



“ So then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober ”
– 1 Thessalonians 5:6

Book Review: The Popular Handbook on the Rapture

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4

August 11, 2013

Greetings in Christ Jesus,

And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down." - Matthew 24:2

This alert includes a very important book review by Jacob Prasch. For further understanding of the specific problem in question, see the related commentary by Danny Isom below as well as **The Plastic Bible** commentary by Jacob Prasch. In particular note the portion concerning Rick Warren's cut & paste nutshell game approach to a Bible Q & A the apostles had with Jesus in his *The Purpose Driven Life* ([on pages 7 and 8 of this link](#)).



We have now entered the most perilous times in the history mankind and indeed the church has ever witnessed. Please read prayerfully.

***May the Lord bless and keep you,
Scott Brisk***

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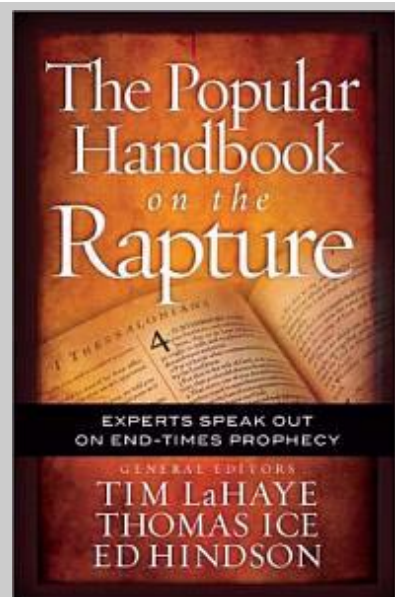
Book Review: The Popular Handbook on the Rapture (Edited by Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice & Ed Hindson)

"Experts Speak Out on End Times Prophecy"
(Published by Harvest House)

MORIEL MINISTRIES - By James Jacob Prasch - August 8, 2013

This book contains a series of chapter articles by a compendium of authors, including the general editors Tim LaHaye, Thomas Ice and Ed Hindson, as well as chapters contributed by Paul Wilkinson, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, David Reagan, Wayne Brindle, Michael Vlach, Wayne House, Grant Jeffrey and Robert Dean. I count the general editors among my personal friends and conference colleagues as I would various of the contributing authors. I certainly appreciate the impact Tim LaHaye has had in propounding belief in the Rapture in a popular season where Rapture belief and eschatology generally has greatly declined. I likewise consider the refutation of Dominion Theology by Thomas Ice and Wayne House to be the finest single work ever authored in opposition to that false school of doctrine. I am furthermore unable to express the depth of my appreciation for the longstanding work of my friend Arnold Fruchtenbaum, who personifies the theologically sane axis of the modern Messianic Movement that has been so plagued by lunacy. Residing in Great Britain, I can testify that the work of Paul Wilkinson in confronting so-called "Christian Anti-Zionism" and "Christian Palestinianism" to be absolutely invaluable.

It is to my confusion, therefore, that such a fine host of authors and editors have produced what is titled *The Popular Handbook on the Rapture*, whose content is beyond inconsistent not only among the authors themselves, but with the doctrinal positions many of these authors once espoused personally. I wish to emphasize that my comments in this review refer **only** to the internal content of this book itself **and in no way** are designed to imply any aspersions on the other fine work of its authors and editors, most of which I would rate very good to excellent. I would also quickly add that I have no problems with the chapters contributed by Paul Wilkinson, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, nor in the main, with David Reagan. The rest, however, has left me feeling like Alice in Wonderland, trying to make sense out of the diatribes of the Mad Hatter.



