

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

OCTOBER, 1995

MAY JESUS COME SOON? MUST JESUS COME SOON?

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Our Lord is Coming Again!

"Surely there can be no greater spur to the servant's activity than the expectation of his master's speedy return [Yet] above all, avoid dogmatism. None have injured the doctrine of the 2nd coming so much as its overzealous friends." -- J. C. Ryle

"October 1844 brought to Louisville one of its more unusual, cosmic illusory threats. Early in that month, a tent was set up at 7th and Chestnut where--because of a prophecy by religious zealot William Miller--vast numbers of all social classes flocked to prepare themselves for an immediate end to the world. Many of those who attended these religious revivals were observed rolling themselves in the dust in penitence. But the world, unobliquely, continued to spin on its axis. About the time of this agitation, two Louisvillians were overheard arguing politics on the ferry to Jeffersonville. Would Polk or Clay be elected president in the fall elections? As they disputed the question, a revivalist interrupted them. Neither would be elected, he insisted. 'Christ will be the next president.'" --from Louisville magazine.

"Well, the doom-sayers have goofed, but, hey, it's not the end of the world!" --Russell Chandler

"My expectations of the Lord's Return have come alive since that earthquake [in California, Jan. 1994] The Day of the Lord will indeed be an awful day for those whose lives are not safely entrusted to Christ's saving power. But those who do love and trust Him will not be taken off-guard by that 'great and terrible day.' Ever since I was jolted out of bed on that January morning, I am trying more and more to be the kind of person who is ready--rather than one who needs to get ready." -- Russell Chandler

"The best way to prepare for the coming of Christ is never to forget the presence of Christ". -- William Barclay

Serve God and Wait for His Son (1 Thes. 1:9-10). "Working and waiting belong together. In combination they will deliver us both from the presumption which thinks we can do everything and from the pessimism which thinks we can do nothing." -- John Stott

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

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SURE FACT, WILD GUESSES

Alex V. Wilson

Almost 15 years ago a friend wrote me, "I have no doubt that we are living in the season of our Lord's return. All the signs point to it."

My friend may be right. Many exciting events have taken place in recent decades. Trends have developed which seem to be of great significance in God's plan for the endtime--as we'll see next month. But still I'm a little disturbed by my friend's expression, "*I have no doubt.*" Instead I wish he would say, "*It seems very probable . . .*"

Why do I say that? Because through the centuries many devout, Bible-believing Christians have felt certain that Christ would return very, very soon. For example, the English reformer John Wycliffe thought the world must come to an end before the close of the 1300s, because of the occurrence of earthquakes and widespread epidemics. And during the 1500s Martin Luther wrote, "It is my belief that the day of judgment is not far off."

Hiram Lester, referring to the era when the Campbell-Stone movement was just beginning, wrote:

In 1798, French troops seized Rome . . .and banished the pope, exactly 1260 years after Belisarius ended the Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy and left papal power supreme. [Note that the number 1260 is used in Rev. 11:3 & 12:6. --AVW] In the dramatic upheavals of the 1790s, devout students . . .were convinced that they were living though the fulfillment of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13.

In the same decades, a revival swept western Europe and America, [and] the Protestant missionary enterprise was born with its vision of winning the world for Christ. Concurrently, the great Protestant voluntary societies arose, dedicated to education, the transformation of morals, the distribution of Bibles, and the conversion of the Jews. It looked like Romans 11 was soon to be fulfilled . . .

But now the western world became drunk on the millennium; more than 339 works on prophecy were published in England and Scotland between 1775 and 1815, and comparable numbers were issued in America. (—*Disciplana*)

Later, during the 1830s and early 1840s, thousands had no doubt that Jesus would return in 1843. That was the date "proved" by William Miller, based on his calculations from Daniel. When the date came but the Lord didn't, Miller postponed the time to 1844. When that too proved wrong, Miller--a sincere Christian--humbly confessed he was mistaken and asked his followers' forgiveness (which few other mistaken teachers have done). But many of his followers began insist-

ing that his predicted *date* was right--only the *place* was wrong! This was the start of the view that at that time Christ had "come" into the inner sanctuary in *heaven* to begin an "investigative judgement." This doctrine became a key point among the Seventh Day Adventists (which Miller had nothing to do with).

Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, did some similar juggling. When Christ did not bring this age to an end in 1914, as Russell had foretold, he said that the Lord actually *did* come at that time, but *invisibly*! Of course Jesus said his coming would not be secret but very visible (Matt. 24:23-28), but that didn't fit into Russell's theory.

However, not only cultists like Russell have jumped the gun, but solid evangelicals too. The outstanding preacher and writer Harry Ironside, in a book published in 1930, gave three pages of evidence that the Italian dictator Mussolini was fulfilling prophecy. Other writers went further than Ironside in this view. But we know now that Mussolini had no endtime significance. He was at most *an* anti-christ, not *the* Antichrist (see 1 John 2:18).

Another evangelical leader, Charles Trumbull, made this observation:

The difference between this day and earlier generations, when some of God's people have mistakenly supposed that the Lord's return was at hand, is simply this: in our generation for the first time since Christ ascended to heaven, ALL the predicted major signs of the end of the age are synchronizing. One or more of these signs have occurred in earlier generations; never before have they ALL occurred simultaneously, as we see them today.

But Trumbull wrote those words in 1937! Fifty-eight years have passed, and our Lord has not come back yet.

Most of us remember Edgar Whisenant's *88 Reasons Why the Rapture will Be in 1988*. Over four million copies were distributed worldwide. Many people felt he was on target; some of them called or wrote me about it. When his forecast failed, Whisenant said he had miscalculated. He then wrote *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*, which sold thousands of copies. "He has reprinted this book every year since then, changing the date as each new year arrives," says B. J. Oropeza in *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*. When will folks ever learn?

Then came Harold Camping with his book *1994*. It too became a bestseller for a while, despite statements like "When September 6, 1994, arrives, no one else can become saved, the end has come." When will folks ever learn? Don't they really believe our Savior's words,

"You do not know on what day your Lord will come"? (Matt. 24:42; also v.36, & 25:13; Acts 1:7).

The List Goes On

Many other examples could be given. We mention these, not (I repeat: NOT) to cast doubt on the certainty of Christ's return, or its possible nearness, but rather to show how important it is to be cautious and humble when interpreting Biblical predictions and the signs of the times.

Over and over such speculations have proved to be mistaken. Dwight Wilson (a premillennialist, and no relative of mine!) in his book *Armageddon Now!* says that almost every major world crisis of this century has been proclaimed by at least some prominent Bible teachers as the doorway to ARMAGEDDON. Examples include the war between Russia and Japan in 1904; World War I; World War II; the war for Israeli independence; and Arab-Israel wars of 1967 and 1973. Six false alarms, and his book was written before the Persian Gulf conflict of 1991, which set off more great waves of speculation. Then there have been the various 20th century candidates for the role of ANTICHRIST, including Mussolini, Hitler, Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter and even Ronald Wilson Reagan (after all, each of his names has six letters, making 666!) Let's be more prudent.

Quite a few evangelicals believe that Ezekiel 38-39 picture a RUSSIAN INVASION OF ISRAEL, which will end with the Lord destroying Russia's armies in the mountains of Israel. The idea is that these events might happen any time now. Through the years "open letters" have been written to Soviet premiers Krushchev, Kosygin, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev warning what would happen if Russia attempted to attack Israel in this way.

Well, who knows? I guess it's theoretically possible even now for Russia to invade Israel soon. Even if it does, I personally cannot see how that would fulfill Ezekiel's prediction, nor how that passage can possibly apply to our *present* world situation. For in 38:11 Gog the aggressor nation says as he plans his attack, "I will invade a land of un-walled villages. I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people--all of them living without gates and bars." How in the world can present-day Israel be described as unprotected (unwalled) and as "a peaceful and unsuspecting people"? Israel today has many high-powered weapons and a fine army that is always on the alert since the land is threatened from almost every side.

In these chapters Ezekiel mentions Rosh, Meshech and Tubal (38: 2, 3; 39:1). The widespread interpretation mentioned earlier believes that these refer to Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk respectively. But other

Bible scholars disagree, even pre-millennialists. For example, George Beasley-Murray in the *New Bible Commentary* says, "The equation of Meshech and Tubal with Moscow and Tobolsk, and Rosh with Russia, is unsupportable." And J. O. Buswell gives more details: "The root of the Hebrew word *rosh* is not the same as the root of the word *Russia*. To identify Meshech and Tubal with Moscow and Tobolsk is to be guilty of philological folly." (Philology is the study of linguistics.) Ezekiel's terms have been shown to refer to places in what is now Turkey, considered by ancient Judah to be the far north, the "ends of the earth" more or less.

