

WHAT AN UNBIASED STUDY OF THE SUBJECT WILL DO

One day, in or about the year 1895, I sat with many hundreds of others in the grove at Old Orchard, Maine, listening to an able exposition of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel by Dr. Nathaniel West, a then noted Pre-Millennial speaker and author of "The Thousand Years", etc. The speaker's manner puzzled me when he came to that part of the chapter dealing with the Great Tribulation. Finally it dawned upon me that he was speaking very guardedly and at times seemed embarrassed. The absence of the usual positive declaration that the Church would be taken away before that time of trouble was so marked that I found myself thinking, "Can it be possible that he does not believe as the others do? If so, he is the first I have heard or read about who does not endorse the popular belief, and I doubt if there is another in all this large audience who believes as we do. If it be so, no wonder he feels embarrassed."

At the close of the meeting, I met the aged D.D. as he left the platform and put to him the point-blank question, "Doctor, do you believe the Church will be taken away before the Great Tribulation?" Before he could reply, a much younger man who was assisting him, and whom I knew to be a believer in the popular doctrine, said, "The Doctor is tired. He had better not discuss the matter." I was about to turn away when the old gentleman said sternly to the younger man, "Leave me alone", and to me, "Come to our cottage and we will talk it over." So to the cottage I went with him, the Doctor's friend, who was also his host, maintaining a silence that was eloquent of disapproval. Arriving at the cottage he entered the house leaving the Doctor and me seated in rockers on the porch.

As we were total strangers, the Doctor did not **know** my belief, whatever he may have inferred from my question. Almost irritably he began to question me and, as best I could, I answered him. I soon found that he was decidedly opposed to the common belief, for at one point, while speaking of it, he said scornfully, "They call it Scripture exegesis!" and then added, almost savagely, "Exegesis! I would like to exegete them with a cowhide!"¹

More than thirty years later I learned from Robert Cameron's book, "Scriptural Truth About the Lord's Return", how Nathaniel West came to change his view, and why he felt as he did about his one-time friends and admirers but later unreasonable critics and strong opponents.

Contemptible Methods

So well does Robert Cameron show the prejudice and consequent unfairness of most, and the added stupidity of many prominent Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists in connection with this subject, that I quote generously from him in this connection (the words in brackets are mine), the better to show the nobility of Nathaniel West, remarking in passing that my own experience in this matter has been very similar to his. Under the heading "Was This Cowardice?", I have related a personal experience--only one of many--which reads very much like some of those mentioned by Cameron.

The writer [Robert Cameron], on invitation, has twice been face to face with leading teachers of the [Pre-Tribulation-Rapture] views, twice trying to reach a harmonious ground for teaching the truth concerning the last things. Once the meeting was in

1 A stout flexible whip made of rawhide.

London, England, and once in Seattle, America. As those with whom the conference was held in London have gone to be with their Lord, their names may be freely mentioned. They were R. C. Morgan [of the firm of Morgan and Scott, publishers of "The Christian", I presume], Dr. McKilliam [editor of "the Morning Star"], and Sir Robert Anderson.

Mr. Morgan introduced the conversation by expressing his regret that evangelical men, holding to the truth of the Lord's Coming as the hope of the Church, could not give a united testimony on prophecy. He then appealed to the writer to state the terms of harmony.

It was immediately answered that no one regretted the lack of harmony more than the writer, and that the controversy could easily be settled by pointing out a single Scripture, distinctly stating, even by a fair inference, that the Church would be caught away to meet the Lord before the Great Tribulation. That would settle everything.

Sir Robert Anderson immediately opened the Bible that lay on the table. On reading verses 14-17 of the fourth chapter of First Thessalonians, he said, "There it is." The reply was this: "The Rapture and the Advent are there, but nothing is said about the Tribulation, whether it comes **before**, or **during**, or **after** the Tribulation."^[2] Then, after a few moments hesitation, Sir Robert closed the Bible and said: "Well, then, let us agree to disagree, and let neither side say any more about the matter in dispute." To this ready assent was given. Then Sir Robert said, as near as I can now recall: "I know that my dear mother, along with Lady Powerscourt, J. N. Darby, and Lord Congleton, on their knees in prayer, [³] sought to know the mind of the Lord, and I am sure it was given to them." Each one of us then engaged in prayer, and when dear Morgan poured out his heart in thanksgiving and prayer, all of us were deeply moved.

We parted, and in a few weeks I was back in America. To my great surprise, Dr. McKilliam had filled the previous issue of "The Morning Star" with an intense defence of the position which he had agreed to leave alone. Of course "Watchword and Truth" [Cameron's paper] made reply without referring directly or indirectly to the London agreement.^[4] Afterwards came a sharp letter from Sir Robert to the writer, complaining of "a breach of faith". The writer replied that Dr. McKilliam was the guilty brother, and what was said in "Watchword and Truth" was in the natural order. Sir Robert's answer was: "No one pays any attention on this side of the Atlantic..."--I will not complete the quotation.

Sir Robert regarded Cameron's Post-Tribulation-Rapturism as the heretical notion of a mere American, therefore beneath the notice of Britishers, yet the great part of what little literature I have seen on the subject is by Englishmen--S.P. Tregelles, the greatest Bible scholar that country has produced, Edward Shackleton, Frank H. White and others, while Spurgeon, England's greatest preacher, and George Muller, the modern world's greatest "faith" man, both staunch Post-Tribulation-Rapturists, were then residing on that "side of the Atlantic". And I, too, was a British subject, living in England, when I discovered and began to teach

2 In "What Did Paul Teach the Thessalonians?" (Part One) in Volume 2, I shall deal with this Scripture.

3 That these people felt they should go to their knees on this subject convicts them. The Scriptures are clear enough for those who are willing to believe what the Lord has said about it, as He said it. These people did not want to do that, for reasons which will be found in "The Origin of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism". Such prayer is an insult to God, and the result, "strong delusion", 2 Thes. 2:11,12, which came to them, reminds one of the words: "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." Psalm 106:15. The Plymouth Brethren, which company they founded, are quick to condemn others who adopt such a course in connection with other Bible subjects.