The title of this book is itself a misnomer. Its subtitle heralds it as "Experts speaking out on end times prophecy", but it largely focuses on only one aspect of End Time prophecy—that is, the Rapture, and a polemic contra those not only holding to a Pre-Tribulational timing of it. A "handbook" by definition must be both comprehensive and consistent; this book is neither. The eschatological themes highlighted by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse are either skipped over or ignored except in certain excerpts borrowed to buttress Pre-Tribulational argumentation. In no comprehensive sense is this book "experts speaking out on end times prophecy" as it is wrongly billed. A handbook on the Rapture, moreover, would demand that **ALL** positions of the timing of the Rapture be presented and assessed, once more, in a comprehensive and comparative fashion. This does not take place in the text of this book.

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

More disturbing, however, is the innate element of inconsistency of different contributing authors juxtaposed in different positions on the definition of "*the apostasy*" of 2 Thessalonians 2, not as a literary symposium of debating or comparing the different interpretations, but presented as if a unified thesis or consensus among the authors was being communicated. This is the most botched attempt at book edition I have ever encountered. It is, however, not difficult to understand why. Unless the copy editors engaged in significant redaction, it would not be possible to make the conflicting positions on the apostasy harmonize. These brethren are intelligent and experienced servants of the Lord whom God has indeed used in the past, and I am left baffled as to how such otherwise responsible figures could produce such a convoluted book.

I am advised by those who attended the last Pre-Trib conference in Dallas in December of 2012 that this inconsistency predominated oral presentations and the resulting convolution is, in this book, merely reflected in print. Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, like myself, has long advocated a position that the doctrinal disintegration in modern Evangelical Protestantism is indeed a prelude to the apostasy in 2 Thessalonians 2, and an expanded and accurate update of this conviction is expressed in this book by Dr. David Reagan. Yet in the same book, as in the same conference, an entirely different and fundamentally incompatible *redefinition* of the traditional conservative Evangelical understanding of what "*the apostasy*" means is introduced, equating "*the apostasy*" with "the Rapture" at the time of the *episunagage*—our gathering together to be with the Lord.

An incipient school of thought has actually emerged among certain Pre-Tribulational Rapture advocates based on a *technically* possible meaning of a related and underlying Greek term "*aphistemi*", applying it in such a way that the "*apostasy*" spoken of by Paul is not interpreted as "falling away", but the actual Rapture itself! As we shall note, this is far removed from the use of the same term elsewhere in the New Testament, including in any eschatological context.

The precarious arguments the book presents, that Pre-Reformation English Bible texts did not understand "apostasy" as "falling away", are devoid of any solid academic substance and command no real scholarly credibility. From Wycliffe onward until the time of Tyndale and Coverdale, English translations were derived from the *Vulgate* until the time of the *Textus Receptus* of Erasmus and the era of the *Geneva Bible* produced in England after the Marian Exile. The lack of scholarly support for the proposition that "*the apostasy*" is best translated "departing" (physically leaving a place) means the Rapture, and not a falling away, violates the context of 2 Thessalonians 2 where the opening verses are followed by the imprecatory announcement of divine judgment coming in the form of delusion against those who reject the truth—that is, the apostates, when read in context.

This contention of "*the apostasy*" being the Rapture has not only **never** been a conventional view among Pre-Tribulationists themselves, but it is plainly not the view of many, if not most, of the Pre-Tribulational authors who have contributed to this book. The parallel passage referring to eschatological apostasy in the New Testament, whose underlying Greek term **IS** "*aphistemi*", moreover, is found in 1 Timothy 4:1 where it plainly means "a departure from truth", and in the caveat of Hebrews 3:12 where it has the same meaning. Only one place is "*aphistemi*" used for an angel literally "departing" in Acts 12:10, but its context is not eschatological or co-textual to 2 Thessalonians 2. It is, moreover, a related underlying term; it is not the term "apostasy" itself. The two Greek *Septuagint* references, moreover, in Deuteronomy 7:4 and 13:10 are overtly defined as "turning away from true belief".

This insurmountable contradiction appears to be the virtual apex of the book, but is the mere culmination of the series of contradictions and inconsistencies throughout the text. These take the form of the list of presuppositions too long to exhaustively be addressed in a book review due to considerations of brevity. From the onset, however, we see a logical incoherence that not infrequently resorts to what these same authors and editors themselves would admit are eisegetical folly and hermeneutical inconsistency when these same practices are adopted by others to advance doctrinal positions with which they and I would both disagree.

