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*Candid Examination
of the Scofield Bible*

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A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THE SCOFIELD BIBLE

A lecture delivered before the Ministerial Association of the Christian Reformed Church, at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 1st, 1938,

by

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BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT

I. C. Herendeen

SWENGEL (Union Co.), PA.

Printed in United States of America

A CANDID EXAMINATION OF THE SCOFIELD BIBLE

Shortly after I returned from Japan, in the year 1923, when I was beginning my work as Bible teacher and College Pastor in Hope College, Dr. John E. Kuizenga, then one of the professors in our seminary, remarked to me that no one could be a teacher of the Bible, in these days, without reckoning with the Scofield Bible, since it was so widely used, and so highly esteemed by many Christian people. This was not exactly the first time I had heard of the Scofield Bible. I knew that there was such a book, but had never had any occasion to pay any especial attention to it. Upon Dr. Kuizenga's advice, I procured a copy, and made myself acquainted with its contents.

This work was first published in 1909, and a second edition appeared in 1917. From that date the present copyright runs, and this copyright is so carefully guarded that when I wrote my discussion of the Apocalypse permission could not be obtained to quote even a few sentences. The biography of the author, Dr. Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, and the history of his writing the "Notes", may be found in a book entitled: "The Life Story of C. I. Scofield", by Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, editor of the "Sunday School Times." Born August 19, 1843, he was in his youth a soldier in the Confed-

erate army. After the war he studied and practiced law, becoming active also in politics. During that period of his life he became a hard drinker. In 1879, at the age of 36, he was converted. For three years more he continued to practice law, but in 1882 he gave it up to become—without any intervening theological training—pastor of a small Congregational church in Dallas, Texas, where he was ordained to the ministry eighteen months later by a Congregational Council. Many years after that, finding that the Congregational churches were no longer loyal to the great doctrines of the Christian faith, he became a minister of the Southern Presbyterian Church; although I do not find in his biography any mention of his ever having served a Presbyterian congregation. Dr. Scofield was no doubt a man of great piety, earnestly devoted to the gospel as understood and preached by the evangelical churches.

The book known as "The Scofield Bible" consists of the King James Version, with a special system of chain references, invented and prepared by Dr. Scofield, a system of paragraph headings, and numerous notes, of very varied character and value. The whole is called by Dr. Trumbull: "A God-planned, God-guided, God-illuminated, and God-energized work" (p. 114). It would be difficult to say more than that of the divinely inspired Scriptures themselves.

The Great Influence of the Scofield Bible

There is no doubt that Dr. Kuizenga was right in his remark to me about the great and wide-spread influence of the Scofield Bible. It may fairly be

called one of the most influential books—perhaps it is the most influential single work—thrust into the religious life of America during the twentieth century. So far as I know, it is not looked upon as a valuable adjunct to Bible study in any of the regular theological seminaries throughout our country, but in numerous “Bible Schools” it is one of the chief text-books, and in many circles an appeal to the Scofield Bible is the end of all controversy. Through its influence there have arisen here and there “tabernacles” and “undenominational churches,” composed of people no longer at home in the established orthodox denominations, because they do not get there the sort of teaching they find in the Scofield Bible. In many other churches, where this development has not yet reached the point of separation, the presence of Sunday School teachers and others who consider themselves illuminated by the Scofield Bible beyond their pastors, forms a troublesome element. Periodicals like the “Sunday School Times” and the “Moody Bible Institute Monthly” frequently refer to it, and always with an air of having spoken the final word, if they can quote a passage from it in support of their views.

All this constitutes a situation to which we as pastors and Bible teachers need to pay attention, and to do so we must be thoroughly acquainted with the Scofield Bible. The importance of the problem is accentuated by the fact that those who use this work are, in other respects, among the best Christians in our churches, those with the deepest faith in the Holy Scriptures and with the most sincere devotion to the Lord. They need to be very carefully and sympathetically dealt with.

These good people do not lack faith and zeal, but they sadly lack knowledge; and the tragedy of the situation lies just here, that this is the very thing they think they have obtained from the Scofield Bible! They are apt to say in their hearts, and not infrequently with their lips: "I have more understanding than all my teachers—because I have a Scofield Bible."

Dr. T. T. Shields, of Toronto, prominent Baptist and premillenarian preacher, said, in "The Gospel Witness" for April 7th, 1932:

"From a position of entire ignorance of the Scriptures to the position of oracular religious certainty—especially respecting eschatological matters—for some people requires from three to six months with a Scofield Bible."

