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

X-Raying Margaret

by Dave MacPherson

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For several decades some pretrib leaders have *deceitfully* isolated Margaret Macdonald's posttrib-resembling statement "The trial of the Church is from Antichrist" to try to establish that she was posttrib. I have in mind leaders like R. A. Huebner, Charles Ryrie, Thomas Ice, and Frank Marotta. Like terrorists who destructively orchestrate mass confusion so that they can personally benefit, they had to have known that partial rapturism----Margaret's view----sees a pretrib rapture of PART of the church while also seeing the REST of the church enduring a future tribulation. The following "X-ray" is found on pp. 169-174 in my 1983 book *The Great Rapture Hoax.*)

Professor Ryrie wonders how Margaret can declare that "the trial of the Church is from Antichrist" (lines 85-86) and speak of "the fiery trial which is to try us" (line 65) if the Church will "be caught up" before Antichrist arrives (lines 39-40). Apparently he's unaware of the terminology used by Partial Rapturists.

First of all, "Church" can denote the sum total of true believers on earth at any given moment. (Actually, in a larger sense, it refers to all such believers who are to live during the Church age. Conceivably *most* of the Church is now with the Lord; they are the dead in Christ who will also participate in the catching up.) Margaret has a message for all of the Church of her time (note "all" in line 14): some will be Spirit-filled and raptured, while others will be left on earth. She thus divides the Church; those left behind are properly called "Church." She even divides the ones left behind, for "many" (lines 62, 71) will fall away and there will be "stony-ground hearers" (line 71).

Margaret uses "us" and "we" in her second division (after the catching up) in an *identifying, compassionate* way----and not in a self-involving way. Again she states that "all should be filled" (line 93), but she knows that some, including possibly her friends, will be "turning from Jesus" (line 94), "not entering in" (line 95), "passing the cross" (line 97), "looking from the cross" (line 100), and so on. Although she is sympathetic towards those who won't be raptured (and doesn't really know who will be raptured), she herself wants to be in the Rapture and prays for it (lines 113-115); she doesn't expect to be left behind. (Even Hal

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Lindsey can use "we" while not including himself! See *The 1980's: Countdown to Armageddon*, pp. 28, 32. Is he himself a farmer? Has he himself seen a UFO?)

Although Margaret employs "us" and "we" and "our" in a self-involving way in parts of her revelation, she stands back and uses detached expressions *more frequently* when referring to Christians: all, men, his people, those who have the light of God, those that are alive in him, spiritual temple, his body, the church, candlestick, temple, bride, she, the people of God, man, those who were filled with the Spirit, the one taken, the very elect, the real members of the body of Jesus, those...counted worthy to stand before the Son of man, the body, the servants of God, and so on. (Even in her second division she uses detached terms *more frequently* than "us" and "we.")

What about "Church"? Can Partial Rapturists use this term when describing those left behind after a Rapture?

We've already noted the June, 1831 article by "Fidus" in *The Morning Watch*. He spoke of a first-stage catching up, then mentioned (p. 277) "the people of God who are left, and who alone shall know the event happened to their brethren...." On page 280, while referring to the seven churches of Revelation, he mentioned "all the churches, all the seven, the complete church of Christ." (Even Laodicea, the group left behind, is part of the *Church*.) In the December, 1831 issue of the same journal, the same writer, speaking about the reign of Antichrist, declared on page 277: "That a part of the church shall be so tried, I believe." (Those left behind are *Church* members.)

When Margaret uses "Church" in her second division, she means *part* of the Church---the part left behind. Do later Partial Rapturists connect "Church" with those left behind? Does later Partial Rapture see the "Church" on earth when the Matthew 24 coming arrives?

In an article entitled "Seven Prophetic Parables and Seven Churches" which appeared in the June, 1888 issue of *The Prophetic News and Israel's Watchman*, G. H. Pember wrote on p. 175: "Philadelphia, then, is taken away, but Laodicea is spued out of Christ's mouth and left behind....The Lord is not in the midst of this fallen church; He has moved outside. Yet He lingers, and knocks at the door, if, perchance, any man---not the whole Church---should hear His voice."

Robert Govett, whom John Walvoord mentions in his latest book, included similar reasoning in his book *Christ the Head; the Church His Body* (1890). On pp. 194-195 he said: "'Then shall all the tribes of the *earth* mourn, and they shall see the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven.' 'Then ye also shall be manifested together with Him in glory.' This appearing of Christ ends the Church, considered as a body under trial on the earth." (The Church, then, is still on earth after the first-stage coming, according to Partial Rapturists. And Margaret properly used "Church" when she described true believers left behind.)

