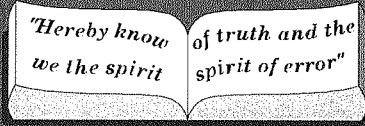


# The Discerner



Volume 22, Number 2

April • May • June 2002

## AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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## EDITORIAL

*By William A. BeVier*

In this issue we are featuring three articles and two book reviews.

Since much has been written recently about Islam, both in Christian and secular publications, and presented in other media, we wanted to present Israel and what is important for us to know about God's plan for Israel and why we need to know about the nation's importance and our place in relationship to it.

The article "Five Facts You Should Know About Israel," by Renald E. Showers, is used by permission of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., PO Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099. This article also has been printed in booklet form and may be obtained by request from The Friends of Israel free of charge.

Renald Showers is the author of several books, is a professor and international conference speaker for The Friends of Israel, and his academic preparation includes graduation from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1962.

We understand the current Israelis in the land of Israel are not the completion of God's purposes for the nation of Israel, but are considered part of God's preparation for the future predicted in Scripture.

Our second article deals in part with the reason why Religion Analysis Service exists. The Greek word translated "apologetics" does not relate to the English word "apology," i.e., excuse, regret. It means a formal justification, defense, answer, reply.

Steve Lagoon, one of our Board members, has shared with us the content of a radio interview he participated in last year

on the subject of apologetics.

Recently we have received several inquiries about the Unity School of Christianity. Jo Ann BeVier has researched the group and its background and written our third article in this issue.

Our issue concludes with reviews of two books that recently came to our attention.

Again, we ask that you continue to pray for RAS. If you have opportunity, you are invited to visit us in our new location in Oakdale, Minnesota. We are located just off I-694. Our hours continue to be 9:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday-Thursday. By appointment, we can be there at other times.

A reminder, if your label reads "XXII-2" (Vol. 22, Nr. 2) it means your subscription expires with this issue. We hope you will renew. All of us need to keep current with what is going on in the area of "religion" in our neighborhoods and in our world today.

# Five Facts You Should Know About Israel

By Renald E. Showers

**H**ave you ever wondered why Jewish people have been scattered throughout the nations of the world more consistently than any other people? Why anti-Semitism persists in rearing its ugly head repeatedly throughout history? Why Nazism specifically targeted the Jewish people for genocide in the Holocaust of World War II? Why the Jews have endured despite all their persecutions? Why they tenaciously hold on to the land they presently occupy in the Middle East? Why the modern State of Israel, despite its small size, is repeatedly the focus of the world's attention?

The answers to these questions are found in certain basic facts about the nation of Israel. And knowledge of these facts is essential if you want to understand not only these issues, but also God's plan and purpose for history.

## **FACT ONE:**

### **Israel Has Had a Unique Relationship With God**

---

Early in Israel's history, God placed the nation into a relationship with Himself that no other nation was privileged to enjoy. In conjunction with the relationship, Moses made the following statements:

*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God; the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people who are upon the face of the earth (Dt. 7:6; cf. 10:15; 14:2).*

*And the LORD hath avowed thee this day to be his peculiar people.... And to make thee high above all nations whom he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor, and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God as he hath spoken (Dt. 26:18-19).*

This unique relationship involved a number of special privileges. First, it involved Israel's adoption as God's firstborn son (Ex. 4:22-23; Rom. 9:4). Second, Israel was permitted to hear God's voice at Mount Sinai (Dt. 4:10, 12, 32-33). Third, Israel

saw and enjoyed a unique association with the shekinah glory of God (Ex. 24:16-17; 40:34-38; Dt. 4:36; 1 Ki. 8:10-11; Rom. 9:4). Fourth, God established covenants with Israel that He never established with any other people (Rom. 9:4). Fifth, God gave the Mosaic Law to Israel alone (Dt. 4:5-6, 8, 13; Ps. 147:19-20; Rom. 9:4). Sixth, only Israel had the worship structures (the Tabernacle and Temple) where God dwelt in a unique sense and the divinely ordained priesthood and sacrificial system of those structures (Ex. 25:8-9; 29:43-46; 1 Ki. 6:11-14, 17; Rom. 9:4; Heb. 9:1-10). Seventh, God made promises to Israel that He made to no other nation (Dt. 1:11; 6:3; 12:20; 15:6; 19:8; 26:18, 28; Rom 9:4). Eighth, Israel had unique, intimate access to God (Dt. 4:7). Ninth, God intervened into history in an unparalleled, supernatural way to deliver Israel from its slavery in Egypt (Dt. 4:32, 34). Tenth, God gave Israel permanent ownership of the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21; 17:8). Eleventh, God made Israel's land and capital city (Jerusalem) holy, or unique, because He dwelt there in a unique sense (Neh. 11:1; Zech. 2:10-12; Rev. 11:2).