So once more we see the need for caution and openmindedness as we study prophecy, especially the more obscure passages. Beware of sensationalist teachers out to make a fast buck with their latest dogmatic claims. Consult sober teachers who have proved to be careful students of Scripture.

(For more needed warnings, see my other article this month. Then next month, the positive side: He might come soon.)

FOUR PROPHETIC FACTS ON WHICH WE ALL AGREE

[Author Unknown]

Many believers today are attracted to studies in Bible prophecy. They run to hear their favorite teacher when he is billed to lecture on Daniel or Revelation. Others, though interested, hesitate because of the clamor of differing view points and conflicting positions. As they hear talk of Pre-trib, Mid-Trib, Post-Trib, Pre-Mil, Post-Mil, A-Mil, 666 markers, The Beast Computer, the Common Market Ten, Israel's Buz-zard Population Increase, etc., they emit a long "Whew." Groping and bewildered, they stand at Confusion Corner.

Perhaps, however, we may be able to cut our way through this endtimes thicket by focusing on four clear basic truths--basics that are accepted by all schools of prophetic thought.

First of all, the Bible everywhere insists that the *return to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ is a future reality.*

"He shall appear a second time," declares Hebrews 9:28. Whether before, amidst, or following the Tribulation, whether prior to or after the Millennium, or even if both Tribulation and the Earthly Kingdom are non-Biblical, this towering mountain peak emerges in the bright sunlight: Jesus is coming again!

Yes, these controversial elements are not insignificant in their contribution to the overall mosaic of the "last things." But the glorious centerpiece is the visible return of the once-crucified and now-glorified Jesus. His appearing will be as awesome as the lightning, producing a sudden burst of dazzling glory that will stun earthlings.

There is a great declaration in the Bible's last book, Revelation: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." But will this amazing revelation bring only wails? No, it also will awaken shouts of welcome. Both will be heard. For "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

The second solid prophetic event to emerge in the Bible is that *all wickedness shall be justly punished.*

Abraham was on target when he exclaimed, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25). Of course He will do right. "Just and right is He" (Deut. 32:4). He is not mocked, having decreed that the sowing of evil always brings inescapable penalties. History, of course, teems with abundant proofs of this, for many sins carry their own built-in penalties.

At the same time, however, history leaves vast areas of violence and corruption still awaiting righteous settlement, with innocent victims still unavenged. Enormous debts yet await payment, and will continue to await the return of the Supreme Judge, Jesus Christ Himself. That implacable rebel, Satan, will be arrested and hurled into the lake of fire, that eternal prison which was originally prepared for him and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

No matter how we may interpret the details of the 19th and 20th chapters of Revelation we cannot avoid the conclusion that the world's greatest master-criminal and his accomplices will be sentenced and eternally banished at the close of time. Evil will be renounced forever from the universe. "The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire . . . and shall be tormented day and night forever." "The fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers and fornicators, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

This decree derives from the Supreme Court of the Almighty, and no appeal is possible. Earth's long dark night is over at last. Eternity's new day has dawned!

Thirdly, *Christ will introduce a perfect world order.*

No matter how teachers of prophecy may differ on details, all are agreed that the age-long prayer of the church ultimately will be answered. The Kingdom will come. God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Some believe that there will be a literal 1000-year earthly reign of righteousness and peace, with Christ and His church exercising worldwide authority. They are convinced that such passages as Isaiah chapters 4, 11, 35 and 60, plus Jeremiah chapters 23 and 33, plus Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, lend solid support for such a view. On the other hand, others interpret such forecasts as finding their fulfillment in Christ's present reign in and through today's church and in God's present spiritual Kingdom.

But this school also agrees that the eternal future will eventuate in a new and cleansed cosmos, a new heaven and a new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness" and where God will wipe away all tears. If we feel that we are not equipped to handle all the differing details and approaches, we can and should rejoice in the ultimate glory that awaits our groaning creation. No need to stand in bewilderment at Confusion Corner.

Finally, *God will have the final word, and we'll all shout the amen!*

Right now let us reach for our Bibles and read again the first six verses of the 19th chapter of Revelation. Notice the "Amens" and "Hallelujahs." Then picture yourself as one of the vast redeemed multitude, swept up in that surge of ecstatic joy and seeking to outshout all the rest.

All the phony and corrupting religions that have bedeviled earth's inhabitants now are gone forever; all Christ's martyrs have been resurrected and avenged; all wrongs finally have been righted; the triune God is enthroned in fullest glory. Finding ourselves sharing the exuberant joy of the 24 elders, we prostrate ourselves in worship. The mighty Hallelujah Chorus consummates in a united Amen.

When man says, "Amen," it means, "May it be so!" but when God utters "Amen," it means, "It shall be so." No question whatever about it. It is a *fiat accompli*.

So God will have the final word. And it will be the finished symphony of a redeemed and perfected creation. Sin never again will raise its ugly head. The new heavens and the new earth will enter a partnership of eternal and joyous harmony, and everything that hath breath will praise the Lord.

Therefore, let us believe. Let us rejoice. Let us praise!

--From *Charislife*.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF INTERPRETING THE THOUSAND YEARS AS FIGURATIVE

Richard Ramsey in *The Exhorter*

The attempt to make the thousand years of Revelation into a symbolic or figurative expression runs into many major difficulties.

1. To attempt to make the thousand years symbolic for the present age *on earth* runs into conflict with other scriptures.

Even as a symbol, the thousand years has to be symbolic of something. What does it symbolize? Christ and His saints are seen reigning on thrones, enjoying victory after the battle is over.

But there are too many scriptures which teach that the present age is one of warfare. As good soldiers of Christ Jesus we are to fight the good fight, and our enemy is ever ready to pounce upon us. Thus, the thousand years, symbolizing victory and peace, cannot be interpreted symbolically so as to harmonize with the present age.

2. To attempt to make the thousand years symbolic of victory for the saints who are now *in heaven* likewise runs into major difficulties.

In the first place, crowns and rewards are always associated with the future return of Christ, not with our change of status at death. See, for example, 2 Timothy 4:8, where Paul expected to receive his crown "at that day," or the appearing of the Lord. The thousand year reign, with saints seated on thrones, even as a symbol, presents a time of rewards such as is consistently pictured in the Bible as following the return of the Lord. We may have the concept of "resting from our labors" at death, but not of receiving our crowns.

3. If one does take the position that the saints are now reigning in heaven "for a thousand years," he must abandon the doctrine of a general resurrection of all the dead and of one general judgment for all. [This doctrine is held by both "a-mils" and "post-mils".--Editor]. It is inconceivable that saints who have already been reigning in heaven for a "thousand years" with the Lord must in the future be raised in one general resurrection of all the dead and to stand before the Great Judgment Throne to be judged as to whether they are saved or lost. Since it has already been demonstrated, according to this interpretation, for a "thousand years" that they are saved, how can they later stand trial? One must either reject the interpretation that the thousand years symbolizes a victory now going on in heaven or else abandon the doctrine of one general resurrection.

These are three of the major difficulties in attempting to explain the thousand years as anything else but a future age to come on this earth. If any one espousing the symbolic position has an answer to these difficulties, we'd be happy to hear from him. [You could send it to *Word and Work's* office.]

CHRIST'S COMING AND THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

R. H. Boll

The prophecies connected with the Second Coming of Christ are many and various. If, as is commonly thought, the Coming of the Lord is just a single act--a descent from heaven followed (as some think) by the immediate wind-up of all things, it is not possible to reconcile or to account for all the different scripture-statements concerning it. There is the whole line of teaching on the *imminency* of the Lord's Coming--that is, the possibility of His coming *at any time*--and we are charged to watch and be ready continually. The *practical* power of the doctrine lies largely in this, and this point must be guarded and preserved above all. But again we read of certain events that must first transpire--a tribulation, for example, such as had never been and would never be again, which would *immediately* be followed by heavenly signs and the Coming of Christ in glory. (Matt. 24:21, 29, etc.) Then there is the national conversion and restoration of Israel, of which there was not the remotest prospect (but rather the contrary) in Paul's day, but which Paul confidently predicted (Rom. 11:15-32) while yet holding up the Coming of Christ as the object of the Christian's constant expectation. Now it is clear that we are to look for the Lord's returning continually; but it is also clear that certain things shall transpire and certain conditions prevail when He does come, of which there is little or no sign at present. It is furthermore evident that no man can earnestly and intelligently expect the Lord's coming from day to day, when he knows that Christ cannot come till this or that far-reaching thing has happened. At one time He says--"at an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh," and shows how quickly and unexpectedly it will happen, even while men are eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage. At another time it seems that the world is in a state of fearful expectation, being aroused by terrifying portents in earth and sky and sea. These things are simply irreconcilable on the hypothesis that the Coming of Christ is to be a single, simple event. Some indeed take the passages that teach the imminency of His Coming and "explain away" the rest, and some show from the scriptures that the Lord cannot come for a long while yet, and explain away all the warnings to the contrary. But shall we not take *all* God has told us on this subject?

