

GARMENTS OF PRAISE

by John D. Rankin

When a minister decides how he should dress for the public phase of his ministry, surely the important question is not "what ye shall put on," but rather "with what spirit do we come?"

The recent article by William Fischer shows vividly that individualism is very much alive in the Unity ministry, which is as it should be. It also appears from this article that the question of ministerial garb is usually decided on an emotional basis, as evidenced by the baffling vagueness in several of the replies quoted, i.e.: "The message loses something in a traditional setting." What does it lose? "It weakens our subscription to the principle of the indwelling Christ." In what way? It is a "vast detriment to the advancement of Unity." To whom, and how?

Certain specific objections are noted in the article, however, which ought to be given careful thought wherever the matter of dress becomes an issue. Various ones of our constituency object to traditional ministerial robes and/or collars on these grounds:

- (1) They are undesirable by association. That is, they are "Catholic" or "Episcopalian."
- (2) They are incompatible with the Unity message of salvation through spiritual self-realization.
- (3) If we have something unique, it can stand alone as a teaching, without clerical frills.
- (4) Such dress is an implicit denial of the servanthood of the ministry.
- (5) Such dress is an implicit affirmation of class distinction and separation.

In examining these objections, I am well aware that neither this article nor Bill Fischer's is likely to change anyone's practice. But it is my hope that as we discuss these things openly, we can all increase our DTL (Diversity Tolerance Level).

(1) Ministerial garb is undesirable by association. To do something that is characteristic of another person or group does not turn one into that person or incorporate one into that group. Catholic and Episcopalian women always wear hats to worship services; yet I do not feel that Unity women must abandon their hats for fear someone will think they are going to St. Mary's-by-the-Sea instead of Unity-in-the-Woods.

To adopt a practice characteristic of another person or group may simply mean one has paused long enough to see that this practice helps many of the features of a Protestant service--things like offerings, hymns, hymnbooks, Bible reading, and teaching. This does not make our assembly a Methodist, Baptist, or Unitarian Church. It simply means that we share certain goals and certain means of reaching those goals.

(2) Is traditional ministerial dress "incompatible with the Unity message of salvation through spiritual self-realization"? This requires comment because of its apparent ambiguity. Charles Fillmore's writings concerning the atoning work of Jesus Christ show Him as a necessary mediator of grace for the salvation (liberation) of man from error-consciousness. Unity is not entirely a do-it-yourself approach; it is also a depend-on-Him religion. If the words quoted above imply self-salvation through mental science, then this argument carries no weight for those whose concept of Unity differs from this. The unnamed author may, on the other hand, have meant simply that such dress detracts from the spiritual emphasis. To this, I can only reply that all clothing, of whatever style, is as material as one's concept of it, so we are incompetent to judge the materiality of another's choice or appearance.

(3) "If we have something . . . unique . . . can it not stand alone as a teaching, without the clerical frills?" Every religious and educational movement has unique qualities, plus qualities common to other movements and activities. Everything that Unity teaches has been taught elsewhere; it is only the combination that is unique. Unity has a genius for making unique combinations. For some of us, this may include combining the dignity of traditional ministerial garb with Pentecostal enthusiasm and straightforward teaching of practical Christianity! There is no intrinsic incompatibility.

"Frill" per se are nonessential. I can eat cake without frosting, wear shoes without laces, and sleep on a mattress without springs. I prefer not to, because frosting, laces, and springs all reinforce the value of the entities to which they are attached.

Our teaching can stand alone as a pure teaching; but as a part of life and sociological activity it has to be blended with something. No matter what one wears in the pulpit, he is imitating someone. And if utter simplicity is our honest goal, then of course the simplest attire is that which we wore at birth.

The clerical collar is worn by canon law in the Roman Church, by custom in the Episcopal Church, and by the free choice of an increasing number of Methodist, Congregational, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Unitarian ministers. It is avoided like the plague by virtually all Baptists, Disciples, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, and fundamentalists in general. Whether we minister in or out of a clerical robe or collar, we "look like" somebody else. Personally, I would rather be identified with a rational Christian liberality than with the spook rackets and tent evangelists.

