

WHY I LEFT SCOFIELDISM.

Breaking away from the fascinating teachings of *The Scofield Reference Bible* was one of the most difficult decisions of my entire life. Even after doubts arose in my mind, it took some seven or eight years to relinquish the ready-made theological clothing I had worn since the day of my conversion. For I was saved, at the age of sixteen, in a Baptist church where almost everyone carried a *Scofield Bible*. My spiritual tutors knew the footnotes and headings placed in the Bible by C. I. Scofield as well as they knew the Bible itself. Indeed, the two had become almost synonymous in their minds even as they were destined to become in my own mind. Even today it is difficult at times to clear my mind of some of Scofield's presuppositions when I study God's Word.

It was while I was serving in Europe as a member of a medium tank crew that God called me into the ministry of his dear Son. Even before the beginning of World War II — in fact, from the time of my conversion — I had been active as a Sunday School teacher and had taken other active interests in the local church. However, acting on the advice of Scofield himself, I had distrusted the outstanding Bible commentaries and had felt that all I needed for a thorough understanding of the Bible was supplied by the notes of my favorite "Bible."

With my call to the ministry came the jolting realization that I would be called upon to say to members of my congregation, "This is why we believe thus and so about the Bible; here is the verse and chapter for our belief on a given subject." With this

thought in mind I deliberately took my theology apart to see whether or not I could put it together again, *based on the Bible*. My thinking was that if I could not convince myself, then certainly I could not convince others. In other words, I asked myself, concerning each and every major doctrine in which I believed, “What saith the scripture?” (Romans 4:3).

This was a helpful experience in my life and ministry. I heartily recommend it to every preacher and teacher. Let me caution you, however, that there are risks involved in such a procedure. You might have to burn some favorite sermons or lessons! I did. Still, it was a rewarding experience, too. To me it was like walking out of a dimly lighted room into one flooded with light. My God and his Book appeared larger than ever before.

Getting back to the dissecting of my beliefs, it was disconcerting, to say the least, to find that some of my most cherished beliefs simply would not stand up under a close scriptural scrutiny. I got most of Humpty-Dumpty back together with relative ease. I could show, from the Bible, why I believed in such great doctrines as the Virgin Birth, deity of Christ, his literal Second Coming, the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, believers’ immersion, eternal security, perseverance of the saints, the bodily resurrection of all, the judgment, eternal heaven, an equally eternal hell, and many other cardinal doctrines.

But, try as I would, certain beliefs kept embarrassing me. For I could not find the verse and chapter to support my beliefs concerning national Israel. I had been taught that the Jews

would go back to Palestine, rebuild the Temple, reinstitute the blood sacrifices, serve as Christ's missionaries during an earthly millennium, and be involved in many other related events. I was so determined to find scriptural support for these teachings that oftentimes I became angry with myself for being so lacking in Bible knowledge.

Finally, after some seven or eight years of searching in vain, God jolted me into reality. It finally dawned upon me that what I sincerely thought were verses of the Bible actually were footnotes put inside the covers of the Bible by a man. I acknowledged, too, that C. I. Scofield was a man, like ourselves and that he did not belong in the same authoritative category as Peter, James, and John.

I broke with Scofieldism grudgingly. He had been such a help in preparing a Sunday School lesson and, later, in "getting up a sermon." All one needed to do was to turn to the passage in mind. In most cases the headings and footnotes presented a ready outline, requiring very little study. Also, just about every Christian in my peer group seemed to agree that here was profound teaching.

Perhaps one of my greatest surprises came with the realization that followers of Scofield actually represented a comparatively small minority among Christians. It was only their dogmatism, plus the fact that they were so vocal, which made them appear to be in the majority. It was a comfort to learn that Snowfield's "rediscovered truths," which he had learned at the feet of John Nelson Darby, a Plymouth Brethren, differed not only from

most known commentaries, but from the great majority of the church fathers, and the reformers as well. I learned, too, that most of the critics of Scofieldism had, as I had, been devoted followers at one time.

Having come out of Scofieldism, I passed through at least three stages to arrive at my present position. My first feeling was that, although many things my former hero taught were not so, the good points (and he has many of these) in his system outweighed the bad. From this stage continued study led me to believe that I must leave *The Scofield Reference Bible* alone completely, but that I should not make an issue of it with equally sincere Christians. Further study led me to the position which I now hold. That position is that Scofieldism is heresy, and that, since God has given me this light, I must seek in love to warn others of the household of faith against this subtle, intriguing heresy.

It has been some 14 years since my final break with Scofieldism. Let me share with you some of the objections to this teaching as they are now formulated in my mind.