It is important to note that God established His unique relationship with Israel *forever*. He intended that relationship to be permanent. King David declared,

*And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and awe-inspiring, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people, Israel, to be a people unto thee forever; and thou, LORD, art become their God (2 Sam. 7:23-24).*

## **FACT TWO:**

### **A Unique Reason Exists for the Special Relationship Between God and Israel**

---

God did not choose Israel to be His special people because they were better than any other people. They were not better. They were descendants of Adam and Eve as were all other people; thus they were born with the same corrupt human nature and tendency to rebel against God, as were the Gentiles. Even David, Israel's great king, recognized that he was shaped in iniquity and conceived in a state of sin (Ps. 51:5). Moses repeatedly warned the people of Israel that they would tend to stray from

God and His ways, and he told them, "The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people" (Dr. 7:7).

If God did not choose the people of Israel because they were better than other people, why then did He choose them for a unique relationship? According to Scripture, He did it based on His own sovereign will. On the basis of His own sovereign will, God performed two special deeds for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Israel's ancestors (Rom. 11:28). First, He made those ancestors the special objects of His love (Dt. 4:37; 10:15); and second, He established a special covenant (the Abrahamic Covenant) with them (Dt. 7:7-9).

The fact that God chose Israel, not because that nation was better than any other but because of two special deeds He performed based on His own sovereign will, seems to imply that God had a sovereign purpose for the nation.

## **FACT THREE:**

### **God Has a Unique Purpose for Israel**

At least two details indicate that God indeed has a unique purpose for Israel. First, God declared that He created Israel for His glory (Isa. 43:7). The word *glory* refers to what is impressive, demands recognition, or gives a person influence. Thus God's declaration indicated that, in a unique sense, He has purposed through Israel to impress the world with Himself, to obtain the world's recognition, and to gain influence in the lives of His human creatures.

Second, when God established the Abrahamic Covenant, He not only promised to make a great nation (Israel) of Abraham's physical descendants (Gen. 12:2), but He also vowed that all families of the earth would be blessed through that nation (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 28:14). God thereby indicated that He purposed Israel to function as a unique channel of His blessings to the whole world.

How does God, through Israel, bring blessing to the world and glorify Himself before it, thereby fulfilling His unique purpose for that nation? He does so in several ways.

**Through His Historic Dealings With Israel.** Early in Israel's national history, Moses promised the Israelites that if they heeded God's Word and obeyed Him, God would do the following for them:

*The LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth.... The LORD shall cause thine enemies who rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face; they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.... The LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt not be beneath (Dt. 28:1, 7, 13).*

Moses also promised that if the Israelites rejected God's Word and disobeyed Him (Dt. 28:15), then the following would happen to them:

*The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand to do,... Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies whom the LORD shall send against thee... the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.... And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life (Dt. 28:20, 48, 64-66).*

The result of God blessing Israel above all other nations if it heeded and obeyed His Word would be as follows: "And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of thee" (Dt. 28:10). The result of God chastening Israel more severely than other nations if it rejected and disobeyed His Word would be this: "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations to which the LORD shall lead thee.... And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder" (Dt. 28:37, 46).

These statements indicate that God intended to make Israel an object lesson to the rest of the world. His dealings with Israel are designed to impress the world with two facts about God: (1) God blesses those who heed and obey His Word; (2) God will severely judge those who reject and disobey His Word.

**Through a Unique Book.** A second way God brings blessing to the world and glorifies Himself through Israel is through the unique book He has given to the world. The Bible is the only book that has been divinely inspired. In it God has revealed ultimate reality, the purposes of history and life, the origin and destiny of man, how sinful man can be made right with a holy God, and how people are to live. Over the centuries, God's book has brought untold blessing to great multitudes of people. God gave

the Bible to the world almost exclusively through the nation of Israel (Dt. 4:5-6, 8; Ps. 147:19-20; Rom. 3:2). This fact indicates that God intended Israel to be the instrument through which He would give the world its most significant book.

**Through the Messiah-Savior.** A third way God has glorified Himself and brought blessing through Israel has been through the Messiah-Savior, Jesus Christ. When Adam, who had been appointed by God to function as His representative to administer His rule over the world, yielded to Satan's temptation to rebel against God (Gen. 1:26-28; 3:1-6), Satan thereby usurped the rule of the world system away from God (Lk. 4:5-6). This angelic enemy of God has been dominating the world system ever since (Jn. 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:19). In addition, man's original sin of rebellion against God brought tragic consequences for the earth and himself. For example, man experienced a radical spiritual change (spiritual death) and became subject to God's eternal judgment (Gen. 2:16-17; Jn. 3:18; Eph. 2:1-3).

Immediately after man's original sin of rebellion, God announced that the key to His crushing of Satan and his evil rule in the world would be the coming and work of a special Redeemer who would be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15). Through the Old Testament prophets, God revealed two major lines of truth concerning this coming Redeemer (1 Pet. 1:10-12). First, the Redeemer would be the Savior of the world (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22:1-18; Isa. 52:13-53:12). Second, the Redeemer would crush Satan and his world rule; would reestablish God's rule over the world system; and would be God's Messiah-King, His last representative to administer His rule over the entire earth (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 2; Isa. 9:6-7; 11; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14).

