

CHAPTER VI

THE NATURE OF GOD

While Unity leaders attach both personal and impersonal symbols to their concept of God, their pattern of thinking is always pantheistic. Invariably associating personality with form and its limitations, the Fillmores insist that those who think of God in terms of personality get a wrong understanding of the character of "Original Being" and its relation to the world. God is formless, so we must drop all thought of God as circumscribed or limited. God is Spirit, not person; God is substance, not matter. God is the basis of all form but does not enter into any form as a finality. He is the "universal Substance," that which stands back of and under form and matter, from which flows all manifestation.

God can be defined only by the use of abstractions. God is "Principle, Law, Being, Mind, Spirit, All-Good, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchangeable. . . . Cause and Source of all that is."¹ The personal element is ever excluded from the definition. "God is not a . . . person having life, intelligence, love, power. God is that invisible, intangible, but very real something we call Life . . . Love . . . Power."² Without regard to the nature of the subject, each term is given a sort of spatial or quantitative significance. "Absolute" does not mean self-existent or unlimited, but rather the sum of all being, the

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 15.

²H. Emilie Cady, Lessons in Truth (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1925), p. 6.

unity of all distinctions. The "infinite Mind . . . fills immensity."¹ "Omnipotence is a monopoly of power . . . the principle by means of which all power is made manifest."² Omnipresent means that God is the only Being of which all creation is but the individualized expression. "He is the universe."³ When John said "God is love," he meant that God was "the essence by and through which men are capable of loving one another."⁴ Unity insists that any attempt to circumscribe God by associating Him with persons would be idolatry.

Nevertheless, Unity frequently embellished its concept of God with personal terms. "What we need," says H. W. Dresser, "when trying to make the thought of God as practical as possible is . . . a symbol or figure of speech to bring the idea home to all persons."⁵ Unity, in common with many thinkers in the New Thought field, has made constant use of personal symbols of God in presenting its message to the world. The first textbook gives expression to this method:

To the individual consciousness God takes on personality, but as the creative underlying cause of all things, He is Principle, impersonal; as expressed in each individual, he becomes personal to that one--a personal, loving, all-forgiving Father-Mother. All that any human soul can ever need is the infinite Father-Principle, the great reservoir of unexpressed good.⁶

¹Thought, V (April, 1893), 9.

²A. P. Barton, "God," Thought, V (June, 1893), 106.

³Sarah D. Scott, The True Character of God (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1927), p. 3 (pamphlet).

⁴A. P. Barton, "God," Thought, V (June, 1893), 106.

⁵H. W. Dresser, "Spiritual Truths," Unity, LXXVIII (June, 1933), 18.

⁶H. Emilie Cady, Lessons in Truth, p. 11.

So Unity calls God "Father," "Mother," "Creator"; manifestations of God it terms "sons of God." The abstract nouns defining God are turned into verbs: "God loves"; "God wills"; "God knows." Believers are told to trust God and to serve God. Unity literature is filled with scriptural quotations concerning God, which carry personal meanings. Cora D. Fillmore, in one of Unity's latest publications, states all her Affirmations in person-to-person terms--"Jesus Christ is raising me."¹ At headquarters each day the entire group of Unity employees, led through a loud speaker system, pause from their activities to repeat aloud the Lord's prayer. Thus Unity's adherents and inquirers, already emotionally charged with such symbols through their experience in the Christian community, are warmed and fed and comforted. This casual adornment of the pantheistic structure with personal symbols sometimes gives Unity's God-idea the appearance of a hybrid, but it is only appearance. God is still the "Inexorable Principle at the source of all existence."²

God is idea and manifestation, thought and extension. Unity ascribes to the divine essence characteristics of both mind and matter. Yet there is no dualism in its universe. The infinite evolves itself into the finite; the finite achieves its destiny by return to the infinite. Charles Fillmore says:

The is-ness of mind is but one side of it. Being is not limited to the level of is-ness; it has all possibilities, including that of breaking forth from its inherencies into

¹See Cora D. Fillmore, Christ Enthroned in Man (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1937).