I. SCOFIELD DOWNGRADES THE CHURCH AND HER ROLE IN GOD'S PLAN.

Historic Christian teaching always has been that the church was the antitype of national Israel. This teaching goes on to say that the church succeeded Israel at the first advent, and that all unfulfilled promises to Abraham will be fulfilled in and through the church.

Scofield admits that this is the historic Christian teaching, then proceeds to teach that it is erroneous. He says: "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 Old Testament foreview of the kingdom is fulfilled in the Church" (p. 989, S.R.B.).

He begins early in his footnotes to lay the groundwork for his teaching that the church will end in failure and be replaced by national Israel, who will succeed where the church failed. On page 8, in footnote I, he states that Eve is a type of the church! Like most of Snowfield's "types," this one is arbitrary, artificial, and forced. Any interested reader may turn to the passages given as "proof" that Eve is a type of the church, and he will see that there is no mention whatsoever of this fact. He lists John 3:28,29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-32; and Revelation 19:7,8. This is typical of Scofield's scriptural references; they rarely say what he says they do. He apparently counted on the fact that his readers would not turn to the passages given. Either that, or he slighted the intelligence of his readers.

On page 9, footnote I, Scofield says: “The Adamic Covenant conditions the life of fallen man — conditions which must remain till, in the kingdom age, ‘the creation also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God’ (Rom. 8:21).” Here again the reader will find that the passage given does not even refer to people, but to the creation.

One might ask just what harm could come from fixing in people’s minds that Eve and Adamic conditions represent the church. The subtle danger is that when Scofield’s disciples think of the church they just automatically think of sinful, fallen, unfaithful children of Satan, and Adam and Eve! Then it is a simple step to teach, without scriptural proof, that the church is destined to end in failure (apostasy).

Coming to the Tower of Babel (p. 18) Scofield continues his slander-by-association. He says that the history of Babel strikingly parallels that of the professing church. He then refers his readers to his footnote on Isaiah 13:1. There he says that Babylon means confusion and is used symbolically to refer ahead to the church. Babylon, he says on page 725, refers to apostate Christianity, destroyed by the nations headed up under the Beast and false prophet (Rev. 17:16).

One could go on piling footnotes on top of each other, showing that Scofield teaches that the church will end in failure, and also showing the type of “reasoning” he uses in arriving at such a conclusion. Let us give one last statement to this effect. “Each of the Dispensations may be regarded as a new test of the natural

man, and each ends in judgment — marking his utter failure” (C. 1. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, p. 13).

In this teaching, as in many others, Scofield unveils his weak Christology. For he admits elsewhere that this church, which he says will end in failure, is the Body and the Bride of Christ! Paul says that the church is destined to glorious victory: “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22,23). Should one believe Scofield or the apostle Paul? And what should one do with the statement of our Lord (Matt. 16:18) that not even the gates of hell should prevail against his church?

II. SCOFIELD TEACHES THAT GOD HAS TWO BODIES — ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH.

Let us first get before us the age-old Christian teaching on this subject: God always has had but one people. In the Old Testament this people (the type) was called Israel. In the New Testament the antitype was known as the church, or “the Israel of God.” The elect number from Israel plus the elect number of Gentiles constitute one and the same olive tree (Rom. 11: 17,24).

Here, again, Scofield begs to differ from the New Testament writers, the church fathers, the reformers, and the outstanding commentators. He chooses rather to accept another of John Nelson Darby’s “rediscovered truths” instead of the historic Christian teaching. He teaches that Israel is an earthly people while the church is a heavenly people; that God has two separate plans for these two distinct peoples; and that Israel and the church have separate destinies. Israel, he says, will spend eternity on earth while the church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, will spend eternity in heaven.

Facing one of the many quandaries to which this teaching naturally leads, Scofield says (p. 922, S.R.B.) that one must make a distinction between the *wife* of God and the bride of Christ (the church). He says that a wife and a *bride* are two different things! Here again, Scofield betrays his weak Christology. Does God the Father have attributes which God the Son does not have? Or, to pose the question another way, does God the Son have possessions to which God the Father may not lay claim? Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.”

Scofield flies in the face of many scriptures when he teaches that God has two separate bodies. Let a few such passages suffice.

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and *there shall be one fold, and one shepherd* (John 10:16, italics mine).

For if thou were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree (Rom. 11:24)?

In this verse Paul teaches two things pointing to one body, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles: (1) Gentiles were grafted into the faithful remnant of national Israel (not into a separate olive tree), and (2) the believing part of Israel will be grafted into the same olive tree. In other words, Paul explicitly teaches (by way of analogy) that God is grafting Jew and Gentile into one and the same olive tree. If God had two bodies, Paul's logic would break down and he would need two separate olive trees.