4 To my mind this was a mistake. This is a fight forced by our opponents, hence fighting methods must be used. J.J.S.

this truth. So the country which produced Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism has also produced many of its opponents.

But to continue quoting Robert Cameron:

Again, a few years afterwards, an effort was made in Seattle in the presence of three distinguished teachers, in a conference with the writer, having the same end in view. To the same appeal the writer again said: "The dispute can be ended at once by pointing out even one Scripture that teaches the Pre-Tribulation Rapture." The brother who has been proclaiming these "novelties" all over America, both by tongue and pen, brought forward two or three Scriptures which were quickly shown to have no definite bearing upon the question at issue. Then, in the most reverential way, this brother said: "Well, I think if a child of God earnestly seeks, on his knees in prayer, to be guided to a knowledge of the truth, he will not be mistaken. I have sought to know the mind of the Lord, and these are my decided conclusions." Did he go to the Lord as a candidate goes to his bishop "to be confirmed"? If so, he certainly got what he sought.

No reflection is here made against prayer in connection with the study of the Word of God. "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Psalm 119:18. It is one thing, however, to ask God to give light in the interpretation of Scripture and quite another to pray for the truth when the heart is not submissive to the plain teachings of the Word of God.

The Scriptures must be studied according to the laws of language. These laws are scientific and God-given. No true scientist begins with an assumption or guess unless he intends to give that assumption a thorough test and has it proved or disproved by a complete induction of all the facts bearing on the case.

Those who advocate this theory, which this brother claims to have received in answer to prayer, on his knees, have overlooked and neglected to consider a number of Scriptures and facts that utterly disprove it. They have accepted **assumptions as interpretations** of a few passages of Scripture and thus have been led astray. Their feelings have become their guide instead of God and His infallible Word.

But to return to the narrative of the interview. It is very plain that after a brother protests his earnest search for the truth and his devoutness in prayer to obtain it, nothing further could be said about his conclusions. The plain inference was that the only one in the group of four, who had "earnestly sought by prayer on his knees for the truth", was the one who had spoken, and any one who differed from him must have neglected that infallible (?) source of accurate knowledge. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.

One of the brethren was observed to curl his lip in scornful silence and the other turned pale, but all remained silent. Afterwards one of the number said, "I was surprised at Mr...'s answer," and the other said, "That was a foolish answer. Let four men get on their knees in prayer over a matter of dispute, concerning some phase of truth, and when they get up from their knees, they will hold exactly the same opinion still. Men must learn truth from the Word of God."

This was certainly an answer wholly unworthy of one who knows the Word of God. Jehovah has said: "I have exalted My Word above all My Name." But this brother honored the impression obtained upon his knees **above the plain teaching of the infallible Word of God.** Pages 139-143.

The "More Noble" Way - Acts 17:11

Very different was Nathaniel West's attitude when confronted by this truth. Let Dr. Cameron tell the story in his own way.

About the year 1883 [this was just before I, thousands of miles away, and knowing nothing about such things, was led to look into them], the writer was pastor of Park Baptist Church, Brantford, Canada, and having attended the Clifton Springs, afterwards Niagara Conference, was appointed one of the committee of nine to take charge of subjects, speakers and other matters. At the 1884 conference it came to be the "fashion" of every speaker to "ring the changes" on the possibility of Christ coming at any moment--before the morning dawned, before the meeting closed, and even before the speaker had completed his address.

Feeling that this was utterly unscriptural and dangerous, the writer opened his heart to the late Nathaniel West, the greatest and most exhaustive student of the Bible and of historic theology, among the teachers participating in the Conference. When pressed for the reason, it was frankly made known, and this led the Doctor to accompany the writer to his room in the "Annex". We talked and prayed until beyond two o'clock in the morning. After walking the floor backwards and forwards in silence, the great man stopped, pointed his finger at me, and said, "Cameron, I begin to think you are right. I will give these matters careful and exhaustive attention, and if I find that the Scriptures teach contrary to what is taught in this Conference, I will reverse myself and boldly defend the truth."

I went to Denver before the next Conference as pastor of the First Baptist Church, while Dr. West remained, made known his change of views, and afterwards, in "The Reformed Episcopal" paper, and then in "Watchword and Truth", after it came into my hands, wrote those scathing articles that no attempt was ever made to answer. He redeemed his promise to "defend the truth" as he came to understand it. Pages 145,146.

In the light of these statements by Cameron (a scholar, a gentleman in every sense of the word, an earnest Christian and an able expositor of the Scriptures, who was practically ostracized by his brethren because of his Post-Tribulation-Rapture views and died in comparative poverty, neglected by those who should have honored and loved him in the Lord and made it possible for him so to carry on his work as to provide for his old age), it is not to be wondered at that Nathaniel West, a still more capable man than Cameron and possessing a more intense nature, should have come to chafe under the contemptible treatment accorded him by many after his honest change of view--the result of a careful and exhaustive examination of the subject.

Since I am not dependent upon money received for preaching, as West and Cameron were, the fact that I have been barred from many platforms and pulpits, even as these men were, because of this teaching, means little to me; hence there is not the same great provocation to bitterness on my part as they had. But it is not pleasant even to me, independent of these ecclesiastical bigots though I am, to be treated by them as often I am treated. To one who, as I do, asks merely the opportunity quietly to discuss this subject, the raised eyebrows, the supercilious smiles, the polite evasions, or the blunt refusals are very trying, and it takes grace to keep me, too, from wanting to "exegete" these people "with a cowhide".

Like Cameron, I have found that when people will quietly and fairly discuss this subject, invariably they will abandon their old-new position in favor of this new-old one. But it is very hard for a preacher or writer who for many years has made positive assertions on public platforms or in books to reverse himself, hence many really are afraid to talk this matter over.