How is this great influence of Dr. Scofield's work to be accounted for? In answering this question, it is right first of all to point out the real excellencies of the book. It was written by a man of faith. On the great fundamental issues of the Christian religion, such as the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith, regeneration, sanctification through the Holy Spirit, the resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting, it rings clear as a bell. Many Christian people have been profoundly disturbed, during the last forty or fifty years, over the growing denial of these things, on account of the increasing modernism in the churches. Often they fail to hear any clear testimony to the gospel from their own pastors, even in Presbyterian and Methodist churches. For such

people it is a relief, and a most welcome assurance to take up the Scofield Bible, and to find in its notes no suggestion that the old gospel is out of date or that the great doctrines are to be doubted. This is the most vital and valuable service that the Scofield Bible has rendered to the Christian faith and life of our country, and its importance can not easily be over-estimated. It has undergirded the faith of God's people in a remarkable manner, and from that point of view even we who see much fault in it, and seriously deprecate its influence in other respects, must thank God for it.

It has excellencies of method, also. Its chain reference system, considered merely as a method, apart from the special propaganda to which it is largely devoted, is admirable. The same must be said of its paragraph headings, although in some parts of the Bible, particularly in the book of Isaiah, these are abused to present as the content of the prophecy what is at best a most doubtful interpretation.

Another thing that goes far to explain the widespread use and great influence of this work, is the oracular and authoritative tone employed throughout. Here we come to something we can not praise, although we admit its effectiveness with superficial Bible students—as most people are. Dr. Scofield never by any chance intimates that he may be mistaken, or that any other view is possible but the one he lays down. In one place I did find him presenting three possible alternative explanations, without deciding which was right, but this is a rare exception. For the most part, no infallible Pope could speak with greater certainty and authority than he;

and this is true no matter what the subject under discussion. Whether dealing with the great doctrines which are the common confession of all Christendom, or with obscure and doubtful points of eschatology, where the most learned and competent expositors confess themselves at a loss, everywhere it is the same "ipse dixit" style. Anciently it was said: "Roma locuta est: causa finita est"; but if you yield yourself at all to the tone and method of the Scofield Bible, you must believe that the message for the present age is: "Scofield locutus est: causa finita est."

The influence of this authoritative tone upon the untrained and unwary reader is necessarily very great, and this is emphasized in no small degree by the fact that the notes are bound up in the same volume with the sacred text itself, so that the confidence of the reader in writings divinely inspired is unconsciously transferred to and shared by the other remarks on the same page. To be sure, this has been done before, as in the great Dutch "Staten Bijbel"; but that method has passed out of use, precisely because it was recognized that fallible interpretation should not thus be associated with infallible revelation. It was a clever idea of Dr. Scofield thus to revive it. Had his notes been published separately, by themselves, as a commentary, they would by this time have been forgotten.

In line with this authoritative attitude, and necessitated by it, is the fact that Dr. Scofield never argues, never explains, never apologizes, and never assigns any reasons for asserting that this or that is true. Not only would it have been difficult to

do that, within the limits of space available, but it would have detracted very seriously from the impression made upon the reader. Had he given his reasons, the intelligent reader would have begun to judge whether these reasons were convincing: by withholding all reasons he gives the impression that, if he did give them, they would be found satisfactory. Thus, with true psychology, he affirms, but never argues.

Now, there are certainly times, places, and circumstances where this is the correct procedure. In teaching small children one must speak thus. The man who proclaims the great Christian doctrines is entitled to speak positively and with authority. He has the Holy Scriptures and the consensus of the Christian church from the beginning with him and behind him as he preaches these truths. Within the Christian circle, the faith is "The Undoubted Holy Catholic Christian Faith." We don't mean "may-be" when we proclaim the doctrines of God, of Christ, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. Besides this, any one called to the office of a Christian pastor in a given denomination has both the right and the duty to affirm, in his own pulpit, the distinctive doctrines of his own denomination, without qualification or apology. That is what he is there for; what he has been called to do; what his people want him to do, and understand that he is doing. He speaks not as an individual, but as an official teacher, the mouth-piece of his denomination. You can not find fault with a Baptist preacher for declaring in his pulpit that infant baptism is a perversion of the sacrament and a great evil; or with a Reformed

Church pastor for preaching in his pulpit that it is a precious divine ordinance. Neither can do otherwise and be faithful to his calling.