(4) Does such dress bespeak an implicit denial of the servanthood of the ministry? As Bill Fischer pointed out, the basic meaning

of the word minister is "servant." We must remember, though, that at the time this word began to be applied to Christian leaders, a servant was readily identifiable by attire distinctive of his station in life. To this day, our "servants" still wear distinctive attire--the milkman, waitress, mechanic, policeman, judge, fireman--which tells anyone instantly what kind of service each is trained to give.

My neighbor wears a mechanic's uniform. This does not mean that he is a better person than I am, but it does mean that he is better trained than I am for a particular kind of work. If my auto needs repair, even as a stranger I would instantly know he could be of more help in this line than the woman down the street who wears a barmaid's apron.

Ministerial attire explicitly affirms the availability of a spiritual servant, rather than denying or hiding the fact.

(5) Is such dress an implicit affirmation of class distinction and separation from the people one serves? Everyone consciously following the Christ Way is called to be a servant. For the sake of order and spiritual efficiency, someone must take the lead, whether in administration, worship, teaching, counseling, or healing. The minister is one who has offered himself to take that lead where required. So there is a distinction ("class" distinction sounds undesirable and undemocratic, but only an anarchy attempts to function without some degree of "class" distinction) between the minister and the congregation. The minister's calling, training, and daily obligations are distinct from those of his congregation; but distinction and separation are not equivalents. Clerical garb does not separate a man from those he serves as Christ's ambassador unless he himself insists on a degree of detachment far beyond that which his attire portrays.

Ministerial dress is an affirmation of distinction as to function, not as to personal worth. It magnifies the God-given office, not the personality. Whether we like it or not, we are in a distinct classification as ministers. To term this category "priestly" is simply to say that we are consciously co-operating in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25), in winning and wooing mankind back to its original consciousness of Truth.

The seamless robe which Jesus wore to the Crucifixion was a distinctive garment of His office; and according to the historian Josephus, it pertained to the high priestly office. If in the hour of His greatest service Jesus found it appropriate to wear a garment of the priesthood, then how can we contend that service and attire characteristic of that service are incongruous? Such robes should remind one of the healing love of Jesus Christ; the collar should remind one of the yoke of Christ, which is backward to world-consciousness. People can be taught these things and learn to appreciate the fact that what their minister wears visibly, they wear spiritually. Where ministerial dress is used the people should be taught its meaning and purpose; otherwise it is truly an empty form.

All clothing expresses something of what we think about ourselves, our work, our students and associates. So in considering one's

individual choice, these questions are therapeutic exercises in honesty:

If I do not wear ministerial attire, what divine quality or Truth principle does this express? And is my adherence to this principle free of personal prejudice?

If I do wear such attire, what divine quality or Truth principle does this express? And is my adherence to this principle free of personal pride?

One's decision then must be an individual reflection of the honesty and integrity of the one deciding. If one's clothing for ministry truly expresses what one understands his ministry to be, then the right to judge or discipline him does not rest with man. Taking Emma Curtis Hopkin's definition of "praise" as "true description," whatever we prayerfully choose to wear becomes a garment of praise, worn to the glory of God.

WHAT ABOUT COLLARS AND CHURCHES?

by Max R. Flickinger

Freedom has always been the hallmark of Unity. It was upon the basic freedom to question dogmatic Christian ideas and practices that Charles Fillmore built the work now known around the world simply as "Unity."

Out of this freedom a great and complex movement grew. It answered questions that had plagued the ecclesiastics for two thousand years. It visited the sick beds of the world and the infirm were made whole and the lame walked. It moved into the world of commerce and businesses prospered. It spoke gently of love and where inharmony, suspicion, and even hatred had flourished, harmony came forth. Its dynamic faith bridged the chasm of death in human consciousness, and men caught a new glimpse of immortality.

In a word, it filled a need; a desperate need in the lives of all who could no longer believe in an absentee Landlord-God; a need for more than a promise of Jesus coming again in the sweet by and by. Yes, it revealed to man once again the vital, practical truths that Jesus had so clearly outlined centuries before to the simple folk of Galilee, who "heard him gladly."

