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From Fabricating Vampires to Fabricating Jesus Anne Rice's Long and Winding Road from Catholicism and Back Again

by G. Richard Fisher

The world is full of ironies. For example, Anne Rice has written nearly 30 books. She is best known for her fiction series "The Vampire Chronicles," which comprises at least a dozen books. Her first vampire book, *Interview with the Vampire* (published in 1976) "has gone on to become the second best-selling vampire novel of all time, second only to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*."¹

But a few years ago, the startling news out of the book world was that she was writing a book about Jesus. She also wrote an autobiographical book, *Called Out of Darkness*, which describes her return to the Roman Catholicism of her youth.

O'Brien because her mother wanted her named after her father. She renamed herself Anne on her very first day of school and Anne she remained.

She earned her bachelor's and master's of arts degrees at San Francisco State University. As Rice moved from writing vampire fables and erotica to stories of Christ — her other more recent titles included *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* and *Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana* — *Time* magazine reported, "Rice could rival C.S. Lewis as a popular apologist for the faith,"² and *Christianity Today* magazine said, "Rice couples her writing talents with the zeal of a recent convert."³

But while her autobiography is titled *Called Out of Darkness*, she still (continues on page 15)



BECOMING ANNE OF MANY GUISES

Rice was born in 1941 in New Orleans, where she spent her childhood. She was named Howard Allen

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Editorials

WHAT IS BEHIND THE "ENERGIZER BUNNY" SYNDROME?

Deceivers and deception are not new. It began with Satan in the Garden in the third chapter of Genesis. And we are given ample warning about deception in the New Testament. Leonardo da Vinci said, "Many are those who trade in tricks and simulated miracles, duping the foolish multitude; and if nobody unmasked their subterfuges, they would impose them on everyone."

One thing that baffles observers of cults and false teachers is their followers' resistance to abandoning these teachers and beliefs despite overwhelming evidence of their error. These devoted followers continue like the Energizer Bunny: they just keep going and going and going. It may seem mysterious, but there's really no mystery.

The following seven things give us a framework for understanding the "Energizer Bunny" syndrome within cultism and among those with aberrational beliefs.

1. **Investment.** Investment in a false teacher will skew objectivity and impair discernment. Deception by investment — be it financial, emotional, or otherwise — is powerful. It is difficult to admit that one has committed to something false. Perhaps the devotee has alienated

family or friends. Perhaps he has given away too much financially. There is the tendency to protect oneself and not admit lapses in judgment or stupid moves. Often, when someone calls PFO's office to complain that we have been too harsh on some author or teacher, we already know there has been significant investment by the caller in that teacher or teaching.

2. **Pride.** This point dovetails with the first. When the follower has done things that are difficult to undo he is less likely to accept anything contrary to what he has committed to. Maybe he has paid a large amount to rent a bus and transport friends to a healing meeting. Admitting the error means trying to cancel a contract with the bus company, get a refund, and call off the big day. The more significant the involvement and the deeper the pride and the more difficult the undoing of actions, the less likely people are to break away. Every serious and binding action creates new ropes that secure the person to the error. Perhaps he passed out a slew of books and his only admission to all the heresy in the book is a lame, "Well, I don't agree with *everything* in the book!"

3. **An acquired support system.** It is difficult to stand alone in anything. Once a person acquires a support system, it reinforces their commitment. When everyone is saying the same thing and cheering one another on, a new dynamic takes over and one can easily fall into

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AMERICANS NOW SEE HOMOSEXUALITY AS "MORALLY ACCEPTABLE"

According to a recent Gallup poll, 52 percent of Americans now view homosexuality (gay or lesbian) as morally acceptable. The numbers have been making slight gains since first being asked nine years ago on surveys of different behavior and social practices. The new poll marks the first time a majority of Americans condone homosexuality. The poll also determined that those who view homosexuality as "morally wrong" is at an all time low of 43 percent.

In spite of gaining a slight majority in accepting same-sex relationships, 53 percent of Americans still say that they oppose legalization of homosexual marriages. Forty-four percent of those polled said they favor legalizing same-sex marriages. In 1996, when the question of homosexual marriage first was asked by Gallup, 68 percent of Americans opposed it, compared to just 27 percent who favored it.

The poll also indicated that 60 percent of Democrats and independents view homosexuality as acceptable, in contrast to 35 percent of Republicans. The numbers were based upon telephone interviews with 1,029 adults and is said to have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

According to apologist Ron Rhodes, it is often claimed that 10 percent of the population is homosexual. However, Rhodes notes that figure as being inflated and based upon the faulty and outdated methodology of sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, and which has been debunked by numerous scientific polls. He says that in reality, only 1 to 2 percent of the population is homosexual.

—MKG

HAGGARD LAUNCHES NEW CHURCH

Ted Haggard is finding himself on a fast track back into the pastorate. In May, the disgraced pastor incorporated the name "St. James Church," and then a few days later he made an official announcement that he was beginning a new church. The first church service, held in a barn next to his Colorado Springs, Colo., home, drew about 160 people. The church is an outgrowth of prayer meetings started last November and hosted in his home.

Within six weeks of the inaugural service, Haggard's attendance had increased to 230 people. The growth has caused him to move the church from his barn into rented facilities in his city's Pikes Peak Center for Performing Arts. The first worship service at the Center was held July 25.

According to *The Denver Post*, "Haggard is taking a weekly salary of \$300." Excess funds from the worship service offerings are going to a variety of other mission and ministry endeavors, including water-well drilling in Africa and medical assistance in Mexico. Haggard told the newspaper that his return to ministry has revived him and his wife, Gayle. "We're more happy than we've ever been. We are supremely satisfied in every dimension of our lives right now," the *Post* reported.

In November 2006, it was disclosed that Haggard had a relationship with a male prostitute and had made purchases of illicit drugs. The revelations led to his resignation as pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, being excommunicated by the church, and a subsequent move from the state. He returned to Colorado in June 2008. Haggard founded New Life Church about 25 years ago and grew the congregation to about 14,000 members, making it the largest in Colorado.

—MKG

SCHULLER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

After 55 years in the pulpit, the Rev. Robert H. Schuller, 83, is giving up his position as the lead pastor of the Crystal Cathedral. Schuller founded the Southern California, 10,000-member megachurch, building it from humble beginnings. In the mid-1950s, Schuller reached the unchurched and casual-minded culture when he began holding Sunday worship services at a drive-in theater in an Orange County suburb. His weekly sermons made their way to television airwaves in 1970 with the popular *Hour of Power* broadcast, which he hosted for more than three decades.

Built upon a message of positive and possibility thinking, Schuller's life and ministry has been less than positive during the past few years. In October 2008, Schuller removed his son, following a decade of grooming him as host of the *Hour of Power* broadcast, resulting from a family rift that made headlines announcing, "Schuller's TV empire crumbling" and "Televangelism

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WHEN IN THE WORLD WILL JESUS RETURN?

The Follies and Perils of Date-Setting

by J. Greg Sheryl



At least since the time that the disciples asked the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Olives, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3), people have been trying to pinpoint the exact time of Christ’s return and/or the end of the world.

The Scriptures promise that Jesus will return to the earth, even within the same section of Scripture above (Matthew 24-25) where He responds to the questions posed by his disciples about future events. (See Matthew 24:27-25:13, 25:31-46, Mark 13:24-37, Luke 21:27, Acts 1:11, 3:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:7-8, 4:5, 11:26, 16:22, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 2:19, 3:13, Hebrews 9:28, and the book of Revelation.) The Scriptures also testify that the present heavens and earth will come to an end (Hebrews 1:10-12, 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13, Revelation 21:1).

The Scriptures say of the original disciples of Jesus:

“... while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so

come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

So, while Jesus was ascending into heaven, two angels assured the disciples that “this same Jesus” would return to them. And, just as they had watched Him disappear in a cloud, Jesus will also return with the clouds (Matthew 24:30, Mark 14:62, Revelation 1:7).

The phrase “Second Coming,” as used in this article, refers to the return of the Lord Jesus *to the earth*. Some evangelicals believe that the rapture of the Church (the catching up of Christ’s people to meet Him in the air — see description below) occurs at a specific time such as 7 years or 3½ years *prior to* the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus *to the earth*, whereas, others believe that the rapture and the Second Coming occur more or less simultaneously. The phrase, “the Second Coming” may possibly derive from the Scripture that says:

“To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST’S RETURN TO OTHER FUTURE EVENTS

Throughout Church history, sincere, godly, orthodox Christians have inter-

preted the prophecies of Scripture concerning the return of Christ in various ways as it relates to future events, such as the appearance of the Antichrist, the Tribulation, the Great Tribulation, the millennium, and the rapture. A brief description of some of these terms follows.

The Antichrist. An extremely wicked man, in league with Satan, who opposes God and His people. The second-century B.C. Syrian ruler, Antiochus IV, who called himself “Epiphanes” (Epiphanes means “god manifest”), and who persecuted the Jews, is thought by some to be a pre-figuring of the end-times Antichrist.

The actual term “antichrist(s)” is only used five times in the Bible; and then only in the books of 1 and 2 John (1 John 2:18 [twice], 2:22, 4:3, 2 John 7). Although these are the only specific references to the Antichrist (or antichrists) in the Bible, a number of other passages (particularly in Revelation) are thought to refer to him (e.g., “the man of sin” in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and the “beast” of Revelation 13).

In Revelation, he appears to be one member of a “trinity of evil,” as it were, consisting of the devil, the Antichrist, and the false prophet (see Revelation 12:9, 13:1-18, 16:13-14, 19:20, 20:10).

The Tribulation/The Great Tribulation. The Lord Jesus told his disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Likewise, Paul and Barnabas told the early Christians, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Tribulation is a normal part of life for those who follow Jesus.

However, there is a period of time described in the Bible that might be called "Tribulation with a capital T." Some use this term synonymously with the biblical phrase "the Great Tribulation." Others, however, believe that "the Great Tribulation" only describes the latter half of "the Tribulation" period. Theology professor Dr. Robert Lightner explains the use of these two terms:

"[The] *Great Tribulation* — Refers to the future seven-year period of unprecedented trouble, also called Daniel's seventieth week [a reference to Daniel 9:24-27]. Some apply this term to the last half of the 'week.'"¹

Lightner also observes:

"... with regard to the future seven-year Tribulation, some evangelicals do not believe there is a future seven-year Tribulation at all. For them the Tribulation is now."²

The *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times* says:

"The phrase 'Great Tribulation' ([Greek] *thlipsis megas*) only occurs four times in the New Testament: Matthew 24:21; Acts 7:11; Revelation 2:22 and 7:14."³

For those evangelicals who believe that the Bible teaches a future tribulation period, it appears that only two of the above four Scripture references — Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14 — could be references to such an event. Concerning the former passage, the same source states:

"In summary, the 'great distress' [i.e., 'Great Tribulation'] of Mat-

thew 24:21 refers to a period of intense tribulation and persecution at the end of the age just prior to Jesus' return."⁴

The Millennium. The Millennium refers to a 1,000-year period most clearly mentioned in Revelation 20:1-7, when Christ with certain Christian martyrs (who are a part of the first resurrection) will reign.

