



PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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newsletter

LOOKING AT LAMSA

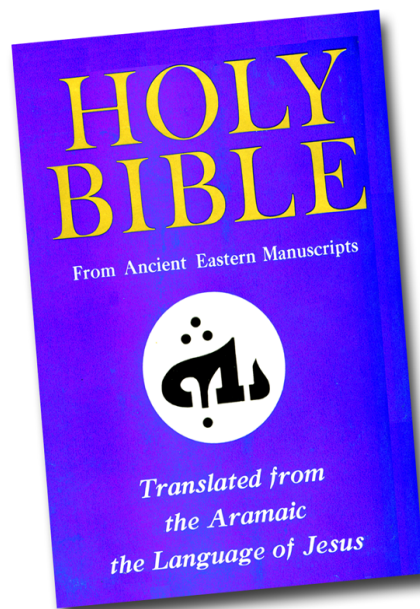
The Holy Bible according to the Eastern text, translated by George M. Lamsa, is another book that can be found in many Christian bookstores but doesn't belong there. However, since his Bible translation and 20 other books have influenced religious thought in this country, it is important for Christians — especially those in cults ministries — to know of his life, work and teachings.

Lamsa influenced the teachings of the late Victor Paul Wierwille, founder of The Way International, and is quoted in the Watchtower Society's **Aid to Bible Understanding** (pg. 1269). His theology also has been embraced by such groups as the Unity School of Christianity and Edgar Cayce's Association for Research and Enlightenment. His thoughts are a force to be reckoned with.

Lamsa's Life History

Lamsa's autobiography, **The Life of George M. Lamsa**, provides the most detailed account of his personal history. Lamsa was born in the town of Marbisha in northwestern Iran about August 5, 1890, into the Mamisho tribe, which he claims used the same language and customs Jesus and Abraham knew. His mother, Sara Peshah (Yokhanan) dedicated young Lamsa to God, but died while he was young, leaving him to his shepherd father, Jando Peshah. Lamsa's family and tribe taught him how to be guided by God through prophecy (which is handed from father to son), dreams and a "sixth sense" that can supernaturally perceive impending danger.

Lamsa claims "Eastern Christianity" as his religion from birth, though he rejects the label "Nestorian." He claims that through a series of peculiar events he attended Presbyterian and Anglican schools, beginning at age four. He claims to have acquired an A.B. equivalent in 1906 from Archbishop of Canterbury's College, Urmiah, Iran, and a Ph.D. equiva-



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lent in theology in 1908 from Archbishop of Canterbury's College, Turkey. Lamsa remembers his "photographic mind" enabled him to hold a 99-100 average and to teach briefly at a college in Van, Turkey.

He left Turkey at the beginning of World War I and migrated to South America, where he worked in the British Merchant Marine, on railroads, in mines and print shops. In 1917, he entered the United States. While waiting to clear customs, he discovered that immigration officials desired more than his single given name, Lamsa. He quickly adopted the name "George" from the man ahead of him in line. From the name of his tribe, Mamisho, came his middle name. The next year, he studied at Episcopal Theology Seminary in Virginia and the University of Pennsylvania. From 1925-1931, he was field secretary for the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Mission. Lamsa

also studied at Dropsie College, from 1942 to 1944 and was a fellow in London's Royal Society of Arts. Lamsa notes that his travels were marked by miraculous events — rescue from dangerous, hopeless circumstances, help from strangers and old acquaintances, visions of direction and warning, discoveries of at least \$485 cash on the streets of New York, cash from mysterious sources and wealthy benefactors who sponsored his ambitious writing projects after 1929.

Lamsa founded the Aramaic Bible Society in 1943 to propagate his work. Four years later, he formed Calvary Missionary Church in San Antonio, Texas, at which Dr. Rocco A. Errico, a student of Lamsa, became co-pastor. The church produced the quarterly **Light for All** and **Lessons for Living**, a radio series with a New Thought perspective. The metaphysical character of Lamsa's movement increased in the 1960s and both Lamsa and Errico became popular speakers for New Thought bodies, including the Unity School of Christianity. Lamsa moved his home and office to Unity's headquarters at Lee's Summit, Mo., in 1970.

The "old" Aramaic Bible Society eventually yielded to the "new" Aramaic Bible Distribution Society, Inc. The Society's goal is to carry on the "Lamsa Work," and place a Lamsa Bible "on every pulpit and in every home." It considers Lamsa's life miraculous and singly qualified to bring "Truth" to the world. A Society brochure states:

"We believe that long ago, God formulated a Plan — and when the time was right, He brought Lamsa into the world to begin the fulfillment of that Plan."

The Character of Lamsa's Message

Since Lamsa and his followers consider him to be the man God has set aside and inspired for our times, it is considered axiomatic that his followers are truth and

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WHO IS TO BLAME? — THE DANGER OF SELFISM

Why do people follow cults and heresies? Christian literature often offers explanations that almost justify or excuse involvement.

We are told that the cultist may have been rejected by his parents, been disappointed by his church or had some childhood trauma that predisposed him to join a cult or drove him into a cult. Any of these might have been in the cultist's background, but they are incidental and not determinative.