And so did we; hear this old turth, newly presented, gladly. It changed our lives, we millions who call ourselves "Unity students." For truly Unity is a teaching. It requires classroom work; it is a demanding course of study that requires application, and so to many it wears the habiliments of the Academy.

But through it all is much more than an academically acquired knowledge. There is much more than intellectual knowledge; in fact there is much that the intellect cannot comprehend in its teaching.

And it is here that the heart of humanity found the answer to its centuries-long search. It found a faith: faith as sublime as that by which Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. Such faith humbles the heart and bends the knee. Such faith stirs in man the age-old longing to worship; to find in some way a oneness with the infinite that cannot be stated in words nor delineated in scholarly texts.

And so Unity, in the hearts and minds of millions of its followers, became their church, their place of worship, their Sunday morning pilgrimage. It gave their children a Sunday school in which to hear again the old stories--perhaps with a more practical touch, but still the same "stories of Jesus."

It blazoned large upon the backdrop of Christianity the ageless admonition of Jesus, "If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." And in Unity Christianity was transformed into a challenging way of life; a new way of life. Dogma and doctrine alike were gone. Ritual was restored to its rightful place of serving to present to consciousness that which could not be conveyed by words. Symbolism was once again taught, rather than mesmerized.

And so Unity became what it was inevitably destined to become as the vision of Truth unfolded for Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. It became the new interpreter of a world faith: a shining star of hope glowing as brightly as the star of Bethlehem of old, guiding mankind through the dark night of human weakness, passion, anger, and greed to the new understanding of a freeing spiritual faith. Its message to the world is Christ in man; our hope of glory.

In the State Capitol of California there is inscribed this quotation: "Give Me Men to Match My Mountains." And Unity today is saying, "Give me men and women to match my message." And we must, we who have dedicated our lives to carrying forth this message; we must ask ourselves, "Are we matching the message?" I think not, when we occupy our time and devote our energies to silly questions of dogma or doctrine; when we debate with an evangelical fervor, whether we should call our works "centers," "churches," "schools," or "temples."

Somehow we are failing to measure up to the message of Unity if all we can conceive of as being important is what our name shall be. We've a "story to tell to the nations," but we aren't going to get it told by becoming a doctrinaire religion, even though that doctrinairism castigates the name church, the clergy collar, and/or the sacrament of communion.

I think it is the inalienable right of each one to determine how they shall dress in performing the functions of the ministry. If such things as this become subjects for discussion and debate through our UMA publications, we will be setting ourselves upon a tremendously dangerous path toward dictatorship. For how are we going to control this unless we outlaw certain modes of dressing, and who is going to set the rules and the penalties?

Supposing one decides that he does not want any Unity minister to wear a collar, but supposing I decide that I do not want anyone to wear

white clothes? Is the one of us who loses the argument to be forced out of Unity? Or will we merely be put on the forgotten list? To me, this is very similar to the argument that is at present going on as to whether or not we should call our works churches or centers, or perhaps something else.

There is much being said about staying with the teachings of Charles Fillmore - that he never wanted churches - but I have yet to hear one of those who raise their voices against churches and collars, put out any strong argument in favor of vegetarianism, which Charles Fillmore both practiced and preached, and made the Unity Way of life at the Village. We who are vegetarians have never attacked the rights of those who are not, to continue to be carnivorous, and I do not think we should.

One of the most particular reasons for my love of Unity has been the very freedom that has existed in it; freedom that allows for disagreement over even the basic tenets of our faith, but which, up to now, has never sought to become dictatorial. If we ever lose this freedom, we have taken a giant step toward institutionalized religion and the very rigid dogma and doctrine that many profess to fear, but who are, apparently unconsciously, working to promote.

It seems to be a very strange human failing that many who espouse freedom so vociferously seek to attain it by shackling others.

Should we not be done with this stuff and nonsense, and get ourselves to the business for which we have "put our hand to the plow"?

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The Handbook Committee is now in the process of re-writing the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws for Unity Centers and Churches as recommended by the UMA.