Although Revelation 20:1-7 speaks clearly and specifically about this event, there are other prophecies of Scripture, even within the Old Testament, that some take to allude to this future golden age. Additionally, some evangelical Christians believe that the Millennium does not take place in the future, but that we are currently living in the Millennium.

The Rapture. The rapture is a word referring to the "catching up" of both dead and living Christians to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air. The primary Scriptural text for this event is 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. (Some also see John 14:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 as referring to it.) One source notes:

"In verse 17 the English phrase 'caught up' translates the Greek word *harpazo*, which means 'to seize upon with force' or 'to snatch up.' This word is used 14 times in the Greek New Testament in a variety of ways."⁵

Critics of this doctrine are fond of pointing out that the word "rapture" isn't even found in the 1 Thessalonians 4 passage. It is true that the English word "rapture" isn't found there; however, Bible prophecy authors Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy have noted and responded to this charge:

"Some critics have noted that the word *rapture* is never used in the Bible. While this is true of English versions [of the Bible], Latin translators of the Greek New Testament *did* use the word *rapere*, which is the root of the English term *rapture*. Throughout much of the history of the West-

ern church, Latin was the accepted language of theological discussion. As a result, many theological terms developed out of this language (i.e., Trinity). Our current term *rapture* is also such a term."⁶

Just because a word or a phrase doesn't occur in the Bible or an English translation of the Bible, doesn't mean that the word or phrase may not express a biblical truth or concept. Other examples of words or phrases that express biblical concepts which are not found in English translations of the Bible include: the Trinity, theocracy, and the phrases "the prodigal son," "the good Samaritan," and so forth.

THREE MAJOR ORTHODOX VIEWS REGARDING JESUS' RETURN

Lightner, who has taught courses in both theology and biblical studies for approximately 50 years, summarizes three *major* orthodox, evangelical views concerning the relationship between some of the terms mentioned above with the return of our Lord:

"There are three major belief systems regarding God's program for the future. Equally dedicated, sincere, and godly men have contended for these. *Premillennialism* is the view that Christ will return and institute a kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness on earth that will last for one thousand years [i.e., the Millennium]. After this reign of true peace, eternity begins. *Amillennialism* is the view that when Christ returns, eternity begins with no prior thousand-year (millennial) reign on earth. The *postmillennial* view (though out of favor for some time, is again gaining popularity) has it that through the church's influence the world will be Christianized before Christ returns. Immediately following His return, eternity begins. ... Whatever else may be said of these views, one thing is sure: They cannot all be right.

The views cancel out each other.”⁷

Lightner further states:

“Wrongly, the three views of the future defined above have often been set forth as primarily the result of one’s interpretation of the references to the ‘thousand years’ in Revelation 20:1-7. This is far too simplistic an answer. Instead of one’s interpretation of this phrase determining his millennial view, it is really the other way around. One’s millennial system arrived at on other biblical grounds determines how Revelation 20:1-7 will be interpreted.”⁸

There are also different versions and flavors within these three major views — for example, pretribulational premillennialism, posttribulational premillennialism, Augustinian amillennialism, etc. — which Lightner details in the chapters he devotes to each of these three major views regarding future events surrounding Christ’s return. Elsewhere in his book, he notes, “It may be hard for some to admit but it is still true: no particular scheme of end-time events is without its problems.”⁹ To this he says:

“He will return! Evangelicals agree fully on that. On the question of what specifics will be associated with His return and what the exact order of events will be, and the sequence of time in which they will come to pass, however, there is very little agreement.”¹⁰

He also notes:

“The fact is that soon after the apostles passed from the earthly scene, differences developed over end times [understandings]. The battle has raged among evangelicals at least since the third century [A.D.]”¹¹

Although, as Lightner makes clear in this book, Christians may war in unchristian ways over their different understandings of the events preced-

ing, following, and occurring simultaneously with Christ’s return, it is another facet regarding the return of Christ with which we are here concerned.

A CLEAR WARNING FROM THE LORD JESUS

Whereas the Lord has not prohibited Christians from having different understandings over the relationship of various end-time events to the Second Coming of Jesus; or even to speculate over various understandings of the millennium, the Tribulation, or the identity of the Antichrist; the Lord *has* clearly told us that we do not (indeed, we *cannot*) know the time of His return to the earth.

In Matthew 24-25, a passage known as the Olivet Discourse, Jesus gives several clear, plain statements regarding our ability to know the time of His return. He said:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone” (Matthew 24:36, NASB, cf. Mark 13:32).

Likewise He said:

“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42).

“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him” (Matthew 24:44).

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matthew 25:13).

In these passages, the Lord clearly tells His disciples that no one, not even the angels in heaven, nor even Jesus Himself (at least, while He was on earth) knew when He would return. He states that only the Father possesses that knowledge. Because they don’t know when He will return — a fact Jesus states several times in the Scriptures quoted above — they must constantly watch for His return and be ready for it.

Similarly, in Mark’s Gospel, He says:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ... Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13:32-33, 35-37).

Here again, the Lord Jesus says that only the Father knows when He (i.e., Jesus) will return. He tells the disciples that they don’t know when He is coming back. As a result, they are to continually watch for His coming.

And in the book of Acts, just prior to His ascension, the disciples asked the Lord:

“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts. 1:6).

Jesus replies:

“And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority’” (Acts 1:7).

In a plain statement of fact, Jesus here tells His disciples not to be concerned with matters sovereignly kept by the Father. Applying this clear statement of our Lord to the matter of the Second Coming of Christ, we again are confronted with the fact that the Father hasn’t granted anyone to know the time of Christ’s return. In unmistakable terms, Jesus told the disciples that only the Father knows this.

Someone has said that where God has put a period, let no man put a question mark. The Scripture itself testifies that:

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us

and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

And the psalmist David testified:

"LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound [or *difficult*] for me" (Psalm 131:1).

BUT WAIT!

Even with the clear teaching of Scriptures such as those cited above, in a letter to supporters fifteen years ago, the president of the Christian Research Institute, Hank Hanegraaff, noted:

"I guess it's just irresistible; some people feel they *have* to decipher the puzzle. I'm talking about the date of Christ's return -- an event that's provoked speculation for nearly two millennia. ... By some accounts, just before AD 1000 many believed the end was near.¹² ... Well, apparently another thousand years of missed predictions and misguided forecasts have not deterred those seeking to 'crack the code.' And it's not just the cults."¹³

In the following several paragraphs, Hanegraaff listed three specific then-current examples of those who had recently been predicting dates for the rapture of the Church and/or the end of the world.

DATE-SETTERS AND DOOMSAYERS

In light of Jesus' teaching, it is hard to believe that anyone would claim to know the date of His return. After all, for someone to claim to know the date of Christ's return essentially means that they are claiming to know more than the angels of God and more than Jesus Himself.

Yet, despite the clear statements from Scripture above about no one except the Father knowing the timing of Christ's return to earth (and, by extension, the end of the world, since

the end of the world won't happen before Christ returns), people throughout history have either cavalierly ignored these statements; or else, perhaps some have simply been unaware of them. A number of such figures can be found in Church history.

Christian end-times researcher and author Richard Kyle notes:

"While apocalyptic millennialism was strong in the early church, on the whole the early church fathers shied away from specific date-setting. ... Most church fathers, however, spoke of Christ's impending but unpredictable coming."¹⁴

In so doing, they were heeding the teachings of Christ regarding His Second Coming. However, Kyle does note exceptions to this general early Church practice: He specifically references Hippolytus (170-236) who predicted a date for Christ's return, and Sextus Julius Africanus (ca. 160-240) who predicted a date for the end.¹⁵

There was an early Church movement that centered, in part, on the belief in an imminent millennium. This was a radically charismatic and ascetic group known as the Montanists, after their founder Montanus (whose ministry began in the mid-to-late second century A.D.). One author notes:

"Montanus, along with followers Prisca and Maximilla, fell into trances and taught that the New Jerusalem was about to descend to an obscure region of Phrygia, now modern day Turkey. Montanus declared himself to be the 'Spirit of Truth,' the personification of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Gospel of John, who was about to reveal all truth.¹⁶ He quickly gathered followers and began to spread what Montanists called 'The Third Testament,' a series of revelatory messages that foretold of the soon-coming Kingdom of God. As word was spread, believers were urged to

come to Phrygia to await the Second Coming."¹⁷

The same author says that in A.D. 431, the Church Council of Ephesus declared Montanus to be a heretic.¹⁸

In the Middle Ages, a division of Franciscans known as "the Spirituals viewed the year 1260 as the beginning of the end."¹⁹ They arrived at this date by studying some of the prophetic teachings of a famous twelfth-century Italian abbot, Joachim of Fiore.

Pastor and conference speaker John A. Williams notes that in A.D. 1526:

"Leaders of the Anabaptists in St. Gallen, Switzerland, excited by events of the day, began running through the streets shouting that the Last Day would arrive in exactly one week. Many were baptized, stopped work, abandoned their homes, and set off into the hills, singing and praying in expectant enthusiasm. After a week had passed with no sign of their returning Lord, they returned to their homes."²⁰

During the reign of the French monarch Louis XIV (1643-1715), there was a group of French Protestants known as the Camisards:

"Among the Camisards a number of prophets arose — most claiming to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and uttering end-time predictions. Best known was Pierre Jurieu, who predicted that the judgment day would come in 1689."²¹

Kyle observes:

"For much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, apocalyptic excitement gripped England. End-time expectations gradually grew until they peaked in the 1640s. ... Talk that doomsday or the millennium would arrive on this day or that became common in England."²²

The large and highly comprehensive book *End Time Visions*, written by

Christian author and investigative reporter Richard Abanes, contains an appendix covering several pages listing numerous Christian and non-Christian sources throughout history that have made end-time predictions.²³ Two of the six chapters of Jason Boyett's irreverent but informative look at the end times, entitled, *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, are devoted to enumerating various predictions about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world throughout human history, again from both Christian and non-Christian sources.²⁴ Some of the dates in Christian history up through the eighteenth century cited by Abanes for the return of Christ and/or the end of the world include 848, 1000, 1033, 1186, 1420, 1524, 1533, 1534, 1656, 1673, 1697, 1716, 1736, and 1792.²⁵ Additional dates predicted for the return of Christ and the end of the world through the eighteenth century given by Boyett include 793, 1583, 1600, 1666, 1694, 1719.²⁶

THE 19TH-21ST CENTURIES

In more modern times, there have been many others who have sought to predict dates for the Second Coming of Jesus and/or the end of the world. We will briefly cover four notable ones in America.