The simple solution of the matter is that in the Second Coming, as in the First Coming, there are certain separate stages and phases. *He came* when He was born in Bethlehem. *He came* when He was baptized of John (Acts 13:24). *He came* at His "triumphal entry" (John 12:15). *He came* at the Cross, at His resurrection. Yet these were not many comings, but the various features of the one coming. So it is with His Second Coming. He comes to take up His saints. (John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). But He also comes *with* His saints to be admired in them. (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10). These two things cannot possibly occur at one and the same time. Here then are *two distinct features* of His coming, at least; and even that may not exhaust the matter yet. It is for this cause, no doubt, that the Holy Spirit chose a word ("parousia") which means not only *arrival* (though it certainly means that) but also "*presence*," as though it were meant to cover a *period of time*. The Second Coming of the Lord is not a single, simple appearance therefore, but is composite in character. Unless that fact is recognized it is impossible to understand the various Bible statements concerning it.

We may add further that in a similar manner the various Bible declarations compel the recognition of *an interval* between the taking up of the living and resurrected saints, and Christ's coming down *with* His saints; for several things must occur then, and can only occur at such a time as that: among which is the judgment of the saints before Christ; the Great Tribulation of which the Olivet Sermon speaks; the great "day of Jacob's trouble," and his subsequent restoration; the reign of Antichrist whom the Lord Jesus destroys when He comes in His glory with His saints--of which things we can not now speak severally.

The important point in all this is not that we should be able to construct a theory that accounts for every scripture statement on this great theme; but that we may not be hindered by our preconceptions from accepting simply *all* that God says about it. On the one hand we shall not cease for any alleged reason to heed the admonition of Christ and the apostles to watch ceaselessly and look earnestly for our returning Lord. Nor, on the other hand, will we be hindered by any theory from believing that all the great future events which shall come to pass on the earth shall find their uncramped fulfillment, even as God has said.

Some Comments by the Editor on the Preceding Article

Bro. Boll's main point seems clearly established: Jesus' return involves more than "a single, simple event." Between His coming *for* and *with* His church there must be some interval of undisclosed length. That would seem to be the time that He will judge/reward His people (2 Cor. 5:10). But Christ taught that the Great Tribulation, when Antichrist rules and persecutes, *precedes* rather than follows His second

coming (Matt. 24:21-31), so how could that period occur during the interval after "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him" (2 Thes. 2:1)? And Paul *lumps together* (1) Christ's giving relief to persecuted Christians and (2) His destroying their persecutors. He doesn't say that 3 1/2 or 7 years intervene between those distinct features of the second coming, but that *both* of them will occur "on the day He comes to be glorified" (2 Thes. 1:5-10; a crucial passage). Now that "day"--the Day of the Lord--may admittedly last more than 24 hours. It could be a period of days, weeks or maybe months. But it will occur *after* the sun is darkened (Joel 2:31), and that will occur *after* the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21, 29). So the Biblical order seems to me to be: first Antichrist, then the darkening of the sun, then the Day of the Lord (see 2 Thes. 2:1-3). During that Day, Christ will come *for* His church and then, soon after, having rewarded the saints and poured out His final plagues of judgment, He shall return *with* His people to smash the unrepentant (led by Antichrist) and set up His kingdom of justice and peace.

Is there not more clearly stated Biblical evidence for this proposed scenario than for the common view that 3 1/2 or 7 years intervene between His coming for and with the saints, and that the church will be removed before the Great Tribulation? The view proposed here does believe in Daniel's 70th week, though we lack time to discuss it now. See Rosenthal's book, *The Pre-Wrath Rapture*. As for "the possibility of His coming *at any time*," remember that that was not possible so long as Peter was alive (for one example)--for he knew he would get old and die rather than be raptured (John 21:18-19). Yet Christ's return was still his great motivation and encouragement, for which he watched--that is, eagerly looked forward to. We can do the same, knowing our Lord may come very soon. See the next article.

CAN JESUS *REALLY* COME NOW?

C. S. Lovett

The apostle Peter wouldn't be popular today. He said, Jesus can't come back now. That's a paraphrase. His exact words were:

"If you will do that (repent), then God will send Jesus back to you, for He is your appointed Messiah. However, He must *remain* in heaven *until* the final restoration of all things, even as God announced through His prophets long ago" (Acts 3:20, 21 PNT).

That's not the popular view. A host of Christians feels Jesus can come at any time. It is considered evangelistically proper to say, "If you don't accept Christ now, it could be too late. He might come at any moment!" That doesn't square with Peter at all. But then the apos-

the Paul wouldn't be popular either. He said two historical events had to occur before the "Day of the Lord" could come:

1. A great "falling away" or apostasy.
2. The man of sin be revealed (2 Thess. 2:1-3).

Neither of these has happened yet, though signs indicate the apostasy is developing. We know the man of sin hasn't appeared. We haven't a hint of him yet.

Most annoying, perhaps, are Jesus' own words. His *and then* don't fit the popular mood either:

"In those days *after* that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, etc. (Joel's prophecy concerning the end of the age) *and then* shall they see the son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. *And then* He will send forth the angels and will gather His elect from the four winds (compass points), from the farthest end of the *earth*, to the farthest end of *Heaven*" (Mark 13:24-27).

Those verses could be upsetting. They not only seem to indicate the Lord cannot come now, but that the church will go through the tribulation. Putting what little I have gathered together, it looks like this: Peter says Jesus must stay in heaven until the final restoration of all things; Paul says He cannot come until the man of sin is revealed; Jesus says He will not gather His elect until *after* the tribulation, when He returns in glory.

Post-Tribulation Rapture?

You wonder if I believe in the rapture of the church? Indeed. We'd have to delete Thessalonians from the N.T. otherwise. But perhaps some readers are not aware of the three views. The Pre-Tribs are those who believe the church will be raptured *before* the tribulation. The Mid-Tribs believe the church will go through *part* of the tribulation. And the Post-Tribs believe we will not be raptured until *after* the tribulation. In the latter case we would be raptured to join the descending host in the air which the Lord will bring with Him upon His return (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Lately I find myself thinking about the Post-Trib position. I wonder if we shouldn't take a "*spare tire*" approach to it. We don't expect to have flat tires on our cars, but we carry a spare just in case. I have no intention of disturbing your Pre-Trib or Mid-Trib views of the rapture. The other four tires are doing their job, but having a spare is always a good idea. You see there is enough Scripture to make the Post-Trib view a possibility. And as long as there is the slightest possi-

bility, shouldn't we think about preparation? I'm not arguing here, merely suggesting we think about it since Scripture leaves room for it.

I know about the piles of verses which support the other views. I can defend all three positions from the Word. Likely you can too. Even so, the "spare tire" approach makes sense. It's the same logic we apply to salvation. To the rejector we say, "If I'm wrong, I am still as well off as you. But if I'm right, I gain eternity and you lose everything." Shouldn't we take that same attitude toward the Post-Trib rapture? At least in the "spare tire" sense, anyway? The Post-Trib Christian is prepared for the worst. If he escapes the tribulation, he's no worse off. But pity the Pre-Trib who was dead certain he would escape the tribulation and finds himself in the thick of it. His faith could be shaken. Even worse, he would not be prepared.

So Just Suppose

It's not foolishness to consider the Post-Trib view when Scripture leaves room for it. Should we be so definite when the Word itself isn't? Some good men have weighed the possibility in this light. Listen to one of them, Dr. Oswald J. Smith:

"Now after years of study and prayer, I am absolutely convinced there will be no rapture before the tribulation, but that the church will be called upon to face the anti-christ, and the Christ will come (for us) at the close of that awful period and not at the beginning."

I'm not saying he's right, but just suppose he is. And suppose that other men of equal stature are also right; men like Henry Frost of the China Inland Mission, William Erdman and Charles Erdman, A. J. Gordon, Carl F. Henry, George Ladd, Robert McQuilken, George Mueller, Harold Ockenga, Charles Spurgeon, and Hudson Taylor.