Since the Messiah-Savior was to be born of a woman, He obviously would come into the world through the nation the woman belonged to. Through the Old Testament prophets, God revealed that Israel was the nation through which the Messiah-Savior would come (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 9:6-7; 11; Mic. 5:2).

The Messiah-Savior, Jesus Christ, did indeed come through Israel (Acts 13:22-23; Rom. 9:4-5). He was born of Mary, a young, righteous Jewess (Lk. 1:26-38; 2:1-7). Through His suffering and death on the cross, He took away the sin of the world and thereby provided salvation for man (Mt. 1:18-21; Jn. 1:29). At His Second Coming, He will crush Satan and his rule (Rom. 16:20; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 19:11-20:3); reestablish God's rule over the world system; and be God's Messiah-King, the last Adam to



administer God's rule over the entire earth (Mt. 19:28; 25:31-34; Acts 3:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:23-25, 45; Rev. 20:4-6).

Thus God purposed that Israel would be the channel through which the key figure of all time would come—the Messiah-Savior through whom God fulfills His purpose for history and brings great blessing to the world.

**Through Repentance.** There is a fourth way God will glorify Himself and bring blessing through Israel. The Scriptures indicate that the Messiah will not crush Satan and reestablish God's rule over the world system until the nation of Israel repents of its rebellion against God. (This repentance will involve accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah-Savior, Dt. 30:1-10; Jer. 31:16-40; Ezek. 36:32-38; Hos. 3:4-5; 5:15-6:3; 14:1-8; Zech. 12:10-13:1, 9: 14; Acts 3:12-21). For this reason, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles preached the gospel of the Kingdom ("Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand") to Israel only (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17; 10:5-7; 15:21-26; Mk. 1:14-15). These facts indicate that God has purposed Israel to be a significant key to the future fulfillment of His purpose for history.

## **FACT FOUR:**

### **Israel Has a Unique Future**

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According to the Scriptures, Israel's unique future will have a twofold nature. First, it will be characterized by unequalled suffering. Satan has attacked Israel many times throughout history. Because the Redeemer (God's key to crushing Satan) was to be born through Israel, Satan repeatedly stirred up anti-Semitism against that nation in Old Testament times, hoping to prevent the Redeemer from coming. Because Messiah will not crush Satan and reestablish God's rule over the world system until Israel repents, Satan has attacked that nation ruthlessly since Christ's First Coming, trying to destroy it before it can repent. (The Holocaust of World War II is one such example).

Despite how terrible these past assaults have been, Israel's worst days are still ahead. During the last three and one-half years prior to Christ's Second Coming, Satan, realizing his time is growing short, will try to annihilate Israel in a manner unparalleled in history (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 12). This period will be so bad that Scripture calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), describes it as an unprecedented time of great tribulation (Jer. 30:4-7; Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:21), and indicates that two-thirds

of the people of Israel will die (Zech. 13:8).

Second, Israel's future also will be characterized by unequalled blessing. God will permit Satan to cause Israel's worst time of suffering as His means of bringing that nation to repentance. The survivors (one-third of Israel) will repent when they see Jesus Christ in His glorious Second Coming and recognize that He is their true Messiah (Zech. 12:10-14; 13:9; Rom. 11:25-26).

In response to Israel's repentance, God will forgive the nation's sins (Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:27); Messiah will crush Satan and his rule (Ps. 2; Zech. 14:1-5, 12-15; Rev. 19:11-20:3), and will reestablish God's rule over this Earth's world system for one thousand years (Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:6-11, 16-21; Rev. 20:4-6).

During this future rule of God through the Messiah, Israel will enjoy unique blessing. The nation will be in a right relationship with God and obedient to Him (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-27). Israel will be the spiritual minister of the world, leading the Gentiles in the worship of God (Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 61:6; Zech 8:23). A magnificent Temple will be built in Jerusalem as a center of worship (Ezek. 40-46). All nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God, receive instruction, and have judicial matters settled (Isa. 2:1-4; 60:14; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16-21). The people of Israel will be restored permanently to their homeland, and God will prosper them abundantly (Ezek. 34:11-14, 22-31; 36:24, 28-38; 37:21-28).

## **FACT FIVE:**

### **Israel Has Been Given Permanent Ownership of a Unique Land**

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In light of God's unique purpose for Israel (to glorify Himself before the world and to bring blessing to the world through Israel), it was essential that God place the nation in a unique location where it would have attention and influence out of proportion to its size. God did exactly that. He gave Israel the land of Canaan, perhaps the most strategic location in the world for attention and influence. Canaan is the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe; and for centuries the major trade and military routes of the ancient world passed through that land. Because of Israel's location, the major world powers have had to deal with that nation.

