



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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Still waiting for the end of the world

The Apocalypse Industry Revisited in the Aftermath of Y2K

By Daniel R. Barnett

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*All you wild beasts of the field, come and eat, all you beasts of the forest!
My watchmen are blind, all of them unaware;
They are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark;
Dreaming as they lie there, loving their sleep.
They are relentless dogs, they know not when they have enough.
These are the shepherds who know no discretion;
Each of them goes his own way, every one of them to his own gain:
"Come, I will fetch some wine; let us carouse with strong drink,
And tomorrow will be like today, or even greater."
The Book of Isaiah; 56:9-12*

As if I didn't have anything better to do with my time, I am now writing about the end of the world. Again.

Oh, sure, I could devote this space to something positive for a change, like that recent television program on the Fox network where extremely intelligent schoolchildren from across America competed against each other for scholarships and other prizes. Instead, we get to revisit Doomsday, an event that was supposed to have happened on January 1 of this year. Or is that May 5? I'm having trouble keeping it straight.

And after all that hoopla over the Y2K bug, guess what? The most extensive damage to computers this year has been due to the ILOVEYOU virus and a couple of copycats. As could

be expected, not one psychic or prophet said a word about some practical jokers in the Philippines unleashing a pack of viruses that would cause billions of dollars' worth of damage.

Life continues to go on. Governments and economies around the world have managed to remain fairly stable. Instead of arguing over whose turn it is to leave the fallout shelter in search of water, we're now talking about Richard Hatch winning the million-dollar prize on Survivor. But how have the prophets of doom fared since their predictions started to fizzle out? Let's take a peek.

Preparedness Expo: Ready for Everything Except the New Millennium?

Regular readers of The North Texas Skeptic may remember that in our May 1999 issue, I presented my report on a field trip that I made to Preparedness Expo '99, which featured an eclectic combination of survivalists, conspiracy buffs, Y2K experts, alternative medicine peddlers, and white supremacists. The one thread that linked most of these folks together was that they knew why civilization was being threatened, who was responsible, and how the average American could prepare for the coming tribulation.

More than halfway into the year 2000, it appears that Preparedness Expo has undergone some drastic changes. A planned return to Dallas in April was canceled with relatively little notice, and the traveling exhibition's Web site didn't get updated for some time. Things were starting to look gloomy for Preparedness Expo – and then it came back as Lifeline Expo, with a new Web site and a June visit to Georgia. Many of the speakers from Preparedness Expos in the past were still on hand to preach the gospels of self-reliance, self-medication, and self-sufficiency.

Since the Georgia visit, however, the survivalist's convention has found itself under new management. Once operated by Utah-based Preparedness Shows, Lifeline Expo is now controlled by LightStream Productions of Naperville, Illinois. I have not yet learned the reason for the change in ownership, but I suspect cash flow may have been disrupted somewhat when Doomsday didn't show up as planned.

And yes, it appears that Lifeline Expo is coming back to Dallas after all. Scheduled speakers during the exhibition on October 21-23 included Preparedness Expo alumni such as militia celebrity James "Bo" Gritz and anti-immunization crusader Dr. Len Horowitz. Also on hand will be ColorVision founder Donna Reis, inventor of "the only non-programmable aura imaging camera on the world-wide market today." Stay tuned.

The Prophecy Club: Tying Up Some Loose Ends

Not long ago, I also examined the prophecies of the late Dumitru Duduman in relation to America's future. Duduman, a Romanian-born prophet, claimed that he received visions foretelling the eventual destruction of America and all who did not repent of their sins and turn to Jesus for protection from the coming troubles.

In my research, I came across ten prominent differences in the accounts of Duduman's prognostications as relayed by both Duduman's autobiography and The Prophecy Club, a Topeka-based ministry founded by Stan Johnson that is dedicated to studying Bible prophecy, conspiracy theories, and so on. One of the discrepancies involved a prophecy entitled "When Will It Happen?" that seemed to set a date for Judgement Day, as will be explained shortly.

I managed to find the on-line version of The Prophecy Club's January/February 2000 newsletter and read this errata from Johnson:

Our office was contacted by Michael Boldea of Hand of Help ministries. [Boldea is Dumitru Duduman's grandson; he served as Duduman's translator at various lectures to American churches. - DB] He told us that our 35 Prophecies, Dreams and Visions booklet we offer has a misquote in it. He said in the "When Will it Happen" message, it should read, "Tell the people of America that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If they will repent and turn back to God, they will make it through the second day to the third day. If they don't, they will not make it."