Many needed changes are being considered. Among these is the phrase "Advisory Board." The recommendation of the Committee will be that this be changed to "Board of Directors." Experience in the field has shown that the word "advisory" minimizes the importance of a board position in the eyes of its members. The word "Director, Executive, or Trustee," on the other hand, more aptly describes and conveys the importance, responsibility, and duties of a board member. It more ably suggests that board members are both wanted, needed, and useful.

Where there is no legal requirement locally that specifies the number that constitutes a quorum, the Committee will recommend that the following be included in all bylaws: "A quorum shall constitute all duly qualified members that are present and voting." You can readily see this will eliminate many difficulties that have been encountered in the past where a specified number is required for a quorum.

Section 501 (c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 requires that a dissolution clause be included in all articles of incorporation

of non-profit religious organizations. A Clause that meets the specifications of the Internal Revenue Code will be among the recommendations of the Committee.

These are but a few of the changes now under consideration. If you have any suggestions that you feel the Committee should have by the time of the meeting of the Council of Committees in January, please send them to the chairman of the Handbook Committee, Norman B. Godfrey, 19th and Baltimore, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119.

Also, if you feel you now have articles of incorporation and bylaws that have proved workable for you and would like to share a copy with the committee, we will appreciate receiving them.

Thank you and God bless you each and every one.

Norman B. Godfrey
Chairman, Handbook Committee

PERPETUAL EMOTION

by Norman V. Olsson

Speaking for myself, with detachment, I wish to say that I believe the UMA is in a sorry state of affairs. The true conscious objectivity of our calling is becoming more and more immersed in a wave of perpetual emotion. The "Voice of the UMA" tends to sound more and more like a gossip column. It started off fairly well. Some good articles have appeared. But the tone has gotten too personal to represent a group of men and women dedicated to Truth and impersonal Spirit.

In the church I serve I refuse to allow the very sort of criticism and judgment now going on in our ministerial association. Certainly, paper and postage should not be wasted for one member of our group to criticize another member's Sunday morning attire. I may prefer to wear an ordinary business suit, but I defend one's preference to wear his collar backward and don a robe. If articles continue to legislate opinion for this personal viewpoint and that we shall soon be debating what shade of lipstick the fairer sex may use, if not whether they shall use lipstick at all! Also, when one feels a colleague has been unfairly regarded and his position put in jeopardy, are there not proper channels through which such a matter can first be followed? Does not our executive board exist to handle such a complaint and make proper investigation? Should all our frustrations and opinions be aired before the whole body of ministers we shall need Daniel Webster himself to defend us from the Devil in us all.

I said I spoke with detachment. Frankly, in my six years in the organization I have found it inadequate to the impartial and effective administration of its own bylaws and code of ethics. We have a good set of bylaws and good ethical code, but are weak on administration.

This weakness stems from the obvious fact that our executive board is scattered over the nation, having the opportunity to meet only a few days a year, and tries to handle by correspondence matters insoluble by mail. I for one keep my own counsel because I could not believe this person or that person with any title at present "speaks with authority." You know and I know that our speaking with authority in our local ministries rests upon our assuming authority, becoming the authority, in servitude to Christ and the spirit of that authority as defined in our organizational charter. We must be the instrument of authority and not tools of any person having influence or personal prominence. And we do not, if we are wise, send out numerous questionnaires asking our congregation the obvious things we should do as Unity ministers.

We need a spiritually strong person as the executive secretary. He or she, because sex should not be debatable either, should receive a year's contract empowering him or her to do the obvious job needed. And, as in a local ministry, that person will find rightful authority by assuming it, creating it, becoming it. In this respect we should do unto this person as we would have our congregation do unto us. But we must get a mature person capable of standing firm. That person's biggest challenge will be ministering to ministers, who by profession are the hardest humans to counsel.

I am glad our President, Ralph Rhea, called for the January meeting of the board and committees. Since "The Voice of the UMA" has overtaxed its vocal chords, let us bless this meeting and trust that the confusion has emphasized the areas for working out order, harmony, and prayerful action. I feel in his letters a restraint which is admirable in view of the strain he must be under.

