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Photo/Illustration Credits

Joe Azzara/The Image Bank, cover; Jeff Banashak, 26-27; FPG International, 36; Grant Heilman, 32-33; Jeff Katz/FPG International, 18-19; Jimmy Necaie, 6; Phillip Ward, 21; Hans Wendler/The Image Bank, 8.

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"Just wait until your daddy comes home"

The Great and Terrible Day

by Bruce Longstreth

Tim Stafford, in his article, "Waiting in Hope," says, "When eschatology is used evangelistically, it capitalizes on the urgency of fear: 'God is coming to judge and you are not ready.'"

That eschatology sounds like something exasperated mothers say as they shake their disobedient children: "Just wait until your daddy comes home." Judgment deferred then hangs like a dark cloud over the young offender's head until his father the judge returns.

Many saints were scared into the kingdom of God by that kind of evangelistic eschatology and have lived in dread of the end of the age and the second coming of Christ ever since. Judgment deferred in this life will surely take place in the next, they believe. One day they will suddenly be yanked skyward (the rapture), taken to the woodshed (great judgment), and given the spanking of their eternal life. The threat of Christ's return is somehow supposed to produce righteous living among the saints. Yeah, just wait until your daddy comes home.

As a young child, I held to such a belief. I knew that when I least expected it, most likely when I was doing something I shouldn't, the Lord would return like a thief, without warning, in the twinkling of an eye (I used to see how fast I could blink to imagine how quickly all of these horrible events would take place). There would be roars, shouts, and trumpets, everything would melt in a thermal holocaust, and dead bodies would pop up out of their coffins as they shot skyward to meet the Lord. And then those of us who remained would head

for that big woodshed in the sky, "forever to be with the Lord."

In California, where I grew up, earthquakes were as common as the "late afternoon and evening thunderstorms" we experience in the South. Their frequent occurrence made this eschatology even more exciting. Earthquakes were one of the "signs," along with wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, famine, sin, and all kinds of degradation—signs that "Dad was almost home." He had just parked his car in the garage and you could feel each heavy step he made as he came up the long back stairway. His keys jangled as he neared the back door. Soon the door would burst open, and he would put down his Bible and head straight for my room. Daddy was home; it was time for judgment.

"When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child," says the apostle. "When I became a man, I did away with childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11 NAS). Those eschatological fears of early childhood now seem a dim and distant memory—not that I don't feel the footsteps on the back steps occasionally when I'm in a place I shouldn't be, but the Scripture is quite clear that it is hope in the future, not the dread of it, that purifies a man's behavior. A living hope has steadily replaced dread and fear. The assurance of sins forgiven, the steadfast love of my heavenly Father, and the joy of participating in the ministry of the gospel are all part of a living hope and an adult eschatology.

In the last few years I have been privileged to work with people who have matured that eschatology even

more. Without sticking a label on it, their positive view of the future makes any present endeavor a tremendous opportunity to complete Christ's expectation of a glorious Church. This month in *New Wine* we present what we feel is an uplifting, hopeful view of the future of God's people.

Charles Simpson reminds us that the second coming will not be a rescue mission when Jesus snatches a trampled Church from under the heel of the devil. Rather, God is even now filling the earth with His glory, just as He promised. Then, five Church leaders—Terry Law, Larry Lea, Houston Miles, Karl Strader, and Ken Sumrall—talk about where they believe the Church is heading in the remaining years of this century. Next, Bob Mumford urges us to do away with the "failing-Church syndrome" and to focus on the theme of God's ultimate triumph. And R. J. Rushdoony takes a historical look at how eschatology has changed over the years.

A bride "who hath made herself ready" is the best indication that the day of the Lord is fully at hand. As the Church makes itself ready, as it proclaims the gospel and extends the glory of Christ's kingdom into every dark nook and cranny, we renew our hope for our Lord's return and the time when, as His victorious servants, we shall forever be with Him, a time when "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. □

Bruce Longstreth is editor of *New Wine*.

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New Wine Magazine seeks to promote the unity and maturity of the Church and individual Christians by presenting sound biblical teachings and testimonies from a variety of Christian authors.

Advertising in *New Wine* does not necessarily imply endorsement by the board of directors or the magazine staff.

LETTERS

Keeping His Eyes on God

In the September issue, through the article "Our Partnership With God" by Bruce Cook, I came to understand faith better. I can see better now where I was lacking in faith. I had been looking at circumstances too much and not to God. I just wanted you to know how much I appreciate what you have done for me. Also, four other friends and I really enjoy the Hosanna! Music tapes. They are great music. I don't know how many times I have listened to them now, but it's been a lot. I think your ministry is great. Keep up the good work for the Lord.

Richard Beam
Lansing, KS

A Royal Feast

I have just finished reading Charles Simpson's article "The Chariot Is Waiting" (September). I am so full; I feel like I have been sitting at "the Father's table." Thank you, *New Wine*, and thank you, Brother Charles Simpson, for your faithfulness to obey and hear from God.

Jessie Kirk
Nitro, WV

Praying for Congressmen

I have just read your *New Wine* for August. I wanted to get a message to Mark Siljander, U.S. representative from Michigan, regarding his interview, "Congressmen Seek God."

I have been so depressed and frustrated with things that are happening in our country—and I was so thrilled to hear what some of our congressmen are doing. I also claim God's promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14. And now I would also pray specifically for Mark Siljander, and all other congressmen who are praying with him.

Caroline Fish
Menlo Park, CA

Improving "The Word"

I must congratulate you on the improvement introduced into the section devoted to the study of the Word. This method is much more profitable, for it is more challenging and appealing to the mind and spirit.

Maria Cucurullo
Argentina, South America

With My Hands Lifted Up

I can't begin to tell you how beneficial your radio broadcasts ("Challenge—With Charles Simpson") are in my life. You are teaching directly to my need. At the end of half of your broadcasts, I'm either crying or raising my hands praising our wonderful God. And that's not easy because I always listen to you while I'm driving home from work.

Eldon Lowman
Eagan, MN

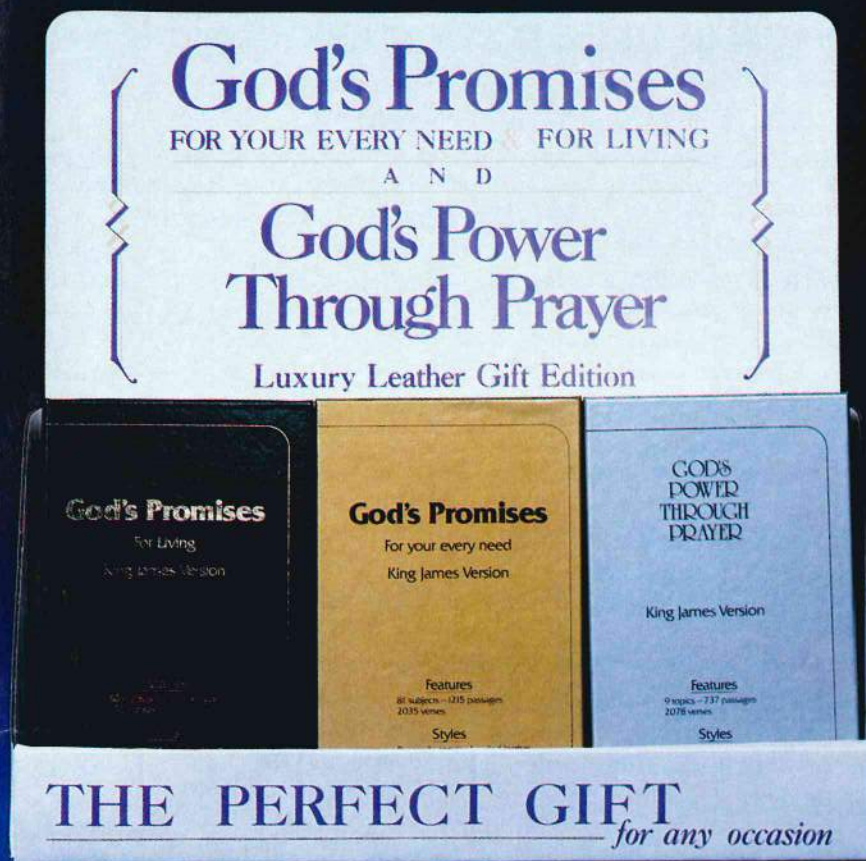
Pursuing the Promises

I have been listening to your radio program, "Challenge—With Charles Simpson," whenever possible at work since you came on the air here. I enjoy your down-to-earth way of talking. I would say one thing I have learned is that, yes, God has promises for us, but we must go after them. Step out into what God calls us to do day by day. I am learning it is a process that builds. Our faith grows and our love for Christ grows as we trust Him to be there for us and go forward without fear. I have been a passive, fearful person all my life with a poor self-image but all that is changed for me now. And your program has definitely played a part and helped me.

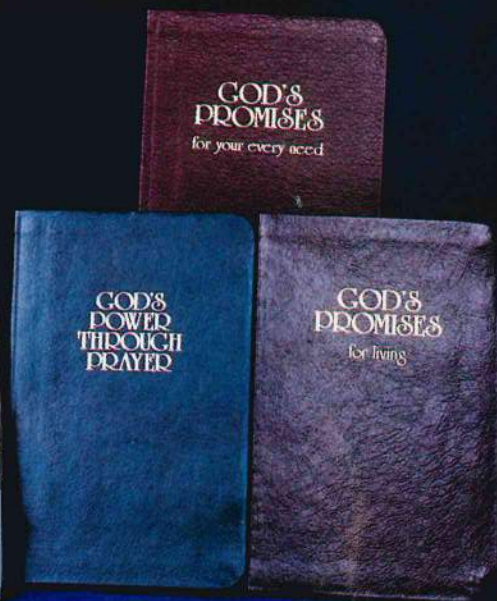
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A Special Announcement

by Charles Simpson

Chairman of the board of Integrity Communications

In the October issue of *New Wine Magazine*, the board of directors announced that as of December the magazine would be discontinued. We stressed that the decision was the result of prayer and counsel and what we sincerely believed to be the leading of the Holy Spirit.

In this issue, we want to put the decision in the context of the Lord's leadership for the future. Bible teachers know the truth of John 12:24: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (NAS). God's purpose is not the death of something, but rather multiplied life.

The teachers who have worked together to produce *New Wine* for years came to a place where we

had to obey God in this matter before we could get to a new degree of fruitfulness. We have been poised to take this difficult step on previous occasions, but this time we knew it was the Lord. We want to be even more fruitful.

While the October announcement may have brought you sadness, or even wonder to some of you, I hope this announcement will bring peace and rejoicing.

The four of us remain in good relationship and will continue to address issues together. We simply felt God did not want us to form a denomination or to try to centrally control the great variety of ministries among us. We further felt that God was calling us to cooperate with emerging ministry groups. We believe that decentralization will

make room for the release of new ministry and power. The four of us are meeting again this month to discuss these and other matters pertaining to our ongoing fellowship. There is no "split up" here. We are sincerely seeking to obey the Lord and release our gifts to His Body.

Bob Mumford and his wife, Judy, live in San Rafael, California. He has a great call to address the Church and nation. His ministry base is also in San Rafael. Life Changers is an organizational instrument that Bob has used in previous years to distribute his teachings. *Plumblime*, his personal ministry letter, and his Recommended Tapes can be obtained from Life Changers, P.O. Box 13459, San Rafael, California 94913. His office phone is (415) 499-8314.

In addition to these ministries, Bob is constructing a seminar for business, professional, and spiritual leaders for a more comprehensive view of the kingdom of God. He will also continue to fulfil his inner burden to share Kingdom content and supernatural power with Third World leaders. Those of you who want to express your personal support or give financially to this ministry God has given him can write to the address in San Rafael.

Ern and Ruth Baxter live in San Diego, California. Ern continues to travel and minister to conferences and churches. In his words, "For many years I have been attracted to the relationship of Timothy to Paul in the New Testament and through these years I have formed and taught Timothy classes in those places where I spend an extended amount of time." Ern has formed a concern called Timothy Distribution Company. It is desirous of publishing the wealth of materials



Ern has produced over the years. Ern is busy editing and preparing these materials. He and I continue to share a pastoral relationship as we have for the last ten years.

Ern has a profound preaching and teaching ministry. He is a preacher's preacher. It is important that the taped and printed records of his ministry be preserved and propagated. You can send your inquiries and expressions of support to Ern at P.O. Box 1947, Spring Valley, California 92077. His office number is (619) 698-7166.

Don and Alice Basham are in Cleveland, Ohio. For several years, Don served as editor of *New Wine Magazine* and since 1982 he has been the chief editorial consultant. He has written a regular column called "The Way I See It." Don has been a mainstay in *New Wine* since its inception. Don has a wonderful gift of writing. He authored *Face Up With a Miracle*, which sold almost a half million copies. He has written numerous other books, including his newly released *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*. *Perils of a Purple Plymouth* and *When You Pass Through the Fire* are scheduled for release in March and the winter of next year respectively.

Don will continue his column, "The Way I See It," through a monthly newsletter entitled *Don Basham's Insights*. He plans to continue to teach and minister publicly on commitment, covenant, Christian family, and spiritual warfare.

Don's new office address is P.O. Box 1720, Elyria, Ohio 44036. We encourage you to support him in his continued ministry. If you desire to express your support financially or otherwise, you can write to the above address.

Since 1978, Integrity Communications has published *New Wine*, Tape of the Month, and numerous other ministries here. The cessation of *New Wine* is not a cessation of ministry. We are poised to harvest years of sowing. The local ministry has taken many thousands of dollars annually from other areas of

service to sow into *New Wine Magazine*. Now God has said, "Discontinue *New Wine Magazine*."

Beginning in January, I will publish a bimonthly magazine called *Christian Conquest*. Our byline will be "equipping you for action." We will continue to bring timely Bible teaching, and aim it at enabling you to act on it. Knowledge or relationship without purpose is not enough. We will present teaching with purpose. Our first issue will be on righteousness as a weapon for spiritual conquest. All of you who receive *New Wine* will receive *Christian Conquest* as a way of fulfilling your subscription and our commitment to you.

In addition to *Christian Conquest*, we will continue to publish *Vino Nuevo*, which goes into many Latin nations. And we will continue Tape of the Month, which features several teachers, including Bob Mumford, Ern Baxter, and Don Basham. Tape of the Month will offer never-before-released messages that are timely for God's people. Hosanna! Music continues to be blessed by God and will remain a vital part of our ministry.

We will also continue my radio broadcast, "Challenge—With Charles Simpson," and hold rallies in various cities across America. In addition, I will continue to write. My new book on leadership is now released through Servant Publications. It is entitled *The Challenge to Care*.

