

Tribulation Central

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed...2 Thessalonians 1:1-8

Deceiving, And Being Deceived

by Dave MacPherson

<http://tribulationcentral.com/pdf/guest/mc-deceived.pdf>

You've probably heard that the pretribulation rapture view was published by a Rev. Morgan Edwards in 1788 and also by a Medieval writer called Pseudo-Ephraem 1000 years earlier.

The Edwards claim (promoted by John Bray and copied by Frank Marotta, Thomas Ice, Tim LaHaye etc.) is based on a 1980 book by Thomas McKibbens and Kenneth Smith, while the claim for Pseudo-Ephraem (promoted by Grant Jeffrey and copied by Thomas Ice, J. R. Church, Jerry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, Chuck Missler, Dave Hunt, Hal Lindsey etc.) rests on a 1985 book by Paul Alexander.

Not only have these promoters covered up and twisted what McKibbens/Smith and Alexander have written, but they've also concealed and perverted Morgan Edwards' and Pseudo-Ephraem's own words!

Let's focus first on Morgan Edwards (hereafter: M.E.). Promoters see a pretrib rapture in the following words by M.E.: "...the dead saints will be raised, and the living changed at Christ's 'appearing in the air' (I Thes. iv, 17); and this will be about three years and a half before the millennium...."

If promoters had been sure of their pretrib claim, they never would have had to collusively cover up the following M.E. statements that contradict their claim:

On p. 14 M.E. described the "Turkish or Ottoman empire" (which began around 1300 A.D.) as the "beast that started out of the earth" (Rev. 13's second beast). (Since Bray etc. repeatedly claim that M.E. had only a "futurist" outlook, without which M.E. couldn't have logically expected a pretrib rapture, Bray deliberately skips over the historicism in M.E.'s "Ottoman" remark - historicism being the belief that the tribulation, covering many centuries, began at some point in the distant past.)

On p. 20 M.E. wrote that the "wicked one" (II Thess. 2:8) has "hitherto assumed no higher title than 'the vicar general of Christ on earth'" and described "Antichrist" as "popery" and a "succession of persons." (Promoters emphasize

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M.E.'s comments about the "last" Pope and ignore M.E.'s view that "popery" had "hitherto" (for many centuries) been playing the role of II Thess. 2:8's "wicked one" while wearing a "mask" (as he put it) - a first beast that historicism could easily see during the second beast's reign!

Since historicism - and not preterism or futurism - is the only one of these three schools which often thinks "years" when reading "days" in the Bible, it isn't surprising to find such year/day historicism in M.E.

On p. 19, for example, while discussing Rev. 11's two witnesses, M.E. says "there are no more than about 204 years between now and their death: I should therefore expect that their appearance is not far off." (Bray quotes M.E.'s very next sentence, on another matter, but ignores this one! Could a futurist ever apply a couple of centuries - instead of only 1260 days - to those witnesses?)

Something else. The authoritative 1980 book about M.E. that inspired the claim promoted by Bray, Ice, LaHaye etc. never classified M.E.'s view as "pretrib," or even remotely resembling it, and the book's authorship had the same conclusion when later interviewed by both phone and correspondence!

And when Thomas Ice's "Pre-Trib Perspectives" newsletter (Sep./Oct.,1995) ran his own article promoting Edwards as a teacher of "pretribulationism." he couldn't find any of the heavyweight authorities on Edwards, that he listed and quoted, evaluating that 18th century pastor as a pretrib!

In light of the fact that Edwards embraced historicism (which can see some future things yet to be fulfilled) and not pure futurism (which sees no past tribulational fulfillment), it's easy to believe that Edwards, like some other historicists of that period, saw a three-and-a-half-year period at the end of a 1260-year tribulation - the same percentage a futurist would have if he were to see a period of three and a half days at the end of a 1260-day tribulation; such a percentage would of course be a posttrib view!

At least I don't have to juggle or cover up historical data to come to such a conclusion!

