

Book Review
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The Praise of Folly (The Enigmatic Life & Theology of C. I. Scofield) by David Lutzweiler. Draper, Virginia, Apologetics Group, 2009, 208 pp. ISBN: 0-9778516-8-0, \$14.99. paper.

David Lutzweiler gives a startling exposé in *The Praise of Folly* of the dispensational, premillennial, Zionist (DPZ) theological view espoused by C. I. Scofield and a host of evangelical ministers including Billy Graham. Lutzweiler is an insider who has become an outsider. Lutzweiler is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute (1956) and Wheaton College. He served on the editorial staff of *The Alliance Witness*, official organ of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, from 1962 to 1964. However, he no longer espouses the dispensational, premillennial, Zionist view (p. 6).

The title of the book is taken from the satire by Desiderius Erasmus (published in 1515). In that book, Erasmus has the character Folly give an oration whereby he praises self-deception. Lutzweiler applies the satire to evangelicals who are engaged in the praise of folly by endorsing Scofield and *The Scofield Reference Bible*.

The book possesses the following features. It begins with an acknowledgement page, includes a preface, and is divided into two main parts. Part one, focusing on Scofield's legacy, covers chapters one and two. Part Two, focusing on Scofield's life, covers chapters three through six. The book concludes with a bibliography and an index.

The book follows an easy outline. Three controversies come together: a controversial movement (the dispensational, premillennial, Zionist movement); a controversial reference Bible (*the Scofield Reference Bible*); and a controversial man (Cyrus Ingerson Scofield).

Chapter one is titled, *Veneration, Vilification, or Verification*. The chapter deals with friends and foes of Scofield and his reference Bible's theology. Lutzweiler states that *controversy* is the major legacy of Scofield (p. 1). Lutzweiler begins his analysis with *The Scofield Reference Bible*. This Bible was first published on January 15, 1909 by Oxford University Press. It has been revised twice in 1917 and 1967. It now exists in the King James and New King James versions. As of 2003, the sales of all editions combined went over ten million (p. 4). This Bible, more than any other single work, solidified the premillennial movement (Paul Boyer, p. 5). This influence can be seen in the men and institutions that have embraced the DPZ theology. Some of these are: (1) Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL; (2) Dallas Theological Seminary (founded by Lewis Sperry Chafer in 1924. Chafer authored the eight- volume systematic theology); (3) the Philadelphia School of the Bible (today Philadelphia Biblical University); (4) Charles Fuller, "Old Fashioned Revival Hour"; (5) J. Vernon McGee of "Through the Bible"; (6) Theodore Epp, "Back to the Bible"; (7) Jerry Falwell; (8) Pat Robertson; (9) Jim Bakker; (10) John Hagee; (11) the *Left Behind Series* by Tim LaHaye (which has sold sixty million copies); (11) Billy Graham; as well as (12) about half of all the evangelical pastors in America (pp. 8-9).

Three book-length biographies of Scofield have been written: (1) *The Life Story of C. I. Scofield*, by Charles Trumbull (1872-1941); (2) *A Biographical Sketch of C. I. Scofield* by William A. BeVier; and (3) *The Incredible Scofield and His Book* by Joseph A. Canfield (1919--). Lutzweiler mentions another work in production at the time of the writing of his book with

the tentative title, *The Rise of Dispensationalism, the Life of C. I. Scofield* by John J. Tollefsen. The first two of these biographies are hagiographic. Canfield's work is good, but contains several errors, hence, the need for Lutzweiler's work. Lutzweiler analyzes each of these works according to their strengths and weaknesses.

One of the most revealing aspects of *The Scofield Reference Bible* according to Lutzweiler was the strategy to include the DPZ theology in a Bible rather than a commentary (pp. 24-25). *The Scofield Reference Bible* was not a balanced, objective work of scholarship. Rather, it was biased toward DPZ. The public was buying a "Bible" tainted with error! Lutzweiler comments, "...the Geneva Bible was not a propaganda piece that was published for the purpose of promoting a new doctrinal system that varied from that of historic Christianity" implying that *the Scofield Reference Bible* was (p. 26). Trumbull touted the Scofield Bible as "God-planned, God-guided, God-illuminated, and God-energized" (p. viii, and 28). This is as close as "God-inspired" as you can come without specifically saying it.