In all honesty, I continue to feel detached. I want to feel confidence in the administration of the UMA to the same extent that I love being a Unity minister, and I respect the ideals and charter of our organization. We have so much good to express. Why should we be sidetracked at a time when we need to give witness to a religion strong in peace and affirmative demonstration of spiritual ideas? An ugly war is going on and our voice should be raised in peace, with the power of the Word. Enough of this speaking to be heard. Let us give an equal voice to those who offer constructive ideas and let us provide channels for this democratic process that keep dignity and unity a virtue among us all. As we so often quote from the Psalms in our bulletins, let us demonstrate "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Amen!

DIVERSITY IN UNITY

by Warren J. Kreml

There is a need for us to think constructively. To be channels for the ideas of Infinite Mind we must be able to think maturely, constructively, and without personal prejudice and animosity. While it is good for us to speak out frankly and attempt to state clearly what it is that we as UMA members object to, sometime, somewhere,

Someone has to start proposing a definite, constructive idea as a solution to the problems that confront us as Unity ministers.

We have problems that have been with us for years for which we have not worked out constructive, workable, permanent solutions. Years ago we had vigorous, heated debates on the floor of our conference meetings about whether we are a school or a church. After that, we went through a period of avoiding discussion of the question. We heard comments like these: "The church vs. school debate is no longer relevant," "We have passed beyond that stage," or "The question has been resolved in our minds."

But it has not been resolved, merely avoided. We have actually increased the problem by building millions of dollars' worth of buildings with divided chancels, choir lofts, central altars, stained-glass windows, and huge crosses. At the same time we have built other buildings carefully designed to exclude any hint of church accouterments. We have added to the complexity and rigidity of our problem by wearing clerical garb or by taking a stand against it, by developing rituals accepted by thousands of persons as characteristic of Unity or by convincing thousands of others that ritual has no place in Unity. We have not worked through our difficulties to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. We have simply invested millions of dollars in factional views and drawn thousands of persons to "our side."

Now we are at a new stage of the disagreement. We have subtly taken the argument to the public in pamphlets, periodicals, books, and lectures. Our disagreement and mutual distrust is so deep that some ministers have removed from sales counters the pamphlets and books written by fellow Unity ministers.

Is there a further step to this growing division? Do we want to come to the place of splitting the Unity field? Must factions contest for control of the Unity ministry in the field? Do we have to live in fear of being rejected and ousted from the movement by the action of fellow ministers?

There is no need for all this continued disagreement, or for the paralysis of indecision. We should not have to waste our energies in argument, or mistrust or fear each other. Let us seek a constructive solution. We can give our energies and the power of our thought to help and support one another. Then we can release our energies into a more vital service to all mankind.

I should like to offer an idea to consider as a possible solution to the church-school, clerical garb-business suit disagreement. Over the years we have avoided a definite resolution of this problem. Practically speaking, though, we have made one decision and reaffirmed it over and over again. We have decided that there should be diversity in Unity; that Unity ministers should be free to follow their own inner guidance. This is our decision; this is our consistent consensus. Then why not accept the decision, carry it to its logical conclusion, implement it with appropriate action and organization?

Let us plan for diversity within Unity. The Unity idea is big enough to contain us all. Let us plan to include all of us, even with

our many and divergent interests and preferences. Let us create several organizations, functioning independently yet co-operatively within the great family of the Unity field activity.

There could be within the family of Unity field activity a federation of Unity Churches of the World. Each church could be headed by an ordained minister who would conduct a worship service at 11 a.m. on Sundays. The ministers could set up any standards they mutually accepted regarding clerical garb, stained-glass windows, crosses, and other Christian forms of worship. They would conduct funerals, marriages, baptisms, and so forth. Their main goal could be to present the teachings of Jesus Christ to those who prefer a church setting as a place of study, fellowship, and worship. They could frankly admit that they were a church and be the best kind of church they could be. They may wish to emphasize to the world that they are a new kind of church, a teaching church, emphasizing the teachings of a practical Christianity for everyday living.