The Great Need--Independent Thinking

Some one has said, "Every man should be equipped with reverse gears so that he can back up and start over again when he finds himself on the wrong road." But comparatively few are so equipped.

I am confident that if a copy of the New Testament were placed in the hands of any intelligent, newly-converted man possessing no knowledge of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ,--such, for instance, as I was forty-eight years ago,--and he were told to study that subject without the aid of any other books, he would reach the conclusion I reached, and which was reached by the early Christians and by all other Christians down to about the year 1830, namely, that the Coming of Christ and the Rapture of the Church will not occur until "immediately after the Tribulation".

Frequently I say, if I can get people really to think on this subject I know where they will land.

Here is a case in point: Gathering from the remarks of a minister to whom I had just been introduced that he was a Pre-Millennialist, I ventured a cautious remark about the Rapture, and instantly he showed that he was a Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist. A brief discussion followed. He had never heard anything on Post-Tribulation-Rapturism and seemed greatly surprised that any one could hold such a belief. But finding it difficult to answer some of my questions, and receiving new answers to some of his own questions, his interest grew. Soon he began to advance arguments that seemed to him to support Post-Tribulation-Rapturism. We parted then, but it did not surprise me when a few days later he sought me out at the Bible Conference we were attending and renewed the conversation by producing new reasons, to him, why Post-Tribulation-Rapturism must be true.

The Rev. J. W. Icenbarger, to whose church I came in 1899 to give two weeks of Bible talks, was admittedly by far the best Bible student then among the ministers and Christian workers of Dayton, many of whom attended his Friday evening studies of the Sunday School lessons. I introduced Post-Tribulation-Rapturism to him privately. Instantly he raised strenuous objections to it. Quietly I met his objections, taking several months to do so, as I had located here following my meetings in his church. I did not know what progress he was making, if any, toward Post-Tribulation-Rapturism, until one day he told me that he had abandoned Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism, having become convinced by a careful and conscientious investigation of the position that it was untenable.

Easier to Convince Lawyers than Preachers

Once while being entertained in the home of Judge V. V. Barnes of Zion City, Illinois, I broached the subject to him. The judge was an earnest, highly-respected and much-loved Christian, and a pronounced Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist, knowing little or nothing about Post-Tribulation-Rapturism. However, he was willing to discuss the subject, and I said, "Judge, I would rather talk this matter over with a legally-trained man like you than with a theologically-trained minister, because you lawyers have been taught to weigh evidence carefully and to render decisions justly, whereas the theologically-trained minister has been taught only how to present the doctrines of his denomination by literalizing all Scripture that seems to support it when so used and by symbolizing, or otherwise getting around, all that does not support it when accepted at its face value. Asked to define 'Theology', some one said, 'Theology is the art of telling what God meant to

say but hadn't sense enough to say.' You and I are not theologians but laymen, and as such, you a lawyer and I a businessman, we will talk this matter over." This we proceeded to do, and at the close the judge rendered a verdict for Post-Tribulation-Rapturism.

She Thought Paul Had Made a Mistake

Near the end of "The World War", I received a letter from a lady in the South who for many years had studied and to some extent had taught Bible doctrines, but who had whole-heartedly accepted Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism because it was being taught by so many "high-ups" in the theological world, therefore, presumably, must be true. In this, of course, she was like at least ninety-nine percent of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists. A portion of the letter follows, because it well illustrates the point I am making here, viz., that an unbiased examination of the alleged Scriptural proof of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism will inevitably result in the rejection of that doctrine.

Just before this war began I was reading 1 Cor. 15, and as I read that familiar passage, "Behold I show you a mystery", etc., suddenly the phrase, "at the last trump", stood out before me as though I had never seen it before. I thought, "What does this mean? When is that last trump blown?" And when I found it over in the tenth chapter of Revelation, I thought Paul had made a serious mistake; for all the Bible students whom I had heard had always confidently asserted that the Church is taken out at the fourth chapter of Revelation.⁵] Then I went to hunting for myself, and the more I hunted the more convinced I became that the Church will have to pass through some, at least, of the Tribulation. This was not pleasing to the flesh, but I wanted the truth. Then came your series of articles which I devoured, and I could not help feeling that you were on the right track.

The "series of articles" referred to by the sister were those twelve under the general heading, "Will the Church Pass Through the Great Tribulation?" which appeared in The Standard Bearer from October, 1915, to July, 1916, inclusive, and which are in large part included in these volumes. While I am always glad to be able to arouse questions in the minds of those who believe in the un-Scriptural and dangerous doctrine of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism, yet it is far more gratifying to me to find that one, who has long believed it, has come to question it because of their own searching of the Scriptures.

I wrote the sister that if she would look again at Rev. 10:7 she would find that the "seventh" or "last" trumpet is not sounded there but in Rev. 11:15, and that the record of its sounding is preceded and followed by words which indicate that that sounding is not until the end of the Tribulation; for when the seventh trumpet sounds, Jesus not only raises and rewards His saints, but also takes over the kingdoms of the world and makes of them His own Kingdom, thus terminating Satan's rule on earth.

5 I shall deal with this subject at greater length in a later volume, under the headings, "Is the Rapture of the Church Shown in the Fourth Chapter of the Revelation?" and "At the Last Trump".

WHY THREE PRE-TRIBULATION-RAPTURISTS CHANGED THEIR MINDS

I could relate many such experiences but instead will let three ex-Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists tell how they came to reverse themselves on this subject.

