

leave it as a structure more akin to Greek idealism" (p. 85)? Such a declaration, it seems to me, fails to take into account *all* the OT roots, as well as the meaning of the "remnant" concept in both OT and NT.

In the final chapters of his book, LaSor has to grapple more directly with a plethora of current views on eschatological topics. In doing so, he is not dogmatic; but readers will undoubtedly find various parts of his treatment here somewhat more debatable (possibly at times, even speculative) than the material in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, his arguments against a pretribulation rapture of the Christians (pp. 130-131) and his caution against removing the Gog prophecy of Ezek 38 from its contemporary setting (p. 139) seem to be particularly well taken. With respect to the former, however, I would question his prior discussion which views the several time periods of Daniel 7, 8, 9, and 12 from a *futuristic* standpoint (pp. 128-129); and with respect to the Gog prophecy, his critique of certain current lines of interpretation that connect "Rosh" with "Russia," etc., could have been strengthened by linguistic analysis, as well as further historical data. Also, his treatment of the "Armageddon" imagery of Rev 16:16 (toward the end of chap. 11), though basically cautious and balanced, could have benefited from considerations of the kind noted by William H. Shea, "The Location and Significance of Armageddon in Rev 16:16," *AUSS* 18 (1980): 157-162.

In conclusion, I would state that *The Truth About Armageddon* is a valuable production that treats an array of important related biblical topics, even though it has relatively little to say specifically about "Armageddon" as such. Its shortcomings, including those noted above, are, in my view, quite minimal in comparison with the richness of material and the perceptive analysis that are provided. The book's excellent organization and the author's clear and smooth writing style are further "plusses." Readers will certainly be rewarded by reviewing LaSor's incisive discussions of both Scripture data and current viewpoints. Even the exercise of looking up, in context, the wide array of Scripture references which he cites will provide an enriching experience.

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MacPherson, Dave. *The Great Rapture Hoax*. Fletcher, N.C.: New Puritan Library, Inc., 1983. (viii) + 210 pp. Paperback, \$5.00.

It is seldom that a reviewer has the opportunity to review three books by the same author, especially books that are in a sequence to follow up and extend earlier discussion of the same topic. In *The Great Rapture*

*Hoax*, MacPherson again sets forth the thesis in his two books that I have earlier reviewed: *The Unbelievable Pre-trib Origin* (reviewed in *AUSS* 13 [1975]: 86-87), and *The Late Great Pre-trib Rapture* (reviewed in *AUSS* 15 [1977]: 238-239). The common thesis to these three publications is that the concept of a pretribulation ("pre-trib," in MacPherson's popular jargon) "secret rapture" as held by modern dispensationalists harks back to the charismatic revelations of Margaret Macdonald, in Port Glasgow, Scotland, in the spring of 1830. To this specific matter, highlighted in a lengthy "Appendix A" in the present publication ("Margaret's Revelation," pp. 125-180), as well as in chap. 3, I shall return later in this review; but attention should first be given to the general scope and content of the book and to some of the features that broaden or extend the coverage of the present volume over that of its predecessors.

*The Great Rapture Hoax* has five main chapters: 1, "The Rapture Revolution" (pp. 3-14); 2, "Famous Rapture Watchers" (pp. 15-42); 3, "Back to Beginnings" (pp. 43-70); 4, "Appearances Can Be . . ." (pp. 71-87); and 5, "Time to Wake Up!" (pp. 89-124). There are also two appendixes besides Appendix A, mentioned above. These further appendixes are as follows: B, "Lacunza's View" (pp. 181-186); and C, "Gundry's Change" (pp. 187-204). There is also a section entitled "Footnotes" (actually, end-notes, pp. 205-210), but the volume has no index (nor is one really needed).

