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When religion and philosophy meet: a comparison of the theology of the Unity School of Christianity with the classical Aristotelian worldview

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ABSTRACT


Thesis advisor Dr. Hugh West.

The Unity School of Christianity’s theology shares key characteristics with Aristotle’s philosophical worldview, which have enabled it to meet the challenges of twentieth century America. Unity was founded in 1889 by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in Kansas City, and has become a thriving religious movement in the United States and worldwide. A comparison of Unity’s theology with Aristotle’s philosophy finds that both share a pragmatic focus on physical life and its attributes instead of an afterlife; both accept the world as inherently good in nature; and both see underlying order and interconnection in the world. Both also see purpose in the world and its life, and require people to exercise intellect and intuition to achieve their purpose, which brings them closest to attaining divinity. These characteristics best suited Unity for twentieth century America just as Aristotle’s philosophy succeeded only in other successful, intellectually advanced civilizations throughout history.
I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Hugh West, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

Robert C. Kenzer, Ph.D.
WHEN RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY MEET:
A COMPARISON OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE UNITY
SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY WITH THE CLASSICAL
ARISTOTELEIAN WORLDVIEW

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Introduction

“For though we have little grasp of eternal things, it brings us because of their great worth more pleasure than all we know of what is about.”

Faith versus rationality has been a dominant theme in American cultural history since before the founding of the United States as an independent nation. During the late nineteenth century, two religious pioneers closely observed the perpetual battle between religion and science in the United States, fiercely waged during their lifetime and still ongoing in American society today, and quietly developed their own unique answer to it. Today, the religious movement they launched out of their own cramped parlor in 1889 counts more than 170,000 active congregants in over one thousand ministries worldwide, the majority within the United States. It also wields an influence over American society far out of proportion to its active membership, through its considerable prayer and publishing services. Its prayer ministry responds to over two million prayer requests each year. Its publishing house is one of the largest religious ones in the Midwest, counting circulation of over one million for just one of its publications, *Daily Word*, which is printed in nine languages and distributed in 175 countries. In other words, between its publications and prayer requests, over six times more people than are active in this religious movement are exposed and affected by its message. It calls itself simply Unity.

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1 Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium* 1.5.644b23-645a31, as quoted in John Herman Randall, Jr., *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 221. All classical works referenced in this paper were authored by Aristotle.
3 Ibid, xiii.
For a movement with such a widespread influence, Unity is not well known in American society. People often conflate Unity with the Unitarian Church, a completely different organization. Consequently, Unity has attracted a disproportionately small amount of attention from established American theological and academic communities, one of the main reasons, along with my own personal interest, for this study.

Twentieth century American society introduced a number of new challenges to religion. A population explosion fueled in large part by multiple waves of immigration brought corresponding cultural and ethnic diversity that demanded religious accommodation, and growing social mobility and exponentially improved communications methods weakened community and geography-based constraints on worship and encouraged independent thought and personal choice. The changes in communications, demographics and transportation also challenged traditional local, national, and ethnic barriers with a more globalized conceptual framework for considering human life, which for some expanded naturally to include a view of spirituality which integrated physical life and the divine much more closely than traditional Platonic-based Christianity. Simultaneously, desk and service jobs plus labor saving technology eliminated much of the back breaking agricultural and industrial manual labor that dominated so many people’s lives, and breakthroughs in both medical and household technology dramatically improved people’s quality of life and extended their longevity. These fundamental changes in living conditions effectively pulled people’s focus away from an afterlife, which often served as the final hope of peace and
comfort to those suffering a harsh life on earth, towards their improved physical lives.
They also caused some people to perceive the perpetual balance between good and evil in
the world as tilting towards the good. Established religions had difficulty meeting all of
these demands and many steadily lost membership; uncounted new religions and new
variations of existing ones arose to address these needs but very few survived the test of
time.

A religious theology or spiritual worldview that hoped to meet these challenges
successfully for the long term needed to attract informed, independent-minded seekers
through its reasonability, logic, and flexibility instead of relying on pure faith and rigid
dogma. It had to value its followers' abilities and intuition by exercising their spiritual
faculties through prayer and meditations. It had to acknowledge the richness of human
cultural diversity in existing religions and philosophies. It had to recognize the goodness
of life and human nature, and have its divinity reflect that. Most important, it had to
focus not on theories of an afterlife, but on the complexity of present life here on earth,
and provide some meaning and purpose to humans living that life. At the same time, it
had to offer those benefits historically available through organized religion: community,
formal emotional and spiritual support, and fully developed theological structure. Unity
successfully met all of the challenges posed by twentieth century American society,
without sacrificing the traditional benefits of organized religion. Out of all the religious
movements began during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States,
Unity was one of the few to survive and prosper, due in large part to how well its
theology fit the conditions of this time period.
Many spiritual teachers have created a body of doctrine and presented it, orally or in writing, to sizable numbers of people. Few, however, have been successful in developing organizations for promulgating the teaching over time. The Fillmores, Charles and Myrtle, and their sons, Lowell, Rickert, and Royal, are among the few gifted spiritual innovators who created, over the course of the twentieth century, a successful worldwide spiritual movement — the Unity movement. The organizations that carry forth their work today are the Unity School of Christianity and the Association of Unity Churches.⁴

Charles Fillmore, a nineteenth century American Midwestern real estate developer with no formal education beyond high school, a man with no reputation or demonstrated skills for logic, religion, or science, and working in an isolated, agrarian nation not yet among the world’s powers nor known for its cultural or intellectual tradition, together with his wife Myrtle and their children, developed the Unity movement as it stands today. The Fillmores were motivated by the basic problems they perceived within the varieties of Christianity existing during their time. In particular, they feared that the perpetual conflict between faith and rationality in American society would continue indefinitely because “science has not gone far enough in her investigations, and religion is not aware of the scientific facts underlying the pure Biblical record.”⁵ Charles Fillmore believed that the burden of proof must be on religion, because “Science has proved her facts so far as she has gone, and has demonstrated what she preaches. Religion, on the other hand, preaches many things not demonstrated.”⁶ For examples he cited the facts that Christian ministers do not heal the sick, raise the dead, see visions, work miracles, and prophesy, as

⁴ Vahle, xiii.
⁵ Weekly Unity, 17 April 1929 (reprint of April, 1889 initial issue of Modern Thought, the first Unity periodical.)
⁶ Ibid.
Jesus Christ reputedly did, despite Jesus’ conviction that his followers eventually should be able to accomplish all of these things.

Fillmore initially developed his theology in order to understand and explain his wife Myrtle’s demonstrated healing practices on herself and others, and as they experienced more success with healing they shared their teachings through self-published pamphlets and magazines as well as personal lessons and services. “The object of the Unity Society,” Charles Fillmore wrote in 1909, “is to harmonize and unify the Christian religion with modern metaphysics . . . It teaches that all . . . are set forth in the doctrine of Jesus and his apostles . . . The literature published by the Unity Society explains in detail the Divine Law and however man can take advantage of it and be restored to health, prosperity and happiness.”7 In brief, they described it as practical Christianity – their first recognizable church was even incorporated as the Kansas City Unity Society of Practical Christianity.8 Though established in order to supplement all existing denominations of Christianity, it soon evolved into its own coherent and unique derivative of Christianity. Based on Jesus’ teachings independently interpreted through careful Scriptural study, it also incorporated elements of emerging philosophical and metaphysical movements of the period such as Transcendentalism, Christian Science, and Theosophy. The result was a highly rational, clearly explicable, and consistent Christian synthesis, which nevertheless owed much to a thorough utilization of intuition accessed through prayer and meditation.

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7 Unity, July 1909, 29.
Unlike a more conventional denomination or personality-based religious movement, the theology developed by the Fillmores demanded a full conscious and intuitive understanding and acceptance of its principles from all of its followers, and granted a corresponding level of dogmatic flexibility to them. Unity “students”, as the Fillmores called them, were not required to believe every thing they were taught, but to use those teachings as the basis for personal meditation and development of their own thoroughly developed “Truth.”

Unity’s distinct characteristics, then, as developed by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, their sons, and colleagues such as H. Emilie Cady, included an emphasis on consistent and understandable principles for the operation of divine forces; logic and rationality in their conception; view of life and the world as fundamentally interconnected; an almost exclusive focus on life in this world, its underlying goodness and our purpose in it; and theological flexibility. These characteristics uniquely equipped Unity to survive and prosper during the challenging theological and social environment of twentieth century America, and are therefore worthy of study in their own right. The best way to analyze these characteristics, I believe, is to compare Unity with another worldview based on rationality and logical intuition, one developed by an authority possessing unassailable credentials, the Philosopher himself, Aristotle.

The classical Greek philosopher/scientist who was arguably the most intelligent, well educated, and most analytical and logically rigorous thinker of the most intellectually advanced culture in classical Mediterranean history, argued logically and convincingly that one cannot use scientific methods to start a science. In its stead, he utilized a form of
what modern scholars describe as intellectual intuition to derive the *archai*, the starting principles, of his beliefs on life, its origins, characteristics, and purposes. These beliefs formed the initial basis of what we know today as biology, physics, and logic, and created a philosophy that vied for primacy within the Western and Arab world for over two thousand years. Though his science undoubtedly made the most important contribution to his world at the time, it is his philosophy (and logic) that have proved most durable and relevant to today.

This study will compare and contrast the theological and metaphysical teachings of Aristotle with those of the Unity movement as developed in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the United States. There are three key contrasts: in motivation, Unity focused its teachings and practices towards the practical goals of healing and improvement in one’s life, while most of Aristotle’s work (with the exception of the *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*) was done solely for the sake of theoretical knowledge; Unity’s faith basis in Scripture and Christ versus Aristotle’s empirical observations and logic-guided speculations; and their differing views of the nature of the soul.

The rest of the issues discussed are similarities between the two. Both focus pragmatically on life and its attributes in our physical world. Both accept the world as inherently good in nature, not recognizing any elemental force as a source of evil. Most important, both see underlying order, connection, and purpose in the world and all of its life, particularly for humanity, and both emphasize the need for people to exercise their full intellectual and intuitive abilities to fulfill this purpose and to experience the resultant

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9 Randall, 46.
divinity available within everyone. The critical role played by these characteristics in helping Unity to grow and prosper, along with their remarkable similarity to Aristotle’s secular, empirically based worldview, demands analysis of the two belief systems utilizing the compare and contrast device.
Chapter 1

Overview

Unity - its origins and theology

In 1881 a twenty-six year old aspiring metals assayer named Charles Fillmore married a thirty-five year old Midwestern schoolteacher named Myrtle Page in Clinton, Missouri. After several career changes and physical moves, the Fillmores ended up in Kansas City in 1885.¹ Myrtle Fillmore often suffered ill health: she had chronic recurring tuberculosis since childhood, abdominal issues, malaria, and hemorrhoids. In 1886, while living in Kansas City after five years of marriage, three children, and Myrtle's steadily deteriorating health, the Fillmores attended a lecture given by a Christian Science practitioner from Chicago, Eugene Weeks.² Neither Charles nor Myrtle had been raised or were active as adults in a religious community of any sort. Myrtle, however, intently absorbed Weeks' teachings regarding the mind's and spirit's connection with the body, and applied his healing principles to herself.

Using a phrase she had heard from Rev. Weeks at that lecture, "I am a child of God, and therefore I do not inherit sickness,"³ she went to work on herself. With intense effort, she successfully healed herself of her long held tuberculosis and malaria. She later testified, "The physical claims that had been considered such a serious nature faded away before the dawning of this new consciousness, and I found that my body temple had been

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¹ Vahle, 35.
² Vahle, 6.
literally transformed through the renewing of my mind." She also explained, "I did most of the healing myself, because I wanted the understanding for future use."\textsuperscript{4} She had discovered and used affirmations, (positive persuasive statements that are repeated frequently to oneself) regularly until she was fully recovered from the diseases, felt more energetic and fully alive than ever before, and filled with a sense of mission to spread this healing gospel. She continued to study Christian Science thoroughly, in order to fully understand it before attempting to teach it. She then started working with friends and neighbors on spiritual healing, and "our parlors were filled nearly every morning."\textsuperscript{5} She soon attracted paying clients of all sorts who heard of her healing abilities. She carried a full, daily client load for years and would later lead the healing circles of Silent Unity.\textsuperscript{6}

Myrtle’s astonishing success at healing herself and a number of others using these Christian Science principles inspired her husband Charles to try to understand how she had done it. He was motivated by his own physical condition; an atrophied right hip and leg that was several inches shorter than his left, requiring the use of a heavy metal brace and causing chronic pain. This resulted from a severe hip injury suffered while ice skating as a ten year old boy and inadequately treated by doctors of the time.

It was first diagnosed as rheumatism in the right leg, which gradually developed into tuberculosis of the hip... I was bled, leeched, cupped, lanced, seatoned, blistered and roweled.[sic] Six running sores were artificially produced on my leg to draw out the diseased condition which was presumed to be within.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{4} Freeman, 47.
\textsuperscript{5} Myrtle Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 18 August 1923.
\textsuperscript{6} Vahle, 8.
\textsuperscript{7} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, September 1896, 262.
Fillmore later related how doctors told him that the abscesses on his leg would kill him before he was forty. For several years he was so incapacitated that he could not lead a normal life. He explained: “I managed after years to get on my feet, although my right leg was several inches shorter than the left, and I was to all appearances destined to chronic invalidism. I managed to get about on crutches and cane and attend school in a desultory way until I was 18.”

Though Charles had no real experience with religion as a youth or young man, his wife’s healing experiences with herself and others drew his interest. He admitted, “My interest became so pronounced that I neglected my real estate for the furtherance of what my commercial friends pronounced a fanatical delusion.”

About two years after her initial healing experience, he applied her healing concepts to his own atrophied leg and hip, with remarkable results. He would eventually report,

The gradual healing of this diseased limb, and its growth to nearly normal size during the last ten years, has been to me, at least, one of the strongest proofs of the power of metaphysical treatment, especially in view of the fact that the physicians who attended me as a boy prophesied that when I reached the age of forty I would undoubtedly be a helpless cripple in a wheel-chair.

His leg was not the only part of Charles Fillmore that required healing. Myrtle wrote to a friend in 1928 about his overcoming deafness in one ear. She wrote that he

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8 Dana Gatlin, *The Story of Unity’s Fifty Golden Years* (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1939), x-xiii, as quoted in Vahle, 34.
9 Freeman, 54.
10 Zebley, 7.
Began to work with his ears. He would give his undivided attention to God, and open his mind and hold it receptive to the ideas which he felt God had for him. He would declare that he was hearing mentally, through his ears. He would think of the abundant life which was flowing up from his life center and heart, through the glands of his neck, and into his ears. He would mentally see this life stream stimulating the nerves and cells there, and setting them into action. And one day, there was a great throbbing, and rush of wax thrown out of his ear. And his hearing has been perfect ever since.  

He focused on improving the failing vision in his right eye in a similar manner, and realized equally good results.  

James Teener, a divinity student at the University of Chicago working on a Ph.D. dissertation about Unity (and not a Unity follower) interviewed Charles Fillmore in 1938; he observed “Today, Mr. Fillmore is a quite interesting, humorous, white-haired man, some eighty-four years young. His right leg is much shorter than his left. He wears a higher heel on his right shoe and walks with a decided hitch.” This brings up a significant point – like many such reported miracles in the world’s religions, it is difficult to verify the degree of healing. There are no medical records or other documentation of the exact state of his leg when young, or during the healing process. All his friends and family agree, though, that after the healing process he experienced a cessation of pain, and was able to walk much more comfortably and stop use of a brace or cane. His leg seemed to become longer and stronger, though it may just have been improvement in the hip socket. Regardless of the precise degree of healing, it was obviously of a magnitude sufficient to dramatically improve his quality of life.

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12 M. Fillmore letter to Mary Eaglehoff, 9 November 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 60. All Myrtle Fillmore letters quoted are located in the Myrtle Fillmore Collection, Unity Archives.
13 Zebley, 7.
14 James W. Teener, “Unity School of Christianity” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1939), 205.
Myrtle and Charles Fillmore’s success at healing or improving themselves solely through mental and spiritual effort motivated them to delve deeper for the true causes. The Fillmores applied a very logical and rational method to their search for explanations. The lack of formal religious upbringing quite probably widened the sources available to the adult Charles, as well as limiting any partiality to a particular religious denomination. This enabled him to more fully and objectively investigate different religious and philosophical ideas. He had no strong preconceived notions, or ingrained habits from childhood to overcome and see beyond. He was obviously a mature and confident young man: he was already supporting his effectively single mother, and had fallen for and married an intelligent, educated,\(^{15}\) accomplished and unusually independent older woman.\(^{16}\)

Given the success of Myrtle Fillmore’s healing practice, Charles Fillmore undertook an intense search for an acceptable theology that could explain it all. In developing his beliefs and theological foundation of Unity, he studied a number of different religious and spiritual schools of thought - Christian Science, Transcendentalism, Hinduism and Buddhism, Theosophy, and Judaism – in an effort to determine the true principles behind healing and religion in general.\(^{17}\) He first attempted to reach a synthesis intellectually, but after considerable effort, with a comment that would eventually become famous within Unity, finally decided “In this babble I will go to headquarters. If I am spirit and this God they talk so much about is Spirit we can somehow communicate, or the whole

\(^{15}\) She had taken the one year Literary Course for Ladies at highly regarded Oberlin College, the most it offered for women at the time.

\(^{16}\) Vahle, 34.

\(^{17}\) Unity, February 1894, 6-7.
thing is a fraud." Fillmore then started having vivid dreams, and these finally convinced him that Spirit was attempting to communicate with him to give him guidance. After a period of deep thought and regular meditation as well as extensive study with various teachers, Charles Fillmore, in concert with his wife Myrtle, developed the core beliefs that would define the religious movement they subsequently founded in 1889 and guided for the rest of their lives, which they called simply Unity.

Unity must be understood in light of what it does not believe, as well as what it does believe. Unlike the mainstream Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations, it does not regard the Bible as literal history, but rather believes that “The Bible is an allegory,” and justifies that with the observation that mainstream Christianity also regarded it as such until a few centuries prior, and that many Hebrew scholars still held the same opinion.

One of the biggest differences between the Fillmores and most other founders of religious movements was their conviction that students of their teachings should go through the same intensely personal method that they themselves used to develop their beliefs. “The first step is to grant all people entire freedom to follow their own understanding no matter how wrong they may appear to us. If they will listen we may express our ideas, but further than that we should not go.” Thus, the Fillmores did not demand that followers accept their teachings literally on faith, but rather that they think

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Zebley, 7.
23 Freeman, 185.
about and meditate on their teachings to reach their own agreement with them. This, as one might expect, developed some very committed followers who did not need a charismatic leader to sustain their faith, but were firm in their own hard won beliefs. By emphasizing the message and not the messenger, though, Unity became less exciting and immediately appealing, so its membership did not grow as rapidly as might have been possible with a more conventional charismatic “revivalist” style of leader.

Because of its emphasis on personal individual understanding and acceptance of Unity’s message rather than insistence on detailed dogma, a consistent and detailed Unity doctrine is difficult to pinpoint. However, some fundamental principles of Unity exist. The first is the nature of God.

The nature of God is the paramount foundation of Unity teachings, and was addressed by Fillmore to some degree in nearly all of his writings. While significant differences exist between Unity’s conception of God and more traditional Christian denominations, one similarity is a belief in the transcendent nature of God. This transcendent aspect of God was very important. Fillmore believed in a God that was limitless and without bounds, and therefore with unimaginably immense power. The most appropriate designation for such a transcendent God, he believed, was the phrase “I AM THAT I AM.” This best described God in Fillmore’s mind because it acknowledged that God could not be named as a mortal man, or even adequately described. Since God was infinitely powerful beyond our understanding, to even attempt to name him would have the effect of limiting his power. I AM THAT I AM refers directly to the purpose of his

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24 Vahle, 39.
25 Unity, 1 April 1898, 260.
own existence, and at once establishes his overarching primacy in everything.\textsuperscript{26} This fundamental Unity view of God has not changed over the years. The \textit{Metaphysical Bible Dictionary}, a compilation of biblical terms and Unity's allegorical definitions of them, has the following listing under "Name, God's":

To describe God is to give Him limitation, hence He could not be given a fairer designation than "I AM THAT I AM." This is without confines or bounds and it allows unlimited expansion in every direction.\textsuperscript{27}

H. Emilie Cady, a metaphysical writer whose \textit{Lessons in Truth} was commissioned by Unity for use as a textbook in their foundation course, elaborated on this aspect of God's nature: "God, the source of our existence every moment, is not simply omnipotent (all-powerful), He is omnipotence (all power). He is not only omniscient (all-knowing); He is omniscience (all knowledge); He is not only omnipresent, but more omnipresence."\textsuperscript{28} While the Fillmores' undoubtedly agreed fully with Cady's description, it appears to go a step further than they did, or just possibly explicated his views more clearly. By using God's characteristics as nouns, she elevates his power and presence. From a \textit{being} who is all-powerful, which does not preclude other, similar (or different) beings equally all-powerful from existing, in one innocuous seeming step he \textit{is} omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, the \textit{sole} power and presence in the universe. Indeed, Cady's description of God led directly to Unity's Statement of Faith, used regularly in most church services as a foundation of its teaching:

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Metaphysical Bible Dictionary}. (Unity Village, MO: Orren Evans Ministries, Inc./Unity Computer Publications, CDROM database), s.v. "Name, God's."
There is One Presence and One Power in the Universe and in my life, God the Good, Omnipotent.\(^{29}\)

While this statement seems to serve a similar role in Unity as does the Nicene Creed within more traditional Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, it actually highlights the distinctive features of Unity. The Nicene Creed originated as a declaration of official Christian beliefs put together in 325 C.E. by a number of leading Christian clergymen in order to combat Arianism, and it became the standardized theology of Christianity, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox.\(^{30}\) It very specifically stated all the fundamentals of Christian beliefs, in order to clarify orthodoxy and make identification of heresy easier. Unity’s Statement of Faith, on the other hand, grew out of the most popular and powerful affirmation in use among Unity followers. It does not attempt to represent all Unity’s beliefs, (though it admirably captures the top three) nor is it expansive enough to help identify any “heresy.” In fact, heresy does not, and cannot, exist within Unity, since it requires every follower to come to their own understanding of Truth. This freedom leads Unity ministers to regularly modify even the Statement of Faith itself to reflect their own beliefs – one minister uses the word “omnipotence” instead of “omnipotent”, to more accurately reflect God’s character\(^{31}\) - something unheard of for the Nicene Creed, which


\(^{31}\) Eileen Goor, New World Unity Church, Springfield, VA.
has not been substantially changed since the insertion of the Filioque clause in 589 C.E. which helped permanently divide the Greek Orthodox church from the Roman Catholic.\(^{32}\)

The clause "in my life" from Unity's Statement of Faith introduces the cornerstone of Unity's teaching - beyond the transcendence of God, Fillmore and Unity believed that God was actively present within everyone. While traditional Christianity prayed to an anthropomorphic supreme being existing separately from humankind, seated on his throne in Heaven, he felt the search for God should focus on the inner self of every human being. "Theology", he wrote, referring to mainstream Christianity, "has wandered away from the very present sentient and vitally active spirit permeating all things, man not excepted."\(^{33}\) Myrtle Fillmore focused almost exclusively on the "indwelling God", the Spirit that existed within each of us, as the part most important to healing. "Each one of us is inseparably one with God," she noted, "the source and Substance (sic) of life and wisdom and every good." She believed that God was present in every cell, every atom and particle of each person's body, as well as every thought and feeling, and therefore their innermost self.\(^{34}\)

One of Unity's biggest differences with traditional Christianity is its conception of God as primarily "principle," operating in spirit form impersonally everywhere in the universe through unbreakable divine law, particularly within each person. Cady almost always wrote about God as principle rather than as person. As she explains it, "God is the name we give to that unchangeable, inexorable principle at the source of all existence


\(^{33}\) *Unity*, March 1895, 531.

\(^{34}\) M. Fillmore letter to Marion Crichton, 16 March 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 10.
... God as Life, Wisdom, Love, Substance fills every place and space of the Universe, or else He is not omnipresent."\textsuperscript{35} To the individual consciousness god takes on personality, but as the creative underlying cause of all things He is Principle, impersonal, as expressed in each individual."\textsuperscript{36} Myrtle Fillmore expressed it in simplest form "God is not a person," she declared, "God is Spirit."\textsuperscript{37}

This view of God has remained the foundation of Unity teaching throughout its history. The following was published in 2004 by the current minister of the first Unity church in Kansas City founded by the Fillmores in 1889;

God is First Cause, the invisible Creative Principle out of which all things come. As Principle, God is the fundamental Truth back of all creation; Principle is the Truth behind everything in the universe whether visible in the material world or not. 'The fundamental basis and starting point of practical Christianity is that God is Principle. By Principle is meant definite, exact, and unchangeable rules of action.'\textsuperscript{38}

Beyond the conventional view of principle as a consistent law of operation, God as principle requires more characterization in order to make him acceptable to the average person. Primarily, the characteristic most attributable to God in Unity's eyes is love. Charles Fillmore explained that "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."\textsuperscript{39} He quoted Jesus on love: "I say unto you, Love (sic) your enemies, and pray for them that

\textsuperscript{35} Cady, \textit{Lessons in Truth}, 22.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{37} Myrtle Fillmore letter to Gertrude DeFrates, 11 February 1931, as quoted in Vahle, 11.
\textsuperscript{39} C. Fillmore, \textit{Christian Healing}, 139.
persecute you.”⁴⁰ Since loving your enemies requires being “established in the consciousness of divine love (law)” which in turn is founded in the eternal unity of all things, ‘love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.”⁴¹ He later summarized, “God is wisdom, God is light, and God is love. . . Thus ‘God is all, and there is none beside Him.”⁴² Myrtle Fillmore also consistently referred to God (one of the several existing aspects of God) as Principle though with identifiable characteristics, operating impersonally throughout the universe through the laws of cause and effect, mind action, as well as physical laws of science. She declared, “God is Law and Principle, as well as Life and Love. God is all in all, and the Source of our every good.”⁴³

Cady confirmed that “God is love and love is God.”⁴⁴ Again, Cady goes a step further with her explanation; by asserting that love is God, she claims all power through this emotion for God, and by inference reminds of his simultaneous presence everywhere. This also has the effect of distinguishing Unity more from mainstream Christianity, which operates from the dictum of “Love your God with all your heart, and love each other as you would God.” It also reinforces Unity’s fundamental belief (and source of name) in the combined unity of people and other life everywhere in the Spirit of God. This idea of God as love, and the unity of everyone within the Spirit of God, seems to make intuitive sense, and therefore tends to attract those who seek some explanation for God and will not accept Him on blind faith.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 135.
⁴¹ Ibid.
⁴² C. Fillmore, Unity, December 1933.
⁴³ M. Fillmore letter to Bee Phillips, 28 July 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 10.
⁴⁴ Cady, Lessons in Truth, 100.
Lowell Fillmore, Charles and Myrtle’s eldest son who served as editor and chief writer of *Unity* and *Weekly Unity* (the latter for over fifty years) and head of Unity School for twenty-nine years after his father’s retirement, also steadfastly proclaimed that God is love. In order to distinguish God’s composition as something most easily understood by humans such as an emotion, versus the idea that “God is moved *by* [emphasis mine] emotions similar to human emotions” (particularly the jealousy and vengeance of the Old Testament God), Lowell flatly declared “This is contrary to the nature of God, for God is love.”

