

## CHAPTER III

### UNITY'S GOLDEN ERA

#### Incorporation of Unity School of Christianity

Praise Good, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Wealth, which helps us here below;  
Praise Truth, the highest virtue known;<sup>1</sup>  
Praise Health, which every one may own.<sup>1</sup>

The years 1914 to 1928 are Unity's golden era. In them the long years of poverty, anxiety, and toil--and much such seed had been sown--bore abundant fruit. The first year of this era was marked by two important events: the incorporation of Unity School of Christianity, and the beginning of a building program, which was to continue almost uninterruptedly until the early years of the financial depression. In 1914 the Unity Tract Society, the publishing side of Unity's work; the Society of Silent Unity, the healing and prosperity group; Unity Correspondence School, which gave lessons to those who could not attend the regular classes given in Kansas City; "Silent-70," the missionary arm of the movement; and Unity Pure Food Company were consolidated under the corporate name "Unity School of Christianity." The following are the "Articles of Incorporation":

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That we, the undersigned, . . .

Charles Fillmore  
Myrtle Fillmore  
Lowell Fillmore,<sup>2</sup>  
Royal Fillmore.

The Administration building of the newly incorporated school was also completed in 1914 at an announced cost of sixty thousand dollars. Six thousand dollars had been contributed

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<sup>1</sup>"The New Unity Doxology," Unity, XXVII (Jan., 1908)

<sup>2</sup>"Articles of Incorporation," typed copy given to writer by Lowell Fillmore.



towards it in love offerings before the building was started. Mr. Fillmore now announced that previous to that time Unity had been holding to two standards: one in the book and subscription department, where they were necessarily connected with the world of business; and the other in their healing ministry, where the Spirit was given full sway. Henceforth they would try to practice only the Spiritual standard. He illustrated what he meant by saying that Unity would no longer "appeal to the bargain hunting tendency" in its announcements concerning the sale of books and magazines. Mr. Fillmore must have soon forgotten his resolution for in a short time he was offering twelve issues of Weekly Unity for ten cents.<sup>1</sup> The cornerstone of the new building, named the "New Race Cornerstone," was to be made at least ten feet long so that there would be space for all the blessings the friends of Unity desired to contribute. Bonds were also offered to those who desired to make investments rather than contributions to the work. The dedication was set for Thanksgiving and then, as with the previous building belonging to Unity Society of Practical Christianity, now recognized as the local Center, was postponed until January lest some miss the glorious opportunity to contribute a sustaining blessing and so becoming linked to this new realm of spiritual force potent to their soul's growth. Mr. Fillmore dedicated the building January 1, 1915, placing and sealing in the cornerstone seven thousand blessings.

For some unaccountable reason the masons were not present to seal the stone. This is well for many blessings have come since.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In 1939 Unity is offering the anniversary book, Unity's Fifty Golden Years, as a prize for securing three annual subscriptions to Unity; see Unity, XC (March, 1939), 96.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Fillmore, "We Are Primitive Christians," Unity, XLII (April, 1915), 339.



Then it was decided to leave the stone open until the building was cleared of debt.

When Unity School of Christianity was incorporated, requests were at once made for diplomas and degrees. The suggestions came from some who had finished Unity's course of training and who now wanted Unity's approval and growing prestige back of them as they tried to develop teaching and healing centers in various cities. The Fillmores, perchance because they had seen how Mrs. Eddy's difficulties had been multiplied by trying to direct her students, did not desire to put the Unity stamp on any work outside Kansas City. They explained<sup>1</sup> that the authority to teach and preach came only from the Spirit while it was the task of the school to train those called. The granting of titles would also interfere with their announced aim of overcoming the "personal man." "Degrees are a delusion and a snare."<sup>2</sup> Finally, ordination to the ministry would put Unity leaders in a position where they would be called to officiate at funerals and weddings. Both of these ceremonies tend to keep death in the race, which Unity is set to destroy. The Silent Unity department then decided to drop all titles that they might get completely away from the "personal."

#### Good Words' Club

In 1915 Lowell Fillmore, who had grown up in the Unity movement and was rapidly becoming its chief business executive,

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<sup>1</sup>See "Extracts," Unity, XLI (Aug., 1914), 150 ff.

<sup>2</sup>"Extracts," Ibid., p. 150.

put forth an idea which in its practical application soon rivaled the use of the prosperity banks. This was the formation of a "Good Words' Club" and, a little later, a "Good Words' Reminder Box." The conclusion that there is power in the spoken word and that every effort should be made to speak creatively had been in the thought of the movement from the beginning, but no practical application had been made of the idea in advancing the cause of Unity. A Good Words' Club was now established in order to gain the power that comes through united effort. Those who became members were asked to report to a central secretary once a month, secure at least one new member for the club a year, and avoid expressions of gossip, poverty, sickness, crime, sorrow, discord, and anger. No dues were charged, but "free will offerings" were accepted. Also pledge cards, cost twenty-five cents, and Club emblems, the "Three Wise Monkeys" at one dollar, were recommended as of special help to the members. Later a Good Words' Reminder Box was sent to each member in which he could place such voluntary forfeit as he thought suitable whenever he used a negative word. No requirements were set as to the use of this money, but the member was kept informed of the good it would accomplish in the expanding ministry of Unity and how such offerings would develop his own grasp of things spiritual. The pledge of the Good Words' Club was made positive in 1925. Members now sought to speak words of "trust, wisdom, goodness, health, courage, truth, cheer, purity, peace, faith, prosperity, praise, joy and good will."<sup>1</sup> No longer were they to pay a forfeit for negative words