Chapter two takes up the DPZ theological system by examining *The Roots of the Controversy*. The theological theory had its roots in the early 1800's in England and Ireland (1826-1836). Two separate conferences on prophecy were held. One at Albury Manor, thirty miles southwest of London called the Albury Conferences. Another, held in Ireland about 15 miles south of Dublin called the Powerscourt Conferences (p. 31). Lutzweiler describes the outcome of those conferences, "Out of those conferences, attended by such disparate notables as Edward Irving (1792-1834), George Müller (1805-98), Darby (John Darby—DS), and many others, came a radical innovative system of theology, having a special emphasis on prophecy. That system rejected the view of Israel and the covenants held by the early church fathers and the reformers...It gave birth to the Plymouth Brethren denomination, of which Darby quickly became the chief exponent. It became what I call here the "DPZ" system" (p. 32). Darby developed the dispensational view of Bible history and Scofield refined it. The standard structure from Scofield until today is as follows: (1) Innocence (from the Creation to the Fall); (2) Conscience (from the Fall to the Flood); (3) Human Government (from the Flood to Abraham); (4) Promise (from Abraham to the Law on Sinai); (5) Law (from Sinai to Christ's cross and resurrection); (6) Church (from the cross to the Rapture of the church); and (7) Kingdom (defined as the "Millennium" after Christ's return) (p. 34). According to Lutzweiler, the controversy over Scofield's dispensations focuses on the precise nature of those dispensations especially the last two (p. 34). Areas of concern include: the nature of the church and the kingdom; the rapture and end time events including the tribulation doctrine and the salvation of the Jews. Debate about the specifics of the theory continues. John Hagee affirmed and then denied the Two Covenant theory when he said, "I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption" (p. 38). Later, Hagee, after a meeting with Jerry Falwell, said that Mr. Falwell had convinced him he didn't believe in the "dual covenant." However, Lutzweiler is unconvinced. Lutzweiler observes, "...it is possible to preach great error with all of the same power and persuasion that one preaches great truth—and many hearers will feel "blessed" (p. 39).

Another point of dispute concerns premillennialism which is placed at the point of transition between the final two dispensations, i.e. the church age and Christ's eternal kingdom (p. 41). Premillennialism is the doctrine that Christ will come again to the earth, set up His kingdom on the earth and reign for one thousand years from the throne of David in Jerusalem. Premillennialism was never included in an ecumenical creed of the church. The very term

“millennial kingdom” coined by dispensationalists is an error because the 1,000 years is not literal but symbolic representing the time of Christ’s reign from the cross to the *parousia* (Second Coming). Lutzweiler points out five serious weaknesses of the system on pages 42-45.

A third controversial aspect of the DPZ theological theory is Zionism. Zionist doctrine separates the church and Israel which results in two divine redemptive-historical programs focusing on two separate distinct peoples of God (p. 45). Lutzweiler makes the following observations: “This is the root of today’s evangelical support for the secular Zionist movement that arose later in the nineteenth century” (p. 45). “Dispensationalism teaches that the literal nation of Israel, the literal temple, and the literal animal sacrifices will all be restored in the “millennial kingdom”” (p. 45). “The restoration of Israel as a nation, therefore, is identified as the preparation today for the imminent fulfillment of the prophecy of Christ’s return” (p. 45). The acceptance of Darby’s distinction between the church and Israel helped garner support politically for Israel to become a separate nation in 1948. It is that same distinction that continues support for Israel among millions of dispensationalist today. Lutzweiler gives an example of the political overtones of this dispensational theory. President Harry S. Truman gave diplomatic recognition of the legitimacy of the newly-created State of Israel in May, 1948 with record-setting speed—eleven minutes from the time of Israel’s official proclamation of its existence (p. 46). At that time, 40% of the American population was evangelical. Lutzweiler shows that the distinction between the church and Israel was an error. The church is spiritual Israel. God’s redeemer, Jesus Christ, was savior of both Jew and Gentile. All men are to be saved in one body (Eph. 2:16) which is the kingdom. The Jews rejected Jesus as the Christ for the most part because they conceived of the kingdom as a political, economic entity and not a spiritual one. Lutzweiler shows that the millennial aspect of the dispensational theory was derived from Jewish Rabbis (p. 50-51). These men insisted on a “transitional” period between the earthly state and that of the Messiah’s kingdom. The period of time most commonly given was 1,000 years. However, the Messianic kingdom was to be eternal not merely 1,000 years!