If God is love, then what is humanity and where did we come from? How were we created? Unity’s conception of the origin of humanity and the universe consistently adheres to its guiding principles of rationality, logic, and intuition. These lead it to reject the Creationist viewpoint, that God literally created the Universe along with Adam and Eve in six days at some determinate point in history, because it does not match archeological and geological records. Agnosticism, however, also fails to fully meet the twin standards of logic and intuition. Humanity is such a highly developed and complex species, with its enormous amount of control over its environment, its ability to find and use powerful sources of energy, and its collective learning and communications, that it is clearly unique in the history of the earth, and as far as we know in the entire universe. Thus logic and intuition balk at accepting the fact that a randomly occurring Big Bang, followed by simple solar and planetary bodies drifting and colliding in space, eventually created the conditions necessary for life, along with the guiding theories of gravitation,

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evolution, and other ruling scientific principles that resulted in today's world. Human
intuition, based on our collective experience so far, says that everything complex is built
by someone or something. To think that we are here solely as the result of a completely
random physical process robs us of any sense of purpose.

Therefore, rationality, (though not necessarily Aristotelian level logic) would
demand, and human intuition would support, that we as a species have some special
origin, something that gave us an advantage over other animals. Charles Fillmore, using
that same logic combined with his own intuition, studied a variety of theories and ideas
and came up with what he was convinced was Truth. Since it is the human mind that
most differentiates us from other species, the Mind must be “The one and only creative
power, and all attempts to account for creation from any other standpoint are futile.”
He explained further in a separate passage:

The Reality back of all creation may be traced to an underlying plan
of creation. To have a plan, to function in an orderly manner,
implies intelligence at work. God is that intelligence; intelligence is
the product of Mind. There is only One Mind at work in the
universe, God the Universal Principle. God, as mind, is invisible;
for whoever saw an idea except through the created, manifest
product of that idea. Though invisible, Mind permeates all of
creation in an independent type of existence which we may call
Spirit.

Since God is really Mind, existing throughout the universe as Universal Principle
and within every physical thing as Spirit, then the Bible’s statement that man is “Made in
the image and likeness of God” leads to a different interpretation from the literal. Indeed,

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46 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 62.
47 C. Fillmore, as quoted in Neteler.
one of the foundations of Unity’s theology is its acceptance of all the Bible’s major tenets, but with “metaphysical” (allegorical) interpretations. Believing that man is made in the image and likeness of God is an emotional support for many people. Whether it is race, religion, ethnic nationality, or, most commonly, common geographic origins, the vast majority of people instinctively feel more comfortable with others who are similar to them. Thus, knowing that God is “one of us”, or we are similar to Him, (or Her), helps us relate better to God and to accept him more. Therefore, in order to retain the benefits of our resemblance to a god, while simultaneously adhering to view of God as Spirit, Unity requires the allegorical interpretation of the Bible. As a result Unity does not regard humanity’s physical appearance as incorporating the image and likeness of God, but rather a very different part of man’s makeup. Fillmore explained that “God created man in His ‘image’ and ‘likeness.’ God being Spirit, the man that He creates is spiritual.” He later elaborated his theory of the Trinity - that “The Mind of God is Spirit, soul, and body; that is, mind, idea, expression. The mind of man is Spirit, soul, body-not separate from God-Mind, but existing in it and making it manifest in an identity peculiar to the individual.” Thus, the physical world, and our material bodies, are expressions of the ideas of Spirit existing as our souls.

Myrtle Fillmore also described the common nature of God and humankind as resulting from God’s creating humans in his “image and likeness.” Consequently, children were born into the world with a divine heritage, possessing in potential all the attributes of

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49 Ibid., 26.
50 Ibid., 21.
God. Unity does not accept Christianity's teaching that men and women are born contaminated with Original Sin or that humans are by nature sinful and require redemption and God's grace to earn a place in heaven.

Unity teaches that since God was perfect, his ideas, which our bodies are the physical expression of, are also perfect. "Divine Nature and Human Nature have the same characteristics, for humankind is made in the image and likeness of God," Charles Fillmore explains, but this perfection exists in potential only. In order to achieve in actuality the perfect health we inherit in potential, "We must . . . mentally concentrate on this perfect body and focus all our powers on it . . . and a transformation will begin that will finally raise the physical to divine stature." Men and women possess free will, which is often used in destructive ways that prevent us from realizing our full potential and as a result, fail to manifest the indwelling Presence." This is the basis of Unity's teachings on healing – that because our bodies are designed to be, and potentially can be, perfect, our minds utilizing Spirit can help them realize their potential for perfect health and heal illnesses. Free will is a powerful gift – like any powerful tool, it can be used for great good, or great evil, depending entirely on the user. Humanity's purpose in life, Unity teaches, is to learn to harness this free will for positive purposes, to, as Myrtle Fillmore put it, "Realize the divine possibilities inherent in human nature, to actualize fully human potential; in short, to manifest divinity."

51 M. Fillmore, letter to Telleta Clutton, 15 March 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 11.
52 Charles Fillmore, Jesus Christ Heals (Unity Village, MO: Orren Evans Ministries, Inc./Unity Computer Publications, CDROM database), 52.
53 M. Fillmore letter to Mr. Weir, 26 March 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 12.
54 M. Fillmore letter to Ella Randolph, 29 March 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 11.
This allegorical interpretation of Biblical scripture at once seems more rational and scientific compared to the literal interpretation offered by traditional Christianity. It offers no significant opposition to twentieth century biology, including evolutionary theory, or contemporary science in general. It also seems more intuitive, and as discussed previously has been promoted by most Christian churches for many centuries before the present emphasis on literal interpretation arose.\textsuperscript{55} The intuition offers a compromise between the literal interpretation, which solely demands unwavering faith, and the opposite approach as represented by a scientific or academic process which would demand independent and rigorous experimental or historical evidence as a starting point in order to support biblical accounts.

Jesus Christ plays a central role in Unity as a Christian movement. However, like everything else in traditional Christianity, it interprets his role differently, and holds to an allegorical view of his accomplishments. Charles Fillmore did not believe that Jesus arrived as literally a god on earth, and criticized mainstream Christianity for asserting so. He believed, rather, that Jesus was born and grew up a man whose primary importance was as an example.\textsuperscript{56} But the example that he set is the very basis of Unity’s teachings.

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\textsuperscript{55} Walker, 90-91, as quoted in Gaither, 18.
\textsuperscript{56} Charles Fillmore, \textit{Atom Smashing Power of Mind} (Unity Village, MO: Unity School of Christianity, 1949), 168.
consciousness by Jesus made Him God incarnate, because Christ is the mind of God individualized, and whoever so loses his personality as to be swallowed up in God becomes Christ Jesus, or God man.\footnote{Charles Fillmore, \textit{Talks on Truth} (Unity Village, MO: Orren Evans Ministries, Inc./Unity Computer Publications, CDROM database), 169.}

Myrtle Fillmore described him (and Unity continues to use the phrase) as a "Way shower," because he became the only person in history to achieve "the complete union of mind, soul and body in Spirit." He both taught and demonstrated truth and provided an example for humankind by manifesting his God-like powers.\footnote{Myrtle Fillmore, letter to Ida Peters, 8 March 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 132.} Unity does not believe, as traditional Christianity does, that Jesus was sent by God to save humankind from sin by dying on the cross, nor that we can be saved from suffering for our acts by simply believing in Him and accepting Him, in a perfunctory way, as our Saviour. Rather, as Charles Fillmore put it, "He said 'Come, follow me. Keep my sayings.' He meant: do as I do. I have overcome; now by following in my footsteps you shall overcome."\footnote{C. Fillmore in Gaither, 154.}

The single most important thing Jesus did as the Way shower was to teach us, by his words and examples, how to achieve the full God consciousness\footnote{Also referred to as the Christ Consciousness, or Christ Mind.} in ourselves that he did. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments as a simplified understanding of some of his laws, what they were able to handle at the time, in order to bring discipline to the Children of Israel. "They were like children. They had to have discipline." But Jesus challenged us with a higher understanding of God's law; "It is written in your law, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'; but I say unto you that you must love another."\footnote{C. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, September 1913.}
This demonstrated Jesus’ approach, and his boldness in directly challenging the traditionally existing doctrine of vengeance, as well as abandoning the specific Commandments for more general guidelines, orders of magnitude more difficult as they were to ensure uniform interpretation and compliance. Jesus claimed that all His knowledge and power used to achieve this, along with everything else he did, came directly from the Father: “I can of myself do nothing.” “The Father abiding in me doeth his works.”

The second most important thing Jesus did was to demonstrate his full achievement of the consciousness of God, not by dying on the cross, but by his continual life through the Crucifixion. Fillmore taught that rather than die and then rise from the dead, Jesus’ crucifixion resulted in “The surrender or death of the whole personality in order that the Christ Mind may be expressed in all its fullness.” (emphasis mine) Cady agreed, explaining that “Because he went down and came up again a glorified man, He brought life and immortality to light . . . and thus to prove to us that all life is One.” In other words, he achieved a Hindu style union with God consciousness, in what Fillmore described as the Fourth Dimension, and by being the first human to do it, he literally created a path for the rest of humanity to follow, as well as offering his own personal example.

The primary goal of human life is to reach the consciousness level that Jesus ultimately obtained at the Crucifixion: to fully express, or join with, the Christ within,
also known as the indwelling Presence. Jesus achieved this transformation himself through developing and living fully what Charles Fillmore later came to call the Twelve Faculties of the Mind, or Twelve Powers. In keeping with the allegorical nature of Unity’s Scriptural interpretation, he located each of these twelve powers in a separate part of the human body, as well as identified each of the twelve powers with a different Disciple of Jesus.

Heavenly rewards awaited those who successfully developed their twelve powers. "Unspeakable joy, glory, and eternal life are promised to those who with unselfish devotion strive to develop the Son of God consciousness." In other words, the very practical rewards of health, happiness, and prosperity could be achieved by strengthening these powers, and one would also develop the ability, as the Bible records Jesus did, and as the Fillmores apparently did, to perform mental and physical healing upon others.

Most importantly, in order to attain physical eternal life, or enter the fourth dimension with God, one must fully develop his or her twelve powers. When one died without having fully developed one’s powers (like everyone throughout history except for Jesus) then the soul temporarily entered an afterlife of peace and tranquility, where it prepared itself for reincarnation into a new physical body. The soul retained the development of the twelve powers cumulatively attained through each incarnation, thus everyone has the opportunity to achieve full development. Jesus himself did not achieve it all in one short

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66 C. Fillmore, Unity, July 1929, 1.
67 C. Fillmore, The Twelve Powers, 16.
68 Ibid., 6.
thirty-three year lifespan, according to the Fillmores, but was born with a soul that had
done most of the work through many previous incarnations.70

The twelve powers are: spiritual understanding, judgment, faith, divine love,
imagination, will, zeal, power, strength, elimination, order and life. The powers are
activated through spiritual practice. The practices include “right thinking,” which
involves disciplining the mind, affirmations and denials, prayer and meditation or sitting
in the silence. These spiritual practices work due to a single underlying principle, called
the Law of Mind Action.

This principle of Unity is a cornerstone of its spiritual healing ministry. The Law of
Mind Action holds that every condition in the world results from thoughts held in our
individual minds. “All things have their cause, and every cause is mental.”71 “Every
action we perceive in the world, every condition we see is the effect, the product, of a
cause or mental action that has attracted the condition or the action.”72 Charles Fillmore
explained it as “Every thought is carving out of the universal ether some thought form,
and that thought form is your creation, a living thing that becomes part of your substance,
and your environment in due season.”73 The action of the law is impersonal; whatever
we sow we reap. A contemporary example of this is the golfer who focuses solely on
getting his shot over the water hazard – no matter how hard he or she tries, he is probably
going to hit his ball straight into the water, because of the fixation on the water in their
mind. On the other hand, the golfer who must hit over the same water hazard but ignores

71 C. Fillmore, Jesus Christ Heals, 136.
73 C. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 27 November 1912.
it and focuses solely on the green and the cup, may or may not hit the green and the cup just right, but will most likely clear the water effortlessly, because it is not in his or her thought pattern. The significance of the Law of Mind Action is that “we form our own world out of the thoughts we choose to hold in mind. We are responsible for the conditions on the planet Earth.” No one else can make us feel bad, we only choose to let ourselves feel bad. It is essentially an extension of the optimist who sees the glass as half full while the pessimist sees the glass as half empty. Full application of the Law of Mind Action involves one “seeing” (affirming in their mind and imagination) the glass as completely full, which exercises positive energy that will result in the glass either literally filling from some unknown source, or the actual contents of it proving fully adequate to the need. Focusing on its being half empty expresses negative thoughts, the idea of lack, which will cause it to either lose more and more liquid until it is literally empty, or prove inadequate to quench one’s thirst.

The most famous demonstrations of the Law of Mind Action were accomplished by Jesus himself. Fillmore explained in one address, in reference to the many miracles that the New Testament credits Jesus with, that “The word ‘miracle; and the meaning attached to it are not found in the original text (of the Bible.) Jesus did ‘signs’ and ‘mighty works,’ but there is no claim in the Scriptures that He did anything outside law.” In other words, Jesus used the same Law that exists today, that we can all potentially use also. He

pointed out the common sense idea that “Mighty works are being done by modern science that in past ages would have been classed as miracles.”

The best known examples of “miracles” (healing) done within Unity, of course, are Charles and Myrtle Fillmore themselves. Though their full theology ended up differing substantially in some aspects from Christian Science, the Law of Mind Action and the basic principles underlying it proved similar enough to be remarkably effective. This method used by Charles and described so thoroughly by Mrs. Fillmore is the primary method taught by Unity for healing and for invoking the Law of Mind Action—the affirmation, which is one form of prayer.

Unity teaches that prayer consists of three components: positive statements, called affirmations; thanksgiving; and listening. Once the idea that, “Whatever thought you send out will come back to you. This is an unchangeable law of thought action,” is accepted, the first step, obviously, is to change our thought patterns. “Prayer”, Myrtle wrote, is simply an exercise to change our thought habits, and our living habits. H. Emilie Cady also teaches that one of the principal ways to discipline the mind so that it functions effectively is through affirmations. “The saying over and over of any denial or affirmation is necessary training of the mind that has lived so long in error and false belief that it needs this constant repetition of Truth.” She believed that affirmations worked best when they directly contradicted the existing conditions. If you were sick, you affirmed that you were healthy; if financially strapped, you affirmed you had plenty.

75 C. Fillmore, address to the World Fellowship of Faiths, Chicago, IL, reprinted in Unity, December 1933.
76 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 122.
77 M. Fillmore, letter to Mary Kohout, 9 June 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 25.
78 Cady, Lessons in Truth, 40.
She further explained: "To affirm anything is to assert positively that it is so, even in the face of all contrary evidence." Prayer as affirmations could either be done silently or out loud, but either way, has to utilize exactly the right arrangement of words in order to train and habituate the mind into thinking proper thoughts. This word arrangement must utilize the Law of Mind Action, (which in turn derives from Spirit as principle) by thinking positive thoughts. One of Lowell Fillmore’s recommended affirmations was “There is but one presence and one power here,” for use when one faces a problem beyond their ability to handle.80

Regarding the thanksgiving part of prayer, Charles Fillmore declared “Instead of a supplication, prayer should be a jubilant thanksgiving.”81 This kind of prayer is very important as well, because the thanksgiving reminds us of the blessings we already have, moves our attention from any lack or issues we might have, and therefore makes it easier to develop and fully believe positive affirmations.

The third kind of prayer is the “Quiet, attentive, receptive coming (into one’s mind) of the divine Father-Mother for example and counsel and light and assurance.”82 This is equally as important as the other two kinds of prayer. Indeed, this is the primary way to communicate with Spirit, as Charles Fillmore states that “When we pray in spiritual understanding, this highest realm of man’s mind contacts universal, impersonal Mind; the very mind of God is joined to the mind of man.”83 The purpose of this joining, of course,

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79 Ibid., 50.
80 L. Fillmore, Metaphysical Gadgets, reprinted in Restoration News, Unity Church Universal, Kansas City, Fall 2003.
81 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 76.
82 M. Fillmore, letter to Ben and Ellen, 28 September 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 25.
83 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 76.
is to *hear* God’s voice and suggestions within you. He observed that “All manifestations of life originate in the silence. . . Then why look to the (outside) eternal for that which comes only from the silence within?”

Due to the fundamental role that prayer played, and requisite frequency of it to be effective, a full fledged method of meditation was felt necessary to achieve this level of prayer. After studying different meditative techniques, the Fillmores chose Eastern over Western, commenting that they used basically the same word, Aum or Om, for God’s name - which sounded remarkably like “I AM.” They did not, however, mandate any specific physical positioning for this meditation.

The meditation that both the Fillmores (as well as Cady and all of their Unity students) engaged in yielded outstanding results. Charles regarded information obtained through meditation as pure Truth, originating directly from Spirit, and termed it “intuition.” “Truth,” he reported, “is not the formulated doctrine of any church, nor the creed of any sect” but rather “Truth is written in the inner sanctuary of every soul, and all know it without external formulas. It is the intuitive perception of what is right in the sight of God and men.”

This emphasis on obtaining Truth through one’s own meditation, directly from Spirit, is one of the most unique aspects of Unity; Aristotle might have described it thus: “In one sense it is a great strength, and in another a weakness.” By encouraging every student of Unity to attain their own Truth through meditation and intuition, students often developed

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84 Editor, “The Silence of God”, *Unity*, June 1891, as quoted in Vahle, 37.
85 Vahle, 38.
a much stronger sense of conviction of their beliefs than they might if fed only a fully
developed and inflexible doctrine, and with a firmly established sense of ownership they
became that much stronger of a convert and advocate for Unity. This undoubtedly
contributed to Unity’s survival and steady growth throughout the twentieth century, a
period when probably thousands of other religious movements started, and finished,
limited to one or two charismatic leaders who were unable to develop either a doctrinally
sound or a permanently stable organizational foundation to survive. It also enabled Unity
to prosper throughout a period of dramatic changes in American religion; Vatican II,
rapprochement of the traditional Protestant denominations; and the rise of more active
fundamentalist Christian groups.

Its main weakness is that there existed no standardized detailed theology which all
could agree on, thus limiting many of its adherents’ ability to describe it fully, which in
turn limited the total publicity the movement could generate. With the existing large
quantity of subscribers to Unity’s publications, (a far higher number than active
practitioners) a more standardized teaching would probably attract more interest and
followers.

Another advantage of the doctrinal latitude Unity granted is that it allowed for a
– Its Evolution and Spiritual Teachings*, declares that two separate schools of Unity
thought have emerged – the Charles and Myrtle Fillmore version which this chapter has
already described in detail, and an Emilie Cady and Lowell Fillmore version, almost
identical in most ways but with a few significant differences, that has become much more
widespread in Unity than the original. Those differences include the latter’s lack of emphasis on the twelve powers and the lack of belief or desirability in the goals of physical immortality and reincarnation, which required, among other things, sexual abstinence. Vahle attributes the development of the two strands and greater popularity of the latter to the complexity and obscurity of the twelve-powers doctrine and the impenetrability of much of Charles Fillmore’s writing. Lowell Fillmore, as editor and primary writer of the most widely read Unity publication Weekly Unity for over fifty years, had more influence as a much easier to understand author with a wider readership. Cady’s book Lessons in Truth is the single best selling Unity publication since its inception and is still used as the introductory text in Unity classes today, and her teachings also mesh more closely with Lowell than Charles Fillmore. Regarding the latter’s ideas on the indefinite extension of life in our physical bodies through regeneration, she flatly declared “the possibility of living here in these bodies indefinitely seems altogether foolish and short-sighted.” The real benefit, however, is that these divergences seem to have developed without any major conflict within the movement, which is a rare accomplishment for religion.

As a religious movement, however, (though the Fillmores consistently denied that it was a distinct denomination or religious sect, which is debatable) that consistently encouraged personal meditation and individual acceptance or rejection of every aspect of their teaching, I believe it is inaccurate to characterize it as containing two separate teachings. First, Lowell Fillmore and Cady did not agree with each other on everything

87 Vahle, 3.
88 Cady, God a Present Help, 114-15.
regarding immortality, and Myrtle Fillmore did not go as far as her husband in his call for complete sexual abstinence as part of the twelve powers, therefore the two versions were not even uniform within themselves; and second, it has always been the nature of the Unity movement that Unity teachers and ministers merely emphasize whichever aspects they believed in and felt were most important over others, so the most unpopular ideas were simply deemphasized by many.

Thus, through its founders' development of its principles out of sheer necessity when confronted with the physical evidence of healing taking place, and through its unique doctrinal latitude granted to everyone that allows ample accommodation and easy transitions for people of religious backgrounds, the Unity movement is the very epitome of logic and rationality, and stands as an ideal example and bridge to other religious adherents as well as to the agnostics and undefined spiritualists of today's United States.
Chapter 1, Part 2

Aristotle on Theology, Science, and Life

We can illuminate Unity’s practices and beliefs best by comparing them with those of a non-religious philosophical system. Aristotle’s views on cosmology, the nature of being, and the definition of matter originate from a fundamentally different world than nineteenth and twentieth century America. Living and writing during the fourth century B.C.E in the cultural and intellectual center of the classical Mediterranean world, Aristotle approached his subjects from the basis of an observer, philosopher, and scientist – what he himself labeled “the theoretical sciences.”

Unlike the Baconian tradition of today, and also unlike Unity which seeks physical and mental healing, improved living, and a specific goal in life and death, he did not pursue knowledge for its productive potential. Rather, he fulfilled in himself that powerful dictum with which he began his *Metaphysics*: “All men by nature desire to know.”

Aristotle’s method also differed markedly from Charles Fillmore. Aristotle *literally* wrote the book on logic – as a scientist, his work in logical and critical thinking and emphasis on empiricism laid the foundation for the modern scientific method. Therefore, the way that a secular, scientific thinker approached a subject such as theology where the potential contributions of

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2 Barnes, 3.
3 *Metaphysics* 1.980a21. (References to this work include the book and the Bekker page/line number.)
4 The *Organon*.
experimentation and empiricism are so limited, is a useful way to illuminate the uniqueness of Unity.

Aristotle is believed to have started his inquiry into the nature of being, and first causes, very early in his career. One difficulty encountered when studying his work, however, is that surviving\(^5\) writings do not form a consistent and coherent finalized picture of Aristotle’s beliefs. Contemporary scholars believe, rather, that what exists today originated from different stages in his professional career, reflecting various, sometimes contradictory beliefs developed throughout his evolution as a philosopher/scientist.\(^6\) Later editors are thought to have combined his surviving works thematically, rather than chronologically. Thus we have an inquiry into theology and the nature of being, which scholars believe Aristotle wrote fairly early in life, (probably during his time as a student at Plato’s Academy) now labeled as “book twelve” and combined with thirteen other “books” evidently written much later, into one work eventually designated as Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

Using the premise that book twelve represented Aristotle’s thinking much earlier in his career, we will initially examine his beliefs in this book in isolation. “Our inquiry is concerned with substance; for it is the principles and causes of substances that we are investigating,”\(^7\) he clearly states at the beginning of book twelve. First he had to narrow down the search, which involved differentiating between substances and “universals” (i.e. mathematical laws, other principles) and determining which came first. He chose

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\(^5\) Classical scholars estimate that roughly one quarter of his total writings survived. Mainly these seem to be his lecture notes while the head of the Lyceum, and sometimes possibly students’ notes of his lectures or later editors’ summaries. Barnes, 4.

\(^6\) Randall, 27.

\(^7\) *Met* 12.1069a18.
substance: “Indeed if the universe is to be regarded as a whole, substance is its first part; and if it is to be regarded as a succession, even so substance is first.”

He defined substance as something that can exist only in “separation” (isolation) from other things.

In keeping with his normal method, and as Charles Fillmore did over two thousand years later, Aristotle carefully considered the preexisting opinions on the topic, and agreed with them on the primacy of substance over universals.

Then he categorized substances, deciding that there were three main types, the third of which was “eternal and immutable.” This he justified by the ideas that “Substances are the primary reality, and if they are all perishable, everything is perishable. But motion cannot be either generated or destroyed, for it always existed.” Since everything (particularly change, and therefore an object or person’s reaching their full “actuality”) depends on motion, and motion in turn is only an actuality of something moving from its potential, the eternal immutable first principle objects must have motion in order for anything sensible in the universe to have motion, therefore they (the first objects) must be actualized forms of something, not just potential forms.

This actually agreed with Plato’s views on the subject, which is consistent with Aristotle’s presumed status as a student at Plato’s Academy at this time. As is also consistent with Aristotle’s undoubtedly advanced status as a student, he felt confident enough to criticize Plato for

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8 Ibid.
9 Met 12.1071a1.
10 Met 12.10692-10.
11 Met 12.1071b4.
12 Met 12.1071b5-8.
13 Met 12.1071b3-7.
not justifying his conclusion, or attempting to identify a cause or source of this eternal motion.\textsuperscript{14}

In order to have actuality existing before potentiality (necessary since if only potentiality existed, nothing need ever pass into actuality and our sensible world might not exist) and in order to have powers of generation and destruction, and since the eternal motion is circular in nature, Aristotle posits that, "the 'ultimate heaven' must be eternal. And since that which is "moved" (physically given motion by something else) while it moves is intermediate, there is something which moves [other things] without being moved; something eternal which is both substance and actuality.\textsuperscript{15}

This eternal substance, which possesses actuality and constant motion and is able to move other things without itself being moved, gives every living thing life, and therefore is Aristotle's equivalent of a god. So he has described the characteristics and results of this divine substance, but what is (or where in the world or human body is) this substance? His answer to this question is: "The object of desire and the object of thought move without being moved."	extsuperscript{16} Since these objects are generated, not by unthinking or unconscious physical impulses but rather by logical thought (assuming that the rational will overrules initial appetite-related impulses), the ultimate source of movement for everything is the "unmoved" mover of personal thought. This unmoved mover is motivated in turn by "the good", a phrase to which Aristotle ascribes two main aspects: the good for something, and also the good which is the end of some action. Then he

\textsuperscript{14} Met 12.1071b33.
\textsuperscript{15} Met 12.1072a22-24.
\textsuperscript{16} Met 12.1072a26.
attributes a motivation to the unmoved mover – "it causes motion as being an object of love."\textsuperscript{17} He apparently does not place high confidence in this particular conclusion, as he fails to develop it any further, and indeed directly contradicts it later in the same book.

He ascribes thinking in itself as the highest good of people, and also it is its own mover, because "Thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same, because that which is receptive of the object of thought, i.e. essence, is thought."\textsuperscript{18} And, since thought has now been shown to be eternal, unmoved (except by itself) and separable it is in his mind Divine, which can also be translated as God. As the highest good of humans, thought can also be considered life.

