

Unity: Science and Spirituality

Well the good news is that you do not have to give up your rational thoughts about science to embrace the principles of Unity. So maybe you can relax and breathe as you listen to the rest of the exploration today.

Today, as with many of my sermons, I find I create more questions than answers. I find I am not in complete alignment with historical Unity thoughts. So you may want to listen to see what resonates with you and what does not. And I may ask you for some input so pay attention. But you won't need your Bibles this week.

I specifically titled this week's exploration Science and Spirituality because Religion implies something different than Spirituality for me. Religion is more structured and has rules. Spirituality is exploration, experience, relational and has room for mystery. One of the challenges in the relationship between Science and Religion is that both look for certainty and both feel that if one is right, the other is wrong. Historically, the answers organized religion tried to provide from a literal view of the Bible were so improbable that people with a bend towards science simply rejected them. Spirituality wasn't really in the mix. Galileo wrote to the Grand Duchess Christina—"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason and intellect has intended us to forgo their use." While that may be a rejection of religion, it doesn't actually sound like a rejection of spirituality. One biographer writes that Leonardo DaVinci "assailed the clergy—at all levels—for their lack of morality, values and education. As a scientist he questioned the contemporary reality of miracles performed by priests and monks. However he found proof for the existence and omnipotence of God in nature—light, color, botany, the human body and in creativity." Well, not unlike the historical accounts of Jesus, who was not a fan of the Pharisees and Sadducees. There are mystics in every religion who have always looked for experiential understanding that transcended the rules and canons of their tradition. Yet what most people are in contact with is the part of the tradition shared by **clergy** in the way **clergy** choose to share. That is one of the limitations of traditional religion. So take me with a grain of salt. Just in case.

Let's look at the historical context of our tradition's origin. In 1894 the United States experienced its first polio epidemic, although it wasn't until 1908 that the polio virus was identified. Modern medicine and the biology of microbes was really just making progress.

We were discovering and exploring atomic energy. Airplanes were new in the first decade of the 20th century. In 1920 KDKA became the first radio station but by 1922 there were 600 radio stations in the United States. July 16, 1922, Unity School of Christianity went on the air with its first radio talk on WOQ—one of the first commercial radio stations in the Midwest. By 1934 it became more economical to purchase broadcast time from local radio stations that reached audiences worldwide. Unity radio WOQ broadcasting ended at midnight on June 12, 1934, but that was just the beginning. Following WOQ, Unity officials launched broadcasting stations at 12 different locations across the United States and amazingly in Auckland, New Zealand. These stations were under the direct supervision of the Unity Radio Department. In the 1930s, Unity broadcasting could be heard in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The Unity message had truly become worldwide. During the next 20 years, Unity programs would appear on as many as 65 radio stations. Currently, if you go to www.unity.org you can log into our online radio fm station. Besides using the technology of radio, in 1907 Charles added telephones to the prayer ministry that was the heart of Myrtle's ministry. This expanded the Silent Unity prayer ministry beyond letters and the circle in their living room. Today we are using online and app technology to continue expanding the ministry.

Last week we talked about the late 1800's as a time that New Thought began to expand ideas of spirituality and relationships with God beyond the binds of Bible and religion. George Washington Carver was a historical contemporary of the Fillmores. If you have been here a while you will know I am a geek about Carver. As a scientist, Carver was criticized because of his open spirituality. He credits God with the scientific ideas and insights he had. He said that nature is "unlimited broadcasting stations through which God speaks to us" when we "tune in to hear." Rising at 4am he said, "When people are still asleep I hear God best and learn my plan." I guess there was something about the idea of waves of thought invisibly transmitted that spoke of spirituality to others.

Myrtle's healing came after multiple visits with medical science, as it existed. Both she and Charles were Christian Science practitioners, which rejects medical science, at the time she embarked on her healing journey to incorporate the idea of "I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness" into her body. Myrtle was content with the mystery of how her spiritual connection transformed her health. Charles wanted more certainty. His keen intellect was curious about all the science of his time.

