

Tribulation Central

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

Humbug Huebner

by Dave MacPherson

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

QUESTION: Which not-so-well-known prophecy writer (who attended neither seminary, college, nor even Bible school and is now a retired electrical engineer) has had a huge influence (while peddling his deliberate distortions of pretrib rapture history) on Walvoord, Ryrie, LaHaye, and many other pretrib leaders?

ANSWER: New Jersey resident R. A. Huebner, described years ago by *Moody Monthly* as a "militant" member of the dwindling (Darbyist) Plymouth Brethren, a fanatical group dedicated to enshrining 19th century John Darby in the "Pretrib Hall of Fame" as pretribism's greatest teacher (if not its originator) even if they have to trample on several of the Ten Commandments in order to achieve their End!

It's now my pleasure----nay, my duty----to share the following excerpt from my book *The Rapture Plot* (available on the Internet from Armageddon Books)¹, a 300-page book containing a lot more of Huebner's deviousness:

Since Huebner knew that the Irvingites had publicly taught pretrib as early as September 1830, all he could hope for in 1973 was an emphasis in his book on Darby's so-called underlying "truths" which supposedly evolved into pretrib, "truths" Darby reportedly had on his own as early as his first (1827) paper.

But during the 1970's and 1980's Huebner was aware that many scholars were accepting my evidence that Darby hadn't been the first to express pretrib and that the well-known "truths" hadn't been used by anyone to create pretrib; they were used only *after* pretrib's emergence as further support.

Since Darby himself didn't establish a link between these "truths" and his understanding of pretrib in 1830 (if his 1850 memory is believable), Huebner's only hope was to find Darby expressing pretrib even *before* 1830. This way he could continue to discredit all of Darby's competitors.

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

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Eventually Huebner found what he claims is unanswerable proof that Darby was a pretrib rapturist in 1827. He presents it in his 1991 book, a book that knows how often and how close it can come to the pretrib "cobra" in *The Morning Watch* without getting bitten!

But if Huebner does in fact believe in his new 1827 claim for Darby, he has no reason to keep on detouring around Irvingism's 1830-and-later contributions. If Darby really did hold to pretrib in 1827, it would have been advantageous for Darby (and Huebner) to highlight (and not cover up) Irvingite development; *they could have shown a Darby so innovative and influential he influenced even the Irvingite outsiders!*

The fact that Huebner, parroting Kelly, consistently conceals the Irvingite achievement tells me that Huebner is unsure of his 1827 claim for Darby. Indeed, when we go through Huebner's 1991 book, we see that he not only has second thoughts about his 1827 evidence but even explodes it in a later footnote!

Huebner's fresh evidence is found in Darby's Memory No. 6 which we discussed briefly in our chapter on his reminiscences. Huebner says that this 1879 recollection expressed what Darby was thinking no later than January of 1827.

In this memory, written 52 years after 1827, Darby wrote: "I saw there would be a David reign, and did not know whether the church might not be removed before forty years' time."

After including this quote, Huebner writes that by January 1827 Darby "had already understood those truths upon which the pretribulation rapture hinges."

But even more remarkable is Huebner's interpretation of what Darby wrote. He says that by this date Darby had "learned" that "Christ might come forty years before he would set up the Kingdom."

Once again we see Huebner shifting a word around so that he can derive a conclusion and continue to credit Darby. Previously we've seen him taking Darby's *daily expectation* of Christ's *coming* and subtly detaching "daily" from "expectation" and attaching it to "coming" in order to change a final advent into a pretrib rapture that can happen "daily," that is, *any day!*

This time Huebner takes the "before" which precedes Darby's 40 years and places it (in his interpretation) *after* the same years! But there's a huge difference. Darby in 1879 was merely recalling that in 1827, when he was still a historicist, he was expecting the final advent around the end of a remaining 40-year period. If, as Huebner asserts,

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Darby was saying that he expected the church's removal 40 years *before* "the Kingdom," Darby should have written "forty years before" instead of putting "before" where he did!

The same language is used today. If a youngster says at 11 in the morning that he'll mow a lawn and be finished before an hour's time, we assume he'll be finished by noon. We surely don't conclude (if he mentions an hour) that he'll be finished before the hour begins!

Also note that this 1879 Darby memory used the term "removed." Since his 1829 work spoke of an earthly "refuge" to "preserve" the church during a future earthly "scourge," his belief in 1827 of the church's removal at the start of a future millennium is hardly a concept of a pretrib (or even a small-gap, prior) rapture. Besides, we now know that in 1829 and 1830 he was expecting only the Revelation 19 coming.

Readers may wonder why this 1879 memory pinpointed 40 years and not 30 or 50 years. When I first saw this new Huebner evidence, I realized that Darby's "forty years" was a vital aspect of the historicism that was still prevalent in the 1820's. Advocates, employing Daniel's 1260, 1290, and 1335 days which had long been viewed as *years*, were agreed that the 1260 *years* had ended around 1792 (the curtailment of Papal power during the French Revolution), the 1290 around 1822, and that the 1335 would end around 1867 (the approximate time of the second advent, according to their view).

One of Le Roy Froom's volumes has a chart analyzing the leading historicists between the French Revolution and the mid-1800's (those who promoted the above time periods as early as 1794 and as late as 1842). Of the 26 who ended the 1335 years during the 1860's, three ended them in 1866, seven in 1868, and the majority (14) ended them in 1867. Those who pinpointed 1867 included Edward Irving (in an 1826 work of his); but he was only reflecting William Cuninghame (1813), James Frere (1813), Charles Maitland (1814), Archibald Mason (1820), and Edward Cooper (1825).