Hence Aristotle continues with,

Moreover, life belongs to God. For the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is."\textsuperscript{19}

He also deduces, based on the qualities of magnitude and infinity (the latter of which he maintained could only exist in time and motion, never in magnitude) that the "eternal, immovable, and separable" substance that was God was also "impartible and indivisible."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Met 12.1072b4-6.
\textsuperscript{18} Met 12.1072b20-22.
\textsuperscript{19} Met 12.1072b28-32.
\textsuperscript{20} Met. 12.1073a5.
The next question, of course, concerns the location of this god. "We must also consider in which sense the nature of the universe contains the good or the supreme good; whether as something separate and independent, or as the orderly arrangement of its parts."\textsuperscript{21} I.e. is it a transcendent god, or an immanent God? Aristotle answers this in what seems a more intuitive manner than normal, "both."\textsuperscript{22} Finally, he concludes this stage of his analysis by determining that "The prime mover, which is immovable, is one both in formula and in number; and therefore so also is that which is eternally and continuously in motion. Therefore there is only one heaven."\textsuperscript{23} He does not, however, ascribe anthropomorphic characteristics to this god.\textsuperscript{24}

Later in his career he analyzed these issues in greater depth. The third book of the compilation known today as the Metropolitan asks such fundamental ontological and epistemological issues as "What is being?" and "What is matter? How shall we study it?"\textsuperscript{25} From those questions a short path leads directly to the crux of his primary enquiry in the Metropolitan:

Above all we must consider and apply ourselves to the question... whether there is any other cause \textit{per se} besides matter, and if so whether it is dissociable from matter, and whether it is numerically one or several; and whether there is anything apart from the concrete thing...or nothing; or whether there is in some cases but not in others; and what these cases are."\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{21} Metropolitan 12.1075a12-17.
\textsuperscript{22} Metropolitan 12.1075a12-17.
\textsuperscript{23} Metropolitan 12.1074a38.
\textsuperscript{24} Metropolitan 12.1074b1-12.
\textsuperscript{25} Metropolitan 3.995b4-32.
\textsuperscript{26} Metropolitan 3.995b27.
After a much more thorough analysis of the issue than in book twelve, including a carefully considered rejection of the Platonic Forms, he eventually used the rationale of substance’s exclusive separability, (the same rationale originally used) to reach the same conclusion. “Substance is primary in all senses, both in definition and in knowledge and in time.”

He also raised the issues most relevant to our comparison with a twentieth century religion: “Further, there is the hardest and most perplexing question of all: (x.) whether Unity and Being (as the Pythagoreans and Plato maintained) are not distinct, but are the substance of things; or whether this is not so, and the substrate is something distinct . . . and (xi.) whether the first principles are universal or like individual things.”

Since he had concluded that substance was primary, then the next step was inevitable: “Our chief and primary and practically our only concern is to investigate the nature of "being" in the sense of substance.”

Next, he carefully lays down a full justification for believing in an eternal substance—since everything has to come from something, if nothing is special or eternal, then where did everything start? Aristotle argues very convincingly against the existence of infinity, which would be the only other possible solution to an eternal substance existing first. As he equates eternal with the Divine, this passage indicates his acceptance of an eternal Divinity, a god of some sort.

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28 *Met* 3.996a4-7.  
29 *Met* 7.1028b5.  
30 *Met* 3.999b3-6.
Aristotle’s separate work *On the Soul* seems to illustrate the evolution of his thinking on the same topics. At one point, apparently abandoning his earlier conclusion from book twelve regarding thought as the Prime Mover, he speculates about whether the mind moves people, and if so which part of the mind. In his words, “Further, even when the mind does command and thought bids us pursue or avoid something, sometimes no movement is produced; we act in accordance with desire, as in the case of moral weakness.”\(^{31}\) So, might physical animal appetite be the primary mover? It would seem not, because sometimes people have appetites but resist acting on them. But he ends up concluding in *On the Soul* that appetite actually *is* the main mover, because its object of desire can be either the real (immediate) or the apparent (delayed) good; the apparent good being calculated by the mind and imagination through their ability to predict future consequences.\(^{32}\) Thus here he can be seen evolving away from his more purely theological views towards a more empirical emphasis.

Chapter eight of book twelve demonstrates this trend away from his earlier views. Aristotle reexamines the question of whether there are more than one of these divine substances (a separate one for each body), or just one. When the astronomer Callipus demonstrated that the motions of each heavenly body were independent and had different principles of motion, Aristotle in turn concludes that “Besides the simple spatial motion of the universe (which we hold to be excited by the primary immovable substance) there are other spatial motions--those of the planets--which are eternal,”\(^{33}\) which means that

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\(^{31}\) *On the Soul* 3.9.5. Citations for this work consist of book number, chapter, and paragraph, as no Bekker references were available.

\(^{32}\) *Soul* 3.9.5.

\(^{33}\) *Met* 12.1073a32-35.
each of the planets should have its own separate Prime Mover, or divine substance. In this view, despite the one main Divine substance running the universe (and by extension everything in it, or at least on earth,) the planets and other celestial bodies, due to their own eternal and therefore divine nature, each possesses its own independent unmoved mover. A total of fifty-five separate and distinct unmoved movers now exist, according to the most current astronomical opinions of his time. Based on the references to the work of Callipus and Eudoxus, this section had to have been written near the end of his life, (or inserted posthumously by one of his later editors) in contrast to the rest of the book.

When taken as a whole, Aristotle’s fundamental definition of being in the Metaphysics came down to “Being is activity,” because that activity, or motion, is the only thing that can do anything or make anything take place. That motion consequently becomes its own divinity. “Now since every kind of thing is divided into the potential and the real. . . The complete reality, then, of that which exists potentially, when it is completely real and actual, not qua itself but qua movable, is motion.”

Motion has always existed (the eternal aspects, anyway) but in order to know it we must understand its causes. Not its cause in a physical sense, as it is the original cause, but the reason or goal of the motion. While Aristotle’s revised book twelve of the Metaphysics, within the context of the rest of the work, can now be interpreted as offering the unmoved mover as equivalent to a modern law of motion, a principle of

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34 Randall, 137.
36 Randall, 133.
37 Met XI 1065b21. The Greek word qua is left here by the author as the best word; its simplest translation would be “while being” or “while doing”. Barnes, 42.
motion, it does not offer it as a “cause” in the sense of for what purpose the motion exists. The logical conclusion of his theory is that an essentially infinite number of Prime Movers exist, because each living thing, and every nonliving thing that somehow “moves” or changes or evolves perceptibly, requires its own Mover. In his mature stage, therefore, in contrast to Unity’s Christian based theology, “Aristotle’s is a pluralistic philosophy, not a monotheistic theology.”

Aristotle’s philosophy, in fact, becomes a naturalistic philosophy, ascribing the first principles and highest good to motion and thought, while the unmoved mover belongs more appropriately to physics and astronomy, rather than First Philosophy. This natural philosophy maintains that the sole reason for the existence of the world as a whole, and what makes it understandable and justifies the existence of humanity, is that it exists to make life possible, and ultimately to enable the best life, which Aristotle defines as “thinking of thinking.”

The primary questions that Aristotle dealt with are exactly the same ones that the Fillmores had to answer in order to understand how their healing process worked, and they took a very similar approach to Aristotle’s. Both first examined the existing opinions of recognized experts. Aristotle awarded significant credence to others who had established reputations in a field, as he acknowledged when he commented that “Whereas no one person can obtain an adequate grasp of it [truth], we cannot all fail in the attempt; . . . a combination of all conjectures results in something considerable.” Indeed, the

38 Randall, 71.
39 Randall, 139.
40 Randall, 144.
41 Met 2.993a30-993b5.
entire first book of the *Metaphysics* consists of a thorough and comprehensive analysis of every other thinker’s views on the topic of being. Similarly, the Fillmores studied and ended up synthesizing an enormous range of religious and philosophical belief systems into their theology.

The primary comparison between the two is the similarity in the worldview that Aristotle initially developed with Unity’s worldview. Aristotle’s derived from sheer reasoning, based upon his own and other existing opinions of the time. These included one God as the source of life, both transcendent and immanent within all of us, indivisible, all goodness and love. As Charles Fillmore declared, “The real of the universe is held in the mind of Being as ideas of life, love, substance, intelligence, Truth, and so forth. . . This right relation of ideas and the science of right thought is practical Christianity.”42 The most obvious contrast, of course, is that Aristotle’s god was composed of human thought, while Unity has it the other way around, humanity is created and held in God’s thought as Spirit. If indeed Aristotle developed this view during his youth, as I am assuming, then he was most likely more religiously inclined, more free to explore widely divergent avenues than his later disciplined empirical self, and more in agreement with his mentor Plato’s teachings that ended up forming such a fundamental basis of traditional Christianity. Nevertheless, the close similarity of views between arguably the most powerful and logically rigorous of thinkers in the entire Mediterranean world of the fourth century B.C.E. and a modest nineteenth century

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American high-school educated real estate speculator attest to the fundamental strength and attraction of these ideas to people during periods with sufficiently similar conditions.

What immediately stands out when comparing the evolution of Aristotle’s beliefs and methods throughout his lifetime with the development of the Unity movement during the twentieth century, is the similarity in directions between the two. Unity started as a “Practical School of Christianity”, oriented towards helping Catholics and Protestants alike to better apply the lessons of Jesus Christ in accordance with their traditional denominational teachings. As it developed throughout the twentieth century and refined its beliefs further, and attempted to understand the principles of healing and prayer discovered by the Fillmores, it emphasized certain aspects that differed from Charles and Myrtle Fillmore’s initial teachings and therefore diverged to some degree in its theology. It also developed into an independent Christian denomination. In a similar manner, Aristotle’s thought grew from its initial Platonic starting point, where it tended to complete and supplement Platonic thought, towards a much more empirical natural science focus. Aristotle’s early thought, when he did directly address theology, was very similar to Unity. His later thought did not so much repudiate his earlier beliefs as abandon inquiry into purely theological issues due to lack of observable evidence. As an empiricist, Aristotle struggled with the logical inconsistencies and sheer implausibility of any kind of divine presence that doesn’t follow the same rules as sensible matter. Underlying his method, though, lay his conviction about the positive, orderly nature of his world, which explains both his and essentially all of humanity’s continuous search for
the structure and meaning of the universe – “For how can there be any order in the universe if there is not something eternal and separate and permanent?”43

43 Met 11.1060a23.
Chapter 2

Life, the World, and the Divine are all Connected

Unity

As previously discussed, the Fillmores learned the “law” of the universe, what they later came to call the “Law of Mind Action,” from the Christian Science movement and through their personal experiences of healing themselves and others. It took them much longer to work out the principle that governed that law. To their credit, once they had developed a working theory of this principle and essentially a unique theological framework, instead of keeping it closely guarded so as to control its secrets and power, they immediately sought to share this Truth as they saw it with as wide an audience as possible.

The following address that Charles Fillmore delivered one Sunday morning expresses his thought process and rationale for discovering this principle:

What has been, can be again, in fact now is. If there is a law back of this universe, and the universe is being carried on through the exercise of that law, it is possible for us to come into that law, and to have the force, the power, the consciousness of the operation of that law right now, just as fully as anyone at any time ever had it.

If the Divine Mind that conceived the Law, that declared the Law, was present at any time, it must be present now, and in all of its fullness is right here in our midst. Consequently, we should know not only the Law, but the Principle lying back of the Law, the
Law Giver. You can readily see into what close relations this brings us to the Creator."\(^1\)

Coming into closer relations with the Creator, in turn, would achieve a greater unity among people and God.

Within two years of beginning their healing activities and founding their flagship magazine, originally named *Modern Thought*, by 1891 the Fillmores had gone through two name changes with it. They had initially studied and been ordained in Christian Science, and so they first changed the name of their periodical to *Christian Science Thought*.\(^2\) Within a year, however, disputes with other practitioners of Christian Science, primarily its leading founder, Mary Baker Eddy, led them to drop the "Christian Science" from the title, to become merely *Thought*.\(^3\) After continuing disagreements between various Christian Science practitioners, and the Fillmores' desire to spread their discoveries to all mainstream Christians as well as other New Thought and metaphysical students, the name Unity appeared in Charles Fillmore's mind and they immediately renamed their publication simply *Unity*; simultaneously they renamed their healing practice *The Society of Silent Unity*, and the Unity name has endured ever since as the primary means of collectively identifying the unique movement founded by the Fillmores.\(^4\)

The name was meant to represent the points *in common* of all versions of Christianity, of other major worldwide religions, and of most other philosophical and metaphysical schools. It corresponded with its founders' belief that they were not creating a new

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1 C.Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 3 September 1913.  
2 Freeman, 57.  
3 Ibid., 60.  
4 Ibid.
religion or a distinct new version of Christianity, but were reinforcing practical aspects of existing Christianity applicable to all followers of the various Christian denominations. They also specifically aspired to include all non-Christians with Unity's regular frank acknowledgement of the incorporation of Buddhist, Hindu, and various philosophic and metaphysical concepts within its teachings.\(^5\) In an article entitled "The Pure Reason and Honest Logic of Practical Christianity," Charles Fillmore reiterated his desire that Unity extend beyond Christianity and the United States when he announced "Truth is not the property of any particular race or chosen people, but is given freely to all who open their understanding to that one Divine Mind, from which the only real wisdom, life and love, ever come."\(^6\)

Surprisingly enough, or perhaps not so surprisingly, the name is often seen today more as a description of its primary theological tenet. Marcus Bach, in his short poem "Definition of Unity" ended with the stirring phrase, "To help man find himself again, The self that is one with God."\(^7\) Lowell Fillmore, in his straightforward way, once answered the question "Where is God?" with "He is here in His universe. You will find Him within you. He cannot be separated from His creation because He is one with all His good works. This is true unity."\(^8\) Even the official Unity sponsored Gospel Glossary contains the following entry for the word unity:

\(^5\) Ibid., 61.  
\(^6\) C. Fillmore, "The Pure Reason and Honest Logic of Practical Christianity," reprinted in Gaither, 57.  
\(^7\) Marcus Bach, "Definition of Unity" in pamphlet of unknown origin.  
\(^8\) L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 27 February 1959.
Unity – [the] Universal oneness of God, man, and all creation. . . Man makes conscious unity with God . . . by prayer. God's name is I AM. Our name is I AM. Speaking this name in the silence, recognizing that it is God's name and ours, we establish conscious unity with Him.⁹

The tripartite nature of the preceding definition defines the essence of Unity’s theology in three short sentences. "Universal oneness of God, man, and all creation.” This “oneness” resides in the spiritual world, geographically coexisting with and in our world, rather than a physically separate heaven. In this spiritual world, sometimes called a separate plane of existence or fourth dimension, God, humanity, and everything else are essentially united. "Man makes conscious unity with God . . .” This refers now to the material world, the physical world which we can sense with our bodies, and lays out mankind’s ultimate purpose in life – to consciously achieve a full physical “connection”, (synonymous with unity), with God, to match or mirror the preexisting spiritual connection. " . . .By prayer. . . Speaking this name in the silence. . ." This refers to the method for achieving our purpose. The latter has already been discussed in chapter one, and humanity’s purpose in life is addressed in greater depth in chapter four. This chapter will focus on the “Universal oneness of God, man, and all creation,” and its logical consequences.

As discussed in chapter one, Unity views God as existing everywhere simultaneously, and connected spiritually to all of His creation. Charles Fillmore described him thus;

⁹ C. Fillmore, The Revealing Word, 202, as quoted in Jesus Christ Gospel Glossary.
Our God is not an enlarged man, but he is the One Great Principle of Being. God is Spirit – the direct opposite of matter. God is Supreme Mind- the storehouse of all (emphasis mine) perfect ideas. God is the One Spirit-Mind in whom all ideas of life, love, substance, intelligence, power, originate. Spirit-Mind is the indwelling idea at the center of everything that has real existence.  

If God is this Spirit-mind in whom all powerful ideas originate, and if everything relies on God’s mind for its continued existence, then everything must exist with a continuous connection to each other. This is the fundamental concept of Unity – the idea that everything is connected to that one Spirit. “We must begin by knowing that ‘God is Spirit.’ Charles Fillmore tells us, and “is not located in a big man called God but is everywhere the breath of life and the knowing quality of mind active in and through all bodies, ‘over all, and through all, and in all.’”

In keeping with his insistence that Truth could be verified through logic and common sense, he cited other “great minds” of religious and philosophical fields, (implying primarily Buddhist, Hindu, Transcendentalist and Christian Science thinkers) as reaching identical conclusions regarding the underlying unity of the universe. These corroborating views were important “Because it proves the immanence of the Good and the absence of evil.” He uses biology to derive more evidence to support Unity’s view: “It has been discovered that even rocks and all minerals have life. This is proof of the omnipresence of the one animating substance.” Mathematics, of course, as a universal, often provides a perfect analogy for this everywhere at once Spirit: “God is the principle of being as an
axiom is a principle of mathematics. God is not confined to locality. Is a mathematical principle confined to a particular place and not found elsewhere?"\textsuperscript{14}

The fact that everything exists in the universe with some connection to everything else, through God or Divine Spirit, can be logically inferred from Unity’s conception of this Spirit’s nature.

This Infinite Cause, or Divine Principle, is All-Good, and there is nothing but it in the universe. Hence it must be all Life, Love, Truth, Intelligence. There can of necessity be nothing else in existence but this one Principle, consequently it must be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. It is the \textit{All} of existence (sic) and there can be nothing real outside of it or separate from it or in any way apart from it, in nature or character of any description. It is Spirit, and all of its manifestations must be spiritual. It is Life, and all of its manifestation must express life and nothing but life. It is Love, and all of its manifestations must express love and \textit{only} love. It is Intelligence . . . It is Truth . . . It is Good . . . It is All- fills all; there can be no other, \textit{and there is no other. (sic)}\textsuperscript{15}

Because of statements like this, critics of Unity have charged it with advocating, not a version of Christianity, but rather pantheism, which means either (1) "God is everything and everything is God ... the world is either identical with God or in some way a self-expression of his nature" or, the view that (2) everything that exists constitutes a "unity" and this all-inclusive unity is in some sense divine.\textsuperscript{16} Responding more in the context of the former definition, Emilie Cady maintained that hers (and Unity’s) view of the universe were not pantheistic, which she defined as “The visible universe taken as a whole is God.” She explained:

\textsuperscript{14} C. Fillmore, “Omnipotence of Prayer,” in Gaither, 244.
\textsuperscript{15} C. Fillmore, “Pure Reason”, in Gaither, 60.
God is the living, warm, throbbing life that pervades our being. He is the quickening intelligence that keeps our mind balanced and steady throughout all the vicissitudes of life. He never is and never can be for a moment separated from his creation.”

In other words, she is limiting God to his spiritual plane of existence, as life, intelligence, and by inference Principle and Mind, within everything as life and Spirit, but not physically everything. Out of context it is easy to misinterpret this. Practically everything that Charles Fillmore himself said (and wrote) needed to be interpreted in a metaphysical or Spiritual context, and he was always sensitive to the appearance of pantheism.¹⁸

Unity’s primary emphasis has always been on the “indwelling Spirit”, as Lowell Fillmore and H. Emilie Cady consistently called it. Charles Fillmore once explained why we have to pay so much attention to this: “Souls are born out of the great Universal Mind; they are separated, apparently, into personalities.”¹⁹ As we grow up, it is our task to rediscover consciously our unity with God and the universe. However, we grow up with free will, and it is this powerful, sometimes too powerful, gift that we have to learn to deal with. Free will, as the next chapter will explore in more detail, allows people the latitude to deny their essential unity with God and others, and to accept negative thoughts and feelings, and let those lead to poor choices and actions. Much of Unity’s message, therefore, consists of techniques and encouragement to overcome that childhood...

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¹⁷ Cady, God a Present Help, 54-55.
¹⁹ C. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 3 July 1912.
separation from God, which free will often extended and strengthened, and to help people rediscover their unity with the All.

Cady, in her book *Lessons in Truth*, viewed God primarily as an indwelling presence in humankind. She pushed her readers to look inside themselves for God, rather than outside somewhere in Heaven, or on Mt. Olympus. She declared: “The ultimate aim of every man should be to come into the consciousness of an indwelling God.” She believed God existed not only in humankind but in all things, in every atom that composed the universe. She explained: “Each rock, tree, animal, every visible thing, is a manifestation of the one Spirit . . . and each of the numberless modes of manifestation or individualities, however insignificant, contains the whole.”

Lowell Fillmore, in over half a century as editor and writer for Unity’s most widely read magazine, *Weekly Unity*, also focused mainly on the reality of the indwelling presence of God. He reasoned, “God is within you, because your intelligence and your life and your power are within you. They are not outside you. You recognize God within yourself, and the better you understand Him the better you will understand the fullness of life.”

The “Kingdom of Heaven” that plays such a powerful role within traditional Christianity also figures prominently in Unity. However, the metaphysical interpretation of that concept holds that the “kingdom of Heaven” exists (in potential) within each of us.

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21 Ibid., 20.
22 Vahle, 103.
while alive, not as a separate place to which our bodiless souls petition for entrance.

Lowell Fillmore in one of his articles made this clear:

The first thing to realize is that heaven is not a place far distant but that it is a harmonious state of mind that each must endeavor to establish in himself... When you realize your unity with God and that you, the real you, are a son of God, you will begin to see that the kingdom of heaven is truly at hand.\(^{24}\)

Charles Fillmore, in his early book *Christian Healing*, explicitly stated one of the benefits of a god within and among us, which became important for many people who missed the personal connection in Fillmore’s God as Principle concept. “The understanding that God is not in a distant heaven, nor located in any way geographically, gives us feeling of nearness to and unity with the parent Mind.”\(^{25}\) In the next chapter, he refers to the common Biblical saying that man is made in the “image” and “likeness” of God. He notes that because of this, “It is therefore true, in logic and in inspiration, that man and the universe are within God-Mind as living, acting thoughts.”\(^{26}\) One possible interpretation of this comment is that rather than God being within us all, we could all be literally within God! This idea is supported by the following Fillmorian definition of Man:

God answers [to man]: “Spiritually you are My idea of Myself as I see Myself in the ideal: physically you are the law of My mind executing that idea. To separate oneself from the whole and then attempt to find out the great mystery is like dissecting inanimate flesh to find the source of life.”\(^{27}\)

\(^{24}\) L. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 9 December 1944.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., 19.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., 20.
It is important not only for one to recognize the fundamental unity of humanity, the physical world, and the spiritual world; but to practice this unity, through proper thinking. This is in order to invoke the Divine Mind, because its “Thoughts are drawn to and find expression [only] in the minds of those who raise themselves to its thought standard. This means that we must think of ourselves as God thinks of us, in order to appreciate and to receive His thought and to bring forth the fruits.”

In keeping with its emphasis on being a Christian movement, Unity cites Scriptural evidence to support its belief in the essential unity of everything, and its other teachings about the location and nature of God. In fact, Ernest Wilson in “Unity’s Interpretation of The Lord’s Prayer,” reinforced the original impetus for the title Unity: the appeal to people everywhere, of all religious denominations. By opening the prayer with “Our Father,” instead of “my father”, or “your father”, he argued, Jesus “linked us all with Him in common brotherhood. How much is implied in that! He has told us of the power of the Father; that not He, Jesus, but God the Father did the mighty works. . .manifested through Him.” Wilson shows how this suggests that Jesus’ real message here is “My brethren, what I do ye shall do and can do, for God is not only My Father but your Father also.” (emphasis mine)

For support of Unity’s belief that God was mind and not matter, and therefore not geographically limited, Fillmore quoted the command reportedly given to the Jews that

28 Ibid., 34.
29 Ernest Wilson loose-leaf pamphlet – origin unknown.
no graven image of God should ever be made. He also quoted Jesus himself as
proclaiming “God is Spirit.”

When directly asked by his disciples about the location of God, Jesus, according to
Fillmore in an article entitled “Holy Spirit Fulfills the Law” answered “He that hath seen
me hath seen the Father.” “He then explained that He was in the Father and the Father in
Him. Yet His listeners did not understand, because they had not been trained to think
metaphysically. God is Spirit, omnipresent Spirit-Mind; and in Him ‘we live, and move,
and have our being.”

This idea of God being pure Spirit, everywhere present, often introduces confusion in
people on the subject of Jesus’ origin. How could he be literally “The [only] son of
God,” if God is not a man, or even a superman or divine “man”? Charles Fillmore
answered this question, as he often did, by quoting Jesus; “Is it not written in your law,
[that] ‘I said, Ye are gods’? He proclaimed the unity of all men in the Father.”

Since this is an important part of Christian dogma, Charles Fillmore felt the need to
address this issue further. He carefully elaborated on his metaphysical allegory for Jesus
as the son of God:

Under the Divine Law all the great ideas of Spirit Mind are gathered
together and epitomized in God’s supreme creation Spiritual Man. 
This Man-Idea is the “only begotten Son of God.” He is the one 
creative idea of Divine Mind. All other ideas are parts- man is the
whole. Through his Man-Idea God creates his universe.

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32 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 25.
33 C. Fillmore, Unity, February 1915.
Unity, as a Christian movement, acknowledges the central role that Jesus played in humanity’s spiritual evolution despite its denial of his inherited Divinity. Probably the most crucial thing that Jesus did was when he recognized and fully accepted God as Principle and “He identified himself with this Great Supreme Law, and he did not allow any thought of separation.”34 This ability to not allow thoughts of separation is paramount in order for us to achieve our full spiritual potential. In the same article, Fillmore demands of his audience “We must wake up to the consciousness of the Original Mind and no longer believe in separation from it. There is such a Mind, and that Mind must be the origin of everything that really is of value.”35 He specifically warns against worshipping Jesus as Divine, merely because he “breaks loose from the race thought and enters into the Original Mind.” Fillmore was explicit in declaring that the One Mind that Jesus entered is the same in all of us, and therefore we all have the same opportunity to join the Divine mind.36

Beyond Scripture, science and empirical observation also endorsed the idea of unity. If God, humanity, and the universe are all interconnected, if all emanate from one common Creator, then various modern day processes and powers from electricity generation, to the water cycle, to atomic and chemical reactions, to human behavior and mind action, should all bear some actual connection, or at the least some resemblance to each other. Charles Fillmore was very interested in science and technology throughout his life, and often fond of using scientific analogies to illustrate his points. He once

34 C. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 3 July 1912.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
compared the underlying unity of the universe and the law of Mind Action to Thomas Edison's then newfangled record player. "The all-penetrating ether receives our thoughts and words, like the wax cylinder of the phonograph, only a thousand times more accurately; it preserves them and echoes them back to us in continuous vibrations." He also equated the Holy Spirit to an electrical transformer, acting as an intermediary between God and humans by "stepping down" the full Divine voltage to a level commensurate with the human nervous system.

He was convinced that Unity's metaphysics and modern science could coexist in complete harmony with each other, complementing each other with their respective spheres of knowledge and utilizing similar experiential approaches: "Physical science has recognized the presence of the creative forces, but it does not know the power that moves them. Divine metaphysics has discovered the moving power to be the thought and word of man, and is proving the truth of this principle through results in a multitude of directions."