One of the ministries about which I am most excited is International Team Ministries. Through International Team Ministries, Integrity Communications helps churches send teams to evangelize and to build churches in other nations. Recently I prayed with and commissioned forty-eight people to such ministries in several nations. All of these were under the leadership of Paul Petrie, who heads International Team Ministries.

Christian Conquest will not only teach and equip, it will keep you informed on developments in these

ministries that advance the kingdom of God.

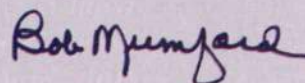
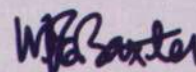
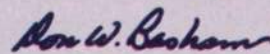
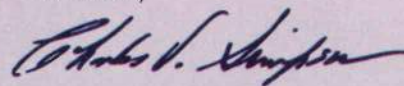
Our desire in this announcement is to tell you what we believe God is saying and doing through us. We all sense a new release to multiplied ministry. The *New Wine* seed is dying and leaving a rich deposit. New life is coming forth. The other teachers and I stand together in this.

We also want to be sensitive to you. You have looked to us as leaders. We do not want to betray your trust in times of change. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian Christians not to be disturbed or shaken from their composure, either by a spirit or a message or even a letter from him. We do not want to disturb or distress you.

Most of all, we want to challenge you to become involved in our worldwide mission. The entire Church is being forced into an agonizing reappraisal of its purpose and goals. The Holy Spirit and world movements will force us into another great awakening. Indeed it is here. The awakening will result in a rediscovery of God's world agenda.

We all need your daily prayers and support. Those of us at Integrity Communications have a tremendous challenge in starting this new publication and continuing other ministries. Please pray with us, write to us, and stand by us financially. Write to us at P.O. Box Z, Mobile, Alabama 36616. The other teachers can be contacted and supported through their addresses.

In Christ,





A HEAVENLY PERSPECTIVE

Proclaiming a victorious Church

by Charles Simpson

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13-14 NAS).

The Apostle Paul in this passage states that when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we receive the Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit is for us the down payment on all God has promised, the earnest of the saints' inheritance, the encourager who assures us God will finish what He started, and the giver of faith to believe it until He does. When we encounter times of discouragement, the Holy Spirit comes to us, and we suddenly find ourselves able to say, "Praise the Lord! I know God is going to finish what He started in my life."

A Prophetic Interpretation

When I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, I prophesied, knowing little about prophecy or the existence of that gift. I was at a prayer meeting, praying by myself in a quiet corner of the room, when a woman began to speak in tongues. It was a long utterance, and I remember thinking, *I don't know what she is saying, but it sounds like the interpretation is going to be powerful.*

When she finished, the Lord gave me the prophetic interpretation. I had never felt so anointed in my life. I began to speak out with boldness and power, and the strange thing was that I didn't even believe what I was saying! Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit I prophesied that God was going to pour out His Spirit on the nations, and that there was going to be a great revival.

But I was a premillennial, fundamental, Southern Baptist pastor. I not only preached the great falling away—I saw it happening. “The Church is going down, down, down,” I said, and the more I said it the more I saw the Church go down, down, down. I had never seen a great outpouring or revival in my eschatology. What I had seen was 2 Timothy 3:1-4:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (NAS).

Eighteen evidences of “perilous times” appear in those verses, and I knew them by heart because I preached them all the time.

But I had prophesied a great revival, an outpouring of God's Spirit. I had said that young people

would prophesy and see visions, that old men would dream dreams, and that God would pour out His Spirit on the servants and handmaids. I had prophesied Joel chapter 2, and to my knowledge I had never even preached from this scripture.

The prophecy was powerful, and when I finished everyone said, “Praise God!” But I thought, *What in the world am I saying?*

In spite of all my theology and my preconceived notions, the Spirit of God had put faith in me unlike anything I had ever experienced. Of course, I had faith in Jesus Christ, but little faith in what He was going to do in the earth until His second coming. In my thinking, He would have to destroy the world before He could put it back together the way it should be.

Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, I began to see what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote that the Spirit of God in me was a pledge of or a down payment on God's promise. What God started He was going to finish. The promise did not mean there would not be sin in the world. The wheat and tares would continue to grow side by side until the final harvest, but the harvest would not be all tares. God had a triumphant people in the earth with whom He intended to do something.

Paul Prays for the Ephesians

Paul goes on to say how he is praying for the Ephesian Church to see its destiny:

...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in

accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:17-23 NAS).

Paul prays that the Ephesians would know Christ by revelation and that their hope would be renewed as they see the high purpose for their calling and the richness of their inheritance. Then he prays that they would know the surpassing greatness of Christ's power. Do we understand that the same power God used when He raised Jesus from the dead is working in us? We have yet to see what would happen if the people of God would open their eyes to see what their calling is, and how triumphant they are going to be because they have resurrection power in them.

Whenever I pray for people, God leads me to pray that they would sense His power and that His power would come on them. None of what Paul is praying here makes any sense without the power of God. When we are in a place where God is not moving, and a preacher reads those same scriptures, we really don't hear a word he is saying. But if the power of God starts to work, what Paul prayed comes alive. It is only in the power of God that we can see what Christ is going to do.

Seeing From the Throne

Next Paul says that he wants them to see the power that God wrought when He raised Christ from the dead and set Him in heavenly places at the Father's right hand, far above all rule, authority,

power, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in the one to come. We must see the world and our mission as well from the throne of the risen Christ, seated at the Father's right hand.

Then Paul says that God put all things under Christ's feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him. Have I misread that, or does it say that the Church will be the fullness of Christ? I don't want to get off in deep water, but if I understand correctly, Christ intends to manifest Himself—His power, His character, His wisdom—through the Church. He is going to show the world His plan through the Church. His second coming will not be a rescue mission to snatch a trampled Church out from under the heel of the devil. That is not what the Scriptures say.

It is important to remember that Paul is writing this letter from a jail cell to people out of jail. In Ephesians 3:13 he says, "I ask you not to lose heart" (NAS). The only way he could say that was that he saw his situation through eyes given by Christ—from the throne. He saw that somehow his imprisonment was going to work to the glory of God and was going to do something in the Church, which it did. His martyrdom released a great wave of the power of God in the Church.

Jesus Is on the Throne

What Paul said to the Ephesians, we want to say through the ministries of Integrity Communications to a world with all kinds of problems, and to a Church that is often divided and weak: "Jesus Christ is on the throne, and He is working all things after the counsel of His will. He knows where He is going."

I am a great admirer of the Israelis, who after the holocaust, declared, "Never again." That simple statement is the cornerstone of the modern nation of Israel; no matter what the cost the people are deter-

mined to stand for the turf they believe is theirs. God had said to the Israelites thousands of years earlier that if they were not willing to war, they would never come into His promises. As God's people we too must be willing to war. We must be willing to come against the enemy and take our stand. We must be willing to believe what God has said to us. Through our ministries we are saying, "Jesus is on the throne. Even if others draw back, God does not draw back, and by His grace neither will we."

In Numbers chapters 13-14 the Jews drew back. They would not go into the land because they looked at the giants, and said, "We became like grasshoppers in our own sight" (Num. 13:33 NAS).

God sentenced those people to wander in the wilderness for forty years, but He also said, "Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21 NAS).

Powerful Theology

That is powerful theology in Numbers chapter 14. In fact, it is more theology than most Christians have today. "All the earth will be filled with the glory of God" was not said at a revival meeting, or when Moses was leading a congregation into high worship and they were being visited by the glory of God, nor had they just conquered a foreign army and were in the midst of a great celebration. It was said in Israel's darkest moment! It was said as a whole generation was turning away from the purposes of God and going out into the wilderness to die. They had drawn back but God had not. God never draws back. He said, "Go ahead, but as surely as I live all the earth will be filled with My glory." A generation is coming that is not going to draw back, and that generation is going to go into the land and I am going in with it.

But God did not say only Canaan was going to be filled with His glory. His glory would not be limited

to the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. He said, "All the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord." If those Jews saw that in Numbers chapter 14, then it is time for us to see it.

Many Christians don't see the glory because they wonder too much about the great falling away. It will happen, but it is not the end of the story. There has been and there is going to be tribulation, but don't ask a Russian Christian in a Siberian prison camp, "Don't you know the great tribulation is coming?" He will say, "I thought it was already here."

More people have been martyred since 1900 than anytime in the history of the Church, more probably than all centuries put together. Millions have been slaughtered in the U.S.S.R. and Red China alone. Many thousands have been killed in Central and South America. A greater tribulation period, one worse than anything we have ever seen, may yet occur, but it is not going to put the light out. Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

It is so important that the Church does not get discouraged. The Apostle Paul says, "I ask you not to lose heart. Don't be discouraged!"

I believe that if we can keep a heavenly view of what is going on, our faith will be strong and God will use us to fulfil His purpose for a victorious Church. God is going to use someone, and I hope He does not have to pass me by to find someone with the hope and faith He can use. I believe God can use us. □



Charles Simpson, senior pastor of Gulf Coast Covenant Church in Mobile, Alabama, ministers extensively throughout the United States and abroad. He is also chairman of the Integrity Communications Board of Directors.

THE WORD

What the prophets saw in

The Exile

We are studying the Old Testament from three viewpoints: the Kingdom principle, God encouraging man to live under His rule; the incarnation principle, God demonstrating His nature through faithful men and women; and the Spirit principle, God acting in human affairs by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In 606 B.C., the southern kingdom of Judah fell, and with it all hope that any part of the nation Israel could ever be the kingdom God would rule over and protect. One hundred years earlier, the northern kingdom, Samaria, was crushed and its people taken to Nineveh. The Assyrians replaced the people of the northern kingdom with captives from other nations. The result was a racially mixed people known as Samaritans, a people greatly despised by the Jews in New Testament times (see John 4:9).

The fall of the two kingdoms was the threshold of the *Diaspora*, the dispersion or scattering of the Jews, which lasted until thirty-eight years ago when the Zionist state was formed after World War II.

Two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin, which made up the southern kingdom, lasted 115 years longer than did Samaria and came back to the land after 70 years of exile in Babylonia and Persia. There has been much speculation about the other ten northern tribes that did not come back.

The prophetic ministries of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel extended from the fall of the two kingdoms through the exile, to the return.

Isaiah was a prophet in Jerusalem for fifty years toward the end of the northern kingdom (745-695

B.C.). His chief messages were the suffering servant, the Messiah, and "a remnant shall return." Jeremiah ministered in Jerusalem for the last forty years of the southern kingdom. He literally wept over the death of the nation, although he had hope for its future.

Ezekiel was a prophet to the exiles in Babylonia from 597-570 B.C. His burden was to explain to the Israelites why God permitted their captivity, and the dominant theme of his message was, "They shall know that I am God."

Daniel's ministry lasted about seventy years during all of Judah's exile. His book is apocalyptic, similar to John's book of Revelation in the New Testament. Daniel looked down through the corridors of time and saw the rule of God in the earth, prophesying that every kingdom on earth would bow to the kingdom of God.

The historical books of this period, Ezra and Nehemiah, outline the return from exile. In 536 B.C., the head of the tribe of Judah, Zerubbabel, led the first return to the land. The temple was rebuilt about fifteen years after this return. In 457 B.C., nearly eighty years later, Ezra restored the temple service and the teaching of the Law. Thirteen years after that, Nehemiah began rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied during the time of the first return under Zerubbabel (520-516 B.C.), and Malachi ministered during Nehemiah's time (450-400 B.C.).

This "scattering" period created a crisis in theology for the Israelites, particularly concerning their notions about the kingdom of God. In the past they had identified the kingdom of God with the Hebrew

kingdom, and their religion with the temple. Now both their concept of the Kingdom and their faith had to be drastically reinterpreted. From the teaching of the prophets and the trauma of the exile, the exiles began to reinterpret their faith in terms of something more spiritual and enduring than the state of Israel. The prophets' message at this time stressed that although the Hebrew kingdom had fallen, God's kingdom would surely come, not by might, but by the suffering of God's people and His Servant. This kingdom would be offered to all men who acknowledged the Lord in obedience and faith.

The prophets themselves incarnated certain aspects of the Messiah's nature and ministry, making the whole nation suffer as it identified with the coming Messiah-King.

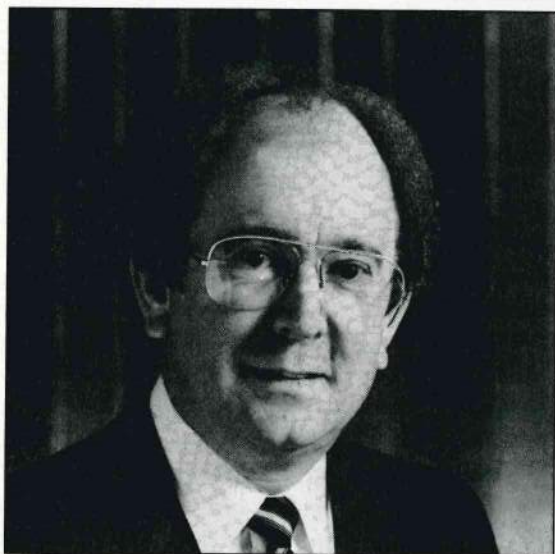
The ministry of the Holy Spirit in this period was primarily to inspire the prophets not just to foretell the future but to declare the word of God to a sinning and spiritually blinded nation that had been chosen to be a channel of His purpose in the entire earth.

GENERAL READING: Ezra chapters 1-10; Nehemiah chapters 1-13; Haggai chapters 1-2; Zechariah chapters 1-14; Malachi chapters 1-4

ASSIGNMENT: Read the "suffering servant" poems found in the following passages: Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6, 13; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12. Sometimes Isaiah speaks of the "servant" as himself, sometimes as the Messiah, sometimes as the nation of Israel. Identify which is which in these passages; in some, there is a combination of all three.

Five Christian leaders answer the question

Where in the World



Terry Law



Larry Lea



Houston Miles

We recently asked five Church leaders with growing ministries to share with us their views of the Church in the last decade of this century.

Terry Law, who travels worldwide with his musical team, Living Sound, and who ministers frequently to people behind the iron curtain, sees the Church renewed in worship as it celebrates the lordship of Jesus in strong songs of praise. He believes that the Church is God's best idea and that it shows no signs of fatigue or burnout. Next, Larry Lea, whose church in Rockwall, Texas, will complete a twelve-thousand-seat auditorium early in 1987, sees intercession as the key to a growing church (more than one hundred people each week join his congregation).