The slight differences (1866-1868) were over the beginning of the 1335 years----whether Justinian's edict (the start of the 1260-year tribulation) was in force in 533 AD or slightly earlier or later.

Huebner gives the impression that Darby in the 1820's was a thoroughgoing futurist holding to a future tribulation of 1260 literal days. But he was still defending the year-day theory in his December 1830 article. We've also seen Darby's 1832 paper criticizing futurism leader William Burgh; Darby was concerned "that Mr. Burgh's views divert the attention of Christians from the present anti-christian principles ...to some supposed or future actings of a personal Antichrist...."

If Darby in 1827 was a futurist, he wouldn't have written about a future period of 40 *years*. He would have expected a future period of 1260 *days*, followed by 30 more *days*, followed by 45 *days*. His recollection that around 1827 he saw 40 more *years* takes us to 1867----and most historicists in 1827 likewise saw only about 40 remaining years. Moreover, if Darby in 1827 was a pretrib, he wouldn't have been expecting even a future 40-*day* period, let alone one of 40 *years*; he would have expected a rapture before even the initial 1260 days!

Everyone agrees that Darby was a posttrib when he was ordained as an Anglican clergyman in 1825. And all agree that from the 1840's until his death in the 1880's he was clearly pretrib. Evidence demonstrates that in his 1829 and 1830 works he expected only the Revelation 19 (posttrib) coming.

Huebner's new 1991 claim that Darby was pretrib in 1827 fashions a Darby who was posttrib (1825), then pretrib (1827), then posttrib (1829-30), then finally pretrib! But who can seriously imagine such a wishy-washy Darby?

After presenting his new evidence for Darby, Huebner's 1991 book repeatedly states on following pages that he has *proven* that Darby was pretrib in 1827: "in 1827" Darby "held that the Lord might come 40 years before the reign of Christ," "already in 1827 he held a coming of the Lord before the Antichrist," "JND's mind was settled on the subject of the pretribulation rapture in the 1820's," etc.

After parading these we've-proven-it statements, Huebner explodes his 1827 claim for Darby in the middle of his 1991 defense on page 100. He writes, concerning the Darby "forty years" quote: "Perhaps this means that he had thought that there might be a time interval of 40 years between when the church would be removed and the reign of Christ would begin. Or, he may have thought that the 40 years would be a period during which the enemies would be put down before the commencement of the kingdom (David reigned 40 years)."

So, with belated second thoughts, Huebner admits that the 40 years in Darby's 1879 memory can just as easily refer to a final 40-year period of judgment! This sort of end-time judgment was typical of historicist outlook in the late 1820's which then saw the church past even the 1290 years and well into the final 45-year, judgments-packed "countdown."

So, after all of the advance publicity from Thomas Ice in even *Bib Sac* in 1990, and after Huebner presents his new evidence in 1991, Huebner admits halfway through the same defense that he *hasn't* proven that Darby's 40 years involved a pretrib (or even a prior) rapture!

But after this incredible admission, he continues to say that he's proven (!) that Darby was pretrib in 1827: Darby "understood the truth of the rapture in 1827," etc.

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In late 1991 in another publication of his, Thomas Ice declared without reservation that Huebner's 1991 defense of Darby "documents" the fact that Darby held to pretrib as early as January 1827 (even though Darby at the time had only his "heavenly" theme which wasn't original). While still evidently unaware that Huebner had merely copied Kelly's selective-quotation and memory-injecting tactics in order to discredit the Irvingites and credit Darby, Ice also stated that Huebner has shown that the early Irvingites *never* held to pretrib.

Since Ice apparently has been as intent as Huebner on defending and crediting Darby, I wrote him and asked if he'd been aware that Huebner's 1991 book explodes its new 1827 evidence on page 100. Ice had given this new claim a rave review and said publicly that Huebner has "positive evidence" that Darby was pretrib in 1827. Ice wrote back and admitted that he "did not overlook" Huebner's page 100 admission!

Honest unawareness of historical data is one thing. But when we find Huebner, imitating Kelly, consistently coming within a sentence of clear pretrib teaching in Irvingism, it's impossible to believe that they didn't know what they were doing when they repeatedly played "leapfrog" over evidence that could have credited the Irvingites. If what they censored wasn't clearly pretrib, there would have been no reason for such a sustained pattern of deliberate omission.

And how can Ice give Huebner's new evidence his unqualified endorsement if he is aware, as he admitted, that Huebner himself had second thoughts and said later on in the same book that Darby's "forty years" phrase *isn't* proof that Darby in 1827 was pretrib? If Ice can perpetuate what Huebner himself has in effect canceled, my own readers may be able to supply an appropriate adjective for Ice's eyes-wide-open action.

R. A. Huebner lives in New Jersey between the World Trade Center rubble and a bus terminal where military-type explosives were recently found----or maybe I should say New Germsey since he's also between two areas where anthrax-tainted letters have lately been found. Was Orson Welles' New Jersey-based "War of the Worlds" Halloween scare more than 60 years ago a bizarre forerunner of the stark reality of what's happening now?

Even though I'm not a prophet, I predict that Huebner will stubbornly hang on to pretribism and Darbyism until entire cities are destroyed by nuclear weapons, germ warfare, or something else!