Then there could be another group, a separate, independent organization that might be called the Unity Spiritual Centers. Our cities have Community Centers, Recreation Centers, Cultural Centers, why not a Spiritual Center? This could be an open forum for men and women of all religious backgrounds, even for scientists and philosophers with an interest in spiritual ideas, to present and discuss their spiritual concepts. The leader could be a "director" instead of a minister. There would not have to be 11 a.m. services but lectures at perhaps 3 o'clock Sunday afternoons and on weekdays and week evenings when they would not conflict with the church services of the community. There would be no need for weddings or funerals or baptisms; these things could be left to the churches of the city according to the individual preference of all the persons who make use of the spiritual center. The center could really develop an open-end approach to religion; without affiliation with any particular church it could truly welcome people of all churches.

Then there could be another organization: an association of the Unity Universities of Life. The universities could have professors and deans, catalogues and curricula, graduations and degrees. Here the challenge would be to teach Truth in an atmosphere of academic excellence with an integration of all the religious streams that are contributing to our organization would have its own function to perform and be free to develop its own tools and methods, yet all could share a common purpose and spiritual interest. To insure good communication between the different associations and maintain a spirit of oneness, we could have interlocking boards of directors wherein officials of the different field associations and Unity School serve several of the policy-making boards. In addition to each association's having its own organization and conferences, we could all meet in a convention annually, or perhaps biennially or triennially, to share ideas and give encouragement to one another. Then as the churches grew in numbers and in ways of making the church relevant to today's challenges, we could all applaud their growth and not resent it or try to control it. As the spiritual centers developed new lecture and discussion programs on psychic research, yoga, and scientific developments, we could all be proud of their advance and not feel they were contaminating

our part of the Unity movement. As the universities raised academic standards we could praise their efforts without feeling that all of Unity was becoming intellectual.

As time goes by we may want to develop other associations: The Association of Unity Counselors, from personnel departments in industry, medical centers, and counseling centers; the Association of Unity Retreat Directors from retreat grounds and church camps from all over the world; or the Association of Unity Campus Houses, directors of campus spiritual activities from colleges and universities everywhere.

The approach outlined briefly above would not split Unity. There would not have to be rejection, hurt feelings, or barriers that would exclude communication and good will. We could maintain respect for one another, a spirit of oneness, and actually give help and encouragement to one another even though we are following slightly different paths. The Unity idea has potential for infinite expansion. Let us allow it to expand into all the exciting possibilities it contains.

Perhaps this is not the time to begin to form the different types of associations with the Unity field work, but, at least, we can now agree that we will work toward diversity in Unity. We can agree that Unity is large enough to have a place for all of us in it. We can agree when we write for the Voice of the UMA and when we come back together for the meeting of the Council of Committees in January that we will work together for the good of all with a secure place for each person who is sincerely trying to follow the guidance of his indwelling Lord and serve the spiritual needs of mankind as he feels directed.

To achieve diversity within the Unity family we are going to have to think, feel, and act with maturity. We are like a child growing up in a family. The child comes to the time of independence when he realizes that his needs and his interests are leading him to stand free from his parents. If this child is growing toward maturity he is able to do this and still maintain love, respect, and good communication. This is our relationship to Unity School now. We are ready to stand as an independent organization fulfilling our own destiny to the best of our ability, yet maintaining respect and effective communication between the people of Unity School and the people in the field.

The different associations within the Unity field ministry are like brothers and sisters growing up in a family. While we have had our childish arguments, we have grown through them into having a more mature respect for the unique good that each one is developing in his own consciousness.

Reaching maturity is difficult, and we are in its growing pains right now. But we are spiritual leaders and teachers who are capable of constructive thought, tolerance for one another, having a feeling of oneness and unity in spite of surface differences, and united action in the face of challenge. The gaining of maturity is worth the effort, for in the maturity that accepts diversity we shall find the release of our deeper energies, the harmony and the united effort that have been our ideals through the years.

"And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grown not in
each other's shadow."

(The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran)

INTRODUCTION TO RESOURCE MATERIALS

3L Spiritual Research

"The New Unity of Science and Religion" by Donald Hatch Andrews. An address delivered at Unity of Delray Beach, Delray Beach, Florida, October 1964.

4U Quotations for Bulletins -- December 1965 and January 1966