In the introduction, it is presupposed that those not subscribing to a Pre-Tribulational Rapture position do so because they have deviated from a literalist hermeneutic. In fact, a *literal* reading in either Greek or English of 2 Thessalonians 2, taken on simple face value, would indicate that the *episunagoge* cannot transpire until the identity of the Antichrist as the "*man of lawlessness*" has been revealed to the faithful Church.

In an opening chapter, a schematic diagram illustrating the prophetic agenda from Daniel is included to underscore the importance of the study of End Time prophecy. With this I would certainly agree. But again, the plain reading to which the author appeals unmistakably indicates that the 70th Week of Daniel (the final seven lunar years of history) are inaugurated by a treaty the Antichrist will make with Israel which he will abrogate mid-point. The author dogmatically asserts the full seven year period to be the Great Tribulation. This presupposition in itself is for good reason subject to being contested, but even if it were not, the plain reading for which the author appeals would of necessity require that the Antichrist *already* be on the scene to make or sign the treaty *before* the 70th Week given the fact that the implementation of the treaty commences that final 70th Week period. There is no rational effort to explain the irrationality of his own non-literalist reading.

The book goes on to quote the late Jerry Falwell of Liberty University in his claim that professors and academic institutions of theology who are right in their belief in Creationism and in a Pre-Tribulational Rapture are, as a rule, right in their other doctrine, including eschatology. Jesus, of course, repeatedly warned of the rise of false prophets and false teachers that would be dispatched by Satan in order to deceive the Elect in the Last Days, even false Christs—that is, men claiming to be Christ. (Mt. 24:24-26) Although Pre-Tribulational, Jerry Falwell himself publicly embraced the Korean antichrist Sun Yung Moon who, in his *Divine Principle*, claimed to be the lord of the second advent and the return of Christ incarnate, donating a multi-million dollar grant to Falwell's Liberty University. This resulted in Jerry Falwell hugging him in a brotherly fashion on a public platform in front of a camera and lauding this now-deceased antichrist as being "an unsung hero". It is most odd that Falwell's maxim would be cited in support of Pre-Tribulationism being a safeguard of doctrinal orthodoxy when it did not work for Jerry Falwell, who engaged in the most unspeakable heterodoxy, openly embracing and extolling one of the eschatological antichrists against whom Christ Himself in the Olivet Discourse warned against.

This is followed by a reference to the post-Apostolic *Shepherd of Hermes* document (circa 140 AD) as some kind of further evidence that Pre-Tribulationism was held by the Apostolic Church, even though the document is technically Post-Apostolic. Yet the book admits in making the citation to support Pre-Tribulationism that the *Shepherd of Hermes* does not convey a view that can be defined as modern Pre-Tribulationism, which is what the book espouses.

Much capital is made on referencing the late John Walvoord. Again, Dr. Walvoord was a brother whose legacy justifiably demands much respect. The book champions Dr. Walvoord's emphasis on the doctrine of immanency while in fact objective reality unmistakably indicates otherwise. Jesus can come at *any* time for any one of us individually. Any one of us can go to be with the Lord tonight, tomorrow or an hour from now. The doctrine of immanency in no sense depends on the timing of the Rapture; neither, of course, does what the Apostle Paul calls "the blessed hope" (). Paul had the blessed hope and even experienced what some describe as a "personal rapture" as reported by him in 2 Corinthians. (Titus 2:13) Yet Paul went to be with the Lord as an individual, not by way of the Rapture of the Church. The entire notion of equating "the blessed hope" or the doctrine of immanency to the timing of the Rapture is a proposition devoid of any scriptural merit. In actual fact, Dr. Walvoord admitted himself that there is no passage in Scripture specifying a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. This was an honest and accurate statement in which he was not alone. John MacArthur admits the same, saying, "The Rapture is between the lines, but it is certainly not in

there".

