
Unity and History

Course One

In the Participating Membership Series



Dell deChant



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U N I T Y
P R O G R E S S I V E
P R E S S

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by Dell deChant

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Chapter One

Jesus and Christian Origins

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize Unity followers with Unity's understanding of the life and work of Jesus and the origins of Christianity. Key topics to be covered in this chapter include:

1. The historical, social, and religious situation in which Jesus lived and taught and from which Christianity emerged;
2. The ways in which Jesus communicated Truth and some of His major teachings;
3. The books in the Bible in which the story of Jesus' life is told and how these books relate to other parts of the Bible;
4. How Unity followers interpret the Bible;
5. How Unity followers understand Jesus, Christ, and Jesus Christ;
6. The role of the disciples in Jesus' ministry and their symbolic role in our spiritual development;
7. The role of the apostle Paul in emergent Christianity and his symbolic role in our spiritual development.

This chapter will follow, for the most part, the sequence of topics given above. Key elements that the student should know will be noted in the review at the end of this text.

Unity is a unique religious community (or denomination) within the world's largest religion, Christianity. The Christian religion is based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians recognize as "Christ" (Gk. "anointed," Hb. "messiah"). During the earthly ministry of Jesus, and for a short time afterward, there were no Christians. His earliest followers, like Himself, were Jews. These Jews who followed Jesus were known as Nazarenes, followers of the rabbi from Nazareth. The Nazarenes were one of many Jewish sects flourishing in the "Holy Land" during Jesus' earthly ministry. Others of note include: Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, Essenes, and Samaritans. Each claimed to be the true form of Judaism. The "Holy Land" was part of the Roman Empire; it was called Palestine at this time.

The first time that the followers of Jesus were called Christians was sometime after His ascension, when the name was given to believers in Antioch, a city in Syria, which the apostle Paul used as his home base (see Acts 11:26). Paul is extremely important to the emergence of Christianity, for he took the message of Jesus to the Gentiles (non-Jews) throughout the Roman Empire, establishing churches in major cities of the Mediterranean World.

Although the role and nature of Jesus is variously interpreted in Christianity, His central importance is never denied. In Unity, we recognize the legitimacy of all the various interpretations of Jesus and we do believe that our interpretation is of decisive importance to our spiritual development. In Unity, we usually use one of three terms/titles of spiritual respect when referring to Jesus Christ: Elder Brother, Master Teacher, Way-Shower.

What and How Jesus Taught

Jesus was an inspiring teacher. He taught through what He did as much as by what He said. We can broadly classify Jesus' teachings under five general headings:

1. Healing
2. Prosperity
3. Overcoming any seeming fear or limitation
4. The divinity of humanity
5. Keys to living the spiritual life

The old maxim, “actions often speak louder than words,” could certainly be applied to Jesus' teachings. These actions, typically referred to as miracles, are numerous. The majority of the so-called miracles offer teachings in the first three areas. They include:

1. Any of the miracles of healing, such as the seemingly handicapped man at Bethesda, or the man born blind,
2. The multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the coin found in the mouth of the fish, or the great catch of fish,
3. The calming of the sea, walking on water, the raising of people who had apparently died (especially Lazarus), and also
4. The empowerment of Peter to walk across the water to join Him.

In Unity, we recognize that "in reality miracles are events that take place as a result of the operation of a higher, unknown law" (RW, p. 135). We seek to understand this law, knowing it to be based on the foundational law of Christian Idealism, the Law of Mind Action, which affirms that mind (or consciousness) is the cause of all material/physical manifestation. We also believe that Jesus affirmed a mighty and fundamental truth when He said: "whosoever believes on me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these . . ." (John 14:12).

Jesus also taught by speaking to others. The primary way in which He verbally communicated His teachings was through story-like narrations known as parables. A parable can be understood as a short story in which people and commonplace events are used to communicate a vital spiritual message. Most of Jesus' parables offer spiritual guidance to those intent on living a more spiritual life. When reading parables, it is important to remember that they are symbolic narratives. Some of the more well known parables are: the parable of the Sower, the Pearl of Great Price, the Talents, and the Wedding Feast.

Jesus also taught keys to living the spiritual life by presenting practical principles; that is, basic norms to be followed by those seeking to grow spiritually. The most concentrated collection of these principles is found in Jesus' most famous sermon, The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, Chap. 5-7). These principles are understood to be used to guide our thinking; the action we are led to do based on these principles is always first and primarily a mental action, an action in consciousness.

Finally, Jesus communicated His teachings verbally through what could be termed assertions of Truth. These assertions are quite important to the Unity follower, since many deal with the divinity of humanity. It is in this area that many individuals who are not in Unity take exception with us. Jesus' teaching by assertion often occurs in the context of a dialogue or a debate with other people. Key assertions dealing with the divinity of humanity are worth noting. They include, in brief, these passages: "Ye are gods," "the kingdom of heaven is in the midst of you," "you will be with me," "when I am lifted up I will draw all persons to me," and "the works that I do shall he do also . . ."

The Bible and Bible Interpretation

The record of Jesus' life and teachings is found in the first four books of the part of the Bible known as the New Testament. These four books are known as Gospels ("good news," "glad tidings"). The "good news" of the Gospels is the story and the messages of Jesus Christ. Dates

for the composition of these books vary. The chronological order of the composition of the Gospels (and an acceptable estimated date for their composition) is as follows: Mark (around 65 C.E.), Matthew (around 80 C.E.), Luke (around 85 C.E.), John (around 100 C.E.). "C.E." means "Common Era," or the period in human history from the birth of Jesus onward when Western religious history is shared by both Judaism and Christianity.

Matthew is placed first in the New Testament because it was the most beloved Gospel in the early Christian church. Three of the Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke) are very similar, and thus these Gospels are called "synoptics" (same). The Gospel of John is quite different from the synoptics in both writing style and content. It is also the most obviously symbolic. John's Gospel is the only one that contains these miracles:

1. Water changed to wine at the wedding feast at Cana
2. The healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda
3. The healing of the man who was blind at birth
4. The raising of Lazarus

In fact, the only miracle story reported in all four Gospels is the feeding of the five thousand. Genuine parables, discussed above, are found only in the three synoptic Gospels.

In addition to the Gospels, the New Testament contains a book called The Acts of the Apostles (what the apostles did after Jesus' ascension), a number of epistles (letters) most written by Paul to the churches he had founded, and a final book called The Book of Revelation. Paul's letters were the first parts of the New Testament to be written—the first letter was to the Thessalonians (1st Thessalonians), written around 50 C.E. The Book of Revelation is the most purely allegorical of all the New Testament books; it is also the most misunderstood. It offers a symbolic account of the process of spiritual transformation. In addition to the 27 books of the New Testament, the Bible contains 39 books in the Old Testament (Torah). The Old, or First Testament is about three-times as long as the New.

Like most Christian denominations, Unity teachings tend to focus on the New Testament, especially the Gospels; but Unity followers recognize the spiritual importance of the entire Bible. Several Unity books, including *Mysteries of Genesis*, *Mysteries of John*, *Your Hope of Glory*, and *Let there Be Light* provide insight into the Unity approach to the Bible. This approach to the Bible is discussed in greater detail in part two of this book series: "Unity's Foundational Teachings." At present, we can note that Unity recognizes the Bible as its primary text book

(together with H. Emilie Cady's *Lessons In Truth*). For us, "it is a divine 'book of life' rather than merely a history of people, and it bears witness unto the word' of God" (RW, p. 23).

Unity readers understand that the Bible functions at three levels of meaning—literal/historical, ethical, and spiritual. The spiritual meaning is the highest meaning. It arches over the entire text, revealing Truth to the receptive reader. The spiritual interpretation is often referred to as the "metaphysical" (beyond the physical) interpretation. Unity readers of the Bible seek to discover this "metaphysical" interpretation. The basis of this interpretation is the initial recognition that the persons, places, stories, and events of Scripture represent states of consciousness or ideas in our minds. In short, the Bible is a great, expansive allegory (symbolic story) about our consciousness and the process of spiritual unfoldment. Hence, the Bible, "gives an explanation of spiritual law as applied to [humanity] and tells [us] how to find the kingdom of heaven within" (RW, p. 24). There is no part of the Bible which is not allegorical. Every part of it is symbolic and reveals spiritual Truth when "metaphysically" (spiritually) interpreted.

Jesus, Christ, and Jesus Christ

Of special interest to readers is Unity's interpretation of Jesus, Christ, and Jesus Christ. We understand Jesus to be the name of the historical figure who lived in the first century of the Common Era (C.E.). Jesus, the historical figure, is symbolic of "I AM" in its highest expression or demonstration. The "I AM" is the divine self, the spiritual mind, the real of every person, the divine idea of humanity, the Christ-self that is within us all. Jesus expressed this divine self at the physical/material level, thus uplifting the physical to the spiritual. Jesus represents the spiritually uplifted natural person, "the perfect expression of the divine idea of [humanity] " (RW, p. 112). Because of His demonstration of the Christ-self, we recognize Him as our Elder Brother, Master Teacher, and Way-Shower.

Christ is the perfect idea of humanity. Christ is the "I AM," the divine idea. In Unity, we recognize that Christ is the spiritual (real) self of every person. When we declare that we are spiritual beings, we mean that this divine idea, this divine self, is our true identity. Christ indwells us all as what we truly are, just as Christ indwelt Jesus. The difference between Jesus and us is not one of quantity but of quality. He did not have more divinity in Himself than we have in ourselves; but he did express His divinity with a higher degree of completeness than any other ever has. It is important to remember, He did tell us that we, too, shall demonstrate as He did, "and greater

works than these shall [we] do"! In speaking of Jesus Christ, we are simply referring to the perfect union of the divine idea (Christ) with the natural person (Jesus). In short, then: JESUS = the natural person who best expressed the divine idea of humanity; CHRIST = divine self of all persons; JESUS CHRIST = perfect union of divine self and natural person.

The Disciples and Apostles

Jesus attracted many followers. He explicitly called twelve men to follow him. These twelve are known as disciples (students/followers). Later when these men and others went forth to teach they were known as apostles (messengers/envoys). Paul, for example was an apostle, but not a disciple. Unity recognizes the twelve disciples of Jesus not only to have great historical significance, but also vital spiritual importance to each of us in a symbolic sense. Charles Fillmore's classic text, *The Twelve Powers [of Man]*, deals with the symbolic spiritual meaning of the disciples to Truth students. Each disciple symbolizes a center of consciousness and a spiritual faculty in the individual. As Jesus called His human disciples, so the Christ in us calls (or awakens) the twelve spiritual faculties in us. Once awakened spiritually, they become our spiritual powers. The Twelve (and the spiritual faculty each represents) are as follows: Peter (faith); Andrew (strength); James, son of Zebedee (judgment/discernment); John (love); Philip (power); Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael (imagination); Thomas (understanding); Matthew (will); James, the Less (order); Simon (zeal); Thaddaeus (elimination); Judas (Life). After the transition of Judas, Matthias (meaning "wholly given over to Jehovah") was added to the group, now called apostles.