Peter dealt with the subject in his second epistle. In II Peter 2:1-2, he affirms that cults are subtle, disruptive and deadly. And in II Peter 2:10 he says cultists are "presumptuous" and "self-willed" (See PFO Newsletter, Vol. 6, No. 4, "The Presumptuous Teachings of the Word-Faith Movement"). That's why they are in a cult, because they are "presumptuous" and "self-willed." In short, they are there because they want to be. They are there because it fits their particular drive and darkness in their particular sin nature. It is a matter of their darkened will. Let's stop blaming parents and churches and let the guilt fall where it really belongs and where God says it should fall.

The Greek word presumptuous, *tolmetes*, can be translated as daring and irreverent (See **An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words** by W.E. Vine, pg. 267). It hardly pictures a poor, mindless victim, but rather one who is stubbornly determined. Self-will in Greek is *authudes*, which means self-pleasing or one dominated by self-interest, arrogant and strongly asserting his own will. It pictures a person so determined that he will not be persuaded or moved off track.

Who is really to blame? The cultist himself. Apart from a miracle of God's grace and conversion, the cultist follows "his own way" in choosing the way of darkness.

Few have seen this as perceptively as Martyn Lloyd-Jones. In his comments on II Peter 2:10, he suggests that false teaching panders to hidden motives in the sin nature and that the cultists follow it willingly to fulfill their own sinful, selfish agenda. Lloyd-Jones, in **Expository Sermons on Second Peter**, remarks:

"Why is it that many are ready to follow various false teachings? Surely there is only one adequate answer to that question. It is because the false teaching makes it easier for them to live the kind of life they want to live. ... It is in a sense, the immoral life that calls for wrong teaching. There is a strange interaction between these things — it is the apostate state of man that always encourages false teaching. The false teaching, in other words, panders to man as he is fallen from God; and man welcomes the teaching because it excuses the life that he lives." (pg. 140)

We need to realize that our goal is not a sociological or psychological one, but a spiritual one. Armed with prayer and a knowledge of God's Word, we need to trust the Holy Spirit to break through the dark, pervasive "selfism" of the cultist as we confront his darkness.

The cultist has no one to blame but himself.

—GRF

LAMSA

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his teachings need no supporting evidence. One even senses in Lamsa's writings an implicit claim that he stands in the line of apostles with Moses, Jesus, Paul and the Moslem prophet Mohammed. Lamsa explains the motivation behind his translation work:

"God had revealed to Lamsa his purpose and how it was to be done. It was a one-man job. In the Bible, testimony is given that God spoke to man; however, it is not recorded where he spoke to a committee. ... Yes, only one man could translate the Bible from Aramaic. God knew it, and Lamsa knew it, and so it was." (**Life of George Lamsa**, pg. 23)

To his followers, anyone opposing Lamsa's work misunderstands God's Word and is spiritually blinded.

Lamsa's writing style reflects an exalted view of his mission and character. Lamsa usually writes embellished narratives or discourses, sometimes like a storyteller. Neither blanket assertions nor detailed comments are documented. Lamsa dismisses his lack of supporting evidence with "What is a fact needs no defense."

(**Gospel Light**, pg. ix) He assumes that his peculiar habits, culture, superstitions, understandings, idioms and musings all match and illuminate the Scripture, resulting in often incorrect and simplistic interpretations of words and concepts.

Some upstanding scholars suggest that sections of some Gospels may have been copied or paraphrased from Aramaic records of Jesus' or his disciples' words. However, the character of their work differs greatly from Lamsa's. For example, one thorough work by Matthew Black offers detailed linguistic evidence and contemporary manuscripts to show some Aramaic sources underlie the Gospels. Moreover, he accepts teaching others offer to supplement or criticize his work, and his conclusions are much more cautious, balanced and conservative than Lamsa's autonomous and exorbitant claims. Black's and Lamsa's content and style differ from one another as much as a doctoral dissertation differs from a grade school essay.

The Spiritual Character of Lamsa's Work

It is said that one can tell much about a man by the company he keeps. Organizations Lamsa has had close contact with give us such insight. The Unity School of

Christianity, a gnostic pseudo-Christian religion, has played a key role in disseminating Lamsa's teachings. Unity originally published at least three of Lamsa's books, **Gems of Wisdom** (1966), **The Kingdom on Earth** (1966) and **The Hidden Years of Jesus** (1968).

Lamsa also spoke at the headquarters of the Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) which is dedicated to studying readings by medium Edgar Cayce and psychic phenomena. Robert W. Krajenke, in the 1970 A.R.E. Press publication **Stand Like Stars**, noted that Lamsa lectured in 1967 on proper use of the "talents" of Creative Power manifesting through men. Lamsa spotlighted Middle Easterners' claim to a "sixth sense," the ability to communicate with and become aware of God through dreams, visions, intuition and clairvoyance. Lamsa also spoke of their "seventh sense," a state of awareness, "higher" than others, which makes one able to discern between good and evil. The 1970 A.R.E. catalog further showed A.R.E. approval of Lamsa's work by listing Lamsa's Bible, New Testament and **The Shepherd of All**, Lamsa's interpretation of Psalm 23. Lamsa's contacts with these groups tip us off to the fact

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NEWS UPDATE

SON OF SLAIN KRISHNA MEMBER DROWNS

The 3-year-old son of slain Hare Krishna member Steve Bryant drowned Nov. 23 in a lake at the cult's compound in Marshall County, West Virginia.