In the case of the Scofield Bible, however, these considerations do not apply. He is not dealing with children, nor is he speaking in any sense in an official and representative capacity. In his presentation of the great central doctrines, he has the whole church behind him, but in a large part of his teachings he represents a minority of a minority, teaching a millennialism which no Christian church has ever admitted to its creed, and of that millennialism a special form which many of the wisest millenarians repudiate. Yet in all of this, as also in his remarks on chronology, and general Bible knowledge, he maintains the same oracular "I know it all" attitude. As a method of inspiring confidence among ignorant people, the method has merits, its effectiveness can not be denied; but from a moral standpoint it deserves severe condemnation. Dr. Scofield had no right thus to assume superiority over his brethren, to whom the Holy Spirit was given as well as to him, and many of whom had qualifications of scholarship far beyond anything he could claim.

In the field of Systematic Theology he is good, for there he utilizes the fruits of the standard Protestant and Calvinistic thinking; but in general Bible knowledge he makes many mistakes, and in his eschatology he goes far astray from anything the church has ever believed. Undoubtedly this oracular and authoritative manner has been effective, but it is not to be excused for that reason. It seems like a harsh judgment, but in the interests of truth

it must be uttered: Dr. Scofield in this was acting the part of an intellectual charlatan, a fraud who pretends to knowledge which he does not possess; like a quack doctor, who is ready with a confident diagnosis in many cases where a competent physician is unable to decide.

Yet the method was truly effective, and accounts in no small degree for the influence and popularity of his work. Dr. T. T. Shields says on this point ("Gospel Witness," April 7th, 1932):

"I readily recognize that the Scofield Bible is very popular with novices, that is, those newly come to the faith, and also with many of longer Christian experience who are but superficial students of Scripture. Ready-made clothes are every where popular with people of average size On the same principle, ready-made religious ideas will always be popular, especially with those indisposed to the exertion of fitting their religious conceptions to an ever-increasing scriptural knowledge. That common human disposition very largely explains the popularity of the Scofield Bible."

The Distinctive Doctrines of the Scofield Bible

Let us turn now from questions of method to those of the contents of the work. These we may divide into two sections; (1) those in line with the common evangelical faith, and (2) those outside of, and in some respects, contrary to, the accepted convictions of evangelical Protestant Christians. Those of the former class will require no special discussion here. As already remarked, in the great standard doctrines of Systematic Theology, the book is decidedly good. Dr. Scofield gives such

instruction mainly through his definitions of pivotal theological terms, such as regeneration, reconciliation, redemption, election, predestination, etc. He assures us in his introduction that "these definitions have been submitted to and approved by a very large number of eminent students and teachers of all the evangelical bodies," and the expert nature of the theological craftsmanship manifest in them bears out this assurance. As such definitions and accompanying notes form a considerable portion of the comment on the great Pauline epistles, it is here that we find the greatest occasion to approve his work. Since these doctrinal conceptions are fully shared by all Presbyterian and Reformed theologians, we need not comment upon them further; except to say again that we believe that they have wrought a great and much needed work among American Christians, who, because of the prevailing neglect of catechetical instruction, have usually only the vaguest notions of Christian doctrine.

I should like to devote my remaining time to a brief consideration of four distinctive features of the Scofield Bible, namely:

- (1) Its artificial and extravagant typology.
- (2) Its doctrine of dispensations and covenants.
- (3) Its eschatology.
- (4) Its doctrine of the church.

Its Artificial and Extravagant Typology

On p. 4 we find Dr. Scofield's definition of a "type," and on p. 100 a statement of the principle

of interpretation to be employed in speaking of types. Both are excellent. The definition is this:

“A type is a divinely purposed illustration of some truth.”

According to this, nothing is a true type unless it was intended to be such by the Holy Spirit in inspiring the Bible. The principle of interpretation is as follows:

“(1) Nothing may be dogmatically asserted to be a type without explicit New Testament authority; and (2) all types not so authenticated must be recognized as having the authority of analogy and spiritual congruity merely.”

This is fine; but we must immediately add that if the author had acted according to his own principles, he would, so far as typology is concerned, have written a very different book. This warning, tucked away on p. 100, is honored more in the breach than in the observance. Constantly he is dogmatically asserting this or that to be a type for which the New Testament offers no sort of explicit authority. Let me give you a few samples. He has hardly begun the story of creation, in Gen. 1, before he tells us that the Sun is a type of Christ, the Moon of the church, and the Stars of the individual believers. A little further on, we are told that Eve is a type of the church as the bride of Christ; then that Enoch typifies the believers of the last day, alive at the coming of Christ. Noah stands for the Jewish people of the end-time, kept through the judgments of the days of Antichrist, and brought as an earthly people into the new heavens and new earth of the millennium. Noah's ark typifies the salvation of Christ; which at first seems a familiar

thought, but Dr. Scofield does not mean this in the ordinary way. He adds that in strictness of application this speaks of the preservation through the great tribulation of the remnant of Israel, who will turn to the Lord after the church has been caught up to meet Him in the air.