We printed it as, "If they will repent and turn back to God, they will make it to the 2000 year mark. If they do not, they will not make it to the 2000th year.

Small change, but it makes a big difference in interpretation. I checked in their booklet, Dreams and Visions from God, published in 1994 and sure enough, they were right!

How it got to me that way is still a mystery, because I treat all dreams and visions as "thus saith the Lord" and don't make any changes, even spelling or grammatical changes without the permission of the author. I checked our files to see if I could find the original newsletter I took it from, but it was not there so I will go along with Michael's published version.

I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

I have no idea when Boldea contacted The Prophecy Club headquarters in Topeka; it appears that Johnson did not make that information available in the on-line version of his newsletter.

I did receive some e-mail in response to my article on Duduman from some prophecy students and pastors, including one-time Prophecy Club speaker Peter Martinez. I appreciate all such responses, but unfortunately I lost all of the e-mail addresses before I had a suitable chance to respond. If you wrote me concerning the Duduman article and never heard anything

else from me, please accept my apologies.

It is worth mentioning at this point that I remember hearing Johnson speak on a Prophecy Club radio broadcast that sometimes his organization features speakers that they might not agree with completely. He's willing to cut them a little slack as long as they follow two simple rules: (1) They must not challenge the inerrancy, infallibility, or divine preservation of the King James Version of the Holy Bible. (2) Their prophecies and visions must not run counter to those that have been made by Dumitru Duduman.

Obviously, Duduman's revelations carry a lot of weight with Johnson, who has frequently spoken about how he drove Duduman to various prophecy meetings and sermons through America and listened as Duduman revealed more visions he had received from the Lord. When Duduman died in 1997, Johnson appeared to be quite saddened by the loss of an old friend that he looked up to and whose prophecies he had apparently cherished in his heart. It is therefore even more of a mystery how such a glaring inconsistency could have persisted in a Prophecy Club publication for so long without anyone bringing it to Johnson's attention earlier.

I appreciate the efforts of Stan Johnson and The Prophecy Club to correct any errors or inconsistencies that may accidentally appear in their publications or newsletters. Still, I must caution Johnson that his work remains unfinished. The way I see it, it's one discrepancy down, nine to go – but I could be wrong.

Credonia Mwerinde: Cult Tragedy in Uganda

While the prophecies of folks such as Dumitru Duduman seem relatively harmless, I get fairly frantic when I contemplate the end results of some failed end-time prophecies in central Africa. With all this talk about being a "Watchman on the Wall" in terms of Biblical prophecy, one question sticks in my mind: Who watches the watchmen?

The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, a renegade Roman Catholic splinter group based in Uganda, self-destructed on St. Patrick's Day of this year. At least 924 followers of the movement were found murdered throughout Uganda by law enforcement officials, giving the Ten Commandments cult the dubious honor of surpassing the body count established by the 1978 mass murder/suicide by the Peoples Temple in the jungles of Guyana.

The cult's muse and absolute ruler is a reputed prostitute named Credonia Mwerinde, who claimed that the Virgin Mary contacted her. Mwerinde was painted in a very bad light by ABC News journalist Sheila MacVicar, who reported on an April 10 broadcast that Mwerinde apparently seduced a local politician and a Catholic priest who would later serve as her chief lieutenants in the Ten Commandments movement. She apparently commanded her followers to sell their property and give their money to the cult's leaders.

According to a *Washington Post* article by Karl Vick printed on April 1, Mwerinde's cult emerged from a prolonged outbreak of religious visions in central Africa since the 1970s, apparently starting when a woman claimed to see the Virgin Mary on a soccer field in Kibee, Rwanda. Mwerinde claimed to receive messages from Mary and passed these dictates to her followers – apparently including predictions that the world was coming to an end.

Mwerinde's first prediction for Doomsday set 1992 as the date. After 1992 came and went, the reckoning was rescheduled for 1995. Once again, the Apocalypse was a no-show, and some cultists started demanding their money back. Doomsday was pushed back to December 1999 and then back to December 31, 2000; there has been some speculation that more of Mwerinde's disciples started insisting that she either put up or pay up.