²H. Emilie Cady, Lessons in Truth, p. 11.

the realm of appearances. Mind has two sides, being and appearance, the visible and the invisible. To say that mind is all and yet deny that things that do appear have any place in the all-ness is to state but half the truth.¹

In such a world there is no creation in a personal sense. As idea, the universe is coexistent with God; as manifestation, the universe is a continuous evolution of God. "Creation is the God consciousness forming within itself centers, which it seeks to endow, through orderly procedure, with all its attributes."¹ The original design in Divine Mind is eternally fixed, but creation is going on all the time. The first and second chapters of Genesis, metaphysically interpreted, are a complete explanation of Principle evolving its world. The six days of the first chapter represent six "degrees or stages" of God-Mind. "Create" means to "ideate." God-Mind ideated the world in the heavens-- "the realm of ideas." The climax of the Mind-ideation process was reached when wisdom and love communed together and produced the mental image, Man. This particular ideation is the "only-begotten Son, the Christ, the Lord God, the Jehovah, the I Am."² "In the six mind movements, called days, Elohim God creates the spiritual universe and spiritual man. He then rests. He has created the ideals, patterns, for the formed universe that is to follow."³

The process of bringing the universe into form or manifestation is carried on by Jehovah or the Logos. This is the

¹Charles Fillmore, "The Unreality of Matter," Unity, IX (Oct., 1897), 309.

²Charles Fillmore, Mysteries of Genesis, p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 24.

subject matter of the second chapter of Genesis. Jehovah God forms that which Elohim God has created in mind. The Logos makes visible through the power of thought--"God said." Thought is the Spirit executing the idea. Ideas project themselves into forms. This is the law of Being. "The object of creation is to form the formless."¹ These forms express Being; every form, even the most minute, carries all of Being even as one drop of water carries the sea. The trinity of Being--mind, idea, and expression--has produced the trinity of form--substance, life, and intelligence. Thus Mr. Fillmore has tried to subsume the theological Trinity under his explanation of the process of the unfoldment of Principle. The real trinity is mind, idea, and expression. "The Father is Principle, the Son is that Principle revealed in a creative plan. The Holy Spirit is the executive power of both Father and Son carrying out the creative plan."² God is the only Being, and all the world is the individualized expression of that Being. "Divine Mind expresses its Word, and through the activity of that Word the universe is brought forth."³ Being unfolds itself, "flows" into the multiform objects of the visible universe. "God is thinking the Universe into manifestation right now."⁴

God achieves self-consciousness in man. This is the

¹Charles Fillmore, Mysteries of Genesis, p. 44.

²"Holy Spirit," Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, p. 629.

³Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 56.

⁴Ibid., p. 17.

climax of the evolution of Principle. Jehovah God, the creative power of Being, has finally brought into manifestation through the law of mind action self-conscious centers. These centers are not independent susistences. Man is a "phase of God-Mind."¹ He is the individualized expression of God-Mind:

God is the one perfect life flowing through us. God is the one pure substance out of which our organism is formed. God is the power that gives us motive power; the strength that holds us upright and allows us to exercise our members; the wisdom that gives us intelligence in every cell of our organism, every thought of our mind. God is the only reality of us.²

Man has identity only. He can say "I" but never "my." He is just "the inlet and the outlet"³ of the everywhere-present substance, life and intelligence. Christ, the Logos, has formed itself into conscious entities for the purpose of continuing the creative process. The "I AM" has become the "I will." The trinity--mind, idea, and expression--has now become Elohim, Jehovah, and Adam. "Adam is the third in the godhead."⁴ The unfoldment of Being continues as this new member of the trinity deliberately assumes his functions. "Throw yourself into the Trinity, and you become its avenue of expression."⁵

This deliberate identification of self-consciousness with Being has been supremely realized in the historical Jesus of Nazareth. He so completely identified himself with Principle

¹Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 18.

²Frances W. Foulks (ed.), Letters of Myrtle Fillmore (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity, 1936), p. 33.

³Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 21.

⁴Charles Fillmore, The Twelve Powers of Man, p. 98.

⁵Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 19.

that he could say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." This, too, is the privileged destiny of every man. When the individual asks as to his own nature, "God-Understanding replies: 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."¹ Man is God manifest.

The personal or impersonal character of a God-concept stands most clearly revealed when it is brought to a test in the practical affairs of every-day living. What demands does God make? What succor does God offer? In this area the outlook of Unity is always horizontal, never vertical; God is immanent but not transcendent. First, what duties does God require of Man? Only one answer can be given. None! God is not that kind of Being.

God is potential, unformed will; man is manifest God-will, or good-will. . . . God is the one Principle; we are all as free to use God as we are free to use the principles of mathematics and music. The principle never interferes, but if it is to be used rightly we must develop understanding.²

God does not use man; man uses God as he sees fit.

