

Sunday, September 16, 2012—Grace Life School of Theology—*Grace History Project*—Lesson 71:
Gaebelein, Scofield, and Post-Niagara Landscape

Introduction

- In the previous lessons we studied how the Niagara Bible Conference declined due to lack of leadership and doctrinal division. We further saw how American millenarianism was divided over the timing of the rapture.
- In this lesson we want to consider what happened to American millenarianism after 1901 and the leaders (Arno C. Gaebelein and C.I. Scofield) who became the great champions for dispensational premillennialism in the United States.

The Post-Niagara Landscape

- “The any-moment coming controversy was evident in the pages of *Our Hope* as early as 1898 when W.J. Erdman, writing about Saint Paul at Thessalonica, took a strong posttribulationist position: ‘It is therefore conclusive that Paul neither taught an immediate coming of the Lord either for or with His saints, nor that he changed his mind.’ ” (Sandeen, 215)
- Gaebelein, who had established *Our Hope* in 1894 was quick to respond, he challenged Erdman’s position, but his gentle and considerate style reflect his respect for Erdman and his willingness to discuss the issue as a matter of legitimate investigation. By late 1900, however, Gaebelein’s style and tone took an abrupt change. In a special December issue of *Our Hope*, devoted to Christ’s premillennial advent, Gaebelein included articles written by Scofield and Erdman, and reprinted something from *Truth* by James H. Brookes. Scofield’s article, entitled, “May the Lord Come at Any Time,” was strongly pretribulationist. Although his article did not touch on the controversy, Erdman was never invited to write for *Our Hope* again. (Sandeen, 216)
- “In February 1901, Gaebelein made his point bluntly: “No one can continue to give out a true, scriptural, edifying testimony of the coming of the Lord who believes that certain events must come to pass before the Lord comes or that the church will pass through the tribulation.” Gaebelein had, in effect, excommunicated the posttribulationists and had begun to treat them as defectors from the grand old party.” (Sandeen, 216)
- “The controversy apparently involved more than theology for both Cameron and Gaebelein were running periodicals which claimed to be in apostolic succession from Brookes and Gordon. . . Cameron had stepped into Gordon’s editorial position in 1895 with scarcely a break in cadence. During the last years of Brooke’s life . . . Cameron had negotiated with him about merging their two papers. Nothing came of that, but when Brookes died, Cameron bought the magazine from the publisher, Fleming J. Revell. Cameron could not have possibly carried out the editorial policies of both men in the same paper since Gordon had been a historicist and Brookes a Darbyite dispensationalist. It is true, however, that both men had looked for the immediate advent of Christ.” (Sandeen, 216-217)

- Meanwhile, Gaebelein chose to ignore Cameron’s legal claims as the successor of Brooke’s paper and represented his paper *Our Hope* as the true successor to the beliefs of Brookes and Gordon. (Sandeen, 217) According to Kraus, “With Scofield’s help, Gaebelein secured the mailing lists of *The Truth* and advertised his magazine *Our Hope*, as the doctrinal successor to it. He justified himself in this by claiming that Cameron was not faithfully carrying on in the prophetic witness of Brookes and Gordon.” (Kraus, 104)
- In May of 1902, Cameron began an eight-part series entitled, “To the Friends of Prophetic Truth,” which so antagonized and alienated the pretribulationists that the breach was never healed. . . . Cameron proceeded to explain how he had come first to accept and then later reject the doctrine of the secret rapture. Among other things Cameron tried to claim that Gordon and Brookes had modified their views on the Second Coming at the end of their lives. Lastly, Cameron turned historian and claimed that the pretribulation rapture originated during a tongues meeting in Edward Irving’s church. According to Cameron, the pretribulationists were accepting a doctrine first taught by a heretic, supported by lying spirits.
 - “Do you think it wise to exalt into “a test of fellowship” a doctrine so recklessly enunciated, that does not have a single passage of Scripture beyond the question of a doubt upon which to rest its feet, that had such a questionable origin, from the lips of a heretic, and supported by the testimony of demons, and that was enforced by him and by them, then, as it is by many now, as the only means by which a sleeping church could be aroused to activity.” (*Watchword and Truth* 24 1902 quoted in Sandeen, 218)
- The result of this paper war between *Our Hope* and *Watchword and Truth* is that the Gaebelein/Scofield party emerged from the struggle far stronger than their opposition. According to Sandeen, “this can be explained partly be the superior organizational and editorial skills of the pretribulationists, and would be attributed in large part by the pretribulationists themselves and their better grasp of Scripture and the consequent blessing of God upon their party.” (Sandeen, 220)
- Gaebelein provided the spark for the millenarian movement during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Rather than withdrawing to lick his wounds, he led his followers in a vigorous campaign of expansion. In 1901 he rented the Park Street Church in Boston (Cameron country) and held a three-day conference for his supporters. A similar conference was held in May in New York City. (Sandeen, 221)
- In 1901, Gaebelein and Scofield, with the financial support of some wealthy Plymouth Brethren, began the Sea Cliff Bible Conference on Long Island which continued for ten years. (Kraus, 104) Gaebelein heralded Sea Cliff as the rightful successor of Niagara. (Sandeen, 221) “It was this group that planned the prophecy conferences at Chicago in 1914 and at New York in 1918.” (Kraus, 104) “C.I. Scofield spoke at many of these conferences, as well as a roster of other speakers who appeared quite regularly—James M. Gray, Henry M. Parsons, F.C. Jennings, John James, and George L. Alrich.” (Sandeen, 222) “The dispensationalists had won the day so