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Even Walvoord unwittingly adds fuel to the fire in *The Rapture Question (Revised)*. On p. 97 he says that Partial Rapturism teaches that only the *faithful* of the Church will be in the Rapture, while the rest will be raptured later on. The rest of what? Although he doesn't say it, the answer can only be the rest of the *Church!* If the ones left behind are the only part of the Church on earth after the Rapture, they can be described properly as the *Church*----the term Margaret and other Partial Rapturists have used.

On the same page Walvoord also refers to Partial Rapturists as *Pre-Tribs* (Pre-Tribs who see *part* of the Church raptured in a first-stage coming instead of all of the Church). If today's Partial Rapturism can be labeled *Pre-Trib*, as Walvoord labels it, even though the earliest Partial Rapturists taught a much smaller gap than Partial Rapturists teach today, it isn't difficult to believe that Walvoord's brand of Pre-Trib also had the same small gap in its earliest days, which is exactly what we've discovered.

Margaret and the Irvingites influenced Darby and the Brethren far more than the latter influenced the former. As we've seen, the former came up with the framework of Pre-Trib much sooner than the latter did. It isn't surprising then to find out that the earliest Brethren (and even Darby) were influenced during their initial development by Partial Rapturism!

Although he doesn't go into much detail, Harold Rowdon's *The Origins of the Brethren* does reveal several early Brethren who, at the first, were under the spell of the Partial Rapturistic Irvingites; Rowdon includes (see primarily his third chapter) H. B. Bulteel, a Mr. Douglas, Captain Percy Hall (who taught a secret Rapture in 1831 at Plymouth), A. N. Groves, Lord Congleton (John Parnell), G. V. Wigram, a Mr. Clarke, J. B. Stoney----and Darby himself! (I find myself writing these words on April 29, 1982----the 100th anniversary of Darby's death.)

Darby's *Letters* reveal the impression Partial Rapturism made on himself and other early Brethren. In a letter dated August 19, 1833 (Vol. 1, pp. 22-24), he mentioned that a Rev. Hardman had been promoting such a view; Hardman believed that Philadelphia would be raptured away and that Laodicea would be left behind. Darby summarizes Hardman's view of Laodicea by writing: "And then the church left in its Laodicean state...." (Note that Darby refers to those left behind as the "church"----the term Margaret and others used.) Referring again to Partial Rapturism, Darby says: "It is an important consideration in the present state of things. It commends itself morally to one's mind." Near the end of the letter Darby writes: "He will surely draw substantially His saints together before the end come, though there may be some left in...."

In the same volume (p. 58), Darby comments on the Tribulation in an 1843 letter: "It may be some will pass through, but I am more than ever confirmed that it is not presented to our faith, but the contrary, and that the faithful will be kept from it." In the next sentence, while using the same language employed by Partial Rapturists today, he speaks of "greater faithfulness which made us escape it." In a letter written on May 1, 1848 (same source, p. 132) Darby declares: "Signs, I

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judge, are for those who have not been faithful enough to keep or find the bride's position...." (Note the stress on faithfulness----a Partial Rapturistic *works* principle.)

In lines 82-83 Margaret misquoted part of Luke 21:36, a verse that is often used by today's Partial Rapturists. Note that she didn't use it in the usual Partial Rapturistic manner, although the Irvingites often did in *The Morning Watch*; "Fidus," for example, did so on p. 280 in the December, 1831 issue. In later decades many others were touched by this viewpoint. A. B. Simpson was one. In his "Queries" column (*The Christian Alliance*, December 7, 1894), Simpson quoted this verse and then added:

"It would seem perfectly clear, from these words, that those who watch and pray shall prevail to escape the Tribulation, and shall be caught up to stand before the Son of man. We cannot help believing that there will be a portion of God's true people in a state of readiness for His coming, and there will be other Christians, like the 'foolish virgins,' found unprepared, and excluded from the first and highest place in connection with His Millennial Kingdom." (Note the word "portion.")

Today's Pre-Trib Rapture view actually sprang from a crude form of Partial Rapturism; Margaret Macdonald was followed by the Irvingites and then by the Plymouth Brethren during their early days. A person can truthfully say that gold has been discovered in a certain place even if the first gold is mixed with some silver; it's still called a gold strike. All Darby did later on was mill out the "silver"---and Pre-Trib teachers have been coming up with "pure gold" since then. (Those who reject this explanation would do well to remember that even Walvoord's latest book classifies Partial Rapturists as *Pre-Tribs*. Indeed, both schools of thought flow from the same headwaters.)