In fact, beyond just nondestructive coexistence, he frequently offered natural phenomena as specific evidence of his theology. In an article entitled "The Unity of Good," he invoked several scientific phenomena to demonstrate the underlying assertion of the unity of everything. One of these was the law of conservation of matter — quoting physicists regarding the nature of individual atoms and their indestructibility, he cited this permanence of underlying matter, and its apparent destruction as actually just

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37 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 68.
38 C. Fillmore "Holy Spirit," in Gaither, 213.
39 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 68.
40 Einstein's theory equating mass with energy had not arrived yet.
“adjustments”, as an example of his point. Another one of these was the global water cycle; his description of water molecules evaporating from the ocean, moving through the atmosphere as vapor, coalescing as moisture and falling back to the earth, and providing essential water to plants and animals before eventually returning back to the ocean of origin, serves as an elegant example of unity within the universe.\(^{41}\)

Thus science is experimentally proving the unity of Being. As it is in the mind, so it is in the manifestation; and when the mind realizes this truth, a new relation is immediately set up in the consciousness, and it makes a great difference to every one of us whether we accept the proposition of the eternal unity of all things or whether we allow the senses to deceive us into believing in separation.\(^{42}\)

Thus in order to aid acceptance of the most critical part of effecting healing or other self-transformation – firm belief in the overall unity of everything - Fillmore suggests that we should not rely solely on faith but also on evidence from a rational system of logic, theory, and experiment to prove or disprove hypotheses.

For Fillmore the benefits of achieving unity with God are multiple and almost beyond imagination. Merely having the knowledge that “all things are held together by a beneficent law,” results in significantly strengthening our faith in how that law operates.\(^{43}\)

In an address entitled “The Fulfillment of the Divine Law in Man,” he declared that “If we rise into the spiritual part of ourselves, and realize our unity with God, we are

\(^{41}\) C. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 3 July 1912.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
forgiven all our limitations." To be forgiven all our limitations, merely by achieving this connection, hints at the sheer power of unity with God, and our enormous potential as humans. This brings with it ineffable happiness: "All the great spiritual Masters have taught that identification with God brings to man his greatest happiness. The Hindu metaphysicians tell us that when the mind of man is consciously one with the Mind of Being, a bliss enters the soul, beyond description."  

With the happiness came physical wholeness, the desire of which motivated the origin and growth of Unity, and it remains an important motivation for the movement. It believes that many people have physically separated themselves from God by focusing on the material world, and "That is what makes our bones so brittle; that is what hardens our arteries." But if "You unify yourself with the Great Universal Substance . . . you will begin to have a lighter, freer, purer, more perfect body, and the very cells of your organism and the circulation of your blood will be quickened, purified."  

This physical healing leads directly to the ultimate goal of humanity, so far achieved only by Jesus. Fillmore holds that when Jesus fully affirmed his oneness with God, he received increased "consciousness." He thought only Truth, and that brought Divine presence into his very nerves and muscles, which made his body immortal. This regeneration happened during and after the Crucifixion, and is his greatest legacy to us. Fillmore believed strongly that we all can be physically regenerated as was Jesus, and

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44 C. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 3 September 1913.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
that "The closer you can get to Divine Mind, the swifter will be your demonstration of unity with the Good."\textsuperscript{48}

Separation from God, especially failure to even recognize one’s separation from the unity of everything, was the worst thing that could happen to a person, and could result from a number of causes. "You can separate yourself from the Divine Goodness by believing that you are evil. That will put you far away from Good."\textsuperscript{49} Ignorance proved another hindrance to spiritual development, as Unity required far more than passive obedience or non-resistance to its teachings for any substantial improvements in one’s life; rather, it required full and unconditional belief in its teachings merely as a \textit{prerequisite}, followed by active and consistent practice of right thinking and acting, enabled by regular prayer and meditation.

Negative thought proved another major inhibitor to unity, according to Charles Fillmore; thoughts like "I can’t, I’m sick, I’m poor," actively stand in the way of achievement, health, and prosperity. Other negative thoughts such as envy, malice, fear, anger, and pride, prevent spiritual achievement of oneness because of their focus on the individual at the expense of others.\textsuperscript{50} Lack of empathy for others was another barrier, a particularly difficult one to cross.\textsuperscript{51} Without empathy, a basic feeling of understanding another person’s point of view, of even being able to relate to them, it became completely impossible to believe in any kind of greater actual connection between persons, or between one person and God.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, April 1908, 198.
Fillmore was aware that love of God needed to flow forth from a deep place inside, a place that was free from self-hate or self-disgust. In short, he recognized that love of self was a prerequisite for divine love. "Self condemnation," he asserted, "is also a great error and leads to dire results. You must love yourself because you are the child of God."

Not only do all the aforementioned negative traits usually lead to a feeling of complete separation from God and others and prevent any spiritual development, but those who see themselves as completely alone, separate from other human beings and God, often develop such negative traits. So, in which direction does the causal chain run? Both situations contribute to the other – in other words, negative thoughts and feelings, and an impression of isolation in the world, each tends to reinforce the other in a negative feedback loop. Thus the next question becomes, how does one break such a cycle as the first step towards achieving spiritual unity? The specific methods, (prayer and affirmations and right thoughts) have already been discussed in chapter one, but aspects of these methods, as well as other factors, that relate to the underlying unity of all will be addressed in greater detail now.

Fillmore and Unity believed strongly in the power of words. He once said that "Every word is mathematically linked with certain creative ideas," and that God enabled us to use these ideas.\(^52\) Using these ideas effectively, however, requires at least one

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\(^{52}\) C. Fillmore, "Healing Power," in Gaither, 353.
absolute prerequisite – the emotional faculty of faith, the first and primary of the Twelve
Powers, whom Fillmore associated with both Abraham and the apostle Peter.\textsuperscript{53}

The beginning of the culture of the mind that enables it to make
contact with the realm of creative ideas is faith... You must have
such confidence in your ability to make union with creative Mind
that you fuse the two and the invisible elements melt and fall in the
mold you have made for them.\textsuperscript{54}

Thus faith is necessary to comprehend the unity of all, since it is not obviously visible to
humans. Fillmore regularly makes an analogy with another unseen phenomenon that also
requires faith for its use – electricity. “The life source is spiritual energy... It is
composed of ideas, and man can turn on its current by making mental contact with it,”\textsuperscript{55}
Charles Fillmore explained in \textit{Jesus Christ Heals}. Or, as he put it more simply in
\textit{Christian Healing}, since God is Mind, then “The vehicles of mind are thoughts, and it is
through our mind in thought action that we shall find God and do His will.”\textsuperscript{56}

So, what kinds of thoughts are necessary for one to hold? “The Truth is, then:...
That to bring forth or to manifest the harmony of Divine Mind... all our ideas must be
one with divine ideas, and must be expressed in the divine order of Divine Mind.\textsuperscript{57}
Since the universe and everything in it is already unified spiritually, it makes sense that
we must make our physical thoughts match the corresponding spiritual ones. Finally, for
the specific mechanism, Fillmore specifically instructed people in an article in \textit{Weekly
Unity} to

\textsuperscript{53} C. Fillmore, \textit{The Twelve Powers}, 25, 28.
\textsuperscript{54} C. Fillmore, “Healing Power,” in Gaither, 353.
\textsuperscript{55} C. Fillmore, “Indispensable Assurance,” from \textit{Jesus Christ Heals}, reprinted in Gaither, 315.
\textsuperscript{56} C. Fillmore, \textit{Christian Healing}, 12.
\textsuperscript{57} C. Fillmore, \textit{Christian Healing}, 16.
Say every morning when you open your eyes, "I do not separate myself from my Good; God is my Good. I live, move and have my being in Good. There is but one presence and one power, the eternal Good. Good shall come to me this day, and unto all men, because I radiate only the Good."\textsuperscript{58}

An easier recommended statement to affirm is that "'I and my Father are one.' Holding this mighty thought in mind one comes to realize his unity with the very mind of Being itself."\textsuperscript{59}

Thus the heart of Unity's teachings on improving one's life, physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially, all rely on accepting and fully embracing one's unity with God and the rest of the universe. That underlying unity began to be expressed as something more tangible than just a principle, usually as love, and is available to all. Fillmore promised that:

"God is never absent from you." He is constantly taking form in your life according to the exact pattern of your words, thoughts, and actions. Just as soon as you really bring your words and your expectations up to the measure of God's love for you, just that soon you will demonstrate."\textsuperscript{60}

Fillmore's views as expressed in \textit{Jesus Christ Heals} represent his thinking in the late 1930s, which had evolved to some degree from his earlier views, particularly regarding the Holy Spirit. In this book he expanded his view of the nature and function of the Holy Spirit beyond a "personality" who helps guide us when we pray, to equate it literally with the healing power of nature and of Divine Mind. In this form it takes on more substance,

\textsuperscript{58} C. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 3 July 1912.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} C. Fillmore, "Indispensable Assurance," in Gaither, 320.
changing it from the “law” of god to the love of God. This Holy Spirit is not necessarily masculine, but also includes the loving, nurturing feminine aspect of God, God as Mother. Fillmore explained that, “Holy Spirit is the love of Jehovah taking care of the human family, and love is always feminine.”

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61 Gaither, 189-190.
62 C. Fillmore, “Holy Spirit”, in Gaither, 204.
Aristotle

Aristotle, working from a vastly different basis in time, method and societal knowledge, understandably conceived of the world’s underlying unity significantly differently in some aspects from Unity. Nevertheless, the similarities outweigh the differences, and the comparison of Aristotle’s theologically minded theories as well as his scientifically derived concepts with Unity’s theology yields a logically persuasive synthesis more in keeping with twentieth century developments in science such as evolution, nuclear physics, and quantum mechanics than traditional Christian teachings. Aristotle perceived unity in the world in the universal divinity of its composition, the singleness of its conceptual framework, and the consistency of thought and knowing. He rejected, however, the popular theory that a Platonic-style mathematical system could apply universally to all things and explain every action. Aristotle came to these conclusions using an empirically based approach that differed from Unity’s emphasis on intuition.

In Book XII of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle comes to the conclusion that there is a divine substance “eternal, unmovable, and separable” and also “impartible, and indivisible,” acting as a Prime Mover within things; these features when considered in combination lead inexorably to the conclusion that this substance can have no magnitude.\(^{63}\) This also raises the question of where it is located, i.e. “whether as something separate and independent, or as the orderly arrangement of its [the particular object’s] parts;” chapter

\(^{63}\) *Met* 12.1073a3.
one of this paper discussed his answer as essentially “both.” As the Prime Mover of everything (at least on Earth) it has to be either within us all, or have some kind of direct contact with us all. Since it has no magnitude, and because of the planets and other celestial bodies there are at least fifty-five separate Prime Movers, more likely an almost infinite number, the only logical conclusion was that this divine substance, as a Prime Mover, is as much inside each of us and everything, as anywhere specific. Therefore Aristotle eventually moved away from his conclusion that one Prime Mover existed in the universe, towards a belief in an almost infinite number of them, a separate one inside and part of each object that had motion. But each of these separate prime movers was composed of the same, eternal, divine substance, tying everything together with an assumption of an underlying universal source of life and motion.

His conception of an eternal substance “moving” each animate being closely resembles Unity’s emphasis on God’s immanence within everything. As Charles Fillmore pointed out that God existed even within rocks and dirt, and Emilie Cady went even further in finding Him in every atom of any kind in the universe, the young Aristotle, not yet limited solely to observation without amplifying instruments, reached the conclusion that one Prime Mover that represented divinity existed within everything, providing motion and formal cause. His eventual theory of separate divine substances rather than one Prime Mover became inevitable as he grew more rigorously empirical, but such rigid reliance on imprecise observation several times led him astray, as in the failure to recognize and properly account for friction in his laws of motion.

64 Met 12.1075a12-17.
65 Met 12.1074a10.
Though even Aristotle’s later conception of separate divine substances within each being demonstrated a form of unity through uniformity, his biggest objection to greater unity lay in his rejection of the Platonists’ belief in one “universal method” to which everything could be assigned a place and by which everything in every field could be explained. He believed that every field demanded its own approach, based on its own unique character.\textsuperscript{66} In the following quote from the beginning of book twelve in the \textit{Metaphysics}, he resolutely disregards the universal approach, ascribing this choice to the ancients, whose observational approach he preferred.

Present-day thinkers tend to regard universals as substance, because genera are universal, and they hold that these are more truly principles and substances because they approach the question theoretically; but the ancients identified substance with particular things, e.g. fire and earth, and not with body in general.\textsuperscript{67}

More specifically, he “Rejected the Pythagorean faith of the Platonists and the Platonic tradition, that the order of nature is and must be mathematical in character.”\textsuperscript{68} This rejection of a simple mathematical order closely resembles Unity’s view of an apparently fractured material world due to humanity’s possession of free will and consequent differentiation of every single individual’s achievement of spiritual consciousness.

However, just like Unity, he was convinced that everything in nature, even beyond its divine origin, was directly connected. One commentator expressed Aristotle’s view of unity in nature like this:

66 Randall, 55.
68 Randall, 58.
Every part of nature is interdependent with every other part. All opposites in nature imply some common underlying reality, like black and white existing on a common surface. That reality, Aristotle said, is Being, the opposite of which is not spirit, matter, or anything else actually existing, but non-Being. Clearly, matter and purpose are not at war with each other in any fundamental sense, since most natural substances are composed of matter and intelligible form (spirit, if you like), inextricably and harmoniously combined.\(^{69}\)

This “combination” of matter and form which existed within all animate beings (plants as well as animals) eventually came to be translated into English as “soul.” Aristotle conceived of the soul as defining the nature and character of its physical being. Though dissimilar in many respects from Christianity’s idea of soul, the fact of its uniform possession by all beings demonstrates a unified system of nature.\(^{70}\)

Another area of universal unity that Aristotle implicitly recognized lay in his common conceptual framework. His methods and goals of scientific inquiry presupposed some concept of underlying order in the universe. The actual structure of corporeal life suggested one way—“All things, both fishes and birds and plants, are ordered together in some way, but not in the same way; and the system is not such that there is no relation between one thing and another; there is a definite connection. Everything is ordered together to one end.”\(^{71}\) This “end,” as Aristotle phrased it, revealed its commonality through the ability to categorize all life into various genera and species, based on common characteristics. This ability to classify everything into its appropriate specific category, which formed a subset of one overarching system, required a fundamental unity

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\(^{70}\) See chapter four for a more in-depth discussion of soul.

\(^{71}\) *Met* 12.1075a16-18.
between all life present on the earth. "Classification and division are counterparts of the intrinsic order of nature," as John Dewey once elegantly expressed it.\textsuperscript{72}

Another aspect of Aristotle's conceptual framework lies in his treatment of causation. In book five of the \textit{Metaphysics} he explores the full variety of meanings for the Greek word whose closest English translation is the word "cause." He takes it well beyond our more limited definition, though, by finding four different meanings in the word, making it applicable to verbs and concepts as well as concrete objects and living beings: the material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause.\textsuperscript{73} The material cause consists of the constituent parts of something – Aristotle cites bronze as a cause of a statue. The formal cause essentially states what something is; he uses the example of an octave consisting of mathematical ratios of 2:1. His efficient cause is generally how we define cause today, "The source of the first beginning of change or rest," i.e. the agent of change.\textsuperscript{74} And his final cause is the "end", or purpose of the object or action. Thus his conception of cause includes both an understanding of something's physical essence as well as its motion and goal in life. This ability to define every single object, concept, and action possible in the universe with one or more versions of its "cause" relies on a form of unity, a unified framework for existence within the universe. Its simple faith in the ability to thoroughly "know" things also directly resembles Unity's stress on its students reaching their own views on theology – both rely confidently on a discoverable, self-evident Truth.

\textsuperscript{72} John Dewey, "Logic", \textit{Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences}, IX, 599, as quoted in Randall, 51.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Met} 5.1013a24-30.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Met} 5.1013a29.
The final cause, in particular, requires the powerful assumption that everything has a purpose, "To actualize its own inherent potential." In the case of living things,

"For any living thing that has reached its normal development... the most natural act is the production of another like itself; an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible."\textsuperscript{75}

This supposition at once moves far beyond modern physical and scientific principles, which address only the "how," to deal directly with the realm of the theological, by addressing the "why." The concept of all living things from the simplest organisms (observable at that time) to humans as the most complex all having the common goal of "partaking in the eternal and divine" illustrates his perception of all life as tied together in its nature, and directly demonstrates his version of the Divine existing within everyone and everything. It also seems identical with the Unity movement's conception of everything and everybody having a Divine purpose in life.

The final area in which Aristotle sensed an underlying unity of his world was in the realm of thought and knowing. We realize our own full potential only by reaching our own "good", i.e. by thinking. And "Thinking in the highest sense [is concerned] with that which is in the highest sense best."\textsuperscript{76} By the mental act of thinking, Aristotle reasons that a union of the thinker and the object of thought occurs: "And thought thinks itself through participation in the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought by the

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Soul} 2.4.2.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Met} 12.1072b18-19.
act of apprehension and thinking, so that thought and the object of thought are the same.”77 Since the object of thought is in a sense also an unmoved mover, (it moves the person to think about it without the object of thought itself moving), and the unmoved mover is life itself, then “The actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and the essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal.”78 In other words, pure thinking literally connects us with everything, with each other, and with the Divine, and therefore forges unity via this universal link.

Thought, of course, is the heart of Unity’s approach to spirituality. Unity teaches thought patterns create our life and experiences, therefore affirmations and other techniques of mental and physical healing all start with practices to change our thought patterns. Thinking is how we express our consciousness and our prayers, our communication with God. That thought holds a similarly critical position in Aristotle’s world is likely no coincidence – but human thought possesses similar stature in many religious and philosophical belief systems, so it is no surprise, but rather yet more evidence of compatibility between the two systems.

One area in which Aristotle differs dramatically from Unity is in his approach. Charles Fillmore taught that,

The highest Scriptural authorities tell us that all things were made by the *logos*-ratio-reason, and *oratio*, word or *speech*. Hence the “word of reason” . . . is the very foundation of the universe. Therefore to know accurately about the reality of things, we must disregard all appearance as indicated by the five senses, and go into *pure reason*-
the Spirit from which was created everything that has permanent existence.\textsuperscript{79}

Aristotle, of course, was the ultimate empiricist, and consistently refused to abandon the evidence of the senses, even when faulty observations (he had no scientific instruments for quantifying observations) tricked him into modifying an accurate theory derived through reason from some known principle. In a sense, Fillmore could have been speaking directly to Aristotle when he addressed his comments about disregarding appearances for the logos to members of his congregation, many of whom were having a hard time reconciling Unity’s view of Truth with the evidence of their own senses. However, the commonality underlying both approaches lay in their emphasis on results. Aristotle expected observed data to verify his theories, and would change his theory to fit the facts as he saw them, while Fillmore also developed his theology based on what he observed worked with himself and others in the realms of physical, mental, and emotional healing and well-being.

Thus, the two opposite approaches both contain merit, and both yielded impressive results. Possibly the best lesson we can learn from this comparison is that multiple approaches to challenges can provide the best results – strengths in one approach compensating for deficiencies in the other, and the converse also true, while always being guided by results achieved.

The primary comparison of both worldviews’ to consider, though, is the sense of the Divine within and around us all, and its accessibility through thinking expressed as

\textsuperscript{79} C. Fillmore, “Pure Reason,” in Gaither, 42.
language. Both affirm that the Divine is within and around us, rather than somewhere distinctly separate, and is accessible to us all through straightforward methods. Of these Unity emphasizes affirmations and right thinking, and Aristotle the unmoved mover of personal thought. Thus both ascribe tremendous power to the action of thought, which has the ability to shape and change our entire world.

Here are almost identical concepts, reached from completely opposite directions. Aristotle, through sense, experience, and logical analysis, believes the universe is united by the link of humanity’s active intellect (as well as a common conceptual framework) and literally sees God in that; while Unity, through some of the same sense and experience but also through faith and intuition, believes the universe is united by the presence of God within us. Whether one saw God as the cause or the result of the fundamental unity of the universe, the two were inseparably bound, and this fitted the overriding trend of the twentieth century, which was the steadily accelerating globalization of nations’ culture, society, and people.
Chapter 3

Good versus Evil – and it is all Good.

Unity

Say, every morning when you open your eyes, "I do not separate myself from my Good; God is my Good. I live, move and have my being in Good. There is but one presence and one power, the eternal Good. Good shall come to me this day, and unto all men, because I radiate only the Good."

Thus commanded Charles Fillmore of his followers. It represents the heart of Unity’s teaching that God is everything, God is all good, and that we need to remain unified with Him in order to stay in the good. Chapter one illustrated Unity’s conviction in the omnipotence and omnipresence of God. But where did this idea of God as exclusively Good come from?

One Unity minister reasons that, “There is no place where God is not; and since God permeates all creation, His nature for Himself can only be absolute good. Who would have anything for himself which isn’t absolute good?” Who indeed? But in reality people exist who want, or need, some aspect of God that is less than good, or a separate omnipotent not-good entity, something or someone representing evil.

Charles Fillmore argued that, “God is too pure to behold iniquity... The Mind of Being takes no cognizance of error or any other negative condition.” This is a more sophisticated argument, though it also presupposes the general optimistic viewpoint that

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1 C. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 3 July 1912.
3 C. Fillmore, “Releasing the Holy Spirit,” 1st lesson 1931, as quoted in Neteler.
God is only good. In fact, Fillmore admits to this in *Christian Healing*: “The central proposition in the inspiration of Spirit is that God, or primal Cause, is good.⁴

His real argument, though, lies in the worldwide consensus of opinion among philosophers, religious scholars, and other spiritual leaders of various belief systems.

It is safe to assert that in all the world not a single person of intelligence can be found who would say that God is anything but good. It requires no exhaustive reasoning to arrive at this conclusion, for it is the ready response of the intuitive faculty of all mankind, which it is always safe to count as correct. Even those who think that evil actually exists as a principle, claim that God is *All-Good* (sic) but that He allows His opposite, the devil, to possess part of His kingdom to accomplish certain ends.⁵

Rationality and logic have their limitations, according to Fillmore – the aggregate weight of “public” opinion, based upon intuition, takes priority over reasoning, and “all mankind” believes it to be so.

Lowell Fillmore enumerated some specific benefits of God as absolute Good, through Divine law: “Divine law or principles, sets men, who obey it, free from the bondage of selfishness, fear, greed, worry, jealousy, and unhappiness. A man is truly free only when he is an obedient servant to the laws of God.⁶ Charles Fillmore also offered one very valuable benefit: “Shall we call everything good? Yes. If the savage knew this law he could lift himself to a higher consciousness by it. We get out of savagery by idealizing the good.”⁷

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⁵ C. Fillmore, “Pure Reason,” in Gaiter, 45.
⁷ C. Fillmore, *Christian Healing*, 93.
The best evidence for God’s complete goodness, of course, derives from necessity – when we assume that God is all good, then Unity’s healing affirmations tend to work. Consequently, Emilie Cady stressed the goodness of God through her instructions for conducting proper affirmations.\(^8\) In explaining that a proper affirmation should change a person’s attitude towards God rather than God’s attitude towards that person (the latter is impossible since He is a Principle rather than a personality, that is already all-good) she confirmed: “By thus affirming, you put yourselves in harmony with Divine Law, which is always working toward your good and never toward your harm or punishment.”\(^9\) This is consistent with her concept of prayer: “True prayer,” she indicated, “is just a continual recognition and thanksgiving that All is good.”\(^10\)

Unity-style prayer, therefore, depends on the perfect goodness of God. Lowell Fillmore emphasized that, through prayer, we should give thanks even for things we have not received. He explained:

> When we give thanks we should do so realizing that we have already received. . . As we cultivate the spirit of thankfulness, we at the same time develop our potential good. Our good has been ready for us all the time, waiting for us to accept it. The first step in accepting it is to give thanks for it.”\(^11\)

So by assuming that God is good and has given us (or made available to us) all that we need, we can recognize, or access, these answers to our needs which were always there.

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\(^8\) See ch. 1 pg. 23 for more on affirmations.


\(^10\) Cady, *Miscellaneous Writings*, (Kansas City, MO.: Unity School of Christianity, 1917), 100, as quoted in Vahle, 88.

This is an extremely powerful concept, which underpins Unity’s teachings on physical, mental, emotional, and financial improvement.

This concept obviously differs dramatically from the traditional Christian God, who demands professions of faith and calls for redemption, demonstrations of piety, and other acts and beliefs to prove one’s worthiness for heaven, lest one be consigned to Hell or Purgatory. The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, views God as demanding multiple Sacramental Acts such as regular confession of sins, Reconciliation, and adherence to specific regulations concerning sex, marriage, and procreation. The Old Testament God, often seen as vengeful, jealous, and sometimes even cruel, especially clashes with Unity’s God. The story of Noah’s Ark serves to highlight these differences. A literal reading of the story of Noah’s Ark instructs us that humanity had failed so miserably at proper living that God had to destroy humanity and completely start over with Noah and his immediate family. However, Unity’s metaphysical interpretation of this story results in a very different interpretation:

When man allows his imagination to run on in a lawless way, he brings about such discord in mind and body that the flood of error thought submerges his understanding and he is drowned in it. “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “And I, behold, I do bring the flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh.”

The concept of Unity’s all-good God leads inexorably to the rejection of the traditional Christian doctrine of “Original Sin,” which holds that at birth all humans

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12 C. Fillmore, *Christian Healing*, 100.
inherit Adam and Eve’s guilt from their transgression in the Garden of Eden, and therefore need to be baptized and to continue throughout their lives with a process of salvation, variously defined by the different denominations. Charles Fillmore wrote that “Man is neither ‘conceived in sin’ nor ‘born in iniquity.’ Man is conceived in purity and born in holiness.”\(^\text{13}\) Thus redemption in mainstream Christianity occurs when we accept that Jesus died for our sins, while “redemption” per se is not necessary in Unity, but one reaches his or her goal by following Jesus’ example and achieving their own Christ consciousness.

Lowell Fillmore once explained that God’s will, or ultimate goal for us “is that man shall be well, happy and prosperous.” In order to realize this, “A committed person cooperates with God’s will, [which] opens the way for God’s abundance of good things to flow into his life.”\(^\text{14}\) In other words, God and his universe are such absolute good that abundance is the “default” condition – rather than starting with the deficit of having to overcome inherited sin – and merely by cooperating with God’s will, goodness in the forms of health, emotional well being, and financial prosperity will “flow into” one. This means the good is everywhere and primary, and that only artificial effort to deny this good, to deny people’s connections with God, can induce bad effects.

This concept of God as absolute good contrasts markedly with the idea of humanity as inherently sinful, facing an uphill struggle in order to overcome our burdens through faith, good works, and sacraments. Lacking original sin, fear as a primary motivator (in Roman Catholicism and some evangelical Protestant movements) and passive acceptance

\(^{13}\) C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, 15 April 1898, 309.

of God’s love for sinners (in mainstream Protestant denominations) are supplanted by a completely nonjudgmental God’s appeals to our better nature, offering the rewards of greater unity with fellow brothers and sisters, and better physical, mental, emotional, and financial living conditions. These rewards rely, in turn, on the underlying goodness of the universe in order to reach fruition and effectively motivate people.