St. Paul taught us that Sarah and Hagar had typical meanings, but he said nothing about Keturah. Dr. Scofield supplies that omission by telling us that she is a type of the fertility of Israel, as the natural seed, after the restoration of Israel under the Palestinian covenant. Jacob, away from home, in Padanaram, becomes a striking illustration, if not a type, of the Jews in the present long continued dispersion. Asenath, the Egyptian wife of Joseph, is a type of the Christian church, called out from among the Gentiles to be the bride of Christ; Amalek, warring against Israel, stands for the flesh, warring against the spirit, in the believer.

In the ark of the covenant, the wood of the ark typifies the humanity of Christ, because it was acacia wood, a desert plant, and He was as a root out of a dry ground! The gold typifies His deity. The manna was a type of Christ in His humiliation, because it was a little thing, but "the old corn of the land," eaten after the manna had ceased to fall, means Christ glorified through resurrection and ascension. Aaron's rod that budded was a type of the resurrection of Christ, and smiting the rock to make the water gush forth typifies the crucifixion. That is the reason why it was so serious an offence for Moses to strike twice; for, says Dr. Scofield, "Christ, once smitten (*i. e.* crucified) **needs** not to be smitten again. Moses' act exalted him-

self and implied, (in type) that the one sacrifice was ineffectual, thus denying the eternal efficacy of the blood."

These are only samples. So he goes on, through book after book, finding types everywhere. No doubt there are real types, as we all recognize; but this sort of typology throws more light on the ingenuity of Dr. C. I. Scofield than upon the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. It is strikingly similar to the allegorizing of the church fathers, and results from the same disposition of mind, namely unwillingness to abide by the results of sober exegesis of the Word of God.

The Doctrine of Dispensations and Covenants

The Scofield Bible teaches that there are seven dispensations, as follows:

The Seven Dispensations

(1) The Dispensation of Innocency, in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall.

(2) The Dispensation of Conscience: before the Flood.

(3) The Dispensation of Human Government: from the flood to various points of time, viz., for the human race as a unit, until the confusion of tongues, which destroyed the racial unity: for the Jews, the captivities: for the Gentile nations, the Second Coming of Christ and the judgment of Matthew 25.

(4) The Dispensation of Promise: from the calling of Abraham until Mt. Sinai.

(5) The Dispensation of the Law: from Mt. Sinai to the cross of Christ.

(6) The Dispensation of Grace: from the cross of Christ to the Second Advent.

(7) The Dispensation of the Kingdom: the millennial era.

His definition is as follows:

“A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.”

Such a use of the word “dispensation,” to indicate a period of time during which some specific aspect of the divine redemptive programme is prominent, is familiar to theology. We are all accustomed to the expressions: “the old dispensation,” “the new dispensation,” as designating the time before and after the coming of Christ, yet not merely as intervals of time, but as periods during which certain distinct religious ordinances were established by divine authority; such as sacrifice and passover in the Old Testament, and baptism, with the Lord’s Supper, in the New. This is the idea which Dr. Scofield extends to the seven periods named.

For such extension and enumeration of dispensations, however, he gives no scriptural authority—for the simple reason that there is none to be given. Nor does he indicate the grounds upon which he bases the assertion that there are just seven: he merely says so, in his characteristic manner. If this is enough to convince you, no more need be said; but if you are disposed to scrutinize the idea, and to demand some kind of proof, you will not be easily satisfied. There are many questions to be asked, to which you get no answer.

On the "Dispensation of Innocency" we need waste no words. We are all agreed that there was such a period, and that the relations between God and man suffered a radical alteration by the coming in of sin. If Dr. Scofield chooses to call this a "dispensation," let him do so. We will not strive about words to no profit. The next point, however, is far from self-evident. The "Dispensation of Conscience," he says, means this:

"Expelled from Eden . . . man was responsible to do all known good, and to abstain from all known evil, and to approach God through sacrifice . . . the dispensation ended in the judgment of the Flood."

"Ended"—what ended? The responsibility of every man to do all known good, and to abstain from all known evil? Certainly not, that abides today. The responsibility to approach God through sacrifice?—that continued until the final sacrifice of Christ. The operation of conscience in the heart of man? By no means. St. Paul refers to it as operative in his day, and there has been no change since. What, then, that was characteristic of "The Dispensation of Conscience," ended at the Flood?

