Everything seems to be growing more and more complex today--including theology. Formerly most everybody could be classified as either a pre, post, or amillennialist. And if you were a premillennialist, it was assumed that you also believed that the church would be raptured before the tribulation begins. But then that could no longer be assumed and one had to declare whether he was a pre, mid, partial, or posttribulational premillennialist. Of course, if you were posttribulational you had to be careful to distinguish whether you were premillennial or amillennial because both are posttributional. But now to add to the if not confusion also eschatological complexities Dr. Payne, Associate Prof of OT at Wheaton College, offers another view--imminent posttribulationism with potentially present antecedents. Such a long title seems to be required though the author would probably like to have his view become known as "classical" posttribulationism in order to allign himself with what he considers the view of the early church.

The thesis of the book is three-fold: (1) dispensational pretribulationism is a redefining of the blessed hope and therefore unscriptural; (2) modern posttribulationism in reality denies the imminency of the Lord's return because of its "rigorous futurism"; (3) therefore, the true view is an imminent posttribulational ratprue kept immenent by this idea of potentially present antecedents.

The only thing good about pretribulationism, according to Dr. Payne, is that it does preserve the imminency of the hope of
Christ's return. Everything else about it seems to be wrong, and at times the author is hardly fair in his statements presentation of dispensationalism. He admits that the idea of a secret rapture is passe with dispensationalism, and yet the reviewer counted no less than 5 statements of it later in the book (pp. 44, 67, 82, 92, 156). The bad thing about posttribulationism, according to Payne, is that it is illogical. How can the rapture of the church occurring after the tribulation really be imminent if a "rigorous" futuristic interpretation outlines the events which occur in the 7 years which precede the rapture? This is a good question, and Payne has plunged a dagger into the heart of posttribulationism and twisted the dagger vigorously. The problem, therefore, is to retain genuine imminency in a posttribulation outline which problem Payne solve with his potentially present antecedents. This simply means that many of the predicted antecedents of Christ's coming could be being fulfilled today if the Lord comes immediately, but could also have a more complete future fulfillment if He doesn't come for another generation or so. Thus, the author suggests, the destruction of 3 of the 10 states by Antichrist (Dan. 7:8, 24) might be fulfilled before our eyes in what has happened to Hungary (p. 108). A further example is to be found in what has happened to iron country churches--this is a potential fulfillment of the tribulation (p. 114). Now, of course, to propose such a solution to the problem of retaining imminency in a posttribulational framework involves some compromises. One concerns literal interpretation, for suffering how can the churches in China fulfill the world-wide tribulation unless "rigorous futurism" is toned down to the extent where
it ceases to be literal interpretation of any brand?
The other concerns the passages which teach certain antecedents
that precede the Lord's coming which could not possibly
be potentially fulfilled by any stretch of the hermeneutical
principle of of the interpreter's imagination. To have anything
that even resembles a literal interpretation certain of the
judgments of the Revelation which Payne believes will be fulfilled
literally will have to await their fulfillment until just before
the Lord comes. But it will have to be just a very little before
otherwise imminency is lost. Thus, even this new twist to
posttribulationism has to have its interval between the rapture
and the second coming (p. 135)—though a very short one to be sure!

The author regrets to see so many thoughtless statements
in a book by one whose scholarly ability one respects highly.
For instance, the author asserts that the doctrine of the
millennium is of little consequence to this subject (p. 6).
Too after his tone is too loud an echo of Reese in calling
unobjectionable,
dispensationalists theorists, etc. This will do little to
which plea practically says "You be tolerant of me even if I'm not
help implement his plea for tolerance (p. 168). Many will
have difficulty in accepting his idea that the Daniel's 70
weeks terminated exactly in A.D. 33 with the conversion of Paul.

To sum up: this book is a sharp rebuke of Ladd's
posttribulationism, but the confusing alternative of posttribulationism
with potentially present antecedents is hardly the answer to
preserving
how to maintain imminency. Perhaps pretribulationists are
right after all! At least they should find interesting the
spectacle of posttribulationists debating the basics of posttribulism
among themselves!