Perhaps the greatest apostle was a convert to Christianity, Saul (later renamed Paul). Saul was a Pharisee who had originally led persecutions of Jesus' followers. As a result of a powerful spiritual experience (symbolized by Jesus speaking to him and asking why he was persecuting Him), Paul became a believer. Symbolically, this transformation suggests the natural will (Saul) being transformed by the Truth (Jesus). Thus transformed, it becomes "the word of the Spirit of Truth" (Paul). Paul (the word) takes the message of Truth throughout the world, visiting many cities and speaking Truth. As is true of the disciples, the cities Paul visits (recorded in Acts) can represent states of consciousness. His letters to these cities are interpreted to be statements of Truth appropriate for the spiritual transformation of the spiritual "cities" within us.

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Chapter Two

Summary Sketch of Christian History

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize Unity followers with certain major events and important figures in Christian History, especially as they relate to Unity's history and teachings. A few very important dates will be given. Key topics to be covered in this chapter include:

1. The major periods of Christian History and the most important thinkers of each period;
2. Notable heresies;
3. Significant Councils of the Church;
4. The central teachings of Christianity;
5. Christianity in America.

This chapter will follow, for the most part, the sequence of topics given above. Key facts and ideas that the student should know will be noted at the end of this text.

As noted in our first chapter, Unity is a part of Christianity. The first democratically mediated document designed to serve as a statement of faith for the Unity movement, was "A Progressive Reaffirmation of Unity Faith" (published by the Unity-Progressive Council about 1989) affirms: "We believe . . . ourselves to be Christians and our organization in all of its manifestations to be a Christian church" and, "We believe, and so accept, all universal doctrines of Christianity." Charles Fillmore's "Unity's Statement of Faith," that had been in use from 1921 until about 1984, affirms, "We believe all the doctrines of Christianity, spiritually interpreted." Christianity is an extremely diverse religion; it is really a collection of many different religions that share several fundamental beliefs. Unity is part of this wonderful diversity of faith and our understanding of the nature and meaning of Christianity brings important qualities to the religion. For those of us who are committed to Unity, these qualities are decisive to our spiritual growth and development. To discover how Unity came into existence as a unique expression of the Christian religion, and indeed how this religion came to be the diverse collection of unique groups that it is today, we must understand more about the history of Christianity.

Just as there are many interpretations of what it means to be a Christian, there are many ways to divide Christian history for purposes of understanding. Different forms of Christianity will offer different divisions of the religion's history. More detailed studies of this history will offer, likewise, more detailed divisions than introductory studies or summaries. The division presented in this chapter is designed to offer a broad introductory sketch of Christianity for the Unity follower. For the purposes of this introduction, Christian history can be divided into five great periods:

- (1) Ancient/Classical (49-451)
- (2) Medieval/Middle Ages (451-1517)
- (3) The Reformation (1517-1648)
- (4) Modern (1648-1900)
- (5) Contemporary/Post-Modern (1900-present)

Each of these periods are rich in detail and importance to the growth of Christianity. Each can be thought of as being framed by a reformation. Only the events and figures considered to be of special significance will be noted here.

Ancient/Classical (49-451)

The date of the first great Council of the Christian church (The Council of Jerusalem) occurred in 49 C.E. Here, the emerging church decided to allow Gentiles (non-Jews) into fellowship. The essence of this decision was that Christianity was not to be bound by Jewish dietary laws nor, especially, the requirement of circumcision for men. Because of this decision, full participation in church life was open to everyone—a fact that Paul used to great advantage in his missionary work. Paul's travels took him throughout the Roman Empire. He focused his missionary activities on "Hellenists" (Jews living outside the "Holy Land"), and "God-fearers" (Gentiles who participated in Jewish religious life but chose not to be circumcised). He also welcomed women into full fellowship.

By the end of the first century, churches could be found throughout the Roman Empire. By this time, Christianity had clearly separated itself from Judaism. Between 100 and 313, the young religion faced two major challenges: the Roman Government and other attractive religions. There were many reasons for Christianity's success in overcoming these challenges. For our purposes, we will cite three (the "Three C's") - Canon, Creed, Clergy. Together, these three elements

gave Christianity a decisive advantage over other religions, while also allowing it to deal with government opposition.

The canon was the official reading list of the early church (the Old Testament, the Gospels, Acts, and certain letters). The Creed was simply a summary statement of what all Christians believed. Clergy, we know as our spiritual/religious leaders (ministers in Unity and most forms of Protestantism; priests, bishops, and the Pope in Catholicism). What is important about these Three-C's in the early church is that all Catholic (universal) Christians were in agreement about what and who they were.

Because of its good organization and consistency in teaching, Christianity quickly began to attract the brightest and best educated citizens of the Roman Empire. The story of the conversion of St. Augustine (354-430) is a good example of Christianity's attractiveness to the educated classes. In 313, the Emperor Constantine made Christianity a legal religion; and in 380, Emperor Theodosius declared it the only legal religion in the Empire. This period comes to a close in 451 with the Council of Chalcedon. Here the bishop of Rome (Leo I) was declared to have authority over the whole church and Jesus Christ was declared to be "fully God and fully man."

In addition to Chalcedon (451), the Council of Nicea (325), and Constantinople (381) are of special note. At Nicea the original form of the famous Creed ("I believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth. . . .") was drafted. At Constantinople, the Holy Spirit was affirmed as a part of God—hence the doctrine of the Trinity was affirmed.

The three most important non-Catholic religious movements of this period were Gnosticism, Montanism, and Manichaeism. (These three movements will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.) Two influential thinkers of this period were Origen (184-254) and Augustine (354-430). Both were Idealists who interpreted the Bible allegorically and held that evil was an illusion or an error in perception.

Medieval/Middle Ages (451-1517)

Although much longer than the first period, the second period of Christian history can be covered more quickly. During this time, the church dominated political and cultural life in Europe. To call this period "the dark ages" is incorrect. It was actually a very vital time for the church. The entire continent was missionized, monastic orders were established, and great schools were founded. Of special interest to Unity followers was the emergence of two new approaches to

Christian faith: Scholasticism and Mysticism. Scholasticism was an educational movement that sought the development of faith through reason. Mysticism was a characteristic element in many of the monastic movements; it sought the development of faith through inner seeking. Unity can be properly understood as a movement that brings both of these approaches together.

Among the Scholastics, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was the giant. Among the mystics, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was unrivaled. In his *Summary of Theology*, St. Thomas asserted that reason could lead to faith; he offered five philosophical arguments for the existence of God. In her volume, *The Interior Castle*, St. Teresa described seven kinds of rooms in the castle of the soul. The seventh room, for example, is described as “spiritual marriage.” Unity followers would also be interested in the Scholastic, Abelard, who argued for the freedom of individuals in matters of belief; and the mystic, Julian of Norwich, who referred to God and Jesus Christ as our Mother.

The Reformation (1517-1648)

Aside from dates associated with the life of Jesus (which are not known for certain), or the date of a particular denomination's founding (such as 1889 for Unity), the most important date in Christian history is October 31, 1517. On that date, a young Augustinian monk, who was a Scholastic with a mystical bent, posted ninety-five theses (statements for debate) on the door of a (reliquary) church in the town of Wittenberg, Germany. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was ten days shy of his thirty-fourth birthday when, by this act, the Reformation was symbolically begun. Charles Fillmore, we might note in a relative sense, was thirty-four when he and Myrtle Fillmore founded Unity in 1889.

At a superficial level, the Reformation was begun because of a religious practice known as "indulgences"—the exchange of gifts (usually money) for spiritual blessings (forgiveness of sins, liberation of souls from purgatory). More fundamentally, the Reformation began and was continued because of excesses in Church teaching and Church structure. Luther believed that the Church had strayed from the teachings of the Bible and was organized in a way that prevented lay persons from full participation in spiritual and religious life. In a famous assertion, he offered to take back all he had said if his position could be proven wrong on the basis of Scripture. Although he was condemned and excommunicated, his argument was never refuted. Martin Luther remained a Catholic (at least in his own mind) until his transition.

Unity followers would be especially interested in Luther's translation of the Bible from Latin to German so that more people could read Scripture, his affirmation of the "priesthood of all believers," and his reduction of the sacraments from seven to two (Baptism and Communion).

Soon after Luther began his work, other reformers came forward. Most notable among them was John Calvin (1509-1564), a lawyer by education. Calvin took the principles of the Reformation and used them as the basis of city government in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Reformation as a whole can be understood as a successful effort to make Christianity more consistent in its teachings and more open in its organizational structure. What began in 1517 has continued unabated ever since. To the century between 1517 and 1617, the following Christian groups trace their historical roots: Lutherans, Amish, Mennonites, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Baptists. The Reformation is an ongoing religious experience in Christianity, with new groups coming forth or breaking off from established traditions in an effort to clarify teachings, promote openness, or both.

The period of the historical Reformation came to a close in 1648, with the end of the Thirty Years' War. This long and devastating war, or series of wars, was caused largely by religious differences. It was one of those "wars to end all wars," but what it really ended was the domination of Europe by religion. After the Thirty Years' War, Christianity was no longer the center of life in Europe.

Modern (1648-1900) and Contemporary/Post-Modern (1900-present)

In the place of religion, new institutions emerged—politics, economics, and education. The process through which formal religion is replaced as the focal institution in a society is known as secularization. Just as the Reformation is still with us religiously, so, too, is secularization with us culturally. The secularization process was beginning before 1648, but after this date it became increasingly dominant in society.

Christianity has wrestled with secularization. The three major types of responses that Christianity has offered can be broadly classified as: Fundamentalism, Liberalism, and "Revivalism." These are loose terms and a number of other classifications can be offered. Today, Fundamentalism is best exemplified in the Southern Baptist Convention. Liberalism is manifested in all denominations (most notably the "mainstream" Protestant denominations). "Revivalism," as used here, is also known as Pentecostalism. In addition to these major types of Christianity, a

number of novel and unique forms of Christianity have come into existence since the beginning of the 19th century (1800's). Notable among these unique new movements are: Mormonism, Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, and Unity. Each of these groups, together with Fundamentalism, Liberalism, and Revivalism, has come into being, in part, as a response to secularization.

Fundamentalism offers an emphatic insistence on the literal inerrancy of Scripture and a dogmatic assertion of its beliefs. Liberalism seeks to bring the message of Christianity to the secular world in an effort to make Christianity relevant to the spiritual desires of contemporary women and men. Revivalism, in its Pentecostal form, stresses the feeling nature of religion, asserts the absolute necessity of a "felt religious experience," tends to be Apocalyptic, and claims to be a return to first century Christianity. Of the five novel religious groups noted above, only Christian Science and Unity are properly considered part of Liberalism—with Unity the more liberal.

Of the many great leaders of the Modern and Post-Modern periods, three are of special note: Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899, Fundamentalist), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1843, Liberal), and John Wesley (1703-1791, Pietistic Revivalist). Jerry Falwell is representative of Fundamentalism; Jimmy Swaggart is seen as a Pentecostal Revivalist.

Heresies

Numerous groups have been labeled "heresies" during the 2000 years of Christian history. The word heresy comes from the Greek word for "choice." Heresies are those groups which have elected not to follow official Christian teachings. Today, official Christian teachings vary from denomination to denomination, and so the term is not used as frequently as it once was. Currently, by the way, groups which differ from mainstream Christianity are often called "cults," but usually only by conservative groups (Fundamentalists and Pentecostals).