Houston Miles, pastor of Evangel Cathedral, Spartanburg, South Carolina, sees the unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament as the glorious predictions of the Church's future. He has a growing expectation that the Church will be more powerful in the last decade of this century than any of us have imagined. In

Lakeland, Florida, Karl Strader pastors a church that recently finished a ten-thousand-seat auditorium (nicknamed Strader Stadium). Strader fears he may have under-built for the great harvest of people who will come to know the Lord before the end of this century. And as pastor of Liberty Church and president of Liberty Bible College, Pensacola, Florida, Ken Sumrall says what he once saw clearly about the end time and the condition of the Church he now "sees through a glass darkly." Although he still holds to some of his earlier eschatology, he is willing to embrace all that the Lord wants to do in this generation for His people.

The comments of those five men compose one of the most encouraging articles for believers we've ever printed in *New Wine*. The future is as bright as the promises of God, and we think you'll feel that way after you read these interviews.



TERRY LAW

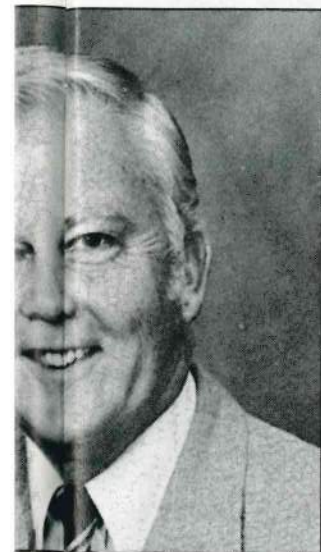
New Wine: How important is eschatology to the individual Christian?

Terry Law: A man's eschatology guides just about everything he does, so it's not a doctrinal consideration that is optional for us.

I was raised in a traditional, classical Pentecostal background, believing that the world was about to overrun the Church, and that the only way God would get any benefit from His Church was to rapture it and get it to heaven as fast as possible. Satan could take over the world as long as the Church was safe. In my early ministry, the messages I preached on the second coming were, "Let's hold on and let's be faithful, because Jesus is coming soon."

I still believe Jesus is coming soon. As I have seen the power implicit in the gospel's declaration, I have come to believe that the gospel itself is a catalyst that's going to shape the world we're living in.

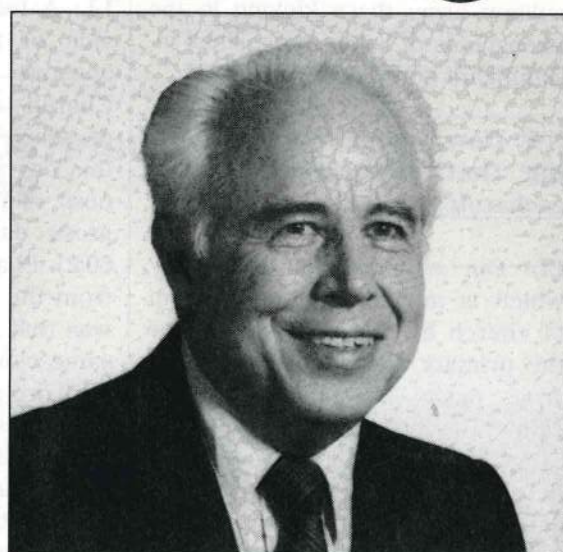
Is the Church Going?



John M. Miles



Karl Strader



Ken Sumrall

God is not going to rapture a Church that's being beaten up by the devil, but a Church that has been actively establishing the kingdom of God on earth.

The 1970's were a time of "froth and bubble" among Charismatics, but the 1980's have brought a tremendous sobering to a lot of people. Along with that has come a sense that we need integrity and honesty, and the fruit as well as the gifts of the Spirit. To me, the fruit of the Spirit brings forth the holiness of the Church.

NW: How has a victorious eschatology affected the Church?

TL: God has called me to lead people in the ministry of praise. The new triumphant praise arising from the body of Christ is a clear indication there's been an eschatological shift in our thinking. We are looking at a positive future with the supernatural involvement of Almighty God, which is different from the way the old hold-the-fort-for-I-am-coming group saw the future. Another effect is that in al-

most every major charismatic organization I'm associated with there's a new social gospel dimension.

Jimmy Swaggart, for example, has a food program for the poor in Africa. Kenneth Copeland is working with the poor. My ministry is involved in helping the poor in the Soviet Union. Then there are men, such as Charles Simpson, who are being the salt of the earth in the political realm.

The passiveness of the early decades of this century has changed. Christian activism is rising up in the grass roots of the charismatic movement.

NW: How do Christians behind the iron curtain respond to the doomsday prophets?

TL: When I was in the Soviet Union recently, I had to console a pastor who had read one of the American doom-and-gloom books. He thought the American Church was going down the tubes and there was no hope for Russia anymore. The only hope they have is that America remains strong spiritually, and that

American Christians are believing God for miracles.

Granted, we've got problems. But when you look at where the Church is today compared to where it was twenty years ago, there are incredible improvements. A revival is going on today with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, supernatural signs and wonders, and evangelism.



LARRY LEA

New Wine: What do you see as the destiny of the Church?

Larry Lea: The Church today is a praying army. I've seen a vision of an army of intercessors that is literally, by the Spirit of God, going to pull down spiritual strongholds. We've already seen that happening in our church.

Those who believe the Church is a small group just holding the fort until Jesus comes are denying the overall teaching of the New Testament of a "glorious Church without spot or wrinkle." That belief

also annihilates the concept of what Jesus said about His Church: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). The Church is and will continue to be a militant army that's kicking in the strongholds of Satan, not a small insignificant group holding the fort.

NW: How is your church reflecting that victorious view of eschatology?

LL: Our emphasis is on prayer, which is not simply one element of church life. Prayer needs to be the primary focus of church life. Jesus said: "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Mt. 21:13). In the first ten chapters of Acts, the believers went from one place of prayer to the next, and in between worked miracles. That is normal Christianity, and that's where we're headed.

The warring aspect of Christianity is going to become more and more preeminent. Paul Billheimer, in his book *Destined for the Throne*, says that we're learning to rule and reign with Jesus in preparation for the heavenly state. So what we are doing in intercessory prayer is preparation for eternity.

I was in Washington, D.C., recently at Bishop John Meares's church, Evangel Temple. Every morning a thousand people got together for intercessory prayer. Someone from an activist newspaper said to me, "You guys are praying, but we're acting."

My response was, "True prayer will always lead to action." The prayer life of Jesus equipped Him to heal people and help people. We are not really praying unless we are doing the work of the apostles, who said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). Through prayer they received the revelation of how to act. As God's people pray, He will say to one, "Go into medicine," to another, "Go into politics," and to another, "Go

here." When you get that "go" from God, you can really go.

NW: What is your opinion of the so-called doomsday prophets?

LL: A lot of them are seeing one side of the truth. They see an apostate Church, a falling-away Church, and the unholy bride—all of which are real. Isaiah spoke of this day when he said, "The darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Is. 60:2). Pharaoh also faced darkness from the cloud, but the other side was that Moses had light from the same cloud. Isaiah continues, "But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

The doomsday prophets are seeing the truth, but it's incomplete without the other positive side. In this regard, I fear any form of holiness that separates itself from others in the body of Christ. That is not the holiness of Jesus, because Jesus was the embodiment of all holiness, yet He stayed with His disciples until the end.

The word of the doomsday prophets is not complete without my word. My word is not complete without their word. I have no problem in telling my congregation, "If you're not going to be holy and live under the dominion of Jesus, I give you the promise of God, which is misery, loneliness, famine, sickness, and death." But on the other side of that is, "If you submit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and walk in holiness under the banner of His law of love in the kingdom of God, then I promise you protection, light, freedom, dominion, wisdom, and overcoming in this life."



HOUSTON MILES

New Wine: What do you see as the destiny of the Church?

Houston Miles: Based on unfulfilled scriptural prophecies, I see the

Church becoming strong, influential, and very large. For example, God told Abraham in Genesis 13:16 that his descendants would be as the dust of the ground, impossible to number. In the New Testament, we find the same promise made to the Church: "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7 NKJ). We are Abraham's descendants, so the promise is to the Church. We're not yet as numerous as the dust of the ground, but a time will come when that will be true.

A similar promise is in Isaiah 54:2-3: "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch out the curtains of your habitations; do not spare; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations" (NKJ). Here the Bible tells us we should expand because there's going to be a spiritual population explosion. Based on scriptures such as those, I believe the Church has an outstanding future.

NW: Did you grow up with an optimistic view of the future?

HM: No, I'm from a Pentecostal background with a theology that took a defeatist mentality. Even our music portrayed that feeling. We sang whining songs: "If I can just make it in...." Only a chosen few would ever make it. Today's worship indicates new hope, new vigor, and a new outlook for the Church.

NW: How does that hope for the future affect your ministry?

HM: Our assignment is to bring the Kingdom into every area of society, such as government, business, education, and media. We've got to establish God's will on earth, and that means the Church, in teaching and worship, must portray itself as a victorious conqueror.

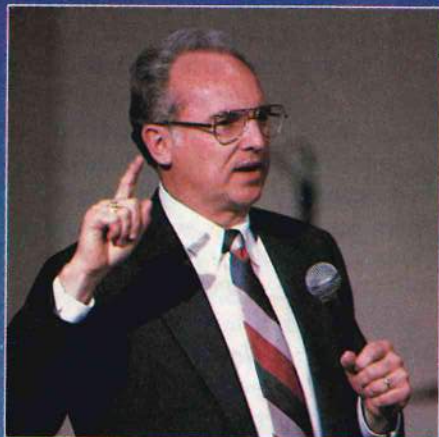


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God has given the keys of the Kingdom to us. We can't have a defeatist attitude. So in my church, I'm encouraging members to vote, to run for office, to get involved in their professions, and to be light and salt in every possible area. If Christianity in the first century could turn the world upside down, Christianity in the twentieth century can do the same.

NW: Where does a negative view of the future come from?

HM: A lot of that is based on situations where Christians are a minority, and the forces of evil seem to be so powerful. But when you read the Word of God and see in the Spirit that the Church is turning the corner, you have a renewed hope that a revival that's going to bring in a great harvest will take place.

There might be a false church and a great falling away in the last days, but at the same time the true Church will experience the greatest revival in Church history. However, as we read in the Book of Joel, in chapter 2, restoration must come to the Church prior to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on "all flesh." The Lord has to get us ready for what's around the corner. He is going to raise up a remnant, a Church that will conquer and be part of the end-time revival that's going to come, and when He does, membership is going to explode and will make a worldwide impact.



KARL STRADER

New Wine: Where do you see the Church going?

Karl Strader: I see two things developing side by side: The dark is getting darker and the light is getting lighter. I see a near bankrupt economy, an increase in natural disasters and crime, and sin becoming more wicked than ever. But I

also see the Church increasing in strength and influence, and a great revival on the horizon. This next big wave will be bigger than anything we've seen, and signs and wonders will accompany the Word, confirming it and exalting the name of Jesus Christ.

The Church is going to forget its fences, and people are going to come together in a united front to heal the Church of its brokenness, and to flow together in a total body ministry. Ministers will be servants, and lay people will pray for the sick, cast out devils, and preach the Word everywhere they go.

I do not see anything that smacks of doomsday. I see a joyful, victorious Church that has a nondefeatist attitude, a Church that doesn't know what the word *retreat* means. I see pure and godly people who are dedicated to the Word.

NW: What specifically is your church doing about its view of the future?

KS: For many years I have stayed away from things such as politics, but God is changing me. I have been quiet too long, and I'm repenting, asking God to forgive me. The people in my congregation have been ready for my change for a long time. But we're not being careless about our involvement in the political arena. We have consulted our attorneys, and we're going to the limit on speaking out on moral issues, and giving people knowledge about candidates. We are also encouraging individuals to participate in politics.

God is also raising up people with a burden for prison ministry, for inner-city ministry, for ministry to various ethnic groups, to down-and-outers, and to the elderly. We are making an effort to get the gospel to every strata of society.

NW: How do you respond to those who say the Church is a dying institution?

KS: Any doomsday message for God's people turns me off and grieves my spirit. We've got the brightest future that anyone could have. We enter into the Kingdom through much tribulation, so it doesn't matter to me whether I go through the great tribulation. The only problem I have with people who don't believe in a pretribulation rapture is that I think they're putting something ahead of the coming of the Lord. No one knows when Jesus is coming back; we should all have our bags packed and ready to go. But I'm not going to stand on a mountain in my white robe waiting for Him. I'm going to be going ninety miles an hour when He comes. I don't advocate that everyone has to believe in a pretribulation or a posttribulation rapture, but I think everyone ought to be a "pan-tribulationist"; when Jesus comes back, everything will just "pan" out all right.



KEN SUMRALL

New Wine: What do you see as the destiny of the Church today?

Ken Sumrall: I believe the destiny of the Church is glorious, and it will demonstrate the power and love of the kingdom of God before the end of this age. A lot of my early eschatology was a reaction to the social gospel. I knew the Scripture commanded us to evangelize, but I didn't have much hope of changing the country's moral climate. I believed Jesus was going to come and take us away from it all. I've changed gradually from that position to one of involvement in efforts to change communities by intercession, by placing Christians in the marketplace and in strategic political offices, and of course, by preaching the gospel of Christ; and the people I have led have changed with me.

I'm still a premillennialist. I do not think the Church is going to

conquer physical death prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The Bible says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But at the same time I'm not at odds with those who believe that when the Church reaches maturity, Jesus will say "enough" and the trumpet will sound for the resurrection. Honestly, I see through a glass darkly on this issue.

I believe that the victorious Church will be meek servants who are bold through intercessory warfare, and that God will reveal to them what He revealed through Elisha to his servant: There are more angelic beings for us than there are against us. They're waiting for us to break through spiritually so that God can order them to make changes, or at least to change circumstances.

I also believe that we're going to reap the greatest harvest ever, and that we're going to turn the world upside down, influencing society and reigning in many areas of the world. The political world can be changed, not like the crusaders and zealots tried to do with carnal weapons, but as the Church becomes victorious through intercession and demonstrations of God's power.

NW: How is your church reflecting a victorious view of eschatology?

KS: We believe that when Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14), He was referring to demonstrating the Kingdom, not just preaching it. So we have asked God to show us our role in the community and around the world.

According to Jesus, we are the salt of the earth and are to "occupy (take territory) until He comes." Therefore, we are trying to influence elected officials, educators, the military community, business and professional people, and all

ethnic groups in Pensacola. I have a particular burden to raise up leaders who will challenge black men to take a strong fathering role in their families. We also are helping homeless and street people, and are taking a stand against abortion, pornography, and gay rights. We also are sending missionaries into many countries to make disciples of the Lord Jesus.

NW: How do you respond to teaching that says the Church is a lonely outpost surrounded by a hostile society, and is doomed to extinction?