After describing Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism in his book, "Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?", Edmund Shackleton says,

There is something about this theory, apart from its promise of deliverance from the persecution under Antichrist, which renders it very fascinating. My own mind was under its spell for about five years. It was not without a struggle that I was induced to admit the possibility of it being false and to set myself to examine its alleged Scriptural foundations. Having first prayed to God to take away my strong bias for the doctrine if it were untrue, I tested, to the best of my ability, by Scripture, all the arguments which I have heard advanced in its support. I found to my surprise that the arguments for it were of the most unsatisfactory character; in fact, that almost any doctrine, no matter how erroneous, might be advocated on the same kind of hypothetical grounds. I have felt for some time a growing burden of regret that this ingenious figment of the human fancy should have been foisted upon God's people as if a most valuable truth. The readiness with which this theory is being received is a proof of how many are studying the Bible by the light of man's teaching instead of "taking heed what they hear" and bringing everything to the touchstone of Scripture. Pages 5,6.

Then Mr. Shackleton devotes about eighty pages to his reasons for having renounced Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism in favor of Post-Tribulation-Rapturism.

In the "Introduction" to his book, "The Church, the Chart and the Coming", Rev. John A. Anderson, a medical missionary to China, says,

The truths which the following pages are written to elucidate are surpassingly solemn, yet transcendently glorious. The author was at Chefoo (China) recuperating from sickness consequent on the strenuous work of the medical missionary. He had agreed to conduct a series of Bible addresses, and the subject chosen was the Coming of the Lord. For many years he had taught that Christ would return secretly to the air for His Church, that on earth the Great Tribulation will follow the Rapture of the Church, that during the Tribulation Jews will be God's witness to the world, and that several years after the secret coming for the Church, our Lord with His Church will come in manifested power and glory, to reign.

Assured in his own mind, that these were the teachings of Scripture, he proceeded to prepare his addresses by seeking for definite Bible declarations on the subject. There was abundant and convincing proof that Christ will come personally; but the Bible was found to be silent regarding a secret coming, and silent as to any world missionary movement by the Jews until after Christ shall come in glory, and the veil of blindness be taken from Israel and the nations. Finally, to his consternation, he found there was no word about the Church being caught up before the Great Tribulation. Three texts upon which he had been relying to prove that the Church will not go through the Tribulation, showed on examination that they did not refer to the Tribulation.

Feeling sick at heart at his inability to prove from the Bible what he believed to be the truth, he approached three senior missionaries, who like himself had taught these doctrines for about a quarter of a century (and who probably still teach them). He explained his difficulty, and they kindly promised to help him. A few days later, each of the three regretfully admitted failure to find a single Scripture proof. In desperation he went to a resident missionary who was said to specialize in the study

of prophecy. This friend at once said there is no proof in the Bible of a secret coming, nor of the Church being taken away before the Great Tribulation, nor that the Church would escape the Great Tribulation: this seemed confusing; but he promised to send a leaflet containing some of the thoughts of the late George Muller of Bristol. The leaflet arrived, but it made confusion worse confounded, for it said the Church must go through the Tribulation, since 2 Thes. 2 made it clear that Antichrist must be manifested before the Coming of Christ, and our gathering to Him in the air.

During the following six months all the author's spare time was devoted to studying the Bible on this subject. During these months he relied as on a sheet anchor, upon the oft-repeated saying, that because the apostles and the early Church expected that Christ would come in their day, therefore, in our day, we may expect Him to come at any moment. At length by diligently searching the Scriptures, with an earnest desire to learn what God has revealed, he found that his supposed sheet anchor was a chimera, and that the apostles and the early Church did not expect Christ to come in their day, but contrariwise, Churches were warned that after the death of the Apostles Peter and Paul, they would pass through perilous times "in the last days" of this age.

The third instance of a prominent Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist reversing himself, one to which I desire to call special attention, and, naturally, one that affords me very great pleasure, is that of Rev. Oswald J. Smith, pastor of "The People's Church", Toronto, Ontario, Canada; a man of international reputation as a pastor, evangelist and author, having traveled extensively in Canada, the United States and Europe in evangelistic and other religious work, and having written a number of books and pamphlets on various subjects including prophecy--some of which have run into several editions--besides contributing many articles to various leading religious publications.

So important do I consider Mr. Smith's testimony in this connection, that I shall quote from it quite extensively.

This testimony appears in his latest book, "God's Future Program: Will the Church Escape the Tribulation?", a copy of which I received in March, 1932.

As is his custom, Mr. Smith heads the chapters in this book with a number of questions, which questions he then proceeds to answer.

Here are first the questions he asks at the beginning of the chapter in which he tells how he became a Post-Tribulation-Rapturist.

Why did Jesus conceal the Secret Rapture in Matthew 24?--How are we to explain the silence of the Church for centuries concerning it?--What about the passages that have been used to support it?--Have we been lulling the Church into a false security?--Are there any outstanding Christian leaders who believe that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation?

Next he proceeds to answer these questions.

In my third address, published in my first book on Prophecy, "Is the Antichrist at Hand?" it will be remembered that I asked the question, "Will the Church pass through the Tribulation or be raptured out of it?", and that in answering the question I made this statement: "I have always held the view that the Rapture precedes the Revelation by some seven years, and that the Church, therefore, will not go through the Tribulation, but I do not want to be dogmatic about it, and if God should reveal the contrary to me I will gladly accept and proclaim it." Hence, you see, I did not approach the subject with my mind closed to new light and my heart already prejudiced. I was open to whatever God might reveal.

Just here I break in to say that a copy of the above-mentioned book, "Is the Antichrist At Hand?", came into my possession. When I read the statement referred to in the foregoing, I said, "Here is a man who may be willing to investigate this important subject." And I knew if he did so there could be but one result, for during the forty-five years, or more, in which I have been presenting Post-Tribulation-Rapturism, I have never known a man who, laying aside bias and prejudice and hair-splitting and facing the issue honestly and squarely, did not abandon Pre-Tribulation Rapturism. Observe the striking resemblance of the latter part of Mr. Smith's statement to what, under somewhat similar circumstances, Nathaniel West, one of America's greatest Bible scholars, said to Robert Cameron many years before, as related in the preceding chapter. "If God should reveal the contrary to me, I will gladly accept and proclaim it," said Oswald J. Smith. "I will give these matters exhaustive and careful attention, and if I find the Scriptures teach contrary to what is taught in this Conference, I will reverse myself and boldly defend the truth", said Nathaniel West. And Oswald Smith is keeping his promise, as West kept his.