Chapter three begins Part II of the book. This chapter focuses on the pre-conversion years of Cyrus Ingerson Scofield. The chapter deals with the birth of Scofield on August 19, 1843 in Clinton, Michigan; his service in the Confederate army; crooked politics in Kansas, financial fraud and alcoholism in St. Louis (p. 59). In this chapter, Lutzweiler reveals that Scofield was involved in many lies. Some of these lies involved Scofield’s account of events in his life which he related to others. Scofield lied to Trumbull (a biographer) about the timing of the death of his mother and report from his father of his mother’s dying prayer request (p. 60-61). Other lies noted by Lutzweiler were: (1) the lie about the reason for receiving the Cross of Honor and the length of time he spent in military service and number of battles he fought in; (2) the lie about having a “D.D.” degree; (3) the cover-up of his first marriage to Leontine and eventual unbiblical divorce; and (4) the lie he made when he took the oath of office of U. S. District Attorney for Kansas where he stated he had never taken up arms against the United States (p. 74). The source of this misinformation was Scofield himself.

Chapter four reveals the details of his conversion and Christian career. The first half of Scofield’s life was involved in financial swindling and the second half of his life was involved in theological swindling (p. 89). Lutzweiler attempts to sort out truth from fiction in regards to both the official and unofficial accounts of Scofield’s conversion which took place when he was thirty-six (p. 90). Scofield was licensed to preach in St. Louis in 1881. Shortly after being licensed, his license was suspended (p. 97). He served the First Congregational Church in Dallas, TX without being licensed to preach (p. 98). Later, he was ordained in Dallas on October

17, 1883 just before his divorce to Leontine was granted on December 8, 1883. Scofield was not scripturally divorced from his first wife! No mention of the divorce proceedings are given in the church records. Leontine received the divorce on the basis of abandonment for more than one year (p. 99). Scofield abandoned his wife and family at the same time he was ordained and serving the church in Dallas. Three months after his divorce, Scofield filed a marriage certificate (March 11, 1884) with Hettie Van Wark. Scofield lied about the date of his marriage certificate stating in *Who's Who* that it was July 14, 1884 (p. 100). Scofield's ordination was the turning point that ultimately led to the production of *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Scofield enjoyed success in his ministry at Dallas. In 1888, he published his first major work, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. Lutzweiler states that this became a major turning point in his life (p. 119) due to its spread of dispensationalism. The book contains many errors. Lutzweiler reveals that Scofield was not trained in exegesis and did not know Greek. His incompetency in these areas led to many exegetical errors in the book. One of the most unusual sections in this chapter deals with Scofield's membership in the Lotus Club of New York city and the possible connections of Scofield with prominent Zionists of the time. No other evangelical leader was a member of this club at this time (p. 147). Another interesting part of the chapter is devoted to the question as to why the Oxford University Press would be interested in publishing Scofield's reference Bible.

Chapter five focuses on the development of *The Scofield Reference Bible*. It was first published in 1909. The royalties from the sale of the Bible made Scofield a wealthy man and yet, he continued to pretend to his former family that he had no money. Scofield often referred to the latter years of his life as "Scofielditis"—referring to the chronic shortage of money (p. 163). At the same time, he was making thousands of dollars in profit from the sale of the SRB. Lutzweiler gives the details of the final preparations in the production of the SRB and shows how Scofield appointed eight men as consulting editors that would give scholarly approval to the production while really promoting the Zionists views of John Darby, Scofield and Arno C. Gaebelein (p. 164-166).

Chapter six completes the book with a look at Scofield's final days and letters he wrote to his daughters Helene and Abigail. Scofield continued to accomplish much in his older years. He spoke on a major prophecy conference in Chicago's Moody Church on February 24-27, 1914. He was seventy years old. He planned and created the Philadelphia Bible School which began in October, 1914 (now called Philadelphia Biblical University located in Langhorne, Pennsylvania). He organized a new church in Douglaston, New York called The Community Church of Douglaston (May 2, 1915). *The Scofield Reference Bible* was revised in 1917. This became the "definitive" edition. Scofield died July 24, 1921. In his will, he left everything to Hattie and Noel (his second wife and son by her). He left nothing to Helene or Abigail. He left nothing to any Christian organization.

The Bibliography contains a complete list of Scofield's works, books about Scofield and books on Zionism (pp. 199-202). The last feature of the book is a topical index.

The Praise of Folly has sold upward of two million copies. It is now listed through Christian Book Distributors (CBD).