But now it's time to analyze Pseudo-Ephraem (hereafter: P-E), the name attached by scholars to manuscripts that were possibly, but not provably, written by the well-known Ephraim the Syrian who lived from 306-373 A.D.

And what's the discovery in P-E's early Medieval sermon on the end of the world that's led pretrib promoters to see pretrib in it? It's basically these words:

"For all the saints and elect of God are gathered, prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins." A pretrib rapture is seen by promoters in the phrase "taken to the Lord."

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It needs to be emphasized that pretrib in P-E has been palmed off on unsuspecting Christians by promoters seeing rapture aspects in P-E's sermon where none exist and by covering up such aspects where they do exist in his 10-section sermon!

In Section 2, P-E says that the only event that's "imminent" is "the advent of the wicked one" (that is, Antichrist). Nevertheless, Grant Jeffrey in his 1995 book, FINAL WARNING, had the audacity to claim that P-E "began with the Rapture using the word 'imminent'" and added in the next sentence that "Ephraem used the word 'imminent' to describe the Rapture." (If he and other P-E promoters can look at a coming of Antichrist and see a coming of "Christ," is it any wonder that in his endtime view folks will look at Antichrist and see "Christ"?)

Ephraim the Syrian, reportedly P-E's inspiration, said the same thing (SERMO SCETICUS, I): "Nothing remains then, except that the coming of our enemy, Antichrist, appear...." (Nobody's ever found even a trace of pretrib in this earlier work!)

In the before-the-tribulation sections, P-E mentions neither a descent of Christ, nor a shout, nor an angelic voice, nor a trumpet of God, nor a resurrection, nor the dead in Christ, nor a rapture, nor meeting Christ.

So where does P-E place the rapture? The answer is found in his last section (10) where he writes that after "the sign of the Son of Man" when "the Lord shall appear with great ower," the "angelic trumpet precedes him, which shall sound and declare: Arise, O sleeping ones, arise, meet Christ, because the hour of judgment has come!" (Like Morgan Edwards and Manuel Lacunza, Pseudo-Ephraem has the nasty, non-pretrib habit of blending the rapture with the final advent!)

In the July/Sep., 1995 BIBLIOTHECA SACRA, Dallas Seminary's journal, Thomas Ice and his co-author Timothy Demy pulled off one of the worst revisionisms of P-E ever: when summarizing Section 10 they carefully deleted what P-E included between "trumpet" and "judgment" (deleted the distinctive I Thess. 4 aspects in that posttrib setting), giving unsuspecting readers this utterly misleading condensation: "A trumpet will sound, calling forth the dead to judgment."

But P-E says much more, as can be seen; he places the resurrection of those who sleep in Jesus and the rapture of those who meet Jesus (details found only in I Thess. 4) at the Matt. 24 coming!

A moment ago I said that Edwards and Lacunza had the same rapture/advent blending. Here's evidence. Edwards in his 1788 work (pp. 21-22) speaks of "the son of man in the clouds, coming to raise the dead saints and change the living....The signs of his coming, in the heavens, will be 'the trump of God [I

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Thess. 4:16], vapour and smoke, which will darken the sun and moon [Acts 2:19,20]...."

Lacunza's 1812 work THE COMING OF MESSIAH IN GLORY AND MAJESTY (Vol. I, p. 113) declares: "...you will find St. Paul and the Gospel speaking one and the same thing: He shall send his angels and they shall gather his elect from the four winds; who can be no other than those very ones who are in Christ, who sleep in Jesus." (A few have assumed that there's pretrib in an earlier Catholic, Franciscus Ribera, but in his 16th century Revelation commentary he viewed Rev. 12's "woman" in the tribulation as the Christian Church!)

But let's go back to Pseudo-Ephraem.