I knew of few men whom I would rather see come over to our side than Oswald J. Smith, for already I had heard much about him and his splendid work. So I wrote him, suggesting that he begin at once seriously to investigate this subject, telling him that I was convinced that if any intelligent man will give it fair treatment, that is to say, if he will approach it without bias and will examine it without "handling the Word of God deceitfully", there can be but one result. This letter I followed up with copies of my paper, "The Standard Bearer", in which I was then running some of these articles for the second time.

And because Mr. Smith "did not approach the subject with his mind closed to new light and his heart already prejudiced", and because he was too honest to avail himself of "The Jewish Waste-paper Basket" into which to throw such Scriptures as Matthew 24, he discovered not "new light" but the old truth of Post-Tribulation-Rapturism, which has almost been done to death by the "new" error of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism. Farther on the reader will see what I mean by calling this doctrine a "new" error, for there Mr. Smith tells of the effect upon his mind when he read in Mr. Shackleton's book how very "modern" Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism is.

But to continue, quoting Mr. Smith:

And now, after years of study and prayer, I am absolutely convinced that there will be no Rapture **before** the Tribulation, but that the Church will undoubtedly be called upon to face the Antichrist, and that Christ will come at the close and not at the beginning of that awful period. I believed the other theory simply because I was taught it, but when I began to search the Scriptures for myself, whether these things were so, I discovered that there is not a single verse in the Bible that upholds the pre-tribulation theory, but that the uniform teaching of the Word of God is for a post-tribulation Rapture. Pre-millennial, always, everywhere pre-millennial, but post-tribulation.

Observe this significant statement: "I believed the other theory [Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism] simply because I was taught it", etc. I say without fear of successful contradiction what I iterate and reiterate throughout these volumes, the idea always the same, the language expressing the idea alone changing, **that no Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist believes in that doctrine for any other reason.** That is to say, every Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist, without a solitary exception, learned that doctrine precisely in the same way that a parrot learns to say "Polly wants a cracker", for it is impossible to learn it in any other way. And any one who will advance beyond the "parrot" stage will abandon that doctrine, even as these three men, and many like them, have done.

Again I stress the fact, for which I am profoundly grateful to God, that I never held the "new" error, consequently I never had to abandon it. As stated in the "Foreword" of this volume, with no teacher save the Holy Spirit and no text-book but the Bible, I learned Post-Tribulation-Rapturism in "The School of Hard Knocks". But all the more honor to those who, having had the misfortune to learn Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism, and who, having achieved a measure--large or small--of popularity by preaching it, have had the honesty and courage to reverse themselves. I take off my hat to them, and almost envy them the privilege that is theirs.

But again from Mr. Smith:

My First Awakening

My first awakening to this important truth came one day when I was spending a few days in a cottage at Stoney Lake, Ontario. A man simply made the suggestion to me. I opposed it at once. My whole soul revolted. "Why," I exclaimed, "however could that be? What about the Scriptures? The teaching of a pre-tribulation Rapture is clear and indisputable." But he quietly affirmed that I was wrong and emphasized the truth concerning the Last Trump. Of course, I was not convinced. I almost ridiculed the very idea of such a possibility. And there the matter rested.

Thus the weeks passed by until, one day, I began preaching on Prophecy. I had taken my people through Daniel without difficulty. Then came Mark 13, Luke 21, and Matthew 24 and 25. But, lo and behold, no sooner had I started on Matthew 24 than I got into trouble. I had announced that I would deal with Matthew 24 at the next service. Hundreds had gathered. I was in a maze, for I was not prepared to make public my findings. Perhaps, after all, I was wrong, I conceded. So I took a verse here and there through the chapter and thus satisfied the people for that hour at least. But now the next meeting was coming. What was I to say? I need not point out that there is no pre-tribulation Rapture in Matthew 24. The Second Coming is unmistakably placed "immediately **after** the Tribulation" (verse 29), and I was forced to the conclusion that if there was to be a previous Rapture the Lord Jesus Christ would certainly have given some hint of it at least. He was dealing with the End-Time of the Age. It is unthinkable that He would have spoken so minutely of the Tribulation without stating that the Church would escape. Instead, He purposely led His hearers to the belief that His followers would be in it. Hence, I was staggered, nor could I honestly defend my previous position. And, so, when I again faced the people, I said sufficient to let them know that I questioned my former stand and saw evidence of a post-tribulation Rapture. For, as I read Matthew 24 and 25, I saw that many things, as prophesied by Jesus Christ, simply had to take place, before He could come, namely, "all these things" (verse 33), especially the prediction regarding the preaching of the Gospel. See Mark 13:10, and note the significance of the word "first". Thus, since God's future program could not be set aside, there could be no any-moment expectation of Christ's Return. We are to watch, watch as prophecy after prophecy is fulfilled, ever looking forward to His Appearing; and in the End-time, to watch as never before, and to always be ready, for none have ever known how quickly the events predicted might come to pass and Christ return.