The next is the "Dispensation of Human Government," which has three points of termination; but the notion that there was no human government before the Flood has no warrant; and in the case of the Jews human government did not end with the captivities, as he alleges. It is true that they did not regain their complete national independence, except for a short time, under the Maccabees, but the exercise of human government by

the heads of the Jewish people continued until the destruction of Jerusalem, in 70 A. D. (Genesis 49: 10).

The next is the "Dispensation of Promise," and we are told that it ended with the giving of the Law, upon Mt. Sinai. Again we ask: "In what sense did it end then?", and again we get no intelligible reply. Was the promise revoked? It was not. St. Paul expressly tells us that the giving of the Law had no such effect. Had it already been fulfilled? We know it was not. Was it then unimportant for an Israelite to believe the promise? Who can entertain such an idea?

This entire "dispensational" scheme, therefore, when subjected to examination in the light of Holy Scripture, breaks down completely—yet it is accepted by multitudes today as the undoubted teaching of the Bible, because Dr. Scofield says so.

The Eight Covenants

Dr. Scofield's doctrine of the Covenants fares a little better. He has eight:

- (1) The Edenic Covenant.
- (2) The Adamic Covenant.
- (3) The Noahic Covenant.
- (4) The Abrahamic Covenant.
- (5) The Mosaic Covenant.
- (6) The Palestinian Covenant.
- (7) The Davidic Covenant.
- (8) The New Covenant.

Five of the eight will be at once admitted by every competent Bible student to be real covenants, namely, those with Noah, with Abraham, on

Mt. Sinai, with David, and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 sq. For these there is direct and abundant scriptural ground. The Edenic Covenant of Dr. Scofield bears a resemblance to the well-known concept of "The Covenant of Works," in Systematic Theology. There is nothing in theology to correspond to the Adamic Covenant and to the Palestinian Covenant.

The former of these two is of minor importance. It is the Palestinian Covenant that is vital to Dr. Scofield's scheme. He finds this in Deuteronomy, chapters 29-31. Under this covenant he thinks that God has pledged Himself to restore the Jews some day to the land of Palestine. I myself can discover no such promise there, except upon condition of repentance, and it is the established premillenarian teaching that the Jews are to be restored in a condition of unbelief. For making this a separate covenant, there is at least a show of scriptural ground, in Deut. 29:1, where it speaks of a new covenant, "beside the covenant which God made with the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai;" but when we examine the passage with care, it turns out to be no more than a repetition and confirmation of preceding promises, so that it does not, in any real sense, constitute a separate covenant. Time forbids us to enter upon the argument here. We hasten on to discuss a very important feature of Dr. Scofield's work, viz.,

The Eschatology of the Scofield Bible

To state Dr. Scofield's eschatological position in one sentence, he is a premillenarian of the extreme "Futuristic" school, combined with a "Darbyite"

conception of the church and the kingdom. First, then, he is a premillenarian, or more correctly, a millenarian, or chiliast. That is, he expects that the Lord Jesus Christ, at His Second Advent, will establish a political kingdom on this earth, and will personally, visibly, rule over it. This is an expectation that had some currency in the early church, although not exactly in the form in which Dr. Scofield holds it. The chiliasm of the early fathers had no Jewish element—only Christians were to share in the glories of that age—while Dr. Scofield's millennium is first of all a Jewish millennium. The reign of Christ on earth at that time, he thinks, will be a sitting on the throne of David, as King of the Jews, literally, strictly, and politically understood. The Gentile nations that survive the judgment of Matthew 25 will have a part in it, but only as vassal states, under the ruling Jewish power.

In the Christian form, as already remarked, such an idea had some currency in the second and third centuries of our era—exactly how much, we do not know. It is often alleged that it was then the prevailing belief, but this cannot be proved by the extant evidence. St. Augustine gave to chiliasm what was practically its death blow in the church, and it did not revive to any considerable extent until after the Reformation. Since that time, in various forms, it has made a good deal of progress, and gradually there has come into it the Jewish element of which I have spoken, which has transformed it into something quite other than the chiliasm of which the early Christians dreamed. Present day millenarians ought not to appeal to the

early faith without recognizing this difference. At present those who hold the premillenarian expectation form a very respectable group, both for learning and for numbers; but they are still only a small minority of the entire Christian church. Those who are called "postmillenarians" are not really millenarians at all, for they do not believe in the setting up of a visible political kingdom under the personal rule of Jesus Christ, which is the essential point in chiliasm.