completely that, for the next fifty years, friend and foe alike largely identified dispensationalism with premillennialism.” (Kraus, 104)

- It was at the Sea Cliff conference in 1901 that Scofield first discussed with Gaebelein an idea that had been growing in his mind for some time, an annotated version of the Bible.
 - “One night, about the middle of the week, Dr. Scofield suggested, after the evening service, that we take a stroll along the shore. It was a beautiful night. Our walk along the shore of the sound lasted until midnight. For the first time he mentioned the plan of producing a Reference bible, and outlined the method he had in mind. He said he had thought of it for many years and had spoken to others about it, but had not received much encouragement. The scheme came to him in the early days of his ministry in Dallas, and later, during the balmy days of the Niagara Conferences he had submitted his desire to a number of brethren, who all approved of it, but nothing came of it. He expressed the hope that the new beginning and this new testimony in Sea Cliff might open the way to bring about the publication of such a bible with references and copious footnotes.” (Gaebelein)
- “The Bible, which Scofield discussed with Gaebelein that night, is perhaps the most influential single publication in millenarian and fundamentalist historiography. The *Scofield Reference Bible* combined an attractive format of typography, paragraphing, notes, and cross references with the theology of Darbyite dispensationalism.” (Sandein, 222)
- In 1902, the men who were backing the Sea Cliff Conference decided to make the finances available for the production of the *Reference Bible*. (Kraus, 112)

Who Was C.I. Scofield?

- In 2009, in commemoration of the one hundred year anniversary of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, R. Todd Mangum and Mark S. Sweetnam wrote *The Scofield Bible: It's History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*. According to Mangum and Sweetnam, evaluating Scofield's life story presents “a fascinating plotline, complete with mystery, twists and turns, shameful failures and glorious triumphs. His life presents both bursts of radiant, regenerative light and shadows that conceal the whole story to this day.” (Mangum and Sweetnam, 7-8)
- “Early biographies of Scofield kept the controversial portions of his life off the record. Whether by design or by unintended consequence, an image with the Christian public was established that suggested the one responsible for the notes of *The Scofield Reference Bible* was in a class of saintliness approaching that of the Bible's main subject.” (M & S, 8) Some of these early biographies included:
 - *The Life Story of C.I. Scofield* by Charles Gallaudet Trumbull, 1920
 - *The History of the Scofield Reference Bible* by Arno C. Gaebelein, 1943
 - *The Story of the Scofield Reference Bible* by Frank E. Gaebelein, 1959