My "Any-Moment" Theory

Then followed the next step. There came into my hands a copy of a book by Henry W. Frost, then the Home Director of the China Inland Mission. It was entitled "Matthew 24 and The Revelation", a volume of over 300 pages. I fairly devoured it. Portions of it I read twice. It was most conclusive in its arguments for a post-tribulation Rapture. About the same time I got hold of a book by James H. McConkey, called, "The Book of Revelation", and another by Edmund Shackleton, an Anglican, entitled "Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation?" Before I had read them through I was firmly convinced that there would be no Rapture before the Tribulation, and that I

had done wrong in promising the Church an escape instead of preparing her for the terrible ordeal that most surely awaited. My "any-moment" theory could not be sustained. In fact the very first statement in the latter book amazed me beyond measure and I was fairly staggered as I grasped its significance. Let me quote it verbatim:

"All who held the pre-millennial Coming of Christ were, till about sixty years ago, of one mind on the subject.⁶ About that time a new view was promulgated that the Coming of Christ was not one event, but that it was divided into stages; in fact, that Christ comes twice from heaven to earth, but the first time only as far as the air. This first descent, it is said, will be for the purpose of removing the Church from the world, and will occur before the Great Tribulation under Antichrist. This they call 'The coming **for** His saints'; or 'Secret Rapture'. The second part of the Coming is said to take place when Christ appears in glory and destroys the Antichrist. This they call 'The coming **with** His saints'.

"Apart from the test of the Word, which is the only final one, there are certain reasons why this doctrine should be viewed with suspicion, and only received after being submitted to the most careful scrutiny. It appears to be little more than sixty years old; and it seems highly improbable that, if scriptural, it could have escaped the scrutiny of the many devoted Bible students whose writings have been preserved to us from the past. More especially in the writings of the early Christian fathers would we expect to find some notice of this doctrine, if it had been taught by the Apostles; but those who have their works declare that they betray no knowledge of a theory that the Church would escape the Tribulation under Antichrist, or that there would be any 'coming' except that spoken of in Matthew 24, as occurring in manifest glory 'after the Tribulation'. This is all the more significant, because these writers bestowed much attention upon the subject of the Antichrist and the great Tribulation. Augustine, referring to Daniel 7, wrote: 'But he who reads this passage even half asleep cannot fail to see that the kingdom of antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church.'"

Then when I remembered that the death of Peter, his prediction of corruption and apostasy after his decease, the death of Paul, and many other events had to occur before the Rapture, my "any-moment" theory took wings and flew. See 2 Peter 1:14,15.

Last of all, I ran across the articles of John J. Scruby of Dayton, Ohio, in "The Standard Bearer", now published, I believe, in book form, the most convincing, the most unanswerable of all. They deal with every point minutely and prove conclusively that the Tribulation precedes the Rapture.

My advice to every Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist, especially if he be a teacher of that doctrine, who may have read these testimonies is, "Go thou, and do likewise." Investigate honestly and examine carefully, and the result will never be in doubt. I defy anyone to look into this subject as frankly and fairly as these men did and not reach the same conclusion.

⁶ Mr. Shackleton's small book was written about forty years ago, hence he says "sixty years", while I say "a hundred years".

ORIGIN OF PRE-TRIBULATION-RAPTURISM

A brief account of the origin of the doctrine of the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the Church should prove enlightening to all, and especially so to the Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists themselves.

In the early part of the nineteenth century--a little more than a hundred years ago--the "Irvingite" movement came into existence. Among other things which distinguished the "Irvingites" (so named after their leader), was their alleged speaking in tongues and receiving inspired messages from the Holy Spirit through their supposed "prophets" and "prophetesses". The work went well for a while, but gradually errors and extravagances crept in, the work fell into disrepute, and at last it died an apparently well-deserved death, if one may judge from certain statements that have come down from those days (many of them "confessions" by disillusioned adherents of the movement who declared that they had come to realize that frequently, at least, while "speaking in tongues" or allegedly "giving messages in the Spirit", they were really under demon control).

In one of the Irvingite meetings a woman, professedly under the influence of the Spirit of God, gave a message to the effect that the Church would not go through the Great Tribulation, as had always been supposed, but would be Raptured before it. Since at that time the Irvingites believed all such messages were divinely inspired, of course they had to believe this one, although it contradicted what they had learned from the Scriptures and what had always theretofore been taught as "the faith once delivered to the saints". Later, as stated, many of them came to question the origin of these messages, then to attribute them to demons--because of accompanying "manifestations"--and so to reject them. Then an era of sanity followed and "Irvingism" died, the good in the movement perishing with the bad. The "leaven" of evil had so permeated the "meal" of good as apparently to make it impossible to separate them, so perhaps it was better that both should die. It is the writer's hope that in the present-day "Pentecostal" or "Tongues" movement, all that was "good" in "Irvingism" has been revived; and he thinks it has. But from the inception of the so-called "Latter Rain" movement, he has detected in it more than a trace of the Irvingite "leaven" and fears that it will yet go the way of its predecessor, but devoutly hopes that enough sane, conservative yet progressive leaders will be developed in it to ensure the separation of "the precious from the vile" (Jer. 15:19) and so ensure perpetuation of the good.

Why Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism Became Popular

But this particular message--to the effect that the Church would be Raptured before the Tribulation--had fallen into soil favorable to its rapid and stupendous growth. That soil was the "weak" flesh of man. "The spirit indeed is willing", said Jesus, when warning His disciples to "watch and pray", "but the flesh is weak." Matt. 26:41. No matter how "willing" the "spirit" of the Christians of the first eighteen centuries may have been to face the horrors of the Great Tribulation for their Lord's glory and their own resultant blessing, naturally the "weak" "flesh" shrank from the ordeal. Had they known of any Biblical teaching that held out the hope of escape by removal from these (as they believed) ever-threatening horrors, certainly they would have caught at this hope and emphasized this teaching. But in none of the writings of any Christians during those eighteen

centuries do we find so much as a hint of such a hope or such a doctrine. It remained for a nineteenth-century "Irvingite" woman to introduce the flesh-pleasing doctrine, and that at a time when Irvingism admittedly had begun to corrupt. And the "weak" "flesh" causes the vast majority of Pre-Millennialists to hold that doctrine today, although they reject almost all else that the Irvingites taught.

Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism Adopted and Spread by "The Plymouth Brethren"

This doctrine of the Rapture of the Church before the Tribulation might also have perished, as it deserved to do, with the other errors of Irvingism but for an incident which gave it new impetus.