Authorities do not believe foul play was involved. However, the Marshall County Sheriff's office had received anonymous calls before the drowning, saying that a member of Bryant's family might be in jeopardy.

An autopsy on Nimai Bryant, 3, showed he died by accidental drowning.

Steve Bryant was found murdered last May in Los Angeles, several weeks after leaving the compound and making allegations of corruptions and fraud among leaders of the Hare Krishna cult. A former Krishna devotee from Ohio has been charged with murder in Bryant's death.

Kirtanananda Swami Bhaktipada, the commune's leader, said of the death: "From a philosophical point of view, we could say there was some bad karma in that family. I'm very sorry, but we didn't create that karma."

—KAM



MORMON ELDER TUTTLE DIES

A. Theodore Tuttle, a member of the LDS First Quorum of the Seventy, died Nov. 28 in Salt Lake City. He was 67.

Tuttle had been receiving treatment for a non-cancerous tumor. He entered the hospital on Nov. 11.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' First Quorum of the Seventy is a major ruling body of the Mormon church.

—KAM



LAWYER PLAYS DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

A lawyer in Little Rock, Ark., has asked that Satan be dismissed as a defendant in a federal lawsuit, contending that the devil doesn't do enough business in Arkansas.

The lawsuit was filed by Ralph Forbes, of London, Ark., who sought to bar public schools from having Halloween observances.

Forbes filed the suit on behalf of himself, Jesus Christ and minor children. The defendants named were Satan, some governmental units, the Russellville, Ark., school district and a state education official.

In seeking the dismissal, John Wesley Hall, Jr., the "devil's advocate," contended that there is no proof that Satan transacted business, owned property or committed any torts in Arkansas. He also argued that Satan should be dismissed from the suit because it alleges a controversy between Jesus Christ and Satan that cannot be litigated in federal court under provisions of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Halloween is not a holiday for Satan, Hall argued, saying the day was derived from a new year's festival and has become a traditional event in the United States without ties to religion.

—KAM



CULT MATERIAL IN JAPANESE

Christian critiques of Mormonism and the Watchtower Society now are available in the Japanese language. "Jehovah's Witnesses and Christ's Witnesses" deals with Watchtower history, the deity and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, life after death, "The New World Translation," the true Church and salvation. It gives tips on witnessing, too.

An eight-page tract, "Does Jehovah Love You?," deals with whether a person is saved by grace through faith or by works. The eight-page "For Whom are the Christian Greek Scriptures Written?" addresses New Testament promises — that the Watchtower Society limits to its 144,000 anointed members. "The Watchtower — God's Mouthpiece?" details false prophecies by the Watchtower.

"Mormonism and Christianity" deals with the origins of Mormonism, "The Book of Mormon" and other Mormon literature, Mormon doctrine and its contradictions, and false prophecies. It also gives tips on witnessing.

The material on the Watchtower can be obtained from the Japan Good News Evangelistic Association, Box 26, Niiza City, Saitama Prefect, 354, Japan. "Mormonism and Christianity" can be obtained from Word of Life Press, Shinanomachi 6, Shinjuku Ku, Tokyo, 160, Japan. Write to these addresses for prices and other information.

—JPJ



SUMMIT CONFERENCE ON NEW THEOLOGIES

A summit conference met December 4-6 in Springfield, Mo., to examine issues causing divisions within evangelical, pentecostal, charismatic and fundamental churches. Author David A. Lewis was host. Attending were pastors from across the country and various counter-cult ministry leaders.

Discussed was the "New Wave Theology," "Kingdom Now Theology," "Dominion Theology" and "Restitutionism." Of chief concern were attacks made by various leaders of these movements against those who hold to a literal interpretation of Scripture. Those attending agreed that these teachings "have not brought new light to the Church, but merely a revival of ancient digressions which have historically wrought havoc upon the spiritual health of the Church."

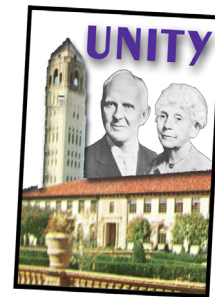
A call for a further investigation and clarification of the "new theologies" was issued. There also was stressed a need for frank dialogue among all sides.

A three-page statement was prepared. For a copy, send a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to PFO-Midwest.

—SFC

MAIL ORDER CHRISTIANITY:

IS A WORD FROM UNITY... A WORD FROM GOD?



Searching for answers to life's questions, many Americans have turned to the Unity School of Christianity and its message of human potential and a positive outlook on life.

Unity has a pleasant public image, thanks to its "Word for the Day" radio and television broadcasts with appearances by Hollywood celebrities; magazines such as **Unity Weekly**, **Unity Sunday**, **Progress**, **Wee Wisdom**, **Good Business**, and the **Daily Word**, which reach a million homes and 8,000 public institutions per month; and Unity Village, the cult's headquarters in Lee's Summit, Mo., a popular place for tour groups and hence a useful publicity device. Unity's influence is widespread. "Silent Unity," a prayer team, takes more than 500,000 calls a year.

