

NO RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION
(Editor Answers Ministerial Association)

(Below from Bible Students Monthly-1914, Vol. 6, No. 7, Page 4.)

“Then came the priests and rulers of the temple, being grieved that the people were taught.”—Acts. 4:2.

The Rev. George A. Cooke, pastor of Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, came to the Evening Journal office yesterday as the bearer of resolutions adopted by the Ministerial Union of this city at its meeting on Monday. The germ of the resolutions was that the Evening Journal should cease publishing each week Pastor Russell’s exposition of the Sunday school lesson because the members of the Ministerial Union do not agree with Pastor Russell’s religious teachings and practices.

Our reply to Mr. Cooke was that the columns of the Evening Journal are now, and always have been, wide open to men and women of all forms of religious belief and that there will be no departure from that policy. We shall continue to handle and to print, with absolute impartiality and fairness, sermons, lectures and news from all religious sources. We hope the time never will come when any Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Methodist or Baptist, Unitarian or Swedenborgian, Friend or Lutheran, New Churchman or Old Churchman, Adventist or Christian Scientist, Salvation Army Soldier or American Volunteer may truthfully say that, because of religious prejudice, the Evening Journal has closed its columns against him and his religious views.

In the handling of religious news we know no creed and no denomination; nor do we purpose knowing any. As men and women of all shades of religious belief read our paper, and as scores of Pastor Russell’s followers are among them, it would be manifestly unfair to bar from our columns matters of interest to any religionist, no matter what he may believe.

Nor is it our purpose to discuss or to seek to reconcile conflicts of religious belief which exist in our community. Our purpose is to keep the doors wide open, print the news and preserve strict neutrality with respect to its treatment. If a Jewish rabbi were to ask us to refuse to print sermons preached by members of the Ministerial Union because such sermons proclaim the divinity of Christ and are contrary to Hebraic teaching and doctrine we would promptly refuse the request, just as we would deny the request of a member of that Union were he to ask us to close our columns against a Jewish rabbi because he refuses to concede the divinity of Christ.

Mr. Cooke asked us if we would print the resolutions adopted by the Union relative to Pastor Russell. We told him we would if he would procure an indemnity bond, have it signed by property-owning members of the Union and turn it over to us with the understanding that it should be used to indemnify us from all loss in event of suit for libel or slander being instituted by Pastor Russell. We received no assurance that such indemnity bond would be forthcoming. Therefore we refrain from publishing a resolution which shows that its framer is so obsessed with prejudice against the object of attack that he throws legal safeguards to the winds.

Mr. Cooke made one point which we feel is deserving of public attention. That is that members of the evangelical churches read the Brooklyn Tabernacle Sunday School exposition in our paper each Saturday and thinking it is an exposition authorized by the evangelical churches, accept it. "If had the name of Pastor Russell attached to it, our people would not be influenced by it," Mr. Cooke said. We immediately informed him that such an objection could be met promptly and that in future it would bear unmistakable evidence of its authorship. Immediate instructions were given to place beneath the heading the words, "Edited by Pastor Russell." In addition, that the public may know fully who Pastor Russell is, we take the following sketch of him from "Who's Who In America":

"Russell, Charles Taze (Pastor Russell). Independent minister; born at Pittsburgh, Feb. 16, 1852; son of Joseph L. and Ann Eliza (Birney) Russell; educated principally under private tutors; married Marie Frances, daughter of Mahlen and Salem Ackley, 1879. Began in independent ministry, Pittsburgh, 1878; now regularly elected pastor of numerous congregations from Maine to California; chiefly serving in Brooklyn Tabernacle. Travels upwards of 30,000 miles each year in his work, including semi-annual trips to Great Britain in connection with the work centering in the London Tabernacle congregation, whom he serves as pastor; disclaims being the founder of a religious sect; interprets the punishment of the Bible as eternal death and not eternal torture. Author of a series of books, 'Studies in the Scriptures,' issued since 1886 and now printed at the rate of 700,000 copies a year; editor of the Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence; his Sunday sermons published in 2,000 newspapers. President of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, People's Pulpit Association of New York and International Bible Students' Association. His address is Brooklyn Tabernacle, 13 and 17 Hicks street, Brooklyn."

We think the above should meet the views of Mr. Cooke and his associates in the matter of the identity of the author of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Sunday School lesson exposition. Whether they agree with him or he with them on matters of religious teaching is wholly beyond the point, because upon such matters the members of the Ministerial Union do not agree among themselves. No one knows that better than those who are acquainted with the composition of its membership.

We do not hold that upon religious matters Pastor Russell is right and that they are wrong, or that they are right and that he is wrong. We simply print the above to show that we know no religious preferences in this newspaper office, and that our columns are wide open to news and other matters affecting and interesting all religionists. We spend thousands of dollars every year in giving a fair and impartial portrayal in our columns of the religious activities in this and other communities. We might add that ten times as much of that money is spent to give news space and free advertising to members of the Ministerial Union as is given to Pastor Russell, and that thus far neither Pastor Russell nor any other religionist who does not agree with their teachings has seen fit to complain to us against such jug-handled liberality or to demand that their teachings be left out of our paper because he does not believe in the varying doctrines they preach. Were any person to make such a demand we would promptly inform him that in the matter of religion the open-door policy prevails in this office and that it will continue to prevail, equal opportunity and courtesy being accorded to Jew and Gentile and Protestant and Catholic.—Wilmington (Del.) Evening Journal.