

Pretrib Diehards

(A Brief History of Pretrib Beginnings)

An Article by Dave MacPherson

Since the 1970's stunning new data has been surfacing about the pretribulation rapture's long-covered-up beginnings in the 1800's. In recent years several persons associated with Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) - which had long been pretribized - have reportedly gone to Britain to check on my research sources and then write books opposing my claims. In 1990 an Ohio pastor told me that Dr. [name omitted], the most qualified DTS professor, traveled there and came back and wrote nothing! The pastor added that he and some others had a good laugh. But change was coming. In 1993 Chuck Swindoll, who became DTS president after John Walvoord, stated: "I'm not sure we're going to make dispensationalism [the chief attraction of which is a pretrib rapture] a part of our marquee as we talk about our school." When asked if the word "dispensationalism" would disappear, he answered: "It may and perhaps it should" ("Christianity Today," Oct. 25, 1993)! But a few diehards (with the stubbornness of Iraqi insurgents and New Orleans looters) keep on milking their cash cow while continuing to cover up and twist the following historical facts about their latter-day, cult-like belief:

1825: British preacher Edward Irving revealed that he had been teaching some of dispensationalism's key aspects as early as late 1825. (John Darby-exalter R. A. Huebner has never even claimed to find any original prophetic idea in Darby before late 1826!)

1827-1830: Darby was still posttrib during these years. His 1827 paper had him waiting for only the posttrib "restitution of all things." After discussing in 1828 the "unity" of the church, he looked for only the Rev. 19 coming in 1829 and 1830.

1830: During the spring a young woman in Scotland, Margaret Macdonald, declared that she had discovered in the Bible what had never been seen by others: a rapture of "church" members described as a "pre-Antichrist" (or pretrib) event. Her words: "one taken and the other left" before "THE WICKED [Antichrist] be revealed." She was a partial rapturist seeing only part of the "church" raptured and the rest of the "church" left on earth. When she wrote that the "trial of the Church is from Antichrist," she meant the part of the church not included in her pretrib rapture. Leading partial rapturists including Pember and Govett have always applied the word "church" to the ones "left behind." Robert Norton, Irvingite historian and on-scene witness of Margaret's utterances, wrote that Margaret was the "first" to privately teach pretrib.

A September article in "The Morning Watch" (Irvingite journal) saw the "Philadelphia" church raptured before a "period of great tribulation" and the "Laodicea" church left on earth. Huebner's "Precious Truths" claimed that Philadelphia was seen raptured before only the "seventh vial" and not before

“the great tribulation” even though the article writer added twice on following pages that this “period” was indeed “the great tribulation”! In the previous (June) issue the same writer had seen Philadelphia on earth until the final posttrib advent. In between these two issues, TMW writers had visited Margaret who explained her new “revelation” which was soon reflected on TMW pages without giving her credit!

In December a published article by Darby was still defending the posttrib view!

1833: British lawyer Robert Baxter, an ex-Irvingite, wrote that the pretrib “delusion first appeared in Scotland” before it began to be taught in London the following year.

1834: A Darby letter referred to the new pretrib rapture view, stated that “the thoughts are new,” and advocated the subtle introduction of it by writing “it would not be well to have it so clear”! Darby also called it the “new wine.” Others who knew that pretrib was then a new view included other Plymouth Brethren, Irvingites, Margaret, and later 19th century historians such as Margaret Oliphant who referred to “a new revelation” in 1830 in western Scotland where Margaret Macdonald lived.

1837: Years after Darby supposedly had derived a distinction (or separation) between the “church” and “Israel,” his 1837 article saw the church “going in with Him to the marriage, to wit, with Jerusalem and the Jews”!

1839: The first year Darby was clearly pretrib. His pretrib basis then (and during the next three decades) was Rev. 12:5’s “man child” that is “caught up.” But this “new” Darby teaching was actually a plagiarism of Edward Irving who had been using this verse for the same (pretrib) purpose since 1831!

1843: In a letter written from Switzerland, Darby referred to “the dissemination of truth and blessing...thus spreading on the right hand and on the left, without knowing whence it came or how it sprung up all of a sudden....” Here he gloated that others didn’t know “whence” pretrib came or that he had advocated the subtle sneaking of the new pretrib view into existing groups (see “1834” above)!