As the rest of the world was winding down from the Y2K hype, members of the Ten Commandments sect were summoned to a cult chapel in the Ugandan town of Kanungu for what was supposed to be a celebration on March 18. Instead, on March 17, a fireball erupted in the chapel, burning alive an estimated 500 of Mwerinde's followers. Even more unfortunate believers were found buried in mass graves or murdered in a cult elder's home.

Law enforcement officials would like very much to interview Credonia Mwerinde and her assistants about the murders – but last I heard, they're still on the run.

Professing Themselves to be Wise, They Became Fools

Let me throw just a few other names at you: Sabbatas Zevi, the Fifth Monarchy Men, Cotton Mather, Charles Taze Russell, The Amazing Criswell, "Moses" David Berg, Keith D. Gilbert, Edgar C. Whisenant, Richard W. Noone, Hon-Ming Chen, and Monte Kim Miller.

This is just a small sampling of the multitudes of people who have made specific prophecies about when the world would end – all of which have obviously failed if you're reading this. I leave it to you for now to research these folks on your own.

The apocalypse industry is good work if you can get it – at least until someone starts examining claims of impending doom with a little more energy than the average person employs. That's why skepticism as a philosophical discipline is so important; it allows an individual the freedom to investigate a particular assertion or concept from all sides, to question it, challenge it, and, if necessary, debunk it. The only problem is that there is so much in the way of untested, unexamined claims that await skeptics in every facet of life.

That's okay; I'm almost done for one evening. Time to shut down the computer. Close the books. Kiss my wife goodnight. Turn out the lights. Sleep.

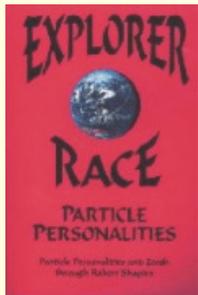
Tomorrow, the world awaits.

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No comment

[EXPLORER RACE: PARTICLE PERSONALITIES](#)

Robert Shapiro/Particle Personalities and Zoosh



All around you in every moment you are surrounded by the most magical and mystical beings. They are too small for you to see as single individuals, but in groups you know them as the physical matter of daily life. We hear from Gold, Mountain Lion, Liquid Light, Uranium, the Great Pyramid's Capstone, Ice and others.

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Advertised in the May 1998 *Sedona Journal of EMERGENCE!* (Volume 5, #8)

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What's new

From Robert Park's *What's New* at <http://www.aps.org>.

Survivor: creationists are voted off the island. It was just one year ago that the state school board in Kansas removed human evolution and any mention of the big bang from the state science standards (WN 13 Aug 99). In Tuesday's Republican Primary, which is almost the same as election in Kansas, three of the four creationist board members running for reelection fell victim to natural selection. The largest margin of defeat was reserved for Linda Holloway, the board chair, who had raised \$100K for a race that would normally have cost a few hundred dollars. Tuesday's vote virtually assures that last year's action will be reversed.

Livin la vida loca: White House panel on alternative medicine. President Clinton last month named James Gordon, who heads the Center for Mind-Body Medicine, to chair a White House Commission on Alternative Medicine. Gordon's book, *Manifesto for a New Medicine*, finds no reason to doubt any alternative therapy. My personal favorite is his discovery that hypnosis can "cure warts, and increase breast size." The White House panel is charged with recommending public policies that will "maximize the benefits to Americans of complementary and alternative medicine."

Who wants to be a millionaire?: She should read What's New. A contestant on last night's program was asked: "The James Randi Educational Foundation offers \$1 million to anyone who can provide solid evidence of what?" She didn't know! The correct choice was "paranormal powers," but the offer is much broader than that. For example, JREF just offered the \$1M to Florsheim, if it can demonstrate its claims for MagneForce Footwear in a formal double-blind scientific test. My question to you is: Will Florsheim take up the challenge? I think you know the answer.

Florsheim: one of the most powerful forces in the universe. According to the brochure describing the benefits of MagneForce shoes: "Magnetism represents one of the most basic powers in the universe. This force keeps order in the galaxy, allowing the stars and planets to spin at significant velocities...At the earth's surface, the magnetic field is relatively weak,

but serves to keep humans attached to the earth. Without it we would spin off into space." There is much, much more, but this gives you the flavor. Florsheim says this information is "compiled from the writings of leaders in the field." This quote, in fact, is taken directly from *Healing with Magnets* by Gary Null, Ph.D.

