

## **The Foundations of Unity**

As interpreted by

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### Lesson 1

#### Bondage or Liberty -- Which?

This new series of lessons may seem very elementary to some readers; to others it may seem at an intermediate level, and to others, it may generate an entirely new concept of thought. But to all, regardless of the level on which you may find yourself on your spiritual path, these lessons will hopefully help you grow to new dimensions in living, because the Unity Way of Life provides you with an alternative.

#### The Bondage of Extremism

The scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders down through the ages have long made us believe that only by enslaving us can they protect us. Those leaders who have followed the great "emancipators" have, for the most part, decided that the human race is evil, weak, vacillating, or all of these, and have designed for us an entrapment in the guise of religion. All through history, the priestly caste of religious leaders has for the most part assumed total responsibility for interpreting what is best for us to believe and for us to do. In general, religions have pre-designed for us a way of life they thought was best for us, though most often, the leaders themselves were placed above the rules and broke them freely as they believed their God gave them the right.

Even today, in whatever arena we choose -- religion, economics, or politics -- we see thousands upon thousands of people advocating their own best interests to either extreme, the right or the left. Back in the 1960's, there was a strong movement toward the left, throwing away all the established rules, and almost advocating a situation of anarchy. Now, in the '80's, we seem to be swinging far to the right. Current leaders each advocate only one way -- their way -- and they each tell us that if we do not follow their ideas, we are evil and out of line. Sometimes, by

coalescing ourselves around one of these leaders, we choose enslavement and bondage, because we accept an idea or ideology that keeps us from making our own decisions. We swallow whole the pre-digested ideas and concepts someone else has developed, and they enslave us.

When we look at our lives, at our environment, at our hopes for happiness and fulfillment, we are often frightened at what we see, and if we look closely, we can begin to understand why. On one side, we see the extremes of the "far left," where there are no rules at all; on the other side, we see the extremes of the "far right," where there exists nothing but rules -- indivisible, changeless rules. And when we succumb to an extreme, we have made a choice -- only ONE choice, for there are no other choices to make. Like a caged animal, we are caught, enslaved in bondage to an idea, an ideology, a concept, and a lifestyle. In choosing an extreme, we have lost the ability to make further choices.

### Freedom Through Choice

Freedom lies in regaining the ability to choose, by striving toward the path that lies in the middle of the road. Like a pendulum, everything in life -- whether it be political, economic, religious, etc. -- sways inexorably to and fro, from left to right and back again -- always reversing its direction. It is impossible for it to continue in one direction when it nears the extreme on one side, it changes direction toward the other side, and thus, spends the greater part of time somewhere near the middle.

Now, the "middle" does not mean dead center, for the center is an area in which no movement can take place. Rather, our path must be one that allows us to move, to pick up some of the good things that lie on both the left and the right, establishing the rules and guidelines we need for a healthy, productive society, yet within the context of freedom. Our concern in these lessons relates mostly to ideas of religion, yet the theory can be applied to any area of life. We need not be entrapped by or enslaved to a fixed set of ideas or an ideology. We can build our own individual foundation upon which we can stand and from which we can make our own decisions. There is, indeed, an alternative that provides us with freedom of choice.

## Unity -- An Alternative

Unity is an alternative, because it gives you the freedom to choose. We do not say that you must agree on every "jot and tittle" of the Bible; we allow you to interpret freely. We are not going to argue and fight over trivial interpretations. And Unity does not require that you accept pre-digested, pre- designed ideas that have been handed down for centuries. Thousands of people are living in a spiritual vacuum because, unable to tolerate religious extremism, they have avoided any form of organized religion.

Unity is an alternative for those who are thinkers, who want to be individualistic, who want to be and to express that which they are. Unity does not provide ideas that are molded in concrete; rather, Unity's objective is to help you find liberty. In one sense, Unity is not a religion in the contemporary meaning of the word, because we do not require that you accept or adopt a fixed set of doctrines or dogma, or a creed by which you must live. Unity's only expectation of you is that as a student of Life, a spiritual student, you make up your own mind; Unity truly is a spiritual path that you create for yourself.

## Building A New Life

This series of lessons can provide a foundation upon which you can build a brand-new life. Yet, building this foundation will not be easy. You will have to begin to think and meditate to determine what these ideas mean to YOU. You must decide whether or not you wish to accept the teachings and ideas you have learned in the past; you must decide which to keep, if any, and which to throw away. Sometimes this can be a frightening process, because in the privacy of your own thinking, you may have to discard the accumulated ideas of the past, which are no longer valid for you. But it is also a thrilling journey, for instead of following the pendulum until it reaches the extreme in your life, and then having to revolt against that extremism, you can learn to discipline yourself by following the middle path, where moderation allows you the freedom to be what you truly are.

In this series, we hope to show that in your spiritual journey, you will be in charge -- not any ideologies, not any principles of Unity -- but you yourself. You may disagree with an idea or concept, taking it into the reservoir of your being, considering it, and then distilling the Truth for yourself. You will be the decision-maker, in charge of your own life and your own belief system.

You have a great opportunity ahead of you to free yourself from the bondage of crystallized doctrine and dogma, to remove the obstacles that stand between you and your Source, between you and your God, you and your Maker. It is those obstacles of pre- designed ideology that tend to enslave us and keep us in bondage, and we must clear them away before we can see what is true for us. Remember that each of us has been conditioned all of our life to accept myriads of rules and concepts, without question and without thinking. Recognize, too, that building a new person and a new belief system is going to be frightening, and that it will take substantial effort.