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<sup>1</sup>"Good Words' Club Pledge Card."



but rather a daily thank-offering for Divine help in speaking positive words. Unity's adherents quickly caught the idea; four thousand enrolled the first year, ten thousand by 1918, and sixty thousand by 1927. The Unity management is at present giving little emphasis to the Good Words' Club. A Good Words' Booster Club for boys and girls under fifteen is an integral part of the program of Wee Wisdom. This children's club is a combination of a Wee Wisdom Club, organized by Royal Fillmore in 1912, and the adult club just mentioned. Children are urged to gather their friends of school or Sunday school into local clubs and unite them with the central club in Kansas City. The central secretary reports that they receive over three hundred inquiries each month from the children but that the idea does not produce sufficient funds to justify extensive promotion.<sup>1</sup>

#### Unity and the World War

Unity with its general tendency towards non-violence even to animals was opposed to the World War. However, since Unity has always urged only such demonstration as the circumstances seemed to render practicable, its policy was not that of idealistic pacifism or refusal to bear arms against one's fellowmen.

The process of receiving exemption from the army was to be treated in the same way as claiming freedom from sin, sickness, and death.

"When the exemption-consciousness is reached, the process of bringing the matter favorably to the attention of the proper of-

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<sup>1</sup>Statement by Elizabeth Hass, personal interview.

officials will take care of itself."<sup>1</sup> When asked to pray with one of its members against army conscription Silent Unity refused and explained: "We hold the thought for protection, safety and guidance into that which is the highest good for the individual."<sup>2</sup> This was in accord with the position it had repeatedly taken in its prosperity treatments that it could not "hold for specific demands." Correspondents were told that they must learn to take an "impersonal" view of the situation. Because they were Truth students, perchance, there was a particular work for them to do "at the front," and they were assured that they would "be protected from doing evil or receiving evil" while they were in the trenches. Early in 1918 Mr. Fillmore had a dream-vision which he interpreted as meaning that the peace efforts of Woodrow Wilson would be successful before the spring plowing and sowing. But time moved on, and Unity turned its attention to those who were doing the fighting. The following advertisement shows their method:

DO YOU KNOW A SOLDIER IN THE TRENCHES?

Do you want to keep him from harm? Do you want him to know and understand the power of the protecting Word? Do you want him to come back after the war unsoiled in soul by the terrors and temptations of that hard life?

Send us \$1.00 and we will send him a year's subscription to Weekly Unity and a copy of "Bullet-Proof Soldiers," and Silent Unity will hold him in prayer.

Unity strenuously opposed conditions of vice and impurity and the

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<sup>1</sup>"Extracts," Unity, XLVII (Sept., 1917), 253.

<sup>2</sup>"Extracts," Unity, XLVII (Nov., 1917), 447.

<sup>3</sup>Weekly Unity, X (June 4, 1918), 8.



flow of liquor about the training camps and criticized those organizations handing out tobacco to the soldiers. When the Armistice came in November, Mr. Fillmore explained that his dream about Woodrow Wilson had been correct but that he had misinterpreted the "field of stubble," which had referred to the end of the harvest rather than the spring plowing.

During the war period the cost of paper rose rapidly until the one-dollar charge for a Unity subscription did not cover the actual outlay of the magazine. Mr. Fillmore first decided to raise the price of the magazine and then feared lest that might bar some from needed help. Therefore, he asked for increased love offerings from those able to give. People were urged to subscribe several years in advance, and all who mailed money to Unity were asked to bless it that there might be no danger of loss.

Bills should be protected with a blessing by the sender. Every letter we send out is blessed, and if all those who write to us would give an audible or silent blessing to their letters before mailing, zones of security would be established between us and never a letter would go astray or a dollar be lost.<sup>1</sup>

#### Home Blessings

In 1917 the Society of Silent Unity inaugurated its "systematic House Harmonizing and House Cleaning propaganda."<sup>2</sup> When any member of the society moved into a new apartment the others called in a group to bless that home. Statements of Truth were made silently and aloud for each room: kitchen, reception room, dining room, bedroom, and bath with a final blessing for the en-

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<sup>1</sup>"How to Send Money," Unity, XLVII (Sept., 1917), 273.

<sup>2</sup>"Dedication of Home," Weekly Unity, IX (June 9, 1917), 2..

tire house. Truth students everywhere are advised to gather with their friends and follow the same practice:

The Universal Ether can be charged with thoughts or Divine Harmony until its power will harmonize a quarrelsome family. It can be charged with the Holy Spirit of Wisdom and Love until it will feel like the presence of a church and its occupants will fall to praising and giving thanks continuously. It can be so filled with thoughts of Health that no contagious disease can find entrance.<sup>1</sup>

Silent Unity stood ready to furnish special blessings for any one consecrating a new home; and, when it became mechanically possible, Mr. and Mrs. Fillmore placed their personal blessings on phonographic records that their friends at the cost of seventy-five cents might have the deep spiritual experience of their spoken presence in the home. "Can you imagine anything more desirable, were you moving into a new house, than to have Charles Fillmore there to dedicate it?"<sup>2</sup>

#### Property Rights

The increase in value of the property of Unity School of Christianity brought repeated inquiries as to its legal ownership and criticism of the stockholders of the corporation in 1918. Mr. Fillmore, at that time, estimated the value of their holdings at five hundred thousand dollars including good will, of which at least three hundred thousand dollars was in physical assets.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Weekly Unity, IX (June 9, 1917), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., XVIII (Sept. 25, 1923), 7.