Until 165 years ago the bulk of God's people believed Jesus would remain at the right hand of God *until* His enemies became His footstool. [Psa. 110:1; Acts 2:34-35] It is [difficult] to find any teaching of a secret, any-moment pre-tribulation rapture before that time.

The "spare tire" approach would find us preparing ourselves--just in case!

MAY Jesus Come Soon? MUST Jesus Come Soon?

Alex V. Wilson

MAY He come soon? Of course; He may come any time He and the Heavenly Father have chosen. He is wise, loving and sovereign, and His timing and "program" are perfect (though we may not see it that way from our vantage point). If we say He *can't* come soon, then He *may*--for He said, "The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him" (Luke 12:40)!

MUST He come soon? Well, some folks seem to say there's no way at all He can delay' beyond 2000 A. D.; He's gotta come by then at the latest. Yes, we face another period of "millennial madness," or, more accurately, end-of-a-millennium craziness.

It happened before. During the decade before 1000 A. D. all sorts of unusual things took place because of the date. Prisoners were freed, debts forgiven, and possessions sold. Some people went to the top of mountains awaiting the Lord, according to **The Story of Human Life and Doomsday**, by Frederick Marten. And on December 31, 999, Pope Sylvester II held a midnight mass to usher in the end of the world. But the world refused to end.

So, here we go again! A major prime-time TV series on ancient prophecies warned that "every futurist from Nostradamus to Edgar Cayce to the architects of the pyramids to the Bible prophets has targeted the year 2000 as the end of the world," reports W. D. Spencer in **Christianity Today**. Several New Age writers are harping on the significance of a new millennium. And various Bible teachers are doing the same.

2000, 1997, or 5761?

On Paul and Jan Crouch's TV show, among others, it has been confidently claimed that the rapture will definitely take place by 2000. Earlier they set June 9, 1994 as the day for "the most cataclysmic experience that the world has ever known since the resurrection." Well, they missed that guess, but are still sure about 2000 because Hosea 6: 2 (and John 2: 19) speak of being raised on the third day. Assuming that one day equals 1000 years (due to 2 Pet. 3: 8), then 2000 brings us to that third day.

Or does it? We must ask, "2000 on *whose* calendar?" Our present calendar was begun by the scholar Dionysius Exiguus in 532 A. D., based on when he estimated Jesus was born. But now we know he was off by at least 4 years: Christ was probably born four years "before

Christ"! Therefore, two thousand years after his birth will probably be 1997. On the other hand, William Spencer observes, "the Hebrews were operating by a calendar dating retroactively from their calculated date for the Creation: 3761 B. C. By that figuring, our year 2000 will be about 5761 on the Jewish calendar, not too apocalyptic-sounding a year, when you think about it."

Then there is the flip-side of Luke 12: 40. If Jesus will return "at an hour when you do not expect Him," and if at present a number of Bible teachers and their followers *are* dogmatically expecting Him before 2000, does that imply that He *won't* come now? Where does that leave us? Well, the safe way is to be ready any time and all the time. "Be on guard! Be alert! . . . Keep watch. . . Watch," said our Master in Mark 13: 33-37. Yet remember that "watch" doesn't mean to stare at the sky but to stay awake, spiritually and morally, doing our duty and reaching out to others rather than allowing sleepiness to make us sluggish. "Do not let him find you sleeping" (v. 36), whether He comes before or after 2000, before or after the Great Tribulation.

So Many Experts, So Many Speculations

Our Lord's very first words in His prophetic discourse were, "Watch out that no one deceives you." With His warning in mind, let me share with you insights from a valuable, carefully researched book called **99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return**. Published in 1994, its author is B. J. Oropeza, a research associate at the Christian Research Institute, the organization that produces the radio program, "Bible Answer Man." The book is 225 pages long and covers an amazing array of prophetic theories filling our airwaves and bookstores. The author is a firm believer in the Bible and Christ's return, but mainly this book evaluates the crowd of human interpretations--exposing most of them as false.

For example, what about that giant computer in Brussels keeping records of every person in the world, and called "the Beast"? What connection does the "Illuminati conspiracy" have to the "last days"? What about the New Age world-ruler, Lord Maitreya? What about the predictions of forecasters like Nostradamus and Jeane Dixon, or prophecies based on the pyramids or UFO's? What about dates set by Jewish rabbis, or early church leaders, or apparitions of Mary? Is the temple in Jerusalem being rebuilt? Is the European Community the revived Roman Empire? Are vultures multiplying in Israel? Could the Universal Product Code be the mark of the Beast? Is Iraq rebuilding Babylon to its former glory? The book deals with all this and more.

It is an unpleasant task to expose by name various teachers who claim to be Christians, especially some who clearly believe the Gospel. But how else can God's people be alerted to teachers who set dates

(contrary to Scripture) or repeatedly spread far-out theories that agitate the saints? Oropeza sees no alternative but to name names and report facts and teachings accurately. (He documents his statements with 21 pages of footnotes.) And, reluctantly, I'll do some of that here too, in order to urge you to beware of sensationalism and excesses. Warn others too, for many are gullible.

We've already mentioned Edgar Whisenant and Harold Camping in our editorial, and Paul Crouch earlier in this article. In addition, Oropeza says Lester Sumrall predicts that starting in 2000, Christ will reign from Jerusalem for 1000 years. D. A. Miller thought the rapture would be in September 1992. Mary Stewart Relfe predicted the Great Tribulation would begin in 1990, the U. S. would be destroyed in 1993, and Armageddon will occur in 1997. Grant Jeffrey calculates that the times of the Gentiles ended in the fall of 1878, but God added 120 years (as He did in Noah's day) to give people time to repent, so 1997 will bring the official end to that period! David Webber, based on Scripture and the pyramids (!), thought the tribulation would start between 1981-85, but later amended it to 1988.

Before 1989, Salem Kirban, author of a "prophecy-Bible" and 2 prophecy novels, suggested a 1989 rapture. The late William Branham predicted the millennium would begin in 1977. Televangelist Jack Van Impe formerly claimed the Great Tribulation would start in 1976. He also claimed in 1994 that it is okay to quote the French sage Nostradamus (1503-66) on prophecy. He was a "great Bible student," said Van Impe! Actually most of Nostradamus' predictions were extremely nebulous and have been interpreted by various folks to mean different things. Many of his less vague forecasts did not come true; and he consulted horoscopes. A great Bible student?

On and on it goes, this date-setting which directly contradicts several clear Scriptures: Matt. 24: 36, 42; 25:13; Mark 13:35; Acts 1:7. May we heed the word of the Lord. Shun all date-setters, and avoid the end-of-a-millennium craziness. Beware of nuts!--but also of scoffers. In your study emphasize the main passages (like Matt. 24, Luke 21, 1 Thes. 4-5, 2 Thes. 1-2, etc.) and see how other, incidental passages blend with them, rather than trying to force longer, clearer texts to fit into some point merely mentioned in passing. Most of all, keep looking for the One who Himself is our blessed Hope. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Amen--come quickly, Lord Jesus!

James A. Harding, Educator

L. C. Sears

[Editor's Note: The first two installments told of Harding's immense evangelistic labors from 1875-1891, when he was forty-three years old. For the next twenty-one years he was engaged mainly in teaching and leading two Christian colleges, though he still preached regularly. He and David Lipscomb co-founded the Nashville Bible School (now David Lipscomb University) in 1891.]

The school, as they envisioned it, was to be different from any they had ever known. It was not to make preachers, but to prepare men and women for fruitful Christian lives. It would require all students alike to carry the courses in Bible. "The aim is. . .to prepare Christians for usefulness in whatever sphere they are called upon to labor." Again and again they had to correct the impression that the school was for preachers only.

Incredible Work, and Respect for Divergent Views

The faculty insisted on thorough work. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," became a constant watchword. "Our school strives to cultivate in every one of its students the habit of doing all his work well," wrote young Professor J. N. Armstrong in 1899. "Our purpose is not to tolerate a student who will not try faithfully to do this." Students caught the spirit of the faculty, and some had to be cautioned against working too hard instead of neglecting assignments. When John T. Lewis planned to enter and heard that students memorized the whole book of Romans, he thought they were crazy. But Harding's students memorized much more than Romans. "Some of the students," Harding wrote, "during their school life memorized the entire New Testament and parts of the old." An examination of Romans, R. C. Bell remembered, required from three to four hours. The class seated on the rostrum repeated in rotation verse by verse the entire book and answered any question Harding asked them. Merely to imagine such exacting work may weary the reader, yet students like Woodson Harding never missed a single question in Bible during the four years. G. W. McQuiddy never missed a question the last three years.