### Reaching Our Spiritual Dimension

We accept our physical and mental capacities, and often feel ourselves in bondage to them. In Lessons in Truth, by Dr. H. Emilie Cady, she says:

"Every man believes himself to be in bondage to the flesh  
and to the things of the flesh. All suffering is the result  
Of this belief. The history of the coming of the children of  
Israel out of their long bondage in Egypt is descriptive of  
The human mind or consciousness, going up out of the animal  
Or sense part and into the spiritual part."

Often, we are alienated from our spiritual dimension; we do not care nor do we want anything to do with spirituality. We know our spiritual dimension exists, yet it seems too mysterious to us and we do not wish to deal with it. Yet, the whole purpose of the journey of life is to grow out of the physical, sense consciousness, into our mental capacity -- entering a higher consciousness -- and then to reach into the spiritual dimension of us.

Our physical selves can provide us with a great deal of pleasure, and a great deal of pain. When we enter the mental realm, we can use our minds to mold new physical bodies and achieve remarkable feats of physical accomplishment, and we can learn to control and balance our physical selves to direct the physical self into the paths we desire. Yet as we grow thusly and evolve, dipping into every cell, every molecule, every atom of ourselves, we recognize that beyond the physical and mental planes on which we exist, there is a spiritual self-crying out for discovery and release. When we reach this point, and we allow our spiritual selves to surface, we can then have the courage and conviction to say, "My will be done in accordance with the larger Will of which I am made. I will not put any idols, any intermediaries, between my God and me. I will try in all ways to be what I was meant to be." This is our alternative, if we choose to find it.

### The Spiritual Journey

Dr. Cady also said this:

"You and I have already come to ourselves. Having  
Become conscious of an oppressive bondage, we have arisen  
And set out on a journey from Egypt to the land of liberty,  
and cannot turn back."

What does this mean? Every reader of this lesson is drawn to this kind of inquiry because deep down within, you are seeking a higher dimension. You are reading this lesson by divine appointment; there are no chance situations. You may decide that Unity is not the place for you -- but that is unimportant; that is not the point. What is important is that you want some answers; you want to grow. We do not have the answers -- truly, we have more questions than answers. But out of this kind of inquiry, in which you will encounter new ideas, you will begin to develop your own concepts and beliefs. You will find new ideas you will wish to think and meditate about. And sooner or later, some of them will begin to take root within you, and you will begin to become a new person of your own design.

Most of us have grown up in traditional churches, where an entire belief system was thrust upon us. And like many other folks, I found this difficult. Even as a child, I asked what were perceived as embarrassing questions of my parents and my religious leaders. Usually, their response was a rap on the knuckles and a reprimand, "Don't ask such questions!" I wondered why! Whether or not I questioned, religion told me that I was born in original sin and that I was already bad when I was born. Yet somehow within me, I felt that there must be a better way. And on my spiritual journey, I found so often that the path to true understanding is a long one, and that it never truly ends. You, too, will have this experience. A wonderful truth will dawn upon you, and you will feel that you have attained a great measure of knowledge and understanding. Then you realize that you have gleaned only a tiny morsel of truth. Like standing at the foot of a snow-capped mountain, you can see the top of the mountain, but until you climb it yourself, you will never see the world from the glory of the mountaintop. The spiritual journey is one that will never end in our lifetime.

### Achieving a Balance

Reconciling opposites or extremes and achieving a blended, balanced state is truly one of our main objectives in life. We may have a feeling for the "left" or the "right," but our job is to reconcile the two and find where we belong individually. Finding Truth for us is a matter of blending and balancing.

For example, traditional religion teaches us that God is "out there" -- in Heaven, or in another dimension, untouchable, and that we can only reach God through the ideology or doctrine of a particular belief system. Unity, on the other hand, teaches that God is immanent -- present always within everything and everyone, as well as "out there." This view reconciles the two ideas.

Someone has said "our liberty comes from an understanding of the mind, and of the thoughts of God toward us." In other words, we must ask questions and find our own way. Does God regard man as His servant or as His child? Most of us have believed ourselves to be not only slaves of circumstances, but at best, the servants of the Most High. But Unity says that neither

is true; it is time for us to awaken to a new way of thinking, to know that we are not servants, but children of God, and if children, then heirs. Heirs to what? Heirs to all wisdom, so that we need not, through lack of wisdom, make mistakes. Heirs to love, so that we need not know fear, envy, or jealousy. Heirs to strength, to life, to good.

To achieve balance, we must first discard the beliefs and ideas of the past, to give ourselves freedom to think, feel, and act in ways that continue to build us as an expression of the Source of our being. Our human intelligence is so accustomed to the sound of words heard from childhood that these words often convey no meaning to us at all. Religion, in its broadest sense, should provide liberty and release. But in its active sense, in our contemporary world, it provides only bondage, with each group insisting that its path is the only true and right one. Religious groups are constantly fighting for supremacy, even within their own denominations or sects. Yet there is an alternative.

The great poet, Robert Frost, wrote these lines:

"I came to a fork in the road, and I chose the one less  
Traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

You, too, can choose the road "less traveled by." It is not easy, and it can be frightening; it takes courage to be who you are and to do what you want to do. It takes courage to follow your own beliefs. But it will pay huge dividends, because when you follow your own spiritual path -- one you have created for yourself -- then everything you do begins working together to achieve good in your life. In following your own spiritual path, you take control of your life.