- “What I Learned from Dr. Scofield,” by Lewis Sperry Chafer in *Sunday School Times*, #64, March 4, 1922
- “In the mid-1980s, a Scofield detractor named Joseph Canfield self-published a study of Scofield’s life (*The Incredible Scofield and His Book*) with the goal of unearthing secrets and bringing the dirt to the surface. Notable for the extensiveness of its research, its approach is like that of a private investigator charged with collecting evidence against a felon—no rumor is deemed unworthy for consideration as potential fact, no motive of Scofield’s heart deemed incapable of being impugned.” (M & S, 8)
- “The result of all of this is that the facts of Scofield’s life have today become politicized. Particularly among those in opposition to Scofield’s theological views, rumors continue to swirl (especially via the Internet), about infidelities, crimes and misdemeanors into which Scofield is alleged to have fallen. Others have objected to this largely posthumous defamation of his character and have sought to restore his image as a saint. . .” (M & S, 8) The work of Mangum and Sweetnam attempts to present a fair minded evaluation of Scofield’s life and ministry that does not defend or defame his life and ministry.
- Cyrus Ingerson Scofield was born August 19, 1843 in Lenawee County, Michigan the youngest of seven children. After his mother died, unable to recover from his birth, his father remarried resulting in Cyrus being raised by his stepmother. Little is known about his early life and education. Scofield reappears in the historical record in 1860 in Lebanon, Tennessee, in the home of his sister Laura and her husband. He enlisted in the Confederate Army on May 20, 1861, still being a minor, he falsified his enlistment papers by claiming to be twenty years of age. He fought for the Confederacy on the eastern front at Richmond until he requested a release in 1862; he claimed to be an alien—having residence in Michigan—and to have falsified his enlistment qualifications. (Hannah, 389)
- “Scofield next appears in the record in St. Louis in 1865. Another sister, Emeline, had married Sylvester Pappin of a French family prominent in the world’s fur market: Pappin was president of the St. Louis Board of Assessors. Scofield found employment in his brother-in-law’s work and, advancing among the city’s social elite, met Loentine Cerre; they married on September 21, 1866.” (Hannah, 389)
- “Some time later Scofield moved his family to Atchison, Kansas, where he entered a career in politics and was elected in 1871 as a representative to the lower house of the Kansas legislature. In 1873 he was appointed by President Grant to the office of District Attorney for the District of Kansas; he resigned within six months under suspicion of misuse of his office for personal gain. Loentine gained a legal separation from her husband in 1877; the marriage dissolved, though the divorce did not become legal for several more years (1883). After separating from his wife in 1871, Scofield returned to St. Louis leaving his wife and children behind and appears to have sunk into a life of thievery and drunkenness. (Hannah, 389-399)

- In 1879, perhaps attending a crusade led by D.L. Moody, Scofield trusted that Jesus Christ died for his sins. Scofield claimed that he never touched a drop of alcohol after that day. There is much evidence to suggest that he was indeed a changed man. However, he never reconciled with his first wife or his children. Loentine and the children were apparently assisted by well-to-do family members, but as far as Scofield's Christian testimony was concerned, they remained to his dying day a skeleton in his closet. (M & S, 10)
- "Upon his conversion, Scofield determined to use his analytical and oratory skills for Christian service. Soon Dr. James Hall Brookes, pastor of the Washington and Compton Avenue Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri, was personally discipling Scofield in Brookes' own home." (M & S, 11)
- "Scofield proved himself capable and eager to join in the work of Christian service, willing to carry signs or hand out pamphlets and also adept at public speaking. He became a key leader and popular preacher in the local YMCA. . . It was not long until his leadership and preaching gifts were sought after for pastoral service. He was licensed to preach by the St. Louis Association of Congregational Churches in 1880. With the organization he planted a church, Hyde Park Congregational Church of North St. Louis, and became the founding pastor. . . The Council of Congregational Ministers and Churches, which was the body officially charged with determining Scofield's fitness for the ministry, deemed all the past events of his life covered by the blood of Christ and officially ordained him for pastoral ministry." (M & S, 11-12)
- "In 1882 Scofield accepted a call to a mission church of the denomination in Dallas where he was ordained in 1883. The small work grew rapidly; within the decade, the church reached a membership of four hundred from the fourteen when he first arrived; a larger church was erected in 1889. In 1884 he married a member of his congregation Hettie Van Wark. . . In 1887 he began to appear regularly in the Bible conferences (such as Northfield and Niagara conferences), recognized for his teaching abilities. . . In 1888, he published his immensely popular *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, an explanation of the dispensational, pretribulational, and premillennial approach to interpreting the Bible." (Hannah, 390)
- In addition, around this time, Scofield began publishing a Bible correspondence course that enrolled over ten thousand people. In 1914 these courses became part of the curriculum offered by Moody Bible Institute. Moreover, the notes from these courses also served as the basis for the notes found in the *Scofield Reference Bible*. (M & S, 13)
- As if all this were not enough, "Scofield directed the Southwestern School of the Bible in Dallas and was president of the board of trustees of the denomination's Lake Charles College in Lake Charles, Louisiana. . . In 1880 he founded the Central American Mission, having been inspired by J. Hudson Taylor the previous year at the Niagara Bible Conference (this was the same year he started the Scofield Bible Correspondence Course). (Hannah, 390)