Unity magazines appear to be Christian inspirational publications emphasizing the positive. Because of this, many Christians receive them without realizing the beliefs that lie behind the Unity phrases. However, their books get much deeper into the true nature of Unity — that of the mind sciences. There are perhaps 1.5 million adherents to these teachings and several million others who are strongly influenced by them.

Unity's History

The Unity School of Christianity was founded by Myrtle and Charles Fillmore. Myrtle was a schoolteacher, raised a Methodist in New England. She moved to Kansas City, Mo., in 1884. In 1887, she converted to Christian Science and claimed to have been healed of tuberculosis and other diseases through its teachings. Her husband, Charles, who had sold real estate, had lost his fortune and his health. His eclectic religious background included spiritism, which years later he denounced, but little or no contact with orthodox Christianity.

The Fillmores published their first magazine, **Modern Thought**, in April 1889. In 1890, the title was changed to **Christian Science Thought**. However, Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy's displeasure with that title forced another change in 1891, to simply **Thought**. Over the years, the Fillmores

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continued to drift from Christian Science both in organization and teaching. In 1893, the Fillmores met a pioneer of the American yoga movement, Swami Vivekananda of India at the Parliament of World Religions at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. His Vedantic philosophy coupled with humanitarian service, along with his eloquence in English, evidently impressed them, and they became his publisher. Largely because of him, Hindu beliefs were added to Unity's theology. In 1895, the name "Unity" was adopted and in 1903 ordination machinery was established. The Unity Field Department was begun in 1918. Charles wrote a Statement of Faith in 1921. In 1922, Unity withdrew from the International New Thought Alliance. In 1931, Myrtle died and Charles married Coba Dedrick. Charles continued to write significant Unity works.

Unity's Formal and Material Principle

Unity always has avoided identification with creeds. Charles wrote a statement of faith only after much encouragement. Even then, he saw the statement as "tentative." This reluctance to adhere to a creed continues. One Unity brochure states, "Unity has no strict creed or dogma — it is a 'way of life.'" (**Unity Welcomes You**, pg. 3) J. Sig Paulson, minister at Unity Village Chapel in Lee's Summit, continues this thought in a January 1977 inspirational:

"We are discovering that believing in Jesus Christ is not necessarily accepting the various systems, institutions, doctrines and dogmas produced and distributed in His name." (**Believing in Jesus Christ**)

While in a public sense, Unity holds this non-denominational emphasis, their writings reflect a harder line against the churches, against what they call "intellectual," a pejorative term, and against those holding to teachings contrary to Unity:

"They [students of Unity] alone are free to persist in holding to the true view of life, regardless of preaccepted theories, and who obey the voice of the higher self, which holds them to an unswerving

performance of the right, both mental and outer, instead of following the voice of their own desires." (**Mysteries of John**, pg. 88)

In discussing Unity's formal principle, it is important to examine their view of the Bible. Charles Fillmore described its use:

"As man is a threefold being, spirit, soul and body, so the Bible is a trinity in unity. It is body as a book of history, soul as a teacher of morals, and spirit as a teacher of the mysteries of being." (**Mysteries of Genesis**, pg. 8)

Christians believe that the Bible is seen as history, morals and mysteries and that each passage has inner significance. However, nowhere does Fillmore mention the real purpose of the Bible: that it is the carrier of the salvation message of the real death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ in space and time. (I Corinthians 15:1-7) "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:31) Unity says, "We believe all the doctrines of Christianity, spiritually interpreted." Unity destroys the biblical writers' intended meanings and replaces them with its own meanings.

Unity's Deviations from Scripture

The name, "Unity School of Christianity," implies that it is a Christian organization. However, we must look beyond the labels used to the meanings held. Unity uses the Bible, but establishes inner meanings for its context to the virtual exclusion of the writers' intended meanings. One must heed Paul's words that there are people who are promoting strange teachings which they call "Jesus," "Spirit," or "Gospel" (II Corinthians 11:2-4).

Unity uses a number of labels for its concepts of God. "God," "Love," "Wisdom," "Good," "All-Good," "Father-Mother," "Source," "Giver," "Mind," "Divine Mind" and "Spirit" are prevalent. Unity's God is impersonal and Unity makes no distinction between who God is and what He does or gives. Indeed, all "creation" manifests "Him."

"Each rock, tree, animal, everything visible, is a manifestation of the one Spirit

— God — differing only in degree of manifestations; and each of the numberless modes of manifestation or individualities, however insignificant, contains the whole." (**Lessons in Truth**, pg. 8)

Unity teaches that God cannot be personal:

"God is not a being or person having life, intelligence, love, power. God is that invisible, intangible, but very real something we call life. ... God is the name we give to that unchangeable, inexorable Principle at the source of all existence. ... He is Principle, impersonal." (**Lessons in Truth**, pp. 6, 10-11)

In Unity's view, belief in a personal God leads to error:

"Interpreting Being from a personal standpoint, we have ignored the principles and laws at the very foundation of all creation and substituted a personal God, and many contradictions have followed." (**Mysteries of John**, Foreword)

A "trinity" is held to by Unity, but it, too, is impersonal and is "metaphysically" understood to refer to "mind, idea and expression, or thinker, thought and action." (**Metaphysical Bible Dictionary**, pg. 664)

Of course, this does not square with the Bible, which shows God as active and vital, remembering, speaking, seeing, hearing, creating, knowing, willing and judging. The idea of an impersonal "God" is indeed a comfortable one, for there is no one to be responsible to. But then neither is there a God to intervene on man's behalf.