KS: Just the opposite was spoken by Jesus: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). Paul describes the Church as being glorious and without blemish. John the apostle describes the last-generation Church as a gorgeous bride who has made herself beautiful. I believe the world will become worse and worse while the Church becomes better and better.

The wrath of God will eventually fall on the wicked world, but indications are right now that the Church is changing in a positive way. President Reagan is not strong in local church ministry, but he is making an impact on our nation's moral standards, helping to return it to Judeo-Christian principles upon which it was founded. Between good government and good church (and hopefully good Christians are in both), we will manifest the principles of the kingdom of God. Our King will come for a victorious Church that will overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by loving not their lives unto death." □

Scriptures marked NKJ: From The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

Next Month in New Wine: The Incarnation and the Nations

Charles Simpson explains that the Incarnation was God's "divine rescue mission." The Father sent His Son to save man from his sins, a fact that has eternal implications.

Ern Baxter adds that when God sent His Son, He rescued not only individuals, but entire nations. Ern says that before Christ's second coming, nation after nation will turn to Him.

Arthur Wallis, author of *China Miracle*, chronicles the revival sweeping a seemingly impenetrable stronghold—the People's Republic of China.

All in the December *New Wine*

Remember: Friday, November 7, is a national day of prayer and fasting.

This month, please focus your prayers on the November elections:

- That voters would get informed about candidates and issues.
- That voters would turn out for elections in record numbers.
- That the weather would be good on election day.
- That righteous, God-fearing men and women would be elected.

"When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan" (Pr. 29:2 NAS).

The Forgotten Progress of the Church

An antidote to the doctrine of defeatism

It has become the common belief among many evangelical Christians today that the world is quickly sinking into a dark night of doom and despair. Immorality, the breakdown of the family, world wars, communist aggression, humanism in the schools, economic crisis and energy shortages have all been viewed as telltale signs that the end is near. Most Christians today, at least in the U.S., have resigned themselves to the idea that growing evil must dominate the earth until Jesus Christ returns to save His Church.

Similar thinking was circulating among Christians in England during the mid-1800's, although it was certainly not as readily accepted. But Charles Spurgeon, who is admired today as one of the world's greatest theologians, thought that the doomsday philosophers would do the world a service by keeping quiet. He wrote in his commentary on the Psalms in 1874:

David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for a day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Savior, shall worship Thee alone, O God, "and shall glorify Thy name." The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the Church for missions, and the sooner it is to be shown unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honors God, nor inspires the Church with ardor. Far hence it be driven.¹

Awful Sin and Corruption

When evangelist John Wesley arrived in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in May of 1742, he witnessed awful sin and corruption among the people. "I was surprised," he wrote in his *Journal*, "So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before in so small a compass of time."²

But Wesley's reaction to the Englishmen's moral state did not appear to him as some ominous signal of the end of the world. Because he believed that truth is more powerful than error, and that Christianity will ultimately conquer evil in this world, he remarked: "Surely this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"³

The history of Christianity's progress throughout the centuries has been forged by men and women who believed in the gospel's inherent power to vanquish sin and bring God's light and salvation to the entire world. Today, if we desire to continue in that path of reformation that these heroes of the faith pioneered, we must take heed to Spurgeon's admonition and drive this faith-quenching doctrine of defeatism from our midst.

Throughout the Scriptures, we are constantly reminded that the Church will ultimately triumph on earth and that the gospel will one day permeate all of society. Jesus Himself told us that His kingdom would gradually take root and spread to all the nations just as leaven spreads through dough—"until it is all leavened" (Matthew 13:33). The prophets of the Old Testament saw a day approaching when "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

Of the Church it is said that "nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:3)—speaking of the day when the influence of Christianity will eventually affect the civil realm throughout the



h e Gospel

by Lee Grady

world. The Psalmist records that the Lord will eventually cut off all of His enemies, and give the inheritance of the earth to His righteous ones (Psalm 37). The prophet Daniel saw the growth and progress of the kingdom of God as a stone

"that became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:35).

Yet despite the clear message of the Scriptures, doomsday prophets continue to pronounce that it is too late to rescue the world from destruction. They come to us, as the ten spies who went into Canaan, to report that the gospel is insignificant and weak in the sight of the towering giants of wickedness that currently inhabit the land.

Why is it that we modern day Christians have such a difficult time believing that the gospel can and will conquer the earth? Why are we such easy prey to this message of doubt and unbelief? Why do so many of us tend to side with the ten spies who bring the bad report, rather than with the Joshuas and Calebs who say, "We should by all means go up and take possession of the land, for we shall surely overcome it" (Numbers 13:30)?

Forgotten Progress

Much of our problem is rooted in the fact that few Christians today understand *the progress of the gospel in history*. Because we are ignorant of what God has done in the past, we have forgotten His works and cannot see what great strides He has already made to bring about His righteous rule on the earth.

When Jesus Christ began His ministry, He clearly stated His purpose by reading a portion of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:17-19).

When Jesus spoke of the "captives," He was referring to all mankind, which was at that time enslaved to sin. Jesus came to free us all individually from the power of sin so that we could come into right relationship with God. But

Jesus' mission was not limited to personal reformation—He was also promising civil freedom, along with all the social and economic blessings that the gospel can bring to society. He knew that, as men became free from sin, they would eventually establish governments, institutions and economies that would be based on moral virtue and biblical law.

This is God's intention...not that men would simply find personal freedom in Christ and eternal life in heaven, but that we would order society according to His principles and take dominion over the earth for His glory. He wants our personal reformation to be visibly and externally expressed in the reformation of society. God plans for all nations to eventually become Christian nations. He desires that His invisible heavenly kingdom be established practically and manifestly among men on this earth.

Jesus commanded His followers to "disciple the nations," and He promised that wherever the gospel is preached, signs and wonders would follow. Such signs and wonders are not necessarily limited to the miracles of healing and personal deliverance that the gospel brings to individuals. It also includes the social transformation that is a direct result of the gospel's influence. Whenever the Christian message has taken deep root in a nation or specific locality, the subsequent social, economic, and political benefits that have followed are truly a sign, a wonder and a witness of the validity of God's truth.

Rulers Will Turn to Him

Although it is hard to imagine a day when no tyrannical governments are on the earth, the Bible tells us that a day is coming when the world's rulers will turn to Him (Psalm 138:4). Corruption and oppression will be driven from the face of this planet, and the world's leaders will seek the Lord's wisdom and implement His principles in reforming their societies.



The modern day prophets of doom look at the onslaught of communism and tell us that we will one day be swallowed by this encroaching force. But is it not true that, for centuries, the whole world was completely enveloped by tyranny? Although Marxism as a doctrine is relatively young, communism as a form of government was a way of life for the whole world until the gospel began to bring civil liberty, first, in some degree, to England, then to the United States, and now to many other nations. Today, places which were once in the total darkness of paganism—nations like South Korea or Nigeria—are now experiencing a Christian revival.

Consider, for example, the progress of the gospel that has taken place in just a little over two hundred years: In 1778, only a few small areas of the map had any sizable proportion of evangelical believers. The Christian influence was limited to England, Scotland, parts of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, the thirteen American colonies, and a small area of southernmost Africa. Today, there is no portion of the world that does not have some percentage of its population embracing the gospel.

Africa is rapidly becoming a Christian continent—more than half of Black Africa now claims to be Christian. The growth of evangelical Christianity in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia continues at a rate far higher than the population growth. There are today more evangelical Christians outside the lands of the West than in them, even though two hundred years ago all evangelical believers were contained in the West.⁴

P. J. Johnstone, who compiled many similar statistics in his book *Operation World*, states that "the pessimism of many Christians in the West about the decline of Christianity is not based on reality."⁵

The progress of the gospel has always been gradual, to be sure, and rarely as sensational as the

supposed advancement of God's enemies. But it is slow because God Himself is testing it for its permanence and enduring value. The wicked can sprout up on every side in the morning, and be destroyed by evening; communist regimes and ungodly rulers can have their heyday and then disappear. But all the while, the gospel of Jesus Christ is steadily taking more ground, ever moving toward its ultimate goal of ruling the nations with its benevolent influence.

We Have a Choice

This, of course, does not mean that we can simply sit in idleness and watch the progress of the gospel. If we believe the promises concerning dominion, then we will act on them. Although we must always acknowledge God's sovereignty, we must as well acknowledge that we are His co-laborers. History has proven that when the Church preached the truth about God's ultimate intention for Christianity to conquer the world, the natural result was always a sweeping revival of world missions.

History also bears record, especially in this country in recent years, that when this view is not preached, and a pessimistic doctrine of defeat is substituted, the Church becomes impotent and weak in the face of ever-encroaching evil. As Iain Murray remarks in his work *Puritan Hope*:

Hope, then, respecting the future of the world must not be an expectation that God will work regardless of the failure of His Church, but rather that God will recall the Church and especially her ministry to that standard of full commitment to the gospel of Christ which Scripture commands.⁶

Think for a moment, Reader. Is it your dream to see the gospel spread throughout the continents of the world? Are you convinced

that the truth of Christianity will one day topple every opposition, and transform the darkest pagan land into a place where His light and blessings abound? And are you willing to give your life to see such a transformation take place?

Or, have you already resigned in defeat? Do you find yourself rejoicing when you hear of things getting worse and worse, somehow thinking that this is God's will? Have you been content to only save a few souls from hell, while hell's forces bring more and more havoc to the world around you? Are you cowering before the armies of the Philistines—or are you willing to stand up before the taunting giant and challenge his authority?

The issue is not so much one of doctrine. It is a question of faith: How big is your God? Is anything too hard for Him? Is He able to conquer the world and bring the nations under submission to His government and benevolent influence? How we answer those questions will determine how much progress Christianity will make in our generation. □

Footnotes

¹Charles Spurgeon in *The Treasury of David*, 1874, in Iain Murray's *The Puritan Hope* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1971), p. XIV.

²Ibid., p. XX.

³Ibid.

⁴P. J. Johnstone, *Operation World: A Handbook for World Intercession* (Bromley, Kent England: STL Publications, 1978), p. 25-26.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

⁶Murray, p. 233.

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Lee Grady is managing editor of *The Forerunner*, a publication of Maranatha Christian Churches.

One of the most critical questions facing Christians today is, How do you see the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth?

Many see it as irrelevant and dying, suggesting that perhaps the quicker the Antichrist comes and tribulation envelopes the world, the better off everyone will be, for then follows the rapture and the final solution to everything. After all, proponents of this theology reason, we can't polish brass on a sinking ship, or why arrange deck chairs on the *Titanic*? In this kind of classic end-time thinking, every gross manifestation of evil is seen as increased evidence of "the soon coming."

On the other hand, the faith of the Church fathers and the Reformers was victorious with a triumphant Christ revealed in His Church. That victory was to be experienced by the believer in his own lifetime and was indeed the hope of the Church!

Ideas have consequences, so it does matter what we believe about the Church and the future. There is a deadly inertia that surrounds biblical ideas, especially the ones that are not quite centered in complete biblical accuracy. Once some mass of opinion, such as the "failing-Church syndrome," begins to gain momentum, it is nearly impossible to stop or even turn it. Disproving it biblically seems to do little to change anything or anyone. Nevertheless, each person's responsibility is to search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.

My Own Search

In my own search, some years ago I ceased using "proof texts" (compiling a mass of Bible evidence to "prove" a theory is true or not true) because the Bible is a whole book, Old Testament and New Testament, written by one God. He used an amazing variety of human instruments who each wrote from a given perspective. My conviction is that the Scriptures are wholly

THE Failing-Church Syndrome

It does matter what we believe about the future of the Church.

by Bob Mumford



inspired and originally without error. The story from garden to garden is one redemptive story. The whole is organic in nature, that is, it all "hangs together" like a grapevine: roots, branches, leaves, and fruit. After some thirty years of studying the Scriptures in the original languages, I am continually humbled and brought to my knees by the marvelous integration and weaving of God's own purpose in every book as "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:21 NAS).

The simple fact is that the Bible is so written that as a whole it can interpreted and organized around

one theme. If we can grasp that, we can solve the problem of conflicting themes that all have ample proof texts. Take, for example, the biblical concept of covenant. The whole Bible could be arranged in orderly and understandable terms by using this one concept. As a result, we would have what is called "covenantal theology," a study of the Scriptures from covenantal principles.

Take another biblical concept, such as faith. We could arrange the whole Bible around the theme of faith to help and benefit millions of believers. The same is true of healing and miracles. We could also

arrange the Scriptures around money, and the result would be biblical economics. What an exciting study that would be, and how badly it is needed. Or we could arrange the Bible around psychology and human behavior, or perhaps spiritual warfare with its emphasis on Satan, demons, and the degradation of society.

The Biblical Theme

The problem arises not in studying the Bible by arranging it around a given theme, but in the tendency to make one theme *the* theme rather than *a* theme. It is the tendency to single out one theme to stand on its own rather than looking at it in conjunction with all the other themes. Many a theologian or Bible teacher has come up with *the* biblical theme based on salvation, the Kingdom, healing, the Holy Spirit, Israel, or another biblical concept. When faced with this approach to the Bible, we become uncomfortable, and our response, of course, is to immediately gather all the "other" scriptures that teach "other" themes.

Let us suppose for a moment that we arranged the whole Bible around these scriptures:

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3 NAS).

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control,

brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these (2 Tim. 3:1-5 NAS).

If we arranged the entire Bible around those two scriptures, we would soon begin seeing every headline on the evening news and in the paper as fulfilling that prophecy. Every violent and ungodly television show and every incident of nudity, pornography, divorce, and child abuse would be expected because of our "biblical" presupposition that this is what is expected to happen. We would never fight or resist evil because that would be equal to counteracting or resisting God's avowed and prophetic purpose.

A Negative Outlook

Our problem is not that the Scriptures are wrong, but that we have arranged the whole Bible with a negative outlook. We see everything as going to hell in a hand basket, whereas our responsibility is to be prepared for the rapture. That preparation, of course, is very personal and private between each believer and the Lord. Basically, we are preparing to leave, and are actually abandoning the world and its problems because "God said so."

What we believe really does matter. R. J. Rushdoony writes:

In the modern era, the Church, while numerically strong, has grown less and less influential and more and more peripheral to everyday life, to politics, economics, the arts and sciences, and all else. For most people, the Church is irrelevant to the "real world" of human affairs. It provides a limited moral training for children, a social focus for the family, and not much more. Churches have numbers, not strength. Both in membership and in leadership, the

churches are radically weak.¹

I have struggled for many years to awaken mentally and scripturally out of this failing-Church syndrome that I have just described. As with many believers, my doctrine was taken secondhand, unexamined and unquestioned, because it was accomplished with multiple proof texts.