Null (see above): three degrees of separation. "A Ph.D. in what?" I can hear you asking. Null claims three degrees: an associate degree from Mountain State College in Parkersburg, WV, a 2-year business school; a bachelor's degree from Thomas Edison State College in New Jersey, a "non-traditional" school without campus or courses that awards degrees for "life experiences"; and a Ph.D. in health from The Union Institute in Cincinnati, where students design their own programs, and form and chair their own PhD committees.

(Maria Cranor contributed to this week's WN.) *Bob Park can be reached via email at opa@aps.org*

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Web news

by John Blanton

The World Wide Web is an unreliable source of information. But it's free.

Step on it

Magnetic therapy has gained a lot of ground since we first featured it two years ago. Recall back then that Foley's, my favorite department store, was featuring body magnets and magnetic insoles in their house wares department. Now it's getting dangerous to walk into any Walgreen or Eckerd drugstore carrying metal objects.

More recently, such famous companies as Florsheim and Dr. Scholl's have gotten into the magnetic footwear business. Unfortunately for these old-line companies, some chickens are about to come home to roost. (From ADPATROL@aol.com):

The Consumer Justice Center, a non-profit 501(c)(3) Consumer Group, filed a lawsuit on August 8, 2000 for false advertising and consumer fraud against Florsheim, for selling its MAGNEFORCE shoes as a pain remedy. The lawsuit was filed in Orange County California, and asks that Florsheim be ordered to stop advertising the MAGNEFORCE shoes as a health aid, and to refund the purchase price to the class of persons who bought the shoes. A copy of the lawsuit is posted at

<http://www.consumerz.com/MAGNEFORCE.htm>

Flight 800, where are you?

Four years after the fact, conspiracy theories still fly following the disastrous explosion of TWA Flight 800. Terry Colvin (fortean1@frontiernet.net) has posted the following from a source.

TWA FLIGHT 800 crash witnesses fed up with the official investigation formed the "TWA 800 Eyewitness Alliance," which published a full-page ad in the Washington Times today demanding that the government tell the truth about the crash. In bold-face type they proclaim:

"WE SAW TWA FLIGHT 800 SHOT DOWN BY MISSILES AND WE WON'T BE SILENCED ANY LONGER

... We, the eyewitnesses know that missiles were involved. We don't know who launched them, but we know that for some reason our government has lied and tried to discredit all of us to keep that question from being addressed. ... The claim that our evidence is worthless is false and we want to know who is behind it. Hundreds of us SAW what happened. The FBI, the CIA and the NTSB must not be allowed to get away with this cover-up by defamation of the eyewitnesses."

See Full Ad:

<http://TWA800.com/images/times-8-15-00.gif>

IAN: It's funny how the media and assorted defenders of the official investigation tried to lead folks to believe that those of us who were trying to make witness accounts known were misrepresenting the accounts by our suggesting that the witnesses saw or even thought they saw a missile. Yet another defense of officialdom to the scrap heap.

It was shortly after the crash, after I'd interviewed several witnesses that I realized there was something here. Each of these people who I contacted based on their names reported in the media was telling me about the same thing, about a rocket that rose from a low elevation fairly close to shore and that flew out to sea, headed south, trailing

smoke in its path. That flight path was at 90 degrees to Flight 800's path, so it could not be Flight 800. The rocket ended in a small explosion — the initial crash event. When I accumulated all witness accounts from which a line-of-sight could be established, I found that the rocket that they observed came from the same area, and the area was not the same as the crash. I then triangulated those accounts — <http://www.erols.com/igoddard/witness.gif>.

Even the accounts from which reliable line-of-sight could not be established were looking in the same general area. Not long thereafter retired Navy crash investigator Commander William Donaldson published his own triangulation of many more accounts than I had and his were based on interviews on location. His triangulated close-to-shore launch site is almost the same, one or two miles off my triangulation: http://twa800.com/images/triangulation_update.gif

With the release of the NTSB report we discovered that the FBI had also triangulated missile-witness accounts and the FBI had triangulated accounts to virtually the same close-to-shore location both Donaldson and I independently determined: http://www.twa800.com/images/fbi_triangle.gif

These accounts are a human recording of what happened.