One of the teachings affected by this impersonal view of God is that on prayer. Throughout history, the Christian Church has valued prayer as a means of communication with God for requesting, thanking, adoring and interceding. All these are thrown out when there is no person to pour out one's heart and mind to. Unity's alternative to prayer is "affirmation." Some examples of "affirmation" from Daily Word are:

"I let love and peace dominate my thinking."

"God's perfect will is being done in my life now."

"The Christ Spirit in me blesses me with health. I am whole and free."

"I no longer see faults and shortcomings in others. I look for and find the best in everyone." (**Daily Word**, June 1977)

While these are positive and generous thoughts, they are in no way true prayer, or communication with God. However, Unity is inconsistent in this replacement of prayer with affirmation. Often one spots a prayer directed toward a personal God, such as, "Thank you, God, for everything." (**Daily Word**, June 1977) This is another of those features which helps

hold individuals to the Unity camp without always realizing the full doctrine or ramifications of it. It should be noted also that if it is "primitive" to pray to a personal God, then Jesus Christ was most primitive — and deceptive — to teach his disciples to pray, "Our Father, who is in heaven..."

A key tenet in Unity is the position that Jesus is not unique among men:

"The difference between Jesus and us is not one of inherent spiritual capacity, but in demonstration of it. Jesus was potentially perfect, and he expressed that perfection; we are potentially perfect, we have not yet expressed it." (**What Unity Teaches**, pg. 3)

"By Christ is not meant the man Jesus." (**Unity** magazine, Vol. 48, #2, pg. 126)

Unity also revises Jesus' self-appointed title from "the Way" to "the Way-Shower." (see Unity's Statement of Faith, #3, pg. 1) He then is only a "type man" (**Metaphysical Bible Dictionary**, pg. 345) on par with other great men. A demonstration of this view is found in a Unity booklet entitled **A Modern Way-Shower — A Tribute to Charles Fillmore** by J.D. Freeman.

As mentioned, the Christ is separate from Jesus, and is impersonal:

"The Christ is the perfect God idea, which is ever in touch with its source. ... Think about Christ as a life-force penetrating your whole being. Try to feel this force as an energy pulsating through every nerve and fiber of your body." (**Mysteries of John**, pp. 64, 31)

Unity teaches that every man is capable of becoming as Jesus; of manifesting this perfect idea, one's higher self:

"Thus he (Jesus) became Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. And we are to follow in this perfect state and become like him, in each of us is the Christ, the only begotten Son. We can through the Christ within us, the true self of all men, be made perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect as Jesus Christ commandeth His followers to be." (**Unity** magazines, Vol. 57, #5, pg. 464 and Vol. 72, #2, pg. 8)

This separation of Jesus from the Christ is not scriptural. As prophesied from the day the angels announced "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11), his followers have held him to be personally the Christ. John warned of the nature of one who separates the Christ from Jesus:

"Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ, that denieth the Father and the Son." (I John 2:22)

In a blasphemous statement of the first order, Charles Fillmore interprets what

has been widely known as the nutshell of the Christian faith, John 3:16, as:

"'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believeth on him (his own divine self) should not perish, but have eternal life.' Not only are we to believe in our own divinity, but we are to accept the example of that divinity expressed by God through Jesus Christ." (**Mysteries of John**, pg. 38)

It is important at this juncture to ponder the ramifications of holding that man is essentially deity. He then sees himself as subservient to no one. In addition, deity has no sin or wrong to be sorry for or to make restitution for. Man then also is immortal, so he need not fear death. Jesus then is no longer unique or necessary. He is only one who has made it, just as many others have and will. Nonetheless, being in a nation so firm in Christian heritage and terminology, Unity retains these terms, but denies their meanings.

Christianity's Terms — Unity's Definitions

Unity deals with sin by denying its existence, saying that any thought that sin or evil exists is a mistake, which must be denied. "There is no sin, sickness or death." (**What Practical Christianity Stands For**, pg. 3) "God is god and God is all, hence there can be no real condition but the good." (**Christian Healing**, pg. 93) Sin, then, has no real existence. In the words of Charles Fillmore, "A short definition of sin is ignorance." (**Mysteries of John**, pg. 90)

"Repentance is a form of denial. The forgiveness of sin is an erasure on mortal thought from consciousness. The joy that comes to the concerted Christian results from the inflow of divine love, which occurs after the mind has been cleansed by the denial of sin." (**Christian Healing**, pp. 57-58)

Fillmore also explains "the regenerative process:"

"First comes the clearing of denial state, in which all the error thought are eliminated. ... This putting away of sin from the consciousness (baptism through denial, plus forgiveness) is very closely allied to the deeper work that is to follow..." (**Mysteries of John**, pg. 17)

"Salvation" has occurred, according to Unity, when the individual attains perfection:

"We believe (that Jehovah God is incarnate in Jesus Christ and) that all men may attain the Christ perfection by living the righteous life. 'Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.'" (Unity's Statement of Faith, #26, pg. 5)

Faced with the fact that perfection in a man is most difficult to find, and with the influence of Eastern religion, the Fillmores added reincarnation to their tenets

