

A History of the Pre-trib Rapture's Origin

The following is an account of the origin of the Pretribulation Rapture teaching which was made by J. Preston Eby, a diligent researcher and prolific author.

"It wasn't until the early or mid 1800's that there was any significant group of believers around the world that looked for a "rapture" of the Church prior to a seven-year tribulation period. It may come as a shock to some who read these lines, but it is a fact, nonetheless, that the "rapture" teaching was not taught by the early Church, it was not taught by Church of the first centuries, it was not taught by the Reformers, it was not taught by anyone (except a couple of Roman Catholic theologians) until about the year 1830. At the time of the Reformation, the early Protestants widely held and were convinced the Pope was the supreme individual embodiment and personification of the spirit of antichrist, and the Roman Church, the Harlot System of Revelation seventeen. This understanding was responsible for bringing millions of believers out of the Roman Catholic religious system. It therefore became expedient for certain Romish theologians to turn the attention of the people away from the Papacy, and this they endeavored to do by inventing a counter-interpretation to that held by the Protestants. This new scheme of prophetic interpretation became known as *futurism*. Rather than viewing the drama of the book of Revelation spiritually and historically, they would consign it all to a brief period of time at the end of the age. It was a Jesuit priest named **Ribera** who, in the days of the Reformation, first taught that all the events in the book of Revelation were to take place literally during the three and a half years reign of the antichrist way down at the end of the age. Thus, Ribera laid the foundation of a system of prophetic interpretation of which the *secret rapture* has now become an integral part.

"Later, **Emmanuel Lacunza**, also a Jesuit priest, built on Ribera's teachings, and spent much of his life writing a book titled "*The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty.*" Lacunza, however, wrote under the assumed name of **Rabbi Ben Ezra**, supposedly a learned Jew who had accepted Christ as his Savior. With Jesuit cunning, he thus conspired to get his book a hearing in the Protestant world they would not even permit it in their homes coming from a Jesuit pen but as the earnest work of the "converted Jew," they would consume it with avid interest! Within the pages of this elaborate forgery, Lacunza taught the novel notion that Jesus returns not once, but twice, and at the "*first stage*" of His return He "*raptures*" His Church so they can escape the reign of the "*future antichrist.*" His book was first published in Spanish in the 1812 and soon found its way onto the shelves of the library of the Archbishop of Canterbury in London, England.

"Now, enter the name of **Edward Irving**. Born in Scotland in 1792, Irving became one of the most eloquent preachers of his time, and a leading figure of the Catholic Apostolic Church of England. In 1828 his open-air meetings in Scotland drew crowds of 10,000 people. His church in London seated one thousand people and was packed week after week with a congregation drawn from the most brilliant and influential circles of society. There were some among them who by prophetic declaration announced that the Lord was coming soon, and this idea became prominent in their prophetic utterances and teachings. Out of those prophetic declarations some began to study the scriptures in the light of a physical, literal coming of the Lord. Up until that time the coming of the Lord was understood as coming of the Lord *TO* His people, and *IN* His saints, and there was no sense of His fleshly coming. Irving discovered Lacunza's book and was deeply



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shaken by it, in fact, fell in love with it, translated it into English, and it was published in London in 1827. At this time Irving heard what he believed to be a voice from heaven commanding him to preach the *Secret Rapture of the Saints*. Irving then began to hold Bible conferences throughout Scotland, Emphasizing the coming of Jesus to rapture His Church.

"About this same time there began the emergence of a new movement which came to be known as the *Plymouth Brethren*. The Brethren movement had its beginning in Dublin in 1825 when a small group of earnest men, dissatisfied with the lethargic condition that prevailed in the Protestant Church in Ireland, met for prayer and fellowship. Soon others joined the fellowship and associated groups sprang up in various places. Though the movement had its beginning at Dublin, it was Plymouth, England that became the center of their vast literature outreach, thus the name *Plymouth Brethren* became attached. Although there was interest from the start in prophetic subjects, the center of interest was on the body of Christ as an organism and the spiritual unity of Christ of all believers in reaction to the deadness of formalism of the organized church systems and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. A man by the name of *John Nelson Darby* was the leading spirit among the Plymouth Brethren from 1830 onward. Darby was from a prosperous Irish family, was educated as a lawyer, took high honors at Dublin University, then turned aside, to his father's chagrin, to become a minister.

"Thus Irving and Darby were contemporaries, though associated with different spiritual movements. Another series of meetings were in progress at this time. A group of seeking Christians were meeting in the castle of Lady Powerscourt for the study of Bible prophecy. Many clergymen attended, and quite a few who were Irvingites. The Irvingites came to the meetings obsessed with the ideas of the "*Secret Rapture*" and the "*future antichrist*," imbibed from the Jesuit teaching of the Secret Rapture and the futurist interpretation of prophecy, as well as the famous book by *Rabbi Ben-Ezra*, or, actually, Jesuit priest *Emmanuel Lacunza*! Darby was himself a prolific writer and from the time a constant stream of propaganda came from his pen. His writings on biblical subjects number over 30 volumes of 600 pages each. Darby developed and organized "*futurism*" into a system of prophetic teaching called "*dispensationalism*." Darby's biographers refer to him as "*the father of dispensationalism*." And the crown jewel in the kingdom of dispensationalism is, of course, the so-called *SECRET RAPTURE!*

"The *Secret Rapture* teaching was introduced into the United States and Canada in the 1860's and 1870's though there is some indication that it may have been taught as early as the 1840's. Darby himself visited the United States six times. The new teaching was spreading. A Congregationalist preacher by the name of *C.I. Scofield* came under the influence of Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. *The Scofield Reference Bible* was destined to have a tremendous impact upon the beliefs of many, when, three million copies were published in the first 50 years. Through this Bible, Scofield carried the teaching of *the Secret Rapture* into the very heart of evangelism. Some ignorant souls look on the notes in this Bible as the Word of God itself. I do not doubt for one instant that many who read these lines have been influenced somewhere in their spiritual lives by the footnotes in the Scofield Bible.

"There is one final link in the chain of the development and spread of the rapture theory that should be mentioned in passing. I would draw your attention again to the source, the origin, of the rapture doctrine and the chain of contact by which it has been brought down to this day. It began as a **Roman Catholic invention**. The Jesuit priest *Ribera's*

writings influenced the Jesuit priest *Lacunza*, Lacunza influenced *Irving*, Irving influenced *Darby*, Darby influenced *Scofield*, Scofield and Darby influenced *D.L. Moody*, and moody influenced *the Pentecostal Movement*. How? you ask. *The Assemblies of God* is today by far the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. When the Pentecostal movement began at the turn of the century, and the Assemblies of God held their first general council in 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas, they were a small movement and didn't have their own publishing house. They needed Sunday School and study materials for their churches so where do you suppose they got it? They bought it from *Moody Press* and had their own cover stitched on it! So, what do you think the Assemblies of God people believed? They believed what Moody Bible Institute taught!

This had its impact on Pentecostal theology, because in the early years there were practically no pre-millennialists in the Pentecostal movement. Most of the ministers in those early days came from Presbyterian, Methodist, or other historic denominations men who, being baptized in the Holy Spirit and leaving their denominations, joined themselves to the Assemblies of God or one of the other emerging Pentecostal denominations. That is how the Pentecostal movement became influenced and saturated with the "*Secret Rapture*" doctrine by a direct chain right back to **THE ROMAN CHURCH.**"



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