But what if we looked toward the future with a victorious perspective? After all, experts estimate there are some thirty million born-again believers in America. So what would happen if they all believed that they were destined to be salt and light in this society, and that it was possible to turn this nation toward God? Suppose those thirty million believed we could see godly men in office, that our judicial system could be influenced by God's law, and that the kingdom of God, for which we have prayed to come for so many years, would and could come in a measurable manner so as to fulfil the scripture that says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Pr. 14:34 NAS).

God's Ultimate Triumph

For us to see, experience, and move toward victory, we must be able to organize the whole Bible around the theme of God's ultimate triumph, Christ's victory in the human situation, and the power of the Holy Spirit to subdue a people until "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." I could do that, but then I would be going back to proof texts! Oh, well, here are a few:

There will be *no end to the increase* of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this (Is. 9:7 NAS, *italics mine*).

"And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, 'nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion *which will not pass away*; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14 NAS, italics mine).

"And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and *His kingdom will have no end*" (Lk. 1:33 NAS, italics mine).

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and *make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:18-19 NAS, italics mine).

"'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'that I will *pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind*; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams....And it shall be, that every one who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'" (Acts 2:17, 21 NAS, italics mine).

"Signs of the Times"

Today, more people are coming to the Lord than at any time in the history of the Church. If we are blinded by the failing-Church syndrome, we can look directly past that to any and every negative happening needed to confirm that things are getting worse.

Africa, with all its problems, is ablaze with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Hundreds of thousands are getting saved and nearly as many are being baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit. Argentina is under a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the same is happening on a smaller scale but just as dramatically in a few Moslem countries. The Far East is awakening to hear

the gospel of the Kingdom preached with signs following. The stories of a victorious Church in China are enough to make an unbelieving press reporter say to me, "This is indeed a miracle!"

On and on we can go, but if we put such reports in a category that says only God's love matters until the end, then we will never be able to take Christ's victory into the marketplace and political arena. We will never be able to disciple a nation unless we believe we will be here to do it. The renewal in its overall perspective restores biblical faith to the Church. Everyone involved in the renewal ought to be able to say by conviction, "America can be turned to God!"

Something good is happening at all levels of the Christian Church. Multitudes of men, churches, and whole movements are seeking to wash themselves mentally and spiritually of the failing-Church syndrome to find a new and fresh expectancy that will enable our God to work supernaturally for us in this complex human situation. Now, when faced with the question, "How do you see the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth?" they can answer with faith like that of the Church fathers and Reformers, and experience the victory of that faith in their lives. □

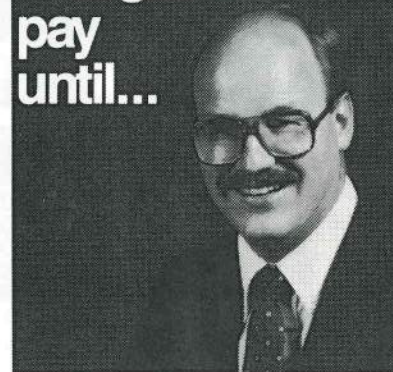
Footnote

¹R. J. Rushdoony, "The Failure of Secondary Education, Symposium on Christian Education," *Journal of Christian Reconstruction*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (Summer 1977), p. 96.



Bob Mumford has served as dean of Elim Bible Institute in Lima, New York, and as a pastor, evangelist, and seminar teacher. Bob, who travels widely in ministry to Christians of all backgrounds, has also written a number of books about the Christian life. He is a member of the Integrity Communications Board of Directors.

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

A historical look at eschatology
by R. J. Rushdoony

Eschatology, the study of end-time events, has always been a topic of great debate in the Church. Throughout the history of the Church biblical scholars have offered various theories about judgment, death, the end of the world, the second coming of Christ, and the millennium, the time when Christ will physically reign on the earth over His enemies. Those theories of eschatology are usually grouped in three broad categories related to the millennium:

Amillennialism is the belief that man's only earthly hope is in the Church. He should retreat into and build up the Church because the world is going to hell. Amillennialism has its roots in Augustine, who saw the Church as man's only shelter in a world destined to go from evil to greater evil. Although this theology has a high doctrine of the Church, it sees little chance for the Church to change society. For amillennialists, the millennium is figurative language; such an event will not take place literally.

Premillennialism, of which there are a number of varieties, is the belief that Christ will come to rapture His people out of a

world that in the absence of the Church will all but destroy itself because of its wickedness. At some later time, Christ will interrupt the destructive processes and return to establish on earth His physical reign with His saints. Christ's lordship and sovereignty are only made visible in the millennial reign.

Postmillennialism is the belief that Christ, with His coming, His atonement, and His continuing regenerative power in those whom He calls, creates in His redeemed people a force for the reconquest of all things. The dominion that Adam first received and then lost by his fall will be restored to redeemed man. God's people will then have a long reign over the entire earth, after which, when all enemies have been put under Christ's feet, the end shall come, and the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.

Today we see a renewed interest and some major shifts in eschatology. Because much of what evangelical Christians today believe has its roots in the Reformation, we asked R. J. Rushdoony, president of the Chalcedon Foundation, to give a brief view of how the eschatology of the Reformers developed.

There have been a number of periods throughout the history of the Church marked by a heightened interest in eschatology, the theology of final things: judgment, death, and, more specifically, the second coming of Christ. In an unhealthy sense, the interest at times has been in last things exclusively, in terms of the end of the world and escaping our problems. As a result, when men have been in crises, they have repeatedly run away from the crises by insisting that the end times are with us, and that Christ will return at any moment. That has been a cop-out from action again and again.

The precondition of both the Reformation (1517) and the Age of Discovery (beginning in the late 1400's) was a postmillennial theology, an outlook that came to focus in the various voyagers beginning with Columbus in 1492. A few years later, Luther and Calvin began their work, carrying on explorations into Scripture and faith.

We do not have to feel that Columbus was the best of men in all his ways. What we cannot escape is this: His private papers indicate he sailed westward because he believed in terms of Isaiah's prophecies there were isles in the west

that had to hear the word of the Lord. He took with him a Hebrew interpreter, thinking that perhaps some of the lost tribes were in these new lands. He definitely believed he had a mandate to find the lost isles of the west, to preach the gospel to the people there, and to bring them under the dominion of Christ. Almost all the explorers had like religious motives.

The idea that they went out *only* in search of gold or wealth is not true—not that they weren't ready to turn a profit if they could but they also felt *called* to go out and extend the sway of the gospel. Those men believed they had a mandate to exercise dominion over the whole earth. The Age of Discovery could not have taken place without that postmillennial tendency as a matter of popular belief. The same popular surge of postmillennial thinking led to the Reformation.

End-of-the-World Thinking

Prior to the Reformation, there was also on the popular level a great deal of interest in the end of the world because of the troubled times. An interest in the end of the world, however, is different from an interest in what the Lord teaches in Scripture: Daniel, Revelation, or Matthew chapter 24. Such concern over the end of the world is an interest in getting out of problems. On the popular level, there was a great deal of interest in the end of the world toward the latter part of the medieval era, from about 1350-1550. We must remember that the black death came, and then a number of social disorders and displacements, so that by the time of the Reformation more than a few people had convinced themselves the end of the world was near and was man's only escape from problems.

Among the Anabaptists (during the Reformation era), a couple cases of extremism of a frightening sort resulted from this kind of eschatology. At Munster in 1534, such Anabaptists seized power and

instituted tyranny, polygamy, and an elite rule by self-styled prophets with claims to special revelations. Most Anabaptists quickly changed their course, and we have them today in such surviving groups as the Amish, Mennonites, and Quakers.

As a result, the Reformers were not interested in end-of-the-world thinking. In Germany, because of such disturbances, Lutheran circles maintained a general distrust of the entire subject of eschatology, and Lutherans since Luther's day have tended to regard the subject as one better left alone. Of course, that is a serious error, because Revelation closes with a statement that there is a blessing in reading that book, for coming to know it and understand it. Thus, we have a remarkable promise in Revelation of blessings if we study and apply its meaning.

Calvin never wrote a commentary on Revelation. However, he did comment on eschatology in his *Commentaries on Isaiah*, which is a postmillennial book. As a result, this gave for some generations an unprecedented vitality to the Calvinistic churches, which were unique at the time of the Reformation in that they had no powerful state behind them. The Episcopal Church was the Church of England, the Catholics had great states, such as France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire, behind them, and the Lutherans had various German princes. But the Calvinists had no such strong support of any great state. They applied their postmillennial dominion perspective in a dramatic way and were a force in Europe and then in England prior to and culminating in Cromwell's time.

The Rule of a Church

The Commonwealth era in England had as its goal the establishment of God's rule over England. Cromwell, one of history's great military leaders, saw the potential for England and made it a great power in his day. In domestic affairs, he was less successful,

because the solution as most Puritans saw it was the establishment of their church as the Church of England. The Presbyterians were in particular a major offender here. The rule of a church was substituted for the rule of God and His law. With the failure of the Commonwealth, Puritanism receded into pietism and lost its concern for social order and dominion.

Essentially what Cromwell and his Commonwealth represented continued in the English-speaking world and came to focus in the colonies and then in the American Revolutionary War. The war was definitely a product of the Edwardean revival of postmillennial dominion thinking. Prior to Jonathan Edwards, the Church had become pessimistic. But with Edwards, the confidence and victory were revived and they continued in this country throughout much of the last century.

Earlier, when the American colonists, overrun yearly by newcomers interested less in God's rule than their prosperity, became discouraged, they lapsed into other eschatologies and lost hope in making America God's domain. The Edwardean revival and the Great Awakening revived that hope in the mid-1700's.

Since World War II, as men have taken seriously the gospel's dominion mandate to disciple all nations, we have seen movements to bring education, civil government, welfare, law, and so on all under the lordship of Christ. We are in the early days of a Christian renewal of unprecedented scope, and it has a postmillennial character. Men are taking seriously the words of John: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). □



R. J. Rushdoony, a New Wine contributing editor, is president of the Chalcedon Foundation.

Say that you put your hope in the Second Coming of Christ, and you will inevitably meet disdainful skepticism. "An escape from reality," people will accuse. Marx called religion "the opiate of the people" with this very point in mind; by promising "pie in the sky," faith pacified the masses. They cared less about this world because they counted on another.

Christians today are tolerated, even valued, as long as they maintain charities or demonstrate on popular ethical issues such as, depending on your political loyalties, abortion, human rights, or nuclear war. But let them begin to talk about heaven and hell and Jesus' return, and they lose their audience. The problem is not just that people don't believe in eternal life; they may not believe in prayer either, but that doesn't prevent them from keeping respectful silence when invocations are offered. Prayer, if not helpful, at least does no harm, they think. But eternal life—that kind of dogma drains away commitment to this life. In extreme form it may make people spend their time banging tambourines instead of working. Citizens of another world are naturally less committed to this one.

So our critics complain, and unquestionably they are sometimes right. The Jesus Movement of the late sixties and early seventies was a case in point. In a spasm of apocalyptic enthusiasm, many "Jesus People" quit school, quit work, quit protesting the Viet Nam war, quit everything except worshipping God and trying to convince other people to join them as they waited for the world to end at any moment. Like similar spasms before it, this one faded away, and most of those who were involved went back to "normal" living—to honoring their parents, loving their neighbors, and building families and careers and churches. For most of them Jesus' arrival became a much more distant prospect.

WAITING

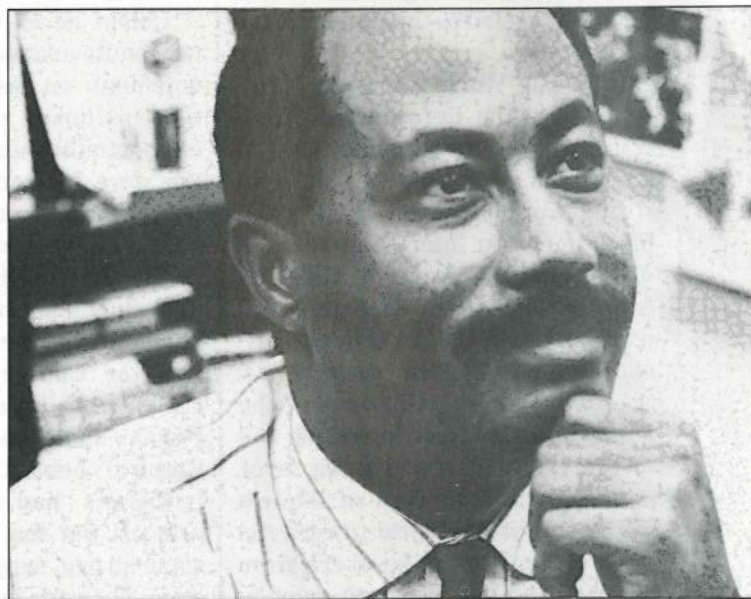
Does the good news of the second

by Tim

Avoiding Overenthusiasm

Luther said that worldly reform is like a drunken peasant trying to get on a donkey: he climbs up on one side and falls off on the other. Perhaps that is the case here. In wanting to avoid overenthusiasm, some of us have lost a fundamental insight into our world's future—and our relationship with God.

This problem of too much enthusiasm about the Second Coming does not seem to have occurred to the apostle Paul—or to any New Testament writer. In Paul's letter to the Colossians he refers to "the



faith and love that *spring from* the hope that is stored up for you in heaven" (1:5). He is talking about very practical and this-worldly faith and love, which create "a life worthy of the Lord, [pleasing] him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work" (1:10). Not only did he consider the Colossians' orientation toward heaven no obstacle to good works; he thought of it as their source.

Paul thought of the Second Coming in a different way than

most of us do. We think of it mainly in terms of cataclysm: war, resurrection, judgment. Paul thought of it primarily as a personal encounter. To Paul and to all the first-century Christians, Jesus was a human being before all else. There were men and women around who remembered him, who had taken trips with him and shared meals with him. So when they talked of Jesus' return, they thought of the return of a particular person. They did not think first and fore-

IN HOPE

and coming make a difference in your life?

m Stafford



most of the cataclysm that would come with him. They thought of him.

What is the end of this world all about? It is about Jesus, and it is about his people living in intimate love with him. "You eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed," Paul writes (1 Cor. 1:7). He refers to the end of our history—and the goal of our lives—as quite simply, "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

Paul uses longing as a synonym

for genuine faith: "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to *all who have longed for his appearing*" (2 Tim. 4:8). Paul could not have conceived of a Christian who did not long for Christ's coming or who hoped (as I have heard some hope) that Jesus delays his return until they have time to enjoy married life.