Dr. Scofield is not only a premillenarian, however, he is a "Futuristic" Darbyite premillenarian. When we call him a "Futurist," we refer to his interpretation of the Apocalypse, in which he is an adherent of the "Futurist" school, as against the "Historicists" and the "Preterists." This means that, in his opinion, nothing after the third chapter of Revelation has as yet begun to be fulfilled—all awaits fulfilment within a period of seven years, at the end of this dispensation. Also, that he regards the "Beast" of chapter 13 to the end, as a personal Antichrist, who shall then rule over the world. By no means do all premillenarians agree with him in this. The great expositors who did so much, in a previous generation, to win approval for chiliasm—Bengel, Mede, Alford, Elliott, Lord, Guinness, and others—were "Historicists." They believed that the Apocalypse was the book of the Christian church, not of the Jews. They took the Beast to be a symbol for the Roman Catholic Church. Most of them—not Alford—reckoned prophecy by the "year-day" theory, which Dr. Scofield and his school repudiate.

Thus Dr. Scofield belongs to a party within a party, a premillenarian who is also a Futurist. Not

only so, but he is a "Darbyite" Futurist, i. e. he teaches that there was a complete break between the Hebrew development and the Christian church, as we shall see presently. Not all Futurists are Darbyites. Dr. Abraham Kuyper was a Futurist in his exposition of the Apocalypse, but by no means a Darbyite. Dr. J. A. Seiss, although in most things of the same mind as Dr. Scofield, recognizes more continuity between Israel and the church than he does. Thus Dr. Scofield is of the Darbyite section of the Futuristic minority of the premillenarian minority of Christian expositors. We do not blame him for that. We cheerfully concede to him the right of private interpretation which we claim for ourselves; but we do think that under such circumstances a certain degree of modesty and caution would have been in place, and that a decent regard for the common opinion of the rest of mankind demanded from him a statement of the reasons why he differs so radically from so many Christian brethren. We find nothing of the kind. The same oracular self-confidence, the same authoritative tone, pervade the book in its most doubtful eschatological portions, as elsewhere. Such self-confidence is either sublime or else it is—something which we prefer not to name!

— In its main outlines, the eschatological scheme presented in the Scofield Bible is as follows:

(1) At any time there may take place the "Rapture," the sudden noiseless, and invisible removal from the world of all true Christians, to meet the Lord in the air. Simultaneously will take place the resurrection of all the redeemed who shall have died by that time, of all the past ages.

Of all this the unbelieving world will hear nothing, and see nothing, except that the people in question have disappeared.

(2) Although there is now not a single true believer left in the world, this event will have such a remarkable effect that many hitherto unbelieving, or only nominal Christians, will turn to the Lord. These form the group called "the tribulation saints." They will begin to preach "the gospel of the kingdom," which is not the old gospel of the grace of God unto salvation, but an announcement of the imminence of the "kingdom," i. e. the earthly rule of Christ. It is thus not a continuation of the Christian message, but a resumption of the preaching of John the Baptist.

(3) Immediately now appears the "Beast" of Revelation, the Antichrist, who will bear rule both in church and state, throughout the world.

(4) At about this time, also, will take place the re-gathering of Israel, including the Ten Tribes, who, Dr. Scofield teaches, are still preserved somewhere as an independent unit, known to God. To these, together with those we usually call "The Jews" the land of Palestine will be restored, according to the "Palestinian Covenant."

(5) With these restored Israelites and Jews the Antichrist will make a "Seven year covenant" for the re-building of the temple in Jerusalem, and the re-institution of the Levitical sacrifices.

(6) In the midst of the said seven-year period, i. e. after three years and a half, the Antichrist will repudiate his promise, and will demand for himself divine worship.

(7) All the "tribulation saints" and many faith-

ful Jews not yet Christians will refuse to render such blasphemous and idolatrous worship, and they will therefore be subject to a terrible persecution, called "the great tribulation."

(8) At the end of this period, all nations will come up against Jerusalem to battle, and will almost win. They will take part of the city, but a great earthquake shall cleave the mount of Olives, and a remnant will flee into the cleft for safety.

(9) This is the "Battle of Armageddon" frequently referred to in the Scofield notes, although only once in the Scriptures. Christ will come down at this point with a heavenly army, as in Rev. 19, and will overthrow the hostile forces.

This appearance of Christ will be visible to the world, and is called "The Revelation," in contrast with His coming seven years before, which is "The Rapture."