1. William Miller and the Adventist Movement. Church historian Bruce Shelley wrote, "The most famous case [of an end-of-the-world prediction] on American soil ... took place in the northeastern United States just before the Civil War."²⁷

William Miller (1782-1849), who was born in Massachusetts, was reared in a Christian home, but rejected Christianity and became a deist. After serving as a captain in the War of 1812,²⁸ he became a farmer in New York. In 1816, Miller was converted to Christianity. Professor of systematic theology Anthony Hoekema informs:

"During the next two years he studied the Bible intensively with the aid of Cruden's Concordance, but without the help of commen-

taries. In 1818 he wrote down the conclusions to which he had arrived, which ended with this statement: 'I was thus brought, in 1818, at the close of my two-year study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time [1818] all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.'"²⁹

Hoekema also noted:

"In other words, Miller concluded from his Bible study that the world would come to an end in 1843. Hesitant about publicizing so startling a conclusion, he undertook four more years of Bible study, which confirmed his previous judgment. ... Involved in the 'winding up' of the affairs of the world was, of course, the expected return from heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ. Miller did not at first set an exact date for Christ's return, but affirmed that this event would occur 'about 1843.' Later, however, he specified that this return would take place some time during the Jewish year running from March 21, 1843 to March 21, 1844."³⁰

Miller himself wrote:

"I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for His coming. And I am fully convinced that some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all His saints with Him; and that then He will reward every man as His work shall be."³¹

Miller seems to have arrived at this date largely based on prophecies from the Old Testament book of Daniel, specifically verses 8:14 and 9:24-27.³² Miller began to make his views public in 1831, and became a Baptist preacher who drew quite a following with his end-time preaching. One researcher has acknowledged, "Num-

bers vary, but Millerism is usually estimated to have ranged from thirty to a hundred thousand."³³ As might be expected, in 1843-1844, crowds grew. However, the fateful year passed without the Lord's return. Miller's reaction seems to have been one of stunned disbelief. He wrote, in part:

"Were I to live my life over again, with the same evidence that I then had, to be honest with God and man I should have to do as I have done. ... I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe that the Day of the Lord is near, even at the door; and I exhort you, my brethren, to be watchful and not let that day come upon you unawares."³⁴

The late cult expert Walter Martin wrote:

"In the wake of this stunning declaration, the Millerites strove vainly to reconcile their interpretations of the prophetic Scripture with the stark truth that Christ had not returned. With one last gasp, so to speak, Miller reluctantly endorsed ... the belief that Christ would come on October 22, 1844. ... Once again the Millerites' hopes were lifted, and October 22, 1844, became the watchword for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁵

Kyle describes some of the tragic results:

"Many withdrew from their churches in anticipation of the second advent. They were instructed to get their affairs in order. Many did — selling their property, closing their stores, resigning their jobs, and abandoning their animals and crops."³⁶

When the Lord failed to return on this second announced date, it resulted in what some refer to as "The Great Disappointment." After this, Miller wisely desisted from predicting any future dates for Christ's return.

Through the movement that he had started, however, the Seventh-day Adventist sect eventually resulted, although Miller himself was never a member. In fact, Miller died only five years after this second date failed.

Miller's experience is tragic in that he appears to have been a godly and sincere man. Perhaps he was simply ignorant of the Lord's warnings about no one being able to know the day or hour of His return; although, in view of his study of biblical prophecy, it is difficult to see how this is possible. Nevertheless, William Miller has become an outstanding example of the folly of predicting dates for the Second Coming of Christ. His false predictions resulted in disappointment and disillusionment, both for himself and others, not to mention other tragic results, such as those noted above.

2. Charles Taze Russell and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell (1852-1916) was the founder of what was first known as International Bible Students and would later (in 1931) be known as Jehovah's Witnesses.³⁷ Although his parents were Presbyterian, Russell joined the Congregational Church at 13 years of age. However, he was troubled by certain doctrines there, especially the biblical doctrine of eternal hell, which he rejected. By age 17, he had lost his faith in the Bible as being divinely inspired. However, he came into a small meeting of some Adventists (apparently either Seventh-day Adventists, or those who held similar beliefs),³⁸ and reported that his faith in the Bible as divinely inspired was restored.

Christian author Fritz Ridenour says further:

"Another turning point came at the age of 18; he wandered into a church where the second coming of Christ was being discussed.³⁹ He got interested in just when Christ was to come again. To solve the problem, he began to study the Bible. Very soon he published his findings in a pamphlet entitled *The Object and Man-*

ner of the Lord's Return. For centuries, great minds of the church have wrestled with the problem of the Second Coming, but Russell felt that he had solved it in almost no time at all. Russell's pamphlet consists of a lengthy, complicated, and incorrect interpretation of unrelated Scriptures combined with an intricate method of computing time. The end result of his labors was the statement that Jesus Christ would return in 1874. Later, Russell changed the date to 1914. This return was not to be a physical one, but a spiritual one. In other words, when Christ would return, He would not be seen. This of course contradicts Revelation 1:7."⁴⁰

Jehovah's Witnesses followed in Russell's footsteps by continuing to set dates for the Second Coming of Christ, the end-time battle of Armageddon, the end of the world, and so forth. Some of their more notable end-time dates were 1925, the 1940s, and 1975. This is probably the reason one researcher dubbed Jehovah's Witnesses, "Armageddon, Inc."⁴¹

Kyle observed:

"The Jehovah's Witnesses may be the most persistent date-setters in history. Most such groups make one or perhaps two failed predictions. But the Jehovah's Witnesses won't quit. Their leaders have earmarked the years 1874, 1878, 1881, 1910, 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, and 1984 as times of eschatological [i.e., end-times] significance."⁴²

3. Edgar Whisenant and 88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988. Whisenant was a retired NASA engineer who apparently thought he had the necessary talents for figuring out the date of the rapture of the Church. For those Christians who believe that the rapture and the Second Coming of Christ occur simultaneously, Whisenant was guilty of setting a date for Christ's return.

However, even for Christians who believe that the rapture occurs at some point in time prior to the Second Coming of Christ, Whisenant's date-setting is problematic; because, according to this view, the rapture of the Church is a *signless event*, which is imminent — that is, it could occur at any moment.

In 1988, Whisenant published two short booklets bound together opposite one another. One was called *On Borrowed Time*.⁴³ The other was called *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*.⁴⁴ He argued that the rapture would occur between September 11-13, 1988, that year's dates for the Jewish feast of Rosh Hashana which is the Jewish New Year.

Investigative reporter Richard Abanes wrote:

"Whisenant had no doubts about his date, stating: 'Only if the Bible is in error am I wrong, and I say that unequivocally. There is no way biblically that I can be wrong; and I say that to every preacher in town.' During one interview he made a declaration that dramatically demonstrated his level of confidence: '[I]f there were a king in this country and I could gamble with my life, I would stake my life on Rosh Hashanah '88.'"⁴⁵

Whisenant is clearly aware of the Lord's words that only the Father knows the time of His return, because he refers to it in his first of 88 reasons. This is what Whisenant wrote in "Reason #1":

"It is evident that, in the minds of most Christians today, Matt. 24:36 is believed to prohibit anyone from being able to see the day of our Lord's return approaching. Matt. 24:36 states that 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.' In looking at this statement, you can easily see that it is impossible to know the exact day and hour of the Lord Jesus'

return. ... Also, there are always two days existing on earth at the same time; only at the exact second that the earth passes through the international date line does only one day exist on all the earth. At all other times, there are two days existing on earth at any one moment; one day is coming and the other day is going. So you can see the problem in trying to tell all the Christians covering the earth at any one instant of time the exact day or hour of our Lord's return. *However, this does not preclude or prevent the faithful from knowing the year, the month, and the week of the Lord's return.*"⁴⁶

What Whisenant seems to be saying above is, "Jesus did say you can't know the day or hour of His return, and I agree. But the significance of Jesus' statement is that while it's Tuesday here, elsewhere in the world it's Wednesday. So, for you to pick a single date in this part of the world, you would be wrong in another part. That's the reason He said that. But He didn't say you couldn't know the *week* He would return — just the *day*." Thus, Whisenant skirts the *spirit* of what Jesus was saying by focusing solely on the *letter*.

Elsewhere, he contends that in Acts 1:7, where Jesus told His disciples that it was not for them "to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority," Whisenant maintains that this is an incorrect translation, and that we *can* know times and seasons!⁴⁷ In fact, Whisenant boldly claims that, "Only the *exact* day and hour of Jesus' return for His Church is unknown."⁴⁸

Whisenant also proclaims that, when the New American Standard Bible translates Acts 1:7 as, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority" — that the word "epoch" means "precise date,"⁴⁹ which is incorrect. An "epoch" is an "era," as any English dictionary would have informed him.

One researcher noted that as a result of Whisenant's faulty predictions, "Thousands took the booklet seriously, some even quitting their jobs to prepare for the rapture."⁵⁰ Undeterred by his failure, however, Whisenant didn't respond with repentance and contrition, but set the date 1989 and then other years after that as dates for the rapture.

In response to Whisenant and other date-setters, B.J. Oropeza, a researcher at the Christian Research Institute, wrote the helpful book *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*.⁵¹

4. Harold Camping and His End-Time Folly. Richard Abanes notes:

"While Whisenant was a relatively obscure individual until he made his false prophecy, the year 1992 saw a more well-known Christian personality — Harold Camping, founder of Family Radio and Open Forum — make his debut as an end-time date-setter."⁵²

Camping⁵³ predicted the end of the world in September 1994. In 1993, senior PFO researcher G. Richard Fisher noted:

"[Camping] states his premise on page 533 [of his book 1994?]: 'By God's mercy there are a few months left. However, if this study is accurate, and I believe with all my heart that it is, there will be no extensions in time. There will be no time for second-guessing. When Sept. 6, 1994 arrives, no one else can become saved. The end has come.'"⁵⁴

In 1994, but still prior to Camping's predicted September end-time date, in a subsequent issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, Fisher wrote another article critiquing Camping's date-setting, in which he observed:

"It seems that some never learn a thing from history. The great disappointment of the Adventists in the 1800s, the disenchantment of the failed dates of the Jeho-

vah's Witnesses throughout the 1900s, and the more recent let-downs of Edgar Whisenant ought to at least make people cautious. Camping's failure may make some more cautious but it also may throw others into skepticism and ridicule of the Christian message. That will be the tragedy of it all. ... Our prayer is that God will ready Harold Camping for genuine repentance and a renouncing of his bizarre extremes."⁵⁵

Sadly, however, Camping did not learn from his errors. More recently, in 2005, Camping published another large volume in which he predicts the end of the world — this time, in the fall of 2011. He says:

"For all of these reasons, it does not appear that we can know with any certainty the calendar date that will be the last day of the history of the world. We are probably far wiser in simply indicating that it will, in all likelihood, occur in the fall of A.D. 2011."⁵⁶

It should be noted that Camping believes that the end of the world and Christ's return occur simultaneously.⁵⁷

However, it appears that Camping has now thrown all caution to the wind by actually predicting a *specific date* for the end of the world. The *San Francisco Chronicle* carried a story on New Year's Day, 2010, about Camping and his 2011 prediction, which states:

"Camping, 88, has scrutinized the Bible for almost 70 years and says he has developed a mathematical system to interpret prophecies hidden within the Good Book. One night a few years ago, Camping, a civil engineer by trade, crunched the numbers and was stunned at what he'd found: The world will end May 21, 2011. This is not the first time Camping has made a bold prediction about Judgment Day.