Dr. Paul Alexander, the leading authority whose book inspired the P-E claim, is portrayed in Jeffrey's book, FINAL WARNING, as "perhaps the most authoritative scholar on the writings of the early Byzantine Church." But this misleading statement, designed to make readers think that Professor Alexander supports the P-E claim, covers up the fact that this world famous scholar sees not even a smidgen of pretrib in the same Medieval writer!

In fact, Alexander writes that the phrase "taken to the Lord" (which has become a bonanza for pretrib history revisionists) means "participate at least in some measure in beatitude." While Jeffrey and Ice do include this "beatitude" phrase, all P-E promoters carefully avoid revealing that the Catholic doctrine of "beatitude," according to the NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA, has to do with "the highest acts of virtue that can be performed in this life" - works on earth and not being raptured off earth! (Elsewhere in his sermon P-E repeats the importance of doing "penance," because of "our sins," so that church members will be "sustained" during the tribulation!)

In fact (again), Alexander has two summaries (textual and outline), in chronological order, of P-E's endtime events. And guess what. Alexander demonstrates both times that P-E saw only one future coming ("Second Coming of Christ" for the "punishment of the Antichrist") which follows (!) the great tribulation ("tribulatio magna lasting three and a half years") - claim-smashing summaries that self-serving promoters, with malice aforethought, have jointly swept under their "secret rapture" rug!

Since "Dr." Thomas Ice is the most rabid pretrib defender who's long promoted the (false) claims for John Darby and, more recently, Edwards and Pseudo-Ephraem, and at the same time covered up or twisted the (true) claims for Margaret Macdonald and the Irvingites, it's fitting to quote the first sentence of a recent news item: "WorldNetDaily reported on March 7 that a Texas district court has ordered the Tyndale Theological Seminary to pay fines totalling \$170,000 for issuing 34 theological degrees without receiving approval from the state education agency."

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This is the Fort Worth seminary that gave the title of "Dr." to Ice - which is at least an improvement over "Dr." C. I. Scofield who, in the 1890's, began deceitfully adding "Dr." to his name instead of waiting for some institution to confer it upon him! Well, I didn't mean to write a book here; I merely wanted to share some long covered up facts about pretrib dispensationalism. My 300-page book THE RAPTURE PLOT (with footnotes, index, bibliography, appendices, plus great commendations from leaders, and obtainable by calling 800-967-7345) has the sort of info I've just outlined plus much, much more.

If you decide to get a copy of my PLOT book, I won't have to tell you about the rest of the bizarre history of the 171-year-old, British-born pretrib rapture view.

I won't tell you that the same promoters have used the same unscrupulous, "twistorical" methods to try to discredit Margaret Macdonald, the real pretrib originator in early 1830, and cover up the fact that other partial rapturists who followed her and taught the same thing have all been classified as pretribs!

I won't tell you that promoters who claim that John Darby was pretrib as early as 1827 won't admit that he then had only his "heavenly church" theme, that he was still clearly posttrib as late as a Dec., 1830 article (he was waiting "to meet Him in the air in order to His judging of the nations"), that he wasn't clearly pretrib before 1839, that in 1839 Darby's only pretrib basis was Rev. 12's "man child" symbol (which symbol had been Edward Irving's pretrib basis since 1831!), that in his 1991 book (p. 100) R. A. Huebner admitted that his source for his 1827 claim for Darby could just as easily refer to something completely un-rapturesque, and that Ice since 1991 has covered this up and continues to declare, while searing his conscience, that Huebner "documents" his belief that Darby was pretrib in 1827!

I won't tell you that all of Darby's so-called "thoughts" which promoters for generations have claimed led him to pretrib (thoughts like the "Gentile parenthesis," "Church/Israel dichotomy," and the "literal method") were taught by others much earlier and that he subtly plagiarized them! (Dispensationalist scholars must have known that airing even a tiny fraction of this would have been a deathblow to their system!)

I won't tell you that throughout most of the 1800's the leading church historians - whether Irvingite or (Plymouth) Brethren - overwhelmingly credited the Macdonald/Irvingite orbit with pretrib; none credited Darby!