"Grandpa Is Coming"

Christian futurology is simple and personal. It is like saying to my children, "Grandpa is coming." Yes, Grandpa will arrive at a certain time via a particular means of transportation, but that is secondary. We can think about that later, if we need to at all. What matters is that Grandpa is coming and that we *will* enjoy him.

Paul put our situation most clearly in 2 Corinthians 5:6: "As long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord." That is as clear as, "As long as

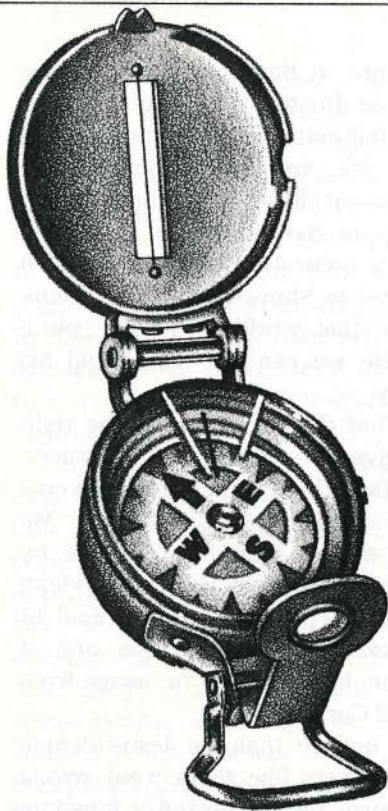
we are in San Francisco, we are not in Boston." We may long for the fall colors of a Boston autumn, but we are not going to see them—at least not more than a hint—in San Francisco, which is not a natural environment for fall leaves to show their colors. Similarly, this world is not the place where we can see God in all his glory.

That does not give us the right to give up on this world, however. In fact, Paul brackets the verse with his sense of confidence: "We are always confident...We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say...So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it" (2 Cor. 5:6-9).

I believe that the Jesus People and others like them went wrong because they expected a kingdom quite disconnected from this world. They did not see that the kingdom that is coming is already here, at work, visible for those with eyes to see. They could not imagine how to please the coming Jesus through any means other than warning people that he was coming. Who can blame them? The way Jesus' return is commonly talked of, you would never make any connection between our life in the future and our life today. The identification of the Antichrist? The role of computers in numbering people? The revived Roman Empire? What do these have to do with my life? But the Bible anticipates something far more personal: Jesus himself, coming to his family. When we concentrate on this perspective, we are in no danger of abandoning this world. For Jesus, in his healing compassion, has not abandoned this world he created. Rather, he holds it together; he has great plans for it.

The Urgency of Fear

When eschatology is used evangelistically, it capitalizes on the urgency of fear: "God is coming to judge and you are not ready."




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But most of the New Testament proclaims the Second Coming to *Christians* and with a different urgency—an urgency of expectation, not of fear. It is the expectation of seeing a loved one again, of being embraced in loving arms, of being rescued from darkness. And with this urgency of expectation comes a desire to please the long-awaited loved one. Thus, we work to prepare for his coming.

There is another kind of response to be considered, however. Some Jesus People, hearing that Jesus was coming, overreacted drastically. But many other people who say they believe that the kingdom of heaven is coming go right on living just as they always have. The good news seems to make no difference in their lives.

A friend, Jack Crabtree, has suggested an illuminating illustration of this. Suppose, Jack says, that you are a sixteen-year-old practicing basketball in your driveway when an angel appears to you and delivers a message about the future. "Good news! You are destined to be a great basketball player. You will one day be Rookie of the Year in the NBA. You will go on to be recognized as one of the greatest players who ever lived!"

"So what's the catch?" you ask.

"Nothing. This is a free gift from God."

Suppose that the angel managed to convince you that he was a real angel and that the message was absolutely unconditional and supernatural. Would it make you practice basketball more, or less?

That would depend on what your heart longed for. If the angel had merely happened to find you practicing basketball out of boredom, if you didn't really care much for the game, his message would have little impact. In fact, it might make you less interested. "Hey, great. That'll be fun. I'll look forward to it." And you'd go off and do the things you really wanted to do. After all, you were guaranteed success whether you practiced or not.

But suppose you lived and breathed and dreamed basketball. Suppose the greatest joy you had ever dared imagine was being NBA Rookie of the Year. Then how would the message affect you? It would, I believe, release you to work harder at your game. You would lose that sense of discouraged uncertainty that afflicts people: "What's the use? I'm just kidding myself that I can be good at this." Instead, you would know that every moment you practiced was preparation for the very thing you longed for. When you made a basket, you would say, "I'm on the way!" When you missed one, you could shrug your shoulders, grin, and say, "Well, I still have a way to go, don't I?" Because your mistakes were merely transitional, you could forgive yourself for them.

Winners and Losers

I once heard an Olympic swimmer define the difference between a winner and a loser this way: "A winner dives into the pool excited about the chance to win. A loser dives into the pool afraid that he is about to lose." Positive expectation does affect the way we compete, but only if we first care deeply about the game.

For example, I expect that I could be a good bridge player. I have a mind for the intricacies of games and learn them quickly. But nothing in all the world—even promise of a world championship—could induce me to practice bridge, because I do not care for card games. I am not interested in changing my life to be successful at something I care nothing about.

Plenty of people are in just this situation. They have been told they can go to heaven to be with God forever. They are glad to hear the news; after all, it is good insurance coverage for the future. Now they can stop worrying and get on with whatever they really care about—making money or becoming admired or outdressing their neighbors or hunting and fishing. They do

not really long for Jesus, so the promise of meeting him in heaven has little effect on their lives.

But the promise should have a far deeper effect on those who long for God. It should catch and hold their attention, forming a burning, joyful expectation that overshadows everything else. If they really believe that Jesus is coming—and and I am not sure most do really believe it—it should make Christians devote themselves to love because they believe that the King of Love is coming.

Rather than providing an escape from reality, the Second Coming clarifies the very nature of reality. Much of what we call "real" becomes insubstantial when seen in the light of Jesus. What will fame be worth for those whom the Everlasting One dismisses with, "Go away; I don't recognize you"? The enduring things will be those that have already the quality of heaven: love, and service, and especially adoration of the Lord. Some actions, seemingly insignificant, will prove to have been part of the secret thread of history in service of the unrecognized king. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

Not only does this have very practical implications here and now, but it helps us as we deal with the question: How do we resolve our double vision? How do we reconcile our longing for God with the dull facts of where we are? Now we can see that we cannot reconcile it and ought not try. Our unfulfilled desire has a point: it will motivate us to care about living faithfully. For only those who ache to be great basketball players will practice more, not less, as they see their greatness on the horizon. Only those who ache to be with Jesus will do his will more, not less, as they wait for his arrival.

Here and now we do not have Jesus as we want to have him. But rather than trying to do away with our uncomfortable unfulfillment, we

should let ourselves feel most deeply what we miss. We should allow ourselves to dream of Jesus' full presence as we prepare for his coming.

The Second Coming is not the end of history; it is the fulfillment of history—a history we are now making. The King is coming. Let the kingdom prepare. □

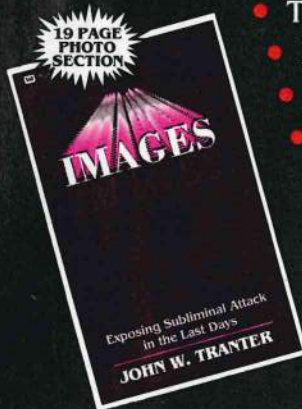
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Tim Stafford is a writer from Santa Rosa, California. He served as editor of Campus Life magazine and as a missionary in Kenya with Youth for Christ.

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Wheat and

Good and evil will grow
but only one will

by Glen R. Ro

Early last spring, my wife, Roberta, decided to plant a garden. We began by terracing part of our property, and then added topsoil, mulch, fertilizer, and other nutrients to the soil. After we planted our crop, we built a fence around the garden to keep the rabbits out. When the gate was finally hung, Roberta was excited, knowing it would not be long before she would see tomatoes, green beans, squash, and other vegetables poking through the dirt. Her anxious longing never would have produced the garden, but after the necessary work was done she knew she would see the fulfillment of her desires.

So it is with the Church. Jesus said the gospel of the kingdom of God must be preached throughout the earth, and only then will the end come. Paul wrote, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19 NAS). But our anxious longing can be satisfied only when we have done our work, the sowing of the seed of the gospel of the Kingdom.

The Church has a multitude of desires and plans, but successful actions call for clear focus. All that we do must be motivated by the ultimate victory of Christ in the earth. God requires each of us to invest our lives in a purpose greater than our individual concerns.

An Assured Dominion

In Scripture the dominion of Christ's kingdom and His Church is assured. In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus reaffirms His absolute proprietorship of the earth in the context

of the end of time. He says that the coming of the Son of Man will be "like the days of Noah" in which God managed His creation as He pleased by saving the righteous and destroying the wicked. David sang, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (Ps. 24:1 NAS). Jeremiah prophesied:

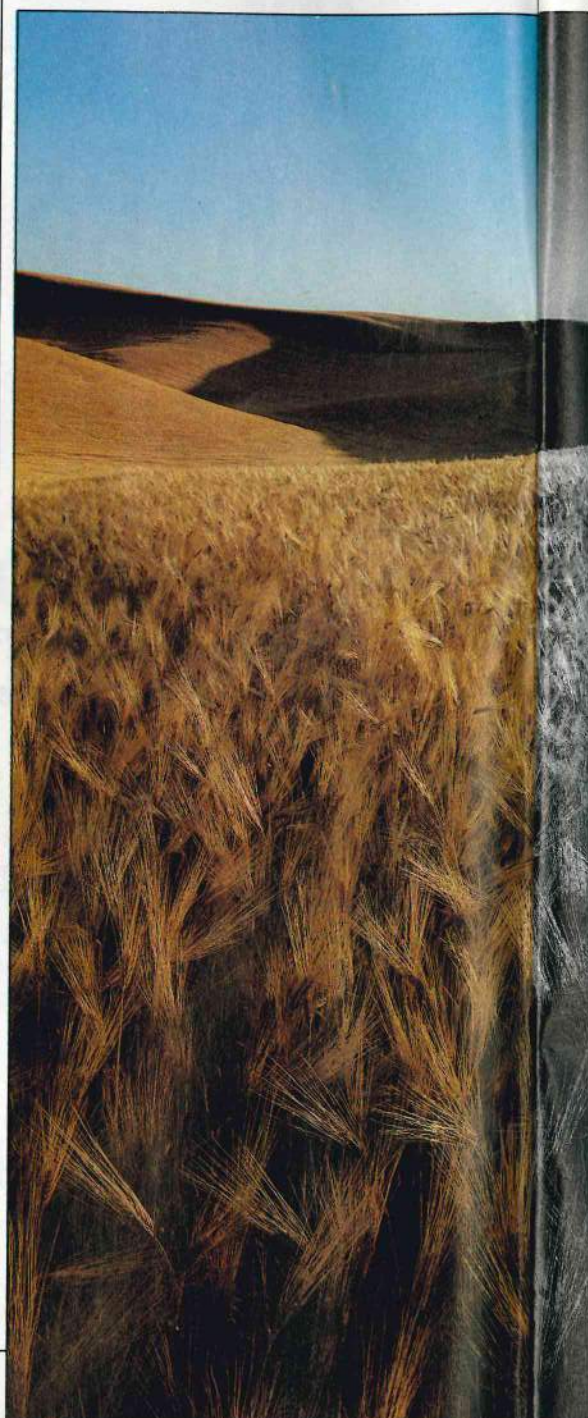
"I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight" (Jer. 27:5 NAS).

And the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians:

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him (Col. 1:16 NAS).

Scripture undeniably asserts the absolute lordship of our Savior over the earth, a fact that will be proven as history is completed. Scripture also gives those who labor hope, because it reveals the destiny of both the righteous and the unrighteous.

When our Lord referred to Noah in Matthew chapter 24, He reminded us that the wicked were removed from the earth. Another reference to Noah in the book of Hebrews says that God warned him about things not yet seen, and in reverence he made preparations. When



Wheat and Tares

grow up together
will triumph.

Roachelle



the fullness of time came, the wicked were removed and Noah became an heir of righteousness, left again with the charge from God to rule and subdue the earth (see Hebrews 11:7). In the parable of the wheat and the tares, God removes from His glorious kingdom every stumbling block and every lawless man and casts them into the fire while the righteous shine forth as the sun in His kingdom (see Matthew 13:41-43). The destiny of the unrighteous is evident; they will die.

The Final, Universal Religion

The destiny of the righteous is demonstrated by what happened to Noah and by Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares: Noah became an heir of righteousness and Jesus said the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom. Such an assurance of our destiny should shape the way we think and respond. In his book *Paradise Restored*, author David Chilton writes:

Our life and worship should reflect our expectation of dominion and our increasing capacity for responsibility. It is the devil who is on the run, and it is paganism which is doomed to extinction. Christianity is ultimately the dominant culture, predestined to be the final and universal religion. The Church will fill the earth.¹

We know the destiny of the righteous, but as with the farmer who sows and then has to wait for the harvest, we must be patient.

Jesus said, "Allow both (the wheat and the tares) to grow together until the harvest" (Mt. 13:30 NAS). The nature of each seed will ultimately become evident.

In our society there is legal protection allowing the wheat and tares to grow side by side. But as the harvest matures, we will see the tares for what they are. We're already beginning to see that all forms of humanism, such as, socialism, hedonism, perversion, atheism, spiritism, and communism, are bankrupt. They have nothing that nourishes or endures.

On the other hand, the righteous, those born of the seed of the Word of God, can rest in confidence that they will flourish. In the parable of the wheat and tares the field is the world; it belongs to the Lord and He is the proprietor. The seed the man sowed was divinely potent and had an eternal purpose. Likewise, the gospel is dynamic; it has power to save, and those who preach it will constantly bear fruit and increase (see Colossians 1:6). The righteous know that the harvest will come forth.

Crowning Glory of Creation

The culmination of the harvest will be the revelation of the sons of God when the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. From the beginning, humanity was to be the crowning glory of God's creation. He placed Adam and Eve in the earth as the final adornment of the splendor of His creation. John wrote, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16 NAS). It is interesting

BOOKS OF INTEREST

The Case Against Pornography by Donald Wildmon (Victor Books, 1986, 204 pages, \$6.95). If you're convinced that the hoopla against pornography is a trumped-up charge, read this book. If you're only mildly interested in the subject and don't want to be offended, avoid it. Wildmon has done his homework and presents an airtight case against even soft-core porn, accurately showing how it invariably leads to hard-core.

The Divided Flame by Howard Snyder (Zondervan Publishing House, 1986, 120 pages, \$6.95). Written by a Methodist for Methodists. A helpful book for Methodist Charismatics who want to learn more about the roots of their theology.