<sup>3</sup>"Dedication," Unity, XLIX (Aug., 1918), 178.



These criticisms led the Fillmores to make what they termed a "legal transfer" of the property. On August 3, 1918 the four stockholders and directors signed a "Declaration," which read in part as follows:

We hold all our right, title and interest in said corporation (represented by said capital stock) in trust, and dedicate same to be used to carry out the purposes herein expressed and referred to, so that all persons who now are or may hereafter be members and adherents may, while so enrolled or upon proper application, receive the benefits of all the principles and teachings and other help that the School can give; reserving, however, to ourselves and our successors the right to manage and control the business and properties, and to a reasonable compensation for our time and services, and to name our successors who will carry out the purposes herein declared.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be noted that the above-named instrument was not made as an amendment to the original charter of the corporation. It was explained by the directors as an attempt to make clear to others that they did not regard Unity as belonging to them personally. The criticism did not die, and, June 27, 1921, the original "Articles of Incorporation" was amended by adding a statement which made it forever impossible for the stockholders to profit by declaring dividends. Finally, in order to quiet any further discussion, the directors made, in 1923, the following "Declaration of Trust:"

#### DECLARATION OF TRUST

Whereas, the undersigned incorporated the Unity School of Christianity in April, 1914, as stockholders and directors; and . . .

In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 22nd day of June, 1923.

Charles Fillmore  
Lowe Fillmore  
Royal Fillmore  
Myrtle Fillmore<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>2</sup>"Concerning Organization of Unity," Unity, LXVII (July, 1927), 9ff.

This closed all action by the Fillmores with reference to the ownership and control of Unity School of Christianity. The following technical appraisal of the value and meaning of the documents just quoted was made by the legal firm of Gossett, Ellis Dietrich and Tyler before the Supreme Court of Missouri in 1932:

All the stock was issued to Charles Fillmore, his wife and his two sons, who constitute the board of directors and officers. Thereafter, in 1921, the Articles of Incorporation were amended to provide that no dividends should be distributed but that all the profits and property of the corporation should be used for the purposes of the corporation. None of the students, communicants, patients or adherents of Unity School of Christianity were ever shown to have any interest in the corporation and no change in ownership of the stock of the corporation was ever shown to have taken place. No other papers were shown of record. Charles offered in evidence as a part of his testimony, an unacknowledged, and unrecorded paper signed by himself, his wife, and his two sons, who he stated owned all the stock of the company, dated August 3, 1918, entitled "Dedication," purporting to be a declaration of the Fillmores that they held the capital stock of the company in trust and dedicated same to be used for carrying out the purposes of the corporation, although no consideration was shown for the instrument, the stock was not transferred or delivered to any trustee, the instrument contained no provision against being revoked by the Fillmores at any time, and they particularly reserved to themselves the management, control and operation of the business and properties and to receive reasonable compensation for their services and to name their successors, substantially all the earmarks of full ownership. A paper substantially to the same effect was executed by the Fillmores in June, 1923, but this paper was never shown to have been acknowledged nor recorded and no pupil, patient or adherent of the school was given any interest in the stock, the family agreed with themselves, there was no consideration for the instrument and it contained no provision that it could not be revoked at any time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>No. 30415 in the Supreme Court of Missouri, April Term, 1932. Clark v. Commerce Trust Co., Appellant's Abstract of Record, Vols. I and II, and Respondents' Additional Abstract of the Record, Statement, Brief and Argument. Quotation is taken from Respondents' Additional Abstract of the Record, Statement, Brief and Argument, p. 17.



### Inner Vision Department

Dreams and their interpretation have long been a favorite study with Charles Fillmore, and he claims to have gained his chief insights into Truth through this method of revelation. During the early period of their movement he tried "the silence" as a method of seeking desired information but gained little thereby. There came a time, however, when he noticed that he was having "exceedingly realistic dreams." He states:

The first connection that I remember to have observed between dreams and my affairs was after closing the purchase of a piece of property I remembered that I had dreamed the whole transaction some months before. After that I watched my dreams closely and found that there was a wider intelligence manifesting in my sleep than I seemed to possess in my waking state, and it flashed over me one day that this was the mode of communication that had been established in response to my desire for information from headquarters. . . . Everything which it is necessary for me to know is shown to me and I have times without number been saved from false steps by this monitor.<sup>1</sup>

In 1914 "Dream Interpretation" was established as a department of Unity and was carried until 1917. In 1921, under the title "Inner Vision," it was resurrected and made a regular part of their work. Correspondents were invited to make use of it on the established basis of love offerings. Unity School advertised that it had given much attention to the subject and had developed teachers who were able to read and interpret the messages that the Spirit of Truth was revealing to those who had been living mostly in the outer realms of their being and had not as yet developed their faculties sufficiently to read intelligibly the messages thus given. The method of interpretation used by these teachers was that which they had been learning from the Fillmores

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Fillmore, "Dreams," Thought, V (Feb., 1894), 454.

and which is most clearly seen in their interpretation of the Scriptures, viz., the allegorical, which would always make the dream support the Fillmore pattern of Absolute Truth. While many presented their dreams to Unity School for interpretation, they did not seem to realize the value to themselves of such services. This required education:

We do not make a definite charge for this work but leave the matter of compensation to the divine justice in those who ask for help in discerning the leading of the Spirit. We find, however, that people do not appreciate the instruction of the Spirit as fully as they do the healing, and their free will offerings are not quite as generous as they should be.<sup>1</sup>

This department is no longer carried regularly in Unity, but help is extended to any who ask for it, and Mr. Fillmore frequently refers to the guidance he receives through the method.