Moses clearly taught that God gave Israel the land. It belongs to the Jewish people. He gave it, not because the nation deserved it, but because of His own sovereign purposes (Dt. 9:4-6). Therefore, Israel's ownership of the land does not depend on the nation's merit.

Moreover, the fulfillment of Israel's unique, God-ordained future requires that it own the land of Canaan *forever*. This is so because that future involves Israel's permanent restoration to that land. And in line with this requirement, God, through the Abrahamic Covenant, solemnly guaranteed Israel's permanent ownership of the land (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-21; 17:8).

[See the Editorial for the way to obtain a free copy of this article.]

# Apologetics

*By Steve Lagoon*

This article is in the form of an interview by a Canadian newspaper of Steve Lagoon in 2001. “Q” refers to the questions asked of Steve Lagoon; “A” refers to his answers.

**Q:** Do you think most Christians understand what is involved with apologetics? Do they understand the need for apologetics?

**A:** The term “apologetics” does seem to confuse some folks. It sounds complicated and intimidating, but it need not be so. The word simply means to give a defense or a reason for your beliefs. This in accordance with the Scriptures that tell us to “contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3), and to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). The apostle John warned Christians “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

In light of these scriptural injunctions, it is surprising to find the lack of interest in apologetics in the church today. I am afraid that we have become mushy Christians, depending a lot more on emotions and experience (subjective), rather than on a serious study of God’s Word (objective). Therefore, we become vulnerable to the workings of false teachers. The saying is true that the “cults are the unpaid bills of the church” (Van Baalen, Chaos of the Cults). We need to be serious students of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11), in order to protect others and ourselves.

If some doubt the need for apologetics, they need to only hear the stories of so many whose lives and families have been torn apart by their involvement with cults. If we are to stand in times of testing, we must have a solid foundation for our faith.

**Q:** Do you think it is important for the “average Christian” to cultivate apologetics skills? Or is this a specialized area that should be left to people who have studied the pertinent issues?

**A:** No man can be the master of everything, but I believe that all Christians should receive basic education in apologetics, and also be familiar with the teachings of the major cults they are likely to encounter. It is my opinion that this is not happening enough at the local church level, but I see positive signs in that direction. Some seem to think the apologetics/counter-cult ministry is only for the “experts.” In fact, many lay Christians have active and effective apologetics ministries.

**Q:** Should Christians take a stronger approach to opposing cultic teachings? If so, how should we go about this?

**A:** One of my biggest areas of concern is in the area of “parachurch” organizations and ministries. I fully support the concept of parachurch ministries (colleges, mission organizations, musical teams, media ministries, evangelism and revival ministries, etc.), but I am concerned with how such groups have become the tool of false teachers to infiltrate the body of Christ. Why? It is because cultists are very successful in gaining acceptance in such organizations. Parachurch ministries must make a greater effort at protecting the Christian integrity of their organizations.

In general, the body of Christ must not give in to the “spirit” of the age that cries out “tolerance.” We must not cave in to criticism that we are negative for “attacking” other faiths. We must stand with Jesus when He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Sounds exclusive doesn’t it?

**Q:** What motivates you to speak out on these subjects?

**A:** My main motivation in speaking on these subjects is two-fold: to help people escape the tragic consequences of cult-involvement in this life, and the danger of hell in the afterlife. I don’t think the average person, even the average Christian, has any idea what it is like to be in a cult and how totally devastating it is. There has been no greater thrill for me than the joy of seeing the changed lives of those who have been rescued from a cult and brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**Q:** Concerns about Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons are fairly well known; but Oneness Pentecostalism is considered by many Christian to be a legitimate form of Christianity. Can you outline your concerns about Oneness teachings, in capsule form?

**A:** It is always necessary to make a clarification at this point. My criticism of Oneness Pentecostalism is not directed at Pentecostals in general, but only towards those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity and adhere to other heretical teachings. That said, I would make the claim that by whatever definition one uses to classify Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons as cults, Oneness Pentecostalism would also meet the criteria. For instance, The United Pentecostal Church has a works-based system of salvation and denies the doctrine of the Trinity. These are essential teachings of the Christian faith, non-negotiable if you will. In addition, Oneness Pentecostalism has been shown to practice extreme legalism and exclusiveness. It teaches that anyone who has not spoken in tongues is not saved. It teaches that anyone who has not been baptized in Jesus name only (contra the triune "formula") is not saved. It teaches that water baptism is necessary for salvation. Also, the use of mind-control and manipulation by leaders in the movement has been documented.

In short, Oneness Pentecostalism is a false gospel, and its adherents are facing the judgment of hell.

**Q:** Oneness Pentecostalism – as exemplified by sects such as the United Pentecostals – reject the biblical concept of the Trinity. What would you say to Christians who do not consider this sufficient reason to categorize Oneness Pentecostalism as cultic?