I won't tell you that in 1880, a year after his Christian conversion, C. I. Scofield was in jail in St. Louis for forgery (he'd stolen his mother-in-law's life savings by means of a real estate scam; would most non-Christian crooks do this?), that

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after he deserted his wife and children she divorced him in 1883 and he remarried three months later and covered everything up, and that as late as 1899 he still owed thousands of dollars he'd stolen 20 years earlier and had been writing phony IOU's to keep from paying back the money!

I won't tell you that after Darby's death in 1882, the editor of his many books, William Kelly, plotted to steal credit for pretrib away from the Macdonald/Irvingite connection and give it posthumously to Darby, that he achieved this between 1889 and 1903 by changing and covering up portions of early Irvingite and Brethren documents, and that 20th century British and American publishers have conspired to continue this historical revisionism in order to enjoy phenomenal sales of pretrib rapture material!

And I won't tell you that during the past century and a half, some of the most influential pretrib rapture books, by British as well as American authors, have been filled with sloppy scholarship and, what's worse, breathtaking amounts of plagiarism and even occultic teachings mixed in with evangelical theology!

Or that my PLOT book and my later book THE THREE R'S reveal, with comparison quotes and in more or less chronological order, embarrassing plagiarism in writings by John Darby, Joseph Seiss, E. W. Bullinger, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, Merrill Unger, Jerry Falwell, Ed Dobson, Ed Hindson, Charles Ryrie, David Jeremiah, C. C. Carlson, Paul Tan, Chuck Missler, and Jack Van Impe, for starters!

Finally, let me say that although I've been researching rapture roots more than 30 years now, I've been into computers only a relatively short time. The discovery of the extent to which misinformation about the pretrib origin has been circling the earth at computer speed still boggles my mind!

But authors are only part of the problem. After all, if an author gets royalties of, say, 10 percent, the other 90 percent goes to the publisher - which means that publishers can have much more incentive to keep churning out bestselling books that are filled with historical error and even deliberate deception simply because they receive far more money than the authors!

Which leads me to give you some of my reactions to publishers that are less than pleasant. After I gave proof to a well-known publisher in the Chicago area that one of its authors had plagiarized one of my books, I received a sympathetic letter from the publisher expressing concern; but no changes to my knowledge were made in the dishonest book which was kept in print, and neither my publisher nor I was ever financially reimbursed.

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I know a pretrib book publisher in California that was caught publishing a pretrib book that was a huge plagiarism of a book that had come out several years earlier. After being confronted by the other publisher, the offending publisher promised to withdraw the book, which it did for a while. But sometime later the offending book was quietly reissued - with the same old plagiarism but with a new book title to avoid detection!

In recent years Hal Lindsey has learned what publishers have always known, that there's far more money if you can be your own publisher or at least control the publishing of your own books. If a person looks closely at his 1999 book, VANISHED INTO THIN AIR (published by the same Western Front Ltd. which was, oddly enough, his "neighbor" when his home was in Palos Verdes, California), he discovers that more than 200 pages (out of 396 pages) are virtually carbon copies of corresponding pages in his 1983 book THE RAPTURE - with no "updated" or "revised" notice included!

This is robbery on a grand scale for unsuspecting buyers who've been assured that VANISHED is a "new" book! Hal has done the same nervy thing with several of his books, something that's allowed him to live in million-dollar-plus homes and drive cars like Ferraris!

And what about Lindsey's THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING which Harvest House Publishers has owned and been republishing for years? During the same time Lindsey has been peddling his reportedly "new" APOCALYPSE CODE, much of which is word-for-word the same as the Harvest House book! And there's no notice of "simultaneous publishing" in either book! Think of the feelings of customers who buy Lindsey's version only to find out that it's largely a mirror image of the other publisher's version which they had bought previously! Talk about greed!