#### Motherhood Department

In July, 1920, the Fillmores started a new discussion among their adherents by installing a "Motherhood Department" in Unity. This seemed to many to be contrary to their previous emphasis upon "regeneration of the body" as the way of salvation accomplished in part through the renunciation of sex. Sex education had played an important part in their teachings through the years:

1889:

The only salvation of the human family lies in the conservation and purification of the sex force.<sup>2</sup>

1894:

Those who desire to come into the closest unity with the

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<sup>1</sup>Unity, LIV (Jan., 1921), 58.

<sup>2</sup>"The Elixir of Life," Modern Thought, I (Nov., 1889), 8.



Spirit of Truth and reconstruct here on earth the temple of God--the regenerated body--must abstain from the sex relation.<sup>1</sup>

1911:

Children of the mind can be brought forth and all those awaiting reincarnation can be given a spiritual body. This will be the ultimate of the regenerative movement that is now going on, and we should therefore strive to put on Christ, and let the body of Christ be formed in us, that we may help those who are in darkness.<sup>2</sup>

1913:

We do believe in marriage, but not for the gratification of sex. The standard of the Spirit for those who would attain eternal life is absolute continence.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Rickert Fillmore had married and that a grandson was to be born to Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in a few months cannot be overlooked as a possible contributing factor to their decision to establish this department. The idea was introduced to their readers a month before the department was launched:

Truth students may be classed under two great heads in the uplift of the race. First are those who follow Joseph and Mary in submitting themselves and all their acts to the will of God to the end that they may bring forth the Holy Child. The second, those who follow Jesus and take the place of the Holy Child in consciousness and put on Christ themselves.

While we teach regeneration, we teach also the steps that lead to regeneration. We are prepared to help humanity in every experience that leads from the present development to the highest, or Jesus Christ consciousness of Life.

While there is yet need of souls being born into the physical plane, there is need of the highest teaching by which to prepare parents for the reception and education of these souls. The Mary standard of motherhood prepares the way for the birth of the Christ, and it is through the teaching of the processes which Mary observed that we present the Motherhood Department in the Unity magazine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Questions and Answers," Thought, IV (April, 1894), 17.

<sup>2</sup>"Extracts," Unity, XXXIV (Jan., 1911), 66.

<sup>3</sup>"Marriage and Continence," Unity, XXXIX (Sept., 1913),

<sup>4</sup>"Motherhood Department," Unity, LII (June, 1920), 549.

As was expected, letters of protest came. The editors replied that they must help those who chose, like Elizabeth and Zacharias, to bring forth children and that many good lessons could be learned in generation. They also returned to the idea expressed in the above announcement made two months previously:

There are waiting to be born into the earth plane souls so advanced that their presence and activity will immeasurably promote the race redemption. These souls are drawn to those women who seek motherhood in its immaculate character, the pure attached to the pure.<sup>1</sup>

They also published one letter of approval in which the writer stated that until this action he had always thought that they were "unwittingly condemning the stairs by which they had climbed." One year after the establishment of a motherhood department in Unity the Kansas City Center introduced the rite of Christening into its worship. Mr. Fillmore who was the minister of this group gave the following explanation:

Some of the members of the Unity Society in Kansas City have been requesting, for a long time, that we christen their children. Having had no revelation on this point, we have never before consented.

No special revelation has yet come, but the request for the rite was so insistent, that our Speaker and S.S. supt. conferred and decided that this ceremony should take place Sunday, June 13th.

Some of our people may think that we are becoming formal and ritualistic, in making this christening part of our church work. But we are searching out the spiritual side of life in everything else, why should we not find the spiritual religious forms and ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> For there is an inner and outer expression in everything.

Little Charles Rickert Fillmore was one of twenty-one children christened at that first service. Since that time the Kansas

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<sup>1</sup>"The Maternity Ministry," Unity, LIII (Aug., 1920, 159.

<sup>2</sup>"Unity Christening," Weekly Unity, XIII (July, 9, 1921), 2

City Society has practiced what it calls "spiritual baptism."

In Unity we do not make use of water in baptism, as did John of old, but prefer to follow the example of Jesus, whose form of baptism John foretold (Mark 1:7, 8). . . . "I baptize you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

Miss Cora Dedrick, then secretary to Mrs. Fillmore, was placed in charge of the new department in Unity. It was not long until "Maternity Treatments" became a part of Unity School's program with the usual love offerings for the service. This has become an important work with Unity School, as is evidenced by the fact that space has been given in the testimonial columns in Unity for those who have successfully borne children under the title "Unto Us a Child."

#### Unity Seeks Popularity

Until the close of the World War women were in the ascendancy in Unity, being largely influential in shaping its teaching and policy. The influence of Emma Curtis Hopkins and Ursula Gestefeld was felt throughout the entire period. Myrtle Fillmore, through her Wee Wisdom and her Home Department in Unity her large private correspondence, and her personal charm, colored the movement every step of the way. Annie Rix Miltz, founder of a "Home of Truth" in California, was a writer of Unity Lessons, a frequent lecturer at headquarters, and a contributor to the magazine. Jennie H. Croft, with Unity more than a quarter of a century, organizer of its local Sunday school and the Women's Auxiliary, was its sturdiest and most dependable character during

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Louis E. Meyer, Minister of Unity Society of Practical Christianity, Kansas City, Missouri, March 8, 1939. In explanation of the method of baptism Mr. Meyer says: "Minister uses flower petals instead of water baptism, symbolizing the innate purity of the soul, and calling forth its expression. Flower petals are presented in a silver bowl by an attendant."



its days of struggle. And Ida Mingle, sometime secretary to Charles Fillmore, who has since developed her own work in Chicago under the name, "Livable School of Christianity," was a strong stabilizing influence in the philosophy of the movement.