Far from a God who sees wickedness and acts with merciless thoroughness to root it out, Unity teaches that God is not just all good, but takes it one significant step further. “Goodness” by itself is essentially a passive trait, indicating whether the object or act described possesses “positive” or “negative” value relative to some human, or cosmic, standard. Unity also stresses that God is something more, love itself. “God is love . . . all the love in the universe is God. The love between husband and wife, between parents and children, is just the least little bit of God . . . A mother’s love . . . is God’s love.”

Love as a noun here represents the potentiality of love as an active verb, which is its primary and more powerful form as an active subject. While mainstream Christianity also views God as love, it is a generous love of a superior deity for His sinning children, as opposed to Unity’s God of pure love as an uncritical principle, readily available to all unconditionally.

The story of the Biblical Flood would be impossible to interpret as a literal historical occurrence, because according to Charles Fillmore, “Love . . . is a divine principle and . . . It has no consciousness of good or evil, pure or impure.” Without any consciousness of good or evil, indeed without any anthropomorphic identity at all, Unity’s God could

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15 Cady, Lessons in Truth, 18.
16 C. Fillmore, “The Development of Divine Love,” from Talks on Truth, as reprinted in Gaither, 326.
not possibly see "wickedness in man's heart" and consciously decide to destroy anything. On the contrary, Unity anticipates not only positive, but dramatic results from this powerful force: "The Earth shall yet be made paradise by the power of love."17 As most of its teachings are, Unity bases this teaching firmly on Scripture: "Such is the love of Christ for His own; such is the love of God through Christ for all creation."18

One of the affirmations that Charles Fillmore recommends in Christian Healing goes like this: "God is Good, and God is all, therefore I refuse to believe in the reality of evil in any of its forms."19 While this statement is simple, powerful, and logically consistent, most people cannot so easily dismiss evil. Unity, continuously attempting to bring emotions and intuition into alignment with logical rationality, regularly addresses the topic in more detail.

One Unity reader queried Fillmore, "I don't understand how you can deny that there is sin and evil when you see it all about you day and night." He responded:

You mistake our teaching if you think we deny that there is seeming evil. (emphasis mine) What we do deny is that evil has Principle (sic) back of it. It does not come from God - man creates it, hence it is not permanent and has no power except what we give it. We give it this power in two ways, first by doing evil, and second, by fearing evil. Many refrain from doing evil, but they talk about it as reality.20

Here Fillmore directly states a fundamental difference in theology between Unity and traditional Christianity – the former views evil as a temporary phenomena, originating

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17 Ibid., 333.
18 Ibid., 325.
19 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing. 60.
20 C. Fillmore, Unity. August 1895, 206.
solely from humanity itself, while the latter regards it as a permanent power, promoted continuously by the fallen angel, Satan.

Cady used very similar terms in describing evil not as an actual entity or thing in its own right, but simply as "apparent absence of the good, just as darkness is an absence of light. But God ... is omnipresent, so the apparent absence of good is unreal. It is only an appearance of evil, just as the moving sun was an appearance."\textsuperscript{21}

Unity's \textit{Gospel Glossary} reinforces this in the following definition:

\textbf{evil}–That which is not of God; unreality; error thought; a product of the fallen human consciousness; negation. Evil is a parasite. It has no permanent life of itself; its whole existence depends on the life it borrows from its parent, and when its connection with the parent is severed nothing remains. In Divine Mind there is no recognition of evil conditions ... Apparent evil is the result of ignorance, and when Truth is presented the error disappears.\textsuperscript{22}

So if God is all Good, then how could this "apparent evil" even occur? As Fillmore said in the preceding quote, it results from ignorance; primarily ignorance of the nature of God and evil, as well as ignorance of one's place in the overall unity of everything, which can lead to feelings of separation. Even those who have advanced beyond ignorance to achieve some level of knowledge need something additional – wisdom. "The balanced mind no longer seeks to do evil ... but a proper discrimination between the enduring,

\textsuperscript{21} Cady, \textit{Lessons in Truth}, 51.
\textsuperscript{22} C. Fillmore, \textit{The Revealing Word}, 64, as quoted in \textit{Jesus Christ Gospel Glossary}. s.v. "evil."
permanent things of existence, and the transient and evanescent is not so common. To choose wisely in this respect requires wisdom and spiritual perception.”

Apparent evil also originates partly through improper or unintentional use of thoughts. “Hard experiences come into our lives because we do not know the law of harmonious thinking (Mind Action.) If we think that evil exists as a power in the world . . . we make it an active force, and it appears to be all that we imagine it.”

Our animal or “carnal” heritage causes evil also. Fillmore interprets Jesus’ statement, “Out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed,” as referring to the heart’s function to exercise not Divine Love, but rather human love, which he considers “fickle, selfish, and lawless.” Because of these weaknesses, feelings like infatuation and physical lust appear in the heart, which often lead to evil. He describes the “life ego,” which he associates with physical sensation pleasures, as the “most subtle and most variable” of all man’s powers, and calls it “The adversary. It is not essentially evil, but because of its place as the central pole of all bodily activity, it . . . becomes inflated with its own importance.” Sensual pleasures therefore constituted a major cause of humankind’s spiritual demise, according to Fillmore, and the recommended solution, of course, was to, “Turn away from the lusts of the flesh and seek God.”

This Puritan attitude towards sensual pleasures does not seem consistent with a world of all goodness. It most likely originated from the Fillmores’ family backgrounds.

Myrtle Fillmore was raised in Ohio by strict Methodist parents, who frowned on

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23 C. Fillmore, Talks on Truth, 125.
24 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 57.
25 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 137.
26 C. Fillmore, The Twelve Powers, 161-162.
27 Ibid., 169.
“frivolities” including singing and dancing (though her father sometimes broke that rule to dance with his young daughter.)⁵⁸. Charles Fillmore’s father also came from a similarly conservative Methodist background – Charles in fact was a second cousin of U.S. President Millard Fillmore.⁵⁹ It was undoubtedly reinforced by the circumstances of Charles’ youth, growing up alone with a mother who had been quickly abandoned by her husband and left to raise her sons (Charles’ brother Norton soon ran away) in perpetual poverty.⁶⁰

The Fillmores’ view of sexual abstinence as a necessity to achieve full bodily regeneration also has several possible sources. During the course of his wide ranging studies, Charles Fillmore likely came across Hindu Tantric practices that regard loss of semen as a weakness of the body. He also may have been influenced by the Augustinian tradition in Christianity, which harbored a deep distrust of sexual relationships.⁶¹

It is important to note that this particular teaching of early Unity, particularly the sexual abstinence that the elder Fillmores came to promote later in their lives, is not emphasized or followed by most Unity adherents today. This in all likelihood partly resulted from its inconsistency with God and the universe as all good and no original sin. It also most likely resulted from the difficulty and resultant inaccessibility of much of Charles Fillmore’s writings to Unity students. When Lowell Fillmore’s and Emilie Cady’s teachings were consistently presented more clearly, with no mention of restriction

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⁵⁸ Freeman, 31.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.
⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.
⁶¹ Vahle, 57.
of senses or sexual abstinence, the difficult and unpopular practices recommended by the Fillmores were inevitably discontinued by most, though not all.

One thing that contributed directly to (or resulted from) an “abuse of the sense” is greed. “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,” Fillmore quoted from the Bible. “The love (sic) of money, not money itself, is the root of all kinds of evil,” he clarified.\(^\text{32}\)

Thus he affirmed Unity’s perception of money – it is not inherently evil or sinful, even in large quantities, as long as one does not lose themselves in greed and other negative emotions in its pursuit.

This introduces another major difference with traditional Christianity. Early Christianity, in particular, looked askance on the possession of money. “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into Heaven.” Jesus was held to have said. More recent views of money among different Christian denominations is somewhat varied, with the Catholic church still requiring vows of poverty from its clergy, though most subscribe to some variation of the theme that successful (and honest) acquisition of money demonstrates God’s favor. Unity takes this a step further, and openly offers help in achieving financial prosperity through a program offered at many Unity churches entitled “The 4T Prosperity Program: Tithing of Time, Talent & Treasure for the Prosperity & the Fullness of Life.” This course aims to “Enable people to change their consciousness and experience a deeper spiritual

awareness, loving relationships, financial security, job satisfaction, creative ideas, improved self-esteem, and better physical health.”

The ultimate underlying cause of apparent evil, however, the “formal cause” as Aristotle might have put it, is the free will that humans have. In The Revealing Word, Fillmore explains “There is but one presence and one power, God omnipotent. But man has the privilege and freedom of using this power as he will. When he misuses it he brings about inharmonious conditions. These are called evil.” In other words, people have the choice of whether to live in accordance with Divine Will, or not. Lowell Fillmore echoes, “Man is a free agent.” Because mankind is created in the image and likeness of God, men and women can use that freedom “for good or evil.” Consequently, “The sin sickness, suffering, and death that men experience are not punishment willed by God; they are the results of broken law.”

The next important question, of course, is how to overcome (apparent) evil. The Gospel Glossary has this to say:

**evil, overcoming**—Evil must be overcome with good. We must dwell in the good so wholly that all the substance of our thoughts and our being is given over to the promotion of the good. This is a mental process in which all negation (evil) is denied, and creative, fearless affirmation of God's perfect good is steadfastly adhered to.

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34 See chapter 1, pg 24 of this paper on the origins of free will in humankind.
35 C. Fillmore, The Revealing Word, 64, as quoted in Jesus Christ Gospel Glossary.
38 C. Fillmore, The Revealing Word, 64, as quoted in Jesus Christ Gospel Glossary.
Cady agreed with this, emphasizing denial as the most important part. "The purpose of denial," Cady explained, was "to eradicate apparent evil and bring the good into manifestation."³⁹ "Denial," she continued, "is the first practical step toward wiping out of our minds the mistaken beliefs of a lifetime."⁴⁰

Since God is love, then application of this trait, combined with denial of the evil, can perform miracles. Fillmore advised,

"Do not be afraid to pour out your love upon all the so-called evil in the world. Deny the appearance of evil, and affirm the omnipotence and the omnipresence of love and goodness. Take no account of the evil that appears in your life and your affairs ... By using this creative power of your own thought you will change that which seemed evil into good, and divine love will pour its healing balm over all."⁴¹

Fillmore acknowledged the difficulty of putting into practice this deceptively simple belief, but maintained that it was possible by trusting in one's intuition. He admitted,

"The statement of the unreality of evil is one that makes Truth a stumbling block to many, yet it must in essence be correct. If there is real evil (sic) it must have a basis in Principle, and as God is the One and Only Principle, it must be in God, hence God is evil. But the mind instantly rebels against this conclusion." He finished by reaffirming that evil’s "seeming reality can be erased from the tables of the mind only through

³⁹ Cady, Lessons in Truth. 37.
⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.
⁴¹ C. Fillmore, "Divine Love," in Gaither, 329.
understanding the truth of God's Being, and then willing that the truth alone shall be built up in thought and character.\textsuperscript{42}

How does Unity view sin? The answer reveals another major distinction from mainstream Christianity. Unity rejects the traditional doctrine of "Original Sin" which holds that all humans inherit Adam and Eve's initial transgression at birth, and therefore need to be baptized and to continue going through some process of salvation, variously defined by different denominations, throughout their lives. Charles Fillmore wrote that, "Man is not 'conceived in sin' nor 'born in iniquity.' Man is conceived in purity and born in holiness."\textsuperscript{43}

Myrtle Fillmore once defined sin as, "An unwise use of the powers and faculties and qualities of Being."\textsuperscript{44} Emilie Cady, in her basic Unity "textbook" Lessons in Truth, uses the word "sin" exactly twice in one hundred and seventy pages, demonstrating its utter lack of significance in her teachings. Charles Fillmore has rather more to say on the subject.

The Gospel Glossary contains the following entry on "sin" – "Missing the mark; that is, falling short of divine perfection. Sin is man's failure to express the attributes \{isnjeses \textit{(sic)}\} of Being--life, love, intelligence, wisdom and the other God qualities."\textsuperscript{45} In one sense, this compares similarly with traditional Christianity, since few (besides Jesus himself) can consistently express all of these positive Divine attributes at all times, thereby identifying all humans as sinners. Fillmore reinforces this interpretation when he

\textsuperscript{42} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, November 1898, 24.
\textsuperscript{43} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, 15 April 1898, 309.
\textsuperscript{44} M. Fillmore, letter to Martha Rieck, 7 September 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 12.
\textsuperscript{45} C. Fillmore, \textit{The Revealing Word}, 179, as quoted in Jesus Christ Gospel Glossary. s.v. "Sin."
declares in *Jesus Christ Heals* that, “Unless your mind has been quickened by the light of spiritual understanding, you are living in a little three-dimensional world whose beginning and end is sin or a falling short of the divine ideal.” On the other hand, its lack of specificity (such as the Ten Commandments) leaves considerable room for error, and consequently offers an accessible opportunity of “redemption” to everyone, which he supports through the following pronouncements: “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; then whatsoever is of faith is not sin.” According to this statement, one has merely to have (and presumably to act on the basis of) adequate faith in order to avoid all sin. Consistent with this is the fact that sin (both one’s own as well as others) can be forgiven: “The forgiveness of sin is an erasure of mortal thought from consciousness,” and in fact, since our Divine purpose in life is to achieve the perfect God-consciousness, “We could not attain perfection unless we were in essence sinless and pure in God's perception.”

The specific procedure for overcoming sin is clearly laid out in the Scriptures, but one must, “get into a certain light of mind, which is spiritual understanding,” in order to “read the Spirit of the Scriptures instead of the letter.” Since Unity views the very nature of sin as, “a mental transgression, instead of . . . a moral defection,” then the first step is to correct one’s thinking, which involves an appropriate affirmation. Fillmore provided the outline of one in a lecture: “In overcoming . . . sin, we must assume that we are in the light of Divine Wisdom, that is the starting point . . . Through the grace of this

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46 C. Fillmore, *Jesus Christ Heals*, 160.
48 Ibid., 57.
50 Ibid., 2 February 1912.
light we attain perfection."\(^{52}\) The next two steps require one to, "Forgive and forget your sins and the sins of all men. Do good and not evil, and you will receive the Light Divine."\(^{53}\) This is not only possible, but fairly easy, since, "The only unpardonable sin is to ignore the Holy Ghost as teacher.(emphasis mine) Only take the stand that you are willing to be taught by the Spirit and you place yourself in line with his forgiving power and your sins will be forgiven."\(^{54}\) Essentially, traditional Christianity teaches that man is punished for its sins, while Unity insists that man is punished by its sins. Indeed, sin in general has been deemphasized by many in Unity, with several ministers referring to it as "Self Imposed Nonsense."\(^{55}\)

Unity interprets the concept of heaven, like everything else, in its own unique way. Charles Fillmore bluntly states that, "No one should be deluded with the vague assumption that there is a place in the skies, or on some far away planet, called heaven. There is not the shadow of foundation in either the old or new Testaments for such doctrine."\(^{56}\) Rather, heaven is "The unlimited spiritual consciousness where mind and body are equal in all activities."\(^{57}\) In other words, heaven is a spiritual "state of mind," of being, that we (can) exist in right now. Thus Unity's emphasis on our current life in this world, rather than worrying about an afterlife. Fillmore stressed that, "God is, and we are. Let us live in His world, not in a world-to-be tomorrow, next month, next year, or

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\(^{52}\) C. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 21 February 1912.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid.  
\(^{55}\) Eileen Goor, email to author, 6 January 2006.  
\(^{56}\) C. Fillmore, *Thought*, February 1895, 479.  
next century, but here and now.\textsuperscript{58} Emilie Cady bases the idea firmly in Scripture when she related that Jesus once explained to his followers, “How they might find the kingdom of heaven \textit{within (sic)} themselves-the kingdom of love, of power, of life.”\textsuperscript{59} And as everything having to do with God, “The new heaven and the new earth that are now being established among men and nations the world over are based on love.”\textsuperscript{60}

Hell is regarded in a similar manner. Rather than a place of pain and punishment through eternal burning of its involuntary residents, consigned there by their own sins, Fillmore in \textit{Christian Healing} explains hell with the following: “Modern interpreters of the Scriptures say that the “hell of fire” referred to by Jesus means simply a state in which purification is taking place.” The words for “hell,” Fillmore quotes a presumed authority figure as saying, translated from the original Hebrew and Aramaic, “are simply mistranslations.” This premise helps to corroborate Unity’s metaphysical interpretation of Scripture, and, “Sustains the truth that hell is a figure of speech that represents a corrective state of mind.”\textsuperscript{61}

More specifically, hell is considered a reformation action, a “purification.” Speaking from the early part of the twentieth century, a time when many still believed in the redemptive power of prison to reform inmates, Fillmore equated hell with prison. He commented that,

\begin{quote}
Men are everywhere calling for broader educational methods in our prisons, and this demand is an acknowledgement of the necessity of purification through discipline and training in morals. This
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, February 1902, 75.
\textsuperscript{60} C. Fillmore, \textit{Christian Healing}, 138-39.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 123:
purifying process is the penalty taught by Jesus—the judgment passed on sinners—the “hell of fire.” When it is received in the right spirit, this fire burns up the dross in character and purifies mind and body.”

Unity’s conception of heaven and hell conforms to its emphasis on life in this world, here and now. It is both logical and rational; heaven and hell are both referred to often enough in Scripture to require explanation and geographical location, but the traditional identification of heaven with the sky and hell with the underground originated during a time of belief in a flat earth, not to mention before modern astronomy and geology. The idea of heaven and hell as states of mind make intuitive sense, as well.

Since Unity does not recognize evil as a separate permanent principle, then it cannot possibly believe in a God-like entity who is all evil, such as the Devil, whose role is to promote the practice of evil. But since the Devil is a significant figure in traditional Christianity, Unity as a Christian and biblically based movement has to address the concept.

While not recognizing an anthropomorphic Satan, Charles Fillmore’s definition of him includes his main role as seen by all of Christianity—temptation to evil. He explains that “Satan is the personal mind that tempts man to try experience without knowledge. In divine illumination man does not consciously enter into that dual condition typified by ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ Good is all; evil is that which might be if man forsook his guiding light.” In other words, it is a state of consciousness—the “personal” mind, the one that relies upon physical sensations and intellect rather than

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62 Ibid., 124.
63 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 56.
spiritual knowledge and intuition, that plays the role of Tempter of evil. Evil itself he consistently identified with ignorance of God's presence and goodness, which in turn led to separation from Him.

Myrtle Fillmore confirms this definition, and explains further about the role of angels: "The Carnal mind is the only devil there really is, and of course, it doesn't intend to give up its reign in the individual; so when the Spirit of Truth sends it "angels" of light in human consciousness, the "old devil" of carnal mind does all it might to destroy the messengers of Truth."\(^{64}\) Thus she equates angels with communication from God, in the form of a common Divine analogy, light.

Lowell Fillmore clarified it even more, as well as pointing out the obvious solution: "The Devil is the (individual's) state of mind that is averse to the perfect creation. The Devil is really the embodiment of your wrong attitude toward life, and he can be overcome only when you eliminate your adverse state of mind and put in its place a Christlike state of mind."\(^{65}\) Charles offered a specific affirmation to help overcome temptations from one's own personal devil:

To know yourself as a son of God is to overcome the "devil"—To overcome, say: *I put Satan behind me by the realization that God is my Father. I am centered in Him, and all things are under His dominion. I live in the infinite Power that produces all self-control. I have no necessity for controlling people. Events and people are controlled by divine law. There is an eternal law of justice. I am one with that law and I rest in it.*\(^{66}\)(sic)

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\(^{64}\) M. Fillmore, letter to Stella Paulus, 6 October 1930, as quoted in Vahle, 12.
Aristotle

So how rational is this teaching of Unity regarding God as Good, sin, heaven and hell? We can test its reasonableness by comparing how a rigorously logical thinker such as Aristotle treats the whole topic.

God, who is pure form, is the most perfectly realized being of all, but this does not mean that less perfect substances are defective or evil. On the contrary, everything in the universe is in the process of realizing its true form or essence – of becoming as perfect as possible, given the limitations of its structure. In this sense, the natural universe – the world of Being – is not only not-evil, it is positively good.67

This comment from a current scholar admirably sums up Aristotle’s view on goodness and evil. Just as Unity did not, Aristotle also did not believe in evil as a fundamental, permanent, principle or force. He had multiple reasons for this belief. One lay in his view of the very nature of the universe itself as knowable. He thoroughly rejected Plato’s concept of duality, of separate and idealized “Forms” existing outside the known universe somewhere as pure versions of concepts we experience here on earth. This concept of duality, in fact, is a direct antecedent of the Christian, (and Unity’s) worldview of God and the heavenly sphere as separately existing perfect forms. Aristotle, therefore, is approaching his conclusion from the opposite direction than Platonic based Christianity does. As the original empiricist, Aristotle held that “There is nothing in it (the world) that cannot enter into man’s experience of it. . . Whatever exists

67 Rubenstein, 178.
has a (material) "form" or "essence" by which it can be understood." The lack of existence of any kind of separate idealized principles, other than the Prime Mover itself, precludes any possibility of absolute evil existing independently.

Aristotle also dealt with "final cause" (God as a physical or mathematical principle and basis of life) and equated it automatically with an object's purpose in life, its "good." This applied both to animate and inanimate objects, with the latter able to achieve a purpose only with the intervention of something else. "For the final cause is not only 'the good for something;' (sic) but also 'the good which is the end of some action (sic). . . Thus X is necessarily existent; and qua necessary it is good, and is in this sense a first principle . . . without which excellence is impossible." The deceptively simple assignment of a deliberate purpose in life to everything, the literal naming of that purpose "the Good", and association of fulfillment of that purpose with God, all serve to reinforce Aristotle's overall view of God and the universe as being all good with no existence of evil. His own conclusions read as follows: "The essential actuality of God is life most good and eternal. We hold, then, that God is a living being, eternal, most good."

Aristotle is arguing here that everything has a purpose (verified through his scientific observations and studies) and therefore God must exist -- for something must have provided that purpose to us. Unity (likely joined by mainstream Christianity) would argue the reverse -- that because of God's existence, we have purpose to our lives. Both

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68 Randall, 97.
69 X = Final cause, composed of spiritual substance, in preparation for being identified as God.
70 Met 12.1072b28-32.
Unity and Aristotle, though, despite their opposite approaches here, agree that God, and the universe, is fundamentally good.

Aristotle does not explicitly deny the presence of evil at times; he lived during a tumultuous period that saw his patron and father-in-law Hermias captured and tortured to death, and his former employer Philip of Macedon and his prize student Alexander embark upon the forcible creation of an enormous empire. However, identical to Unity’s teachings, he held firmly to the belief that evil existed only in connection with specific acts by people. Unlike Unity, he does not seek to change people’s behavior and improve their lives, but instead, without passing any moral judgment on people, he merely seeks to understand people as they are.

Aristotle also has a more specific argument against the existence of evil. This one involves his definition of potentiality versus actuality, important principles in his science and logic. He started with the premise that actuality is always first, because if potentiality came first, then what would cause it to transition to actuality? The universe and all in it might never exist, save in mere potential.71 He also proves that “Nothing eternal is potential.”72 Evil, however, since it is one of two contrary possibilities (good or evil) must exist initially as a potentiality, before being actualized in an act or a person. Thus evil as a potentiality could not exist initially, either with or as part of an eternal, spiritual substance. Therefore, Aristotle concludes that:

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71 Met 9.1050b2-4.
Clearly . . . evil does not exist apart from things; (sic) for evil is by nature posterior to potentiality. Nor is there in things which are original and eternal (Divine substances) any evil or error, or anything which has been destroyed--for destruction is an evil. 73

This reasoning represents yet another approach unavailable to Unity, which because of its reliance on the Platonic world of Forms holds that potential does indeed precede actuality.

Beyond Aristotle’s rejection of any fundamental evil among primary substances, he was convinced the universe is well governed by its first principles for our good. To those who disagreed with his ideas on first principles, he countered with the conclusion to book twelve, “As for those who . . . go on generating one substance after another and finding different principles for each one, they make the substance of the universe incoherent . . . and give us a great many governing principles. But the world must not be governed badly: The rule of many is not good; let one be the ruler.”74

Aristotle believes not only that the world is all “good,” but that it actually aims towards an even better goal – pleasure. His inquiry into the nature of First Cause, the Prime Mover, moved directly from proof of its existence and nature as all good, to the following characterization of it: “Its life is like the best which we temporarily enjoy. It must be in that state always (which for us is impossible), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And for this reason waking, sensation and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are pleasant because of them.)”75 Aristotle reveals his true optimism

73 Met. 9.1051a19-21.
74 Met 12.1075b38-1076a5.
75 Met 12.1072b16-19.
in this conception of the world as all good and pleasure oriented, as well as his belief in
the orderly "ruling of the world."

This is a far cry from the world of humanity born in suffering with Original Sin,
trying to avoid eternal banishment to hell from a vengeful Old Testament-style Judeo-
Christian God. However, it also differs significantly from Unity's all goodness, or at
least Charles Fillmore's initial teachings on sensual (carnal) pleasures as major sources of
sin. As mentioned previously, most Unity representatives do not currently emphasize or
agree with this particular teaching of the Fillmores, so today Unity's teachings resemble
even more closely Aristotle's views on the goodness of the world and innocence of
physical pleasure.
Chapter 4
The Soul, and Life Here on Earth

Aristotle’s soul

Commonly, religious belief systems address the existence and fate of the very essence of life, the soul, as one of the fundamental questions of life. As an observer and philosopher of life as well as a scientist, Aristotle could not fail to take an interest in the same topic. He sees the soul as the heart, the distinguishing personality and skill set, the very life itself of every living thing. As such he assigns appropriate responsibility to it for generating a being’s thoughts and actions, and it plays the primary role in determining both one’s immediate and eventual fates. Similarly, Unity credits the soul with the central role of containing all of a person’s consciousness, thus endowing it with ultimate responsibility for the outcome of his or her life. Unity’s soul is also similar to Aristotle in the greater degree of effort expected of it than in traditional Christianity, effort expressed primarily through proper thinking patterns and consistent identification of Truth principles. Despite these similarities in function, Unity’s overall conception of the soul more closely resembles mainstream Christianity than it does Aristotle, because of the former’s shared belief in a physically separable soul that enters the material body at birth and leaves it at death for another destination, contrasted with Aristotle’s view of a soul fundamentally integrated with the body, as inseparable from it as walking is from the
legs. This Platonic view of the nature of the soul is the single greatest difference between Unity and Aristotle, and not coincidentally marks one of the closest areas of agreement between Unity and traditional Christianity. However, this fact should not diminish the significance of the real similarities between the Greek philosopher’s view and Unity’s.

One of Aristotle’s works, *Eudemus*, advances the idea of the deathlessness of the soul. It laments a man’s death, looks for faith, and pictures death as a release of an immortal independent soul. This, however, seems most likely to have been written early in his career while he was still heavily influenced by Plato (probably while a student at Plato’s Academy).\(^1\) Examination of Aristotle’s later work, such as *On the Soul* and *Nichomachean Ethics*, reveals a very different idea, logically reasoned and more in keeping with Aristotle’s overall developed beliefs.