Three of the most famous heresies were noted earlier: Gnosticism, Montanism, and Manichaeism. Gnosticism is traditionally seen as affirming that matter was evil, the earth was made by an evil being, and human beings were trapped in their physical bodies from which they must escape for salvation. Montanism was radically Apocalyptic, affirming that Jesus was about to return to chastise the wicked (non-Montanists) and rescue His chosen people (Montanists). They recognized themselves as a spiritual elite, unlike other Christians who were merely "physical believers." They opposed art of any kind and sought martyrdom as a path to salvation.

Manichaeism emerged out of Gnosticism and shared many of its beliefs. Additionally, Manichaeism recognized Jesus as one of many divine messengers, though thought to be no more significant than others; such as Buddha, Zoroaster, and Mani (215-276) himself. Manichaeism affirmed the reality of evil, the actuality of Satan, and the power of the Zodiac to release the light indwelling all persons.

Some Unity followers who are not familiar with the traditional teachings of Unity find some of the teachings noted as acceptable within the Unity context. Although some of the teachings of these groups do harmonize with Unity, the specific teachings noted here do not. It is noteworthy that some New Age teachings are identical with the teachings of these ancient “heresies.”

Church Councils, Central Christian Beliefs, Religion in America

From the many Councils of the Catholic Church, a number are of note. Aside from the Council of Jerusalem (49), these include: Nicea (325) – the Creed and the co-equality of Jesus and God; Constantinople (381) –the Trinity; Chalcedon (451) –affirmed Jesus Christ as "fully God and fully man" and the Bishop of Rome (Pope) as the head of the entire Church; Lateran I (1123) –forbade marriage of priests; Pisa (1409)–asserted authority of Councils over the papacy; Trent (1545-1563)–denied key teachings of Protestantism and launched the Counter-Reformation; Vatican I (1869-1870)–affirmed the authority of the Pope (“papal infallibility”); Vatican II (1962-1965)–modernization and liberalization of Catholicism, encouraged Bible study, Mass in native languages, greater participation by the laity, and dialogue with other faiths.

On the basis of these Councils and various Protestant teachings, certain central beliefs of Christianity have come to be seen as universal, as follows:

- God is good and all of His creations are good.
- God is a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (in Unity: Mind, Idea, and Expression [see CH, p. 20]).
- Jesus Christ is affirmed as divine and recognized (in various ways) as the supreme religious/spiritual authority. Therefore, Jesus' virgin birth, transfiguration, death, resurrection, and ascension are confirmations of His divinity and His humanity. His teachings (variously interpreted) form the basis of Christian faith.

- There are two universal devotional rituals: Baptism and Communion. Catholics also recognize five others (confirmation, reconciliation of a penitent, extreme unction, holy orders, matrimony).
- The Bible (Old and New Testament) is recognized as the foundational religious document; it is unsurpassed by any other text.

In Unity, we accept these universal doctrines of Christianity, noting, of course, that their highest interpretation is spiritual (not material), and that these teachings are to be personally applied.

America is often referred to as a Christian nation. In a certain sense, this is true: Christianity is the dominant religion; the vast majority of early settlers were Christians; and the framers of the Constitution were all nominally Christians. However, America was not founded as a Christian nation. It was founded as a pluralistic nation—a nation based on freedom of religion and freedom from religion. This ideal, dogmatized in the First Amendment to the Constitution, is not consistent with the history of Christianity which saw religion as above the state and definitive of the state.

By legally forbidding the nation from ever endorsing one religion and also allowing all religions free and equal opportunity, the United States established a new ideal in human government. This ideal is a secular ideal, an ideal born of the concern with religious conflict after the Thirty Years' War. Christianity has flourished in America due to the First Amendment. So, too, has Judaism, and more recently, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unity, and a host of new religious groups have been successful in America because of the religious freedom safeguarded by the Constitution.

There have been at least three great surges of religious belief in American history. The first ("Great Awakening I") from 1720's-1740's, the second ("Great Awakening II") in the early 1800's, and the third at the start of the 20th century. Some people suggest that today we are in the midst of another great surge of religious belief.

Unity and History

Chapter Three

Survey of New Thought History

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize Unity followers with certain major events and important figures in the history of the New Thought Movement, especially as they relate to Unity's history and teachings. A number of important dates will be given. Key topics to be covered in this chapter include:

1. Historical divisions;
2. The religious and philosophical taproots of New Thought;
3. The American cultural environment which gave birth to New Thought;
4. The two great precursors of New Thought;
5. The mission and influence of Emma Curtis Hopkins;
6. Brief survey of New Thought groups and leaders.

This chapter will follow, for the most part, the sequence of topics given above. Key facts and ideas that the student should know will be noted at the end of this text.

Like Christianity, New Thought is a diverse religious movement. In fact, New Thought can be considered even more diverse than Christianity, as both Christian and non-Christian groups can be found under this broad heading. Aside from the important Christian/non-Christian distinction between New Thought groups, member bodies of this religious family have very much in common. All New Thought groups affirm, at least:

1. Ultimate Reality is Good
2. Humanity is divine
3. Mind is primary and causative
4. The freedom of individuals in matters of religious belief

Unity is both the largest and most clearly Christian member of this fascinating religious family. To understand more about Unity's origins and its contemporary profile as a unique (New

Thought) expression of Christianity, we must learn more about the movement of which it is the largest member.

Our introductory comments about Christianity hold equally true of New Thought. Historical divisions vary, as do the choice and evaluation of facts, leaders, and dates. Distinctions are based on one's denominational vantage point and depth of the study being undertaken. The survey offered in this chapter is designed to offer a broad introductory sketch of New Thought for the Unity follower. Students desiring more information regarding the New Thought movement may consult one of the in-depth histories of the movement (*The History and Philosophy of the Metaphysical Movements in America* by J. Stillson Judah and/or *Spirits in Rebellion* by Charles Braden), or may establish contact with one of the two major New Thought organizations (the International New Thought Alliance and/or the Alliance for Global New Thought). For purposes of this introduction, New Thought history can be divided into four great periods:

1. Pre-history (until 1889)
2. Early (1889-1927)
3. Classical (1927-1960)
4. Modern (1954-present)

All dates refer to specific events of great importance. Each of these periods is rich in detail and peopled by colorful and inspiring leaders. Brief notes on each period will be given.

Pre-history (until 1889)

The religious and philosophical taproots of New Thought will be summarized shortly. For now, it can be noted that these roots can be traced back as far as Plato (428-348 B.C.E.). The line from Plato to the birth of New Thought (in 1889) follows a generally uninterrupted route. In its earliest manifestation, New Thought has been a healing movement. From the many names of reference used before "New Thought" became standard, "Mind Cure" was probably the best known and most accurate. The year, 1889, is cited as the end of New Thought's "pre-history" for three reasons.

First, according to Horatio W. Dresser, this was the year in which "New Thought" was first used publicly in reference to the Mind Cure movement. Second, it is the date traditionally accepted as the founding of the first religious movement begun by students of Emma Curtis Hopkins ([1849

or] 1853-1925). The students were Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, the movement is known today as Unity. Third, 1889 is the date when the first class of students graduated from Hopkins' Chicago seminary and received ordination. This event also marked the first time in Western history that a woman ordained other women in Christian ministry.

Early (1889-1927)

New Thought's early period begins with the founding of Unity (1889) and concludes with the founding of the youngest major New Thought denomination, Religious Science (1927). Between the founding of these two groups, New Thought's third major denomination was founded—Divine Science, begun in 1898. Each of these groups was established by students of Emma Curtis Hopkins, the Mother of New Thought. Unity was founded by the Fillmores, Myrtle (1845-1931) and Charles (1854-1948); Divine Science was founded by as many as five women (depending on one's interpretation), but most significantly by Malinda Cramer (?-1907) and Nona Brooks (1861-1945); Religious Science was founded by Ernest Holmes (1887-1960). Cramer does not note affiliation with Hopkins and Brooks' affiliation was mediated by Mrs. Frank Bingham. It is of note that in this period, the International New Thought Alliance (I.N.T.A.) was founded (1914).

Classical (1927-1960)

New Thought's classical period begins with the founding of the youngest major New Thought group (Religious Science) and ends with the transition of its founder, Ernest Holmes. Holmes was the last of the great founders to make transition. During these years, the three groups grew in size and influence. Growth was constant, if not always rapid. Wonderful demonstrations of Truth occurred: physical healings, mystical illuminations, prosperity demonstrations. Periodicals, pamphlets, and books were published in abundance. Teachers and ministers spread the message across America; churches (often called "centers") were founded and congregations grew. As the churches grew in number, the movements began to develop institutional structures to help promote growth, to maintain continuity in teachings, and to facilitate communication.

Modern (1954-present)

As noted above, by 1960, all of the major New Thought groups were led by persons other than the visionaries who had brought them into being and guided their early growth. However, New Thought's Modern period did not begin in 1960. It began six years earlier, in 1954, when a major internal division occurred within a major New Thought group. In that year, Religious Science became two unique movements. Today these movements are known as Religious Science International and the United Church of Religious Science. The division of Religious Science has resulted in a significant expansion of the number of churches, members, and ministers committed to the movement's teachings. Today, the International Centers for Spiritual Living, the United Centers for Spiritual Living (which combined into the Centers for Spiritual Living in 2011) and Global Religious Science Ministries are the main denominations promoting Religious Science. During this modern period, Unity and I.N.T.A. have also grown considerably.

Roots of New Thought

The religious and philosophical roots of New Thought can be traced back as far as the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. Plato is properly classified as an "Idealist." He is the father of this tradition which has continued on in various expressions in the work of numerous thinkers from his day to our own. New Thought is part of this tradition. Thus, wherever and whenever one encounters an Idealist or an example of Idealism in the history of philosophy or religion, one usually is encountering a precursor of New Thought. Plato's philosophy in general, and his Idealism in specific, exercised great influence over Christianity. This influence began to weaken with Aquinas, and it has been in decline within Christianity following the Reformation.

It is important for the Unity follower to understand the use of the term "Idealism," which characterizes our philosophic approach to religious life. In short, Idealism refers to any system of thinking/ believing/ understanding that recognizes that (in one way or another) the highest reality is mental. Idealism is fundamentally different from and incompatible with Materialism. Plato knew this and so do we. From among the numerous religious and philosophic figures who could be cited as precursors of New Thought, major thinkers include: Origen (185-254 C.E.), Augustine (354-430 C.E.), John Scotus Erigena (810-877), Anselm (1033-1109), Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), and Hegel (1770-1831). Students are also reminded to include the medieval movements known as Scholasticism and Mysticism, discussed in the previous lesson.

New Thought is a decidedly American religious movement. It is a product of turn of the century America (late 1800's, early 1900's). It emerged in the context of secularization and was enriched by the secularization process. Although the roots of New Thought are found in the mental healing movement that preceded it, from the very beginning New Thought offered a comprehensive interpretation of individual existence and human life as a whole. This interpretation can be thought of as "optimistic," but it is an optimism grounded in the understanding that life's ultimate Truth is the omnipotence of Good. Healing did not cease to be a major component in New Thought teachings, but its implications expanded to include all areas of life. New Thought was comfortable with advancing secularization, increasing urbanization, and rapid industrialization. It brought a new gospel of happiness and prosperity to a young but developing American culture that was seeking both.