Let us continue with other scriptures which show conclusively that God has, not two bodies, but one.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for *ye are all one in Christ Jesus*. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:28,29, italics mine.)

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, *who hath made both one*, and hath broken down the middle wall of

partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; *for to make in himself of twain one new man*, so making peace; and *that he might reconcile both unto God in one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:13-16, italics mine).

Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That *the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body*, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6, italics mine).

It would be difficult to find language any plainer than that used by Paul in the above-quoted scriptures. Paul states emphatically that God took two peoples and made them into one people. He says that God, in effect, took two men (Jew and Gentile) and made the two of them become one man. Truly Scofield contradicts the apostle Paul by teaching that God has two bodies.

III. SCOFIELD TEACHES THAT GOD'S PROMISES TO NATIONAL ISRAEL AWAIT FUTURE FULFILLMENT.

What is the historic Christian teaching on this subject? All such promises have been either fulfilled or invalidated through unbelief. Those on which Scofield rests most of his case have been literally fulfilled, and these fulfillments are clearly recorded in the Bible.

Scofield, on the other hand, teaches that God has future plans to regather national Israel to Palestine, rebuild the Temple, and reinstitute the Old Testament economy (including the blood sacrifices). The reader might find it interesting to look at some of the typical scriptures on which Scofield builds this argument. On page 157, note 2, one reads: "The feast of Trumpets, vs. 23-25. This feast is a prophetic type and refers to the future regathering of long-dispersed Israel." This footnote goes on to state that trumpets are always symbols of testimony and that they are connected with the regathering and repentance of Israel after the church, or pentecostal, period is ended.

Remember now, that this conclusion is based on Leviticus 23:23-25. Let us quote these verses word for word in order that one might see more clearly Scofield's handling of the Scriptures.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto God.

You expected more? Honestly now, that is all the passage says! Check it in your own Bible. And on this passage, and others equally unrelated, Scofield bases a doctrine of the regathering of Israel to Palestine.

Realizing that the Bible records two regatherings of Israel to Palestine in fulfillment of prophecies (see note on p. 25, S.R.B.), Scofield says that *three* such regatherings are predicted in Scripture. His only proofs for this alleged return are scriptures such as Leviticus 23:23-25, which we have quoted above. Actually, no third regathering *to the land* is mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Scofield lists a number of scriptures on page 25, purporting to show by these that a third such regathering is promised. However, each of these passages clearly refers either to the first or second regathering to the land (already fulfilled, as attested to in the Old Testament), or to the first advent of Christ.

It is not necessary here to refute all of Scofield's claims for national Israel. His argument actually rests on whether or not they have ever occupied all the land promised them through Abraham. Scofield argues thus: (1) Israel has never received *all* the land promised in the Abrahamic Covenant (p. 250, S.R.B.); (2) therefore, she must some day return to the land; (3) associated with the land are the Temple, blood sacrifices, etc.; therefore, since they will return to the land, it stands to reason that they will rebuild the Temple and all that goes with the land.

So, if Scofield is wrong concerning the land, his entire plan for national Israel goes begging. Let us examine the Bible itself to

see whether or not God has kept his promise that Israel would inherit all the land of Palestine.

Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess *the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, to give unto them and to their seed after them (Deut. 1:8, italics mine).

Please note *which* land it is into which God says Joshua will lead the Israelites. *It is the same land promised to Abraham.*

And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers (Deut. 6:23).

Moses stated explicitly that God's purpose in the Exodus from Egypt was to fulfill his promise to Abraham to give the land to Abraham's seed.

Be strong and of a good courage; for unto this people shalt thou divide the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them (Joshua 1:6).

Here God but reaffirms to Joshua the promise given through Moses, i.e., that God was now about to fulfill his promise to Abraham with reference to the land. Did God keep this promise through Joshua? What saith the scripture?

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war (Joshua 11:23).

And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to *all that he swore unto their fathers*: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. *There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass* (Joshua 21:43-45, italics mine).

Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it (Nehemiah (9:23).

The above scriptures record the first regathering of Israel to the land. Scofield devotes not a single footnote to either of these verses! The prophets later predicted a second such return. This second return literally came to pass under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and its fulfillment is recorded in such books of the Bible as Ezra and Nehemiah (whose books, incidentally, were written *after* those of all the prophets with the possible exception of Malachi). Following this second return and the literal rebuilding of Solomon's temple, in 516 B.C., there is not a single scripture reference, either in the Old Testament or the New, regarding a return to the land. What *saith* the scripture?