**A:** I would point out that there is nearly unanimous agreement among cult researchers that Oneness Pentecostalism is rightly classified as a cult. This is the opinion of such noted authorities on the subject as Robert Bowman, Gregory Boyd [a former Oneness Pentecostal], Calvin Beisner, Hank Hanegraaff, Norm Geisler, and John Ankerberg, and many others.

To those who disagree with this assessment, I must humbly disagree. The Oneness view teaches that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. Not one God in three persons as with Trinitarianism, but one person who is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not the teaching of Scripture concerning God, and profoundly distorts how God has revealed Himself in Scripture. How dare we tamper with God's self-revelation in areas so vital to theology and Christology? The Oneness Jesus is a most confusing idea if ever there was one. He goes about creating the "illusion of plurality" (that there is three persons in the Godhead) while in reality there is only one. He often acts

as though He is in relation to the other persons in the Godhead (they speak, send, obey, and love one another), when in reality there are no relations in the Godhead, but only one person. Oneness Pentecostalism is a revival of two heresies that were condemned by the early church: Modalistic Monarchianism and Nestorianism. We do well to listen to the witness of the father's of the church, and the witness of the Scriptures, and reject Oneness Pentecostalism as a valid expression of the body of Christ today.

**Q:** What are your concerns about the teachings of Arnold Murray?

**A:** Arnold Murray of the Shepherd's Chapel is a most colorful, if not tragic figure. He is seen regularly on television throughout North America. He is also heard on the radio and through an active cassette tape ministry. Like Oneness Pentecostals, Arnold Murray rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and holds to a Modalistic understanding that is heretical. He is often classified as being a part of the Christian Identity movement with its "supremacist's" beliefs. His favorite target is the "Kenites" that Murray teaches are the hybrid offspring of sexual relations between Satan and Eve in the Garden of Eden. These Cainites or Kenites are Murray's favorite villain, being the cause of most of the problems in the world today. He suggests that the "Jews" in Israel today are not the real Jews, but are Kenite imposters. Who then are the real Jews? Murray tells us that it is the peoples of Western Europe, Canada, and America.

Murray also teaches that mankind preexisted this life on earth. There is also some indication that Murray denies the physical nature of Christ's resurrection. This is a brief summary of the many heresies of one Arnold Murray.

**Q:** How best can Christians reach out to those caught up in unbiblical teachings?

**A:** Actually, the answer is rather simple. We must see the cultist as a real person with real needs that only Christ can fulfill. The cultist is not our ultimate enemy, the devil is. The cultists have been trapped by the devil and our job is to share our love for Christ with the cultist. We can choose the level of involvement we desire. It can be a simple sharing of your Christian testimony with love to the cultist at your door. If you feel the call, you can make counter-cult ministry an active part of your life.

If we wish to be an effective missionary in a foreign country we must first learn the language, history, and customs of the people we seek to reach. No less is true of those who wish to reach cultists. We must educate ourselves about the group and its beliefs and practices. As one reaches out to cultists, he finds that he learns more about his own beliefs. Counter-cult ministry is a noble task and fulfills Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).



## Unity School of Christianity... *And Its Message*

*By JoAnn BeVier*

In 1887 the great "idea" of "I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness" dawned on Myrtle Fillmore as she and her husband listened to a lecture on New Thought by E. B. Weeks.

The first church (or group) started in Charles and Myrtle Fillmore's home in 1889. They also started publishing a magazine, Modern Thought, in 1889, by Charles Fillmore, which was the start of the new cult.

Unity School of Christianity has taught its message for 111 years. They claim to be both non-denominational and denominational. "We believe we can best serve the spiritual development of humankind by providing as many different ways as possible to help people know the truth that God is ever with them, waiting to support and love them in all aspects of life." ("The Nature of the Unity Movement Non-Denominational and Denominational" by Connie Fillmore Bazy).

Unity, with a world membership of over a million (in 1985) is the largest Gnostic cult today. It is also the best advertised, i.e., correspondence courses, multiple publications, literally tons of printed matter. It has grown from two people in a rented hall in Kansas City to an entire city (Unity Village) in Lee's Summit, MO. Known as the least offensive cult, it has been described as "a religious philosophy with an open end."

Myrtle Fillmore died in 1931 and Charles married again. When he died in 1948, the organization came under the leadership of his sons, Lowell and W. Rickert. Since then Unity has experienced tremendous growth worldwide.

According to Unity's website, several well-known major corporations have participated in "vision quests," as "part of their project to revolutionize product development." They claim to be "the spiritual revolution which is definitely not being led by the traditional church." Their website also claims that messages being delivered by mega-denominational churches can "scarcely be distinguished from the Unity message."