Aristotle’s work known today as *On the Soul*, or *De Anima* in Latin, could just as accurately be translated from Greek as “On Living and Knowing,” since it addresses the Greek term *psuchê*, (psyche in English) which refers to that which sets off and distinguishes “living” beings from those that are not living.\(^2\) All living things, according to Aristotle, possess this *psuchê*, or “animator” of life force, (hence its Latin translation) which does bear many of the same characteristics of our contemporary definition of the human soul. However, Aristotle’s soul is far more fundamental to its owner. Its main difference is that it consists of a being’s essential *principles*, its complete characteristics and capacities as a living being, rather than being one separate component containing someone’s spiritual allotment. Aristotle’s definition of soul inevitably means that all

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1 Randall, 14.
2 Barnes, 107.
living things have it, in contrast to the Christian “rational” soul, which is possessed exclusively by human beings.

In order to arrive at his final definition of soul, Aristotle characteristically surveyed the many existing theories regarding the topic. They ranged from psuchê as material elements such as fire, air, or water; to powers or attributes such as motion itself, breathing, and thinking; to composites such as “harmony.”3 The widespread (then and now) belief that soul was a physical element within the body and thus separable, similar to the later Christian view of a soul as independent of any body, he dismissed:

All . . . that these thinkers do is to describe the specific characteristics of the soul; they do not try to determine anything about the body which is to contain it, as if it were possible, as in the Pythagorean myths, that any soul could be clothed upon with any body—an absurd view, for each body seems to have a form and shape of its own. It is as absurd as to say that the art of carpentry could embody itself in flutes; each art must use its tools, each soul its body.”4

Instead, he starts with an unassailable premise: “Now since some things can exist in separation and others cannot, it is the former that are substances. And therefore all things have the same causes, because without substance there can be no affections and motions.”5 Now he assigns soul its central role: “Next we shall see that these causes are probably soul and body, or mind, appetite and body.”6 Not only is soul fundamental to a being’s identity, but he is equating it with appetite and the mind itself. More specifically,
he is defining it as the form or attributes of a living being. It is as exclusively associated with one particular living creature as that being’s skills and personality. In On the Soul, his main inquiry is, “What is life? What are living, sensing, and knowing?” His formal definition of psuchē therefore reads “We must describe it as the first grade of actuality of a natural organized body.” He then defines actuality as having two main gradations; that of possessing a power, and that of the actual exercise of that power. Psuchē is regarded as the first “actuality” (potentiality), for example possessing knowledge when asleep, and exercising that knowledge when awake.

He rejects any spiritual origin for soul, such as the widespread belief in atoms whirling in a continuous circle, in a divine way mimicking or connected to the endless rotation of the divine stars, imparting life force in the form of motion to animate bodies. This rejection is primarily based on classic Aristotelian applied logic—does part or all of this entire “circle” of atoms connect to the rest of the body? Are they supposed to be in motion or at rest? Either way, wouldn’t there be conflict and pain when the body was in the opposite of its natural state – at rest when motion was called for, or in motion if rest was the natural state? Aristotle then remarks that the “cause of the revolutions of the heavens is left obscure.” After brief speculation on that himself, he concedes that: “Since this sort of consideration is more appropriate to another field of speculation, let us

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7 Even grammatically it is generally referred to without the preceding article “the” as befits an adjective rather than a noun.
8 Soul 2.1.16.
9 Later designated as potentiality in Metaphysics.
10 Soul 2.1.17.
11 Soul 1.3.15.
dismiss it for the present.”

This is consistent with the development throughout his career of an insistence on empiricism, the study of only observable nature, and what he feels we can learn about.

Aristotle’s masterpiece on human behavior, the *Nichomachean Ethics*, was probably written fairly late in his career, and thus reflects his correspondingly greater experience in observing human and animal life as well as his typically rigorous analytical skills. He adopts the prevailing view of soul having two main aspects, “one irrational and the other capable of reason.”

The irrational part he subdivides into two more components, a “vegetative” part which causes nutrition and growth, common to all living things, most active during sleep; and a conscious part, “the seat of the appetites and of desire in general,” which “opposes and runs counter to principle.”

The latter is essentially the conscious part of the soul from which people’s (or animal’s) immediate impulses originate.

The portion of the soul capable of reason is the most important part of the whole thing. This reasoning part functions most strongly in those who consistently demonstrate virtue, because not only does it determine the Truth, but overrides the impulsive part to enforce adherence to that Truth and thus practice virtue. One’s soul directs a person to demonstrate two main kinds of virtue, according to Aristotle: the intellectual kind, and the moral kind.

Thus while the former requires intelligence or talent to achieve it, the latter can be attained by anyone with the proper disposition, such as gentleness and

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12 *Soul* 1.3.15.
13 *Nichomachean Ethics* 1.13.9. References to this work cite book, section, line number.
14 *Ethics* 1.13.11-18.
15 *Ethics* 1.13.20.
temperance.\textsuperscript{16} Aristotle recognizes, however, that both kinds of virtue are defined by that person’s society, not solely by one’s own or somebody’s divine judgment.

Aristotle identifies three specific “elements” within the soul which “control action and the attainment of truth: namely, Sensation, Intellect, and Desire.”\textsuperscript{(sic)}\textsuperscript{17} These elements roughly correspond with the vegetative, the intellectual, and the impulse portions of the soul. But they are significant because Aristotle specifies that “the virtue of a faculty is related to the special function which that faculty performs.”\textsuperscript{18} So, each of these specific faculties must operate to its full potential in order to achieve virtue. Since the purpose of the soul in general is to discover Truth, then each specific part of the soul can have virtue only by possessing “those dispositions which will best qualify them to attain truth.”\textsuperscript{19} Thus, Aristotle defines the virtuous soul as one that employs the conscious intellect to identify the “truth” of the proper actions to be performed in any situation, and enforces completion of those actions despite physical impulsive urges to the contrary, in a way that will gain praise in that person’s society. And since acting to achieve one’s full potentiality, in this case exercising full virtue of each of the soul’s faculties, is a person’s ultimate goal in life, then full and proper operation of the soul results in happiness for the individual.

As Aristotle’s analysis of life moved up through the various levels starting with the simple life of all living things, to the sensing that animals are capable of, to the unique thought of humans, he left an opening for later Christian theologians. The Greek word

\textsuperscript{16} Ethics 1.13.20.
\textsuperscript{17} Ethics 6.2.1.
\textsuperscript{18} Ethics 6.1.7.
\textsuperscript{19} Ethics 6.2.1.
nous, which has been variously translated as intelligence, mind, imagination, thought, knowing, and by later commentators as active intellect, was considered by the Greek philosophical tradition, including Aristotle himself, to be the “highest” (best) function possible.\textsuperscript{20} Nous is the ability “to know” that makes such a dramatic opening in Metaphysics. Just as with all major attributes that Aristotle addresses, there are two parts to this active intellect, or “mind” as it is translated in this text – the power of it (which all humans possess), and the actuality of it (when someone is actually doing it.) In the latter form Aristotle explained that;

Mind is not at one time knowing and at another not. When mind is set free from its present conditions it appears as just what it is and nothing more: this alone is immortal and eternal . . . and without it nothing thinks.”\textsuperscript{21}

This hint at part of the active intellect being “immortal and eternal” when “set free from present conditions” was seized upon by later commentators, particularly Thomas Aquinas, as evidence of Aristotle’s belief in the idea of a separate and independent Christian style soul.\textsuperscript{22} Indeed, when discussing his contention that formal causes must coexist with their effects, Aristotle questions, “Whether any form remains also afterwards,” and mentions the soul, or at least the intelligent part of it, as an example of something that may outlast its “effect”, in this case its living body.\textsuperscript{23}

Ascribing a definite belief in a physically separable part of the soul to Aristotle, however, would be contrary to his entire conception of the origins and functioning of

\textsuperscript{20} Randall, 6.  
\textsuperscript{21} Soul 3.5.4.  
\textsuperscript{22} Randall, 94.  
\textsuperscript{23} Met 12.1070a30.
mind. In brief, thinking depends upon imagination, which depends on sense perception, which is carried out only by a person capable of it. Therefore *when thought occurs*, it might in a sense be separate by rising to comprehend universal truths, but it is entirely dependent physically and chronologically on a person capable of thinking that thought. The obvious inconsistency in the logic between an active intellect becoming “immortal and eternal . . . when set free” with his contention of thought being physically tied to the body through sense perception led some to charge that Aristotle had not fully completed his analysis of this particular concept and “fell back on a Platonism.”

\[24\] Randall, 105.
Unity’s Soul

Interestingly enough, Aristotle’s soul is very similar to the Hebrew Old Testament idea of soul, represented by the Hebrew word nepes. It was used to refer to “the life principle or living being.”\(^\text{25}\) The King James Version of the Bible often renders nepes as “life” rather than “soul”. The same word is used in reference to living animals in Genesis, meaning that animals and humans share this “life,” identical with Aristotle’s usage of the term psuchê. In the Old Testament, then, “a mortal is a living soul rather than having a soul.”\(^\text{26}\) (emphasis mine) Since Cyrus the Great had helped the Hebrews to reestablish the kingdom of Israel in the sixth century B.C.E., and they had recently clarified and standardized their conception of Judaism during the Babylonian captivity, it is very likely that there was some direct contact, or at least indirect diffusion, between the two Mediterranean societies by the time Aristotle wrote in the third century B.C.E.

The New Testament used the same Greek term as Aristotle, psuchê. It does not reference it nearly as much as in the Old Testament, however, instead using words such as pneuma in similar situations that translate as “spirit.” Psuchê is used in a broader sense in the New Testament, variably referring to one’s physical life, the whole person, and emotions. In fact the adjectival form of the word translated as “soulish” indicates someone governed by physical sensation, someone who is unable to comprehend or receive the spirit of God because they are too much in their body. Thus, soul even in the


\(^{26}\) Ibid.
New Testament generally relates humans directly to the animal world, while it is spirit that allows a relationship with God.\textsuperscript{27}

However, there are some passages in the New Testament that seem to imply an immortal soul separable from the body, such as this one from Matt 10:28: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”\textsuperscript{28} Though the passage does not clarify any details about soul other than implying its basic separability, it serves as an example of the sort of passages that support the belief in a separate, immortal human soul, developed almost from the beginning of Christianity as evidenced by the writings of Augustine and the Apostle Paul himself.

Without detailed guidance in Scripture, an enormous variety of beliefs regarding soul has arisen among the various Christian denominations. Roman Catholic dogma holds that the soul comprises “basically, all that a human person is ...except for the physical body. [It is] used in Scripture as synonymous with ‘spirit’ in regards to humans. The body perishes, but the soul is immortal. As such, it contains all elements of personality, memory, and non-material individuality.”\textsuperscript{29} Scripture itself, though, sometimes distinguishes soul from spirit: “St. Paul for instance prays that God may sanctify his people ‘wholly’, with ‘spirit and soul and body’ kept sound and blameless at the Lord’s coming.”\textsuperscript{30} The Vatican denies that this “introduces a duality into the soul,” or changes

\textsuperscript{27} Baker’s Evangelical Dictionary.
\textsuperscript{28} Matt 10:28, as quoted in Baker’s.
\textsuperscript{29} Data Rat Theological Glossary, http://www.datarat.net/DR/ FramesLexGloss.html. accessed 13 March 2006. s.v. “Soul.”
its basic definition of soul in any way.\textsuperscript{31} It explains that “Spirit” signifies in this case the
divine end that humanity can reach and the potential of one’s soul to “be raised . . . to
communion with God.”\textsuperscript{32} Most Protestant and Evangelical denominations believe in
differing versions of this, though generally of the same fundamental character: an
independent, separable, immortal soul containing more or less the essence of a person’s
personality, consciousness and memories.

The differences in Christian beliefs in the soul come in two main areas: the origins
of the soul and the status of the soul after death. Some argue for the theory of
Preexistence, meaning that all souls are eternal and have existed since the beginning of
time; others propose the concept of Traduction, which means that souls are created by the
parents, in a similar manner and at the same time as the physical fetus; but most believe
in the idea of Creationism, which is “the doctrine that the soul is not derived as the body
is, but owes its existence to the creative power of God.”\textsuperscript{33}

The status of the soul after death engenders the greatest disagreements among
different denominations, including Unity. Some believe that after death “the soul at the
point of death, immediately becomes present at the end of time, without experiencing any
time passing between.”\textsuperscript{34} Others adhere to “soul sleep”, meaning that the soul goes into a
coma-like, unconscious state after death of the body until being woken up at Final

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Systematic Theology Vol. II (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library at Calvin College,
Judgment. The majority, however, like the Catholic Church and Unity, believe that the soul exists independently in a detached, conscious state after death of the body. Here, however, they differ again, as Catholic dogma introduces an immediate judgment of Heaven, Purgatory or Hell for all souls, and permanent residence with God in heaven for the first two. Other groups believe that the final Resurrection will eventually restore every soul to its original physical body, to live forever physically with God. The latter group includes Jehovah’s Witnesses, except that they believe the soul is more the “breath of life” within a body, and dies with the body, depending utterly upon God for an eventual resurrection.

As in every other Christian denomination, the soul holds a critical place in Unity theology. Its nature, however, differs markedly from the others. As Paul seemed to describe literally, Unity regards a person as consisting of three main parts – spirit, soul, and body. Spirit is the immanent portion of God that is within and part of everyone. Unity’s Metaphysical Bible Dictionary defines soul as follows: “Soul is man’s consciousness – that which he has apprehended or developed out of Spirit; also the impressions that he has received from the outer world. Soul is both conscious and subconscious.” The role left for the body, then, is as “the form of expression of both spirit and soul.”

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*
38 *Wikipedia*
39 Ibid.
40 *Metaphysical Bible Dictionary.* s.v. “Soul”.
41 Ibid.
Because it includes all of consciousness, the soul is a more significant percentage of a person’s overall identity than for some other Christian groups that define soul more narrowly. Unity sees soul as the central link between body and actual Spirit, which is God-mind within us. It contains the blueprint of our body, the “Idea” of it in a Platonic sense. And just as the human body is the physical expression of the human soul, in turn “the soul of man is the expressed idea of man in Divine Mind.”\textsuperscript{42} Therefore, God’s ideas of man express themselves in our soul, and our soul then expresses itself as our bodies.

This definition of soul, thus far, differs in important aspects but still resembles the mainstream Christian view of soul. It very closely resembles that of early Christian beliefs and seems to be based on a more literal interpretation of Scripture. Its capabilities and eventual fate, however, differ more markedly, as Unity does not believe in the traditional Christian views of Heaven and Hell, as discussed previously. The existence of Purgatory, as an eleventh century creation with no real Scriptural basis, is completely rejected by Unity.\textsuperscript{43}

In addition to its similarity with other Christian concepts of soul, this definition of soul as holding the memory of man’s physical bodies is essentially a Platonic Idea, and contrasts with the Aristotelian version. The biggest difference between the two lies in the nature of Aristotle’s soul as an integrated characteristic of the person, defining his or her personality and abilities, and literally animating their life with energy and purpose. With his soul defined as the nature of a specific person, it obviously is not separable and

\textsuperscript{42} C. Fillmore, \textit{The Revealing Word}, 182, as quoted in Gospel Glossary, s.v. “Soul.”
therefore completely precludes the possibility of the soul “entering” the body at birth and exiting at death. Unity’s Christian conception of the soul sees it as separable, however, allowing it free reign to enter the body upon birth and leave it after death.

In fact, the separability of the soul leads directly to another major difference between Unity and Aristotle’s views. Charles Fillmore liberally interpreted Jesus’ teaching regarding (a separable) soul and hell as, “It is not a saving of the soul from a mythical place called hell that Jesus talked of, but the purification of the soul while yet in the body to the end that this same body may be raised up out of its tomb of matter and spiritualized until it is a fit home for that illumined soul.”44 However, since only Jesus has achieved this full “spiritualization”, everyone else who has ever died, according to Fillmore, saw their soul go not “to a far-off heaven or hell but continued to exist in close relation to family, friends, and loved ones in a mental environment similar to the earthly one,” that he described as “the mental plane of consciousness, which is right here in our midst. Consequently, they do not go anywhere. They come in close relation with us mentally.”45 Myrtle Fillmore believed additionally that full consciousness existed beyond physical death, explaining: “There is no reason to suppose that a soul out of the physical body is not aware of what is going on about it. At least, since the soul is consciousness, it is most reasonable to assume that it is aware of all that really interests it and all that it desires to identify itself with.”46 Its only real limitation, in fact, was that though “the soul continues to exist just as it is . . . it no longer has the vehicle of expression.”47

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44 C. Fillmore, _Unity_, June 1901, 263.
45 C. Fillmore, _Unity_, January 1907, 58.
46 M. Fillmore, letter to Mrs. D’Isay, 23 July 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 28.
In other words, human souls leave the body at death, and then remain nearby until eventually reincarnating into a newly created body. Aristotle’s soul, of course, dies with the person that it is inseparably bound with.

The most important function of soul, as Unity conceives it, is to act as “a place where we can consciously meet God and receive a flood of new life into not only our mind but also our body.” 48 Thus, the soul is where God as Spirit literally meets man, making it the critical connector through which all of the spiritual processes of Unity such as prayer and affirmations work to achieve their results. As Charles Fillmore put it, prayer in Unity enables “the bringing forth of divine ideas in the soul or consciousness of man and the bringing of these ideas into expression in the body.” 49 (emphasis mine)

These “ideas” are most often states of being such as health, happiness, prosperity, and harmony.

Both schools of thought stress the active nature of this quest for divinity. Proper function of the soul in Unity requires “correct” thought habits developed through affirmations and prayer, as discussed previously, which in turn requires self-discipline. Aristotle also emphasized that even knowing the right thing to do was inadequate, that one must act in accordance with virtue, (more often than not with the help of laws and training) and that the whole process of identifying the appropriate actions, and enforcing the body’s following through with them, demonstrated proper functioning of the intellect and soul and therefore achieved divinity. Unity, in fact, unlike mainstream Christianity, specifically locates the necessary thought habits within the soul itself. Myrtle Fillmore

48 C. Fillmore, *Teach us to Pray*, 6-7, as quoted in *Gospel Glossary*, s.v. “Soul.”
warned that, "Unless the soul is strong and positive, and can maintain its hold upon Christ, the Truth, it is apt to suffer adverse experiences."\textsuperscript{50} Charles Fillmore agreed that, "The muscles of the soul are as flabby in most people as those of the infant. They have lost control of them through ignorance and neglect."\textsuperscript{51} This places more emphasis specifically on the soul, primarily during life, in contrast to traditional Christian dogma that sees the soul as a more passive recipient of consequences after death incurred by actions undertaken during life by the whole person.

Both Unity and Aristotle emphasized an overriding priority of discerning the "truth" of identity and appropriate actions. Aristotle urges full utilization of the conscious intellect and hard logic to determine what those actions should be, as judged by society and one's peers; Unity prefers the use of prayer, meditation, and intuition, based on God's perceived truth rather than societal norms. To perform those actions Aristotle calls for the overriding of impulsive urges through self-control, while Unity teaches followers to \textit{eliminate} impulsive thoughts completely through the constant practice of prayer and meditation.

Like Aristotle, Lowell Fillmore believed that a person's main resource for achieving the desired states of being, which reflect divine perfection, was the conscious mind aspect of the human soul.\textsuperscript{52} He saw it as powerful enough to unite spirit, soul and body in activity and goals, just as Aristotle saw an intelligent person's wisdom and prudence as necessary and sufficient to achieve virtue and happiness, which directly reflected

\textsuperscript{50} M. Fillmore, letter to Stella Paulus, 6 October 1930, as quoted in Vahle, 12.
\textsuperscript{51} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, June 1903, 375.
\textsuperscript{52} Vahle, 107.
divinity. In fact, Unity’s teaching that Jesus, through spiritual work during his lifetime, perfected the conscious mind and “became unified with Christ,”

Aristotle’s contention that human thought by itself is the only genuine connection with the divine that human beings can make. Unity, though, takes the Christian (and Platonic) view of the soul as having the potential to achieve divinity, while Aristotle’s psuchê, as part of one’s life force, was always active in reality, and prior to any potentiality.

Myrtle Fillmore believed firmly in humankind’s immortality. “Life cannot be defeated!” she proclaimed, “Life is Eternal and unchangeable.”

Aristotle would have agreed with this wholeheartedly, as his divine substances that made up the building blocks of life were also eternal and unchangeable. More specifically regarding soul, in theory nothing prevents Aristotle’s soul from performing the same function as Unity’s, that of linking the body with the Divine Spirit which both parties agree exist within every person, because both believed the soul was a person’s guiding conscious. Unity says the soul is consciousness itself – incorporating human thought, intelligence, personality, all that we are. Aristotle says soul is our thinking, our essence of humanity, and our connection to the divine.

The fundamental reason for the differences in belief in the soul between Aristotle and Unity originates from the differing goals of the two belief systems and their accompanying approaches. Aristotle’s observations attempted to understand life as it lived, as deeply as possible, from an as objective perspective as he could achieve, usually with the sole purpose of knowledge for its own sake, with no intention of ever using this

53 L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 9 September 1939.
54 M. Fillmore, letter to Juliet Heer, 31 October 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 28.
information for any practical end. The glaring exceptions to this, of course, are his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, which he regarded as “Practical Philosophy.” He clearly states his purpose for undertaking these studies in his introduction to the *Ethics*:

“The present treatise is not, like the others, undertaken for the sake of understanding – for we are conducting the enquiry not in order to know what goodness is but in order to become good men.”

Unity, in contrast to the bulk of Aristotle’s work though similar to his intent in the *Ethics* and *Politics*, exists not to observe, but to effect change. The headquarters of the Unity movement, located at Unity Village near Kansas City, Missouri, has long been known as “The Unity School of Practical Christianity,” because of its expressed purpose to help people learn how to apply the Unity principles of healing and achieving Spirit. The ultimate goal of Unity, of course, is to improve people’s lives through greater health, prosperity, and harmony, and thereby to achieve the “Kingdom of Heaven”, which it teaches can be found within each of us, not high up in a physically separate Heaven.

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55 *Ethics* 1.1.1.
Unity on Life on Earth

Aristotle’s and Unity’s conceptions of the soul possess another fundamental similarity about them, which is their overwhelming emphasis on our current life, almost to the exclusion of any kind of afterlife. Though the focus on physical life makes sense for a philosopher/scientist whose first love was biology, it seems unusual for a religion, particularly a Christian movement.

One example of this focus on our physical lives is the general lack of discussion in Unity religious services regarding the concept of reincarnation. Though this occupies an official place in Unity theology, anecdotal evidence indicates it is seldom, if ever, addressed by Unity ministers during regular services. The two most common Unity religious education classes are 4T\textsuperscript{56} and Emilie Cady’s Lessons in Truth, neither of which addresses the topic in the slightest. Indeed, Cady did not believe in reincarnation at all. “Death,” she believed, “is simply being born out of this hampered sphere into a grander, fuller, freer life.”\textsuperscript{57} The facts that Cady’s book is still the overall top selling Unity book, and her live and written teachings have formed such an integral component of Unity’s outreach, demonstrate both that the topic of reincarnation is not among the movement’s priorities, and the wide latitude allowed all individual beliefs. It also demonstrates Unity’s emphasis on our sensible, physical lives, instead of an afterlife.

Unity’s focus on our physical lives is deliberate and consistent, and derives from its denial of a heaven or hell for souls to achieve. Charles Fillmore promised, “When we

\textsuperscript{56} Tithing of Time, Talent and Treasure for Prosperity and the Fullness of Life.  
\textsuperscript{57} Cady, God a Present Help, 106.
finally understand the facts of life andrid our minds of the delusion that we shall find immortal life after we die, then we shall seek more diligently to awaken the spiritual man within us.\textsuperscript{58} In an article in \textit{Unity} magazine, he was more blunt: “God is, and we are. Let us live in His world, not in a world-to-be tomorrow, next month, next year, or next century, but here and now.”\textsuperscript{59}

He urged followers to focus on their life right now as their prime opportunity to achieve their own divinity:

We must think life, talk life, and see ourselves filled with the fullness of life. When we are not manifesting life as we desire, it is because our thoughts and our conversation are not in accord with the life idea. Every time we think life, speak life, rejoice in life, we are setting free, and bringing into expression in ourselves more and more of the life idea.\textsuperscript{60}

This focus would immediately result in dramatic rewards for those who were able to achieve it, explaining, “The feature of happiness here and now is the beautiful part of Jesus’ teaching. He did not defer health nor salvation to a world to come after death; he taught that both are attainable wherever we are.”\textsuperscript{61} Fillmore bases this teaching on that cornerstone of Unity theology, the belief that Jesus’ “kingdom of heaven” is within us.

Taking life in general to the ultimate extreme, Lowell Fillmore stressed the importance of a concept called “living in the now,” a cornerstone of Unity teaching today. He believed that as people learned to focus more strongly on the present rather

\textsuperscript{58} C. Fillmore, \textit{Atom Smashing Power}, 13.
\textsuperscript{59} C. Fillmore, \textit{Unity}, February 1902, 75.
\textsuperscript{60} C. Fillmore, “Indispensable Assurance,” in Gaither, 315.
\textsuperscript{61} C. Fillmore, “Pure Reason,” in Gaither, 53.
than on the past or future, they would further develop their divine potential and become much healthier and happier in the process. "God lives in the now, and so must we," he commanded, and further explained:

In Truth there is only the now. The Spirit of god does not change, but is the same yesterday, today and forever. God lives in the eternal now, unaffected by time, place or events. Should we not continually rejoice in the consciousness of god's loving presence, which gives us an everlasting foundation of stability and firmness?\(^{62}\)

Unity's headquarters, as mentioned previously, calls itself the Unity School of Practical Christianity, because as Neal Vahle succinctly put it, "they apply Christian principles to improving the quality of everyday living."\(^{63}\) The cornerstone of this improvement in life, of course, is the law of mind action, which "can be learned and applied the same as any other law."\(^{64}\) Charles Fillmore explained of Unity,

It is not alone a religion in the sense that word is usually taken but is a rule of thinking, doing, living, and being. It is not only ethical but practical . . . the teachings of Jesus . . . are the most practical rules for daily living in all departments of life. They are vital to modern civilization and the very foundation of business stability.\(^{65}\)

Fillmore believed Unity out of all Christian groups best fulfilled Jesus' teaching because of this emphasis on the physical world. He said of Jesus,

\(^{63}\) Vahle, 1.
\(^{64}\) C. Fillmore in "Right Giving, the Key to Abundant Receiving," from *Prosperity* (Kansas City, MO: Unity School of Christianity, 1936), reprinted in Gaither, 270.
\(^{65}\) Ibid.
His was peculiarly a religion of works, and when the disciples of John the Baptist came to inquire as to his divinity, he told them to tell John what they saw: “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

He continued to call upon Jesus’ example to illustrate why his rules and religion were so practical and to show what Unity’s true purpose was, saying:

[Jesus] showed that religion is a hollow mockery unless it demonstrates, here and now, freedom from the ills of the flesh. He said that the evidences of a Christian and the signs that follow and bear witness to his belief or understanding are healing the sick, cleansing from sin, raising from death, and preaching the Word.

