

Tribulation Central

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

The Real Manuel Lacunza

by Dave MacPherson

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

A few of my acquaintances, especially John Bray, have claimed that a Catholic priest named Manuel de Lacunza (using the pen name "Ben-Ezra") originated the pretribulation rapture belief and introduced it in his notable work "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty" (1812). Well, now is the right time to tell you that I am forced to kindly disagree with the Lacunza claim.

Here's why: Bray, in his 1982 booklet "The Origin of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Teaching," admitted that he'd been influenced by an early 20th century pastor, Rev. Duncan McDougall of the Free Church of Scotland, who wrote the booklet "The Rapture of the Saints." McDougall, copied by Bray, was inspired by "much before" speculation in a Lacunza quote (Vol. I, p. 99) which declared that "much before" Christ's "arrival at the earth" He "will give his orders" involving a shout, the archangel's voice, and the trumpet of God (I Thess. 4:16).

But both McDougall and Bray were evidently unaware that a few paragraphs after the "much before" quote (and in the same context), Lacunza reveals that other writers of his time commonly believe that "a few minutes will suffice---five or six" between the catching up and the touchdown at Jerusalem. Although Lacunza doesn't explain his "much before," a day----or even an hour----would be "much before" when compared with only five or six minutes.

Lacunza speculates (Vol. II, p. 250) that the "wrath" and "commotion" of the "day of the Lord's coming" (that is, the second advent) will last at least "forty-five natural days." Bray somehow sees these days as part of "the tribulation period" and claims that in Lacunza's view the raptured saints are up in the air with Christ throughout the same 45-day period. Even though Lacunza places a rapture before this period, he repeatedly notes that this period is "after the entire ruin of Antichrist," "after the coming of Christ in glory and majesty," "in the age to come," etc.!

After the meeting in the air, Lacunza even has the raptured saints back on earth during the 45 days! In Vol. II (pp. 262-3) he declares that they will immediately

become Christ's messengers; he quotes Isa. 18:2: "Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled"----in other words, to "the relics of all nations which shall survive" Antichrist's reign.

Does Lacunza teach a rapture occurring 45 days before the coming to earth, as Bray claims? Let's look at Vol. I. On p. 83 Lacunza refers to the book of Revelation and writes that "the nineteenth chapter speaks of the coming of the Lord in glory and majesty, which Christians with one consent do wait for." Pages 99-100: after quoting I Thess. 4:13-18 Lacunza quotes Matt. 24:30 and then comments: "If you compare this text with that of St. Paul, you shall find no other difference than this, that those who are to arise on the coming of the Lord, the apostle nameth those who are dead in Christ, who sleep in Jesus; and the Lord nameth them his elect." Lacunza (p. 113) again quotes I Thess. 4 and Matt. 24 in this manner: "...He shall descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive, &c. and it appears to me, that 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."

For years I sent Lacunza quotes like the ones above to Bray and urged him to abandon that Catholic priest. Finally, in a letter dated Oct. 17, 1990 (still in my files), Bray wrote: "I don't even know what all Lacunza was talking about." (He's the same Bray who's been promoting 18th century pastor Morgan Edwards as a pretrib. But I've been telling Bray that Edwards believed that "Antichrist" was the Catholic papacy which had already been on earth for 1200 years before Edwards wrote his book! I've also told Bray that Edwards viewed the Ottoman Empire as Rev. 13's second beast----a beast that was already four centuries old in Edwards' day! It would have been impossible for Edwards to expect an event which logically should have happened centuries earlier!) Interestingly, even Tim LaHaye's 1992 book "No Fear of the Storm" (alias "Rapture Under Attack," alias "The Rapture"), p. 169, admits that "Lacunza never taught a pre-Trib Rapture!"

If Lacunza's 1812 book contains pretrib, as McDougall and Bray have claimed, why was such doctrine unknown before 1830? It wasn't that John Darby and Edward Irving were unaware of Lacunza's work, for both discussed it in their pre-1830 writings. And it wasn't that Darby and Irving were opposed to novel ideas, for both began to embrace pretrib after it emerged in 1830.

One final thought: why did the world have to wait until McDougall's time to hear something about Lacunza that it had never heard before?