On Sept. 6, 1994, dozens of Camping's believers gathered inside Alameda's Veterans Memorial Building to await the return of Christ, an event Camping had promised for two years. Followers dressed children in their Sunday best and held Bibles open-faced toward heaven. But the world did not end. Camping allowed that he may have made a mathematical error. He spent the next decade running new calculations, as well as overseeing a media company that has grown significantly in size and reach."⁵⁸

Noting that some of Camping's employees at his Oakland office wear T-shirts which read, "May 21, 2011," the article continues:

"They're happy to talk about the day they believe their souls will be retrieved by Christ. 'I'm looking forward to it,' said Ted Solomon, 60, who started listening to Camping in 1997. He's worked at Family Radio since 2004."⁵⁹

The article concludes:

"Rick LaCasse, who attended the September 1994 service in Alameda, said that 15 years later, his faith in Camping has only strengthened. 'Evidently, he was wrong,' LaCasse allowed, 'but this time it is going to happen. There was some doubt last time, but we didn't have any proofs. This time we do.' Would his opinion of Camping change if May 21, 2011, ended without incident? 'I can't even think like that,' LaCasse said. 'Everything is too positive right now. There's too little time to think like that.'"⁶⁰

There have been a number of other well-known Christian personalities who have set dates (or suggested dates) for the rapture and/or the return of Christ and/or the end of the world. Examples include:

Hal Lindsey: Well-known author of *The Late Great Planet Earth*, who sug-

gested that the rapture of the Church would take place by 1981, and the end of the world by 1988.⁶¹ In one of his books, he suggested that the 1980s might be the final decade.⁶²

Chuck Smith: Senior pastor of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. He suggested the rapture of the Church would occur in 1981, basing his understanding for this on Hal Lindsey's teaching.⁶³

Lester Sumrall: A well-known Pentecostal preacher, who predicted the return of Jesus and the beginning of the Millennium by 2000.⁶⁴

Grant R. Jeffrey: A prolific Christian author, who suggested Christ's reign might begin in the fall of 2000.⁶⁵

Charles Taylor: A Bible prophecy teacher. Richard Kyle says that, "Taylor qualifies his predictions, calling them suggestions, not date-setting. Nevertheless, he suggested eleven dates from 1975 to 1989 for the rapture."⁶⁶

SUMMING UP

Robert Lightner, whom we cited earlier, notes:

"Date-setting for end-time events is of course not new. The founder of Adventism, William Miller, predicted Christ would return in 1843. [Charles] Taze Russell of the Jehovah's Witnesses set 1914 as the date of Christ's return. Herbert W. Armstrong, and his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, said in 1966 the kingdom of Christ would come in ten or fifteen years. Hal Lindsey, who rather recently popularized the pretribulational view, predicted Christ would return about forty years after the May 14, 1948 establishment of the nation Israel. See his *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and his more recent: *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*, in which he asserts that this present generation is the one that will witness the return of Christ. Edgar C. Whisenant's prediction

... was accompanied with considerable boasting that he had incontrovertible proof that his date for Christ's return in 1988 was correct and, only if the Bible was wrong, could he be wrong. When it became obvious he *was* wrong, he changed the date to January 1989 and later updated it again to September 1989. Such dogmatic error serves only to hurt the cause with which it is associated."⁶⁷

BIBLICAL TEACHING ON THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

The Lord Jesus Christ (and, afterwards, His apostles) taught numerous things about His return. While we cannot here cover all that the Bible teaches about His Second Coming, it is worth mentioning several things that are relevant to the topic of this article:

1. Jesus' followers will long to see Him and this desire will be exploited by some. Jesus told His disciples:

"The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day" (Luke 17:22-24).

Here Jesus tells His disciples that the time will come when they will desire or long to see Him, but will not see Him. This has certainly occurred in the lives of many Christians from the first century onward. Then Jesus shows us that this desire to see Him will be exploited by some who will proclaim that Jesus has already returned. This is even clearer in a passage that has some similarities to the one above, where Jesus tells His disciples:

"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My

name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5).

Again, in that same passage, Christ warns:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:23-27).

We see here that this natural desire in the hearts of people, including Christians, to see the Lord will be exploited by those who will pretend to be Christ and those who will be false prophets. Jesus says that they will even show great signs and wonders in order to deceive and mislead people, even God's own people. (Whether these signs are genuine or bogus is not the point of our discussion here.)

Some others, Jesus says, will claim that He has returned to some remote location, such as a desert or an inner room. Jesus specifically warns His disciples not to believe such claims, rather, He says that when He returns, His coming will be obvious to all, just like lightning that lights up the entire sky.

2. God's people are to look expectantly for Jesus' return. A number of Scriptures teach that Christians should watch with anticipation for Jesus' return. For example, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples:

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not

allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Matthew 24:42-44).

Again, Jesus offered these further words of instruction:

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming — in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning — lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:33-37).

Elsewhere in the New Testament, we find more Scriptures indicating that we are to look for the return of our Savior:

"...you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:7).

"O Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17).

"He who testifies to these things [i.e., the Lord Jesus] says, 'Surely, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Leslie B. Flynn recounted a story about the famous nineteenth-century Scottish preacher Robert Murray McCheyne, who once:

"...was hosting a ministers' meeting in his home. In a lull in the conversation he asked the ministers individually, 'Do you think Jesus will come tonight?' All said, 'No, I think not.' After going the rounds and receiving the same answer, McCheyne solemnly repeated, 'Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh' (Matt. 24:44)."⁶⁸

While believers look with anticipation for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus, to those who do not believe in Him and/or do not look for His return, He will come like a thief — that is, the event will catch them unaware and unprepared. See, for example, verses of warning such as Matthew 24:42-44, Luke 12:39-40, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-10, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 3:2-3, and 16:15.

There will be negative consequences in store for some who do not look for His promised return, as Matthew 24:48-25:13, Luke 12:45-48, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-10, and Revelation 3:3 clearly show.

3. We should be doing the business of God until Jesus returns. Although the Lord Jesus told us to remain watchful for His return, this doesn't mean that a person should go and sell everything they own, move to a mountain somewhere, and wait for Jesus to come back, although some misguided people have done things like that. Rather, it means that we are to be watching for His return and to be doing the will of God so that we will be ready whenever He comes.

Perhaps you have heard the saying, "Jesus is coming. Look busy!!" Although this is intended to be humor-

ous, there is some truth to it. In one of Jesus' parables, given in Luke 19:11-27, the Lord told a story about a nobleman who went away to receive a kingdom and then return. The nobleman in the parable obviously represents the Lord Jesus Himself. He gives each of his slaves some money and he tells them, "Do business with this until I come back" (Luke 19:13, NASB). Likewise, we should be doing the will of Jesus on earth until He returns and receives us to Himself.

Apologist Ron Rhodes tells us:

"The timing of end-time events is completely in God's hands (Acts 1:7), and we haven't been given the precise details. As far as the second coming is concerned, we should live as if Jesus were coming today and yet prepare for the future as if He were not coming for a long time. Then we will be ready for time and eternity. ... So this is my challenge: Live your life in such a way that when the rapture occurs, you won't be embarrassed to see your Lord face-to-face. Let us live to please Him every single day."⁶⁹

We are to watch for the Lord's return, and be doing His will for our lives so that each of us will be ready whenever He may come. We should be watching for Him and doing His will so that we won't be ashamed whenever He returns. He *will* return, although the Father hasn't disclosed the time to anyone.

Related to doing the will of God, in Matthew chapter 25, Jesus gives the well-known parable of the talents. This parable teaches us that we should be about using the gifts that God has given us for His glory until Jesus returns. And when He returns, we will be judged for what we have done with the gifts that He has given us (e.g., see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10-12). Unlike the man with the one talent, who simply buried it, God intends for us to discover and use the gifts that He has given us for His glory.

4. To be prepared for Christ's return, we should abide in Him. The Apostle John instructs believers:

"And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

5. The delay in Christ's return will cause some to scoff, but His delay is a delay of mercy on His part. Although the New Testament speaks of Christ returning soon, we also find at least one indication that the length of time between His first and second comings might be misinterpreted by some as negating His promised return. In 2 Peter 3, we read:

"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' ... But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-10).

And the delay of His return could be one reason that the Savior said at the end of one of His parables, "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8, NIV).

THE RETURN OF OUR LORD

Scripture says, "Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11). One thing we know with certainty is that Christ's return becomes closer every day. My theology professor, Dr. Lightner, has a small sign on his desk with the words, "Perhaps Today."

In early 1942, during World War II, the famous military general, Douglas MacArthur, was ordered by President Franklin Roosevelt to leave the Philippines and go to Australia. "On the trip to Melbourne, MacArthur made his famous statement of determination. 'I came through,' he declared, 'and I shall return.'"⁷⁰

Two-and-a-half years later, MacArthur kept his promise, landing in the Philippines. He said to his audience there, in part:

"This is the Voice of Freedom, General MacArthur speaking. People of the Philippines: I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil. ... The hour of your redemption is here. ... Rally to me."⁷¹

That great general made a promise to the people of the Philippines that he would return to them and he kept his promise. How much more, then, should we believe it when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promises that He will return to this earth?

As the Lord Jesus told us, we cannot know the day or the hour. However, one thing we can say with assurance is what God's Word tells us about it when it says:

"For *at just the right time* Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords" (1 Timothy 6:15, New Living Translation, emphasis added).