But a new emphasis came with the twenties. More and more, men entered to give direction to Unity's policy of expansion. Some of them, notably E. V. Ingraham, author of The Silence, H. B. Jeffrey, author of When Ye Pray, and W. I. Hoschauer, formerly a Congregational minister, gave increased depth to the movement. But a second group were ambitious to popularize Unity, especially with men. In 1920 the Society of Practical Christianity organized its men into a club, "The Men's Unity Extension." This was imaged as a club for "matter-of-fact" business men. The new club held monthly meetings emphasizing how Christian principles could be applied to economic life. It soon developed its own set of rules and took a new name, "Business Men's Christian Unity." The following statements were included in its constitution:

To search out and apply the laws of God in all the commercial relations between ourselves and all men.

The scope of the Association shall be the commercial relations of the whole world, to the end that uniform prosperity, officience, equity, honesty, justice and fair dealing shall be established everywhere.

In all meetings of this Association, a chair shall be reserved for Jesus Christ, the unseen Guest, whom we acknowledge to be the directive head of our work.

Francis J. Gable, originator of the club, sought to popularize it throughout the immediate Kansas City area by lecturing before Rotary and commercial organizations. Unity magazine suggested

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<sup>1</sup>"Constitution and By-Laws of Business Men's Christian Unity," The Christian Business Man, I (July, 1922), 24.

that the pattern of the local organization be followed by other Centers, and more than one hundred clubs quickly sprang into existence. Representatives from these groups were then called to Kansas City to form a national organization, which was termed the "Christian Business Federation." A magazine, The Christian Business Man, editor, Francis J. Gable, was established to carry publicity and foster fellowship among the clubs. The magazine was to offer "practical and usable principles that make for good business." The clubs were vigorously promoted and for a time seemed to be quite successful; but by 1935 only forty of them were in existence, and no more than three had been continuous since 1922. The Christian Business Federation was buried about the middle of the present decade without any publicity. The magazine, however, has been kept in the field by Unity School. Its name was changed to Good Business in 1933 with this announcement:

We shall adhere to the high ideals to which the periodical is devoted; and shall continue to advocate the use of Christian principles in every activity of business and professional life. The only purpose in making the change is to open the door to a more ready acceptance of our work, especially by those who have not learned that Christian business is good business.<sup>1</sup>

In announcing the change of name the editor also stated that Good Business would offer "Practical and usable principles that make for good business--good in profits and in satisfaction as well as good in practice and methods."<sup>1</sup>

The argument advanced for the change in name is strangely like that used by the International New Thought Alliance in 1921,

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<sup>1</sup>"Good Business," Christian Business, XXII (June, 1933), 10. The magazine became Christian Business, Jan., 1926.

when the Fillmores sought to have the name "Christian" added to that title. In view of their previous commitments the dropping of the term from their magazine's title seems hardly consistent, nor has it added to its popularity. The monthly is now composed of a series of highly-colored success stories, some generally platitudinous answers to business questions, and a dash of humor. It has never been able to compete with the success-story magazines of the day, has not captured the imagination even of Unity's adherents, and is Unity School's poorest seller.

A second of the popularizing group was Frank B. Whitney, a graduate of St. Louis University in dentistry. After practicing his profession for four years he came to Unity in 1915. He served his country in the World War, returned to Kansas City, and in 1924 introduced Unity Daily Word, a pocket-sized periodical giving an inspirational message for each day of the month. Under his editorship, continued until his death in 1938, this magazine became the most popular monthly publication of Unity School. Another of this group was Ralph E. Boileau, former automobile salesman, and Chautauqua singer and entertainer, who came to Unity School in the early twenties and rapidly rose to the position of Field Director and Lecturer. He proposed to make every large city in America Unity conscious.<sup>1</sup> But Mr. Boileau was too advanced even for Unity; he disagreed with its leadership in 1930 and established an independent work, which he called "The Emer-

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<sup>1</sup>The following news item is suggestive: "Ralph E. Boileau is bringing the Unity message before thousands of people in Seattle. . . . a telegram states that 2,200 persons attended the meeting Sunday night." Unity News, X (Dec. 8, 1923), 1.



gent Life Foundation." He had scarcely got his movement under way when he was killed in an automobile accident in 1933.

Two others who have added to the popularizing tendency in Unity are W. Rickert Fillmore and his friend Howard A. Colby. Rickert, second son of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, has given very little attention to the philosophy of Unity and has never shown any great concern over its more spiritual aspects. He took his advanced training at the Chicago Art Institute and then returned to Kansas City to begin work as an architect and decorator. He has dabbled in amateur theatricals, has been President of Kansas City Rotary, General Chairman of the Committee of Fifty on Kansas City Bonds (1928), General Chairman of Kansas City Charities (1932), President of Kansas City Art Institute, and a trustee of Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra. He acted as host to the Republican National Convention held in Kansas City in 1928. He became secretary of Unity School in 1915 and, since the death of Royal Fillmore, has been one of its trustees. He is also Manager of Unity Farm and Dean of Unity Training School. Howard A. Colby, son of a former president of Wisconsin Central Railways, graduate of Princeton University, friend of members of both the Roosevelt and Rockefeller families and, especially, of Harold McCormick of Chicago, was the most colorful of the group. He was with Unity eight years; he served as host at Unity Inn and as director of social and athletic activities at Unity Country Club and added spice to the local situation by his Colbygrams in Unity News, the workers' weekly. Mr. Colby died in 1928.