Harding's classes were always an inspiration. "He was a great teacher," Armstrong said. "He could double the lesson and make the students think they could get it." He always stood when teaching. If he had only two or three students in a class he prepared the lesson as carefully as if for three thousand. He expected the same thoroughness from his students, and would never accept careless work or lack of preparation. He emphasized that being a Christian required the utmost excellence in everything. The Christian should be the best farmer, doctor, or teacher, for "he is working for God, not for man."

G. G. Taylor, who spent a week on the campus and sat in on Harding's classes, wrote:

"I must say that in all my life I have not seen in any school a greater draft made upon students nor a more satisfactory response. They are required to commit to memory from some approved translation, one chapter each from the Old and New Testament every day, and then give an itemized synopsis, clearly and correctly bringing out the points in the argument of the Scripture thus committed. This exegesis is supplemented by questions and discussions pro and con, so that what is taught in the lesson is riveted permanently upon the mind."

Concerning the "permanence" of Harding's instruction, John T. Glenn, who was one of those students who never missed a question in Bible during the year, and who later became one of the great teachers in the college, always repeated his Bible lesson the last thing before he fell asleep. If he stumbled over a verse, he hopped out of bed, lighted the lamp, since the dormitory still had no electric lights, and learned it properly. After his ninetieth birthday--sixty-seven years after those happy days--remembering that memory work, he started repeating Ephesians when he retired and went straight through the entire book without missing a verse!

In the courses offered it is doubtful if more thorough work was ever done in any institution large or small. Most of the students were mature men who had come with a definite purpose. They were there to work, not to play.

Characteristic of Harding's thoroughness and also the fairness with which he treated every problem and every person, he started a meeting on Monday nights in which any subject of interest could be discussed, and every student or teacher could present his views openly and without prejudice. On subjects of unusual controversy he invited speakers on different sides of the issues so that students could learn every side of a question.

Harding and Lipscomb, as well as all the teachers and most of the students, believed that the Christian should not vote, hold political office, or participate in the affairs of civil government. His responsibility was simply to be obedient to the government as a foreigner, for his citizenship was in heaven. G. G. Taylor, who held that the Christian should participate actively in the government, was invited to lecture to the students and faculty for as long as he wished and Lipscomb would present the opposite view. Of his lectures at the school during the day and to the church at night, Taylor wrote: "I rejoice that this school and also the congregation which meets in its chapel not only tolerates but invites the fullest and freest investigation of controverted questions without any restriction or limitation on those differing from them."

This perfect courtesy and high respect for the views of others was always true of the school under Harding and Lipscomb. Such Christian tolerance and love, and such openness of mind, left impressions on students that influenced the church for a generation or more. Dr. T. W. Brents, who differed radically from E. G. Sewell on the appointment of elders, was invited to present his views and Sewell to present his. After their discussion Lipscomb commented, "Now, young people, we have done our best to help you. You will have to study your Bibles and make up your own minds."

Teachers did not dictate to the students what they must believe or teach. They held the principle: "I'm not right; you're not right; but the Bible is right." They presented from the Scriptures the truth, as they understood it, and then left students to reach their own conclusions on the basis of their own study. It was a high respect both for the authority of the Scriptures and for the intelligence and the integrity of each man's mind and conscience.

Life on Campus

The Hardings always kept the girls' dormitory. The girls were not allowed to "receive calls from gentlemen," and could meet the young men only in class and at the Monday night meetings. The catalog stated, "There is scarcely a home in the land where girls are so well guarded as with us. It is almost impossible for a boy or girl to speak together except in plain view of a number of others."

But there was apparently little misconduct. A rule forbade smoking on the grounds, and three boys, found smoking in the loft of Brother Dodd's barn, protested that they had broken no rule because they were in the loft, not "on the ground."

"I have never seen a school," J. N. Armstrong wrote, "in which every member seemed to love every other one so much." Such love came naturally, Armstrong thought, from their study of the Bible. "The more we study the Bible the more we will love one another."

The warmth of fellowship on the campus was an even greater revelation to John T. Glenn, who entered in 1897. Writing sixty-seven years later, Glenn said: "I can never forget what a terrific change I found there from that to which I had been accustomed--from Texas to a Bible school! From men who wore their six-shooters as regularly as their trousers, to men who talked habitually of God and Christ, the Savior! Men who spoke of love and of wanting to interest one in eternal salvation. But maybe nothing impressed me more forcibly than Brother Harding himself--and everything about him. I felt instinctively that here was a man different from the ordinary, a man who radiated warmth and happiness--and power. Brother Harding was a dynamic speaker. He could make his hearers feel they could 'turn the world up-

side down,' and they could just about do it! He could make the Bible just as real and attractive to you as it seemed to be to him."

Harding's Unceasing Labors

Harding read through the Bible every year--the whole Bible at least once and the New Testament two or three times. As regularly as the clock his light flashed on every morning at four. He washed, dressed and combed his hair carefully before devoting himself to a reading of the Scriptures and prayer. He always knelt in prayer.

After the daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer came preparation for his classes. During those years he taught five or six hours a day, preached on Sundays and usually Wednesday evenings, spoke almost daily in chapel, and wrote constantly for the *Advocate* and later for his own paper, *The Way*. As R. C. Bell once said, he did the work of three men. He had little time for anything but work. Yet if he felt like a father to the students, they returned his affection fully.

He Starts a New School

[At the request of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Potter, Harding established in 1901 the Potter Bible College near Bowling Green, Kentucky--"hoping to double the good that is being done" (at the Nashville Bible School), he wrote. He ministered there through 1912, as president, business manager, teacher and much else besides. Here are a few "snapshots" from that period.]

Beyond scholarship, teachers had to be devoted Christians, willing to live practically without salaries. No salaries were ever guaranteed at Potter Bible College. All teachers and their families had space for gardens and chickens and were furnished houses, groceries, and utilities. All the men preached for churches on Sundays and held meetings in the summers, and everybody was happy, for they were united in a cause far greater than themselves. One teacher was offered a position that would have paid him far more than the entire faculty received at Potter but turned it down.

Besides Harding, some of the faculty members were J. N. Armstrong, R. C. Bell, M. C. Kurfees, D. H. Friend, and later George Klingman. Students included H. L. Olmstead, Don Carlos Janes, Clinton Davidson, the Gills, and the two Homer Rutherfords.

Identical names are often confusing. At chapel one morning Harding called on "Brother Rutherford" to lead the prayer. Everybody knelt, but no one spoke up. Harding then remembered there were two Rutherfords. "Brother Homer Rutherford," he corrected. Still no one spoke; both were Homer Rutherfords. "The dark-haired Homer Rutherford," he added. Still no one spoke. Both had dark hair. Finally

the older Homer started the prayer, as students--and teachers--barely restrained an outburst of laughter, which would hardly have been an unforgivable sin. For God himself must have a fine sense of humor to have endowed us so richly with it, and to endure our blunders so patiently.

An Evaluation

It is impossible to overemphasize the immense contribution of James A. Harding in the twenty-one years he devoted to Christian education. With David Lipscomb he started the first, and he also headed both the first and the second colleges inaugurating the new, unique program of education in which students were to be prepared for any profession they might choose, yet in which every student carried a Bible course and in which all courses and all activities were centered around the Christ and his teaching. He saw hundreds of young people become leaders in the church as well as in their professions, and he saw twelve or fifteen similar schools spring up in the United States, Canada, Persia and Japan.

Harding's students, at keen personal sacrifice in the early days when schools received little support and much condemnation, carried other colleges through to their present successful operation. "James A. Harding stands out preeminently as having filled the first period of our Christian schools full of the spirit of faith, sacrifice, and devotion to God," wrote J. N. Armstrong, one of those students whom Harding inspired. "No other man has been so able to collect a faculty that would live on bread and water while they served as Brother Harding was. More than this, it is he who lives, though he be dead, who has made it possible for all our Christian schools to maintain faculties at half salaries. The salaries we have been able to offer have not prevented our obtaining teachers from among the students of J. A. Harding. God bless his memory forever!"

[*Editor's postscript:* There were many ties between Harding and the Portland Christian School, still operating in Louisville after 71 years. Both R. H. Boll and Stanford Chambers studied under him at the Nashville Bible School, and drank deeply of his faith, prayerfulness, love and open-mindedness. I'm sad to say that, following in the steps of Harding and his students, PCS teachers receive less than 1/2 the pay that public school teachers get. I'm glad to say that, even so, we have never lacked teachers willing to work for such pay--knowing that their reward is great in heaven. If you want to pursue the story of Christian schools, read the story of J. N. Armstrong, Harding's co-worker and son-in-law: *For Freedom*, also by L. C. Sears. We have a few copies for sale. The Dec. '88 and Jan. '89 Word & Works ran excerpts from that book.]