American society at this time was becoming thoroughly secular; science, technology, education, and personal freedom were prized. During this era (and probably for the first time in world history), a large middle class, between rich and poor, came into existence. New Thought has always been especially attractive to members of the middle class. The two most important theoretic elements in New Thought's successful evangelism of the middle class were (1) Idealism and (2) Scientific method.

America's middle class found something of value in this new faith which proclaimed that God was wholly good, evil was only error, ultimate reality was Mind, and the empowering message that one's life and one's world were predicated on one's thought. This was religious Idealism designed for popular consumption by an optimistic, self-confident, self-made society in the making. But New Thought was more than popular Idealism. It was also a pragmatic philosophy of life that was based on popular understandings of scientific method—a religious technology for the masses. Here was a religion (that often denied its own religious character) that persons could use, not a religion that used persons.

The mind-set of turn of the century America was a hot iron for the New Thought world-view, and its early visionaries struck the iron with enthusiasm. From a practical standpoint, New Thought's early success is owed to four major factors, probably in this order:

1. Confidence of its leaders
2. Professional empowerment of women
3. Skillful use of mass media
4. Criticism of existing religions

The first two factors will be discussed here. The confidence of the early New Thought leaders was total. They believed in their message with an intense conviction, and they taught with zeal, power, and consummate understanding. Although never dogmatic, these early leaders held to the highest vision of Truth and inspired others to share this vision.

New Thought was truly gender blind and this proved to be a tremendous boon to the movement's evangelistic efforts. From the outset, with the ministry of Hopkins, New Thought ordained women, thus giving them professional status in a society totally dominated by men. As a consequence, New Thought attracted many of the best and brightest persons (who happened to be women) in American society. Women who today might be attorneys, university educators, and government officials, became leaders in New Thought, since those other professions were closed to their gender. In this regard, we note that women did not even receive the right to vote until 1920—31 years after the first women were ordained by Emma Curtis Hopkins. As noted previously, Hopkins' ordination of women marked the first time in Christian history that women were ordained by a woman.

The Precursors of New Thought

There is considerable debate about the immediate (19th century) background of New Thought, as to whom should be cited as legitimate precursors, whom might be properly cited as its founder, and whom should be cited among its early leaders. Without question, the title of "founder" should be given to Emma Curtis Hopkins—the "Teacher of teachers." What is known as New Thought came into existence because of her work and she trained and ordained persons to carry on the work she began. This understanding is relatively new, and replaced the older position which recognized Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866) as the founder.

Quimby can rightly be cited as a pioneer in mental healing. Originally attracted to Mesmerism (hypnotism), Quimby became an itinerant "mesmerist healer," using an assistant who, in an hypnotic state, would diagnose health challenges and prescribe material cures. By 1847 (possibly earlier), Quimby abandoned mesmerism and his assistant in favor of a new healing method. This method was an early form of what we call "spiritual (or prayer) treatment." From 1847 to 1859, Quimby traveled alone, setting up temporary clinics where persons who came to him could be healed through this new method.

Quimby's method was to sit down with persons, "tell them their feelings and what they think is their disease." He would then correct their error in thinking, thus changing the "fluids of the system" and establishing "truth or health" (New Thought, c. 1985, Larson, p. 101).

After 1859, Quimby settled in Portland, Maine, where he continued to practice his healing method. From 1859 until his transition, he instructed an inner circle of followers, and outlined his method in writing. Of the 311 articles that he wrote, 101 appeared in *The Quimby Manuscripts*, first published in 1921. Although Quimby's work laid the foundation for New Thought, he cannot be properly cited as its founder. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. He was anti-religion; he had no intention of founding a church and took no steps to facilitate the formation of a religion. He was also anti-medicine.
2. Although he suggests a spiritual basis for healing and occasionally links his work with the work of Jesus, the spiritual element is not developed in detail.
3. Although he calls his healing method "science," in practice and contrary to New Thought healing treatment, he relied on his own clairvoyant skills in diagnosis and approached the healing treatment as a struggle.

In New Thought, spiritual treatment is not contingent on an individual's specific diagnosis. In the most fundamental sense, any apparent limitation is an error, and naming the manifestation of the error with a specific name is not necessary, since all error is eliminated through the realization of the foundational teaching—the Truth of One Presence and the One Power. Specific treatments may be used for specific challenges, but specificity in treatment is not mandatory.

Aside from Quimby, who is often cited as the founder of New Thought, the other major precursor of the movement is Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), an individual whose contributions to the movement are often depreciated in favor of Quimby's. Eddy experienced a healing as a result of Quimby's treatment in 1862. She studied with him for sometime after the healing. In 1866, a few weeks after Quimby's transition, Eddy had a serious accident—"pronounced fatal by physicians." Three days later, during a study of the Bible, she experienced a sudden healing predicated on the realization that: "Life in and of Spirit; this Life being the sole reality of existence."

In 1870 Eddy offered her first class on spiritual healing, using a manuscript on which she had been working for some time. In 1875, the manuscript was published as *Science and Health*. More than all of Quimby's teachings and writings, this text helped lay the groundwork for New Thought. In 1879, Eddy took another step that would prove to be of vast importance to the

emergence of New Thought; she founded a religion. Chartered in Massachusetts, "The Church of Christ (Scientist)," was the first religious group based on the principles of mental healing.

Eddy's addition of scriptural interpretation is the beginning of the modern allegorical (or metaphysical) interpretation of the Bible. To maintain uniformity in teaching, in 1895, Eddy "ordained" the Bible and *Science and Health* as the only pastors in Christian Science, thus eliminating the possibility of individual sermons. Eddy's work is of great importance to the emergence of New Thought. Her most notable contributions include:

1. Establishment of a popular religion based on the principles of Idealism. It is of note that Eddy included the word "Christian" in the title of her movement.
2. Creation of the first education program for persons desiring to serve as "mental healers" and the official institutional certification of these workers as "practitioners."
3. Publication of a serious and systematic exposition of the religious teachings on which her movement was based and the utilization of modern publication methods to propagate these teachings.

New Thought groups have followed Christian Science with regard to these three developmental activities. New Thought also differs from Christian Science. The most fundamental differences are these:

1. Dogma: unlike Christian Science, New Thought is non-dogmatic;
2. Matter: in New Thought matter (the material world) is not an error or an illusion;
3. Medicine: New Thought is not opposed to the medical resolution of physical ills . . . (the symptoms of mental error).

Emma Curtis Hopkins: Mother of New Thought

The distinction between Christian Science and New Thought and the birth of the younger movement is the result of the work of Emma Curtis Hopkins. Hopkins is properly cited as the founder of New Thought. As noted above she was "the Teacher of teachers," meaning that she or her students taught the great teachers and founders of the major New Thought groups. Hopkins became a student of Eddy in the early 1880's. She rose rapidly in the movement and in 1884 was given the prestigious title of Editor for the *Christian Science Journal*. For reasons still unclear,

she was dismissed as Editor in 1885. It is fair to believe that the dismissal was a result of the conflict between two extremely talented and religiously zealous individuals. The reason usually given is that Hopkins began to study spiritual teachings other than those of Eddy.

In 1886, Hopkins moved to Chicago and opened offices as a practitioner. In 1887, Hopkins established The Christian Science Theological Seminary, and in 1888, the Hopkins' Metaphysical Association. In 1889, the first class graduated from Hopkins' seminary and the first ministers were ordained. These were the first New Thought ministers. By 1893, Hopkins had ordained 111 persons and the seminary had an enrollment of 350.

In 1891, Hopkins ordained Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. The Fillmores were ordained in their own organization as Unity ministers in 1906.

Hopkins' students took her teachings to all parts of the continent. In the early years, most churches were independent and denominational structures were loose. Some of Hopkins' students opened their own training centers and sent forth their own ministers and teachers. This was the case with Unity and Divine Science.

In 1895, Hopkins closed the Chicago Seminary and moved to New York City. In New York, she continued to meet with students and clients on a one to one basis. Hopkins authored many texts; her best known text is *High Mysticism*. Her influence on the birth and advance of New Thought cannot be overstated. Hopkins' major contributions are these:

1. Establishment of a seminary, ordination of ministers, and "sending" of ministers to all parts of America
2. Creation of a non-dogmatic doctrine
3. Emphasis on Christianity
4. Separation from Eddy's movement
5. Development of a primary organizational structure for the New Thought movement
6. Teaching of the founders of the major New Thought groups

New Thought Groups and Early Leaders

Even a modest historical survey of New Thought groups and leaders would be much too exhaustive for a study of this kind. As a result, we will note the major groups and certain important leaders. Students are referred to Charles Braden's *Spirits in Rebellion* or J. Stillson Judah's *History and Philosophy* for further details.

Unity is the largest, oldest, and most clearly Christian movement in New Thought. Details on Unity's history and current profile will be offered in the next two chapters.

The second oldest New Thought group is Divine Science. Some interpretations could date Divine Science's founding before Unity's; the usual date given for its founding is 1898. Divine Science ordains ministers and licenses Practitioners and Teachers. Its headquarters is in Denver. Its representative publication is *Spirit* (formerly *Aspire*). As of 1987, there were 33 Divine Science churches. Divine Science affirms itself to be a Christian church but in actual practice, it is less committed to traditional Christian teachings than Unity.

Religious Science was founded in 1927. Since 1954 Religious Science has been represented by two different groups: the United Church of Religious Science and Religious Science International (R.S.I.). The United Church is the largest (175 churches, 180 study groups, 36 foreign organizations); Religious Science International has about 100 religious centers (churches and "societies"). Both groups ordain ministers and license practitioners. The United Church is headquartered in Los Angeles; R.S.I. in San Diego. United Church publishes *Science of Mind* magazine (circ. 100,000), R.S.I. publishes *Creative Thought* magazine. Religious Science does not consider itself Christian.

The International New Thought Alliance (I.N.T.A.) is a loose association of New Thought churches, religious groups, and individuals. I.N.T.A. was founded in 1914, although its organizational roots can be traced back to the National New Thought Alliance (1907), the New Thought Federation (1904), the first "New Thought Convention"(1899), and (perhaps) the International Divine Science Association (1892). Today there are over 100 I.N.T.A. districts worldwide. More than 300 churches and religious groups are members. The Association of Unity Churches and the Unity-Progressive Council have both been members of I.N.T.A. Other New Thought groups of note are The Church(es) of Truth, and the independent (non-affiliated) Science of Mind Churches. Total membership in all New Thought groups probably does not exceed 250,000 persons.

Notable New Thought precursors and leaders not previously noted include: Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772); Franz Anton Mesmer (1733-1815); Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882); Warren Felt Evans (1817-1889); Julius & Annetta Dresser; Ursula Gestefeld (1845-1921); Annie Rix Militz (1856-1924); Elizabeth Towne; Horatio Dresser (1866-1954); Thomas Troward (1847-1916); James A. Edgerton; Emmet Fox (1886-1951); Albert Grier; Joel Goldsmith; and numerous others.

Unity and History

Chapter Four

History of Unity I: Origins until 1948

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Unity followers to the history of the Unity movement from its origins to the transition of Charles Fillmore. Key topics to be covered in this chapter include:

1. The major divisions of Unity's history, important events, key dates;
2. How Unity began, healing in Unity, the role of Myrtle Fillmore, Hopkins' influence;
3. How Unity grew, publications, education, the work of Charles Fillmore;
4. Summary of Unity's basic teachings;
5. Unity's relationship with I.N.T.A.;
6. Some important early figures.