The last and most able of this group is Ernest C. Wilson. Ordained a minister in New Thought in 1918, he soon threw in his lot with Unity and took charge of their work at Cleveland. He was called to Kansas City in 1927; where he shortly became editor of Youth, a magazine started in January of that year to minister to Unity's young people.<sup>1</sup> In 1930 he was appointed editor-in-chief of all Unity's publications. When Charles Fillmore retired as minister of Unity Society of Practical Christianity in late 1933, he announced that he had chosen Mr. Wilson as his successor. Ernest C. Wilson has been a prolific writer and the most popular preacher and radio speaker of Unity's history. For some unannounced reason he left his position of leadership at Unity headquarters in 1938 and became the leader of a Unity Center in Los Angeles. Against the deeper, spiritual note of the earlier leaders, this group's chief concern has been the spreading of Unity's doctrine.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly the emphasis has been on size, magnificence, prosperity.

#### Money Flows to Unity

In the ten-year period following 1920 Unity School sought from its supporters, at different times and in varying amounts,

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<sup>1</sup>The first editor of the magazine was Gardner Hunt, a young novelist. The name of the magazine was changed to Progress in 1933.

<sup>2</sup>The popularizing tendency is quite discernable in the titles this group gave to their publications. Frank B. Whitney wrote Mightier than Circumstance, Open Doors, Beginning Again. Ralph E. Boileau published Heaven Now. Ernest C. Wilson has contributed The Sunlit Way, The Song of Life, The Protecting Presence, Have We Lived Before, the Contemplation of Christ.

a total of over two million four hundred thousand dollars for the expansion of its plant and organization. No record is available as to how much was realized, either through gifts or the sale of bonds. However, some insight is given into the financial affairs of that period through two court proceedings in which Unity School of Christianity was one of the parties involved. In the Laura R. MacMahon will contest in 1929 the testimony of Charles Fillmore as to the financial condition of the School was summarized by the Appellant's attorneys as follows:

The evidence shows that Charles Fillmore receives a salary of \$7,500.00 per year, his wife \$6,000.00 per year, his son, Rickert Fillmore, \$6,000.00 per year, and his other son, Lowell Fillmore, \$6,000.00 per year. From the \$5,000.00 capital shown to have been owned by the company in 1914, the properties and monies have increased until at the time of the trial the company owned a Unity Inn, Unity Center Building, Unity Annex (a rooming house), the publishing or printing plant comprising a four-story building, covering one-half a square block, all located at Unity Center, extending from 9th to 10th on Tracy, in Kansas City, Missouri; also there is Unity Farm, containing over 1,200 acres, located on Highway No. 50, about 18 miles from Kansas City, with a Silent Unity Building, costing about \$200,000.00, a Unity Tower, not yet completed, but already costing \$100,000.00, and or, not yet completed, but already costing \$100,000.00, and various other houses, buildings and barns, all having a value at the time of the trial, of approximately \$3,000,000.00.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Barney S. Ricketts, director of the accounting department of Unity School of Christianity, testified in the same trial that the "Good Will Offerings" were at that time averaging about one

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<sup>1</sup>No. 30415, Supreme Court of Missouri, April Term, 1932. Respondents' Additional Abstract of the Record, Statement, Brief and Argument, p. 18. The essential facts of this case were: Laura R. MacMahon, Columbus, Ohio, had been a sufferer from goiter since 1905. She came to Unity School of Christianity for treatment about 1911 and lived there the rest of her life. At seventy-two years of age she made her will, January 27, 1926, ten months before her death. Relatives were given a total sum of \$1,400; Mercy Hospital of Kansas City, \$5,000; Kansas City Coun-

thousand dollars daily and that the total daily income of Unity School of Christianity was about \$4,700. On an estimated business year of three hundred days Unity School of Christianity had an annual income of approximately one and one-half million dollars in 1923. The salaries of Myrtle Fillmore and the two sons were raised to equal that of Charles Fillmore in 1930<sup>1</sup>, so that the four Fillmores, directors and trustees of Unity School of Christianity, were voting themselves an annual income from the School of thirty thousand dollars--a goodly sum, but not excessive in view of the holdings involved and the business transacted.

Unity School of Christianity has also profited through some large gifts. Evidence in the trial concerning the will of Laura R. MacMahon showed that she had actually given to Unity, in the three-year period previous to her death, the sum of \$185,000 (approximately), from which she was receiving an annuity of six percent until her death. A similar situation appeared in the life of Dr. Clara C. Austin, formerly of Boston. When eighty-two years of age, Dr. Austin transferred her total holdings of twelve thousand dollars to Unity School of Christianity and re-

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cil of Boy Scouts of America, \$5,000; Lois Coldren, a fellow-member of Unity Society and companion of the deceased, \$5,000. The remainder of the \$50,000 (approximately) estate was willed to Unity School of Christianity. Suit was entered against the validity of the will by Nellie E. Clark, a niece. Decision of jury in Jackson County Circuit Court set aside the "purported will." Supreme Court of Missouri remanded the case to Jackson County Circuit Court for retrial because of error in instructions given jury by presiding judge. Case was finally "compromised and settled" out of court.