Phineas P. Quimby was the father of Christian Science, New Thought, and Unity. Neither Christian Science nor Unity is

willing to admit that Quimby's pantheistic, metaphysical system is its original parent. The vocabulary of the three groups is almost interchangeable. J. K. Van Baalen says the three groups are as alike as triplets (The Chaos of Cults, p. 128). Unity distinguishes itself from the other two by adding "School" to their name. Unity also bears a definite resemblance to the "health and wealth" gospel in its claim that God does not want anyone to be sick or poor.

Charles Fillmore was born on an Indian Reservation near St. Cloud, MN in 1854. As a result of a skating accident when a young boy, he became crippled. He married Myrtle Page and the early years of their marriage was plagued by financial troubles. They were left penniless along with their physical problems until they attended a lecture by a representative of the Illinois Metaphysical College, when Mrs. Fillmore was "miraculously" healed.

Charles Fillmore investigated some other religions and practices. He studied Hinduism, Buddhism, Rosicrucianism, Theosophy, New Thought, Christian Science, and Christianity. The Fillmores later borrowed many of the teachings of the various groups, including New Age.

The early history of the group saw many changes of names and associations. After Mrs. Fillmore's miraculous healing (from tuberculosis) she became an avid Christian Scientist, followed in 1890 by her husband. They advertised themselves as "Healers and Teachers." This, along with the change of his magazine to Christian Science Thought, alienated them from Mary Baker Eddy. They publicly severed connections with Christian Science in 1915. Fillmore later changed the name of the magazine to Unity.

The name Unity came as a "revelation" to Charles Fillmore while he was sitting with a group known as the Society of Silent Help. Unity School's central work is done through what is called "Silent Unity" which is a silent help of prayer and meditation for every human want and illness. It operates 24 hours a day for any calls, telegrams, and letters asking for help. A

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*UNITY*  
*described as*  
*"a religious*  
*philosophy*  
*with an*  
*open end."*

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large staff (at Unity Village in Kansas City, MO) is available to pray with people day and night. An average of one million calls and two million letters annually are received. It involves relaxation and develops the consciousness of the individual and silent receptivity to Divine Mind for whatever the seeker needs. It emphasizes all that is good – love, joy, and confidence. Overcoming health-inhibiting emotions such as anger, hatred and despair is encouraged. “God is love but God is not loving. He is the love in everybody and everything. God is impersonal and by recognizing and constantly affirming our union with God – you are all that God is,” spoken by Charles Fillmore, “Christian Healing,” p. 37.

So some of the beliefs (or “not beliefs”) of the Unity School of Christianity are: they do not believe the Scriptures are complete and absolute authority but just “testimonials of men.” (Charles Fillmore didn’t develop a Statement of Faith until 1921). They do not use the Bible as it is, but interpret it according to their metaphysical interpretation; God is a principle – not a person, and they humanize God and deify man; Unity separates Jesus from Christ, as also other Eastern religions, teaching that Christ is a principle – not a person; Christ is the essence of the “divine mind”; Jesus was not God but a man who possessed the Christ principle, they believe we can do anything Jesus did; they deny the reality of sin and evil (therefore man does not need salvation); they do not believe hell is a real place – both heaven and hell are “states of mind”; they claim that sickness, old age and death are not real and teach a process of healing that uses denial and mental power; they believe and emphasize reincarnation – that through a series of rebirths (reincarnations) we eventually reach perfection and immortality, when we become part of the “divine mind”; they go beyond the common view of positive thinking resulting in a dangerous extreme.

These and many other beliefs and teachings are propagated by a wide range of literature from children’s to adult magazines, all done in the best taste of good quality. They print, “Wee Wisdom” for children, “Good Business” for the workingman, “Weekly Unity” a devotional magazine, a Sunday School quarterly, a “Metaphysical Bible Dictionary” and a lot of other literature. The style of writing uses Biblical references and illustrations and the average person reading their publications, or listening to a Unity broadcast could believe Unity to be a form of Christian theology. The system is a clever counterfeit.

In order to join the Unity School of Christianity one would have to renounce every basic doctrine of the Christian faith, denying the Lord's deity, resurrection, and Second Coming. We're warned in 1 John 4:1, "Try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

Unity appeals to many today by overlooking the existence of sin, death, evil, hell, and seeing everything as good, prosperity and health. Also, the New Age Movement and the Faith Movement is popular with Unity adherents. The outlook today is not emphasizing a commitment to anything, but ourselves. The biblical doctrines of sin and punishment are not popular today. People want to believe that sin does not exist; therefore, there will be no penalty for it. The Apostle Paul warns about this in 2 Timothy 4:3: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires." Many other Scriptures prove likewise, e.g., Rom. 3:10, 23; Isa. 64:6; Jn. 1:12; 5:24.

Also in speaking of heaven and hell, both are given a metaphysical interpretation, when God's Word makes it plain in such passages as Mt. 10:28; Mk. 9:43; Rev. 20:10-15. The Scripture is God's Word as stated in many places by many authors, e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Jn. 17:17; Psa. 119:89, and numerous other references.