As there are no divine imperatives in Unity's thinking, so there is no real sin. "God is good and God is all; hence there can be no real condition but the good."³ Such human inconsistencies as appear among men are due only to ignorance. We shall carry the thought further as we study the nature and ability of man. Now we note only Unity's tendency to discount all moral distinctions. The devil is that phase of "mortal mind" which "deludes us into believing . . . that we are less than

¹Ibid., p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Ibid., p. 86.

gods."¹ Evil has no real subsistence but is only the absence of good:

All things are manifestations of the good. Man in his spiritual identity is the very essence of good, and he can do no wrong. He can in his experience misuse the powers placed at his disposal by the Father, but he can do no permanent evil."²

Man should never condemn himself nor criticize his neighbor, regardless of any apparent evil. Each should be held in the mind as he actually exists in Divine Substance--a manifestation of God. Mr. Fillmore carries this to its logical conclusion. Speaking of passion and lust as "love submerged in the human consciousness and smothered with selfishness," he says:

We should remember that we have laid down, as a foundation principle, that God is love, and, as there is but one God, there can be but one love. This being true, we must find place in the creative law for every manifestation, regardless of its apparent contradictions of the righteousness of First Cause.³

Under this philosophy there is no need for divine forgiveness. Neither the God of Sinai nor the God of Calvary walks in the world which Unity portrays.

Let us now look at the experience of human suffering. Whence came the harsh features of nature--earthquakes, floods, and pestilences? Why the strange inequalities of life? Why should man endure them? What challenge do they bring to sustained thinking or creative living? Whence comes help to live sanely in

¹Unity, LXXXVII (Jan., 1938), 80.

²Charles Fillmore, The Twelve Powers of Man, p. 153.

³Charles Fillmore, "The Healing Word," Unity, LXXXV (Nov., 1936), 8.

the midst of them? The answer of Unity shows anew the controlling power of her impersonal God-concept. Suffering and sacrifice bear no fruits! These physical inconsistencies are a temporary product of error-thought on the part of the race and have no real subsistence. They exist only as effect and so have no actual power. Such injury as they bring comes only to the power man imparts to them by his own limited vision. When man fully realizes his oneness with Being, the one Absolute Cause, he will quickly dispel all such appearances by the authority of his word. This is the philosophy Unity applies to those experiences in which it is particularly interested--disease versus health, poverty versus prosperity, ignorance versus knowledge. Because of later discussion, I use only the first by way of illustration. Since disease is merely the effect of wrong thinking; since "there is nothing to heal,"¹ as Mr. Fillmore says; since man can demonstrate bodily perfection by consciously linking himself with Being, there was and is no real need of the science of medicine. How tragic, then, the long history of human suffering; how pathetic the innumerable sacrifices made in the interest of supposed human need! Nature has been making no demand; man has needed no grace. The centuries of human struggle eventuating in modern applied science have no real significance.

Unity's impersonal God-pattern continues to manifest itself when we turn to two problems of religious thought--miracle

¹Charles Fillmore, "The Healing Word," Unity, LXXXV (Nov., 1936), 8.

and prayer. From the standpoint of religion, the miracles of Scripture have always been interpreted as God's answer to the cry of human need, a revelation of the activity of a personal Being in a seemingly impersonal world. Unity, significantly, does not deny the historicity of the biblical miracles. Jesus actually increased the loaves and fishes, cleared the lepers, healed the sick, and raised Lazarus out of the tomb. Unity does deny that they can be called miracles.¹ Jesus, through Divine self-realization, drew out of impersonal substance whatever he desired to supply the needs of his fellow-men. That, too, is our birthright.

How, then, does the individual approach such a God? Prayer is quite generally recognized as the core or vital religion. H. H. Farmer says; "All that distinguishes man's specifically religious response to his world from his response in morals, science, or art comes to expression in the act of prayer."² This religious response to the world is always a personal one, as Miss Cady has suggested.³ And one of the most common elements of prayer is petition. Now Unity has no prayer in the sense of petition. God-Mind has evolved itself under law, and any such prayer

¹The following is an example of Mr. Fillmore's approach to the miracles of Scripture: "Mary, a virgin, conceived the seed as an idea in Spirit. Medical authorities claim that European records testify to cases where virgins have become so exalted spiritually that they have conceived and given birth to infants, as the Bible states Mary did. So the virgin birth of Jesus is not a miracle but the attestation of law not fully understood or observed." See Unity, XXXIV (May, 1911), 453.