Judgment in the Gate edited by Richie Martin (Crossway Books, 1986, 167 pages, \$6.95). Bill Bright, Franky Schaeffer, Melody Green, and other well-known Christian leaders who speak out on pornography, humanism, bias in the courts, and other contemporary issues call the Church to awaken.

The Pastors' Barracks by Robert Wise (Victor Books, 1986, 200 pages, \$11.95). A compelling novel based on the real-life experiences of a German minister who survived five years in Dachau concentration camp, where ten percent of the prisoners were clergymen.

When You've Been Abused by Andre Bustanoby (Here's Life Publishers, 1986, 60 pages, \$2.95). Hope for the estimated one in four people who have experienced the trauma of incest. Includes how to forgive and be free, and how to trust again. □

to note that the same Greek words used for *world* in that verse appear in 1 Peter 3:3, where they are translated "adornment." It could be said that Christ's sacrifice was to redeem and restore the adornment of God's creation. As adornment, the righteous shall shine forth as the sun.

With the revelation of the sons of righteousness, all of creation will be released from bondage. Commentary writer Handley Moule said of Romans 8:19 ("The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God"):

The ultimate and eternal manifestation of Christ Mystical, the Perfect Head, with His perfected members, will be the occasion, and...cause...of the emancipation of nature...from the cancer of decay and its entrance on an endless aeon of indissoluble light and splendor.²

Until that glorious emancipation, the righteous must see that the devil has no right to creation. As one Methodist preacher said, "The devil is a squatter, one who settles on land he has no right to and works it for his own advantage."³

Delivering Creation

"We are not engaged in attempting to wrest something from one to whom it belongs," writes G. Campbell Morgan in *The Gospel According to Matthew*. "Our toil and conflict are directed rather toward bringing back to the rightful owner that which belongs to Him."⁴

Knowing that the future belongs to the righteous, we are able to seize the opportunities for delivering creation that are before us. Ours must not be the longing of escapists for a rapture from responsibility. Rather, our anticipation of what lies ahead should give focus to our planning and discipline to our action, and should release our faith. It is faith that causes us to see what is not yet seen. John

wrote, "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2 NAS). The Church today is a "statue that is partly hidden, its proportions are partially visible, but we shall later discern its lustrous beauty and perfection, complete and unstained!"⁵

Faith enables us to persevere and overcome obstacles. The testimony of Abraham must be the testimony of the Church today.

With respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform (Rom. 4:20-21 NAS).

Because our destiny is sure, we must remain undaunted in our determination to press on and to lay hold of that for which God laid hold of us.

Faith also produces purposeful action. The Scripture says, "The people who know their God will display strength and take action" (Dan. 11:32 NAS). Our faith moves us to reach out to a world waiting for the revelation of God's kingdom and present it with a gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit, a gospel made credible by the testimonies of men and women whose lives have been touched by God, a gospel that when proclaimed will usher in the destiny God prescribed before the beginning of time.

A Fuller Consecration

Just as our anticipation of the future releases faith and produces purposeful action, it also shapes our response to Jesus Christ as Lord. It leads us to a fuller consecration to God and disentangles us from the world. Wherever Scripture speaks about the fulfillment of the ages, we are directed to purify ourselves and draw close to the Lord. "Every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3 NAS).

Ultimately, our anticipation of

the future must instill within us an unshakable confidence in the victory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28 NAS).

That familiar passage must be heard within the context of victory that leads up to the climactic declaration just a few verses later: "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (v. 37 NAS).

Although what we will be has not yet been made known, the Spirit whom the Father has sent into our hearts whispers of the coming state of larger possibilities and nobler joys. We are princes, kings, and heirs who have tasted of the powers of the age to come while living in surroundings that conceal our destiny. But our confidence in His ultimate victory and its glorious results forms our faith and shapes our investment in the harvest field. □

Footnotes

¹David Chilton, *Paradise Restored* (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1985), p. 218.

²Handley C.G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, Inc.), p. 226.

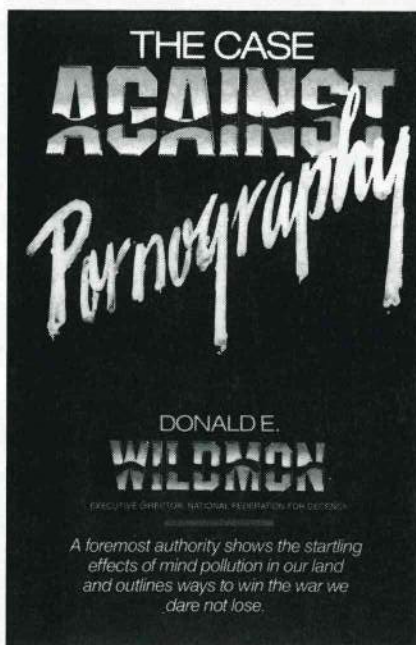
³G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1979), p. 154.

⁴Ibid. p. 152.

⁵*The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), Vol. 18, p. 249.



Glen Roachelle is senior pastor of Metroplex Covenant Church in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. He has an extensive regional and national pastoral ministry.



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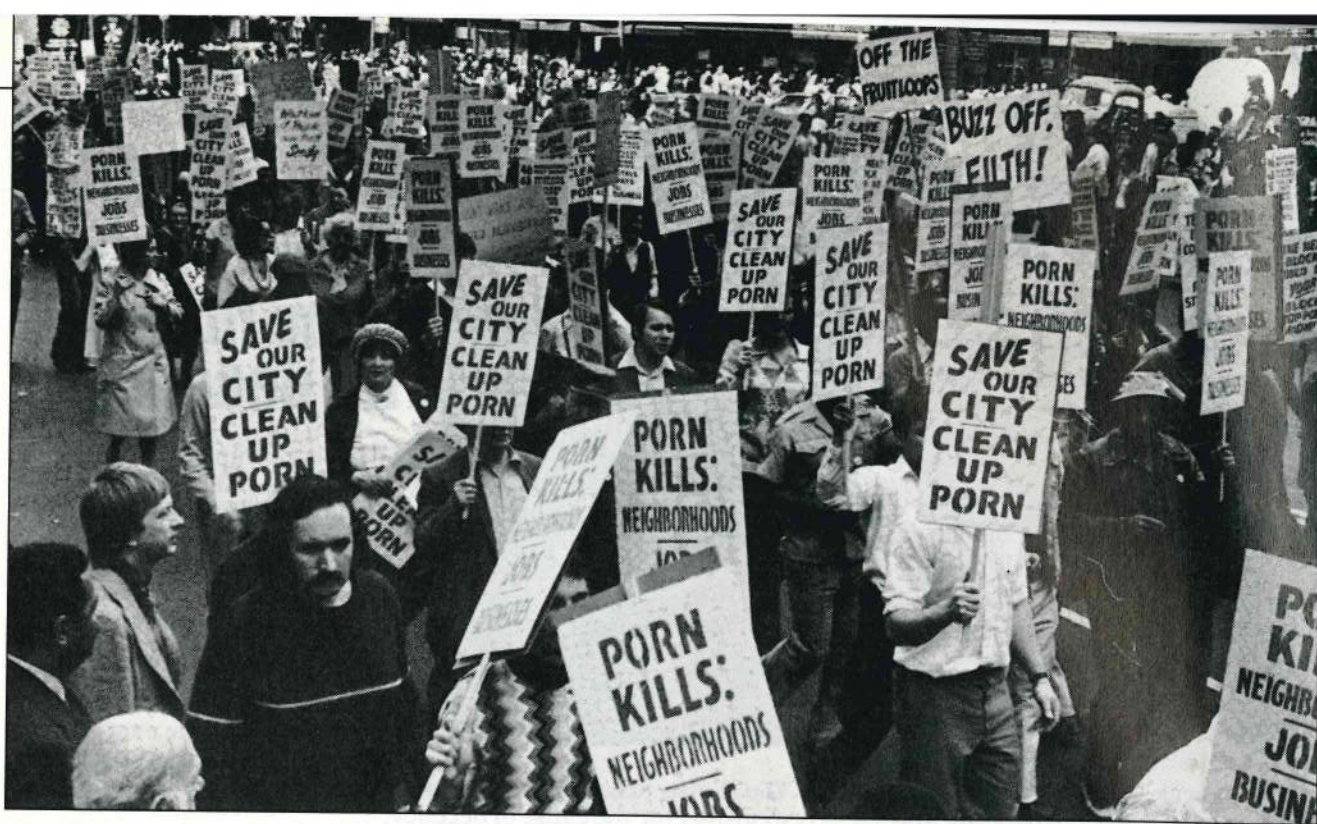
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The Little Platoons and the Big War

What the average citizen can do about pornography
by Charles Colson

Two recent developments in the decades-long struggle against pornography give us an instructive lesson in what really creates change in American society. After a year's descent into the murky world of smut, the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography surfaced. Its task, given by President Reagan, had been to study pornography and to "tell America what to do about it."

A tall order. The commission's charter took it into an arena where different perspectives passionately clash: the economic interests of the massive pornography industry; the concerns of civil libertarians, who see specters of censorship lurking in every paragraph; and the concerns of Christians, who see pornography as an odious symptom of widespread moral rot.

Pornography's adversaries have

pinned great hopes on the panel's recommendations. After all, working through the leverage of big government seems the most effective way to destroy such a widespread social cancer.

Pornography and Crime

As one of the nation's least-regulated industries (earning six billion dollars last year), pornography recognizes few standards except the increasingly perverse tastes of its clientele. Michigan police statistics show that pornography was involved in 40 percent of its sexual assault cases. The FBI Academy issued a report tracing pornography's role in fantasies prior to sexual murder.

The Meese commission, which included "Focus on the Family's" Dr. James Dobson, found similar evidence. Dobson said the job,

which included 12-hour days of wading through material such as "Pregnant Lesbians" and "Tri-Sexual Lust," was one of the most unpleasant experiences of his life. "I will never forget a particular set of photographs..." he says. "It focused on a cute, nine-year-old boy who had fallen into the hands of a molester. In the first picture, the blond lad was fully clothed and smiling at the camera. But in the second, he was nude, dead, and had a butcher knife protruding from his chest. I...thought I had seen it all. But my knees buckled, and tears came to my eyes...."

Christians should be grateful to James Dobson for taking on such a tough task. Because of his leadership, the report may now set the tone for national policies for years to come. The panel's report strongly supports the connection between

some pornography and violent crimes. It also recommends tougher prosecution practices, stronger federal laws, and the vigorous enforcement of existing obscenity laws.

But just because the report is finished doesn't mean the problem is solved. Even if these laudable proposals make it through the legislative process—and that will be tough going—extended court challenges can be expected. Balancing free speech against the right of public freedom from smut is a delicate business. Purveyors of pornography have prevailed in many court decisions in the past; and, as Barry Lynn of the American Civil Liberties Union has boasted, "There are enough constitutional questions here to litigate for the next 20 years."

Becoming Realistic

So, while we must keep fighting through litigation and legislation,

we must also be realistic: nothing in the record of recent years offers much hope that pornography's surging tides can be easily stemmed in the courts or the halls of Congress.

But, even as the commission was finishing its report, the pornography industry did suffer its first major blow in years—in a way that caught just about everyone by surprise.

When Jack Eckerd, founder of the Eckerd Drug chain, became a Christian in 1983, he gained a new perspective on the *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines sold in his stores. He called his company's president and told him he wanted the magazines out. The executive protested. Jack Eckerd persisted. Eventually all 1,700 Eckerd drug-stores dropped their copies of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*.

Eckerd wrote to the directors of other retail stores, encouraging

them to stop stocking the magazines. When his letters went unanswered, he wrote again.

Meanwhile, thousands of Christians, organized under the National Coalition Against Pornography, were taking their stand as well—through widespread picketing and a boycott of stores selling "adult magazines."

The pressure began to pay off. Like dominoes, stores began to remove *Playboy* and *Penthouse*: one by one, Revco, Peoples, RiteAid, Dart Drug, Gray Drug, and High's Dairy Stores all pulled pornography from their shelves.

And finally, last April, the last major hold-out gave in as well: 7-Eleven removed pornography from its 4,500 stores and recommended that its 3,600 franchises do the same.

Thus, without one debate before Congress or one case won in the courts, nearly 12,000 retail stores

A Campaign to Smear the Pornography Report

A group of publishers of pornographic magazines has hired Gray and Company, Washington, D.C.'s largest public relations firm, to help it with a campaign to smear the report of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.

Gray and Company's senior vice-president, Stephen Johnson, outlined the firm's proposals in a letter to John M. Harrington, executive vice-president of the Council for Periodical Distributors Associations (CPDA), the group that hired Gray and Company:

We propose...to further discredit the Commission on Pornography, the manner in which its members were chosen, the way in which it has conducted its deliberations, the highly political and biased way in which it has organized its findings and recommendations, and the deeper motives of those who have been

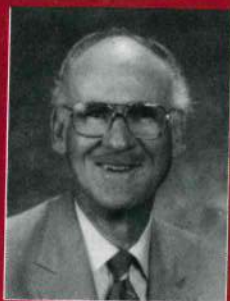
its most enthusiastic proponents.

Johnson's letter also says that a broad coalition of individuals and organizations, including academicians, civil libertarians, religious leaders, civic and community leaders, and politicians, needs to be organized to oppose the findings and recommendations of the commission. He suggests the new group be called Americans for the Right to Read or The First Amendment Coalition. Such a group would work to "dispel the notion that opponents of the Commission's work are only interested in protecting their own financial interests or are somehow 'pro-pornography.'" A spokesman for this new group, he says, would "help...the general public understand that the issue here is not 'pornography' but rather First Amendment freedoms."

The firm's strategy includes communicating that there is no factual or scientific basis for the "exagger-

ated and unfounded allegations" that pornography is directly related to violent, criminal behavior, that groups working to ban pornography are "socially harmful" because they divert attention from real economic and social problems, and that even if one does not read certain publications, others have a right to read them. The firm also proposes stressing its "right-to-read" tie-in with First Amendment rights by linking the efforts to the 1987 bicentennial of the Constitution.

Donald Wildmon, executive director of the National Federation for Decency, says CPDA has already formed a group, Americans for Constitutional Freedoms, to act as the lobby for the pornography industry. The lobby has already raised \$600,000, and has been endorsed by the National Coalition Against Censorship, a group that includes mainline Protestant denominations and the National Council of Churches. □



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have cleaned pornography from their shelves!

Playboy's lawyers, shocked at the blow, are arguing that a letter written from the Meese commission put coercive pressure on the stores. Maybe it did have an impact. But the real impetus came not from the government, but from the inexorable pressure of thousands of Christians and the courageous action of one man who was converted and immediately put his faith into practice, right in his own line of business.

