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

by G. Richard Fisher

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

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

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

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

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



BECOMING ANNE OF MANY GUISES

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

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

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

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

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

1992, pg. 533.

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

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

57. *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

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

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

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

62. *Ibid.*, pg. 85.

63. *Ibid.*, pg. 326.

64. *Ibid.*, pg. 99.

65. *Ibid.*, pg. 105.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANNE RICE

(continued from page 1)

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

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

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

FROM CATHOLIC TO ATHEIST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A RETURN TO THE MASSES

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

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

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

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

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

Her entry for December 7th reads:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RELIGION REIGNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NO REGRETS, NO REMORSE, NO REPENTANCE

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

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

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

FABRICATING JESUS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A DEFECTIVE JESUS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Linguist W.E. Vine adds:

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

Apologist Ron Rhodes offers:

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

SILLY MIRACLES

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

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

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

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

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

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

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

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

JOHN THE ESSENE?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESSING QUESTIONS AND FINAL BLASPHEMY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She also stated:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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