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TAKE THE PIECES AND MAKE A PEACE

James DeForest Murch; Part 3

One of the most thrilling by-products of the Christian Action Crusade (see the past 2 issues) was an effort to bring about a meaningful unity between the Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (a cappella). When I was in Toronto, Canada, for a Christian Action rally I expressed the hope for breaking down the "middle wall of partition" which separated the two communions. Claud F. Witty, minister of the West Side-Central Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan, held similar hopes, and we were soon in conference.

But a little background: At this time it had been seventy years since the opening wedges of division began to do their deadly work in the Restoration Movement. We all sought to restore the New Testament Church in doctrine, ordinances, and life through an appeal to the Holy Scriptures. In our effort to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" we had clashed over the scripturality of missionary societies, Sunday schools, choirs, musical instruments, church colleges, etc., etc.

Feverish debates were conducted, hard feelings were fanned to white heat, and many local congregations were rent asunder. Eventually two rather clearly defined camps emerged from the foggy thinking and chaotic conditions of the time--"conservative" and "progressive". The former group insisted upon no "innovations"--no practice of any kind for which there could not be given a "thus saith the Lord." The latter group held that where the Bible did not speak on a given issue it was a matter of opinion to be settled amicably by each local congregation.

Locally these groups were variously known as "organ" and "anti-organ," but in the beginning this divisive spirit was not able to shake off a common faith in the great fundamental principles which brought them into being and a mutual recognition of the ties that bound them together in a great common task. For instance: My sainted father was a student in the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky, in the days of McGarvey. The faculty members were divided on the issues above mentioned. These differences were even discussed in the classroom. On the Lord's Day morning some would worship in "organ" churches and some in "anti-organ" churches. For years this situation obtained in utmost good spirit, "each esteeming the other better than himself." Graduates went out from those classic halls--some to "progressive" and some to "conservative" churches. My father preached for both. No one ever questioned my father's orthodoxy and he was equally acceptable in both pulpits.

But a later generation arose which "knew not the Spirit of the Lord had departed" from them, and it was not long until the mole hills became mountains and the valleys of opinion grew into chasms of division.

Brother Witty and I talked and prayed and corresponded for about a year before we made bolder moves. Then on February 23, 1937, the first of a series of "conversations" between interested brethren was held in the Central Y.M.C.A. in Cincinnati. About an equal number of "progressive" and "conservative" leaders were present. A general friendly spirit pervaded the meeting. Prayer was made. Each one present was privileged to speak his sentiments on the occasion. It was a great and good day when men from opposing sides could sit face to face and talk, plan and hope to the end that perhaps thousands may be knit together in the bonds of peace and unity that today are separated by a chasm which needs eradicating.

Brother Witty and I then agreed on a simple plan to be publicized and presented to all the brethren everywhere. We called it--

AN APPROACH TO UNITY

1. **PRAYER.** Definite private and congregational prayer for unity.
2. **SURVEY.** Seeking to determine how much we have in common in faith and practice.
3. **FRIENDLINESS.** Establishing individual friendly relations by exchange of fraternal courtesies and through fellowship meetings.
4. **COOPERATION.** In enterprises which will not do violence to our personal or group convictions.
5. **STUDY AND DISCUSSION.** Open minded study and humble discussion of the things which at present divide us, in order to discover the way to complete a permanent unity.

Then we envisioned a meeting of more general character in which ministers of each group in equal number might preach on the great fundamentals of the faith and stress the aims which we hold in common in the Restoration Movement. The Westside-Central Church of Christ in Detroit, Michigan, placed their facilities at our disposal for this meeting. We called it the first "National Unity Meeting" and it was held May 3, 4, 1938, drawing large audiences. More than a thousand persons heard messages delivered by George Benson and J. N. Armstrong of the Churches of Christ and W. R. Walker and P. H. Welshimer of the Christian Churches. Then followed national meetings in Indianapolis, Lexington and other important centers of Brotherhood life. Such meetings continued with encouraging interest for several years.

Some fifty key men from each communion braved the criticism of many of their brethren to make valuable contributions to the venture.

A *Christian Unity Quarterly*, edited jointly by Witty and Murch, was launched as a medium of free discussion. The *Christian Standard* gave generous space to addresses delivered in the gatherings and heartily supported the effort. Among the more conservative periodicals of the Churches of Christ, only the *Christian Leader* and the *Word and Work* were openly friendly. The *Gospel Advocate* was at first violent in its opposition, but later joined with the *Firm Foundation* in studiously ignoring the movement. The latter two were the most widely circulated and influential of these papers.

Louisville, Kentucky, brethren arranged a demonstration of unity in which I preached on Lord's Day morning in the Highland Church of Christ, E. L. Jorgensen, minister, and in the evening at the Crescent Hill Christian Church. My audiences were most responsive and included brethren of both persuasions in each instance. Then, as a part of the plan, I addressed a joint meeting of around eighty ministers of both groups on Monday morning at the Christian Church Homes of Kentucky. There were many expressions of hope for closer fellowship. I stayed over a day as the guest of the *Word and Work* brethren Janes, Boll, Clark, Jorgensen and others. Janes' print shop was producing our *Christian Unity Quarterly* on a cost basis and it was a pleasure to form a personal acquaintance with this good man. He was largely responsible at this time for the development of the tragically weak missionary conscience of the a cappella brethren. He did not live to see the day when they were to excel in this important phase of the church's work. How he would have rejoiced in seeing his dreams come true!

Another rich experience was being the guest of E. W. McMillan and the Central Church of Christ, in Nashville, Tennessee. This was the leading congregation of the non-instrument brethren in Nashville (often called their "Jerusalem," with over a hundred congregations in the metropolitan area). In an unprecedented action on the part of the elders I was invited to offer the morning prayer at the Lord's Day service. More than a thousand people were in the audience. Then I was given the privilege of conducting the church's Monday morning devotional radio broadcast from the church's studios in the building. A half dozen leading Church of Christ ministers and laymen entertained me at lunch and afterward gave me a tour of the McQuiddy Printing and Office Supply plant where the *Gospel Advocate* was published.

The editor of the *Advocate*, H. Leo Boles, one of the bitterest opponents of our Unity Effort, was conveniently absent. Our reception by the management was most cordial. Indeed (and after many years it can be told), one of the McQuiddy brothers asked me to come into his private office. After he had asked me to be seated, he closed the door and

said, "Brother Murch, I am glad to see you and Brother Witty engaged in your good work. I am praying for God to bless you. Of course, Brother Boles and his associates are using the *Advocate* to oppose you. This is the only thing they can do. If they approved your work thousands of our elders and college professors would rise up and boycott the *Advocate* and our company, which handles the major part of the book and supply business of our churches. We have to go along with their policy. I wanted you to know my personal feelings in the situation. We are delighted to have you visit us and to extend to you a hearty invitation to honor us by your presence whenever you are in Nashville. As far as I am concerned, I consider you a full brother in Christ. My the Lord bless you!"

It is impossible to describe the deep emotional experience of the trip with Brother Witty to Kentucky where we visited the scenes of the great Cane Ridge Revival. We sat in the old log meeting-house near Paris and talked and prayed about the unity of God's people. Then we visited the grave of Barton Stone in the nearby cemetery, and the burial-place of J. W. McGarvey in Lexington. We felt the moving of the spirits of "just men made perfect" urging us on in a work which often seemed futile but yet a work that must be done.

[*Editor's Note:* After a few years, due to various sad circumstances, "the movement lost momentum and finally died," as Brother Murch put it. Yet its influence continued in many hearts and churches. And there is no doubt that seeds sown then sprang up later in similar efforts through the decades. The most recent of these is the Restoration Forums which meet annually, the latest one being here in Louisville, Nov. 8-10. Our Lord Christ still yearns for His people to love one another and "cooperate in enterprises which will not do violence to their personal or group convictions." Let's work to make His prayer (John 17) come true!]

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E. L. JORGENSEN

A SONG OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

Part III

Dale A. Jorgenson

Resignation from the full-time pulpit of the Highland Church of Christ in 1923 afforded Elmer Jorgenson time and opportunity to expand his experience in vocal and choral music, activities which he considered important in sharpening his ability to make spiritual and aesthetic judgments for the continued development of the new hymnal: "All the time I had been working with and for the Louisville Chorus--a mixed group of one hundred trained singers" Describing the activities of the ensemble, he says:

We had done in part public concerts, the great things of the Russian a cappella liturgy, much from the early Latin and others. Naturally my tastes and hopes for our simple churches and Christian schools had advanced. Everything one does in good music has a tendency to elevate his musical tastes.