- “In 1895 Scofield was invited to become pastor of Moody’s home church, the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield, Massachusetts. When Moody died four years later, Scofield presided over the funeral service.” (M & S, 15)
- In *The Scofield Bible*, Mangum and Sweetnam, discuss some of the more unsavory aspects of Scofield’s life under the following headings: 1) Should Scofield’s divorce have disqualified him from the ministry he undertook? 2) Was Scofield simply a fraud? Time and space will simply not permit a detailed discussion of this lengthy section of their book. Interested parties are encouraged to seek out their own copy of the book. We will however, consider a few summary points about these matters.
- “Especially within the fundamentalist wing of American Christianity, both this divorce and his struggle with alcoholism held potential for ruining Scofield’s reputation and his entire ministry if they had been widely known. . . There were occasions, even during his lifetime, when rumors of Scofield’s past life would surface and cause him grief. . . After one Bible conference, having heard Scofield share his testimony about Christ’s delivering him from alcoholism, D.L. Moody counseled him strongly against sharing such aspects of his past life with the public. . . there is simply no question that Scofield and certain of his close friends did conceal from the record the fact that Scofield had been divorced and had an ex-wife and children from a previous marriage.” (M & S, 22-23)
- Canfield contends that character flaws evident in Scofield’s failed first marriage are part of a pattern of dishonesty both before and after his alleged conversion. According to Canfield, Scofield is guilty of perpetuating instances of fraud and deception throughout his life. Three episodes from Scofield’s life are submitted by Canfield as proof that Scofield was a fraud. It is important to note that only one of these events happened after Scofield’s 1879 conversion. (M & S, 33-34)
- According to Canfield these three areas include:
 - Alleged discrepancies and deceit concerning Scofield’s military service in the Confederate Army. The fact that Scofield lied about his age on his enlistment papers is beyond dispute.
 - Scofield’s time as a lawyer and politician. Kansas politics seems to have been a hotbed of graft and corruption, and Scofield seems to have been tainted by it to some extent. The exact nature of the political scandal that Scofield found himself in, no one knows for sure. That Scofield engaged in activities of questionable ethics once the scandal broke seems clear. Being removed from office put him in a desperate situation, not least of all financially. At one point, he used the name of his client, John Ingalls to secure funds for himself. While Ingalls never pressed charges, this maneuver cost Scofield his job and ended his legal career in the state of Kansas, the one state in which he was fully licensed to practice law. (M & S, 41-43)

- The final episode that Canfield uses to convict Scofield of being a fraud centers on his credentials. Sometime in the early 1890s, Scofield began using the title Rev. C.I. Scofield, D.D. The D.D. refers to an honorary degree of doctor of divinity. What is mysterious about this fact is that no one including Mangum and Sweetnam has been able to locate any record of what academic institution awarded this honorary degree to Scofield. Canfield jumps to the most slanderous conclusion possible by arguing that Scofield simply conferred it upon himself. (M & S, 46)
- “It is certainly beyond question that his own accounts of his life did not contain the whole truth. Some will find this understandable, others devious. . . Scofield was a sinner as he claimed. What is probably more remarkable is that he was redeemed relatively late in life (at age 36) and went on to give such notable Christian service till the end of his life. . . Someone once said, “God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick.” How straight was the line drawn through the life of Scofield and how crooked the stick of Scofield the man are points that remain in dispute. But that the life and work of Scofield manifests the truth of this proverb no one really can dispute.” (M & S, 49-51)

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