IV. SCOFIELD MISHANDLES MANY CLEAR VERSES OF SCRIPTURE.

In 2 Corinthians 4:2 Paul prided himself on walking without craftiness and on not handling the Word of God deceitfully. Unfortunately, this claim could not be made for Dr. Scofield. For he posits his teachings on craftily manufactured premises, then handles the Word deceitfully in order, to support these premises. Lest this statement seem too harsh, let us look at only a few of the plain scriptures on which he places interpretations altogether contrary to their obvious meaning.

Let us begin with Acts 15:16, since this verse is said by leading dispensationalists to be the most important verse of scripture in their entire school of thought (p. 1169, S.R.B.). Scofield interprets James as saying that, *after the time that James was speaking*, God would return and rebuild the tabernacle of David. Actually, Acts 15:16 is a quotation from Amos 9:11, and the words are those of Amos, not those of James. So that the “after this” refers to a time following Amos’s time, not to a time subsequent to James. In fact, James says (read the entire context) that Amos’s prophecy was fulfilled when Cornelius’ household (Gentiles) were added to the church. If this be spiritualizing then the blame must be placed on James, who spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And James definitely disagrees with Scofield on this interpretation.

On page 1015, note 2, Scofield says: “The parable of the wheat and tares is not a description of the world, . . .” Verse 38 of this passage which the footnote is interpreting says, “The field is the world.” Here we have the words of Jesus versus the words of C.

I. Scofield!

On page 1036, note 1, one reads that the judgment of Matthew is to be distinguished from the judgment of the great white throne. One of the “proofs” of this is that “three classes are present, sheep, goats, brethren. . . . These ‘brethren’ are the Jewish Remnant who will have preached the Gospel of the kingdom to all nations during the tribulation.” What saith the scripture? In Matthew 12:48-50 our Lord asked a question and also gave the answer to it. “... and who are my brethren? . . . whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Jesus’ own words would make the brethren of Matthew synonymous with the sheep of that same passage. This would give, not three, but two groups of people at the judgment of Matthew 25 — the same two groups present in Revelation 20:11-15. Acts 1:15 and Hebrews 2:11,12 also refer to *Christians* as the brethren of Christ.

On page 1023, note 1, Scofield says: “Christ confirms the specific and still unfulfilled prophecy of Mal. 4:5,6: ‘Elias shall truly first come and restore all things.’ ” He goes on to speak of “that yet to be fulfilled in Elijah.” Here again, Scofield is daring to contradict the words of Christ himself. Jesus said: “But I say unto you. That *Elias is indeed come*, and *they have done* unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him” (Mark 9:13, italics mine). Is any further comment necessary here?

Scofield assigns Zechariah 12:10 (“they shall look on him whom they have pierced”) to a time following the tribulation and says it teaches that national Israelites will accept Christ at a future

date. John says explicitly that this prophecy was fulfilled when the spear pierced Jesus' side on the cross at Calvary (John 19:34-37).

On page 1115, note 2, these words appear: "As a dispensation, grace begins with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:24,25). The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation. . . ." And on page 1011, note 2, he speaks on this same subject. "The new message of Jesus. The rejected King now turns from the rejecting nation and offers, not the kingdom, but rest and service to such in the nation as are conscious of need. It is a pivotal point in the ministry of Jesus." Here Scofield lays himself open to the charge leveled against him, i.e., that he has more than one plan of salvation in his system. Note his words, "*no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation.*" He plainly implies that: (1) before Christ came, people were saved by good works (legal obedience); (2) now that Jesus has come, they are saved through Christ; and (3) good works *now* are a *fruit* of salvation, whereas *before* they were the *means* of salvation. And if Jesus offered people one thing in his "old" message while offering something else in his "new" message, what other conclusion can be drawn except that he offered two plans of righteousness?

That thinking people have taken dispensationalism to present various means of salvation is evident in the report adopted by the Southern Presbyterian Church in the United States. That report, adopted by this assembly in May, 1944, was in part as

follows:

It is the unanimous opinion of your Committee that Dispensationalism is out of accord with the system of doctrines set forth in the Confession of Faith, not primarily or simply in the field of eschatology, but because it attacks the very heart of the theology of our Church. Dispensationalism rejects the doctrine that God has, since the Fall, but one plan of salvation for all mankind and affirms that God has been through the ages administering various and diverse plans of salvation for various groups. . . .

CONCLUSION.

Many other discrepancies could be pointed to in Scofieldism. However, to discredit any of the points dealt with above is to bring his entire system into serious question, since these are pivotal dogmas.

It has not been the intention of this writer to discredit a person, but to challenge unscriptural teachings put forth by a person. This pamphlet is sent forth in Christian love for all the household of faith, and with the prayer that it might lead many to a “more excellent way” of handling the Word of God.