He was also heavily occupied in marketing the Great Songs No. 1 hymnal, an effort which continued even throughout the Great Depression, with good success. The song rally tours were still held regularly.

In 1926, a devastating tragedy struck the Jorgenson family. Their beloved child, Martha Jane, was seven years old, and an active and beautiful little girl. In mid-June, 1926, however, she contracted a severe case of pneumonia which progressed very rapidly, despite the best efforts of the medical science available at the time. After only one week of illness, she died Sunday morning, June 20. The funeral services were held in the Jorgenson family home June 21 without any formal address, under the direction of D. H. Friend, a close friend of the family.

Among many who offered love and wrote letters to E. L. and Irene Jorgenson during the dark days after Martha Jane's death, R. H. Boll was perhaps the most constant in sharing written notes of encouragement and deep caring. On the day of her death, and each of the next two days, Boll, (who was out of town preaching and could not get away to be with the grieving family) wrote careful, spiritual, poetic letters to his friends. The June 20 letter begins: "My dear brother, whom I love more than any man." He continues:

The one thing that came to me when I heard, was this, that but just a little while ("how short, how short!") and *He that cometh shall come and not tarry*. Then, in a moment, all sorrow and separation shall be forever past, as a dream of the night; and the Lord Jesus whom we love will give you back your precious little girl, to lose her no more.

One week later, the faithful friend wrote again, with prose later to be utilized by ELJ himself in a tract he ultimately wrote on suffering:

When we pass through the valley of the shadow of death God's presence becomes more real. We never learn God in hours of ease, but in stress and trial He draws near to us and we to Him, and He is made known to us. And I am sure that He is more precious to you through your deep affliction.

Two weeks later, Boll's message, written from Sherman, Texas, responds to another letter he had received from ELJ in the meantime. The response makes clear the faith struggle and near-depression being experienced by the bereaved young father:

I would have answered sooner if I could have answered more lightly. But your letter was so heart-searching and testing, so full of sorrow and battling faith and dreadful earnestness, that to answer it seems too great a responsibility. Above all I felt that I must guard against all *mere talk*. When one has passed through such a trial, only felt truth and reality can bring comfort.

Saddened, chastened, but even more focused, ELJ was able to concentrate on writing, editing, weekend preaching, and publishing during the years immediately following his daughter's death. Typically, perhaps, it is as though he turned to his work with an intensity which distracted him from his grief. Numerous congregational singing services were held in the Kentuckiana area during the 1930's, and in 1935 a "mass song service" with over a thousand in attendance was conducted in Bloomington, Indiana, the home of Indiana University. Other rallies were held in Chickasha, Oklahoma; Denver, Colorado; Berkeley, California and in Los Angeles. His work as Publisher of the *Word and Work* required his continued application to the business of that journal, and the articles he contributed to it were good enough to generate reprints many years later.

However, the primary work interest of his life remained the creation of the best possible hymn book for the worship of the non-instrumental Churches of Christ. As he grew in perception and studied possibilities, he says, "By 1935 I was dissatisfied with No. 1--though not with its sale. I felt I could now venture deeper and do so much better." He then did some research, made some inquiries, and decided to go ahead--though the financial risk was great.

The editing, "winnowing," choosing process--checking some three hundred hymnals and an aggregate of 60,000 numbers--writing many letters seeking permissions and copyrights, proof-reading, all took their toll in time and energy:

The stenographer knocked off at five o'clock, but I went on right there, night after night, until midnight! For fear of my eyes I dared not go any longer. But I never wanted to quit, and could hardly wait until morning to go back down--I loved it so, and the work you *love* to do doesn't kill you! In September

1937 I wrote the Foreword, went with my entire family to Chicago to check the final press proofs, and in October of that year the No. 2 was on the market.

The new book, which the compiler called the "supreme labor of my life, and . . . the ripened fruit of thirty years' experience and research in the field of sacred music," contained six hundred "Hymns" and "Gospel Songs." The pre-publication price was fifty cents, increased to sixty-five cents after publication. The five sections of the book were divided into lighter gospel songs, the "stately hymns of the church," "special songs," "a childrens hymn section, and a complete set of indexes. The book was printed in both round notes and shape notes; shape notes made it more accessible to many southern churches where people could still read the shapes.

Immediately, the compiler hit the road again to conduct song rallies across the United States and Canada, so that the book could be both introduced and used. The first Louisville songfest was again at the Highland Church of Christ September 24, 1937, a rally which "taxed the capacity of the house." A western trip was planned for summer, 1938, and in June of that year Jorgenson was also in Winnipeg, Canada with a mixed quartet to assist the rally scheduled at Sherbrook Street Church. During the summer of 1939 his tour covered 8,000 miles, all by train. Although the traveling constraints imposed by World War II inhibited the rally tours greatly, by 1945 they were again an annual affair and continued to be until ELJ's illness which brought them to a halt in 1958.

With the previous high level of acceptance of Great Songs No. 1, the vigorous tours, and the good reputation of the compiler, the new book had sold nearly two million copies to about ten thousand churches--Churches of Christ and conservative Christian Churches--by the mid-1950's. The round note edition was published for a time during the 1950's by the Standard Publishing Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. The shaped note plates were taken over by Abilene Christian College in 1958. The relationship between the College--later to become Abilene Christian University--and the compiler remained cordial and positive throughout his lifetime.

Besides earlier songs by ELJ, the new Great Songs No. 2 added March's hymn, "Hark! The Voice of Jesus Calling" and an arrangement of the traditional chorus, "When He Calls Me." A nod to tradition is the musical setting to the benediction, "The Lord Bless Thee and Keep Thee." An inside flyleaf later added to the book provided space for Jorgenson's arrangement of "Beyond the Sunset." An additional supplement of seventy songs was added in 1975, but never brought into the primary alphabetical structure of the larger hymnal.

[To be concluded]

VOICES from the FIELDS

Winston Allen

Eagle River, Alaska

Sept. 14, 1995

On July 17, after experiencing a time of shortness of breath, and after extensive examination, I was told "You have a malignancy." On two separate occasions two quarts of fluid were drained from the left pleural cavity. The malignancy evidently is widespread in the lining of the cavity as well as on the left lung, as revealed by a thorascopy. Doctors told us in effect, "Your situation is serious; you probably have two months to two years to live. If there is anything you want to do or need to do, do it now. Because of your age (almost 76) and the extent of the malignancy we would say it is untreatable by chemotherapy or radiation, and is inoperable." One cancer specialist in Anchorage said. "Adenocarcinoma is one of the most difficult kinds of cancer to deal with, but I believe in two things (1) the human immune system (and whatever you can do to help it) and (2) in the miracle-working God in answer to prayer." We agree.

Though requiring much rest and some pain medication, I am able to attend and help in the meetings as well as arrange for speakers and leaders. Our son David spoke Sunday, Aug. 27; Jim Goodwin spoke Sept. 3, and our son Norman is speaking the next two Sundays. My brothers, Argyle and Dennis, will speak, the Lord willing, Oct. 1 and Oct. 8. Beyond that we cannot see or plan at this time.

The men of the church have come forward in a wonderful way to help and to lead meetings. In recent weeks there have been three rededications, two baptisms, and one marriage.

Your prayers for healing are appreciated, and for continued growth in the church here both spiritually and in numbers. We trust the Lord to use this whole situation for His glory, to be a blessing to His people and for our good. The response of many Christian friends far and near is greatly appreciated.

The next appointment with the cancer specialist is scheduled for 9/25. At that time the doctor wants to compare new X-rays with those previously taken.

Winston and Irene Allen
12731 Spring Brook Drive
Eagle River, Alaska 99577

Nakahara News

Piedmont Church of Christ

Sept. 1995

In our last letter information was shared with you about the Nakaharas' visit to the states this fall. That time has nearly arrived and

plans are well underway for his visit among various churches. Michiya will be traveling with his wife, Tomoko, their one year old son, Kazuma, and Michiya's mother, Teruko Nakahara. We write this newsletter so that you may know the schedule of their visit; and we hope that you will be able to see them and give them a word of encouragement as they labor for the Lord Jesus Christ in Shizuoka City, Japan. The following itinerary is set:

Piedmont Church of Christ TX	Oct. 26 A.M.
Piedmont Church of Christ TX	Oct. 26 P.M.
Denham Springs Church of Christ LA	Nov. 5 A.M.
Amite Church of Christ LA	Nov. 5 P.M.
Crowley Church of Christ LA	Nov. 12 A.M.
Abbeville Church of Christ LA	Nov. 12 P.M.
Louisiana Lectureship in Glenmora, Louisiana	Nov. 13 - 16
Cutting Ave. Church of Christ LA	Nov. 15 P.M.
Cherry Street Church of Christ IN	Nov. 19 A.M.
Linton Church of Christ IN	Nov. 19 P.M.
Southeast Church of Christ KY	Nov. 26 A.M.
Sellersburg Church of Christ IN	Nov. 26 P.M.
Locust Street Church of Christ TN	Nov. 29 P.M.
Gallatin Church of Christ TN	Dec. 3 A.M.