(10) Now occurs the judgment of Matthew 25, that of "the sheep and the goats" which according to Scofield, is not an individual judgment, but of nations, to determine which of them shall be allowed to survive and to have part in the millennial blessings.

(11) Thereupon is to follow the conversion of the remaining Jews, who then will become missionaries to the rest of the world.

(12) At this time takes place another resurrection, called by this school the "second stage" of the first resurrection. Now are raised to life the "tribulation saints" who were martyred by the Beast.

(13) At last comes the establishment of the millennial kingdom, not by persuasion but by force.

Thus Christ bears rule over the Jews, who bear rule over the rest of the world.

(14) During this period the temple foreseen by Ezekiel is to be built, and the sacrifices prescribed by him will be offered. The Mosaic legislation and the Sermon on the Mount will be the law of that kingdom and that period.

(15) After 1,000 years of such rule, there will occur the revolt of Gog and Magog, the resurrection of the wicked, the last judgment, and the beginning of the eternal state.

It is evident that we can not discuss this subject in detail here; but even without such discussion it is immediately clear that no such programme can be justified except by laborious exegesis of numerous passages of Scripture, each of which is open to different interpretations and most of which have received from the Christian church at large a very different interpretation from the one held by Dr. Scofield and his school. One doubtful exposition must be piled upon another, and then others again on those, before you can arrive at any such scheme as this. If any can convince himself that it is true, let him believe it. That is his privilege; but no man has a right, without the assignment of reasons and without due recognition of divergent views, to present this completed structure to the uninformed as scriptural teaching; thus to all intents and purposes writing over it: "THUS SAITH THE LORD." Yet this is what Dr. Scofield does, and an examination of his work shows that this is one of the main objects, if not the chief object, of his writing this book. From start to finish it is a partisan book, definitely, both openly and under cov-

er, an instrument of propaganda in favor of an exceedingly doubtful eschatology.

Dr. Scofield's Doctrine of the Church

The point at which Dr. Scofield comes most definitely into conflict with the historic Christian faith, as otherwise held by all branches of the church, both ancient and modern, is his doctrine of the church and its relation to the Old Testament Israel. While in his premillenarianism he has a certain degree of support from the post-apostolic age, there is no such support in this matter. This he himself recognizes, for his announcement of his position is as follows:

“Especially is it necessary to exclude the notion—a legacy in Protestant thought from post-apostolic and Roman Catholic theology—that the Church is the true Israel, and that the New Testament foreview of the kingdom is fulfilled in the church.”

Here he says that the doctrine he opposes was taught by the Roman Catholic Church. Certainly it was, and by the Greek Church, and by all the Protestant churches, and by any sort of church of every name, up to the time of John N. Darby, who was born in 1800 and died in 1882, a leader of the sect called the “Plymouth Brethren.” In saying this, we have the concurrence of Dr. Ironside, one of Dr. Scofield's ardent disciples, who says (*Mysteries of God*, p. 50):

“In fact, until brought to the fore through the writings and the preaching of a distinguished ex-clergyman, Mr. J. N. Darby, in the early part of the last century, it (i. e. the doctrine taught by

Dr. Scofield) is scarcely to be found in a single book or sermon throughout a period of 1600 years! If any doubt this statement, let them search, as the writer has in a measure done, the remarks of the so-called Fathers, both pre- and post-Nicene, the theological treatises of the scholastic divines, Roman Catholic writers of all shades of thought; the literature of the Reformation; the sermons and expositions of the Puritans; and the general theological works of the day. He will find the 'mystery' conspicuous by its absence."

(By the "mystery," in this quotation, Dr. Ironside means the doctrine that the Christian church, being entirely unrelated to the Old Testament Israel, was unknown to the prophets, and is not referred to in any way in their predictions).

This statement of Dr. Ironside's is true—absolutely true. Among the church fathers, Justin Martyr is the earliest from whom we have any extensive writings; and he is very emphatic in teaching the very opposite of the Darbyite doctrine. He asserts over and over again that the church is the true Israel, the heir to all the promises, and that therefore in her is to be found the fulfilment of all the glorious Old Testament kingdom promises. This is the weapon with which he meets Trypho the Jew, in his controversy with him; and it is easy to see how essential it was in those days in Christian apologetics, when the faith had to be defended against Judaism. I believe that there is no dissent to this view of Justin's anywhere to be found in the patristic writings. Nor is there any later, to the time of John N. Darby. Christians might differ on almost anything else, but up to his

time never on this. If Darby and his school are right, the entire Christian church for eighteen hundred years, was wrong on a vital part of the Christian faith. It is most discouraging, if the Holy Spirit has allowed that to happen.