<sup>1</sup>Statement by Charles Fillmore, personal interview.



ceived in exchange an annuity contract.<sup>1</sup> Unity School realized almost two hundred thousand dollars on these two contracts.

The development of Unity Farm makes the height of the physical expansion of Unity. In 1919 the Fillmores purchased a fifty-eight-acre farm, some seventeen miles east of Kansas City, which they prepared to develop as a vacation and week-end retreat for Unity employees. This retreat had developed in ten years into a twelve-hundred-acre Unity Farm and Country Club. A dam, making a lake of twenty acres, had been thrown across a stream; a large outdoor amphitheater had been made; and Silent Unity Building, with a floor-space of fifty thousand square feet, had been erected. The Campanile, towering to the height of a ten-story building, was under construction. A club house, apartment house, swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, and several modern residences had been scattered over the farm's rolling hills. The announced building plans called for a final outlay of about two and one-half million dollars. This was to be the future home of Unity School. The entire idea was set forth by Charles Fillmore as a great "Christian Service Station." Love offerings and tithes and the usual blessings were sought from world-wide Unity.

The paramount ideal of Unity City will be the setting up on earth of the kingdom of the heavens,--the ideals of peace and harmony, prosperity and health to be established right here on earth. We look forward to the fulfilling of the vision of John as given in the twenty first chapter of Revelation.

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<sup>1</sup>The Kansas City Star, Feb. 22, 1925, p. 1. A Nephew of the deceased sued Unity School of Christianity, alleging undue influence. Case was decided for defendant.

tion.<sup>1</sup>

Readers of Unity periodicals were invited to suggest possible names for the city to be built at Unity Farm. Some suggestions were: "Unity City," "Inspiration City," "Unitopia," "Fillmore," "Unity Reimora," "Kingdom City," and "Unityopolis." Unity suggested that it would build homes at the "Farm" for those who were ready to appreciate its benefits. In his dedication address Mr. Fillmore explained:

It is to be a city of peace for the children of God. Nobody can own anything and property will be for the common good of all. We shall try out a real community of interests with God as the head. We were put here as the children were given their heritage. Most of us have forgotten God. Unity City will acknowledge Him and peace will be the only power and presence here.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, not every one could fulfill the conditions of residence which would guarantee reaching this ideal. "Those who spiritually understand the Truth taught by Jesus and who are able to render needed assistance to the cause"<sup>3</sup> may become residents. Only those who are in the upper bracket of Unity's payroll or who have contributed lovingly of their wealth<sup>4</sup> to Unity School have as yet fulfilled these conditions. In the dedication ceremony the "New Unity Doxology"<sup>5</sup> was sung, and a special blessing was given:

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<sup>1</sup>"Unity City," Unity, LXVI (March, 1927), 206.

<sup>2</sup>"Unity Farm Dedication," The Kansas City Times, Aug. 29, 1927, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>C. W. Ferguson, Confusion of Tongues (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1928), p. 225.

<sup>4</sup>Laura R. MacMahon had a home built for herself at Unity Farm the year of her death.

<sup>5</sup>See p. 67.

God bless Unity City. All the activities of Unity City are in divine order. Divine life inspires it and divine power protects it. The spirit of Jesus Christ is active in Unity City.<sup>1</sup>

#### Other Activities

In September, 1920, Unity School told subscribers to its various magazines that a pink wrapper was notice of expiration of subscription and that a special meeting of Silent Unity was being held each month to bless these particular wrappers with the hope that it would keep those who lacked enthusiasm within the fold. They also informed their readers that, if requested, they would place a "plain wrapper" on all Unity literature sent through the mail to any individual.

#### Unity Inn

Unity Inn, from May, 1916, to April, 1921, was conducted at a loss of \$9,784.54.<sup>2</sup> The leaders, therefore, suggested that, since every loyal soul planned sometime to visit headquarters, a person would confer a great favor upon Unity School as well as drawing a real blessing to himself if he would send an advance of five dollars for a "certificate of entertainment," which would be honored at its face value whenever he came. When Howard A. Colby became host for Unity Inn, publicity for it was intensified. Some finely equipped busses were purchased and assigned regular routes through the shopping district of Kansas City. These provided free transportation to any Unity Inn customer. Unity Inn became known as the largest, strictly vegetarian Inn in the world."

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<sup>1</sup>"Dedication of Unity City," Unity, LXVI (May, 1927), 410.



But the depression wrought a complete change; the busses were discontinued; and, in 1935 the Inn was leased to a private party. This arrangement did not prove successful. The Inn now operates on a limited basis primarily for the workers in Unity School. It is no longer "strictly vegetarian."<sup>1</sup>

### The Radio

Unity went on the air over the Western Radio Company, June, 1923. One year later it purchased this station and for eleven years WOQ was a most effective means of spreading the Unity gospel. The broadcast arrangement included two Unity sermons on Sunday, a morning meditation each week-day at eight-thirty and "God's Half Hour" at 11:00 A.M. Other Unity programs were broadcast during the afternoon and evening. But in June, 1934, WOQ lost its radio license from the Federal Radio Commission, and since then Unity has taken time through other stations. Unity now carries its "mornin' Meditations" on nine stations, located at Kansas City, Topeka, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Beverly Hills, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and New York. It also occasionally uses a station at Auckland, New Zealand.