Elsewhere and in their other doctrinal theology, these same authors would be among the first to warn for the need to only base doctrine on **exegesis** (drawing from the text that which is specifically stated) and avoiding **eisegesis** (reading into the text something that is not). Human opinion—even sanctified human opinion, has its place in the ministry of the Church, but not as a basis for doctrine. We see this in 1 Corinthians 7 where Paul is repeatedly cautious to distinguish between the commands of the Lord and his own personal opinion. (1 Co. 7:6, 10, 12, 25-26) Even Paul as an Apostle who saw Christ and who was in some way raptured would not pose to establish doctrine based on his opinion. As this book itself points out, the final church before Jesus comes in Laodicea, built of a compound Greek name "*laos*" and "*dikaionoma*", meaning "people's opinions" or "rights to their opinions". It is just such pronouncement of doctrine based on human opinion that characterizes the lukewarm and spiritually blind Church at the end of the age that Jesus warns us would come and, indeed, has arrived.

To resort to that which they themselves elsewhere quite correctly decry is a further inconsistency. Not only is it inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture where doctrine can only be postulated on exegesis—not eisegesis, but is incompatible with their own exegetical standards affirmed and rigorously practiced elsewhere in their writing and preaching.

The book leaps forward to citation of Patristic sources, most notably Irenaeus. Irenaeus was indeed a disciple of Polycarp who obtained his doctrine from the Apostle John, and is the last major source of directly communicated Apostolic tradition of which we have a record. Irenaeus wrote in both Greek and Latin after relocating to Lyon, France after leaving Asia Minor and, among other bullet points of importance, Irenaeus confirms a Johannine authorship of the Book of Revelation during the reign of Domitian at the close of the 1st century and at the end of the Apostolic or Ephesian Age. I was therefore nothing less than flabbergasted to see Irenaeus being referenced in support of a Pre-Tribulational position when in fact the book itself admits that he was **not** teaching Pre-Tribulationism!

In his summation before the jury, no trial lawyer would reference the testimony of a witness whose testimony did not support his case. This kind of irrational argumentation seems to suggest desperation more than coherence.

A late Patristic reference is also introduced from *Pseudo-Ephraim*, usually dated 373 AD, originating in Syria. This late date is Post-Nicean and springs from an era where the post-Constantine Hellenization of the Church was well underway as Christendom replaced Christianity and the Church became uncoupled from its Hebraic origins. Yet *Pseudo-Ephraim* clearly taught the Great Tribulation to be 3-1/2 years—not 7. Why then would such a late source even be accessed, especially when in significant areas it conflicts with their stated position?

Similarly, supportive references are cited from Morgan Edwards. Yet his actual views fit a Mid-Tribulational position, not a Pre-Tribulational one, and astonishingly in one place the medieval Joachinists are rightly discredited as theological lunatics yet elsewhere referenced in order to lend credence to a Pre-Tribulational thesis.

Much capital is made of the role of John Nelson Darby in the rise of Pre-Tribulational thought. Darby, however, was not only a founder of Dispensationalism, but even before E. W. Bullinger, was the primary founder of Hyper-Dispensationalism. As Bullinger was denounced as a proponent of satanic dogma by the modern Dispensationalist Harry Ironside, Darby, who furnished Bullinger with the core of his beliefs which bordered on a sanitized version of the ancient heresy of Marcionism, was denounced by Charles Spurgeon. Darby was not the greatest of the early Brethren theologians, but Dr. Samuel Tregelles was, and Tregelles was **not** Pre-Tribulational. Neither was Darby the most influential of the Brethren expounders of Scripture, but Scofield was. In the Newton Schism, the mainstream Plymouth Brethren who gave us such luminaries as Hudson Taylor and George Muller were in a hostile split with Darby, whose final legacy is that of a cult founder. Exclusive Brethren groups such as the Taylorite Cult remain ardent Darbyists to this day. Yet Darby is not the only questionable character highlighted or mentioned in support of Pre-Tribulational presupposition.