A few earnest men in Dublin, Ireland, gave themselves to independent study of the Scriptures. While doing so they came to see the prominence which the Scriptures give to the second coming of Christ, and at once began to preach His coming as imminent, seeing that it was then eighteen hundred years since the formation of the Church to which this doctrine had been given as an inspiring force. Titus 2:11-13. But when emphasizing the imminence of the coming of Christ, they were confronted with a difficulty--the words of Christ in Matt. 24:29,30:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days...shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

For three years this passage tended to dampen their ardor when declaring the imminence of the Coming, for they realized that not only was the Tribulation not then in sight, but also that its immediately antecedent events were conspicuous by their absence.

Finally there came to them from England a minister named Tweedy who taught that Jesus' discourse in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel was intended for the Jews alone, not for the Church, and gave them the doctrine of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism as we know it today (and as the Satan-deluded woman had given it in an alleged Spirit-inspired message a few years before). This seemed to them to be a happy solution of their problem. Immediately they tossed that chapter into what has aptly been named "The Jewish Wastepaper Basket", where so much other scripture has been and is being tossed by Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists. They proceeded with their "Imminent Coming" teaching, led by that eminent man, J. N. Darby (whose piety and scholarship gave prestige to the doctrine and so caused it to forge to the front in spite of the opposition which it met from the first from prominent believers in the Pre-Millennial Coming of Christ, such men as S. P. Tregelles, Charles H. Spurgeon, George Muller of Bristol, and others).

Why George Muller Abandoned Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism

In "Scriptural Truth About the Lord's Return", Robert Cameron tells how George Muller came to reverse himself in this matter.

When Mr. Muller was asked how it happened that he came to abandon the "at any moment" expectation of the Lord's Coming, and also the belief that the Church would escape

the Great Tribulation, he made a very prompt answer and said, "My brother, I am a constant reader of my Bible and I soon found that what I was taught to believe did not always agree with what my Bible said. I came to see that I must either part company from John Darby, or from my precious Bible, and I chose to cling to my Bible and part from Mr. Darby." This was the explanation given to me in his room in the Kirby House, Brantford, Canada.

Never can I forget the wonderful Conference in the Y.M.C.A. of Toronto, when over two hundred ministers sat on the platform every day while, in tenderness, he spoke of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and, in fiery indignation, of the evils of the present day, and also of the failure of the ministers to make known the coming of the Lord, and their failure also to oppose the downgrade on which modern Christians had entered.

He appealed to the ministers who had been preaching "progress", and told them that just before us were horrible wars, famines and pestilences--the coming of the Antichrist and the day of unequalled tribulation before the coming of our adorable Lord, who alone could bring the day of peace. "That," said he, "is what you are coming to, and not the Millennium of which you dream. Christ must come first to reward the saints and to crush His foes, but before He comes will occur the horrors of the Tribulation." Pages 146-148.⁷

Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism a New Thing

Robert Cameron further remarks:

"If this novel view of Pre-Tribulation Rapture is anywhere taught in the Scripture, how did it escape the scrutiny of so many earnest students for eighteen centuries? The doctrine of the Lord's return, and all kindred truths, occupied the attention of the Christian scholars very much during the first four centuries, but **not one of them** has betrayed any knowledge of the Church escaping the Tribulation. All of them, like Augustine, take the opposite view. See DeCivitate Deo. Commenting on Daniel 7:25 he says: 'He who reads this passage, even half-asleep, cannot fail to see that the Kingdom of Antichrist shall fiercely, though for a short time, assail the Church.'" Page 20.

S. P. Tregelles, who has been termed "The greatest Biblical scholar of the nineteenth century in the British Empire", says in his book, "The Hope of Christ's Second Advent",

I am not aware that there was any definite teaching that there would be a secret rapture of the Church at a secret coming, until this was given forth as an utterance

⁷ Several years after the above was written the following came into my hands: "Are we to expect our Lord's return at any moment, or that certain events must be fulfilled before He comes again." This was one of nine questions answered by the late Mr. George Muller at a public meeting held on December 12, 1879, at Shaftesbury Hall, Toronto, Canada. His answer was: "I know that on this subject there is great diversity of judgment, and I do not wish to force on other persons the light I have myself. The subject, however, is not new to me; for having been a careful, diligent student of the Bible for nearly fifty years, my mind has long been settled on this point, and I have not the shadow of a doubt about it. The Scripture declares plainly that the Lord Jesus will not come until the Apostacy shall have taken place, and the man of sin, the "son of perdition" (or personal Antichrist) shall have been revealed, as seen in 2 Thessalonians 2. Many other portions also of the Word of God distinctly teach that certain events are to be fulfilled before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This does not, however, alter the fact, that the Coming of Christ, and not death, is the great Hope of the Church, and, if in a right state of heart, we (as the Thessalonians believers did) shall "serve the living and true God, and wait for His Son from heaven." From "Missionary Tour and Labours" by Mrs. Muller.

in Mr. Irving's church from what was there received as being the voice of the Spirit. But whether any one ever asserted such a thing or not, it was from that supposed revelation that the modern doctrine and the modern phraseology respecting it arose. **It came, not from Holy Scripture, but from that which falsely pretended to be the Spirit of God;** whilst not owning the true doctrine of our Lord's incarnation in the same flesh and blood as His brethren but without taint of sin.

It is doubtful if one in a million of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists know these facts, so they need to be strongly emphasized and widely circulated.

The First Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists Failed To Heed Paul's Warning

Observe the remarkable resemblance of the possible cause of the error into which the Thessalonians had fallen, namely, that "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" would precede the Parousia of the Antichrist, and the little-known cause of the present-day delusion of the Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists, who also believe that "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him" will precede the Parousia of the Antichrist.

Paul warned the Thessalonians, *"Be not...troubled either by Spirit [by alleged Spirit-revelations], or by [alleged] word, or by [alleged] epistle, as from us, as that the Day of the Lord is now present; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed."* 2 Thes. 2:2,3.