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to allow more time for each individual to overcome the lower self:

"We believe that the dissolution of Spirit, soul and body — caused by death — is annulled by rebirth of the same spirit and soul in another body here on Earth. We believe the repeated incarnations of man to be a merciful provision of our loving Father to the end that all may have opportunity to attain immortality through regeneration, as did Jesus. 'This corruptible must put on incorruption.'" (Unity's Statement of Faith, #22)

Unity teaches that over many lifetimes of continued denials and affirmations:

"Salvation is finally attained when the cycle of rebirth is broken and man comes to birth no more.' The true spiritual body is to replace the physical body and the man becomes like Christ. This is to be done here on Earth. ... Eternal life means conscious existence in the body." (**Talk on Truth**, pp. 150-151)

Reincarnation can be an appealing doctrine. It appears to answer the problem of evil — why some are born into better situations than others. It gives all a "fair chance" to work for salvation. However, it has no place in Christianity. The Bible refutes it, teaching not reincarnation in a different body, but resurrection and resuscitation of the same body. Death does not mean being placed into another body, but to be at home with the Lord. (Philippians 1:23-24; II Corinthians 5:8. See also PFO Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 3)

Death, too, is denied by Unity, saying, "The total unreality of death must be portrayed to deluded consciousness." Since it is unreal, it can be overcome by the higher self. "Jesus overcame death of the body. His followers are expected to do the same." (**Mysteries of John**, pp. 62, 93) Scripture has seen death as a reality, a real enemy to be overcome and destroyed only by the resurrected Jesus Christ and his power: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. For the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (I Corinthians 15:25-26)

An important and attractive doctrine of Unity today is its emphasis on healing the body by using the mind:

"Unity has similar cases every day, and the testimonials that we receive bear witness to the efficacy of our healing ministry." (**Mysteries of John**, pg. 54)

One cannot deny that there are cases of people who have been healed, apparently by the techniques Unity teaches. However, the source of this must be in question. Healing in Scripture follows the pattern of a request to a personal God for healing, followed by intervention from him that

removes the disease; a healing which was brought by Jesus by his suffering and death on the cross. (Matthew 8:16-17) This is different than Unity's healing, where man, not God, receives the glory.

Unity, with its basis in the mind sciences, owes a great debt to Phineas Quimby, Warren Evans and Mary Baker Eddy. To complete its system, the Fillmores added elements of Theosophy (reincarnation), Spiritism (astral and physical self) and Hinduism (reincarnation and idealism). It also shows similarities to other movements of the day, including Quakerism (inner light) and Rosicrucianism (cosmic unity). By Unity's denial of the true gospel and its substitution for it, their students face damnation.

For the writer of the book of Hebrews declares, "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of Grace?" (Hebrews 10:29).

Alerting the Flock

In alerting Christians to the dangers of Unity, it is best to begin with Unity's media outlets, the magazines and broadcast spots.

People usually are attracted to Unity through its media outlets, which use Christian terms in a way that sound in harmony with Christian beliefs. In these cases, it would be best to explore with them what they think Unity means and what they think Unity's doctrines are. If alerted soon enough, the individual ought to recognize Unity teachings as heretical. An effort should be made to identify what need the person has that Unity literature is filling. Then that person should be directed to some appropriate Christian literature.

At times it will be helpful to point out the ramifications of Unity, such as the impossibility of prayer to an impersonal God, and the absence of anyone to answer or to receive help from when man himself is divine.

Hard-core followers of Unity may be open to seeing inconsistencies between what they do and what they believe. Try pointing out their occasional prayers directed to what appears to be a personal God.

It also may help to share Jesus' many claims of uniqueness and separation from humanity as a whole, in some cases even before he came to the point where Unity teaches he manifested Christ. One also should show that Jesus claims not to manifest Christ, but to be Christ.

Ask the Unity follower on what authority he bases his belief and how he uses and interprets Scripture. Contrast Unity's error with biblical Christianity. In this

discussion, it may be helpful to show the different conclusions Christian Science and Unity arrive at while using the same methods to interpret Scripture.

Lessons We Can Learn

There are positive lessons we can learn from Unity — those worth adopting — and negative ones — those we should avoid and warn against. Some of the positive ones are doctrinal emphasis. Christians also should have positive thinking of a sort and attitudes with an eye toward overcoming and victory. However, Christians must remember their victory is in Jesus Christ, not in mental gymnastics.

Divine, supernatural healing also is a topic the Church has played down. Christians should find a new emphasis here, based on God's power rather than man's abilities. We also have positive lessons to learn from Unity in the practical area. Unity makes excellent use of radio, television and the printed page. We too must learn the wide, creative and influential use of quality media.

Unity's negative lessons fall mostly in the doctrinal area. We must be warned against misuse of terminology. We must define our terms and have others define theirs.

Unity has established a large and effective machinery of largely mail-order religion, and has had "success." It holds out promises of prosperity and health in this life and the prospect of no sin, sickness, death or hell. It holds out great promises of prosperity, but it has neither ministry nor message to those who have failed. How unlike our Lord, for whom life brought not prosperity, but poverty, culminating in a crown of thorns, a scourge and a cross! How contrary to his teaching that his disciples were to deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow him. How unlike the teaching of St. Paul, which involved him in stripes, imprisonment and distress.