And then there's Tim LaHaye. His 1992 book NO FEAR OF THE STORM, published by Multnomah Press Books, has an entire chapter entitled "MacPherson's Vendetta." Relying on miscopied secondhand sources that in turn miscopied still earlier sources, he gives the impression that my decades of rapture roots research is my revenge for the troubles pretrib caused my family in the 1950's including my expulsion from Biola in downtown Los Angeles. (My mother went to be with the Lord not long after I was "raptured away" from L.A.) But LaHaye's "crystal ball" is cracked because I didn't even wonder about the pretrib origin, or start any research on it, until two decades later - long after the chief troublemakers had been off the scene and forgotten!

Since my origin research has never had any reason to hide or twist any historical facts, my practice in my eight book titles has always been to give proper credit and list sources when quoting or discussing others including pretrib critics. In light of LaHaye's chapter about me, maybe he (or Multnomah) can explain why he doesn't list any of my books in his footnotes or even his bibliography!

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But his bibliography does list John Bray's 1982 pretrib origin booklet, containing only 34 pages of "origin" text, even though LaHaye has denounced Bray's claim that Lacunza taught pretrib (the same Lacunza that Bray has long since de-emphasized!) and even though Bray's little booklet is packed with miscopying errors, misspelled names, and even two instances of his plagiarism! How fair is it for LaHaye to discuss me at length without listing my books and publishers so that readers can learn what I've actually written?

The same LaHaye book (reprinted in 1998 as RAPTURE UNDER ATTACK) is filled with mountains of copying errors and missing footnotes, and his inclusion of Margaret Macdonald's short 1830 revelation account has 48 missing words - the same 48 words that Thomas Ice somehow left out (which changed the meaning) when he reproduced it three years earlier!

Why is it that Multnomah and other pretrib publishers almost never make any changes whenever errors and dishonesty in their books are pointed out to them? Don't they have time or money for necessary proofreading? Don't they have any self-respect? Don't they fear God?

One happy exception to publishing dishonesty is Thomas Nelson Publishers. After I convinced that company, with a stack of photocopies of marked pages, that David Jeremiah's and C. C. Carlson's ESCAPE THE COMING NIGHT (1990) is a massive plagiarism of Lindsey's THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING, a top TNP official sent me a letter, part of which revealed that "we at Thomas Nelson are very concerned about this matter. Accordingly, we are destroying all our current inventory of this title and will not reprint the book. Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention." (Anyone wishing a copy of this TNP letter can send a SASE and request it from me: Dave MacPherson, Box 1226, Monticello, Utah 84535.)

But as I've shown, many pretrib publishers are a far cry from Thomas Nelson. Their bottom line consists of three things: money, money, and money! They don't care that pretrib is less than 200 years old and that it didn't take over American evangelicalism much before "Doctor" Scofield's Bible in 1909! They don't care that the late Corrie ten Boom stated in a published article that pretrib leaders are "the false teachers Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days" and that pretrib caused the deaths of "millions" of Chinese Christians when the Communists took over China! And they don't care that the dishonest pretrib theory they peddle for money in fact makes them accessories to the past, present, and future mass-murder of fellow believers!

Since the same evanjellyfish publishers don't care, I intend from now on to focus as much on their business practices and personal lives as I have on past and

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present pretrib authors. If anyone can send me documented evidence in this regard, I'll be happy to share it on the internet and in other ways.

But I really must stop. If this article has whetted your curiosity, call 800-967-7345 in South Carolina and get my book THE RAPTURE PLOT, the most detailed and documented book on the pretrib rapture's astonishing and long hidden history. Or you can order it through online bookstores such as armageddonbooks.com¹.

As a historian I confess that I am no expert on where the different kinds of "wrath" (e.g. Satan's wrath and God's wrath) should be placed on prophecy charts. To me, a really important "wrath" question is whether or not the rapture will happen before the coming of pretrib wrath against those who expose pretrib dishonesty!

¹ <http://www.armageddonbooks.com/rapture.html> .