### Music and Recordings

In September, 1924, Unity announced the organization of a "School of Music," the purpose of which was to awaken the "inner consciousness of melody, harmony and rhythm" in the mind of the student and help him gain an understanding of the spiritual

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 186.



law of accomplishment. This adventure was tried for three years but finally was dropped for lack of patronage. Lest the reader should think that the Red Leaf episode marked only a temporary stage in the growth of Unity's thought to be soon dropped by the wayside, we note that the idea has continued throughout Unity's history, now and again being brought to the attention of followers. This statement appeared in 1925:

This leaf has been blessed by the Silent Unity Society of Kansas City, Mo. In fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might have whatsoever we asked in his name we, the 60 members of Silent Unity Society, laid our hands on this leaf and prayed that it would in word and substance, quicken the healing power of Spirit in all those who would join us in the faith. As the woman touched the hem of Jesus' garments, and by her faith was healed, so you may touch this leaf and receive the same great blessing.<sup>1</sup>

Unity School began, in 1925, to place its monthly "Healing and Prosperity Thoughts" on phonograph records. These, carrying the voice of Mr. or Mrs. Fillmore or some lesser light, were offered to their constituency at the subscription price of three dollars annually. Another method used by the Field Department to arouse the interest of more distant members was that of sending out a motion picture film showing local activities of Unity School. Since 1927 the School repeatedly has warned its disciples not to be seduced by the lure of the "charmed beads," supposedly blessed by Unity leaders, being marketed in various parts of the country. Only after due notice was given in a Unity publication was a worker sent into any community in the interests of the School.

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<sup>1</sup>Unity, LXII (April, 1925), 365.

### The Help-One-a-Month Club

The Help-One-a-Month Club was organized at Unity in 1930 and is the most recent competitor of the "Prosperity Bank" and the "Good Words" Reminder Box." This was specifically announced as a method for increasing subscriptions to Unity literature. Like the two just mentioned, there were no dues for joining the club; but it would take a great deal more from the pocket of an individual than either of them. In joining this club one becomes a boy scout of the Unity type (the idea is theirs) and do one good deed each month. The good deed takes the form of a gift subscription of some Unity periodical to some needy friend. At the end of twelve months you will have sent twelve dollars to Unity School and started twelve messengers of happiness to that many persons. No information has been published as to the effectiveness of the method in increasing the subscription lists, but it is still in use.

### Automobile Blessings

Silent Unity began the habit of blessing automobiles as a means of insuring the safety of Unity travellers in 1930. A suggested blessing for a road reads as follows:

This is God's road and it is used by His children. There is nothing on the road but perfect safety. All who travel this road are protected by the loving power of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Unfortunately these blessings do not seem to have been effective in protecting Unity's own cars. At least three damage suits have been filed against Unity School in the past three years for injury from Unity's cars. See the following cases in the Jackson County Circuit Court, Kansas City, Mo.: No. 446,790, B. Klayman v. Unity School of Christianity (128A), p. 354; No. 460,753, William Morrison v. Unity School of Christianity (134A), p. 530; No. 460,754, Earl A. Tweedle v. Unity School of Christianity (137A), p. 122.

This idea received notice in the newspapers of the country, and Unity Society set aside a special Sunday to bless cars of its worshippers. Cards carrying blessings are now sent to all who desire to place them in their cars.

### The Death of Myrtle Fillmore

Myrtle Fillmore, whose faith was the basis of the founding of Unity School of Christianity, died October 6, 1931, after giving more than forty-two years to the practice of healing and teaching. When other leaders had died, Unity had always explained that such a person had "grown discouraged" or had become "too personal" to hold spirit, soul, and body together. Myrtle Fillmore, like her husband,<sup>1</sup> thought that she would herself demonstrate eternal life in the body.<sup>2</sup> Her demise seemed to demand some explanation. This was given by Ernest C. Wilson in the "Memorial Address."

There are very few people who have seen their way so clearly and made their decisions so definitely as Myrtle Fillmore did. Her transition was such a decision. A number of those who have been very close to her know this, and firmly believe that Mrs. Fillmore need not have slipped out of the body if she had not wished to do so. But she did wish to do so. She spoke of it to a number of those who are present here today. She spoke of it to me some time ago, when clearly there was no least shadow of illness upon her to suggest such an idea. Nor was there any reason at the time of her passing why she should need to do so. She could, I am sure, have remained with us as long as she might wish to, and I think that is what she did. Not that she did not want to be with us, but that she had some very clear and definite ideas about work that was just ahead of her to do,<sup>3</sup> and she felt that this change had a part in that work.

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<sup>1</sup>See Letters of Myrtle Fillmore (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1936), pp. 105-118.

<sup>2</sup>See p. 200.

<sup>3</sup>Ernest C. Wilson, "Memorial Address," Myrtle Page Fillmore (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity), pp. 2-3.

In 1929 Unity Society of Practical Christianity purchased a lot in the Country Club District, Kansas City's wealthy residential section, at a cost of forty thousand dollars. Here they planned to build a great Unity Temple. Although purchased by the local Unity Society, not by Unity School, the site and building were to be paid for partly by love offerings sought from Unity's world-wide following. When Myrtle Fillmore<sup>1</sup> died in 1931, Unity's Memorial Committee decided that this new Unity Temple should become a shrine dedicated to her memory. For seven years "Temple Banks" have been sent to all who would save for this purpose. The lot is still vacant, but a renewed appeal is being made in this Golden Anniversary Year of 1939.

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<sup>1</sup>On December 30, 1933, Charles Fillmore, then seventy-nine years of age, remarried, taking as his second wife Cora G. Dedrick, fifty-seven years old, his secretary at the time of the marriage.