The first chapter outlines briefly the author's own background with respect to pretribulationism and furnishes an account of the recognition being given his earlier publications on the same subject. Chap. 2 begins the book's real content enhancement by quoting excerpts from some 124 writers from the early-church period till the present day—writers who have expressed belief in a *post*-tribulation rapture (pp. 16-35). Though this information is necessarily very brief and also somewhat sketchy, it nonetheless is valuable in providing an overview. The use of a chronological sequence for the entries, together with a format that makes the individual items stand out, increases the value of the material from the standpoint of utility as a reference list. (One may wish to compare and contrast, e.g., the far-more-detailed treatment of the somewhat less-sweeping and less-clearly-organized presentation by George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* [Grand Rapids, Mich., 1956], pp. 20-34, 45-58.)

Skipping past chap. 3 for the moment (it will be discussed below, in conjunction with Appendix A), we may note that chap. 4 does basically two things: (a) it uncovers unsavory aspects of C. I. Scofield's life (including newspaper reports of such); and (b) it reveals that certain leading pretribulationist advocates, such as Harry Ironside, have expressed doubts about pretribulationism. The second feature is interesting, to say the least; but one can well wonder whether there is much value in MacPherson's *ad hominem* argumentation with respect to Scofield. If MacPherson had

proved that the Scofield Reference Bible was the product of fraud (and such is *not* the case, nor does MacPherson attempt the task), his discussion might have been *apropos*. But what do the details of Scofield's marital status, Scofield's questionable practices during his political career, etc., have to do with the correctness or error in his pretribulationist views as expressed in the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible?

Chap. 5 portrays more forcefully than any other chapter the author's own strong personal involvement in his subject matter. He begins with accounts of strange events that would hamper his research on pre-trib origins (including a fire at Powerscourt House in 1974, thus destroying any evidence that might be uncovered there). He next deals with the lethargy of the news media to treat the question of pre-trib origins, though they have in other respects given abundant attention to the right-wing clergy who are proponents of the view. Has he adequately considered, however, that *secular* media would necessarily be more interested in the overt political interests and activities of this group than in religious theories? Then, a major portion of the chapter is devoted to discussion of certain ideas recently and/or currently set forth by pretribulationist exponents (including a few pages on the "Jupiter Effect" and other speculations). His perceptive analysis of a number of present-day pretribulationist arguments that are frequently mentioned in radio and television broadcasts (treated on pp. 98-108) constitutes, to my mind, one of the more valuable aspects of this book. Moreover, for persons confused about terminology relating to the varieties of "millennialist" and "tribulationist" positions, the author's discussion on pp. 114-116 provides an excellent, accurate, and easy-to-understand overview.

Appendix B, dealing with Manuel Lacunza's eschatological views, is timely. Certain writers in recent years have attributed the idea of a two-stage second advent of Jesus to Lacunza, who wrote his major work on the subject prior to 1800. Moreover, it has also been suggested that Edward Irving adopted the same concept in 1826, while translating Lacunza's work into English (four years prior to Margaret Macdonald's vision that MacPherson claims originated the view!). By use of a number of direct quotations from Lacunza's own work, MacPherson shows that what Lacunza really believed entailed no double second coming, nor any pretribulation rapture of the saints. Rather, Lacunza saw Christ's *one* second advent as embracing a period of time. Lacunza does state that upon Christ's coming forth from heaven and "much before" his arrival on earth, he gives forth orders (involving the "shout, the archangel's voice, and the trumpet of God"); but the "much before" must be seen in the context of Lacunza's reference to other writers of his time who thought of the period as but "a few minutes" (see pp. 181-182). Lacunza, as MacPherson also points out, does deal with a 45-day period (based on Lacunza's subtraction of the 1290

days from the 1335 days of Dan 12), but in Lacunza's view this period was *after* Christ's descent to earth, subsequent to the tribulation, and with the saints here on earth at that time (pp. 183-184). To my mind, this rather short Appendix B, consisting of only six pages, is one of the major contributions in MacPherson's present book.

The final appendix in *The Great Rapture Hoax* notes that Robert Gundry, in the "sixth printing" of his *The Church and the Tribulation* (December, 1980), has deleted "all of his support for Edward Irving as the Pre-Trib originator" and substituted MacPherson's "published evidence about Margaret Macdonald"—this change in Gundry's stance taking place subsequent to a long letter by MacPherson to Gundry, dated January 21, 1980 (p. 187). Then the text of the letter follows as the major portion of this appendix. It is a letter which, incidentally, provides a rather broad and quick overview of the lines of argument that influenced MacPherson to opt for the Margaret Macdonald thesis.