More concrete evidence of Unity’s intense focus on our material world comes from a list of their earliest class offerings. Charles Fillmore offered the first classes for Unity students in Kansas City starting July 26, 1896; they were entitled “Spiritual Healing,” and “Practical Christianity,” and consisted of twelve evening sessions conducted over a two-week period. They were based primarily on his own spiritual experiences and physical healing experiences.

The next year Myrtle joined Charles in offering a similar class called “Practical Christianity and Christian Healing.” This title by itself illustrates perfectly the close relationship existing in Unity between spiritual understanding and effort on one hand, and

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66 C. Fillmore in “Pure Reason,” in Gaither, 52.
67 Ibid., 56.
68 Unity, August 1896, 207.
69 Ibid.
70 Unity, January 1899, 325.
physical healing on the other. It also displays Unity’s almost single-minded focus on this life. The course contents also supported this intent, combining components such as how to activate the twelve powers of man through affirmations, denials and the “generative power of thought,” with theory on God and Jesus.\textsuperscript{71} The next course they offered also focused on this life by serving a practical purpose. It was called the “Advanced Course in Concentration,” and the powers of concentration that it attempted to help students develop were central to implementing tools like affirmations.\textsuperscript{72} Ultimately, the collective reward promised by Charles Fillmore if and when humanity achieves spiritual consciousness is worth all the effort – it is the “harmony and order on which all existence depends.”\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Unity, May 1899, 524-26.
\textsuperscript{72} Unity, December 1902, 371-72.
\textsuperscript{73} C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 37.
Aristotle on Life on Earth

Aristotle, like Unity, also focused overwhelmingly on understanding our physical world. Despite occasional brief speculations on the heavens and heavenly bodies, and a foray into first causes in the *Metaphysics*, he usually limited himself to understanding the people, flora and fauna of his native world, things that had material evidence to allow for discovery and proof. He flirted with religious theory when he examined existing beliefs on *psuchē*, but quickly rejected it as both unobservable and “more appropriate to another field of speculation.”\(^{74}\) As one modern commentator put it, “He did not aim to understand something else – the Heavenly Beauty in the sky, the moral order in the universe, the divine creator of the world – any of those things which men would like to find in the world, but which so far as the evidence goes, are not there. Aristotle tried to understand the world of Greece, that *was* there.”\(^{75}\)

In fact, just as Unity, Aristotle focused even more on *people* themselves, as the central aspect of life that needed explanation the most. Unlike modern physicists, who leave the study of life to the organic chemists and biologists, and unlike modern biologists, who leave the study of human life to medical doctors and psychiatrists, Aristotle tackled the physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of human life in dozens of works with an all out zeal.

Aristotle operated under the basic premise that the world is completely intelligible to humans with the power of thought. Therefore his criteria for “knowing” something

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\(^{74}\) *Soul* 1.3.1.

\(^{75}\) Randall, 3.
involved more than just sensations of something, or faith in an idea, but being able to state in precise language what that thing is, and why it is as it is.\textsuperscript{76} Even when addressing abstract topics in the \textit{Metaphysics}, he eventually has to offer a physical example. In the \textit{Ethics}, one of his main convictions is that wisdom is learning how to deal, not with what might be, but with what is. This makes it a prerequisite to achieving one’s purpose in life, because we need it in order to deal with the real world, which is the end all and be all for Aristotle.\textsuperscript{77} This is further evidenced by his overall direction in the \textit{Ethics} and \textit{Politics}, which concentrate on identifying real possibilities of action and achievement, rather than pure Platonic style ideals.\textsuperscript{78} His analysis of the purpose of existence of a polis, to provide not just the conditions for people to live, but to live well, also conforms to an emphasis on this life.

He admits the lure of trying to fully understand that which is “ungenerated and indestructible throughout all ages,” which he describes as “of the highest worth and are divine, but they are less open to knowledge.” The air of regret is obvious as he concludes, “but we can get more and better knowledge about the things near us.”\textsuperscript{79}

His view of human behavior also reflects his focus on this life. Rather than there being some universally applicable set of ethics, of appropriate moral behavior, he maintains that one must draw upon one’s wisdom and knowledge to determine the best thing to do in every specific situation, which changes with the local context. Thus one requires not just knowledge of ethics and rules, but also excellence of character. And the

\textsuperscript{76} Randall, 7.
\textsuperscript{77} Randall, 245.
\textsuperscript{78} Randall, 251.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{De Partibus Animalium} 1.5.644b23-645a31, as quoted in Randall, 221.
proper training produces such excellence, by moral education: hence moral education will be the chief end of all wise legislation. But it can’t be learned by reading or hearing about it from a teacher— it is only through the practice of performing good acts that we can become good ourselves, through actual experience and practice and training.

The ultimate example of Aristotle’s emphasis on this life, ironically enough, is his prescription for finding and participating in the divine. As the next chapter will discuss more thoroughly, Aristotle believes that humanity’s ultimate end is to fully exercise our intellect, guided by wisdom—satisfying our ultimate drive “to know,” and in knowing, to act in accordance with virtue and achieve well being and happiness. Thinking and acting in accordance with these dictates makes us most fully human, which in Aristotle’s eyes, leads directly to the divine. The twentieth century, which saw humanity harness the power of the atom, discover buried secrets of the earth, explore the moon and planets, and begin to map the human genome, is particularly well suited to philosophical and religious belief systems calling for humans to strive for their full potential and actively seek divinity.
Chapter Five

Why are we Here? How do we Find Happiness?

Aristotle

The topics of humanity’s purpose in life and recommended lifestyle are where the Unity School of Christianity’s theology and Aristotle’s metaphysical and ethical living views match most closely. Indeed, at times they are almost indistinguishable from each other. Aristotle posits that everything strives towards the goal of participating in the eternal and divine, and Unity as well maintains that every person’s purpose and goal is to achieve this same divine immortality through joining consciousness with God. Aristotle sees much of this being attempted through reproduction, as he had rejected immortality already: “No living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance (for nothing perishable can for ever remain one and the same.)”\(^1\) However, he believes that for a limited time at least, humans can participate in what is eternal and divine through their own faculty that is closest to the divine - pure thought, in a life of contemplation. As Aristotle might have said, the two schools of thought differ not in ends but only in means. Fundamentally, both believe wholeheartedly in the necessity and desire for people to reach their full divine potential during their mortal lifetime. Both believe this will be rewarded in this life with happiness and fulfillment, though Charles Fillmore and a minority of followers believed this would also result in physical immortality through a complete merger with the consciousness of God.

\(^1\) *Soul* 2.4.2.
“Aristotle’s whole philosophy is built around the categories of life . . . life is to be understood, not in terms of its elements and origins alone, but in terms of its ends.”

He was convinced that all living things are driven by appetite, or desire; primarily by the desire to achieve their own end, which he defined as that thing’s full potential as a member of a specific species. This “actualized”, or fulfilled, potential is their ultimate “Good.” For as Aristotle observes, “All things desire and love existence; but we exist in activity . . . in fact a fundamental principle of nature [is]: what a thing is potentially, that its work reveals in actuality.”

As for humans specifically, Aristotle posits in the *Metaphysics* that humans’ most divine activity is possession and comprehension of knowledge, “knowing” for short, *nous* in Greek. Thus, humans are the animal who *know*. Consequently, when Aristotle opens his *Metaphysics* with “All men by nature desire to know” he is not just noting an interesting characteristic of our makeup, but highlighting what he sees as our fundamental driving force, our motivation for everything we do in life.

So the question is, to what ultimate end, or good, is this drive “to know” taking us?

Aristotle operates from the basic premise that the universe and all its residents have a final cause, or purpose, for existence, as shown in his discussion of teleology in the *Metaphysics*. “Since nothing accidental is prior to that which is per se, neither are accidental causes prior. Therefore if chance or spontaneity is the cause of the universe,

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2 Randall, 243.
3 *Ethics* 9.7.3.
4 One commentator is convinced that Aristotle never would have made that claim if he had had the privilege of teaching in an American university. Randall, 1.
mind and nature are prior causes.”\textsuperscript{5} This quote illustrates Aristotle’s conception of deliberate purpose underlying all life in the universe. Though he devotes a page of his introduction to discussing his reasons for assuming this, he is not able to prove it in typical Aristotelian logic. He does offers some evidence for it in a separate work, \textit{De Partibus Animalium}, when he reasons that “Now, as each of the parts of the body is for something, just as every instrument or tool is for something, that is, for some action, it is evident that the body as a whole must be constituted for some complex action.”\textsuperscript{6} Some modern commentators distinguish his “natural ends” of every species from conscious intent, arguing that Aristotle did not intend to imply that every species, even humanity, was consciously created with a deliberately conceived purpose for living, as some religious scholars have interpreted him in the past.\textsuperscript{7} He certainly did not mean that every species’ final cause was meant to benefit humanity; rather he was clear that every species had its \textit{own} end, which actually closely approaches modern evolutionary theory. Aristotle is certainly touching on theological questions here, but does not address them more fully in the \textit{Ethics}, instead beginning with the supposition that we have a natural purpose, from some unspecified source, and then focusing his efforts on determining exactly what that purpose is and how best to fulfill it.

\textquotebegin{q}{Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking, seems to aim at some good: hence it has been well said that the Good is That}

\textsuperscript{5} Met 11.1065b4-5.
\textsuperscript{6} De Partibus Animalium 1.1.640b30-641a14., as quoted in Randall, 234.
\textsuperscript{7} Randall, 229.
at which all things aim,” Aristotle opened his Nichomachean Ethics with. “If therefore among the ends at which our actions aim there be one which we will for its own sake, while we will the others only for the sake of this . . . it is clear that this one ultimate End must be the Good, and indeed the Supreme Good. Will not then a knowledge of this Supreme Good be also of great practical importance for the conduct of life?” Here he clearly lays out the motivation for pursuing this line of inquiry. It is worth noting that he offers justification specific to this topic, the “practical importance to the conduct of life,” beyond the basic desire to know that fuels so much of his other researches. He also identifies his audience: “Moral Science may be of great value to those who guide their desires and actions by principle.” He refers here to the older and the mature, those capable of overruling feelings and passions and lack of self-discipline with reliance on discipline and knowledge.

Determining more precisely the specific good of humans entails some extra work to avoid hidden pitfalls. Aristotle is quite aware of them, however, and he carefully avoids them. He acknowledges that “Uncertainty surrounds the conception of the Good, because it frequently occurs that good things have harmful consequences: people have before now been ruined by wealth, and in other cases courage has cost men their lives.” He therefore specifies that his conclusions are general only, always subject to individual exceptions.

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8 *Ethics* 1.1.1.
9 Ibid. 1.2.1-3.
10 Ibid. 1.3.8.
11 Ibid. 1.3.3-4.
After an analysis of the linguistic and grammatical features and uses of the word "good" as a concept, Aristotle concedes that "Clearly good cannot be a single and universal general notion; if it were, it would not be predicable in all the Categories, but only in one."\textsuperscript{12} He also rejects the existence of this Ideal Good because it does not "square with the process" of discovery, citing the example of physicians who do not study a theoretical ideal of health in general, but only the health of specific individuals.\textsuperscript{13}

After surveying many of his contemporaries in Greece, Aristotle concludes that "There are three specially prominent Lives, the Life of Pleasure, the Life of Politics, and thirdly, the Life of Contemplation."\textsuperscript{14} Though he concedes that the majority of people identify their Good with pleasure, he dismisses that as "preferring what is only a life for cattle."\textsuperscript{15} "Men of refinement, on the other hand, and men of action think that the Good is honor," but Aristotle argues that honor depends on others' approval, while our Good should be something we can attain ourselves regardless of others' judgments.\textsuperscript{16} Virtue, on the other hand, can be earned in a more objective way. "It is clear therefore that in the opinion at all events of men of action, virtue is a greater good than honor; and one might perhaps accordingly suppose that virtue rather than honor is the end of the Political Life."\textsuperscript{17} But upon closer inspection, virtue comes up short also, since someone can

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ethics} 1.6.3.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. 1.6.15.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. 1.5.2.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 1.5.3.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 1.5.4.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 1.5.5-6.
either possess virtue without always acting in accordance with it, or live a life of misery due to some tragic occurrence while still being virtuous.\textsuperscript{18} Aristotle quickly dismisses wealth as an end, also, since it "is only good as being useful, a means to something else."\textsuperscript{19}

So what is this mysterious end, this good, this purpose of humanity, according to Aristotle? We know so far that it is something for the sake of which all things are done by us, either directly or indirectly. We can assume it is something that makes life desirable, since that is a prerequisite for working the hardest towards our good. The philosopher answers, "We take a self-sufficient thing to mean a thing which merely standing by itself alone renders life desirable lacking in nothing, and such a thing we deem happiness to be."\textsuperscript{20} "Happiness," he concludes, "being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim."\textsuperscript{21} So, what exactly is "happiness"?

Aristotle defines it as "The highest of all the goods that action can achieve," which "both the multitude and persons of refinement speak of it as Happiness, and conceive 'the good life' or 'doing well' to be the same thing as 'being happy.'"\textsuperscript{22} Happiness, however, can be a vague and inconsistent term, as Aristotle demonstrates by pointing out differences between various people's definitions of it, and even differences in the same

\textsuperscript{18} Ethics 1.5.5-6.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. 1.5.8.  
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. 1.7.7.  
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 1.7.8.  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. 1.4.1-2.
person’s definition of happiness based on the context of his or her current situation. Language itself introduces further ambiguities, as modern scholars characterize the Greek term that Aristotle actually used, *eudaimonia*, as probably meaning “well being” or “prosperity” more so than happiness. They point out that the term is generally used by Aristotle to denote a kind of activity rather than a state of feeling, which is consistent with Aristotle’s view of an end or good as motion related.

Since happiness is the Supreme Good, and “The good of man resides in the function of man,” in order to define happiness more precisely, Aristotle attempts to define the “function of man.” His result – “The Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and most perfect among them.” He also cautions that it takes a complete lifetime to achieve this kind of happiness, that a “brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely blessed and happy.” This is consistent with Aristotle’s usage of the term in the sense of “well being” or “prosperous” as well as being an activity, rather than the more common English usage of the word happiness to mean an emotional (and therefore transient) state of being. In his own words, “Again, our definition accords with the description of the happy man as one who ‘lives well’ or ‘does well’; for it has virtually identified happiness with a form of good life or doing well.”

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23 *Ethics* 1.4.3.
24 Ibid. 1.4.2, footnote 3 (ed. H. Rackham)
25 Ibid. 1.7.10.
26 Ibid. 1.7.15.
27 Ibid. 1.7.16.
28 Ibid. 1.8.4.
So to take it one step further, how do we “live well” in order to be happy, or feel successful? As Aristotle mentioned briefly in the previous paragraph, it has to do with virtue:

Happiness consists in activity in accordance with virtue, [and] it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of the best part of us... to have cognizance of what is noble and divine, either as being itself also actually divine, or as being relatively the divinest (sic) part of us, it is the activity of this part of us in accordance with the virtue proper to it that will constitute perfect happiness.\(^\text{29}\)

There are restrictions to this life of virtue. It is definitely not to be confused with the life of pleasure, as Aristotle warns “The life that conforms with virtue is thought to be a happy life; but virtuous life involves serious purpose, and does not consist in amusement.”\(^\text{30}\) He also explains why a life of pleasure does not equate to happiness: “Anybody can enjoy the pleasures of the body, a slave no less than the noblest of mankind; but no one allows a slave any measure of happiness, any more than a life of his own. Therefore happiness does not consist in pastimes and amusements, but in activities in accordance with virtue, as has been said already.”\(^\text{31}\) No one would consider a slave to be “doing well”, or prosperous, anyway – certainly some slaves in comfortable situations or with cheerful dispositions have been able to enjoy at least limited happiness, in our sense of the word. Epictetus, the well known slave who became a leading Stoic philosopher and favored advisor to Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, is an ideal example of this.

\(^{29}\) *Ethics* 10.7.1.

\(^{30}\) Ibid. 10.6.6.

\(^{31}\) Ibid. 10.6.8.
However, Aristotle goes on to propose something beyond even virtue. "The life of moral virtue, on the other hand, is happy only in a secondary degree." This surprising statement derives from the fact that moral virtue depends on at least limited interaction with other people, who are necessary to judge the presence of virtue in one. Aristotle continues to seek a perfect Supreme Good, now one that can be pursued even in isolation. Such a one is the life of intellectual contemplation. Not only does it possess what Aristotle terms "self-sufficiency," but it involves the highest form of activity, thought; it involves some pleasure and virtue; and it is an activity pursued for its own sake.

Aristotle determined that not only was this life of thought our absolute good, but that it allowed us to come closest to contacting and achieving our divinity.

It is the activity of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness . . . Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine . . . If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life. Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality, and do all that man may to live in accordance with the highest thing in him; for though this be small in bulk, in power and value it far surpasses all the rest.

Aristotle even references those travesties of virtue and honor, the Olympian gods, to provide more evidence for his argument. A brief analysis of their activities and attributes reveals that it would be "absurd" (closest translation of Aristotle's actual word) for them to carry on normal human activities that could be considered virtuous, and therefore their activities and effects are attributed to the gods.

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32 *Ethics* 10.7.9-8.1.
33 Ibid. 10.7.2-5.
34 Ibid. 10.7.7-8.
main distinguishing activity from mortal humans, representing their divinity, "is the
activity of contemplation; and therefore among human activities that which is most akin
to the divine activity of contemplation will be the greatest source of happiness."\(^{35}\)

Aristotle even speculates about the gods having a more direct role in our happiness.
"Now if anything that men have is a gift of the gods, it is reasonable to suppose that
happiness is divinely given—indeed of all man’s possessions it is most likely to be so,
inasmuch as it is the best of them all."\(^{36}\) He quickly shies away from this brief flirtation
with theology, though, by suggesting that the topic be addressed elsewhere.

Still, even if happiness is not sent us from heaven, but is won by
virtue and by some kind of study or practice, it seems to be one of
the most divine things that exist. For the prize and end of virtue
must clearly be supremely good—it must be something divine and
blissful. . . it can be attained through some process of study or effort
by all persons whose capacity for virtue has not been stunted or
maimed."\(^{37}\)

The access by "all" persons can be misleading, as elsewhere he makes clear that people
who are not older and wiser are incapable of distinguishing between selfish pleasure and
truly virtuous acts, consigning the majority to at least a temporary state of having their
capability for virtue "stunted or maimed."

There are other conditions that affect how well one is able to attain the classical
Greek version of happiness, "For it is impossible, or at least not easy, to play a noble part
unless furnished with the necessary equipment."\(^{38}\) He is referring to the big three -

\(^{35}\) Ethics 10.8.7.
\(^{36}\) Ibid. 1.9.2.
\(^{37}\) Ibid. 1.12.4.
\(^{38}\) Ibid. 1.8.15.
wealth, power and beauty - one or more of which is required, at least to some degree, to enable one to either consistently demonstrate virtue to his peers or pursue a "life of contemplation." Government also plays a role: "For we stated that the Supreme Good was the end of political science, but the principal care of this science is to produce a certain character in the citizens, namely to make them virtuous, and capable of performing noble actions." So, Aristotle views the "end," or primary duty, of government to help its citizens realize virtue and happiness, which in turn would lead them closer to divinity. And since happiness is a full life well lived, unobtainable by the young and by anyone suffering an untimely death, then government plays a dominant role in contributing to the peace and stability that would allow that life of virtue or contemplation to be lived.

Notwithstanding Aristotle's assumption near the end of the Nicomachean Ethics that only a life of contemplation as the "highest" activity could lead to perfect happiness, throughout the entire work he consistently emphasizes that some level of happiness is available to those living other kinds of lives, simply by acting in accordance with virtue. Consequently the majority of the entire work is given over to a detailed analysis of what he considers to constitute virtue. In his own words, "Inasmuch as happiness is a certain activity of soul in conformity with perfect virtue, it is necessary to examine the nature of virtue. For this will probably assist us in our investigation of the nature of happiness."  

39 Ethics 1.9.8.  
40 Note - Athens granted citizenship almost exclusively to the native born, of citizen parentage; thereby excluding significant numbers of free immigrant residents and slaves from the category.  
41 Ethics 1.13.1.
His definition of virtue goes well beyond a particular action to include the essence of a person's nature, their soul: "Human virtue means in our view excellence of soul, not excellence of body; also our definition of happiness is an activity of the soul."\textsuperscript{42} Since "Moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit (ethos) . . . it is clear that none of the moral virtues formed is engendered in us by nature, for no natural property can be altered by habit."\textsuperscript{43} This reinforces his conclusion that moral virtue is a divine practice, since it is what man does best, the most differently and uniquely from other animals. One can almost see the stern look and finger stabbing towards his students as he admonishes "It is incumbent on us to control the character of our activities, since on the quality of these depends the quality of our dispositions."\textsuperscript{44} This of course highlights the need for ethical training and guidance both for children, and for adults of all ages.

"Virtue, like art, is constantly dealing with what is harder, since the harder the task the better is success. For this reason also therefore pleasure and pain are necessarily the main concern both of virtue and of political science,"\textsuperscript{45} Aristotle remarks. Surprisingly, he singles out pleasure over pain as the bigger temptation: "It appears to be pleasure that misleads the mass of mankind; for it seems to them to be a good, though it is not, so they choose what is pleasant as good and shun pain as evil."\textsuperscript{46} But on the other hand, he concedes "The happy life must be a pleasant life, and regards pleasure as a necessary ingredient of happiness."\textsuperscript{47} So how can we reconcile the two approaches?

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ethics} 1.13.5-6.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. 2.1.1-12.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid. 2.1.7-8.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. 2.3.8-10.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid. 3.3.4-6.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 7.13.2.
Aristotle accomplishes this by recognizing several distinct forms of pleasure – those of the intellect, and those of sensation. He contends that those of the former “excel in purity” over those of the latter, hence, pleasure derived from intellectual pursuits is in accordance with virtue.\textsuperscript{48} On pleasure in general, Aristotle concludes “it seems therefore that pleasure is not the Good, and that not every pleasure is desirable, but also that there are certain pleasures . . . that are desirable in themselves.”\textsuperscript{49}

It is difficult not to marvel at the persistence of human nature over six millennia, when Aristotle takes entire populations to task for talking about virtue without actually demonstrating it. “The mass of mankind, instead of doing virtuous acts, have recourse to discussing virtue, and fancy that they are pursuing philosophy and that this will make them good men. In so doing they act like invalids who listen carefully to what the doctor says, but entirely neglect to carry out his prescriptions.”\textsuperscript{50} Discussion and knowledge are prerequisites, but since the essence of virtue is “a settled disposition of the mind determining the choice of actions and emotions,”\textsuperscript{51} (emphasis mine) the actions themselves are the sole means of demonstrating virtue.

The most compelling question that arises, of course, is how exactly does one demonstrate virtue, in order to be happy and attain our Supreme Good? Aristotle assures us that there is no disagreement regarding the ends, virtue and happiness, but that we need to carefully choose the means to it: “It is in our power to do and to refrain from

\textsuperscript{48} Ethics 10.5.7.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. 10.3.13.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. 2.4.5-6.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. 2.6.15.
doing right and wrong, and . . . it consequently depends on us whether we are virtuous or 
vicious. . . [for] man is the author of his own actions.” In other words, we have the free 
will necessary to choose virtuous actions that will result in the desired end.

In some ways Aristotle’s world was much simpler than ours, as his contemporaries 
had fewer options available to them. He cites the example of doctors not arguing about 
whether to cure the patient, merely how. Today, on the other hand, our ends themselves 
are not even as clear, as doctors regularly encounter the question of quality of life versus 
longevity at all costs, and conflicts between the survival and benefit of individuals versus 
humanity as a whole versus the whole global biosphere take on increasing urgency.

The most important aspect to demonstrating virtue in one’s actions is discerning the 
truth about what actions are truly virtuous. Regarding this important and challenging 
task, Aristotle tells us “The attainment of truth is indeed the function of every part of the 
intellect, but that of the practical intelligence is the attainment of truth corresponding to 
right desire.”

He includes within “practical intelligence” qualities such as scientific knowledge, 
prudence, and wisdom, but holds out the primary role for intelligence itself. So, 
according to Aristotle, only a person with knowledge, prudence, wisdom, and overall 
intelligence, the proverbial “good” man, is able to discern Truth by recognizing and 
enjoying good and virtuous activities. This betrays his elitism – it denies virtue, (and 
happiness!) to the majority of people living in his world.

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52 Ethics 3.5.3-6.
53 Ibid. 3.3.11.
54 Ibid. 6.2.3.
55 Ibid. 6.6.2.
Prudence and wisdom, according to Aristotle, are particularly useful to determining the truth because they are each virtues in themselves of different parts of the soul. They are virtues because they represent the highest operation of the human soul faculties - thinking. In other words, their operation in itself is a functioning of a mental faculty in its highest capacity, and one immediate end of their functioning is to help determine other virtuous actions to take.\textsuperscript{56}

Virtue in Aristotle's time was refreshingly straightforward. It offered collective as well as individual rewards, as he recognized when he commented that "If all men vied with each other in moral nobility and strove to perform the noblest deeds, the common welfare would be fully realized, while individuals also could enjoy the greatest of goods, inasmuch as virtue is the greatest good."\textsuperscript{57} Since a person's actions affect their entire community, it is reasonable that that same community, particularly in the matter of virtue which requires the approbation of others anyway, also guide them. Aristotle examines a hypothetical man's motives for great personal sacrifice:

For he will surrender wealth and power and all the goods that men struggle to win, if he can secure nobility for himself; since he would prefer . . . a year of noble life to many years of ordinary existence, one great and glorious exploit to many small successes. And this is doubtless the case with those who give their lives for others; thus they choose great nobility for themselves.\textsuperscript{58}

But is this nobility truly equivalent to virtue? Aristotle is assuming here that the fundamental purpose of the virtuous man's life is to secure nobility and ultimate honor

\textsuperscript{56} Ethics 6.12.5-6. 
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. 9.8.5-8. 
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid. 9.8.9.
for himself as the highest good, rather than the animal-like self survival at all costs.

However, it fails to conform to his contention in the first book of the *Ethics* that a happy man must live a long life to be fully "happy" (successful/accomplished.)

Other collective rewards offered by the exercise of virtue included the creating of stronger social bonds of friendship.