The Darbyite doctrine, briefly stated, is this, that there was a clean break between the historical development of Israel and the rise of the Christian church. The promise that the Messiah should sit upon the throne of David, to quote Dr. Scofield's words, "enters the New Testament entirely unchanged" and must be understood in no other way than as the promise of a political sovereignty. So John the Baptist intended it, when he preached that the kingdom was at hand. So Jesus Himself preached and intended it in the early portion of His ministry. The establishment of such a political regime was what Jesus came to do, what He tried to do, and what He would have done if He could. This purpose was frustrated by the refusal of the Jews to accept Him as their king. Thereupon, at a certain point in His ministry, indicated by Matthew 11:28, the offer was withdrawn, and a new offer was substituted, "not the kingdom, but rest and service to such in the nation as are conscious of need." This withdrawal of the offer to establish the "kingdom" was, however, only temporary. It will be renewed shortly before the "Revelation" of Jesus Christ, i. e. during the dark days of the Anti-christ, and will be accomplished in the millennial age. This is what is called "the postponed kingdom" theory.

The renewal of this offer in the last days, therefore, will mark the point at which the fulfilment of

prophecy will be resumed. There is, according to this school, no fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy going on now, nor has there been any since the death of Jesus Christ. Dr. Ironside puts it thus (p. 54):

“The prophetic clock stopped at Calvary. Not one tick has been heard since. From the moment Jesus bowed His head and yielded up His spirit to the Father, all the glories of the kingdom spoken of by the Old Testament seers and prophets have been in abeyance.”

It is easily understood that such views as this must seriously influence, first, the interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, and then the exegesis of numerous passages in the New Testament. And so, indeed, they do. It is not uncommon for those who are introduced to the Scofield Bible to testify in great enthusiasm that it has made the Bible a new book to them. It must do so, if they yield themselves to its influence and accept it as authority. Their Bible is then no longer the Bible of the early church, of the Reformation, or of the fathers of the Reformed faith. It has been transformed into a Jewish book, in the sense that the traditional interpretation of the Synagogue, not of the Church, must be regarded as correct.

The New Testament, accepted by us hitherto in a simple-minded way, as the Word of God spoken to us, and to be heeded by us, becomes under the guidance of these teachers a jumble of documents, and it requires a Darbyite expert to decide for us which are messages for us and which for the Jews of the millennium. Alas, not even all of the Darbyite

experts can agree, for Bullinger follows hard on the footsteps of Scofield, and tells us that not even the sacrament of baptism is left for us. It seems that the Pauline epistles are for us, for in them Dr. Scofield finds the mystery of the church unfolded, but the Apocalypse has little to do with the Christian church—nothing at all after the close of the third chapter. The Sermon on the Mount is not intended for us. It may, indeed, be used to edification for its general religious and moral principles—as we also may use the Mosaic law—but in reality the Sermon on the Mount contains the laws of the “kingdom age,” i. e. the millennium.

Dr. Scofield insists, in his Introduction, that he has rejected all “expository novelties.” We must in all charity give him credit for saying this honestly, but what did he mean by “expository novelties?” Darby taught a generation before Scofield, so perhaps the latter did not look upon distinctively Darbyite doctrines as novelties. If this be the sense, the statement may be correct; but from the standpoint of general Christian exposition down the centuries, there are as many “expository novelties” in the Scofield Bible as there are bones in a fish—and, like the bones in the fish, they are indispensable.

Particularly is this doctrine of the church and Israel irreconcilably in conflict with the Reformed doctrine of the covenants and of infant baptism, for if it be accepted, there is no longer any justification for the sentence in our liturgy: “God said to Abraham, and therefore to us and our children, I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee.” Rather we should say: “God said unto Abra-

ham but not to us and our children, I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee."

The expiration of our time admonishes me to stop. Let me close with the exhortation with which I began, that every minister get a Scofield Bible and study it for himself; for good as the intentions of the author were, and good as the faith and zeal of his followers are, this book must be pronounced, from the standpoint of the Reformed theology, and with a view to the peace and prosperity of our churches, one of the most dangerous books on the market. Its circulation is no aid to sound Bible study and true scriptural knowledge, but rather the contrary. Its use should be quietly and tactfully, but persistently and vigilantly opposed; and our congregations should be diligently instructed in a better interpretation of the Word of God.

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