TWA Flight 800 Eyewitness Databases:

<http://TWA800.com/witnesscd/witnesscd.htm>
<http://TWA800.com/witnesscd/eyewitnesshighlights.htm>
<http://Flight800.org/eye.html>
<http://users.erols.com/igoddard/twa-core.htm>
<http://users.erols.com/igoddard/witness.htm>
<http://www.multipull.com/eye/default.htm>
<http://www.multipull.com/twacasefile/probabilities.html>

GODDARD'S JOURNAL:

<http://www.erols.com/igoddard/journal.htm>

Asking the "wrong questions," challenging the Official Story

Classic quack

From Linda Rosa:

Via the American Freedom Network Radio Station (1360AM), out of Johnstown, Colorado, you can now hear over the Internet the most demented of all quacks — Denver's Alvin Stjernholm, DC:

<Http://winamp.americanewsnet.com:8080/ramgen/encoder/live.rm>

Among Stjernholm's favorite subjects: the evils of vaccination, the reversal of all pathologies through chiropractic adjustment and soft laser treatments. Learn how poisonous vaccinations mimic "shaken baby" syndrome; how a little "tug on the hip" can stop a heart attack.

A true marvel of imagination! Classic quack!

Program Guide:

<http://www.americanewsnet.com/radio/proguide.htm>

EST: Saturdays: 5-7pm, 11pm-1am
Sundays: 2-4pm
CST: Saturdays: 2-4pm, 10-12pm
Sundays: 1-3pm
MST: Saturdays: 1-3pm, and 9-11pm
Sundays: Noon - 2pm
PST: Saturdays: Noon-2pm, 8-10pm
Sundays: 11am-1pm

Closer to truth

Posted by Marcello Truzzi:

Looks like an important new TV series called "Closer to Truth" (dealing with consciousness and parapsychology in an apparently balanced perspective) will soon be on PBS. For details, see:
<http://www.closetotruth.com/>

—Marcello

Whale back-masking

From the *Weekly World News*:

WHALE SOUNDS PLAYED BACKWARD PRAISE THE DEVIL!

DALLAS — Scientists have discovered 60 different whale songs recorded between 1987 and 1999 that, when played backward, appear to contain messages praising the Devil.

Analysis of the tapes confirms they haven't been altered in any way.

And while experts say it's possible for phrases like "God is dead" and "Lucifer is my lord" to crop up in whale songs entirely by chance, the odds of it happening more than once in a collection of just 60 tapes are astronomically against it.

"The supernatural connection, the link to Satan, is crystal clear," declares Dr. John Saltersetts, evangelist and founder of Soldiers Against Satan, a Dallas-based Christian outreach that blew the lid off the satanic whale tapes in the July issue of its newsletter, *Gabriel's Horn*.

"Make no mistake," he continues, "the Devil is at work in the world, not just on land but even in the sea.

"Not content to spread his darkness through mere demons and human beings, he is now working his evil through innocent mammals, whales — the majestic and gentle giants of the deep."

Dr. Saltersetts says the terrifying messages came to light when producers making a "sounds of nature" album in Los Angeles rewound a tape of whale songs — and heard a frail, feminine voice chanting "Satan is God" over and over again.

Intrigued, they pulled other whale tapes from their archives and discovered 117 words and phrases on 60 of 200 tapes they checked. The tapes were recorded over a 12-year period that began in 1987 and ended in 1999.

Even eerier, they are said to include songs from at least a dozen whale species living in every ocean on earth.

According to Dr. Saltersetts, the messages range from the relatively mild "Devil man good" to the hideously savage "Satan kill God" refrain that reportedly is hidden away in a song sung by a blue whale in 1997.

"Even though you can't hear the messages consciously, unless you play the songs backward, the subconscious mind processes the words as if they were being spoken to you directly," explains Dr. Saltersetts.

"If you hear the phrase 'Satan is lord' often enough, pretty soon you begin to believe it. The sinister thing about hidden messages is that you don't even know you're being exposed."

In the 1960s and 1970s, rock groups like Led Zeppelin and The Beatles occasionally used a special recording technique called "backward masking" to encrypt records with weird messages that listeners can't hear unless the songs are played backward.

But those kinds of studio shenanigans leave a clear and undeniable electronic "footprint" that indicates tampering, which the whale tapes don't have.

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Skeptical ink

By Prasad Golla and John Blanton

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