This chapter will follow, for the most part, the sequence of topics given above. Key facts and ideas that the student should know will be noted at the end of this text.

As has been true of our previous studies in this course, the summary sketch of Unity's history presented here is designed to offer Unity followers a broad and general introduction to the first half of Unity's history.

Students are also directed to four good books on Unity's history: *Myrtle Fillmore: Mother of Unity* (Witherspoon), *Charles Fillmore: Herald of the New Age* (D'Andrade), *The Unity Way* (Bach), *The Story of Unity* (Freeman); and the pamphlet, *A Unity Chronology*. A more recent book, *The Unity Movement* by Neal Vahle, is certainly the most comprehensive volume on the history of the movement to date, albeit lacking in serious treatment of alternative Unity organizations and challenges currently facing the Unity movement.

For purposes of this introduction, Unity's history can be divided into five major periods:

1. Pre-history (until 1889)
2. Early (1889-1903)
3. Classical (1903-1948)

4. Modern (1948-1966)

5. Recent (1966-present)

Brief notes on the first three periods follows. A discussion of the Modern and Recent periods will follow in Chapter Five.

Pre-history (until 1889)

Unity began in 1889. In that year its co-founders, Myrtle and Charles Fillmore, began publishing a religious periodical titled *Modern Thought* ("devoted to the spiritualization of Humanity from an Independent Standpoint"). In that same year, the couple gave up their secular pursuits in order to devote their lives to the study and teaching of Truth.

Myrtle (Mary Caroline) Page (1845-1931) and Charles (1854-1948) met in 1876 in Denison, Texas, and were married in Clinton, Missouri, in 1881. Myrtle was born into a Methodist family in Pagetown, Ohio. She studied at Oberlin College, was licensed as a teacher in 1868, and for a short time, operated her own private school. She was apparently afflicted with tuberculosis. Charles was born in St. Cloud, Minnesota. His mother was a devout Episcopalian. A hip injury in 1864 left him with an apparently withered leg. He held various jobs, including railroad freight inspector, mule-team driver, assayer, and real-estate salesperson. After their marriage, they lived in Pueblo, Colorado (1881-1884). In 1884, the Fillmores (and their two sons, Lowell [1882-1975], and Rickert [1884-1965]) moved to Kansas City where Charles sold real-estate. Before founding Unity, they were active in the temperance movement and attended Methodist and Episcopal churches.

In 1886, Charles and Myrtle attended a lecture on New Thought in Kansas City given by Dr. E.B. Weeks—a man often cited as a student of Emma Curtis Hopkins. (Note: recent studies suggest that Weeks was not a student of Hopkins, but of another Christian Science renegade, a man by the name of Mr. George Charles). At this time, Myrtle was apparently in great physical distress due to the symptoms of tuberculosis. As a result of Weeks' lecture, Myrtle discovered Truth. The key was a Truth statement offered by Weeks: "I am a child of God, and therefore I do not inherit sickness."

After the lecture, Myrtle began spiritual prayer treatment; she worked with this statement (among other affirmations), speaking words of Truth to her body. She studied the Gospels, sitting next to an empty chair, knowing "that the Spirit of Jesus Christ occupied the chair and was supporting her and encouraging her in her quest" for healing (Mother, 38-39). By 1888, she pronounced herself healed. Although Charles at first doubted the effectiveness of this healing

method, his wife's healing convinced him of the efficacy of prayer treatment based on Truth Principles. He, too, began to study Truth. By 1889, the couple was ready to devote themselves to the study and teaching of Truth full time. In that same year, their third son, Royal (1889-1923) was born.

Early (1889-1903)

Unity began as a healing movement, although its official date of origin is traced to the beginning of a publication, *Modern Thought*. The date, 1903, is cited as the close of the early period of Unity's history, since that was the year in which the first Unity institution was legally incorporated—Unity Society of Practical Christianity ("a society for scientific and educational purposes").

In the early period of the movement, the emphasis of the Fillmores was on healing work and the publication of New Thought periodicals. Inspired by Myrtle's healing, in 1890, the couple established The Society of Silent Help, a prayer ministry which is now called Silent Unity. Remarkable healings occurred, and continue to occur to this day, through the healing ministry.

In 1891, the emerging work was officially titled "Unity" and a new publication began under that name. In that same year, the Fillmores were ordained Christian Science ministers by Emma Curtis Hopkins. On the first issue of *Unity*, the winged-globe appears. The earlier publication (which went through a number of name changes), was merged with Unity in 1895, so that the latter publication stands as the longest continually published New Thought periodical in the world.

In 1892, the Fillmores composed their famous "Dedication and Covenant" dedicating "ourselves, our time, our money, all we have and all we expect to have to the Spirit of Truth, and through it, to the Society of Silent Unity" (Mother, p 58). The spiritual commitment, and radical conviction of the founders was sealed. A mighty work had begun. In that same year, the first article by Dr. H. Emilie Cady (1848-1941) appeared in *Unity*. Under Myrtle's guidance, *Wee Wisdom*, the longest running children's magazine in America, began publication in 1893. *Wee Wisdom* was discontinued by Unity School for financial reasons in 1993. In 1894, the first lesson of what would become *Lessons in Truth* was published in Unity. In 1895, for ethical reasons, the Fillmores became vegetarians. Charles Fillmore's "Unity Statement of Faith" affirmed, "We believe that all life is sacred and that man should not kill or be party to the killing of animals for food; also that cruelty, war, and wanton destruction of human life will continue so long as men destroy animals."

During this period, the Fillmores were strongly influenced by Hopkins—a person they recognized as their great Teacher. After their ordination, the Fillmores began church services in Kansas City and by 1900, the 100 seat meeting hall where Sunday services were held was overflowing. At first, services were held in the afternoon on Sundays and Wednesdays so as not to conflict with the services of other churches. This soon changed, and Unity took its place among Kansas City's Sunday morning churches. As the movement grew, one can clearly recognize the impact of Hopkins' vision on the Fillmores. Her theology and organizational strategies (noted in Chapter Three) were clearly reflected in the Fillmores' work.

Classical (1903-1948)

Unity's classical period covers its emergence from a small prayer and publication ministry to a significant religious movement—small by traditional standards of American denominations, but by far the largest New Thought movement. We mark the close of this period with the transition of Charles Fillmore. Notable historical events from this period are numerous. Those of major importance to understanding the Unity's growth, its traditions, and its current character are noted here.

In 1905, the Fillmores started Unity Inn at 913 Tracy Street in Kansas City—Unity's first true home. The Inn was a vegetarian restaurant. Today at Unity Village, the Inn still offers vegetarian fare, but meat products are also served. By 1906, as the result of the Fillmores' excellent prosperity consciousness, a new building had been built at 913 Tracy Street. This building, which was soon outgrown, contained all Unity operations, publishing, prayer ministry, education ministry, and sanctuary. In this same year, the Fillmores were ordained Unity ministers. They then ordained seven others (women and men) to the Unity ministry.

In 1909, a correspondence school was established (discontinued in 1973). In 1914, Unity School of Christianity was incorporated. In 1916, Myrtle stepped down as Director of Silent Unity. The new Director was Clara May Rowland, one of Unity's greatest leaders. May Rowland served as Director for fifty-five years. In 1918, a Field Department was established to maintain contact and offer guidance to the first Unity churches (often called centers or societies).

In 1920, fifty-eight acres of land were purchased in nearby Jackson County. The Jackson County holdings were increased in subsequent years and became known as Unity Farm. The farm was intended to function as a genuine agricultural enterprise, and the foundation for what was

envisioned as Unity City—a self-sufficient religious community based on the ideal of "setting up on earth the kingdom of the heavens" (Found a Faith, 241). For a time the Farm actually did function as it was intended to do, but Unity City never became a reality. In 1929, Silent Unity moved to the Farm, beginning a process of relocation that would see all Unity operations housed there by 1948. Unity Farm was renamed Unity Village in 1953; an incorporated area totaling nearly 1,400 acres.

The classical period is rich in theological and organizational development. It might well be called Unity's "Golden Age." If, by Unity's "Golden Age," one is referring to the period of Unity's grandest expression, the classical period is misunderstood. This period of time was indeed a high point, a wonderful and dynamic period, when Principle guided Unity's mission, when religious and spiritual aims harmonized, when Truth ideals were taught with conviction, and when Unity's role as "a link in the great educational movement inaugurated by Jesus Christ" was understood and celebrated by leaders and teachers with zeal and enthusiasm. The classical period was indeed a high point, but Unity's grandest expression is yet to come. We foresee the dawning of Unity's true Golden Age, yet to be made manifest. We look back with love and thankfulness to the work of the Fillmores and we see all that they did as preface to the greater works that will be done in this time and in days to come by followers, students, teachers, and ministers who are committed to the progressive unfoldment of the Fillmore vision—the manifestation of Practical Christianity and the demonstration of the Truth of Christian Idealism.

Before leaving the subject of Unity's classical period, several other events ought to be mentioned. In 1921, Charles Fillmore published his famous "Unity's Statement of Faith," a document removed from print by Unity School by the mid-1980's. This document forms the basis of the Unity-Progressive Council's "Progressive Reaffirmation of Unity Faith," the only detailed statement of Unity faith to appear after the passing of Charles Fillmore. In 1922, the first Unity radio talk was given over WOQ in Kansas City, a station later purchased by Unity and greatly utilized by Charles. The year 1924 saw the beginning of publication for Unity: *Daily Word* (Unity was dropped from the title in 1939). In 1925, the first meeting (Annual Conference) of all Unity leaders was held, apparently as the result of a crisis in doctrine and leadership. This Conference would lead to the formation of the Unity Ministers' Association (1934) and later, the Association of Unity Churches (1966). After Myrtle's transition (1931), Charles married Cora G. Dedrick (1933). As late as 1946, Charles was founding churches in California and had established an independent ministerial training school in Los Angeles. Students are referred to the "Selected Bibliography"

for a list of the titles and dates of publication for the works of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. In the final chapter, we will survey the Modern (1948-1966) and Recent (1966-present) periods of Unity's history.

As noted above, Unity came into being as a result of Myrtle's healing. Charles was at first skeptical, but his doubt turned to faith as he witnessed his wife's recovery through prayer and spiritual treatment. As Myrtle was experiencing her healing and Charles was growing in faith, a steady stream of Hopkins-trained teachers passed through Kansas City. In 1890, Hopkins' herself came to the city and offered a two-week course. The relationship between the Fillmores and their beloved Teacher grew over the years of the final decade of the 1800's. In addition to their study with Hopkins, the Fillmores received instruction in Truth from Joseph Adams. It was the presence of Hopkins and her New Thought missionaries that sustained and helped advance the faith of the Fillmores.