Cotton Mather of 1726 fame was Cromwell's witch hunter general in Puritan England, where based

on spectral evidence, falsely accused women were submerged under the ice of frozen lakes in an ordeal to determine if they were witches. If they survived, it was juridical proof of witchcraft and they were hung or burned; if they were drowned, they were pronounced innocent. As in Salem, Massachusetts, a capital indictment would be brought by these Hyper-Reformed madmen and Reconstructionists on the basis of spectral evidence, where anyone could claim, "The Lord showed me someone was a witch". Mather was part of the Puritan war machine run by Cromwell and John Owen which witnesses the English Puritan Calvinists and the Scottish Presbyterian Calvinists literally massacring each other in a kind of Reformed jihad. Yet this is the caliber of historical figures this book resorts to referencing in support of its position.

so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians 1:7)

A further stream of problems emerges in this book where everything raging from exegetical hatchet jobs to presuppositional proof-texting is employed in order to advance the thesis proposed. The text of 1 Corinthians 1:7, read in the exegetical context of the letter as a whole is a component of the introductory literary prologue of the various doctrinal issues Paul would address throughout the body of the Epistle. The verse reads that the Church should not be lacking in any "*charism*"-that is, any charismatic gift until the revelation of Jesus.

The text of Revelation 1:1 makes it clear that the "*Revelation*" of Jesus (from the Greek "*apokalypsis*") cannot be the Book itself due to the absence of a definite article, but is rather the prophetic End Times events in the Book leading up to His return and the establishment of the Millennial and eternal Kingdom which follows. A plain, literal meaning of the text indicates that the charismatic gifts of 1 Corinthians 12-14 are not to be lacking in the Church until the *Parousia*-that is, the revelation of Christ.

This Pre-Tribulational author, however, is also a Cessationist, and so he omits from this quotation of the verse the first half which defines its meaning and intent as "*charismata*" and only quotes the second half out of context, attempting to make it a statement which he imagines to be somehow supportive of Pre-Tribulationism, while at the same time deleting the preceding portion of the verse that mitigates against his Cessationist beliefs that the gifts of the Spirit concluded with the Apostles.

I have seen this sort of egregious mishandling of God's Word by Eugene Peterson in his maligning of Holy Writ with his pseudologon make believe Bible, *The Message*. And I have seen this kind of maligning of context readily engaged in by Rick Warren to support his agenda. But to see an authentically conservative Evangelical engaging in the same cut-and-paste pseudo-exegetical gymnastics is as painful as it is almost unbelievable.

Other examples of eisegesis include the erroneous conclusion that since Titus 2:13 is absent of reference to signs or the Tribulation, it implies immanence. Without wanting to be offensive, such eisegetical conclusions are too silly to warrant serious consideration.

Another proposition built on nothing more than eisegetical presupposition is the argument of large numbers of salvations following the Rapture, based on an interpretation of Revelation 7 which I would be prepared to heartily challenge.

On page 130 it is asserted that "the day of the Lord" is not just a twenty-four hour period, but a period of seven years. The logical question emerges: "How can it be both?" You either believe it to be a literal day, or a metaphor for some composite period of time, be it the full seven years or a portion thereof. In fact, in that period when all except Post-Tribulationists agree that the Church has already been Raptured, we are told when divine judgments are compounded, that men would still not repent. (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9-11) Moreover, the overwhelming mass of what the New Testament teaches will transpire following the Rapture is focused on God returning His prophetic and salvific purposes from the nations back toward Israel and the Jews.

On page 135 it is asserted that the Rapture must take place before the identity of the Antichrist. Yet if the Church must be Raptured before the final seven years, and the seven years commence with the Antichrist concluding a treaty with Israel, how can such a contention even be rationally proposed with any suggestion of certainty?

