healed of her sickness.

The Fillmores would later take "several courses" from Emma Curtis Hopkins to further their understanding of New Thought. Hopkins had been an editor on the *Christian Science Journal*, Mary Baker Eddy's publication. It was Eddy who founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist, better known as Christian Science.<sup>3</sup>

In 1889, when Unity claims to have been founded, the first issue of *Modern Thought* was published. This magazine promoted the metaphysical healing concepts that were rampant in the late 1800's. The magazine's name was changed in 1890 to *Christian Science Thought*. It would later be changed to *Thought* and finally in 1895 to *Unity*.<sup>4</sup>

Some historians date the founding of Unity to 1891 when Charles Fillmore, during a time of silent prayer, is said to have received the name Unity. Fillmore explained he

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heard the name “just as the voice of Jesus was heard by Paul.”<sup>5</sup> While the Fillmore’s had been operating under various names, Freeman confirms that Unity School of Christianity was not officially established until 1914.<sup>6</sup>

After the death of Myrtle in 1931, Charles continued to lead Unity in its metaphysical teachings. He died in 1948.<sup>7</sup> Though James Freeman exclaims, “The Fillmores were never students of Mary Baker Eddy,” it can hardly be denied that her influence, as well as the influence of the many other metaphysical teachers of their day, had a strong influence on the Fillmore’s theological perspectives.<sup>8</sup>

## DOCTRINE

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**Trinity:** Unity does not believe in the biblical concept of the Trinity. Rather, they teach the New Age/Pantheistic idea that God is All and All is God. They explain,

God is Spirit, or the creative energy which is the cause of all visible things. God is not a being or person having life, intelligence, love, power. God is that invisible, intangible, but very real, something we call life. Each rock, tree, animal, everything visible, is a manifestation of the one Spirit – God – differing only in degree of manifestation; and each of the numberless modes of manifestation, or individualities, however insignificant, contains the whole.<sup>9</sup>

**God the Father:** Under the heading “spirit,” Unity’s *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary* states,

A name for God. Spirit and Mind are synonymous; therefore we know God—Spirit as Mind, the one Mind, or Intelligence, of the universe....The Father is Principle. Thus, we might also say, Father is Being in the absolute, the unlimited, the unrelated.<sup>10</sup>

Cady explains,

Childlike, untrained minds say God is a personal being. The statement that God is principle chills them, and in terror they cry out. God is the name we give to that unchangeable, inexorable principle at the source of all existence. To the individual consciousness God takes on personality, but as the creative underlying cause of all things, He is principle, impersonal; as expressed in each individual, He becomes personal to that one - a personal, loving, all-forgiving Father-Mother.<sup>11</sup>

**God the Son:** As with numerous other New Age/Pantheistic groups, Unity distinguishes between Jesus the man and Christ the divine consciousness. Unity explains, “Jesus represents God’s idea of man in expression; Christ is that idea in the absolute.”

The following passage should provide clearer insights not only into this metaphysical distinction drawn by Unity writers, but also into Unity’s techniques in biblical interpretation.

In the individual consciousness the meaning of Jesus’ being born in Bethlehem of Judea is that the principles of Truth have laid hold of the intelligent substance of Spirit (Bethlehem), and through praise (Judea) have brought the Christ into manifestation. It is wise to protect the newborn spiritual consciousness from contact with Herod, the personal ego. Herod seeks ‘the young child to destroy him,’ but under the guidance of Spirit no harm comes to the Child. He is taken down into Egypt (down into the protected places of the subconsciousness), to remain until the personal ego destroys itself; then the Christ child is free to come forth and to express.<sup>12</sup>

**God the Holy Spirit:** Charles Fillmore, again in harmony with the Pantheistic ideology of his day, stated that the Holy Spirit was not a personal being, but rather only an impersonal force. He wrote,

The Holy Spirit in Divine Mind corresponds to our thought in our minds. So we can ideate the unlimited Divine Mind, but when this Mind is brought into our world or consciousness it is limited to our conception of it.<sup>13</sup>

**Man's Purpose:** When Unity's ideas of a universal Christ consciousness, which is inherent in all things, is combined with their concept that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal, all-pervasive thought process, similar to mankind's thoughts, it is easy to understand their view of man's purpose. They declare,

Each of us has within him the Christ, just as Jesus had, and we must look within to recognize and realize our sonship, our divine origin and birth, even as He did. By continually unifying ourselves with the Highest by our thoughts and words, we too shall become sons of God, manifest.<sup>14</sup>