That thesis, as mentioned earlier in this review, is reiterated in chap. 3 and Appendix A of the present volume. As in MacPherson's first book on the topic, the text of Margaret's vision, as published in 1840 in Robert Norton's *Memoirs of James & George Macdonald, of Port Glasgow*, is given in full—at this time, however, with the advantage of a numbering of the lines of text (117 lines in total). This presentation of the text of the revelation at the outset of Appendix A (pp. 125-128) lends to easy reference with respect to MacPherson's discussion of specific items in the text.

I would say, however, that such discussion, both here and in chap. 3, is no more convincing than the author's earlier attempts to discover in this "revelation" a pretribulation secret rapture. The text of the vision makes abundantly clear that the antichrist's activity "with all power and signs and lying wonders" constitutes "the fiery trial which is to try us" (lines 63-65), that the "trial of the Church is from Antichrist" (lines 85-86), and that it "is by being filled with the Spirit that we shall be kept" (lines 86-87). The fact that Margaret's vision considered the "sign of the Son of man" as being "just the Lord himself descending from Heaven with a shout" (lines 7-13), moreover, has nothing to do with a secret *pretribulation* rapture of the saints. Rather, in the context of the discussion that follows, it manifestly relates to the importance of spiritual discernment on the part of Christ's followers (i.e., to the power of the Holy Spirit), so as to withstand antichrist's persecutions and to be ready for the *post*-tribulation rapture. What Margaret's view seems more akin to is that of Lacunza, a point overlooked by MacPherson; and one can well wonder if somehow she had had contact with Lacunza's material.

What has just been said does not dispute the fact that certain later pretribulationists, such as Norton, could read back their *own* views into Margaret's revelation. Their doing so does not, however, validate the idea

that that vision was really pretribulationist in even the most incipient form. Its very text speaks to the contrary!

In spite of the author's failure to *prove* his thesis regarding Margaret Macdonald, his chap. 3 and Appendix A summarize some vital discoveries that have been made with respect to early pretribulationist developments. It is interesting to find, for example, that Irvingites did not express pretribulationist ideas until September of 1830 and that among the Plymouth Brethren the earliest evidence of such leanings comes from 1831. Moreover, J. N. Darby himself—the individual most responsible for the origin and initial spread of *present-day* pretribulationist views—did not manifest any pretribulationism prior to 1834. Finally, in the earliest period of the two-stage second-advent theory, the two stages were separated by only a very short period of time; it was not until about 1839 and 1840 that both Irvingites and Darbyites stretched the period out to encompass seven years.

In conclusion: Although I see in this new volume some of the same weaknesses and strengths as I have indicated in my reviews of MacPherson's earlier books on the topic, the present title has additional material that is helpful indeed. The presentation style is again popular, rather than scholarly, in nature. It is obvious, however, that the author has done a great deal of "homework" (or perhaps better said, "library research"). *The Great Rapture Hoax* can well be read and reflected upon by Christian educators, pastors, and laity. The enthusiasm with which MacPherson and his wife have devoted themselves to the task of divulging the *late* origin of the pretribulationist theory (in this point they are correct, regardless of the manner of the origin) and the very reasonable price of the books they have published—these are indications that theirs is indeed "a labor of love." That labor of love can well be received as such; and its fruitage, as represented in *The Great Rapture Hoax*, provides both fascinating and helpful reading, irrespective of points of agreement and disagreement.

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O'Brien, Peter T. *Colossians, Philemon*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 44. Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1982. liv + 328 pp. \$18.95.

In my review of the commentary on Philippians in this series, I have made certain general observations concerning characteristics of the various volumes of the entire series (see p. 60, above). Those observations pertain also to the volume here under review.

With respect to the two epistles treated in this volume of the commentary, O'Brien sees them both as written by Paul about A.D. 60-61 during the