Further internal contradictions are found on page 148 where Augustine of Hippo is cited regarding the Antichrist. Augustine said that it is beyond doubt that Paul's definition of the apostasy refers to "*the man of sin*". If this was the view held by the Early Church, it does not jibe with the newfangled view that "*the apostasy*" is the Rapture.

Arch Pre-Tribulational and Pre-Millennial Charles Ryrie, moreover, likewise joins David Regan and Arnold Fruchtenbaum in defining "*the apostasy*" as a "falling away" of the professing Church, not as "the Rapture". While Dr. Ryrie is indeed correct, how can any rationally thinking person reading this book be expected to comprehend it as a coherent, comprehensive and unified position when the authors in stark contrast to each other vociferously assert two contradicting and utterly incompatible things.

Another characteristic of the bogus argumentation in this book is the over-amplification of highly circumstantial evidence to the point where it is treated as almost becoming prima facie proof. Kenneth Weust, for instance, is cited, but the actual quotation is that the text he references "*may refer*" to some Pre-Tribulational belief. He makes no attempt to establish the interpretation as a dogmatic conclusion.

There is further interesting reading on page 151 where Jerome's Latin translation in the *Vulgate* of "apostasy" is "*discessio*"-again, supporting a doctrinal "falling away". The book postulates that it is the Church that restrains the Antichrist from surfacing, yet in John's Epistle, even in the Apostolic Age, the New Testament teaches that there were already even then "many antichrists". (1 Jn. 2:18) If even the Apostolic Church with Peter, Paul and John at the helm were unable to suppress the arrival of many minor antichrists, how can the Church of Laodicea sequester the advent of the ultimate one who will, for all intent and purposes, approximate an incarnation of Satan?

In the book, Dr. Reagan rightly asserts that "*the apostasy*" is already here. Yet page 158 of the book states that it readily admits that the same term "apostasy" has an entirely different meaning in at least three different places.

In closing, I can only summarize with my own reflection.

Holding the highest regard of the editors and authors of this book as men of God whom the Lord uses and has used, I am at an utter loss to account for their rationale, or the lack of it, in producing such a confused and poorly conceived book. All of them are uniformly capable of much better things, including producing a higher grade apologetic for their Pre-Tribulational position and polemic in opposition to those who disagree. And I say this irrespective of the fact that I personally do not share their views in this instance. Yet even if I did, I would want to see a much better and more solid published representation of the position they seek to advance and defend.

Unedited :: Link to Original Posting

<http://moriel.org/MorielArchive/index.php/discernment/church-issues/book-review-the-popular-handbook-on-the-rapture>

When the Experts Get It Wrong

WALK WITH THE WORD - By Danny Isom - April 2013

Why did so few of God's people recognize the Messiah at His First Coming? In spite of having all the Scriptures, and unlike His Second Coming, in spite of having been given through the Prophet Daniel the specific time of His arrival (and many were, therefore, actually looking for Him at that time), and in spite of His doing things in their presence which only the Messiah could do, most would reject Him. As indicated in the Scriptures above, it was not just religious leaders or the people in general who were seemingly blind to what took place before their very eyes, but even Christ's disciples and John the Baptist admitted that things were not what they had expected. One of the biggest reasons was erroneous teachings about the Messiah, particularly a very rigid interpretation of prophecy. The events of Christ's First Coming are characterized as contradicting

the popular notions of what was generally anticipated would take place when the Messiah finally came. They so rigidly clung to their own expectations of how prophecy would be fulfilled, they could not recognize when those very prophecies were actually being fulfilled. And I believe the same pattern is repeating itself today among a great many of those who are supposed to be anticipating most His Second Coming. ...

Read Full Report

http://walkwiththeword.org/SiteInfo/Commentaries/2013/04_When_Experts_Get_It_Wrong.pdf

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Abbotsford, BC

CONTACT Eileen MacDonald 604-814-0777

Cell 604-226-7277

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