And so, with the Scriptures, we also say, "Maranatha" or "O Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. ... He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:17, 20).

Endnotes:

1. Robert Lightner, *Last Days Handbook*. Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005, revised and updated edition, pg. 232, bold and italics in original. The bulk of the material in this book was originally published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tenn., 1990. Thomas Nelson Publishers also published the revised and updated edition in 1997. The current 2005 edition by Wipf and Stock is essentially the same as the 1997 edition, with some slight additions and changes. The 2005 edition will be cited in this article, because it is the newest edition; however, even the page numbering in the 1997 edition is the same as that in the 2005 edition. The purpose of this excellent book, at which it succeeds admirably, is well described on the title page of each of the three editions. It is "A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding the Different Views of Prophecy. Who believes what about prophecy and why." I highly recommend this book.

2. *Ibid.*, pg. 114. There are also some evangelical Christians — called preterists — who believe that the great tribulation took place in A.D. 70.

3. J. Daniel Hays, J. Scott Duvall, and C. Marvin Pate, *Dictionary of Biblical Prophecy and End Times*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007, pg. 192, s.v., "Great Tribulation," italics in original.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Prophecy Watch*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, pg. 78, italic in original.

6. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

7. *Last Days Handbook*, op. cit., pg. 55, italics in original.

8. *Ibid.*, pg. 56.

9. *Ibid.*, pg. 4.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

11. *Ibid.*, pg. 120.

12. Whether or not the Christian world, at large, expected Jesus to return in A.D. 1000 is a matter of some scholarly disagreement. For a discussion of this debate, see Richard Abanes, *End-Time Visions*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1998, pp. 170-174; also see, John A. Williams, *The Cost of Deception*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, pp. 121-123.

13. Christian Research Institute support letter, dated Sept. 14, 1994, copy on file, italic and underlining in original.

14. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998, pg. 37.

15. *Ibid.*

16. One source correctly notes that this claim is "blasphemy." Jason Boyett, *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*. Orlando: Relevant Books, 2005, pg. 30. This book is an irreverent, tongue-in-cheek book about the

end times. The claim of Montanus to be the personification of the Holy Spirit is also nonsense, because the Holy Spirit is *spirit*, and thus, by definition, is incorporeal, unlike Montanus.

17. *The Cost of Deception*, op. cit., pg. 137.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 49.

20. *The Cost of Deception*, op. cit., pg. 139. Williams references Otto Friedrich, *The End of the World: A History*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1986.

21. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 70.

22. *Ibid.*, pg. 64.

23. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 337-342, Appendix C, entitled, "Timeline of Doom."

24. *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 26-73.

25. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 337-338.

26. *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse*, op. cit., pp. 31, 36-39.

27. Bruce Shelley, "The Great Disappointment," *Christian History*, 1999, Issue 61, pg. 31.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988, pg. 89, brackets in original. Hoekema here references Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1954, IV, pg. 463.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. Hoekema here references Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*. Washington: Review and Herald, 1945, pg. 169.

31. From the magazine, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 25, 1843, quoted by Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985, revised and expanded edition, pg. 412. Miller's expression about his date range being "according to the Jewish mode of computation of time" is unclear, because the dates that he references are actually in the years 5603-5604 in the Jewish calendar. The source for this is the "Jewish/Civil Date Converter." Document available at: www.chabad.org/calendar/1000year_cdo/aid/6225/jewish/Date-Converter.htm.

32. *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pg. 90. Also, see *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 415.

33. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 89.

34. Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*. Boston: n.p., 1853, pg. 256, quoted in *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pg. 413.

35. *The Kingdom of the Cults*, op. cit., pp. 413-414.

36. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 90.

37. Most of the information in this para-

graph is taken from *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pp. 223-224.

38. *The Four Major Cults*, op. cit., pg. 224, note 3.

39. This may or may not have been the same meeting and/or group where his faith in the Bible was restored. The time-frame for both incidents is similar, and if not the same, it would have been very natural if the Adventist group referred to above had been discussing the Second Coming of Christ.

40. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1979, pg. 106. In 2001, a revised, expanded, and updated edition of this book was published by Regal Books, however, it doesn't contain the incident above which earlier editions contained.

41. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 229.

42. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 93.

43. Edgar C. Whisenant, *On Borrowed Time*. Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988, New Expanded edition.

44. Edgar C. Whisenant, *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*. Nashville: World Bible Society, 1988, New Expanded edition.

45. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 93, brackets in original. For the first Whisenant quotation above, Abanes cites "Edgar Whisenant, quoted in *A Critique on the 1988 Rapture Theory*. Oklahoma City: Southwest Radio Church, 1988, pg. 2." For the second Whisenant quotation, Abanes cites, "Edgar Whisenant, interview with radio host 'Greg' (no last name). Tape available at the Christian Research Institute, Rancho Santa Margarita, California." (Note: The Christian Research Institute is now located in Charlotte, N.C.)

46. *88 REASONS Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988*, op. cit., pp. 2-3, emphasis added.

47. *On Borrowed Time*, op. cit., pg. 1; also note 2 on that page.

48. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, emphasis added. See also note 2 on that same page, where he says that, "This implies that there are only two limitations to our knowing when Jesus will return for the Church: the day and the hour."

49. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, note 2, underlining in original.

50. Dean C. Halverson, "88 Reasons: What Went Wrong?," *Christian Research Journal*, Fall 1988, pg. 14. Halverson references "Book Predicts End of World; Some Quit Jobs," *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph*, 31 Sept. 1988, Part A. Document available at: www.equip.org/articles/88-reasons-what-went-wrong-

51. B.J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994. This book is also helpful in that it contains an Appendix listing the 99 reasons covered in

the body of the book, and also has an index.

52. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pg. 94.

53. *The Quarterly Journal* has featured at least three articles on Harold Camping: G. Richard Fisher, "Will Jesus Return in 1994? The Prognostications of Harold Camping," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1993, pp. 1, 13-14; G. Richard Fisher, "Ready for Failure? The Further Prognostications of Harold Camping," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1994, pp. 1, 12-14; and G. Richard Fisher, "The Hazardous Hermeneutics of Harold Camping – The End of the Church or His End?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2002, pp. 1, 16-24.

54. "Will Jesus Return in 1994? The Prognostications of Harold Camping," op. cit., pg. 1. Fisher quotes from Harold Camping, 1994? New York: Vantage Press,

1992, pg. 533.

55. "Ready for Failure? The Further Prognostications of Harold Camping," op. cit., pg. 14.

56. Harold Camping, *Time Has An End: A Biblical History of the World 11,013 BC — AD 2011*. New York: Vantage Press, 2005, pg. 420.

57. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

58. Justin Berton, "Biblical scholar's date for rapture: May 21, 2011," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 1, 2010, pg. C-1. Document available at: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/01/01/BA8V1AV589.DTL.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. *End-Time Visions*, op. cit., pp. 84-87.

62. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

63. *Ibid.*, pg. 326.

64. *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

65. *Ibid.*, pg. 105.

66. *The Last Days Are Here Again*, op. cit., pg. 121.

67. *Last Days Handbook*, op. cit., pg. 183, italics in original.

68. Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1997, pg. 341.

69. Ron Rhodes, *Christianity According to the Bible*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2006, pp. 251, 252.

70. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, International edition. Danbury, Conn.: Grolier, Incorporated, 1997, Vol. 18, pg. 7.

71. George Sweeting, *Who Said That?* Chicago: Moody Press, 1995, pg. 393, ellipsis in original, quote rendered in italics in original. First published as *Great Quotes and Illustrations*. Waco, Texas: Word, Incorporated, 1985.

ANNE RICE

(continued from page 1)

allows her dark and immoral novels to be sold. A Website that describes her seamy novels says:

"As Anne Rampling, Rice has published *Exit to Eden* and *Belinda*, both erotica, though *Belinda* has less of a raw erotic tone than does *Exit*, and is more of a romance involving an older man and a teenage girl. Under the pen name A.N. Roquelaure, Anne wrote the *Beauty* series, a trilogy of erotic work: *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983), *Beauty's Punishment* (1984), *Beauty's Release* (1985). Her reasons for choosing the name A.N. Roquelaure are quite interesting. Roquelaure was in fact a cloak designed by Count Roquelaure in the 18th century, and Anne used it because of its meaning — 'Anne under a cloak' as well as because it had the right sound for erotica. ... The *Beauty* trilogy has sparked some controversy when the Columbus Metropolitan Library (Ohio) pulled the books from the shelves. The books were banned by the library after one person complained

about them. The library stated that the books were hard core S&M pornography."⁴

FROM CATHOLIC TO ATHEIST

There is little doubt regarding the early and deep indoctrination Rice had in Catholicism. She studied under nuns in a Catholic elementary school.

In her childhood, she was strongly committed to the Virgin Mary, believing the standard Catholic notion that "The Virgin Mary and the saints were close to God and they could 'intercede' for you."⁵ Young Rice was taught the titles of Mary which included, "Virgin Most Faithful; Mirror of Justice; Seat of Wisdom; Cause of Our Joy; Spiritual Vessel; Vessel of Honor; Singular Vessel of Devotion; Mystical Rose; Tower of David; Tower of Ivory; House of Gold."⁶ Her time in church was spent "addressing the Virgin Mary, talking to her, giving our hearts to her under all these many names, and praying for her to intercede with her Divine Son for us and help us."⁷ She had a desire to be a nun.⁸

Her belief growing up included transubstantiation, the teaching that the communion wafer and wine actually become the literal body and blood of Jesus. She writes, "The Body

and Blood of Jesus were in the golden tabernacle on the altar above"⁹ and "at the moment of the Consecration the miracle of Christ coming into the bread on the altar was being enacted or repeated ... This was Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament."¹⁰

Rice's early commitments also extended to the shrine at Lourdes when she describes:

"... a large stone edifice, in which the Blessed Mother stood with arms out, appearing to the kneeling figure of St. Bernadette. No Catholic school existed in those days that didn't have a grotto, with the Virgin and St. Bernadette. We all knew the Virgin had appeared to St. Bernadette in Lourdes, France, and that there was a great miraculous shrine there where people were constantly healed by the powerful waters that had sprung from the earth at the command of the Virgin to Bernadette."¹¹

But she wrote that in her college years, "My faith began to crack apart,"¹² and "I lost my faith."¹³ She adds:

"I stopped being a Catholic. I stopped arguing with people about being Catholic. I stopped

getting upset if they made fun of my church or the pope. I simply quit. I quit for thirty-eight years."¹⁴

Rice reasoned that if the Catholic Church was to be rejected, so was the God that it taught. She laments, "that God didn't exist. The idea of God belonged to the utter falsity of Catholicism. ... there was no God."¹⁵ Thus began her near four-decade drift into atheism.