This victory against a formidable foe has given many Christians a renewed vision—moral change is possible after all!

The 19th-century English political writer Edmund Burke would have applauded such strategy. He wrote about the value of "little platoons"—private, voluntary groups of people that shape the conscience of a country and accomplish far more than the machinations of big government.

In today's culture, obsessed with solutions that come from the top down, this is a radical notion. But, as the anti-pornography campaign makes clear, we don't need to place all our hopes in government. When we accept personal responsibility to act as salt and light, right where we are, the results can be spectacular. Our "little platoons," like Gideon's tiny band, can put the greatest armies to flight. □

Reprinted with permission from the August 1986 Jubilee, the monthly newsletter of Prison Fellowship.



Charles Colson is founder of Prison Fellowship, a ministry to prisoners, which he began in 1976 following his term in prison for his involvement in Watergate. He has written a number of books, including *Loving God and Who Speaks for God?*

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WASHINGTON WATCH

Can we make a lasting difference?

Christians in Politics

by Arne Christenson

With the midterm elections on November 4, evangelical Christians will have another opportunity to demonstrate their electoral power. Their rising influence, however, is not only being felt on election day. Throughout the year, Evangelicals across the country are getting involved as campaign employees, as volunteers, as consultants, and as candidates. They are part of the most dynamic movement in American politics today.

Yet that dynamism has not been without setbacks. This year's primaries have been a mixed bag for candidates with evangelical backing. While evangelical candidates have won important contests in states such as Indiana, other candidates have not fared as well. Representative Mark Siljander (R-Mich.), for example, a three-term congressman who was interviewed in the August issue of *New Wine*, was beaten by a challenger from his own party in the state primary on August 5. After a stunning showing earlier in the year, Pat Robertson also polled less than expected in Michigan's delegate selection process. Those results have fueled talk of an anti-Christian backlash.

It's not surprising that such a vital and diverse movement is experiencing some growing pains. As millions of Christians have streamed into the political arena, they have stepped on the toes of activists who were already there. Their rising influence has provoked opposition from within the political establishment, something that was especially evident in Representative Siljander's defeat. The advent of Evangelicals has brought new tensions to the political process, tensions that may

indeed hold the seeds of a backlash.

Whether that backlash really materializes, however, depends in large part upon Evangelicals themselves. To give their surge into politics the lasting impact they want, they will need both political skill and Christian integrity. Without skill they won't be successful; without integrity their success won't make a difference.

One of the hallmarks of political skill is the ability to forge firm and broad coalitions. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt formed a coalition that established the Democratic party as the majority party for a half century. That coalition was made up of a diverse group that included blacks, Jews, organized labor, Catholics, and the "solid South." At this pivotal moment, as that coalition is breaking up, Evangelicals need to help build an equally broad and successful coalition. That means balancing concerns about issues with a realistic assessment of the political landscape. One congressional candidate told me, "Too often, Christians look for a candidate who will vote with them only on a long line of issues. My advice would be, narrow your list of issues down to the essentials, and then pick a winner."

Besides building coalitions for elections, Christians will need to become more adept at working with those who are setting policy. Arlan Fuhr, a congressional campaign chairman who has been involved in politics for twenty years, says that influence depends on credibility: "You can't come storming into Washington for one day every year and expect to change things. You need to build a long-term relationship with your rep-

resentatives. Otherwise, you won't have credibility on the issues that matter to you."

Establishing coalitions and credibility is vital, but integrity and faithfulness will make the Christian impact lasting. In part, that means taking an unequivocal stance on important moral issues. But it also means holding to a standard of truthfulness in an arena filled with duplicity and hypocrisy. If Christians are really going to change the political process, they can't adopt tactics that are unscrupulous or rhetoric that is duplicitous.

In America, effective political influence is often won through gradual infiltration rather than a swift ascension to power. Infiltration is a slow, permeating process. As Christians begin to move into all levels of the political process—serving as volunteers in campaigns, registering voters, running for office, taking part in fund-raising, working in different areas of government—their presence will become a leaven that will change the country.

That change flows out of a grand vision, but it depends on faithful foot soldiers. Right now, there are Christians across the country who are finding out that politics often means stuffing letters, ringing doorbells, and making phone calls. As they learn the political trade, God is testing their dedication and faithfulness, waiting for the day when He can say, "You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much." □

Arne Christenson is a legislative aide to Representative Vin Weber (R-Minn.).

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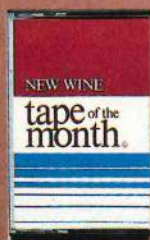
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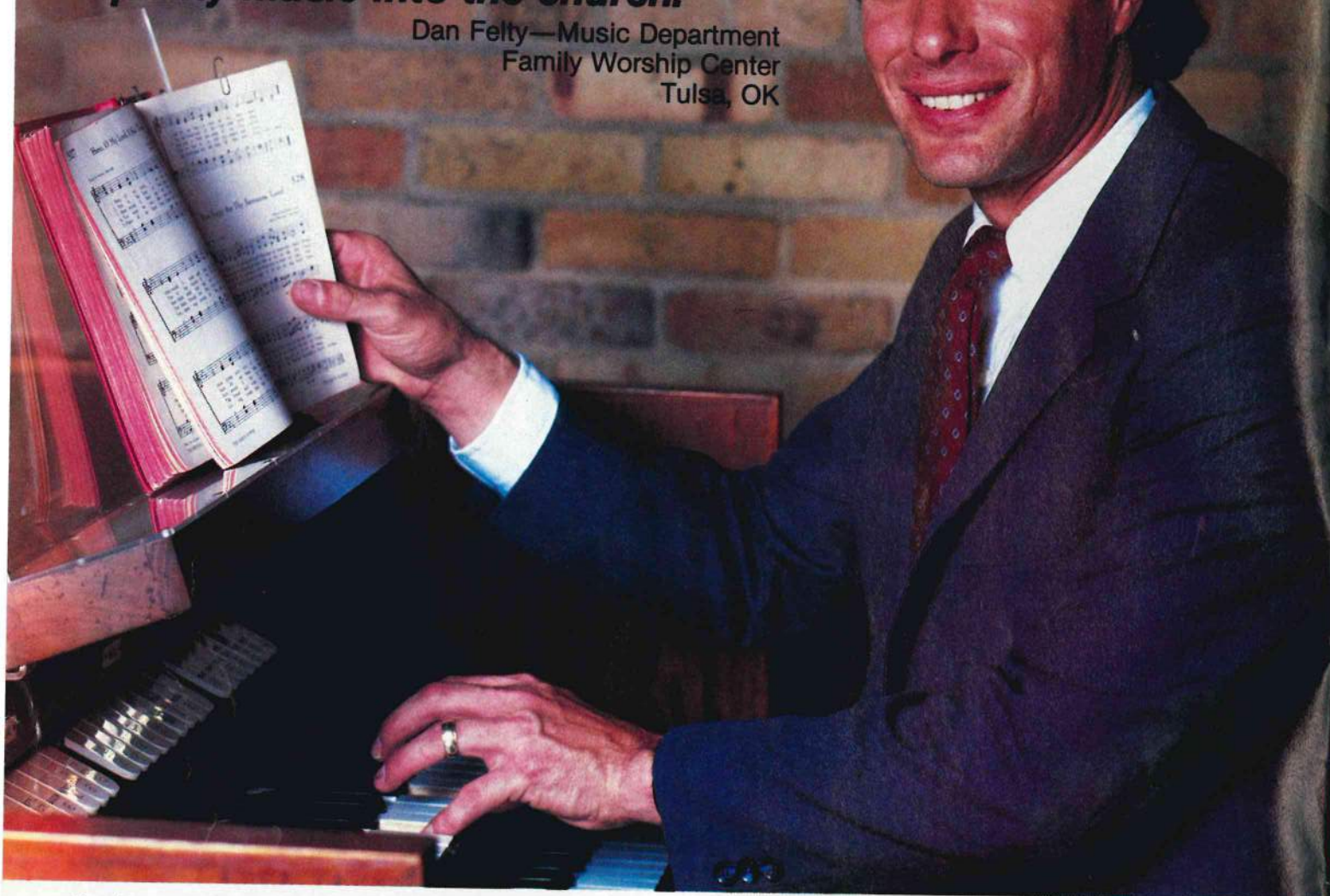


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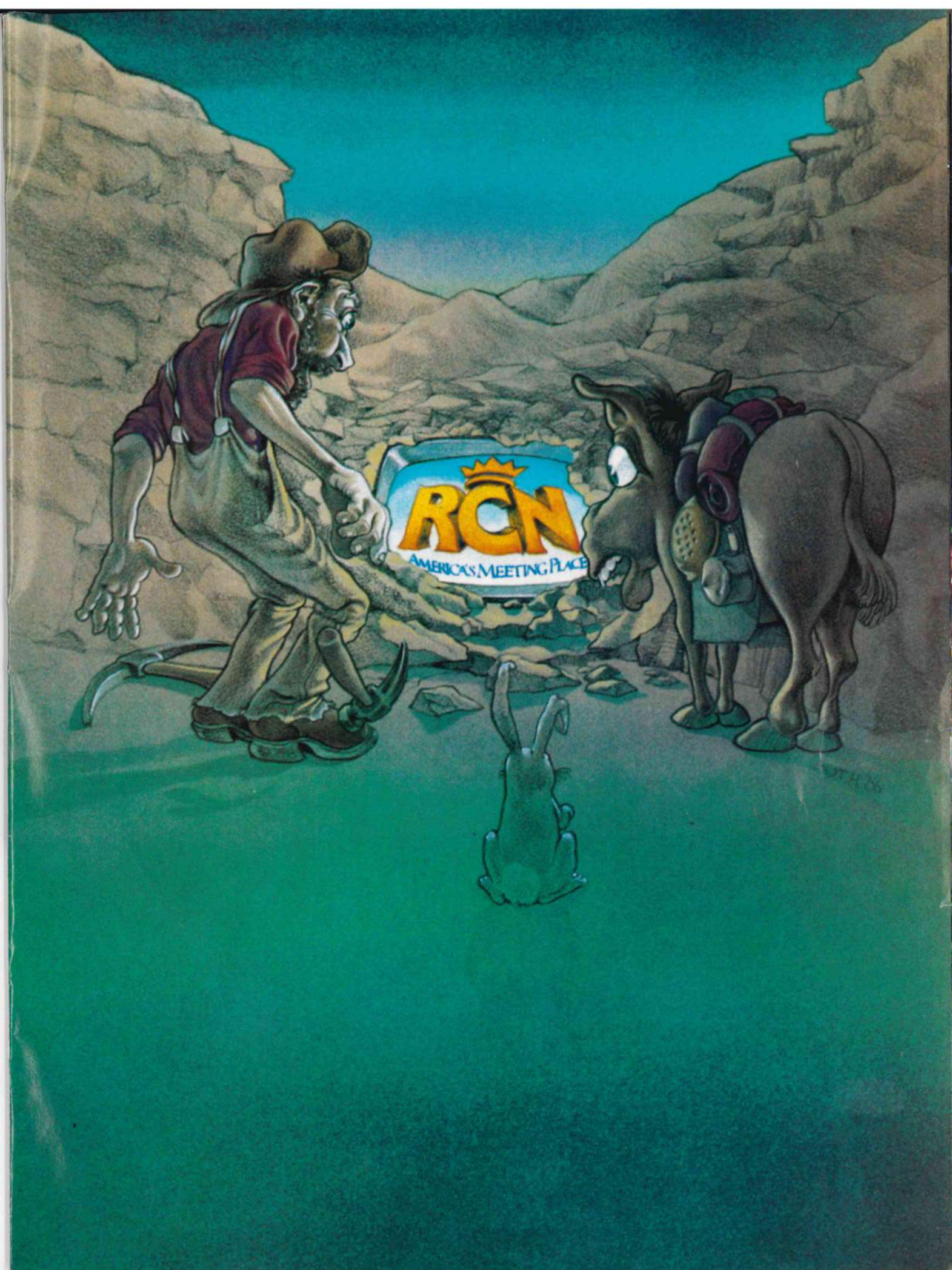
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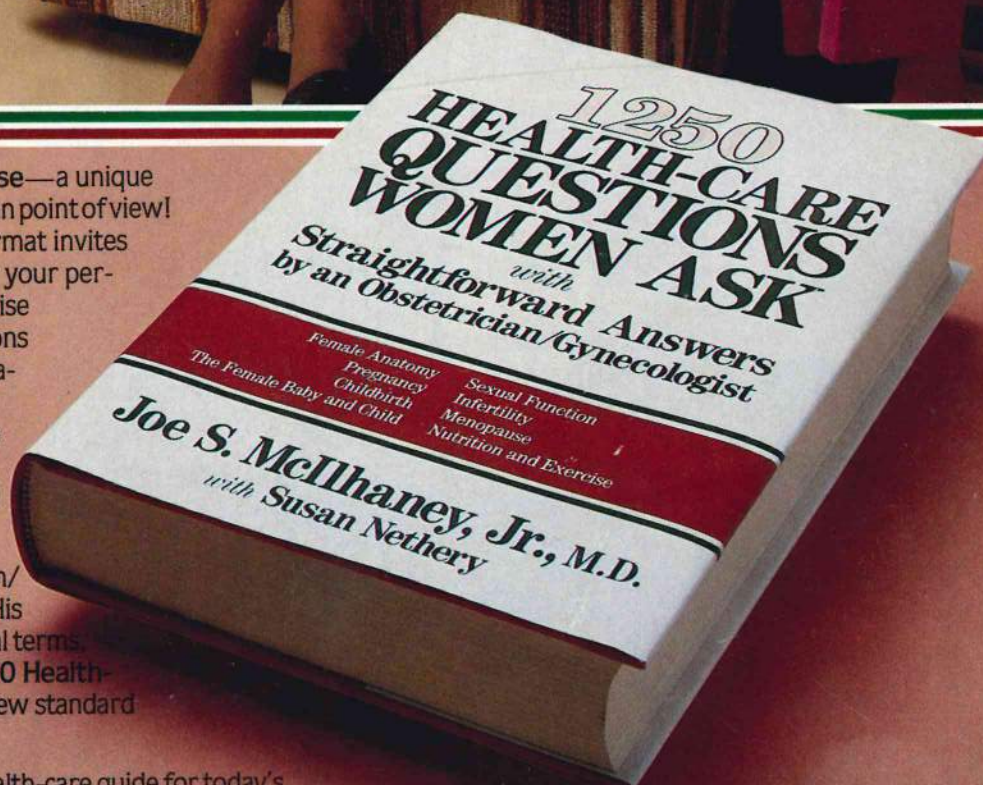
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