Please pray for their safety as the Nakaharas travel among the churches. -- Bob Yarbrough, Treasurer

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blaes

Two Books By R. H. Boll Back in Print

Robert Garrett, just "home" from Africa, has brought over 100 copies of 2 books which have long been out of print. They are "Lessons on Daniel," and "The Revelation," both by former W&W editor R. H. Boll. He printed them in Zimbabwe, so you'll have to learn to read an African language! No, I'm joking--

they're in English. He is selling them @ \$5.00, but he may be sold out soon. See Robert when he visits your area, or write him c/o 9209 Wildwood Lane, Louisville KY 40272. Any copies he has left (if any) when he returns to Africa next Aug. will be sold through W&W. If you order from Robert by mail, be sure to pay extra postage costs.

W&W is still accepting donations to enable us to publish Tom Bradshaw's book about R.H. Boll's life and ministry. Several hundred dollars have come in; we need between 1000-1500 more. Every gift helps us get nearer the goal.

Progress In the Philippines

A letter from David Moldez, church-planter in Greater Manila and its environs, reports increasing activity in evangelism. He was our co-worker in Central Bible College and in pastoral work. He is still involved in these ministries but now is mostly engaged in pioneer work in un-reached areas.

For years he led the San Francisco church, but now is able to leave it in the hands of other brethren--though he visits occasionally. He started and still leads 2 churches in Novaliches. But in addition, he says, "we now are making outreaches into 3 areas of Caloocan City. We are grateful for Central Bible College students who help us" and are willing to receive on-the-job training. They have divided up into 4 teams of 3 men each. Some of these brothers are in this work fulltime, others parttime. Each team of 3 concentrates on one community, visiting from house to house, then returning to teach the Gospel to families that show interest. Later they gather these interested folks into community-wide gatherings for worship and fellowship. Some of these men have health problems, and most of them face financial struggles. Yet they press on to make Christ known. Remember them in prayer. -- Alex Wilson

Southeast Church of Christ

What a joy it is to hear our Team Leaders present what their teams have accomplished and what they are planning. After meeting

with the builders of Stone Creek subdivision next to our property, I have been advised the sewers are to be ready by Feb. 1996. Pray for our Team Leaders as they get their teams ready to meet the spiritual needs of 76 new families to occupy the first section of Stone Creek. Stone Creek will grow 280+ new homes very soon. "beep>BEEP grows louder as the earthmoving equipment moves forward.

Portland Ave. Church, Louisville

One S.S. class addressed & stuffed 150 envelopes, each with a gospel of John in the language of a closed Muslim land. Then we prayed for each person, which was hard due to unpronounceable names, & mailed them. Their names were furnished to us by a mission organization which gets them from telephone directories!

8 of our members are studying Alex' class in Church History at the School of Biblical Studies (+3 students from other churches). 4 of our 8 are ladies, and 4 in the class attend tuition-free due to the senior citizens' discount for those over 59. Perhaps they were inspired by several older brethren from Linton who drive down with Jerry Carmichael & attend his class. We hope this is part of a growing trend.

The Lord Is Doing Good Things

At the Louisville--area church leaders' lunch on Sept. 13, there were 21 present. This was the most in a long time, & several items of good news were shared:

The Cherry St. church has ordained 2 deacons, & Waterford ordained 3 deacons. Portland ordained 3 elders. At Buechel church 2 young people from the community were baptized. Jim Rowe reported

that the church in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, which he visited lately, has for the past few years been growing at a rate of 25% yearly! Also all 3 camps-- in Ky., Ind. & La.--experienced an increase in attendance this past summer. Praise God for His goodness.

1995 Louisville Christian Fellowship Week

There was a good number of favorable comments about this year's lessons and speakers from those attending. Attendance was up from recent years and the missions offering was \$2945.00, much higher than last year's offering. Please be in prayer for next year's fellowship week and committee. Next year's theme is "Making Connections: With Those Outside The Church".

-- Mike Abbott

Jennings, La. Bulletin

Help Needed for Devotional. Friday morning, Sept. 8, we host the Jennings football team and coaches at 7:00 a.m. for a devotional, as we have in the past. Two of our young men, Teep Guinn and Lynn Lasserre, are part of this year's team. We provide donuts, milk, juice, for our guests, and Bro. A. J. shares a short message with the team. [Some 85 young men attended the 45 minute time of sharing. Thank you to all who helped.]

New Student Worships With Us -- Be sure you give Carolina Berreta a special hello and welcome this morning. She is a foreign exchange student from Brazil, residing with the Broyles family while she studies at Lake Authur High. As a Christian, Carolina wants to worship and work with us. Welcome, Carolina!

Maple Manor

In memory of her parents,, her husband and her aunt, Sister Barbara

O. Bellamy of Winchester, Ky. gave two bedrooms of furniture for the Maple Manor Christian Children's Home. Sister Bellamy has been a member of the Belmont Church of Christ for fifty years and also a faithful supporter of Maple Manor.

We extend a warm welcome to Kirstan Buck as a child care worker with the girls of Maple Manor. She comes to us from Louisville, KY where she is a member of the Southeast Church of Christ.

Kirstan is a graduate of Transylvania University of Lexington, KY where she received her BA on a mission trip to Mexico. When she returned, she applied for the position of houseparent and was hired. Kirstan brings with her a warm smile and added stability to the houseparents position. We are truly blessed to have her on our staff.

Adult Division - It is time to begin preparation of the budget for 1996. With the ever increasing costs of food, supplies, and paying employees a fair wage, this is a time of suspense!

With the decrease in income due to an increase of residents on Medicaid, and the loss of some regular monthly support, it becomes quite a struggle to present a budget that is balanced. It is a necessary work, but juggling figures to fit becomes quite an interesting exercise.

There is much good news at our home We remain full--24 in the nursing wing. We have lost some of our regular monthly supporters, and we need to have them rejoin us in this good work or we need to have some new ones join in supporting to take up the slack that has resulted from losing other supporters. To date, the Lord has been very gracious to us and has enabled us to meet all of our financial obligations

without the necessity of borrowing funds.

Locust Street Church, Johnson City, TN

The congregation is still prayerfully searching for a preacher. During Sept. two men were invited to preach twice, lead a Wed. night meeting & attend other meetings in order to promote mutual knowledge & acquaintance.

Amite Church of Christ, La.

This has been one of the busiest summers ever for our church. We were very fortunate to have Cullen Istre with us this summer. Cullen, a Bible student at Cincinnati Bible College, completed his summer internship with us. We enjoyed Cullen's stay and he truly was a blessing to all that met him.

The summer was filled with VBS, a youth trip to Astro World, and three weeks of camp. At the senior week of camp, our youth were reunited with Sonny Childs from Illinois. We became acquainted with

Sonny at the winter youth rally in Jennings and again in Amite when he was invited to teach a seminar for our area youth in the spring.

We're currently gearing up for the three upcoming fall retreats in De Ridder, La. --Kathy Currier

Gallatin Church of Christ

By the end of 1995 we will have had visits from these missionaries that we support:

Ken Rideout, Thailand
Robert Garrett, Zimbabwe
Joe Shulam, Israel
Michiya Nakahara, Japan

We must be in regular, fervent prayer for all God's laborers and ask Him to raise up additional ones.

Don't Forget . . .

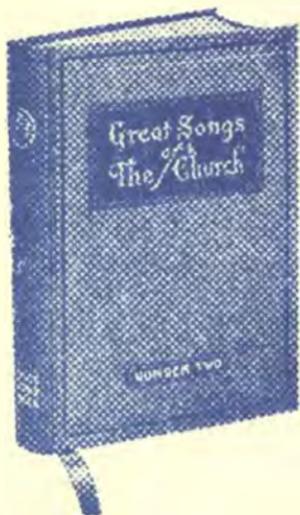
Remember the Central La. Christian Fellowship, Nov. 13 - 16. See Sept. W&W for schedule.

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