1853: Darby’s book “The Irrationalism of Infidelity” recalled his visit to Margaret Macdonald and her brothers in mid-1830. He remembered 23 minor details but carefully omitted the most important one: Margaret’s teaching of a coming of Christ that would exempt believers from the great tribulation “judgments”—a detail that all others who visited her and then wrote accounts could easily remember! (It’s obvious that Todd Strandberg’s mother didn’t soap his mouth enough because even though he knows better after the airing of “Open Letter to Todd Strandberg” on the internet, his falsehood-packed “Margaret MacDonald Who?” article on his “Rapture Ready” site continues to pollute minds by stating that I “have never been able to prove that Darby had ever heard of MacDonald or her vision”!)

1855: An article by eminent Brethren scholar S. P. Tregelles tied “Judaisers” to pretrib. But in an 1864 book he tied “Irving’s Church” to pretrib. Both Huebner and Walvoord claimed that Tregelles contradicted himself, and Huebner charged Tregelles with “untruth and slander.” But even William Kelly, Darby’s editor, saw no contradiction and wrote, concerning “Judaising,” that “nowhere is this so patent as in Irvingism”!

1861: Robert Norton, medical doctor and Irvingite, wrote that the “true origin” of pretrib had been “hidden and misrepresented.” (This was about the time that Kelly was working towards the goal of elevating Darby and giving the false impression that Darby should be credited with the pretrib view.) Several pages later, in the same book, Norton revealed Margaret as the true originator of pretrib.

1863: In his “Five Letters” leading Brethren scholar Tregelles wrote that some Brethren had been unscrupulously issuing tracts by the thousands in which they changed the “words and doctrines” of “the Reformers and others” to give the impression that those ancient writers had actually been teaching the novel doctrines that some Darbyist Brethren were then circulating in the 1800’s!

1864: Brethren scholar Tregelles charged fellow Brethren with changing even the words in ancient hymns: “Sometimes from a hymn being altered, writers appear to set forth a secret rapture of which they had never heard, or against which they have protested.” I should add that in an 1865 letter Darby asked his editor to preserve the newer (pretrib) hymns and “correct the others,” that is, the older (posttrib) ones!

1860’s: From the 1860’s to the 1880’s William Kelly, editor of Darby’s works, was busy putting together some volumes known as “The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby.” Opposition to Darbyism had been increasing and Kelly was determined to fight it and continue to exalt Darby. His goal was to present a Darby that was prophetically “mature” long before he actually matured. He achieved this dishonesty with misleading words in brackets inside sentences in Darby’s early works, and with footnotes that he “borrowed” from Darby’s much later works when he was obviously more developed! Darby even gave this deviousness his blessing. In an 1865 letter to Kelly he wrote: “I should think that some of the Notes would require some revising....Even the sermons contain things I should not accept....” Kelly even flaunted his shameful manipulation in a footnote to Darby’s 1830 article; the note said that “it was not worthwhile either suppressing or changing it.”

Interestingly, since the Irvingites were clear (and clearly first) when it came to public pretrib teaching, they didn’t need later “fixers” to dishonestly correct their original statements!

1872: In an article in “The Princeton Review,” Thomas Croskery of Ireland listed beliefs of the Plymouth Brethren including these: “That the moral law is

of no use at all to believers” and “that believers have nothing to do in the way of keeping themselves from sin for God must look to them if He will....” He said that “Mr. Darby” pursues his opponents” with a virulence that has no parallel in the history of religious controversy.”

1877: A medical doctor, James Carson, wrote that “the Darbyites have managed to cloak their opinions by using language in a Jesuitical sense....” He added: “Unless a person makes himself properly acquainted with the opinions” of Darbyites and argues “with the utmost precision on every point...it is impossible to manage such wily and slippery customers.”

1879: A later work by Thomas Croskery declared that “Brethrenite doctrine...clearly tends to immorality.” He then quoted Darby’s editor, William Kelly, who stated: “I am no longer, as a Christian man, having to do with the responsibility that attaches to mortal man, but am passed now into a new state, even while I am in the world.” Rev. Frederick Whitfield spoke of “the flagrant immoralities among the Plymouth Brethren” while James Grant commented: “Darbyism is the most selfish religious system with which I am acquainted.”

1880: William Reid’s work on Brethrenism revealed that “no other sect was, perhaps, ever so fruitful of divisions” and referred to “the novel doctrines propounded by some of its leaders.” He quoted Lord Congleton, a leading Brethren member, who asked: “Have you tried these Brethren—the Darbyites?...They are false in what they say of their brethren, they are false in doctrine, and they are false in their walk.”