We must agree with J.O. Sanders that while its literature is of such a healthy and attractive appearance, it is laced with eternal death:

"We would say that the greatest danger in this movement lies in the many beautiful and true sentiments contained in its literature, which would appeal to the uninstructed, leading them to believe that they are imbibing true spiritual teaching. Satan does his most dangerous work when he is masquerading as an angel of light." (**Cults and Isms**, pg. 62)

In seeking the present, Unity has destroyed its hope for the future by trodding under foot the Lord who has bought them with his blood. Unity has pursued righteousness, but by man's methods, on man's terms. ✱

that his theology matches their gnostic and psychic doctrine rather than that of evangelical Christianity. Careful reading of Lamsa's writings reveals that this is the case.

Lamsa on Scripture

Lamsa appears to regard all of the Bible highly. However, he distinguishes between the authoritative teachings of Jesus and what he considers to be the inferior doctrine of his disciples. Jesus, he claims, had an infinite understanding of God and his teachings were from God "based on divine inspiration." He says that the apostles and disciples, on the other hand, were unduly influenced by Jewish religion, traditions, customs, laws and practices and so reveal human weakness in what they wrote. Lamsa says some Scripture was lost by the time of the Nicean council in A.D. 325, was rejected because it was "contrary to the new doctrines and dogmas" adopted at Nicea, or was simply destroyed. (*New Testament Commentary*, pp. xiii-xv) He says certain passages were "deliberately forged" and added to the legitimate books. (*New Testament Origin*, pg. 97) The English Bible versions, Lamsa adds, are corrupted by mistranslations and contradictions because of their trek from Aramaic to Greek, Greek to Latin, and Latin to English. In spite of Lamsa's superficial respect for the Bible, he distrusts and condemns portions of it and changes it whenever he desires.

Lamsa says that while Scripture was perverted, men such as Marconi and Edison were as "inspired" as the Prophets were because:

"...they relied on hidden power, the power of God, the power of their indwelling self ... able to contact the spiritual forces, which are the only true power. All power belongs to God and comes from Him." (*The Kingdom on Earth*, pg. 181)

Lamsa says that a tool man can use to feel the spiritual forces is prayer for "Prayer is the strongest medium through which man attunes himself with God, discovers his real self, and understands the world around him." (*The Kingdom on Earth*, pg. 125) Lamsa sees prayer not so much as a Christian's communication, to which God responds, but as a force that can directly influence even the sick, strengthening them and helping them have faith. (*The Kingdom on Earth*, pg. 135)

Lamsa on Jesus

Lamsa's upbringing in the Nestorian church influenced his theory of two persons within Jesus, one human and one divine:

"Jesus was born a man. He died on the cross as a man, but Christ, God dwelling

in Him — His divinity — was not subject to human suffering nor to birth or death." (*The Hidden Years of Jesus*, pp. 10-11) "Jesus was a man, but Christ in him was God. The human and divine were united. This doctrine is still upheld by the Christians in the East." (*New Testament Commentary*, pg. 177)

In Lamsa's view, Jesus was born, circumcised, carried out Jewish rituals, grew in understanding and died, while Christ — that is God, Spirit, Life and Truth, the divinity which existed at the time of Abraham — dwelt in Jesus but did not die with him.

While Nestorianism influenced Lamsa's ideas on the Christ who walked the Earth, his New Thought tendencies show in his doctrine of Christ's post-resurrection nature. While the term "spiritual body" is biblical, Lamsa uses it to subtly rule out the idea that Jesus' disciples visually saw Him after His resurrection. *My Neighbor Jesus*, a brief expose' on the life of Christ by Lamsa, ends with the empty tomb, and he later assumes that people today "will see him just as those who believed in him saw him after his resurrection." (*New Testament Commentary*, pg. 31) Again, implying "spiritual," not physical sight. Instead of physical appearances, Lamsa asserts that Jesus' resurrection as "a larger beginning of his spiritual personality," which included contact with other spirits. (*My Neighbor Jesus*, pg. 139)

Since Lamsa "spiritualizes" the resurrection, it is no surprise to find that he offers metaphysical versions of the ascension and second coming as well. Lamsa dubs the ascension a "Spiritual transformation," the exact nature of which is unknown:

"We cannot figure exactly what happened..." (*Gospel Light*, pg. 305) "He was seen alive and ascending to heaven only by those whose spiritual vision had been strengthened by faith in him. (*New Testament Commentary*, pg. 7)

Lamsa stresses that the second coming is not a future event, but a "spiritual" coming that has begun and continues even today:

"The second coming of Jesus will be a spiritual coming; ... Moreover, the people's consciousness will be raised to a spiritual level, so that every eye will see nothing but good. In other words, it will be a spiritual life and a spiritual kingdom." (*More Light on The Gospel*, pg. 151)

While Lamsa's ideas about Jesus may have begun in a Nestorian character, they have developed largely upon gnostic New Thought lines.