In recent years Rice has made a recommitment to Roman Catholicism. And she has reaffirmed some of the extreme and bizarre teachings of her church, namely the claims of stigmata and saints who are supposed to have reproduced the wounds of Jesus in their hands, feet, and side.¹⁶ She says of Francis of Assisi, "Francis was the first mystic ever to be granted the gift of the stigmata. I knew this from childhood devotion to Francis."¹⁷

Rice continues to approve of the unnatural lifestyle of the priests and nuns. "When I look back on it, I have only the deepest respect for their remarkable self-discipline and the difficult life that they had chosen, and their full commitment to it," she tells her readers.¹⁸ Part of that self-discipline and self-imposed difficulty includes an unnatural and unscriptural enforced celibacy and mandated fasting practices. These are not to be admired but rather confronted. The Apostle Paul warned in the strongest of terms:

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Rigorous self-denial is a legalistic human whim that is seen by the

Apostle Paul as self-imposed religion and false humility (Colossians 2:20-23).

Rice lacks any kind of biblical astuteness. In spite of her claim to "a fidelity to the Jesus of Scripture, the Jesus of the Four Gospels,"¹⁹ her authority is, for the most part, the Roman Church, not the Scriptures. She appears to be unaware or neglectful of Ephesians 5:11-12, which commands believers to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." She feels no shame for her past writings. At the very least, these books provide a mental stumbling block for others (Romans 14:13).

Rice looks back on her first vampire book, *Interview with the Vampire*, and sees it as an outworking of her psyche in terms of her lost Catholicism. She says that, "The novel was also an obvious lament for my lost faith. The vampires roam in a world without God."²⁰ Others might look at her vampire novels and conclude they are a venting for her sinful imagination. Such interpretation would fit more into the biblical model of our fallen nature.

A RETURN TO THE MASSES

Rice tells how she spent time in the late 1990s visiting Catholic churches in Europe and longing nostalgically for the religious setting of her early upbringing. She tells how she collected religious statues and found herself "drawn to watching the Mass on EWTN."²¹

Rice's attachment to unbiblical trappings is troubling. The Mass as described and defined by the Roman Catholic Church has Christ repeatedly suffering in a never-ending sacrifice. The church's catechism states, "As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out."²² So the redemption of Jesus must continue to be made effective by His being offered and sacrificed on

the altar day after day. Yet Jesus Himself as He was dying said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Hebrews 7:27 is clear when it speaks of the finality of the death of our High Priest Jesus upon the cross, "who does not need daily, as those high priests to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this *He did once for all* when he offered up Himself" (emphasis added, see also Hebrews 10:10, 12).

In December 1998, after years of clinging to "atheism" with a "martyr's determination," Rice finally returned to "religion" and Catholicism. She explains her "conversion" — or what she later calls her return — along with her husband's approval (he died of cancer in 2002), in this diary entry:

"This is a happy day for me — my reconciliation to the Church. ... I read a lot of St. Augustine last night. What poetry. I'm also reading on purgatory. Jacques Le Goff. ... I feel peace and quiet in my soul. I feel happiness. I think — I know — Stan is happy for me. He told me."²³

Her entry for December 7th reads:

"Went to Mass and Holy Communion. Received Our Lord into my body and heart for the first time in thirty-eight years. ... I went to the side altar of the Giant Crucifix and said my special prayers of thanks to God for giving me the Gift of Faith and the strength to do this. ... I was so nervous. When the priest put the host in my hand, I didn't know whether he had finished speaking or not. Then to put it in my mouth was easy. Only in the pew did I find a private moment to feel Christ inside me and to cry a little, spontaneously. I didn't want to make a scene."²⁴

Rice later reframes her experience and explains it as surrendering to the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Catholic Catechism teaches that at the words of consecration of the bread and wine during the Mass, "the body

and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained*” in the elements.²⁵ As such, Jesus is to be adored in the consecrated host. Rice admits that God did not use the Scriptures to bring about her return, but rather:

“He used the doctrine of the Real Presence. And I surrendered to that doctrine because it was the way to Him, and He was what I wanted, with my heart and soul. Go to Him, I thought. Go to the Christ who is under the roof of your church. He’s waiting there for you. Get up from the desk and go. Go to the Christ who is Real and Present in every Catholic tabernacle throughout the world.”²⁶

Surrendering to an unbiblical doctrine cannot bring new life. Understanding the Gospel and accepting the Jesus of that Gospel is what truly saves, according to Romans 1:16. James 1:18 says that the means God uses for the new birth is His Word. Christ does not reside in millions of hosts in Catholic churches — this would destroy His unity and multiply Christ’s glorified body everywhere. He is our High Priest in heaven, according to the Book of Hebrews. Charles Wesley expressed it in his hymn, “Arise My Soul, Arise!”:

“He ever lives above, for me to intercede. His all-redeeming love, His precious blood to plead.”

To eat literal flesh and blood would be a gross violation of Acts 15:29, as well as numerous Old Testament passages. Surely the words of Jesus, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” are metaphors the same as “I am the door” or “Behold the Lamb of God.”

RELIGION REIGNS

Rice never really describes God in biblical terms, but introduces words that suggest mysticism and Mind Science. She refers to God as “the Divine Mind” and then claims “the

love of God is the air we breathe.”²⁷ She refers to her decision as going “back to a religion.”²⁸ She rightly speaks of the Incarnation, but even true doctrine can get buried under incorrect ideas. One can hear her doctrinal confusion when she speaks of her going back to Catholicism in this way:

“I went back to the Catholic Church of St. Paul and the Apostles, and the angels Gabriel, Michael, Raphael. I went back to the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, first among the saved.”²⁹

Mary was not a Roman Catholic, but rather a Jewish Christian. Even the word “Catholic” — meaning universal in its formal sense — did not come into use until long after the days of the Apostles. Moreover, angels — even archangels — never were and can never be part of the Church because Christ did not die to redeem them (1 Peter 1:11-12).

These observations and questions about whether Rice truly converted to Christ or just the Catholic Church are justified not only as her experiences are placed against Scripture, but because of her own words that, “I wasn’t really ‘born again’ in Christ.”³⁰ Her summary of what the Christian life is all about boils down to two issues: 1) We must love others and in so doing bring the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, and 2) We cannot judge other religions or denominations.³¹ She says that these ideas come from the Gospel of Matthew. But what she misses is that in Matthew we find Jesus’ strongest rebukes of sin and false teaching (see Matthew, chapters 7 and 24), as well as the distinction between saved and lost.

Rice is also dismissive of doctrine and any debates over sexual preferences, claiming that these may actually distance one from Jesus:

“If one becomes too involved with doctrinal arguments and sexual and gender controversies, one can be alienated from the Lord.”³²

Rice questions her church’s teachings in several areas, including birth control, abortion, and the ordination of women into the priesthood. And she is not opposed to homosexual marriage. Brian Snider says:

“...her spiritual biography tells of her return to cafeteria Catholicism, where she picks and chooses which parts of the Catholic faith she will accept. For instance, she still condones homosexuality and gay marriage.”³³

She also wants the churches to openly accept homosexuals, whom she calls “our gay Christian brothers and sisters.”³⁴ One can somewhat understand her conflicted feelings about the gay issue in that her son is homosexual.

NO REGRETS, NO REMORSE, NO REPENTANCE

As Rice approaches the end of her autobiography, she appears to have no sense of the scope of sin or the need of repentance:

“I feel no guilt whatsoever for anything I ever wrote. The sincerity of my writings removes them completely from what I hold to be sin. I also feel no real contrition for my years as an atheist, because my departure from the church was not only painful, but also completely sincere.”³⁵

So the vampires and the pornographic books remain. No second thoughts and no regrets. No repentance is apparently needed for the past because her sinning was sincere. Her failure to love as she understands it is the only thing she regrets.³⁶

FABRICATING JESUS

For a time Rice pondered if Jesus might visit her with stigmata.³⁷ This led her to devote herself to writing novels about Christ. In preparation for these, Rice spent more than two years reading all the significant Jesus literature pertaining to the first-

century background of the life of Jesus. Her reading included authors such as N.T. Wright.³⁸

In the fall 2005 her novel *Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt* was published. She ignored much of the good literature she had digested and decided to create a fabled childhood for Jesus. Christ fiction is not new and there is no end to it. It hearkens back to the Gnostics, the non-canonical Pseudepigrapha, and traces its way through the cult of Theosophy, the cynic David Strauss, and some Jesus Quest literature. It continues today with all the New Age Christs and the revival of interest in Gnostic writings. Authors such as Dan Brown keep adding imaginary accounts of Jesus to the pile while ignoring the eyewitness accounts of the Gospel writers and the orthodoxy of so many early Church Fathers.

Rice, in her "Author's Note," sets forth her goal, choosing not a straight historical approach, but rather a fictional one based on her imagination:

"Then there were the legends — the Apocrypha — including the tantalizing tales of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas describing a boy Jesus who could strike a child dead, bring another to life, turn clay birds into living creatures, and perform other miracles. I'd stumbled on them very early in my research, in multiple editions, and never forgotten them. And neither has the world. They were fanciful, some of them humorous, extreme to be sure, but they had lived on into the Middle Ages, and beyond. I couldn't get these legends out of my mind. Ultimately I chose to embrace this material, to enclose it within the canonical framework as best I could. I felt there was a deep truth in it, and I wanted to preserve that truth as it spoke to me. Of course that is an assumption. But I made it. And perhaps in assuming that Jesus did manifest supernatural powers at an early age I am

somehow being true to the declaration of the Council of Chalcedon, that Jesus was God and Man at all times."³⁹

There are no pretensions here. This life of Jesus in Rice's book would be based on "legends" and "fanciful" accounts as well as "assumption." It would not be canonical, that is, from the pages of sacred Scripture, but fiction melded with Scripture. The story that Rice fabricates is told through the eyes, mind, and words of a seven-year-old Jesus. Seasoned readers will probably find the book slow-paced, dull, boring, and not very engaging.

A DEFECTIVE JESUS

Rice also offers her readers a concept of Jesus that contains a decidedly defective Christology when she states:

"I am certainly trying to be true to Paul when he said that Our Lord emptied himself for us, in that my character has emptied himself of his Divine awareness in order to suffer as a human being."⁴⁰

Paul did not say that Jesus "emptied himself of his Divine awareness." This statement is not being true to Paul.

Jesus always knew who He was. The self-emptying of Jesus refers to something entirely different and is referenced in Philippians 2:7 when it says that Jesus "made Himself of no reputation." The underlying Greek word for empty is *ekenosan*. Theologians refer to this truth as the *kenosis* or emptying of Jesus. The question is, Of what did Jesus empty Himself? Did He, as Rice states, "empty himself of his Divine awareness"? This is not possible because of so many Scriptures to the contrary.