"Good men find pleasure in the actions of other good men who are their friends, ... it therefore follows that the supremely happy man will require good friends. ... Also men think that the life of the happy man ought to be pleasant. ... [but] a solitary man has a hard life ... . The good man’s activity therefore, which is pleasant in itself, will be more continuous if practiced with friends; and the life of the supremely happy should be continuously pleasant."^59

Since a society benefits so much from the exercise of virtue by its members, and since virtue requires such judgment, maturity, and self-restraint (qualities not always present in the young) Aristotle spells out the role that society should play in helping its people to develop and practice living virtuously. It starts with the young. In order to accustom youth to the life of virtue, particularly temperance and hardiness, since they tend to seek pleasure and avoid pain,

The nurture and exercises of the young should be regulated by law, since temperance and hardiness will not be painful when they have become habitual. But doubtless it is not enough ... they must also practice the lessons they have learnt, and confirm them by habit, when they are grown up. Accordingly we shall need laws to regulate the discipline of adults as well ... for the many are more amenable to compulsion and punishment than to reason and to moral ideals. Hence ... it is proper for the lawgiver to encourage and exhort men

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^59 Ibid. 9.9.5-6.
to virtue on moral grounds . . . yet he is bound to impose chastisement and penalties on the disobedient and ill-conditioned, and to banish the incorrigible out of the state altogether.”

Though Aristotle advises that “It would seem to be the duty of the individual to assist his own children and friends to attain virtue,” he immediately concedes that “it would seem to follow from what has been said before, that he will be more likely to be successful in this if he has acquired the science of legislation.”

This opinion of Aristotle’s goes right to the heart of the debate, still raging today, over the extent of government’s role and power in its citizen’s lives. While it would be nice to observe progress in our daily expressions of virtue today over those of six thousand years ago, the necessity for myriad laws regarding all aspects of today’s society - exceeding the speed limit, for one example - argue against it. One look at our current legal system suffices to reaffirm the essential accuracies of Aristotle’s observations on human nature.

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60 *Ethics* 10.9.8-10.
61 Ibid. 10.9.14.
Unity

Charles Fillmore was very explicit in his conception of the ultimate purpose of life for human beings. According to him, "The real object of existence is to bring forth the perfect man and attain eternal life."62 This would be done by a literal transformation: "The true spiritual body will replace the physical body and all men will become like Jesus Christ."63 This will happen when we "transform or regenerate our consciousness from sense consciousness to Christ consciousness so that we can continue our process of spiritual evolution. This will result in our physical bodies being regenerated into our spiritual bodies."64 When the "whole man--spirit, soul, and body"—achieves this spiritual regeneration, it results in "perfection, which is the goal of man's existence."65 How did Fillmore define perfection? Fillmore believed that perfection in human beings means "to manifest all that is potentially involved in us by our Creator,"66 which means there is quite a lot implied in his "all that is potentially involved . . ."

Unity clearly and explicitly teaches that the purpose of our life on earth, as Myrtle Fillmore insisted, "was to realize the divine possibilities inherent in human nature, to actualize fully human potential; in short, to manifest divinity."67 This quote could have come verbatim from Aristotle, as he also saw humans' purpose as achieving their full potential as humans, which would bring them the closest to divinity. Notwithstanding the

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62 C. Fillmore, Atom Smashing Power, 150.
63 C. Fillmore, Talks on Truth, 159.
64 Gospel Glossary, 64. s.v. "Goal of Fallen Human Beings."
65 C. Fillmore, Keep a True Lent, 93, as quoted in Gospel Glossary, 131.
66 C. Fillmore, Atom Smashing Power, 185.
67 M. Fillmore, letter to Ella Randolph, 19 March 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 11.
Fillmores belief in the physical/spiritual regeneration aspect, shared only by a small minority within Unity today, as a whole the movement has always focused, like Aristotle, on our purpose in this physical life, as mortal human beings.

Like Aristotle's insistence that only wisdom and prudence would allow one to correctly identify the appropriate actions to take to remain virtuous and fulfill one's potential, Unity also stressed the overwhelming importance of understanding life. The critical prerequisite to a person's reaching his or her full potential, according to Myrtle Fillmore, was to gain a thorough knowledge of the natures of both God and humans, as well as the purpose of our life on earth. She condensed this all together into the concept of "understanding Truth", and throughout her life she constantly urged her students to get familiar with Unity's principles of Truth. "There is nothing to compare with understanding of Truth . . . Truth principles are laws which, when they are understood and followed, will result in peace of mind, health of body and prosperity in affairs." 68

She told another, "There is much to learn, if we would be in command of all our wonderful faculties and powers, and do with them what we came into the world to do." 69 Her husband agreed when he said, "The object of man's existence is to demonstrate the Truth of Being. This demonstration takes place through experience; but there are two ways of working out the experience. The first is by knowing the law of every process, and the second is by blindly testing the process without understanding the law." 70 Unity, as did Aristotle, obviously recommends the former.

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68 M. Fillmore, letter to Madie, 11 June 1930, as quoted in Vahle, 15.
69 M. Fillmore, letter to Alice, 23 January 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 20.
70 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 55.
Charles Fillmore was convinced that only an understanding of the Truth of life and God could enable all men and women to reach the same level of consciousness attained by Jesus. He emphasized that the purpose of life was not about creating wealth or attaining material goods, but about living the Christ life. Aristotle advocated exactly the same thing during his time, merely substituting “virtuous” for Christ. Fillmore observed:

We sometimes think that we must succeed in some business or occupation before we can become rich or famous. This is a missing of the mark of the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” which is to demonstrate the divine idea of a perfect man. The real object of life is not making money or becoming famous but the building of character, the bringing forth of the potentialities that exist in every one of us.\(^{71}\)

Aristotle could not have said it better himself, though the realist in him conceded that power and wealth can be helpful to achieving one’s full potential.

One path towards achieving one’s potential lay in one’s relations with other people. “The purpose of human relations,” Myrtle once observed, “is the glorification of the divine. The purpose of life is to manifest God.”\(^{72}\) An essential component of these relations was Unity’s emphasis on the spiritual connections between everyone and God. She urged her correspondents “To abide in the realization that God and the Good are omnipresent.”\(^{73}\) She taught that men and women who develop themselves spiritually and experience the indwelling presence best fulfilled their own divine potential, and in return for becoming God-realized, according to Myrtle, they were rewarded in this lifetime.

\(^{71}\) C. Fillmore, *Prosperity*, 161.
\(^{72}\) M. Fillmore, letter to Jennie Koerner, 3 December 1929, as quoted in Vahle, 13.
\(^{73}\) M. Fillmore, letter to Lady Norma, 17 June 1928, as quoted in Vahle, 13.
Since his God was more vague and remote, Aristotle placed even more importance on human relations, and invested it with greater authority since virtue had to be defined and judged through the means of societal norms.

Emilie Cady, expanding on this concept, called our physical, conscious selves the “human self,” and “Carnal mind,” similar to Aristotle’s “Life of [physical] pleasure” opposing the “Life of contemplation.” She said that this mind “is envious and jealous and fretful and sick because he is ‘self’... The human self sees its own gratification at the expense, if need be, of someone else.” Therefore, according to Cady, “The goal of human life was to realize fully the divine nature within.” Just like Aristotle’s contention that every person’s “good” is to approach divinity, and that we are happiest when moving towards that good, Cady believed that not only should realizing our divine nature be our goal, but also that at least somewhere deep inside, we all recognized and desired this as our goal. She explained “Every person in his heart desires, though he may not yet quite know it, this new birth into a higher life, into spiritual consciousness... Many today are conscious that the inner hunger cannot be satisfied with worldly goods, and are with all earnestly [sic] seeking spiritual understanding, or consciousness of an immanent God.”

The primary deterrence to people reaching their divine potential, Cady explained, were the basic human emotions. These included negative thought, ignorance, willfulness, false belief, and selfishness, but more than anything else, fear. Of the latter she proclaimed “It is the root of all of our failures, of nearly all sickness, poverty and

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74 Cady, Lessons in Truth, 29.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 84.
distress.” In order to overcome these hindrances, Cady bluntly advised people to “Cease to desire anything less than the fulfillment of God's will in you. His thoughts are higher than yours as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let nothing short of the perfect fulfillment of His thought in and through you satisfy you.” This also resembles Aristotle’s treatment of emotions to some degree, as he identified emotional extremes as being farthest away from virtue. For him, the mean located halfway between the two extreme poles of any emotion represented moderation as the ideal, rather than advocating a complete cessation of negative emotions.

Cady’s recommendations for achieving a divine consciousness closely matched the Fillmores’, including such techniques as disciplining the mind through use of affirmations and denials, meditation, faith in God, expressions of divine love, and living in the present. They also resembled Aristotle’s in their dependence on self-discipline, but differed from his both in their greater reliance in emotion and instinct over intellect, and in the degree that they attempted to fundamentally change one’s very thought patterns, rather than merely controlling them.

Lowell Fillmore echoed his parents and Cady in his belief that the purpose of human life is to fully realize our divine, Christ-like potential. “The goal of every man is to become the son of God in manifestation. Christ in you and me is our hope of glory.” By equating this goal with “glory”, he follows in the footsteps of Aristotle and many others in recognizing the human desire for immortality in some fashion, though he left it

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77 Ibid., 112.
78 Ibid., 64.
79 L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 14 April 1949.
vague as to whether this would be mere memory, or glory through the collective survival of the human race, or individual Charles Fillmore-style physical immortality. The philosopher was convinced that sufficient glory would come from one achieving eudemonia, happiness/success, within their lifetime.

Lowell Fillmore’s prescription for achieving divinity also resembles the other Unity founders. He directly connected the goal of fulfilling God’s will with following His laws, i.e. Divine Principle, by saying “God’s will works through his laws.”80 Again mirroring Aristotle, he urged that people follow God’s will rather than their own selfish will, as that gave the only chance of realizing one’s divine potential.

Though Lowell Fillmore also stressed faith and spiritual education, he influenced Unity’s long term development even more than his parents by emphasizing specific actions for people to take, that would help them achieve their divine potential and improve their lives. He stressed in particular divine love. He credited it with being “the most powerful force in the world . . . the greatest expression of God’s power in the Universe.”81 Lowell viewed divine love as an aspect of divine law. “When we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind,” he explained, “we are cooperating with the Creator in the most perfect way possible, and our affairs will then come under the perfect law of love. In loving, we comply with all good laws.”82 Similarly, Aristotle believed that people needed to engage with the rest of their community in accordance with selflessness

80 L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 4 November 1956.
81 L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 5 June 1944. This was quite a declaration in the midst of WWII, the day before D-Day!
82 L. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 9 June 1949.
and virtue, because not only would the individual be exercising virtue, but the entire community would benefit.

Lowell Fillmore also stressed meditation, commenting once “All our earthly problems can be solved in the silence if we go direct to headquarters and speak the truth about them in the presence of God.”\(^{83}\) This comment also reflects his emphasis on the practical “problem solving” aspect of religion and spirituality in general. Charles and Myrtle, on the other hand, stressed knowledge, and the development of the twelve powers within people, and believed that that knowledge and those powers would help lead people to the proper actions. Lowell’s method was the more truly practical Christianity for more people, although some respond better to the knowledge and twelve powers teaching. By the end of the twentieth century more Unity churches and followers had evolved towards Lowell Fillmore’s priorities than his parents’, though Unity’s decentralized structure and theological freedom of spirit has led many to develop their own distinctive combinations.

The differences in their priorities are understandable. Lowell Fillmore was born healthy, vigorous, with both parents, three siblings, and a grandmother that all lived very long and fulfilling lives together as a family. He himself stayed healthy, active, and fulfilled his entire life. Thus he tended to focus on the substance of what people should do to realize their divine potential and achieve happiness. Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, on the other hand, both faced major physical and health issues that involved chronic pain and physical hindrances to many activities. They both also had significant family members missing in their lives: Charles’ father was gone, his brother was gone, his

mother was all he had left until he married Myrtle. Therefore they needed a much more comprehensive explanation of why things occurred, what caused all the pain and suffering that they experienced, and a thorough knowledge of the principles involved in overcoming their situations in order to help give them faith in their effectiveness.

Both Aristotle and Unity emphasize education and full knowledge of “Truth” so much in comparison to mainstream Christianity because of the former’s recognition that humanity has complete free will. Free will is at once our greatest hope and our biggest obstacle. Charles Fillmore admitted, “We are never forced to be good nor truthful nor holy. We can live on the animal plane or the spiritual plane as we choose.”

Thus finding an appropriate guide to decision-making in a freewill environment becomes the top priority for everyone, leading directly to Unity’s heavy emphasis on thorough spiritual knowledge and ability to find answers through prayer and meditation. Aristotle also recognizes this as the top priority, hence his faith in the wisdom and prudence gained through both intelligence and maturity of age. His very specific recommendations for thorough ethical training during youth, reinforced throughout adulthood by law, reveal even more the strength of his conviction on this issue, as well as his more pragmatic nature.

Just as Greece’s philosopher/scientist did, Lowell Fillmore believed that God provides men and women with free will for a purpose. Freedom of choice is a necessary condition for spiritual development. “God gave humankind free will,” Lowell observed, “to develop their inner powers, to give each one full opportunity to become conscious of

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his unity with God, and to realize the full meaning and joy of unity.\textsuperscript{85} Unity believes that people can only realize their divine potential \textit{voluntarily}, through their God-given free will. Similarly, though he does not identify the source of it, Aristotle believes we have free will in order to strive to fulfill our purpose in life, which brings us close to divinity. By this reliance on voluntary free will, Unity rejects two of the most powerful motivators around – compulsion and fear. Aristotle also avoids negative motivators, though he sees the virtue that one strives for as ultimately defined by one’s peers, introducing some inescapable competitive pressure.

Neither Unity nor Aristotle demands mandatory actions, such as obeying the Ten Commandments or partaking in Holy Sacraments. They also do not wield fear of Hell or Purgatory after death as a motivator. Unity’s primary motivating force is people’s voluntary desire to realize their Christ-consciousness, which it encourages through education and the prospect of rewards available to the successful. This refusal to use fear or coercion in any form is one of the main differences between Unity and traditional Christianity. While the Roman Catholic church holds out the threat of going to Hell or purgatory after death without appropriate performance of the various Sacraments, and Protestants hold to certain mandatory requirements in religious practice, Unity, in identical fashion with Aristotle, just encourages everyone to fulfill their purpose in life – to do what we were put here for, to reach our divine potential. As Charles Fillmore acknowledged, “Man can be \textit{sic} what he determines to be. He can be master or he can

\textsuperscript{85} L. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 20 November 1937.
be serf. It rests with him whether he shall fill the high places in life or the low, whether he shall serve or be served, lead or be led, or be sickly or healthy.”

Unity’s theology instructs us that reaching our divine potential not only fulfills our purpose in life, but makes living that life the happiest and most rewarding thing possible. In like manner, Aristotle inseparably links achieving virtue and full humanity with happiness and satisfaction in life. Charles Fillmore warned very early that, “We think that if we have money and friends we can be happy; but things do not make happiness.”

Rather, he explained that “All the great spiritual Masters have taught that identification with God brings to man his greatest happiness.” In a comparison with the Hindu ultimate spiritual goal of “reaching union with Brahma,” Fillmore goes on to explain that

The Hindu metaphysicians tell us that when the mind of man is consciously one with the Mind of Being, a bliss enters the soul, beyond description. So there have arisen in India armies of Yogis, priests, adepts who strive to be spiritually minded, to become one with the Great Brahma. We of the occident think that they have carried this identification too far. They have ignored the visible side of existence and lost control in a measure, while we have gone to the other extreme and identified ourselves with effect until we know no world but the material.

So in order to solve this issue, to properly balance the spiritual with the material worlds, he recommends that we turn to God, and to Jesus Christ’ (the “Great Teacher” in this matter) words on this subject: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and

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87 C. Fillmore, Christian Healing, 90.
88 C. Fillmore, Weekly Unity, 3 July 1912.
89 Ibid.
unto God the things that are God's."\(^{90}\) Thus, he is recognizing that both the spiritual and the material realms play an important part in our complete development. Aristotle also recognizes that wealth or power, while not a desired end in itself, can assist in achieving one's full potential.

It is Lowell Fillmore who reveals most clearly how to achieve happiness in life:

"Unity feels that no greater work can be done than lifting up the individual’s point of view to a realization that peace, righteousness, love and good will... will bring more happiness into his life than any of the negative ways of thinking,"\(^{91}\) he wrote. "Happy is the man," he continues, "who by right thinking is daily strengthening the good in his life, and creating new and brighter things for himself."\(^{92}\)

Thus Lowell Fillmore again signals a subtle shift in direction over time of Unity's message, in this case its conception of its primary purpose as an independent entity. In his view, which has taken hold with the majority of Unity today (though by no means unanimously,) Unity’s ultimate goal is to help us achieve happiness, utilizing the method of better realizing our divine potential. Charles saw the goal and process in reverse, as did Aristotle; Unity’s (or wisdom and virtue’s in Aristotle’s case) main purpose was to directly help people achieve their divine potential, which would result in happiness and success as a byproduct. Since all parties agreed that our main purpose in life was to realize our divinity - Unity through achieving the Christ consciousness within us, and Aristotle by exercising full virtue and thought in the highest possible manner - and that

\(^{90}\) Ibid.
\(^{91}\) L. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 10 October 1935.
this goal was inextricably bound with “happiness” (both in the modern sense and as eudemonia), the actual order of the causative chain matters little to us. Not only does this belief highlight both Unity’s and Aristotle’s overwhelming emphasis on conditions during this life, which has guided Unity’s course during the twentieth century, but more significantly, the resemblance between Unity and Aristotle reinforces the extreme importance of striving for and achieving our purpose in life.

In order to help us achieve the goal of perfection in man, attainable only through the vehicle of a fully realized Christ consciousness, Unity teaches that God has provided the tools necessary – He has helpfully equipped us with the desire to succeed, to excel in things, and to reach perfection. Charles Fillmore explained that, “We all desire to excel. This desire is the inspiration of Spirit, which ever forces us up through earth toward heaven, and it should be encouraged and cultivated in the right direction.”\textsuperscript{93} Perfection is not easy to attain, however, as Unity holds that only Jesus Christ himself has achieved this status. Aristotle’s ideal excellence is only slightly easier to achieve, as it requires a person to first possess the necessary attributes of wisdom, prudence, intelligence, and a long life; and then for that person to consistently exercise those traits in a virtuous way for most of their life. Both standards therefore require education, knowledge, proper thought patterns, self-discipline, and above all, constant practice. They compare quite closely with each other, while both contrast dramatically with more traditional Christianity.

\textsuperscript{93} C. Fillmore, “Indispensable Assurance,” in Gaither, 311.
But if our goal in life is to achieve divine consciousness and immortality, why do we come with that goal? What purpose does humanity serve in the greater scheme of things? Here Aristotle’s empiricism could not help, and he did not attempt a serious inquiry, while on the other hand Emilie Cady believed we all serve a purpose for God. She taught that we are the primary means for God to manifest Himself in the world. Without humanity, God would be unable to fully express His true nature. Thus every single one of us has a unique role to play in this divine mission. She explained to her readers: “Always remember that God has need of you through whom . . . to manifest Himself . . . However unable your place in life . . . however small your capacities may seem at present to you, you are just as much a necessity to God in His efforts to get Himself into visibility as the most brilliant intellect, the most cultured person in the world.”

Lowell Fillmore emphasized the same thing. He often suggested to his readers that God needed them, observing, “Man is one of God’s means of expressing himself.” He believed, like Cady, that God required the existence and active participation of humans in order to carry out a specific plan for the universe. He later suggested that: “God in His love made man in His own image and likeness to become a companion and helper to Him . . . God’s intention, it seems to me, was to create a physical being who would be able to help Him bring His spiritual world into manifestation on the physical plane.”

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95 L. Fillmore, *Weekly Unity*, 14 April 1940.
How much progress does Unity feel humanity has made towards achieving our goal of "manifesting our divinity?" Lowell Fillmore, ever the optimist, during the Great Depression judged that "We are working toward our salvation as a race slowly and cautiously. We are unfolding slowly toward the goal of the perfect man who was made in the image and likeness of God."\textsuperscript{97} But nine years later, on the eve of the United States' entry into the Second World War, he conceded, "The human race is still in its infancy. Judging by the newspaper headlines, we have not ceased to be barbarians. We continue to love war and strife more than peace and harmony. . . Much of the human race is still in the savage state as far as spiritual progress is concerned."\textsuperscript{98}

So if Jesus provided us the perfect example of someone fully reaching his divinity, and acted as a teacher and model to us all, then why was development of the human race "still in its infancy" nearly two thousand years later? Fillmore laid the blame directly on the power of negative thought. These included the usual suspects of greed, anger, hate, selfishness, ambition, jealousy, and above all fear. "It is the negative thought habits of the human race that are keeping the affairs of the world in turmoil. . . Thoughts of hate, fear, greed, revenge, and other human emotions are breaking up the world today in whirlwinds of destruction."\textsuperscript{99} He singled out fear as the most powerful. He observed, "Fear is about the worst troublemaker in the world today, and more of our troubles than we realize are caused by it."\textsuperscript{100} Fillmore's words are just as applicable to the twenty-first century as to his own time.

\textsuperscript{97} L. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 21 May 1932.
\textsuperscript{98} L. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 7 June 1941.
\textsuperscript{99} L. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 1 August 1942.
\textsuperscript{100} L. Fillmore, \textit{Weekly Unity}, 21 February 1942.
Conclusion

Philosophy and religion, by addressing the same questions of life and purpose, will always develop answers that bear at least some similarities. The resemblances in worldview between the Unity School of Practical Christianity and that of one of the most secular philosopher/scientists of the classical world, however, are remarkable. Both see underlying order, purpose, and interconnection in the world and its life, both emphasize humanity's need to utilize our full intellectual and intuitive abilities to fulfill this purpose, both focus pragmatically on our physical world, and both accept the world as inherently good in nature.

Unity's favorable comparison with a worldview developed through rigorous logic by arguably the deepest thinker in the classical world, and the enduring success enjoyed by both of those belief systems, is not a coincidence. The two systems' emphasis on rationality; the interconnectedness, goodness, and purpose of life; the material world; and the importance of human thought and initiative, are the traits that enabled them to prosper amid similar historical conditions during their respective time periods.

The Aristotelian worldview first gained prominence near the end of Aristotle's life in the fourth century B.C.E., as it took the better part of his career as a philosopher and scientist to fully distinguish himself and his views from the popular Platonic system bequeathed to the Hellenic world by Aristotle's powerful mentor, Plato. The conditions in Hellas which contributed to acceptance of Aristotle's worldview were political stability, economic prosperity, intellectual freedom and achievement, and relative peace.
Though the classical world could only rarely be accused of true “peace,” Philip of Macedon’s conquest of Greece in 338 B.C.E was both rapid and extremely thorough, and under Macedonian rule Greece itself enjoyed over a decade of relative stability and prosperity while Alexander remained occupied “overseas”, carving out a new empire from the remnants of Persia.\(^1\) The third century B.C.E., after the initial scramble to fill the power vacuum left by Alexander’s premature death, despite continued intermittent wars to settle borders and successions saw enough relative stability to enable continued prosperity in the collectively Greek-dominated world of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Aristotle’s worldview prospered there for a while longer, until challenged by a succession of vital new Eastern “mystery” religions. Once the Hellenistic world began to yield to growing Roman power, not coincidentally the Aristotelian belief system almost completely disappeared.

Aristotle’s worldview enjoyed the first of a number of “renaissances” during the golden age of Rome, when the Greek scholar Andronicus of Rhodes, working in Rome, received the corpus of Aristotle’s work from what legend says was a hiding place in a dark basement neglected for centuries.\(^2\) The first two centuries of the Common Era, which coincided with the first two centuries of Rome’s empire founded by Augustus, also marked a period of dramatic Roman political and military dominance of the Mediterranean world, inevitably accompanied by fantastic economic wealth. Again, these favorable conditions in the Roman world proved ideal for Aristotle’s conception of an integrated universe, fundamentally good with imbedded purpose, attuned to the life

\(^1\) Buckley et al, 127.
\(^2\) Rubenstein, 39.
and abilities of materially focused men and women. Unsurprisingly, this worldview disappeared along with the western Roman empire by the fifth century C.E., replaced by a Platonic-inspired Christianity of otherworldly ideals that offered an afterlife of safe refuge in a physically remote “Kingdom of Heaven” for the desperate former Roman citizens, now unprotected from frequent nomadic “barbarian” incursions throughout Europe.

Aristotle’s worldview reemerged into the Arabic Muslim empire of the seventh and eighth centuries, whose advanced scholars analyzed, debated, and skillfully commented on his views. This empire also possessed the conditions necessary for the Aristotelian worldview: political and military power resulting in relative stability for its people, and astonishing material wealth, as well as relative freedom of thought which led to impressive intellectual achievements. The Muslim world, in fact, eventually delivered the corpus of Aristotle’s work, complete with comprehensive analyses by the best Arabic philosophers, directly to Christian Europe in the twelfth century.³

Europe at this point was also experiencing the conditions necessary for Aristotelian ideas to prosper. It had successfully emerged from the chaos of its formative medieval period into its high Middle Ages, which not coincidentally included growing political and military power, economic expansion, and corresponding intellectual achievement. The latter occurred almost exclusively within the Roman Catholic Church, specifically its universities of higher education. For almost two centuries, the sheer power of Aristotle’s ideas and methods of inquiry and analysis dominated Christian intellectual and

³ Rubenstein, 4.
theological thought, and created the "scholastic" movement which attempted, ultimately unsuccessfully, to integrate Aristotelian logic and science with Catholic faith and dogma.⁴

After centuries of rigid separation starting with the Italian Renaissance, faith and reason again began to attempt a merger during the twentieth century in the United States. The conditions, unhindered economic growth and prosperity enabled by abundant natural resources, a culture of innovation and intellectual freedom, and unprecedented political stability and military success, cried out for another Aristotelian style renaissance to occur. The Unity movement, so Aristotelian in many ways though remaining uniquely Christian in others, was the result. Its characteristics of rationality, optimism and faith in people and nature, focus on the physical world, and views of that world as interconnected and purposeful, uniquely suited it to the time and place and were central to its continued growth, just as these same characteristics allowed the Aristotelian worldview to prosper in similar periods earlier in recorded history. It would not be at all surprising to find that earlier nomadic hunter-gatherer groups, during periods of relative prosperity, shared a roughly similar worldview.

Obviously any religious movement requires more than just an appropriate theology to thrive. This analysis of Unity's teachings and its suitability to its time period is not in any way meant to minimize the equally important role that the Fillmores' superb organizational and leadership skills played in establishing Unity in the long term, as well as their lifelong devotion to it and the contributions of many other equally committed and

⁴ Ibid. 7-9.
talented supporters. With Unity’s valuation of all humanity in its full diversity of culture, ethnicity, and other individual variations, combined with the continued rapid improvement of economic and intellectual conditions in places such as India and East Asia, this religious movement is well-situated to continue its world-wide growth and prosperity, and extend its message of goodness and optimism to more people than ever before.
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Jeffrey Michael Jackson was born in California and grew up in Spokane, Washington. In 1991 he earned a B.S. in history from the U.S. Naval Academy and was commissioned as a Naval Officer. He spent nine years on active duty and served as a navigator, tactical coordinator and mission commander on maritime patrol aircraft. In 2000 he began a second career in education, teaching middle and high school social studies and instrumental music at Fredericksburg Academy, in central Virginia, with an emphasis on World History. He first learned of Unity in 2001, and he and his wife Jennifer have been active in the spiritual community ever since. They currently live in Sacramento, California.