And Henry Craik, a colleague of George Muller, was also quoted: “The truth is, Brethrenism as such, is broken to pieces. By pretending to be wiser, holier, more spiritual, more enlightened, than all other Christians; by rash and unprofitable intrusions into things not revealed; by making mysticism and eccentricity the test of spiritual life and depth; by preferring a dreamy and imaginative theology to the solid food of the Word of God....” (Leading Brethren scholar Harold Rowdon’s 1967 book “The Origins of the Brethren,” p. 253, quoted earlier Brethren member Lord Congleton who was “disgusted with...the falseness” of Darby’s narratives. Rowdon also quoted a historian of the Brethren, W. B. Neatby, who wrote that “the time-honoured method of single combat” was as good a method as any “to elicit the truth” from Darby!)

1880’s: In 1880, a year after his Christian conversion, C. I. Scofield was in the St. Louis jail for forgery because he’d stolen his mother-in-law’s life savings in a real estate scam. In 1883 his first wife divorced him (for desertion) and he remarried three months later. Although he had no formal theological training, he began putting a non-conferred “D.D.” after his name in the 1890’s. In 1899, when he preached D. L. Moody’s funeral sermon, he still owed thousands of dollars that he had stolen from acquaintances 20 years earlier. (In 1921 he advised his daughter, who then had financial problems, to pray to an ancient Catholic saint; at the same time his Scofield Bible, p. 1346, was predicting a future reign of “apostate Christendom, headed up under the

Papacy"!))

1889: Aware that for 60 years the leading historians—whether Brethren or Irvingite—had been crediting someone in Irving's circle (and not Darby's circle!) with the pretrib rapture, Darby's editor William Kelly embarked on a sinister plan to discredit the Irvingites (and their female inspiration) and belatedly (and falsely) give credit for pretrib to Darby. He achieved this in 1889-1890 in a series of articles in his own British journal while analyzing the Irvingites in a supposedly fair and honest manner. Let's see a few of the many examples of his clever dishonesty:

When quoting early Irvingites like Baxter and Norton, Kelly would consistently skip over their clear pretrib teaching but quote just before and after it! And he was a change artist. When Irvingites would write about their pretrib "rapture," Kelly loved to water it down into only their belief in the "Second Coming"! If the Irvingites expressed their belief in an imminent pretrib catching up, Kelly revised it into their "constantly to be expected Lord"! When Irving's followers hoped to escape, by rapture, the coming "tribulation," their "tribulation" was changed by Kelly into only "corrupt or apostate evils"! My 300-page book "The Rapture Plot" has 16 pages (!) of glaring specimens of short quotes exhibiting Kelly's shameful revisions of Irvingite doctrine!

1918: A prophetic book by E. P. Cachemaille discussed the pretrib origin, tied it to the 1830's, then added: "There has since been much scheming to give the doctrine a reputable origin, scheming by those who did not know the original facts, not being contemporaries of Dr. Tregelles."

1942: Noted prophecy teacher H. A. Ironside, who had a Brethren background, dared to assert, minus evidence, that what early Brethren taught re the rapture was "so contrary" to what the Irvingites had been teaching, adding that no links had existed between the two groups!

1960: After mentioning that the claim that Darby originated pretrib "is certainly open to question," evangelical scholar Clarence Bass wrote: "More probably, however, its origin can be traced through the Irvingite movement." But he failed to elaborate, evidently aware that he would be opening a can of you-know-what!

1973: Darby worshiper R. A. Huebner wrote that "The Irvingites (1828-1834) never held the pretribulation rapture or any 'any-moment' views." He was aware that many couldn't know how close he had repeatedly come to clear pretrib teaching by Irvingites and then had covered up everything while using the same devious tactics his inspiration William Kelly had used a century earlier while analyzing the same Irvingites!

My "Plot" book has a 31-page chapter of many quotes from the earliest Irvingites showing that they repeatedly and clearly taught pretrib as well as imminence. For example, in 1832 the Irvingite journal said that "some" will be "left in the great tribulation...after the translation of the saints." We've

already seen clear pretribism in the Sep., 1830 issue of the Irvingite journal. It's bad enough that Huebner (who never attended seminary, college, or even Bible school) has mind-poisoned his tiny circle of Darby-idolizers, but disastrous that pretrib leaders like Walvoord, Ryrie, LaHaye, and Ice were apparently "too busy" to check Huebner's sources and later on too proud to admit they'd been taken in by him!