Myrtle was an educated woman, by standards of the day. She was better educated in a formal sense than Charles. Her background as a teacher who had operated her own school was of tremendous value in the formative years of the movement. Because she was a teacher, she recognized the value of education, hence Unity was, from the outset, more than just a healing movement—it was also an educational movement. Myrtle's healing and resultant faith gave her life spiritual direction, but she already had the educational and organizational experience to share her faith effectively with others in a clear and systematic manner. The relationship with Hopkins served to expand and give greater structure to Myrtle's talents. The relationship also gave professional legitimacy to Myrtle's leadership role, for Hopkins had ordained Myrtle as a minister. Myrtle is sometimes portrayed as somewhat retiring. While this may well have been the case, her role as co-founder of Unity cannot be diminished: Her healing precipitated the founding of Unity (perhaps she should be cited as the founder!), she established the Society for Silent Help, initiated *Wee Wisdom* magazine, authored numerous articles, and wrote countless letters explaining Unity's teachings while guiding correspondents through healing experiences. Her work with youth cannot be overlooked, nor her role in initiating the practice of the "love offering plan." Myrtle's two great contributions to Unity, then, can be cited as: 1. Her demonstration of Truth (through her healing), and 2. Her establishment of Unity's first ministry (The Society of Silent Help [Silent Unity])—in short: Healing and Ministry.

If Unity's origin and initial inspiration can be traced to Myrtle's healing, its early growth and development can be credited to the work of her husband. Charles established Unity's first

institutional structures and served as the primary teacher. Although Charles and Myrtle both wrote profusely, Charles is cited as the author of many more books.

Charles' two major contributions to the emergence of Unity can be cited as: 1. His formal organization of the movement, and 2. His establishment of Unity's teachings—in short: Organization and Doctrine.

In the case of Myrtle, it is entirely possible that she could have done her work without Charles (Charles certainly played no real role in her healing). It is, however, equally evident that Charles could not have made his contribution without Myrtle's presence in his life.

Charles is cited as the author or co-author of 13 books and 11 pamphlets currently in print. Recent years have seen the discontinuation of a number of his pamphlets by Unity School.

Charles also established editorial policy for Unity's publications and Unity's religious doctrine. It is noteworthy that as early as 1897, Charles established Unity's editorial policy on the Jesus Christ Doctrine. This meant that all "occult" teachings were banned from Unity publications (see Unity, 8 [May 1897]: 393). In his own works, Charles repeatedly denied the legitimacy of occult teachings and clearly distinguished Unity's authentic teachings from those of occult schools. In Talks on Truth, for example, he writes: "The regaining of [our] lost consciousness [of Truth] is a matter that rests between God and man. We cannot get into this 'kingdom' through such artificial means as mesmerism, hypnotism, mediumship, or any 'shortcut' to spirituality"(TT, p. 36). The same position on such teachings was Unity's policy for churches as early as 1925. Today we know that this firm policy no longer guides many Unity churches, particularly those outside the Unity-Progressive Council or Universal Foundation for Better Living.

Charles was a brilliant organizer and manager. He attracted superior individuals to the movement and gave them positions of authority and responsibility. Under his leadership, Unity became the largest New Thought movement in the world. Its educational programs were unrivaled, its Christian character clearly evident, and its commitment to Truth solidly established.

Today it is difficult to find a clear and systematic statement of Unity's beliefs. Of the four institutional representatives of Unity, only the Unity-Progressive Council published a democratically mediated statement—"A Progressive Reaffirmation of Unity Faith." The 40 statements in this document (P.R.U.F. for short) contain Unity's foundational teachings. These 40 statements can be summarized with seven basic affirmations:

1. The absolute goodness of God and (hence) the unreality of evil
2. The innate divinity of humanity

3. The omnipotently causative nature of consciousness
4. The spiritual and religious freedom of individuals in matters of faith and expression
5. The acceptance of spiritually interpreted Christian doctrine as normative
6. The allegorical interpretation of Scripture
7. The power of prayer

In short:

1. Ultimate Reality is God/Good
2. Humanity is divine
3. Mind is primary and causative
4. Freedom of individuals
5. Christianity
6. Allegory
7. Prayer

All statements in the P.R.U.F. harmonize with these seven great ideals.

Unity and the International New Thought Alliance

As noted in the previous chapter, six of the seven ideals noted here are identical to those shared by all New Thought groups. The fifth ideal, our affirmation of Christianity, is what separates us from most other New Thought groups. Only Divine Science shares a common affirmation of Christianness.

The desire of the International New Thought Alliance to remain free of any specific religious affiliation (especially affiliation with Christianity) is traditionally cited as the reason that Charles Fillmore removed Unity from affiliation with I.N.T.A. Unity was one of the original members of the New Thought Federation (a precursor of I.N.T.A.), and Charles served on its board of directors. In 1906, Charles removed Unity from the Federation because he felt it had ceased to express "Absolute Truth." Unity stayed out of the official New Thought movement until 1919, when the movement accepted the Fillmores' suggestion that "the Jesus Christ standard" be accepted as normative in I.N.T.A. Unity hosted the I.N.T.A. Congress of 1920 and the rift seemed to be resolved. In 1921, in Denver, the Fillmores suggested that the designation "Christian" be added to the official name of the Alliance. The motion was postponed for a year; and in 1922, Unity School

left the I.N.T.A. It has never returned, although in 1990 the Association of Unity Churches (A.U.C.) joined, and in 1991 The Unity-Progressive Council was welcomed into membership by unanimous vote of the I.N.T.A. Board of Directors. Both the World Federation of Unity Churches and the Universal Foundation for Better Living (an organization that, while not part of the Unity movement, is based on Fillmore teachings) are members of I.N.T.A. Additionally, many Unity churches and leaders of Unity organizations are members of the International New Thought Alliance and the Alliance for Global New Thought, affiliations that are often beneficial to both the member organizations as well as to the two major New Thought organizations.

Significant Early Unity Leaders

In a summary study of this sort, considerable information is necessarily omitted. For the purposes of this chapter, a listing of some of Unity's greatest leaders from the period of this study will at least introduce students to the people who helped make Unity a success.

Dr. H. Emilie Cady (1848-1941)

Cady was a homeopathic physician, but her fame rests entirely with a single text, *Lessons In Truth*, which is Unity's primary textbook, after the Bible. It was the first book published by Unity. Cady had been educated and taught school before becoming a physician. Like Charles and Myrtle, Cady had been a student of Emma Curtis Hopkins.

Annie Rix Militz (1856-1924)

Militz was ordained by Hopkins in 1891, the same year as the Fillmores. In 1893, she published the first of many articles in Unity (referring to the disciples of Jesus as representative of spiritual faculties of humankind). Militz's special talent was Bible interpretation. She pioneered the "metaphysical" or allegorical method of spiritual interpretation of Scripture. Militz tends to be ignored in histories of Unity published by Unity School, although she was affiliated with Unity from 1893-1911. Unity School no longer publishes her best-known book, *Both Riches and Honor*.

Clara May Rowland (? - 1977)

In 1916, Myrtle stepped down as head of Silent Unity. She was replaced by May Rowland, the daughter of an important early supporter of the Fillmores. Rowland served as Director of Silent

Unity until 1971. She wrote numerous articles for Unity periodicals, and her two books (*The Magic of the Word* and the classic, *Dare to Believe!*) were published by Unity School. She was married three times, once to Frank B. Whitney, the first Editor of *Daily Word*.

Frank B. Whitney (1889-1939)

Whitney was the first editor of *Daily Word* and authored numerous articles and texts, including: *Mightier than Circumstance*, *Beginning Again*, *Open Doors*, and *Be of Good Courage*.

Ernest C. Wilson

One of Unity's greatest ministers and authors, Wilson followed Charles as minister of Unity Temple in Kansas City and he subsequently built a large ministry in Los Angeles. He composed Unity's minister's manual and wrote the words for Unity's special services—weddings, memorials, Christmas candlelighting, New Year's Burning Bowl, and others. He is the author of numerous texts (many now out of print), including: *The Week that Changed the World*, *The Emerging Self*, *The Sunlit Way*, and *Have We Lived Before*.

Other notable leaders include: Imelda Octavia Shanklin (author), Georgina Tree West (author, and president of the Unity Ministers' Association [U.M.A.]), Elizabeth Sand Turner (Bible interpreter), Louise Beaty (dynamic field minister, church builder, president of U.M.A.), Theodosia DeWitt Schobert (contributor to The *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary*, and author of *Divine Remedies*), Frances W. Foulks, James A. Decker, Richard Lynch, Dana Gatlin, and numerous others.

Unity and History

Chapter Five

History of Unity II: 1948 to Present

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce Unity followers to the history of the Unity movement from the transition of Charles Fillmore to the present. Key topics to be covered in this chapter include:

1. Major historical divisions;
2. The Unity movement after Charles Fillmore;
3. Two issues in religious self-understanding;
4. Unity's current challenges;
5. The mission and work of organizations founded out of the Unity movement:

Universal Foundation for Better Living and the Independent Alliance of Ministers in Unity (The World Federation of Unity Churches and the Unity-Progressive Council are no longer operating);

This chapter will follow, for the most part, the sequence of topics given above.

As has been true of our previous chapters in this book, the summary sketch of Unity's history to be presented here is designed to complete a broad and general introduction to Unity's history. This chapter will focus on Unity's modern and recent history. A more detailed study of Unity's history is available in *The Unity Movement* by Neal Vahle, although it does not cover alternative Fillmore-based organizations.

Sudents are also directed to the books on Unity's history noted in Chapter Four and in the bibliography of suggested readings. Before turning to our survey of Unity's modern and recent era, we should briefly review the major divisions in Unity's history:

1. Pre-history (until 1889)
2. Early (1889-1903)
3. Classical (1903-1948)
4. Modern (1948-1966)
5. Recent (1966-Present)

Notes and comments on the first three periods were given in Chapter Four. Brief notes on the final two periods will be given here.

Modern (1948-1966)

Unity's modern period began in 1948 when co-founder, Charles Fillmore, made his transition. Myrtle had made her transition in 1931. The Modern period comes to an end and the recent period begins in 1966 when the Association of Unity Churches was incorporated—a Unity institution that was separate and distinct from Unity School. During the Modern period, the Fillmores' first son, Lowell (1882-1975), served as President of Unity School.

Lowell was apparently a competent administrator, and served as Editor of *Unity* magazine from 1909 until 1975. What most individuals know as Unity today is what it became under the guidance of Lowell Fillmore. Lowell was a religious moderate. Literature describes him as kind, gentle, and friendly. Under his guidance, Unity became less novel and much less original than it had been when his parents were alive. His intention seems to have been to broaden Unity's popular appeal by eliminating or de-emphasizing material that seemed too unusual or contrary to the everyday, common sense world view of middle class America.

This tendency towards the cultural and religious "middle ground" has been the hallmark of Unity since 1948. During Lowell's tenure as head of Unity School, and in his own writings, we observe a de-emphasis of such concepts and teachings as Regeneration, the "Mother-Father God" concept, the limitations of institutional Christianity, and the divinity of humanity.

During this time, Unity published anthologies of Charles Fillmore's writings that had not appeared before his transition. These works were: *Atom-Smashing Power of Mind* (1949); *Keep A True Lent* (1953); and *The Revealing Word* (1959). It is of note that some of the material found in these books is also found in the books published during Charles' life.

Events of note during the modern period include: the first "retreat" at Unity Farm (1951); the transition of Unity Farm to Unity Village and the legal incorporation of the Village (1953); and the transition of Rickert Fillmore (1884-1965).