²H. H. Farmer, The World and God (London: Nisbet and Co., 1935), p. 315.

³See H. Emilie Cady, Lessons in Truth, p. 11.

is futile. "The prayer of supplication is impotent."¹ Myrtle Fillmore says:

Prayers aren't sent out at all! Sometimes that is our trouble. Where would we be sending out our prayers? As individuals we should direct them to our own mind and heart and affairs. We commune with God-Mind within our own consciousness. Prayer is an exercise to change our own thought habits and our living habits, that we may set up a new and better activity, in accord with divine law.²

Since God-Mind has arrived at self-consciousness in man, he, by the realization of that fact, becomes creator in the use of substance. We should cease invoking the aid of an "imaginary being" who we hope will grant us favors and command omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience to do our bidding.³ Unity, therefore, has replaced petitions with affirmations, both in public and private devotions. "In the presence and power of God's omnipresent substance I decree that my supply shall be made manifest."⁴

A second element of prayer which Unity stresses and which shows the same pattern is praise. "Praise is one of the avenues through which spirituality expresses itself."⁵ However, praise is not the adoration of a loving Father; it is the increasing of the activity of Substance. Mr. Fillmore says:

We increase whatever we praise . . . We can praise our own ability, and the very brain cells will expand and increase in capacity and intelligence.⁶

¹Charles Fillmore, The Twelve Powers of Man, p. 28.

²Letters of Myrtle Fillmore, p. 27.

³See L. P. Dale, "The Omnipotence of God," Unity, XC (May, 1939), 3.

⁴"Unity Prosperity Thought," Feb.-March, 1939.

⁵Unity, LXXXV (Nov., 1936), 24.

⁶Ibid.

We open the way for great demonstrations by recognizing the Presence and praising it. . . . We quicken our life by affirming that we are alive with the life of the Spirit; our intelligence by affirming our oneness with divine intelligence; and we quicken the indwelling, interpenetrating substance by recognizing it and claiming it as our own.¹

Adoration is Unity's method of making use of God.

In the third place, "communion with God," a phrase frequently on the lips of Unity's teachers does not mean that we have set up a personal fellowship. This will become most evident when we study their practice of "the Silence." Now we can say that Unity thinks of communion as the raising of consciousness to the level of Superconsciousness; the lifting of the "I will," the second part of the human trinity, to the "I AM," the originating substance of the human trinity. When Jesus went up into the mountain to pray, he sought out his Father, the Christ, located at the top of his head. "All that any human soul can ever need or desire is the infinite Father-Principle, the great reservoir of all good."² Prayer, as expressed in Unity, is the climax of self-deification.

Finally, we see Unity's pantheistic God-concept dominant in its treatment of salvation and ultimate destiny. We have noted how man has no independent existence, no substance which he can call his own, but he exists only as identity in and through God-Substance. He exists in God as an eddy exists in a stream.

¹Charles Fillmore, Prosperity, p. 35.

²H. Emilie Cady, Lessons in Truth, p. 12.

"God-Mind cannot be separated or divided."¹ The particular mental slip which has caused the apparent ills of man was his assumption that he could separate himself from God-Mind. Therefore, salvation is man's conscious identification of himself as within God-Mind. The only salvation man needs is the self-deification which we have mentioned--the "I will" completely associating itself with the "I AM." In this process man gradually refines his body so that it is no longer subject to sense limitations. The cycle of sickness, death, and rebirth--a limitation of error-thought--is broken, and the fleshly body becomes a pure, spiritual body. This psiritual body lives in the four-dimensional world, the world of thought. Just what this involves we cannot now imagine. We shall later follow Unity's suggestions concerning what happened to the body of Jesus, but we cannot be sure the same will happen to ours. However, in the mind of Jesus the "Mind of Being and the Thought of Being were joined, and there was no consciousness of separation or apartness."² This suggests the complete loss of conscious identity. The end of the process is suggested in the following statement:

When infinite Mind has completed the cycles of creation, both the invisible and the visible universe will be rolled up as a scroll and disappear and only Mind remain.³

In another place Mr. Fillmore says the Hindu name for this Mind is "Brahm."⁴ This makes the Unity pattern of pantheism complete.

¹"The True Character of God," Correspondence School Lessons (Kansas City: Unity School of Christianity), Series 2, Lesson 1, p. 12.

²Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 25.

³Charles Fillmore, Prosperity, p. 5.

⁴Charles Fillmore, Christian Healing (14th ed.), p. 10.