In the Temple, at 12 years of age, Jesus said to His mother Mary, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49, emphasis added). Jews did not refer to God as *my* Father, but referred rather to "*Our* Father" (Mat-

thew 6:9, emphasis added). For Jesus to refer to God as "My Father" was to claim a unique and singular relationship to the heavenly Father (see also John 20:17).

There is no text in Scripture to suggest Jesus was ever ambivalent about who He was and why He came. Hebrews 10:5-7 indicates an early grasp of the self-awareness of Jesus. There is no doubt that the incarnation of Jesus is an unfathomable mystery that defies full explanation or understanding, but Hebrews 10:5 and 9 say, "when He came into the world, He said ... a body You have prepared for Me. ... Behold, I have come to do your will, O God." We cannot give the precise moment for this event and neither could we rule out any moment in Jesus' early life. Some would hold that though there is a sacred silence on precise detail, Jesus always knew who He was.

The late theologian John Walvoord struggled with this issue and in his book, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, discusses the relationship of the two natures of Jesus to His self-consciousness:

"The orthodox doctrine necessarily implies that Christ in His divine self-consciousness was aware of His deity at all times. There was no point in the life of Christ when He suddenly became aware of the fact that He was God. His divine self-consciousness was as fully operative when He was a babe in Bethlehem as it was in His most mature experience. There is evidence, however, that the human nature developed and with it a human self-consciousness came into play. In view of the varied forms of manifestation of the divine and human natures, it seems possible to conclude that he had both a divine and human self-consciousness, that these were never in conflict, and that Christ sometimes thought, spoke and acted from the divine self-consciousness and at other times from the human."⁴¹

Jesus' many pronouncements as to who He was left no room for ambiguity. In John 8, the repetitive "I am" passages clearly show Jesus presenting Himself as Deity. John 5:18 shows that some wished to stone Him for the claims He was making about Himself. It is simply untrue and unbiblical to say, as Rice does, that Jesus "emptied himself of Divine awareness."

The context of Philippians 2 makes it clear that, "Christ is not said to have removed from Himself His identity as God. The phrase means that He humbled Himself, relinquishing His heavenly status, not His divine being."⁴² So it was Jesus' status and His right to have heavenly worship that He voluntarily set aside. Charles Ryrie adds a bit more detail with this, saying:

"The *kenosis* (emptying) of Christ during His incarnation does not mean that He surrendered any attributes of deity, but that He took on the limitations of humanity. This involved a veiling of His preincarnate glory (John 17:5) and the voluntary waiving of some of His divine prerogatives during the time He was on earth."⁴³

Linguist W.E. Vine adds:

"Christ did not empty Himself of Godhood. He did not cease to be what He essentially and eternally was."⁴⁴

Apologist Ron Rhodes offers:

"Christ's self-emptying amounts to three primary things: He veiled His preincarnate glory, He voluntarily didn't use some of His divine attributes on some occasions, and He condescended to take on a human nature."⁴⁵

SILLY MIRACLES

Rice's tale begins with Jesus and His family in Alexandria, Egypt. The boy Jesus is 7 years old and there is a great neighborhood rivalry among the families because Joseph is getting all the carpentry jobs.

While Jesus is at play, with a shouted word and power from within, He kills an intimidating bully.⁴⁶ Jesus then raises the bully from death and the bully gives Jesus a brutal thrashing.⁴⁷ The young Jesus later heals Himself and His bruises. This type of fantasy clearly draws from the non-canonical and Gnostic *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The Jesus character of this false "gospel" was referred to by the French author Renan as "a vicious little guttersnipe."⁴⁸ It is of no wonder that even Catholic historian Philip Jenkins refers to these "Infancy Gospels" as "tales" and "blatantly fictitious concoctions."⁴⁹

Rice introduces additional, nonbiblical information about Joseph and the brothers and sisters of Jesus. In her version, Joseph fathered these other children by a former marriage and they are referred to as cousins of Christ. This is clearly to try to hold on to the view that Mary was a perpetual virgin. Scripture is clear that Joseph "did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn Son" (Matthew 1:25). The idea of not knowing her can be interpreted in no other way but sexual intimacy in marriage and could be translated, kept her as a virgin until the birth of Jesus. The word "until" is important as well as it shows that Mary remained a virgin until after the birth of Jesus when the marriage was consummated.

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

There are two Greek words for "cousin" in the New Testament. They are *anepsios* and *sunegenis*.⁵⁰ Matthew 13:55-56 refers to the family of Jesus. The context is clear and straightforward. There is Mary, Jesus' four brothers by name, and reference to His sisters. In this passage, the words *anepsios* and *sunegenis* are not used. The Greek words for brother and sister are used and it is not referring to spiritual brothers and sisters because the context clearly is a family setting. The origin of the cousin idea came long after the time of Jesus and the apostles and was first suggested by a Gnostic writing entitled *The*

Apocalypse of James.⁵¹ The cousin scenario was then repeated by Eusebius, the Church historian (approximately A.D. 300), and later repeated by Jerome in the late 300s.

In Rice's telling, the fictional cousins (actually brothers and sisters) of Jesus tell how He made birds of clay and brought them alive in another capricious miracle.⁵² The miracles of Jesus were not whimsical but, according to Scripture, always had a definite purpose. In many instances they manifested His glory, as in John 2:11. These miracle signs during His adult ministry pointed to Jesus' power, deity, and Messiahship and were to provoke belief in Him, according to John 20:30-31. They also always benefited others. Jesus did not do miracles as a child or as a young man. Luke 2:51-52 indicates a normal Jewish childhood and a normal growing up in Nazareth.

The Gospel of John is clear that the first miracle done by Jesus was at the beginning of His adult ministry at Cana. John wrote, "This *beginning* of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11, emphasis added). The word "beginning" can be translated with the word "first" as in the very first sign or very first miracle. Cana was the "beginning" of miracles. It is then as one commentary says, "Clearly Christ wrought no miracles in His childhood, as the Apocryphal Gospels assert."⁵³

JOHN THE ESSENE?

In another leap of poetic license, Rice develops a scenario where Elizabeth gives young John the Baptist over to the care of the Essenes.⁵⁴ Some may proffer that leniency be extended here in that this is a fictional novel. However, Rice (or her publisher) has set the standard high with the restricted prescript found on the book's dust jacket:

"Anne Rice gives us now her most ambitious, and courageous book, a novel about the early

years of CHRIST THE LORD, based on the gospels and on the most respected New Testament scholarship."⁵⁵

This claim, however, is not true. Much of her novel is not based on the Gospels and there is not a hint in the Gospels as far as a connection with John and the Essenes.

The odds that John lived with and trained with the Essenes is not very high. According to one encyclopedia:

"With the discovery of the Qumran scrolls, a hypothesis has become popular that ties John in with the Essene community. ... Although it is true that similarities exist between John and the community, differences also exist, and the theory is entirely speculative. It would seem somewhat closer to reality to think that John made an attempt at following the profession of his father, being under a solemn obligation to do so as a son, but was so disgusted by the political machinations and corruption he encountered in the priesthood that he concluded Israel deserved the divine wrath. Whereupon he separated himself from official religion and called upon men to form a righteous remnant. John and Qumran practiced baptism, both saw their ministry in terms of the 'voice' prophecy (Isa 40:3), and both were ascetic, but the resemblance is superficial. On the other hand, the Qumran sect was a closed system in retreat from the world, and would have frowned upon John's efforts to convert sinners. The degree of anticipation was different. Qumran still waited for the messiah to come; John knew He was already here."⁵⁶

It must also be pointed out that the Essenes practiced repeated baptisms (washings), whereas John's baptism of repentance was a singular event.

Rice also names the parents of Mary as Joachim and Anna,⁵⁷ something

that neither the Bible nor any first century document does. She got these names from unorthodox legends that are part of a genre called Infancy Narratives. This second-century fiction creating names for Mary's parents is called *The Protevangelium of James* and was not written by James the brother of Jesus. It is mentioned by Origen, who lived from A.D. 185-254, and was later rejected by Jerome and by some popes. It purports to be the record of the birth of Mary, attests to her perpetual virginity, and calls her "Mother of God." The title "Mother of God" is anachronistic, meaning it is being read into the first century from a much later time. "Mother of God" became an official title for Mary at the Council of Ephesus in A.D. 431. *The Protevangelium* also has the first mention of Joseph as a widower with children from a former marriage. It is easy to see that Greek dualism was beginning to infiltrate Church thinking with the developing idea that the flesh was inherently evil. As a result, the demotion of physical relations in marriage emerged.

A summary of how the early Church viewed *The Protevangelium of James* is capsulized by Irenaeus in approximately A.D. 180:

"The New Testament Pseudepigrapha are writings that are falsely ascribed to the apostles or other New Testament figures. Most of these writings are Gnostic in origin. Included among the New Testament Pseudepigrapha are the Preaching of Peter, the Preaching of Paul, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Protevangelium of James. They bring forward an endless number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they themselves have forged. They use them to bewilder the minds of foolish men and those who are ignorant of the Scriptures of truth."⁵⁸

Revisions of *The Protevangelium of James* were produced and called *Pseudo Matthew* and the *Gospel of the*

Nativity of Mary which continued to name Mary's parents, promoted Mary's perpetual virginity, and kept alive the story of Joseph as a widower with children from a prior marriage. According to Philip Comfort and Jason Driesbach, these spurious documents "became instrumental in fostering the veneration of Mary."⁵⁹

Rice adds more superstition to her novel by creating a legend that she adopted from another legend. She writes that Joseph describes a mythical "holy one" named "Honi, the Circle Drawer" who "could make the rain come and he could make the rain go."⁶⁰ From Rice's report, Jesus entertains the thought, "I want this rain to stop," and it does.⁶¹ Honi, according to legend, was a Jewish narcoleptic who slept for 70 years.⁶²

PRESSING QUESTIONS AND FINAL BLASPHEMY

Many people will believe that Rice's fictional Jesus is somewhat close to the historical Jesus. The Apostle Paul warned about "fables" (1 Timothy 4:7). The word translated "fables" is *muthos* in Greek, and it means fiction or an account that purports to set forth truth and facts, but is a falsification of truth. We have to consider major questions as we think of Anne Rice's presentation of Jesus:

1. If we create a fictional Jesus, are we actually giving others "another Jesus" which is warned about in such Scriptures as 2 Corinthians 11:4?

2. If our portrait of Deity is a myth and a fiction, a product of our own imagination, are we in fact creating another God as warned about in Exodus 20:3 and Jeremiah 25:6?