What method Satan had adopted to deceive the Thessalonians we are not told, but Paul knew the "devices" of Satan, 2 Cor. 2:11, and he knew also that he who delights to assume the role of "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) in order to deceive the saints, when as "a roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8) he cannot terrify them, might try to accomplish such deception by means of an alleged "Spirit-revelation", so he included this among the things to be guarded against in this connection. They were to accept no such alleged "Spirit-revelation", but his inspired words only.

This warning should have put John Darby and his associates on their guard against the alleged "Spirit-revelation" through which Satan, by means of the Irvingite woman, introduced the doctrine of Pre-Tribulation-Rapture. But unfortunately it did not do so, and for the simple reason that they needed this flesh-pleasing (therefore Satan-inspired) doctrine to enable them to solve the problem that had arisen in connection with their unscriptural preaching of the imminency of the Second Coming of Christ. They grasped this attractive theory as a drowning man is said to grasp a straw, and, changing the figure, through their efforts and the efforts of their successors the noxious weed of Pre-Tribulation-Rapture has so covered the entire Christian field as to have almost completely destroyed the "good seed" of Post-Tribulation-Rapture which was sown by the Lord and by the apostles.

"The Inexorable Logic of Facts" Will Yet Destroy Pre-Tribulation-Rapture

But, thank God! a little of this seed and a few of those who care for it remain, and assisted by "the inexorable logic of facts", this "good seed" will yet prevail. By which I mean that, as "The Signs of the Times" develop and the Lord's

Coming is still delayed, many of the more reasonable Pre-Tribulation-Rapturists will re-examine their doctrine in the light of these things (some of them assisted, I hope, by what I am now writing), and so will discover their error.

We have an illustration of this sort of thing during the so-called "World War" of 1914-1918, when many who theretofore had sincerely believed in Post-Millennialism--and so had been among the strongest of the "Peace Advocates" who were saying so much about "Peace and safety through arbitration at the Peace Tribunal"--realizing the futility of all such plans to secure world peace during the absence of "The Prince of Peace", came over to the old truth of Pre-Millennialism, with the result that the doctrine of the Second Personal Pre-Millennial Coming of Christ (for which a despised few had fought so faithfully for generations) received such careful attention and consequently gained such vast popularity as both to amaze and delight those of us who had stood for it when it was decidedly unpopular. "The inexorable logic of facts", as "The Signs of the Times" facts develop, will again cause "history to repeat itself" by destroying the new theory of Pre-Tribulation-Rapture, and establishing the old truth of Post-Tribulation-Rapture.

A Warning to the "Pentecostal" People

I have said that I have detected in the modern "Pentecostal" or "Tongues" movement, which in so many respects resembles the "Irvingite" movement, "more than a trace of the 'Irvingite' leaven". This is especially true in the matter of alleged "Spirit revelations", usually uttered in "Tongues" by one and then interpreted by another, which alleged "revelations" are often placed on a par with and sometimes are regarded as superior to Biblical statements.

That I am not stating this too strongly is evident from the following from a recent pamphlet, "A Warning to the Pentecostal People", by Frank Bartleman, himself a well-known "Tongues" man, and, so far as I know, a Pre-Tribulation-Rapturist.

One hesitates these days in writing a message of this nature to the baptized saints because of the general spirit of unwillingness to be taught, or to receive admonition. But we must obey God. The responsibility for the results in further action must remain with the ones admonished. The "watchman" gives the warning, however, he may be criticized, misunderstood, or condemned for it. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." The majority usually reject it. But honest souls are warned.

We are living in days of lawlessness and disorder; of freaks and fads; of foolishness, fancy and fanaticism; of cliques and clans and cults and vain imaginations. Every man does pretty much "that which seems right in his own eyes", ends being often made to justify dishonest means. It seems necessary for some kind of a sane, honest, Scriptural standard to be raised, and for the trumpet to give a "certain" sound (1 Cor. 14:8), in these matters....

Tongues and interpretation were never given to the Church as an "oracle" for the saints, to get the mind of God. There is no evidence in the Scripture to this end. That is not their avowed purpose. The Word of God, the inspired canon of Scripture, is the mind of God for us, the "more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed". We have a more complete canon of Scripture than they had in the beginning of the Church age. We have the whole New Testament. Here many are getting into trouble. They are magnifying the "tongues" above the written Word, as a superior channel of utterance to the Word. This opens the way for modern inspiration, which they would have us accept as infallible. But one who knows the Word of God has no need or desire for further, advanced revelation. The Word of God

is fathomless and exhaustless in its depth and meaning, beside which in comparison most modern-day inspiration, through would-be prophets, looks like a two cent piece with a big hole in it.

Many are playing with "tongues" like children with sharp knives. They are willing to run anywhere to get their "tongues" interpreted. This is dangerous business. We cannot accept purported interpretation as infallible. It is not proven. The Scriptures do not teach that we are hearing more "direct from heaven", or that we are to receive advanced revelation with time, through the medium of tongues and interpretation. This is unscriptural, a dangerous delusion. We dare not even accept modern-day purported prophetic utterance in this light. Great havoc has already been wrought to the work of God and souls through this error.

A somewhat similar warning was later issued by the editor of one of the most prominent and widely-circulated "Pentecostal" papers.

It was under just such circumstances as these that Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism was begotten, which fact should make its advocates think very seriously before declaring it to be of Divine origin.

It is not to be wondered at that Tregelles, already quoted in this chapter, who was as well acquainted with "Irvingism" as I am with "Pentecostalism", decided that its offspring--Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism--was of Satanic origin.

IMPORTANT

After the **second edition** of this volume had been issued, further information regarding the Origin of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism came to hand. This will be presented in Volume 2 under the heading, "**More About the Origin of Pre-Tribulation-Rapturism**".