Charles Fillmore incorporated the **language** of science into the way he articulated his understanding of the power of Spirit. In the Preface to *Christian Healing*, published in 1909, Fillmore says, “These are not simply lectures; they are, rather, lessons. They are not merely to be read; they are to be studied and applied as one studies and applies mathematical rules.” He refers to the activity of God as Principle and Law. In scientific fashion, he seeks to reduce our interaction with the energy and substance of the divine to repeatable, consistent equations. He views the operation of spiritual principle and law as absolute, without variation. One of the reasons both Fillmore and Butterworth reject the word “miracle” is that they feel it implies the ability to break spiritual laws of cause and effect to obtain a different outcome. For me, miracle implies a process beyond my understanding. The challenge with the absolutism of Fillmore for me is the presumption that he **knows** all there is to know. He has captured how God works and nothing else is in play. For me, science and spirituality come together more closely when we allow there to be more to be discovered, mystery. Enter quantum theory and quantum physics which allows multiple states and infinite possibilities to exist. Black holes and the consciousness of the Universe. I’m not saying we throw out the idea of the law of *mind action* and the idea what we focus on shapes our experience. I WILL say, I’m not sure the power of my thought is the ONLY influence on my experience. I’m not saying my beliefs don’t affect my health and my relationships. I WILL say, again, I’m not sure the power of my beliefs is the ONLY influence on my health and my relationships.

Let’s look at some of Fillmore’s quotes that use the language of science to set out his understanding of spiritual law and power. *Atom Smashing Power of the Mind* was published in 1949, after Charles’ death. Like many of what we consider his texts, the writings originally appeared as articles in the *Unity Magazines*. Some articles in *Atom Smashing Power* appeared as early as 1898. So his chapters don’t always flow. The preface to the book indicates that Fillmore had an ongoing concern with how this new atomic power would be used, as a gift or to destroy humankind. In the beginning of the book, however, Fillmore connects this energy discovery to Jesus. Fillmore says, “Science has broken into the atom and revealed it to be charged with tremendous energy that may be released and made to give the inhabitants of the earth powers beyond expression. Jesus evidently knew about this hidden energy in matter and used His knowledge to perform so called miracles.” So Fillmore portrays this powerful, newly discovered energy as a potential tool that Jesus used to produce such mysterious outcomes we call them miracles.

It wasn't just energy that fascinated Fillmore. In his *Talks On Truth*, published in 1926, during his life, Charles has a chapter titled "Microorganisms". Here is what he says, "Thinking is formative—every thought clothes itself in a life form according to the character given it by the thinker. This being true, it must follow that thoughts of health will produce microbes whose office is to build up healthy organisms; that thoughts of disease will produce microbes of disorder and destruction. Here we have the connecting link between *materia medica* and *metaphysics*. The physician observes the ravages of the disease microbe, but is at a loss to account for its source; the metaphysician stands in the factory of Mind and sees thoughts poured into visibility as microbes." In the chapter he credits Pasteur and Koch for discovering agents to kill the microbes and yet calls for the spiritual work to destroy the thought causation. In that chapter he cites a Dr. Parker, a physician in New York, who has discovered the microbe of death.

And herein lies one of the dangers of Unity's relationship to science. Over the years, we have sometimes attached our spirituality to trendy science. It shows up in classes Unity teaches; the focus of ministry; the books we publish; and the way we edit and republish older texts. When the trend is over, we change.

I want to include one more of Fillmore's kind of unique ideas. You can find it in [Keep A True Lent](#), which is one of those compilations published in 1953. It is also a book with many versions, depending on what was deemed favorable to put out into public opinion at the time that version was published. Fillmore says, "Through the power of His word, Jesus purified and spiritualized the natural blood in His body until it became a spiritual life stream into which all may enter and be cleansed. Through the power of His word, Jesus broadcast the spiritual electrons of His body into the race thought atmosphere, that they may be apprehended by all who believe in Him. The blood of Jesus in me is the life contained in God. The crown of life is attained by living eternally in the presence of God. Attainment depends on the understanding of the science of right thinking. In His name I am gradually transforming and regenerating my blood and my body. Thus I am saved by Jesus Christ." As we enter into this Lent season we discover that spiritual electron by spiritual electron, Unity DOES believe we are saved by the blood of Jesus. It is a fascinating idea; both scientifically literal and metaphysical at the same time.

I am not demeaning the teachings of Fillmore. I just point out that the science he embraces is over a hundred years old. Does any of this sound odd to you? Is there any science you embrace that not everyone agrees with?

I encourage you to approach the way you connect your beliefs about science and your beliefs about spirituality with some caution. Leaving space for an evolution of thought is a good idea. See what works for you. Try new things. Keep practicing. I am not an absolutist. I like mystery and I am ok with surrendering the intellect sometimes to know what I know without knowing how I know. I like discovery. I also like **not** being told what to do or what to believe or what experiences are meant to teach me. I love science-I have a degree in clinical science. I love spirituality. For me it will always come down to my **personal** relationship to and understanding of the Divine.