

CHAPTER V

THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

The Test of Truth

There are three elements in Unity's theory of knowledge: the nature of God, the psychology of man, and the use of logic. First, Unity is a metaphysical idealism. God is Mind; Mind has evolved itself into a world of forms, and one of these forms is man-Mind come to self consciousness.

Man is a phase of God-Mind, and his mind must act like God-Mind.¹

In Truth there is but one Mind . . . man expresses Mind in a multitude of ways.²

God is supreme Knowing.³

The second element in Mr. Fillmore's theory is his idea of the psychology of man. Psychologically, man is mind in three aspects--superconscious, conscious, and subconscious. Consciousness, the center of this trinity, is man's awareness of himself; it is that "phase of knowing by which we take cognizance of our existence and our relation to what we call environment."⁴ The subconsciousness is the memory of man--the unity of all past thinking, both of this and previous incarnations, and the directing agent in all bodily relations. It has no creative ability but carries out automatically the habits one has trained into himself through the conscious mind.⁵ The superconscious mind

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.; Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1928), p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 90.

³Ibid., p. 104.

⁴"Consciousness," Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, p. 155.

⁵Mr. Fillmore says: There is a subconsciousness that carries on digestion, assimilation, circulation, respiration, elimination and the like. We should not be in possession of an organism having the various movements of mind unless at some point in our experience we had established them." Charles Fillmore, Mysteries of Genesis, p. 77.

is located at the top of the head and is the organ of communion with God.

The superconscious mind, Christ consciousness, or spiritual consciousness is a state of consciousness, that is based upon true ideas, upon an understanding and realization of spiritual Truth.¹

Christ is the only begotten Son of God, or the one complete idea of perfect man in Divine Mind. This Christ, or perfect man-idea existing eternally in Divine Mind,² is the true, spiritual, higher self of every individual.

Man has a mind called the Lord, transcending both the conscious and the subconscious.³

The superconsciousness in man, that is, the Christ or Lord, is the second element of the "Divine trinity"--mind, idea, expression. Now the problem of attaining real knowledge is that of direct adjustment of the conscious mind to the Christ mind. The conscious mind looks in two directions: it looks outward through the five senses to other forms; it looks inward and upward through what Mr. Fillmore calls the sixth and seventh senses--"thought" and "intuitive perception." The thinking sense involves man's ability to create forms or call God-ideas into manifestation through words. The intuitive sense, "located back of the heart at the solar plexus," is that quality of consciousness by which we immediately apprehend Truth. Stated in psychological terms, superconsciousness is "Supreme Knowing"; consciousness turned upward is "Understanding." The process of

¹"Consciousness," Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, p. 155.

²"Christ," ibid., p. 150.

³Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, p. 90.

gaining Truth, then, is man's realization of his true nature as a "Son of God." No outward experience is necessary to such knowing; one needs only to affirm one's birthright:

Never say, "I don't know"; "I can't understand." Claim your Christ understanding at all times, and declare: "I am not under any spell of human ignorance. I am one with Infinite Understanding." The accumulation of ignorance gathered through association with ignorant minds can be dispelled by the Word. You may know by simply holding that you know. This is not egotism, but spiritual knowing. When you declare divine understanding, you sometimes meet your old line of thought and are disappointed. Right then continue to hold for knowing. Judge not by appearances. Do not act until you get the assurance; if you keep in the Spirit by affirmation, the assurance will come. Will it come by voice? No! you will know through the faculty of intuition. Divine knowing is direct fusion of mind of God with mind of man.¹

So the true source of knowledge is the "Spirit of Truth" within every man. Consciousness has blinded man somewhat to this Spirit by turning outward through the five physical senses into the world of experience. This explains why man is not naturally conscious of the Divine Presence to-day. He has built up a sense-world, a world of things, which, so long as he trusts it, keeps him apart from his birthright to "Absolute knowledge." "To arrive at Truth we must find the opposite of what the senses reveal."² Ernest C. Wilson, applying the words of Shelley, says: "Consciousness . . .

"Like a dome of many-colored glass
Stains the white radiance of eternity."³

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, pp. 106-107.

²Charles Fillmore, "Self Training," Unity, VII (July, 1896), 161.

³Ernest C. Wilson, The Sunlit Way (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1923), p. 22.

Recovery from this condition of blindness and return to pure knowledge requires effort, and sometimes is reached only by stages through dreams and visions. The consciousness of man may be so filled with error-thoughts that the Divine Mind cannot at first find entrance to it during man's waking moments. Mr. Fillmore recalls that his earliest experiences of gaining Truth came in this way.¹ When messages come through dreams it may be necessary for the one receiving them to seek out an interpreter more advanced in Truth; or, as in the case of Joseph, one may be so near the Father's house that God himself will show him the dream. It follows, also, that the check or test of knowledge must necessarily be individual. No objective standards can be set up, and we should not submit our will to another.

But Mr. Fillmore would not agree that this opens the door to intellectual anarchy. If one is in Truth, he will trust the logic of mind. Students must learn to follow Truth to its ultimate implication regardless of seeming inconsistencies. "If appearances are out of harmony with your mental premise, do not let them unseat your logic."² For example, the statement, "God is good; God is all," denies that there is or can be any real evil. Therefore, one must not let any appearance of evil cause him to waver from this affirmation in thought, word, or deed.

This is not blind belief; it is an acquiescence in the superconsciousness of the logic of Being. The Superconsciousness is man's only sure guide in the mazes of the creative process. By trusting to the infallibility of this guide, man

¹See Thought, V (Feb., 1894), 454.

²Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, p. 8.

opens himself to the inspiration of the Almighty.¹
An intuitive experience of the oneness of man with Being, deliberately affirmed, and followed by man to its logical conclusion will guide the one who trusts it into knowledge of truth. This is the theory of knowledge held by Unity.

Application of the Test of Truth to Its Sources

We consider now how Unity's theory of knowledge causes it to react toward its sources. Christian Science, Hinduism, and Theosophy have so much in common with Unity in this respect that we need not deal with them. We must look at Unity's attitude toward science and the Scripture.

Mr. Fillmore has assumed a dual attitude toward science: on the one side, as has been suggested, he has developed a scientific nomenclature by which he has sought to give his system intellectual standing and has assured his readers that Unity is the real synthesis between religion and science:

When Christians understand the science of thinking, the power of thought to manifest itself, and how the manifestation of thought is accomplished, they will no longer fear material science; when material scientists have fathomed the real nature of the living force that they discern as ever active in all of nature's structures, they will have more respect for religion.²

On the other hand, Mr. Fillmore's theory of the Absolute and of knowledge as intuitive without the need of experience together with his theory of evil as being a darkening of intellectual perception makes him a severe critic of the scientific method. He says that it is foolish to try to store up knowledge, that intellectual people often make a burden out of life because they try

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, p. 8.

²Ibid., p. 28.

to accumulate more knowledge than they can apply.¹ He also suggests that intellectual or scientific standards are "constantly shifting opinions" and adds that the science that is founded upon Spirit is the "only real science."² Why should one struggle through the maze of modern scientific education when he has in him "that which, when opened, will place him in direct contact with universal knowledge and enable him instantly and continuously to draw forth anything he may wish to know?"³ Furthermore, it is out of sense-perception, which gives the basic material that science seeks to organize into knowledge, that the ills of mankind have come--discord, limitation, disease, death. We shall see how antagonistic to science Unity is when we consider the application of its theory of knowledge to the problem of disease.

Finally, how does Unity handle the Bible, which has been the authority for Christians for so many centuries? Mr. Fillmore admits that Scripture may be a good guide for those who have not come into a realization of Truth; but one who has the "Spirit of Truth" has the substance of which the Bible is only the shadow.

Scripture may be a satisfactory authority for those who are not themselves in direct communion with the Lord, but we should remember that we have gone deeper into practical metaphysics than the people that lived when the Bible was written.⁴

The Bible is one of many sacred books, all of which are to be treated with reverence, for they are the "records of men as to what their experiences have been in communing with the omnipresent

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 9.

³Ibid., p. 91

⁴"Correspondence," Unity, VII (Oct., 1896), 400.

God."¹ But these records are only corroborative and sometimes contain grievous errors. Mr. Fillmore has been especially critical of the Apostle Paul. He feels that Paul has loaded "old beliefs," especially the blood sacrifices of the Hebrew faith, upon the teachings of Jesus. He once said: "If Paul had known how conditions are made through thinking and speaking he would not have written many things that are credited to him."² In this instance, however, Mr. Fillmore does not judge Paul on the basis of intuitive knowledge but says he knows Paul in the flesh and has his word for it.³

During the early years of his movement Mr. Fillmore would have little to do with the Bible; but, as he worked out things in the Absolute, he finally discovered that his experiences were being "corroborated in a wonderful way in the Hebrew Scriptures."⁴ This led to a more definite study of them and finally to the issuance of a large Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, the most ambitious publication attempt of Unity School. The significant thing about it is its method of interpretation. It assumes that the historical side of the Bible is a mere shell in which an inner meaning is hidden and can be discovered only by those who are already attuned to the Spirit of Truth.

¹Charles Fillmore, The Twelve Powers of Man (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1950), p. 114.

²"Correspondence," Unity, VII (Oct., 1896), 400.

³Ibid. See also Unity, VIII (Jan., 1897), 78. Mr. Fillmore reported that at that time Paul was a "plain American citizen." He did not realize his previous incarnations until he was thirty-eight years of age.

⁴Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing, p. 69.

The Bible and the prophets can be understood only by those who arrive mentally at the place where the writers were when they gave forth their messages. It requires the same inspiration to read the Scriptures that it required to write them.¹

The method of interpretation is not new. The Fillmores in this respect belong in the lineage of Origen, Swedenborg, and Mrs. Eddy. To these the allegorical character of the Bible was of primary importance. Scriptural terms have "both an outer and inner significance." The historical is a veil which must be lifted in order to discover the inner, esoteric, spiritual significance. This is the method of Unity:

The history of the Hebrew race from Adam to Jesus is a symbolical picture of the development of one man's character, veiled under many personalities, and that man is every man who is following Christ. The journeys of the children of Israel are but the journeys of man's thoughts in his consciousness. Every name, place, and circumstance refers to some condition of spirit, soul or body. The spirit is the realm of ideals, the soul the realm of thoughts, and the body the realm of forms.

In studying this great arcanum of Truth we should remember that it encompasses the whole of man and hence it is a work on physiology, metaphysics and transcendentalism. Every character is the representative of some Divine Idea operating on one of these three planes. For instance, Moses represents, in the spiritual, the Perception of the Law; in the physical, the Record of the Law. Aaron represents, spiritually, the Idea of Strength; mentally, the Word of Strength; and physically, Strength in Action. So with all the characters and incidents--they have a trinity of action. When this is understood, all seeming inconsistencies in interpretation will disappear.²

This is Unity's attempt to unite the metaphysical, mystical East and the practical, ethical West. Mr. Fillmore's theory of God as the Absolute and knowledge as intuitive has resulted in giving the West only the status of a handmaid, both as to science and religion.

¹Unity, VIII (Feb., 1897), 216.

²Charles Fillmore, "The Scriptures," Unity, VII (July, 1902), 19.