3. Some would argue that Rice is at least pointing to Christ. But we must ask, which Christ?

The Bible is clear in teaching us that the apostolic faith given to us by inspiration in the first century is settled and unchanging. Jude 3 says an apostolic body of truth has been once for all delivered and it needs no additions. Ron Rhodes informs us:

“The word translated *delivered* in this verse is what Greek grammarians call an aorist passive participle, indicating an act that was completed in the past with no continuing element. It leaves no room for a new faith or body of truth communicated through psychics or channelers or cultists.”⁶³

It appears that Rice constructs her own imaginary world and then tries to live in it. She returned to a Catholicism that she constructed in her own way according to her own rules. What she was missing is that Roman Catholicism is not a fill-in-the-blanks or a multiple choice religion. To stay in its good graces, one must embrace all of its teachings as found in the standard catechisms which are written with the intention of “carefully preserving the unity of faith and fidelity to catholic doctrine.”⁶⁴

Apparently this has become all too obvious to Rice. In July, she posted these startling personal revelations to her fans on her Facebook page:

“For those who care, and I understand if you don’t: Today I quit being a Christian. I’m out. I remain committed to Christ as always but not to being ‘Christian’ or to being part of Christianity. It’s simply impossible for me to ‘belong’ to this quarrelsome, hostile, disputatious, and deservedly infamous group. For ten years, I’ve tried. I’ve failed. I’m an outsider. My conscience will allow nothing else.”⁶⁵

She also stated:

“My faith in Christ is central to my life. My conversion from a pessimistic atheist lost in a world I didn’t understand, to an optimistic believer in a universe created and sustained by a loving God is crucial to me. But following Christ does not mean following His followers. Christ is infinitely more important than Christianity and always will be, no matter what Christianity is, has been, or might become.”⁶⁶

As if all of this is not enough, the final straw is Rice’s second Jesus novel: *Christ the Lord: The Road to Cana*. Even *New York Times* secular reviewer Janet Maslin sees the tainted mind of Rice intruding into the story:

“Piety courts brazenness as ‘The Road to Cana’ raises personal questions about its main character, since Yeshua bar Joseph (its name for Jesus) is now over 30. Ms. Rice describes this stage of his life with awe and respect. But she does present Yeshua as the subject of rumors — said to be what was once called a confirmed bachelor. And she gives him a crush on one of his relatives, a 15-year-old girl. So ‘The Road to Cana’ perches on the brink of blasphemy. But it succeeds in treating Yeshua’s humanity as an essential part of his divinity. That humanity nearly takes the form of bodice-ripping (‘The man in me knew that we were alone, and the man in me knew that I could have this woman’), now that Ms. Rice’s confidence about her daunting subject allows some of her familiar proclivities to emerge. Gone is the earlier book’s attention to pottery and textiles. Along come suppressed passions and eyebrow-raising about Yeshua’s unattached status.”⁶⁷

It is grievous and unfortunate to have to repeat these things, but people need to be warned. Maslin continues:

“The first half of this book lingers eagerly upon its characters’ unfulfilled desires. In its opening scene, Yeshua’s thoughts of Avigail, his beautiful ‘young kinswoman,’ lead him straight to a cold bath in a Nazareth spring. ... Avigail throws herself at Yeshua with the steam heat of a Rice vampire, sobbing, ‘I am your harlot.’ Yeshua fights back his desires in order to refuse her.”⁶⁸

No disciplined Christian would want to read this volume — or even recommend it for anyone to read. We

do not need to jump in a cesspool to know it is filthy.

The accounts of Jesus within the four Gospels are from the testimony of eyewitnesses. The Apostle Peter is clear, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). The Apostle John concurs, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness” (1 John 1:1-2).

Orthodox and objective scholars of the New Testament would all agree that Rice’s source material is suspect.

Rice imagines a Jesus that she constructs on paper. Her Jesus is largely made up not of facts, but of ancient fictions and fables. The boy Jesus of the first novel is imaginary and the second Jesus novel presents a man full of doubts and even leanings toward perversion as he struggles with burning lust. Having spent her adult life fabricating pornography and evil vampires, she seems to have created habits that are hard to break. Whether fabricated vampires, fabricated religion, or another fabricated Jesus, it all needs to be confronted, refuted, and rejected.

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EDITORIALS

(continued from page 2)

wanting to please the group and keep the cohesion going. A mob mentality can sweep people along and make them even more impervious to intrusion and truth.

4. Redefining of the evidence. This is taking facts and evidence to the contrary and turning it around into new confirmation. The false teacher is under investigation for money laundering and wire fraud. *Ignore the facts* — this is new proof of spiritual warfare and/or government and satanic persecution. The false teacher sets a date that passes with no fulfillment. *Ignore the facts* — this only means that our commitment is being tried and our faithfulness is being tested. The healing is not taking place. *Ignore the facts* — this means we are to pray harder and have more faith. Turn the evidence around. Even all the negative consequences of these denials are reinter-

preted in twisted ways. Refutation is turned into confirmation with a sleight of hand and mind and, of course, a twisted Scripture.

5. The payoff. The follower believes that he is gaining something special. Perhaps his association with the teacher gives him a vicarious standing before God. Or perhaps he gains influence, power, or control over others. Wanting that above all, he is impervious to truth, even the truth of God's Word. He wants the payoff above everything else, even if it is at great cost to himself.

6. The pain aspects. Giving up false beliefs can be very painful and almost intolerable. Some choose to stay in the error because the struggle to keep those errors is a bit easier and a bit more tolerable than the upset of walking away and making changes.

7. The fear of a vacuum. This point, connected to the point above, simply means that having to build a new

life is hard. It is often easier to tolerate what is familiar than to try to build a new life with new constructs. The fear will be directly related to the number of hours, days, weeks, months, and even years of commitment to things that were false. Endless hours must now be channeled into a new way of living and thinking.

New social structures must be built and new friends acquired. It's hard work! Many things will have to be "put off" so new biblical thoughts and ways can be "put on." Some are not willing to face that. It has been observed that "some would rather stay in hell because they know the names of the streets."

Error and deception bring heavy consequences and a high price. Deception sets up traceable mechanisms that can be examined. The way out is going to have to be biblical and based on solid truth. The truth can set us free. Nothing short of renouncing the error, repenting of certain behaviors (especially leading others astray), and heartfelt commitment to new obedience to Scripture will do.

The new support system must consist of a healthy biblical church and mature believers. This also must involve the warnings to others about the false system no matter how embarrassing or difficult. Energizer bunnies need to be dismantled and given new life in Christ. God is the only one who can give us a "new heart" and give us by His grace a life motivated by truth and truth alone.

—GRF

empire in chaos over family split." The church described the discord as a "lack of shared vision" for the ministry. The younger Schuller held the host position for less than three years.

The church also has experienced serious financial difficulties. Revenue fell 27 percent between 2008 and 2009. Failure to meet its obligations to more than 100 vendors who were owed millions of dollars for work and supplies for the church's pageants also forced the church to cancel its Easter pageant this year. Schuller's church also has sold buildings and 170 acres of land it owned in Orange County, laid off employees, and cut back on the number of television stations airing its *Hour of Power* broadcast.

In June 2009, Schuller turned the leadership of the church over to his eldest daughter, Sheila Schuller Coleman. She will now become the sole lead pastor of the Crystal Cathedral, a role she shared with her father for thirteen months.

Although Schuller officially resigned, he will not be leaving the church entirely. The *Orange County Register* reported that he will assume the newly created position of chairman of the church's consistory, which is said to be the church's board of directors.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.



Books in Review

THE POPULAR DICTIONARY OF BIBLE PROPHECY

by Ron Rhodes

Harvest House Publishers, 340 pages, \$14.99

Where could one have over 350 terms and concepts regarding Bible prophecy defined and explained? Ron Rhodes' *The Popular Dictionary of Bible Prophecy* would be the answer.

Rhodes is incredibly prolific and his new book is an exceptional resource. He is always well-balanced and scripturally on target. With such a good track record we can have confidence in his handling of God's Word, especially in the much debated arena of prophecy and eschatology.

These are days of uncertainty and deception. Add to that the extremes we see all around us. There are those who are apathetic toward the Bible and those who try to twist the Scripture to fit into the latest headlines. What is needed is a sane, sound, balanced, and biblical approach to the end times. *The Popular Dictionary of Bible Prophecy* gives us that.

In the Introduction, Rhodes describes the design and scope of the book:

"The study of prophecy or the end times is known in theological circles as *eschatology*. This term is derived from two Greek words: *eschatos*, meaning 'last' or 'last things,' and *logos*, meaning 'study of.' *Eschatology* is the study of last things, or study of the end times. Eschatology can logically be broken down into two primary fields of study. *Personal eschatology* concerns things such as death, the future judgment, heaven, and hell. (These are matters related to each person.) *General eschatology* concerns more general matters, such as the rapture, the Tribulation, the second coming of Christ, the millennial kingdom, and the eternal state. For your benefit, this dictionary contains common terms related to both personal and general eschatology" (pg. 5).

Take the issue of America in prophecy. Some have gone off into wild and unbiblical extremes. For starters, is America in prophecy at all? Why or why not? That issue is treated in detail on pages 18-23 of the *Dictionary*. It will tell you what you need to know and why.

Others are puzzled by Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Preterism. Events such as the Tribulation are also examined. Places that figure into Bible prophecy are covered and include Armageddon, Babylon, Ephesus, the Euphrates River, Gog, Gomer, Laodicea, Sardis, and so many more. What about words such as Maranatha and Wormwood? Theological words not in the Bible, but which describe future events, are handled in understandable ways.

Is there a difference between Hades and Hell? What about Tartarus? You will find out when you look under the three names in the H and T sections of this book. Then there is the Old Testament word Sheol and the nuances we should know about that place.

Differences in prophetic viewpoints are not side-stepped, but explained. Readers at any level will easily grasp the explanations.

There are other subjects related to the major topic of prophecy. For instance, because astrologers claim to forecast the future, there are several pages examining the subject of astrology. Rhodes' apologetic skills are conspicuous as he gives us entries on Ultradispensationalism and Universalism.

There are entries on Blasphemy, Date-Setting, Death, Demons, and The Elect. Pages 281-284 examine Satan and all his titles and descriptions.

Another asset of this book is the overview of the prophetic books of the Bible. Brief surveys of books such as Habakkuk, Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, Zephaniah, and others are covered. There are four pages detailing all of the Messianic Prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.

One might decide to teach from portions of this book or use the definitions for sharing with a class. Some of the topics could even make for a short Bible study. There are many ways to mine the contents. Get this book — you will be very glad you did. You and others will profit much from it.

—GRF

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