The parallels between Huebner and his two inspirations, Darby and Kelly, are astounding. Like them, he easily applies "demon" to opponents and their beliefs. Like them, he exaggerates and even purposely muddies up Darby's earliest pretrib development and Darby's later reminiscences. And like them, he can deftly dance around pretrib "cobras" in Irvingism (and its female inspiration) without getting bitten! In his 1973 book, Huebner had 95 copying errors when quoting others including pretrib leaders! (For more shocks on the internet, type in "Humbug Huebner.")

1989: Thomas Ice, one of the biggest pretrib diehards, doesn't have favorites when he discusses the pretrib origin; he can use deviousness as well as sloppiness. When he reproduced Margaret's short "revelation" account he somehow left out 48 words! As if his carelessness wasn't bad enough, his reproduction also included four distinctive errors that Hal Lindsey had made in his own reproduction of it in 1983—what Ice chose to do instead of going to the original 19th century sources! (See my internet piece "Thomas Ice - Hired Gun" if you are shockproof.)

1990: A year after his "rapture" of 48 words from Margaret's handwritten "revelation" account, Ice was elevated all the way up to Dallas Seminary's journal which published his article on pretrib history. In it he had some copying errors when quoting John Bray, Huebner, and Walvoord. Even worse, when he quoted the same Margaret Macdonald account, he skipped right over what he knew was her main point (a catching up of church members just before the Antichrist is revealed) even though he quoted shortly before and after it! And when quoting present-day Brethren scholar Harold Rowdon, he used an ellipsis to cover up Rowdon's evidence in his 1967 book that Irvingite development preceded Darby's!

1991: After many objective, no-axe-to-grind scholars had publicly endorsed my research (which emphasized Margaret, the Irvingites, and 1830), R. A. Huebner, aware of the same objective scholarship and determined to negate it, came out with a book in which he claimed to find Darby teaching pretrib in 1827—that is, three years before Margaret etc. But halfway through his book (which had more than 250 copying errors!), he admitted that his 1827 "proof" could refer to something completely different! Nevertheless, diehard Thomas Ice, after admitting to me that he was indeed aware of Huebner's change, continues to declare publicly that Huebner's 1991 book "proves" that Darby was pretrib as early as 1827!

1992: When Tim LaHaye's "No Fear of the Storm" reproduced Margaret's short account, he "left behind" 48 words—the same 48 words that Ice had left

out in 1989! In the same book LaHaye made 84 other copying errors when discussing pretrib beginnings! Although he had a whole chapter focusing on my origin research, un-scholar LaHaye didn't list any of my books in footnotes or bibliography which kept readers from being able to find out what I had actually written! And LaHaye based his analysis on inaccurate secondhand sources and also made many copying errors when quoting them.

For many years Tim and Beverly LaHaye's "conservative" organizations have raked in millions of dollars while telling folks to vote for only "moral" political candidates, and while appearing to be very pro-family and anti-gay. What they haven't revealed is that their son Lee LaHaye has long been the Chief Financial Officer of Concerned Women for America and that Lee is openly gay! Can we be sure that "Left Behind" Tim isn't just as hypocritical with his pro-pretrib stance? (If you're man or woman enough, warm up your computer and type in "Pretrib Hypocrisy," "LaHaye's Temperament," "Tim LaHaye's gay son," "God to Same-Sexers: Hurry Up," and "Thieves' Marketing"—for starters!)

2005: In the August "Pre-Trib Perspectives" Thomas Ice again had the audacity to claim that the late Prof. Paul Alexander saw a "pretribulational translation" in Pseudo-Ephraem's now famous Medieval sermon. But Ice has known since 1995 that Alexander's 1985 book has textual as well as outline summaries of P-E's chronological order of end time events—both summaries showing only one final coming of Christ that follows the great tribulation and not even a hint of a pretrib coming in either summary! Is it possible that Ice knows more than the professor whose book somehow inspired one of the desperate pretrib diehards? As Eph. 4:14 puts it, Ice knows how to "lie in wait to deceive." And lie and lie! (See my internet paper "Deceiving and Being Deceived" and discover the calculated dishonesty in the Pseudo-Ephraem and Morgan Edwards claims plus other dishonesty including massive plagiarism in some of today's leading pretrib diehards! Type in my name and see all of my internet items. Since Ice and LaHaye are associated with the Pre-Trib Research Center which has its own site, you may feel inspired to write them, ask them some blunt questions, and even send them a copy of this paper.)

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