In these days of such confusion we are called upon to know what we believe and to stand firm as is stated in 2 Peter 3-4, and in Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Cor. 16:13.

#### RESOURCES:

"Unity School of Christianity" by George Darby, n.d.

"Unity School of Christianity: What They Believe" by Harold Berry, 1987.

Handbook of Denominations by Frank/Mead/Samuel S. Hill, 1995.

Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin, 1985.

The Chaos of Cults by J. K. Van Baalen, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1960.

## BOOK REVIEW

### Tongues, Prosperity, & Godhood

By Dr. Cathy Burns

Mt. Carmel, PA: Sharing, 2001, 180pp

*Reviewed by William A. BeVier*

**D**r. Burns is author of ten published books (several of them stocked by RAS) and numerous booklets and tracts.

This recent book deals with such subjects as: Do all Christians speak in tongues? Is speaking in tongues evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Do non-Christians speak in tongues? Should we expect signs and wonders? Are Christians supposed to be prosperous just by speaking our desires into existence? Can we visualize Jesus? What about Inner Healing? Are you a god? How do New Agers feel about true Christians? Will Christians be counted as misfits in the new world order? Will the church be raptured? These are the type of questions Dr. Burns deals with in this book from a Scriptural perspective. She uses the King James Version as her translation.

The book is documented with Endnotes and has an eight page Bibliography. It also has an Index, something missing from some books today. The Table of Contents presents the 14 chapters in the book.

Dr. Burns begins by making the point that the Bible really does not speak of "unknown" tongues. Tongues in Scripture are always a known language, even down to specific dialects (Acts 2:6-7).

In her first chapter Dr. Burns concludes from the Bible that not all Christians are to speak in tongues any more than all are apostles (1 Cor. 12:29-30).

Directed primarily to Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, Dr. Burns documents that many individuals were "filled with the Holy Spirit" in the Bible but did not speak in "tongues."

Citing Laurence Cucariello (Gift of Tongues and the Bible) and other sources the point is made there is no relationship between speaking in "tongues" and holy living.

Dr. Burns discusses the question of sickness and other infirmities afflicting Christians and Old Testament saints in contrast with the proclaiming by some Pentecostals and Charismatics that true believers should never be sick. She then

refutes from Scripture and history the claim by some that it is every Christian's right to be "healthy and wealthy." The oft proclaimed "Name it and claim it" is not Biblical.

The author is not reluctant to name the prominent individuals involved in promoting these false doctrines.

Dr. Burns also has a chapter showing the similarities between the "power of words" of the Pentecostal/Charismatics and the New Age Movement, and how the New Age Movement has infiltrated the Church. Occultists have said some of the things the modern preachers are saying for centuries. The author has done extensive study of the New Age Movement and can see these similarities.

In her chapter titled "What Is Visualization" Dr. Burns quotes 1 Corinthians 2:9 "...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But as so many people do, she fails to go on to cite the next verse: "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...." We as believers know (or can know) what God has prepared for us.

Dr. Burns makes the point that "Inner Healing" practiced by a number of denominations today is a form of visualization. She devotes a chapter to this subject. In the chapter she cites those responsible for this development.

Chapter 10 of Dr. Burns' book is titled: "Are You a God?" She reminds us that part of Satan's original temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1-5) was that she could be as God. This lie has been repeated in various ways for centuries and still is being proclaimed, not only by New Agers but also by Pentecostal/Charismatics. Again, Dr. Burns documents and names names.

In Chapter 11, "Misfits Removed," Dr. Burns gives quotation after quotation from New Agers stating that Christianity, especially Fundamentalism, must be and will be destroyed. This is followed by her Chapter 12, "Renegades Excluded," citing such so-called Christian groups and individuals as Stanley Mooneyham (former president of World-Vision), the Manifest Sons of God, and the Rock Church as advocating the same procedure.

There is a movement within Christendom, called under the general title, "Dominion Theology" (which includes both non-Charismatics and Charismatics) that essentially has the same goal as the New Agers, bringing in a new world order. Both approaches agree that dissidents, i.e., non-conformists, must be eliminated. Dr. Burns asserts that both approaches are in real-

ity preparing the world for the Antichrist and his kingdom.

Reading of such intentions by so many people might cause a Bible-believing Christian to become discouraged and even fearful. However, Dr. Burns concludes her book with a reminder that the sovereign, only-one God will rapture the Church, the world will go through a period of great tribulation, and then Christ will personally return to this earth and establish His Kingdom. There will indeed be a "new world order," but it will not be the one New Agers and some Charismatics now visualize.

Dr. Burns uses ample Scripture in this book. If you are not familiar with her writing, this may be a good book in which to start. She does make several confusing statements in her closing invitation what a person needs to do to become a Christian, but this doesn't mitigate against the rest of her book.

*This book can be ordered from RAS for \$8.95 plus \$1.75 P&H.*

## BOOK REVIEW

Life Alert, The Medical Case of Muhammad

By Dede Korkut, M.D.

Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2001, 213pp

*Reviewed by William A. BeVier*

**D**r. Korkut is of Turkish background with specializations in Neurology and Psychiatry.

According to the back cover the book provides an examination of:

1. Elementary neurology in layman's terminology.
2. Muhammad's medical history and its meaning.
3. Actual case studies of others with the same physical problems as Muhammad and their "spiritual" experiences.
4. How his [Muhammad's] "visions" came to be accepted as revelations from Allah.
5. The implications of these findings on the Islam religion.

One missionary is quoted as saying: "Historians of the future may well regard this book as the proverbial 'straw' that broke the camel of Islam's back." Obviously over optimistic and certainly depends on how many Muslims read and believe the book. Since most Muslims don't read English and there is no indication the book is translated into other languages, its impact on the Muslim world may be slight.

The book is divided into six chapters, with a nine-page bibliography, and a five-page "Index," which is also an annotated glossary. Documentation is in footnotes at the bottom of pages, a very helpful aid for the reader.

The book is dedicated to Kemal Mustafa Ataturk, founder of the modern Republic of Turkey. The author quotes Ataturk as saying: "Islam, this theology of an immoral Arab... is a dead thing." Many could wish today that these words were true.

Dr. Korkut has diagnosed Muhammad as suffering from two types of neurological deficiencies. He defines these as Hydrocephalus and "a special kind of Epilepsy." Hydrocephalus in layman's terms is "water on the brain."

The author begins his work with a chapter explaining how the brain and mind works. The chapter has several diagrams



of the human brain. A chapter describing the major classified types of epilepsy follows this.

Chapter 3 of the book describes "Complex Partial Seizures," which is the type Dr. Korkut diagnoses Muhammad to have had, plus Hydrocephalus. The author includes a 33-page appendix on Complex Partial Seizures. Much of the information in the Appendix is presented elsewhere in the book.

Dr. Korkut indicates that Muhammad had his first seizure at about age four. Reference is made to the Muslim Hadith, non-Koran (Qu'ran) traditions written by Muhammad's leaders, friends, family, and wives. These give personal information about Muhammad, which assist Dr. Korkut's diagnosis. From these records Dr. Korkut concluded Muhammad suffered from hydrocephalus, he displayed the three major symptoms, i.e., mild dementia, gait disturbance, urinary incontinence. Korkut concludes: "Obviously he entered life with a defective brain."

In a long chapter "Muhammad's Medical History" the author presents numerous examples from Muslim sources interpreted by modern medical science to show that Muhammad did indeed have Complex Partial Seizures (CPS), a form of epilepsy.

In view of what some say today about Islam, a statement by Dr. Korkut is significant:

*There never has been any idea in Islam of equal civil rights for all. There is no tolerance in Islam. The Islamic idea of tolerance is that if you are willing to be a slave/serf within Muslim society, a second-class citizen, then you will be tolerated. Even in today's pluralistic world the Islamic nations lack basic civil rights as compared to Western nations, which are basically from a Christian origin (p. 86).*

Dr. Korkut writes of Muhammad: "His religious and theological views were derived from his illness, including the self-deceptive view that he was a prophet." The author cites as illustrations of his point some of the obvious contradictions within the Koran (Qu'ran).

Dr. Korkut has in his book a chapter addressed to Muslims endeavoring to have them accept Jesus Christ as their only Savior. He does warn the Muslims that within Christendom are two main groups, i.e., "traditionalistic" and the "really converted, born-again saved Christians." He also terms them "liberal" and "conservative," or evangelical. He recommends the second group.

The author points out that only in recent years has medical science made it possible to properly diagnose Muhammad's problems. Dr. Korkut then goes on to demonstrate the problems logically, historically, linguistically in the Koran (Qu'ran). This is in a book, which Muslims claim, came directly from God.

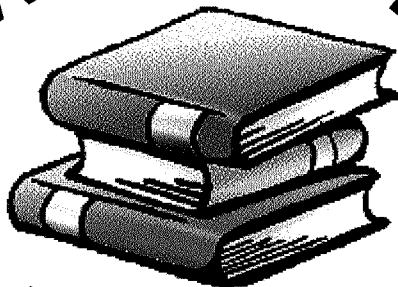
In his final chapter, "Hope for Your Life and Future," Dr. Korkut uses his formal training in the Bible with his medical/psychiatric knowledge to present an overview of Christianity directed to any non-Christian, especially Muslims. The appeal is to become a believing, practicing Christian with a clear statement of the dire consequences facing the person who does not. Incidentally, Dr. Korkut is a premillennialist in his theology. He considers Islamic fundamentalism "a last gasp effort" (p. 100).

I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in Islam or reaching Muslims with the Gospel.

*We do not plan to stock the book at this time,  
but it can be obtained for \$24.95 + \$4.95 P&H at:*

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