Recent (1966 - present)

In 1966, during the Presidency of Lowell Fillmore, a most important event occurred—the formation of the Association of Unity Churches. Until this date, Unity ministers and churches had

been inspired, directed, and controlled by Unity School. Comment will be made on the importance of this event later. For now, we can briefly survey events in Unity School's development during the Recent period of Unity's history.

In 1966, a formal ministerial training program was established. The year 1967 saw the establishment of the Unity Institute for Continuing Education. This work, later renamed the Continuing Education Program (C.E.P.), was designed to facilitate the training and education of Unity teachers, rather than Unity ministers. After about 2003, the AUC (renamed the Unity Worldwide Ministries about 2013), began to operate and supervise Unity's educational programs for teachers and ministers.

In 1969, Unity School began to produce its distinctive radio and TV program, *The Word*. Also in 1969, Unity Village received its own mailing address—Unity Village, Missouri, 64065. In 1971, May Rowland Bezio stepped down as Director of Silent Unity. She was succeeded by Unity's "poet laureate," James Dillet Freeman. In 1972, Charles Rickert Fillmore succeeded Lowell Fillmore as President of Unity School. Lowell made transition in 1975. Charles Rickert (1921), son of Waldo Rickert Fillmore, retired in 1987.

Under Charles Rickert's leadership, Unity School continued the tradition of moderation begun during Lowell's tenure. The operations of the School were put on a more "cost effective" basis. The Correspondence School, begun in 1909, was eliminated in 1973. In 1977, the I.N.T.A. archives were added to Unity library. (NOTE: In 1990 the Archives were moved from Unity School to I.N.T.A. headquarters in Mesa, Arizona). Unity Ministerial School (U.M.S.), a successor of the Unity School for Ministerial and Religious Studies, was established in 1979. In 1980, Unity School for Religious Studies was established and in 1983 expanded to include the ministerial training program. Also in 1983, John Strickland (second husband of Constance Fillmore, daughter of Charles Rickert Fillmore), became Director of Silent Unity and Unity School resumed control of the ministerial training program. In 1987, Connie Fillmore Bazy (1948-present) succeeded her father, Charles Rickert, as President of Unity School (and later retired). In 1989, the Unity movement celebrated its centennial anniversary. (That year, the Unity-Progressive Council began; the Unity-Progressive Theological Seminary, subsequently renamed the Emma Curtis Hopkins Theological Seminary, was begun in 1992). The seminary ceased operations after 2003, following an accidental electrical fire at its campus, the Unity Church of Clearwater, Florida; subsequently, the Unity-Progressive Council ceased formal operations in 2009, encouraged by the possibility of Unity School seeking to develop an academically accredited ministerial program).

The Unity-Progressive Council began on May 7, 1989, when three individuals, in prayerful openness to the Spirit of Truth and with the guidance of God, ascribed their names to a statement of religious commitment. U-P.C. was incorporated as a non-profit, tax exempt, religious organization in the state of Florida on April 17, 1990. The founding members of the Council were Mr. Charles R. Throckmorton, Mr. Eric S. Gerard, and The Rev. Dell deChant. The Rev. Leddy Hammock joined in the work of the Council shortly after it was formed. The U-P.C. was committed to undertaking the constructive actions that are necessary to resolve the various challenges facing Unity as summarized above. The Council's mission proceeded on the basis of three general affirmations:

1. To reaffirm the traditional teachings of Unity
2. To establish a truly democratic and egalitarian Unity institution (and establish and encourage the establishment of subsequent institutions based on this model)
3. To expand and enrich the educational opportunities available to Unity participants

As noted above, the transition of Charles Fillmore was a decisive event in Unity's history. Unity has continued to follow the direction in which his son, Lowell, took the movement, beginning in 1948. Also as noted above, Lowell was a moderate and perhaps a revisionist. He sought to expand Unity's presence in American society and his strategy seems to have been to try to position the movement closer to the religious mainstream—he certainly moved to moderate the teachings of his father. He also allowed Unity churches to become autonomous; historical evidence does not reveal whether this was due to the demand of the churches or the desire of Unity School. Whatever caused the division, by 1966, the Unity movement began to be represented by two different religious organizations: Unity School and the Association of Unity Churches (since renamed the Unity Worldwide Ministries).

The Relationship between Unity Worldwide Ministries and Unity School (Unity Worldwide Headquarters)

UWH and UWM are in many ways distinct religious institutions. The two groups are related but they are functionally and philosophically independent. One (UWH) is the main campus setting for Silent Unity. The other is a coordinating body for the more than 500 ministries of Unity congregations (UWM). There is indeed some intellectual commerce and a certain structural relationship between the two organizations, but the relationship appears to be in transition. The

member ministers of the UWM are not formally bound to UWH and there are no formally detailed guidelines concerning what can be taught at the individual Unity churches, although UWM has developed a branding program to embody a shared sense of identity among Unity ministries.

Until 2002, Unity School had always been a private corporation, controlled and operated by the Fillmore family. In 2002, Connie Fillmore Bazy stepped down as President and Tom Zender was appointed as President and CEO of Unity School; later, Charlotte Shelton and others continued leadership of UWH. Ideas are being explored by UWM and UWH as to ways to expand and enrich Unity's teachings, the empowerment of Unity followers, and the expansion of Unity's ideals in culture as a whole.

The first alternative ministry to grow out of the Unity movement was the Universal Foundation for Better Living (U.F.B.L.), founded by Johnnie Coleman in 1974. Coleman and her mother were the first persons of color to live at Unity Village, effectively desegregating the campus. In 1974, Coleman withdrew from the movement to promote her ideals of diversity and inclusiveness, founding the Universal Foundation for Better Living, an organization dedicated to empowering a culturally diverse gathering of people and churches to study New Thought principles without regard to the individual's gender, race, or ethnicity.

While not describing itself as a Unity organization, U.F.B.L. does see itself as firmly grounded in the teachings of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. U.F.B.L. opposes incorporation of the occult and New Age teachings into the ministry of its member churches, and places particular emphasis on the Bible in its literature and educational programs. U.F.B.L. is not operated democratically, due to the concern that opening the direction and teachings of the organization to progression and change could dilute the emphases of Idealism and the Bible. U.F.B.L. is the only organization other than the Unity-Progressive Council that published a statement of faith and supported theologically normative academic study for ministers. As noted earlier, the World Federation of Unity Churches and the Unity-Progressive Council are no longer in operation.

The Independent Alliance of Ministers in Unity (IAMU) is an inclusive, affirming and welcoming alliance open to all active and retired ordained and/or licensed Unity* ministers, as well as ministers ordained by other religious organizations who have adopted Unity as their primary spiritual path and are currently serving in a Unity ministry, who believe themselves to be in accord with the stated purpose of IAMU. (*Unity referring to ministers trained in the teachings of Jesus Christ as discerned and interpreted within the Unity movement founded by Charles & Myrtle Fillmore.)

IAMU began with a meeting of Unity ministers in March of 2009 in Virginia Beach, Virginia. The group met to discuss growing concerns about the needs of Unity ministers. The specific needs discussed were how to support ministers in fulfilling their duties as spiritual leaders and administrators and how to support them in times of challenge. Other concerns addressed included the desire to insure that the principles of Unity continue to be taught in Unity's educational programs.

The Independent Alliance of Ministers in Unity was incorporated in the State of Texas as a non-profit organization. At a meeting in Austin, Texas in October 2009, members were received into membership, By-Laws were adopted and a Board of Trustees was elected to serve the organization. The stated purpose of the IAMU was and is primarily to provide support for its members through programs and services that specifically address ministerial needs, to keep its members informed of activities that may affect their ministries, and to provide a channel for their voices to be heard in the Unity movement. The IAMU has democratically affirmed a statement of belief expressing essential Unity teachings.

The Issues of Identity and Authenticity

All religions must wrestle with two major issues: 1. Identity, and 2. Authenticity. By identity we mean what a religion understands itself to be and how it expresses this understanding. By authenticity we mean the extent to which a religion embodies its self-understanding; how well it lives up to what it says it is. As noted in Chapters One and Two of this course, Christianity wrestled with these issues, and largely solved them through its separation from Judaism and its establishment of the 3-C's (Canon, Creed and Clergy).

During the life of Charles Fillmore (and through his contributions to the development of Unity's organizational structure and doctrinal profile), Unity made excellent progress in developing its identity and authenticity. It could also be said that through Fillmore's work, Unity effectively separated itself from religions with which it might be confused (Christian Science and New Age in general), and took great strides towards the establishment of its own 3-C's:

1. Bible, *Lessons in Truth*, the Fillmore writings
2. Fillmore's "Statement of Faith"
3. Leadership education programs which were inclusive and sophisticated (at least by New Thought standards)

Since Fillmore's transition, however, Unity's identity and authenticity has been evolving. Why this has happened is clear enough. From 1889 to 1948, Unity's identity was essentially defined by Charles Fillmore. It was what he wanted it to be. He defined what was permitted in Unity School, Unity publications, and even, generally, in Unity churches. Thus, for the first 59 years of Unity's life, Unity's identity was defined by one person, Charles Fillmore; and at most two persons, if we include Myrtle (1845-1931). Charles' concept of what Unity was, stood for, and did was clear and precise: Practical Christian Idealism based on the Jesus Christ doctrine of freedom and spiritual empowerment.

Was Unity authentic with regard to this self- understanding? It appears to have been. In fact the writings and decisions of Fillmore reveal it to have been radically authentic. In short, during the life of Charles Fillmore, Unity knew what it was and conformed to this self-understanding.

After 1948, Unity was not defined by Charles Fillmore. It was defined to a large extent by the more moderate Lowell Fillmore, from 1948 to 1966 (18 years); then by Lowell and the A.U.C. from 1966 to 1972 (6 years); then by Charles Rickert and the A.U.C. from 1972 to 1987 (15 years); and, finally, from 1987 to the present by Connie Fillmore Bazy, the A.U.C., and (from 1989 to about 2009) by the U-P.C. In 2016, the Independent Alliance of Ministers in Unity democratically affirmed a concise statement of belief written by The Reverend Marge Dale that effectively expresses the organization's self-understanding as essentially Unity.

What this short chronology reveals is that since 1948, the identity of Unity has been determined by a number of persons and institutions. For about the first 60 years of the movement, the identity was determined by one (or two) person(s). For about the next 20 years, another individual, with a new agenda, determined the identity and set the course which the movement has followed ever since. And for the most recent 20 or so years, a number of individuals (including the leadership of the A.U.C./UWM) have had the responsibility of defining the identity of the movement and maintaining its authenticity relative to this definition.

As noted above, Lowell sought to moderate and revise Unity's religious identity; to transform it into something like a non-doctrinal version of mainstream, post-Reformation, American religion. Since Lowell's tenure, this tendency towards "generic religion" has become more pronounced, so that today Unity's identity is evolving. In the absence of an authoritative collection of foundational texts and teachings, an explicit statement of faith, and a well educated and tradition-grounded clergy, the identity of the movement seems to be in flux, leaving open the

door to a variety of interpretations that may or may not reflect the intent and theology of the founders.

Many within the Unity movement do not consider these issues to be meaningless. In fact, many Unity ministers, teachers, lay leaders, and congregants believe these issues are at the very forefront of Unity's contemporary mission. These people recognize that the Unity Movement is on the threshold of new self-understanding. The developing issues for the movement can be briefly summarized as religious, educational, and institutional.