Lamsa seems to lean toward a Sabellian view of God as one God who appears in three manifestations, rather than the Trinitarian three persons in one God. Lamsa

uses interchangeable terms such as "the Spirit," "Comforter," "Spirit of Jesus," "Holy Spirit," and "Spirit of the Lord." Furthermore, he considers "spirit" to be synonymous with "influence," "expansion," "effectiveness" and "hidden power." Lamsa encourages his readers to believe that the Comforter of John 14:16 and 16:8 is but the influence Jesus left behind with his movement after his experience of the cross. (*Gospel Light*, pp. 367-368, 372-373)

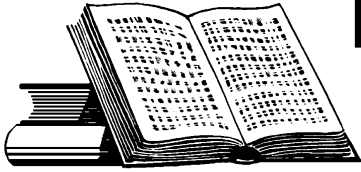
Lamsa's move to metaphysical interpretation of Scripture probably helped him reconcile differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He denounces as "ignorant" teachers of his youth who claimed the three religions were incompatible. He says he later discovered that the three religions all worshipped the same God:

"The adherents of these three great religions believe in one God, the holy prophets, the Scriptures, Resurrection, Judgement Day and the Life hereafter. On the other hand, a greater part of the differences between them are due to the doctrines and the teachings of men, and the traditions of the elders." (*The Short Koran*, pg. x-xi)

Lamsa implies that he fully accepts the Koran as Scripture and offers excerpts of the Moslem holy book arranged by subject in his *Short Koran* (including the subject heading "Jesus is not God") He suggests that sending Christian missionaries to Moslem countries is unnecessary, and commends one missionary who became a Moslem after finding that religion closer to the teachings of Christ.

Lamsa's doctrine and spiritual character are not easy to determine, for he admits that he has "avoided doctrinal and theological matters" in his writings. Although he has tried to veil his beliefs, heretical Nestorianism has left an indelible mark on his teachings and his New Thought emphasis is even more prevalent and contrary to evangelical Christianity. Both of these religious genres have caused him to distort the Bible passages and have slanted his version of the Bible, causing it to have serious translation problems. Lamsa's claim to be an apostle who is the lone revealer of truth for our time and above correction by others in the body of Christ is characteristic of pseudo-Christian religious leaders and has obtained for him a small, almost cult-like following.

It is important that Christians recognize that Lamsa stands well outside of the Christian faith and so should not buy or use his books for research. When talking to a Jehovah's Witness or a follower of Lamsa or The Way International, it may be useful to explain Lamsa's errors so the person has a better understanding of Scripture and is warned to avoid Lamsa's work. ✱



BOOKS IN REVIEW

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-LOVE, SELF-IMAGE

by Jay E. Adams

Harvest House Publishers, 143 pages, \$5.95

What was found only in humanistic, modern psychology a few short years ago is now found in many churches. Many Christians have adopted a preoccupation with the concept of self-image as a cause and excuse for personal problems. Jay Adams believes that the shift to this philosophy puts an unbiblical emphasis on self.

Adams points out flaws in the presuppositions of TV preacher Robert Schuller and others, showing where they conflict with historic Christian belief and theology.

Is good self-image central to success in life? Can we be driven to suicide without it? Is it the cause of problems or the byproduct of wrong living and wrong thinking? The book answers these questions in a thoroughly biblical way. Adams shows that this self-esteem doctrine originated only in recent years with Alfred Adler, Eric Fromm, Karen Homey, Carl Rogers (now a full-blown spiritist) and Abraham Maslow.

In short, the teaching should be seen for what it is: a humanistic invention. In straightforward fashion, Adams shows that the Adler/Maslow need theory is pagan, not scriptural.

Along with telling what's wrong, Adams says what's right. He lays out a biblical view of man and the self that is extremely helpful. Jesus and Paul show and tell us that we can live godly lives even where there has been deprivation and when things do not go our way.

This is a vital, hard-hitting book. It has value for the cult researcher in that the views spoken against spawn cults and cultic thinking. Wrong views of man always lead to wrong views of God and His salvation. We strongly urge everyone to

buy and read this book. It addresses one of the watershed issues of our day.

—GRF

Jehovah's WITNESSES ANSWERED VERSE BY VERSE

by David A. Reed

Baker Book House, 139 pages, \$5.95

David Reed has given Watchtower-watchers a valuable tool in his **Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse By Verse**. Until now, one had to leaf through Edmond Gruss' **Apostles of Denial**, F.W. Thomas' **Masters of Deception** and others to learn how Jehovah's Witnesses have misinterpreted Scripture. Now one need only reach for Reed's publication.

The two major chapters of the book highlight Old and New Testament verses the Watchtower uses to "prove" its theology. The book tells how the verse is used by the Witnesses, whether it has been taken out of context and how a Christian should respond.

Also included is a discussion of verses Jehovah's Witnesses ignore or are unfamiliar with, such as John 3:3 and John 20:28. The book might have been improved by separating the verses used by Christians from the Watchtower proof texts, rather than putting them together for the sake of biblical sequence.

Other chapters include a treatment of Watchtower doctrines, an expose' of **The New World Translation**, Watchtower history, suggestions for witnessing and the testimony of the author and his wife, Penni.

The back cover of Reed's publication states, "While other types of books on this sect — exposes', testimonials, or doctrinal studies — are good for indepth studies, they do not lend themselves to quick reference use when Jehovah's Witnesses must be refuted." We agree and recommend this book for all cult reference libraries.

—MKG

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