Cady simplified this process by stating, "Your Lord is not my Lord, nor is my Lord your Lord. Your Lord is the Christ within your own being. My Lord is the Christ within my soul."<sup>15</sup>

**Scripture:** Because of Unity's philosophy that all religions teach truth, the Bible is simply another book of scripture. Charles Fillmore wrote,

It is not necessary that you despise the scriptures of the Jews, of the Hindus, or of any people, but you are to take them for what they are: the records of men as to what their experiences have been in communing with the omnipresent God.<sup>16</sup>

**Relativism:** Since all scripture is to be accepted as true, then it necessarily follows that all religions must be true. Charles Fillmore wrote,

Unity says that other spiritually illumined persons - ministers, priests, or religious teachers of any kind - can help one get started on the right path for finding God, but ultimately each person must find God individually. In other words, Unity says that true religious growth is a "do-it-yourself project."<sup>17</sup>

**Heaven and Hell:** In the pamphlet *Twenty Questions About Unity*, their views of heaven and hell are discussed. "Heaven and hell are states of consciousness, not geographical locations. Man makes his own heaven and hell here and now by his thoughts, words and deeds."<sup>18</sup>

**Reincarnation:** Unity was one of the first groups to openly promote reincarnation in America.

We believe that the dissolution of spirit, soul and body caused by death, is annulled by rebirth of the same spirit and soul in another body here on earth. We believe the repeated incarnations of man to be a merciful provision of our loving Father to the end that all may have opportunity to attain immortality through regeneration, as did Jesus.<sup>19</sup>

**Maya:** Similar to other New Age groups, Unity denies the reality of evil, pain, sickness, poverty, old age and death, by explaining that they "are not real."<sup>20</sup>

## **BIBLICAL RESPONSE**

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1) God is not all and all is not God. Rather, God is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 44:24; John 1:2-3; Colossians 1:16).

2) The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have personal attributes. They speak (Exodus 24:12, Acts 13:2), they reason (Isaiah 1:18), and they feel compassion (Luke 13:34, John 3:16-18).

3) Jesus was not possessed of a Christ consciousness, He is the Christ (Matthew 1:18; Luke 2:11).

4) All religions are not true (Matthew 7:21; 24:24, John 14:6, Acts 4:12).

5) Poverty, sin, sickness and death are real (Matthew 4:24, Mark 14:7, Romans 3:23; 6:23, 1 John 1:7-10).

6) Reincarnation is not biblical (Hebrews 9:27).

## RECOMMENDED READING

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*New Age Spirituality, A Christian Perspective.* Watchman Fellowship's James Walker discusses the theological and historical roots of the New Age in this cassette tape (or CD) and work book. Unity's part in the New Age is mentioned in the historical section.

*Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin. This 544 page book discusses several of the major cults, including Unity. This is the definitive work in the area of Unity. This hardback volume provides an excellent scriptural refutation for Unity's errors. Indexed.

*Cults and the Occult* by Edmond C. Gruss. For those who prefer the synopsis approach, Gruss has done an outstanding job. While he discusses different groups, he provides insights for the Christian who wishes to share the true Gospel with family and friends who are involved in Unity. Soft back, 150 pages.

*The Reincarnation Sensation*, Norman Geisler and Yutaka Amano. Though this book does not discuss Unity specifically, it treats one of Unity's cardinal doctrines. This book would be helpful not only with those who are in Unity, but in any of the New Age groups which teach reincarnation. Soft backed, indexed, 192 pages.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Dillet Freeman, *The Story of Unity*, (Lee's Summit: Unity, 1969) 35, 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> Clio Armstrong, *A Unity Chronology*, (Unity Village: Unity, Nov. 1976) 4.

<sup>3</sup> Freeman, 43-45.

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Freeman, 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 204, 213.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>9</sup> H. Emilie Cady, *Lessons In Truth*, (Lee's Summit: Unity, 1949) 6, 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, Unity School of Christianity (Unity Village: Unity, 1931) 629.

<sup>11</sup> Cady, 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, 345-346.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Filmore, *Atom-Smashing Power of Mind*, (Lee's Summit: Unity, 1963) 99.

<sup>14</sup> *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, 150.

<sup>15</sup> Cady, 117.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Filmore, *The Twelve Powers of Man*, (Unity Village: Unity, 1980) 115.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Filmore, *The Adventure Called Unity*, (Unity Village: Unity, Nov. 1978) 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Phil and Mary Stovin, *Twenty Questions About Unity*, Association of Unity Churches ed. (Unity Village: Unity) 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Unity's Statement of Faith* (Lee's Summit: Unity, May 1980) Article 22.

<sup>20</sup> Cady, 36-37.



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