Issues for the Unity Movement

The religious challenges facing the movement involve questions that grow out of emerging self-definition through the UWM, UWH, and also through IAMU'. Questions to be brought into clarity include: What is Unity? Is it Christian? Is it part of the New Age movement? Is it part of New Thought? Does it endorse channeling and channeled teachings? Does it find any unique or authoritative value in the teachings of the Fillmores and H. Emilie Cady? Where can someone find out what Unity believes? Is Unity consistent in its teachings? What are its teachings on the central elements of Christian doctrine? These are religious questions, and the movement is seeking, in various ways to find coherent, unified, and authoritative answers to these questions that are currently published and promoted by organizations in the Unity movement.

The educational challenges facing the movement involve questions that grow out of Unity's ministerial programs and approaches to teaching Unity leaders and followers. At the upper levels of education, there is no accredited Unity seminary. In fact, there is no accredited seminary in the entire New Thought movement. There are no schools of higher learning, no colleges, no universities based on Unity ideals. In fact, there is often a denial of the necessity for such schools.

Unity ministers are trained in schools that lack professional theological certification and are typically taught by many instructors who lack terminal academic degrees (Ph.D, Th.D.), and who follow a curriculum that is less academically rigorous than those of other seminaries.

At the middle level of education, the training of Licensed Teachers is time consuming, somewhat costly, and varying in empowerment of graduates. Licensed Unity Teachers serve at the appointment of the Unity Ministers in leadership at the churches where they teach, and yet, Truth students continue to choose to follow this demanding course, for love of the Unity principles. Licensed Unity Teachers as a group are often significantly sincere, deeply committed, and knowledgeable of Unity's foundational teachings. There is also a prevailing sentiment in the field

that there are many spiritual leaders actively serving the Unity movement who are deserving of credentialing, including ordination, yet who, for a variety of reasons, have not qualified for this honor through UWM. IAMU is currently exploring ways to be supportive toward fulfilling this goal.

It is worth noting that at the level of basic religious education, Unity churches would do well to offer primary courses in Unity's history, principles, and teachings. Some churches routinely offer *Lessons in Truth*, but few teach the works of Fillmore on a regular basis. But even if *Lessons in Truth* is taught regularly and Fillmore texts are taught from time to time, unless there is a clear and systematic introduction to Unity presented in these or other classes, Unity followers may lack a grasp of Unity's foundational teachings. The present course was developed by U-P.C. as a resource to help empower Unity students and teachers now and in the days to come. (*Libertas et Veritas: Toward a Unity Renaissance*, by The Rev. Dell deChant. is a recommended resource.)

Let us resolve to a renewed dedication to teaching, demonstrating, and advancing the foundational teachings of the Unity movement based on the works of the Fillmores and H. Emilie Cady (*Lessons in Truth* and *How I Used Truth*). Let us be committed to the full empowerment of all Unity followers, regardless of title or background. Let us commit to expanding the horizons of the Unity educational enterprise without compromising the fundamental spiritual teachings which give dynamic force to that enterprise.

Let us envision together an entirely open and thoroughly inter-coordinated religious education program designed to satisfy the interests of Unity followers at all levels of involvement. Such a program would provide resources, curricula, certifications, ordinations, and other training for youth education, adult lay education, ministerial training and continuing education.

Rather than seeking a reformation, we affirm a renaissance—a rebirth of the Unity ideal, a rediscovery of the light of the Fillmore teachings, and a renewed commitment to following that light into a deeper understanding of Mind and into a new era of healing, prosperity, spiritual communication, and authentic fellowship with all humanity. Like the Fillmores, let us resolve to follow Truth wherever She leads.

Unity and History

Key Facts and Ideas to Remember for Review

Chapter One

Jesus and Christian Origins

The evaluation at the end of this course will be based on these key facts and ideas

1. Unity is a part of the world's largest religion.
What is the name of this religion? _____
2. The life and teachings of Jesus form the basis of Unity and the religion noted in Question #1
Jesus was, however, a member of which religion? _____
3. Name at least two Jewish groups which flourished during the time of Jesus.
_____ and _____
4. The "Holy Land" was a part of a great world empire at the time of Jesus' ministry.
What was the name of the empire? _____
5. Where was Jesus born? _____
Where did He grow up? _____
6. Where was Jesus crucified? _____
How many days was He in the tomb? _____
7. Name the holiday on which we celebrate Jesus' resurrection. _____
8. In Unity, we usually refer to Jesus with three terms/titles of spiritual respect.
_____, _____ and _____
9. Jesus' teachings can be broadly classified under 5 headings. Give at least three headings.
_____, _____ and _____

10. When Jesus taught through actions, the actions are typically referred to as _____.
11. When Jesus communicated Truth verbally. He used three major teaching techniques. Name one of the three. _____
12. Name Jesus' most famous sermon. _____
13. Did Jesus affirm the divinity of humanity? _____
14. The life and teachings of Jesus are found in the first four books of the New Testament. What do we call these books? _____
15. Name the 4 books noted in question 14. Put an (S) next to the most obviously symbolic.
 _____,
 _____,
16. In Unity, what term do we use to refer to the highest (spiritual) level of Scriptural interpretation? _____
17. Give a short definition of the following names/terms:
 Jesus = _____
 Christ = _____
 Jesus Christ = _____
18. Jesus called 12 men to follow Him. We refer to these 12 as His _____
19. Name three of the men referred to in Question 18 and spiritual faculty each symbolizes.
 _____ (_____)
 _____ (_____)
 _____ (_____)
20. Perhaps the greatest apostle was a convert. Name this man. _____

Unity and History

Key Facts and Ideas to Remember for Review

Chapter Two

Summary Sketch of Christian History

The evaluation at the end of this course will be based on these key facts and ideas

1. The first great Council of the Christian religion affirmed that Gentiles
(_____) could be _____
2. What were the two great challenges faced by the early Church, before 313?
_____ and _____
3. The early Church overcame these challenges through the “3 C’s.”

4. Name one of the two greatest thinkers of the early Church. _____
5. Unity can be understood as the union of two major movements which flourished during the Medieval Period. Name the two
_____ and _____
6. Name the great Medieval thinker who proved the existence of God in Five Ways.

7. Have devout Christians ever referred to God as Mother before Unity?
Yes _____ No _____
8. When did the Reformation begin? _____
9. Did the Reformation seek to reaffirm the foundational teachings of Christianity and give lay persons more power and opportunity to participate in religious life?
Yes _____ No _____

10. Name the two great spiritual rituals that were retained by Protestantism

_____ and _____

11. Are these rituals practiced in Unity today? _____

12. After the Thirty Years' War, religion was not as important as it had been in the centuries before. The new historical process that has characterized history since this time is known as

BONUS: Date of the end of the Thirty Years' War _____

13. Name one of the three major types of responses that Christianity has offered to Secularization:

14. Name one major new religious movement (besides Unity) that has come into existence since the beginning of the 19th century. _____

15. Name a heresy. _____

16. Does Unity believe, like some ancient heresies, that salvation requires escape from the body, and that matter is evil?

Yes _____ No _____

17. Has the Pope always held full (infallible) authority in Catholicism? _____

18. Does Unity accept all the universal doctrines of Christianity? _____

19. Did the framers of the Constitution desire to have the United States have a national religion?

20. Was there a great surge in religious belief at the beginning of the 20th century?

Unity and History

Key Facts and Ideas to Remember for Review

Chapter Three

Survey of New Thought History

The evaluation at the end of this course will be based on these key facts and ideas

1. Unity is the largest member group in a religious movement known as _____ Thought.
2. The founder, or Mother, of this movement was _____.
3. Name one of her major contributions to the development of the movement.

4. This person is noteworthy in the history of Christianity because she was the first woman to ordain _____.
5. The philosophic roots of this movement can be traced back as far as the ancient Greek philosopher _____.
6. Name two other major historical figures who could be seen as forerunners of New Thought:

7. New Thought's two most important 19th century precursors were:
_____ and _____
8. Which of the two (above, #7) played a role in the healing of the other?

9. Who is the founder of Christian Science? _____
10. Name one way in which New Thought differs from Christian Science:

11. When did New Thought begin? _____

12. Who ordained the Fillmores at their first ordination in 1891? _____

13. Besides Unity, name two other New Thought groups:

14. Which of the two (in # 13) is the oldest? _____

15. Which one is represented by two different organizations? _____

16. Has the division in this movement (#15) aided it's growth and development?

17. For all New Thought followers, life's ultimate Truth is the Omnipotence of _____.

18. New Thought teachings have always been especially attractive to members of the

_____ class.

19. Were early New Thought leaders confident about their teachings? _____

20. What is the name of the group that serves as a loose association of New Thought churches and individuals?

Unity and History

Key Facts and Ideas to Remember for Review

Chapter Four

History of Unity I: Origins until 1948

The evaluation at the end of this course will be based on these key facts and ideas

1. Unity began in the year _____.
2. Where (in what city) did Unity begin? _____
3. The co-founders of Unity were the Fillmores.
_____ and _____
4. The movement began as the result of _____'s healing.
5. This healing came about, in part, due to a powerful Truth statement heard by Unity's co-founder.

This statement was: "I am a child of _____
and therefore I do not inherit _____."
6. The name of the first religious periodical published by the founders was

7. Aside from the publishing work, Unity's first ministry was based on prayer; it was the
Society of _____ Help—today known as Silent Unity.
8. Did Charles immediately accept the idea of mental healing? _____
9. Did the Fillmores believe that eating animal flesh was morally acceptable? _____
10. Name one book that deals with Unity's history. _____
11. How many times were the Fillmores ordained? _____

Who ordained them the first time? _____
12. In addition to the Bible, Unity's primary text book is _____.

13. Who is the author of this book? _____

14. What long-running children's magazine is associated with Unity?

15. Unity's property in Jackson Co., Missouri, was originally known as Unity _____.

16. Charles great contributions to Unity were

(1) _____ and (2) _____

17. (True or False) Throughout his life, Charles Fillmore believed that Unity should allow all religious and spiritual teachings to be presented in Unity publications.

18. Give three of Unity's seven basic affirmations:

19. Was Unity School ever a member of I.N.T.A.? _____

20. Name the document in which one might find a systematic presentation of Unity's basic beliefs.

21. In addition to the Fillmores and H. Emilie Cady, name at least two other early Unity leaders:

_____ and _____

Unity and History

Key Facts and Ideas to Remember for Review

Chapter Five

History of Unity II: 1948 to Present

The evaluation at the end of this course will be based on these key facts and ideas

1. Charles Fillmore was followed by his son, _____, as the President of Unity School.
2. This man was a religious _____.
3. Name one book by Charles Fillmore published after his transition.

4. The Association of Unity Churches was founded in _____.
5. There are over _____ churches in Unity today.
6. There may be as many as _____ participants in Unity today.
7. All religions have to wrestle with two major issues:
(1) _____ and (2) _____
8. Did Charles Fillmore deal successfully with these two issues? _____
9. Since 1948, has Unity been successful in dealing with these issues? _____
10. (True/False) The ministerial school at Unity Village is an accredited seminary.

11. The work of the Unity-Progressive Council began in _____.
12. The work of the Independent Alliance of Ministers in Unity began in _____.

NOTES

