

## WHAT PASTOR RUSSELL PREACHES

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WHO is this Pastor Charles T. Russell, who through one medium and another is making an appeal to the Jews, in fact, is going to the length of advising them on internal affairs, from a Kehillah to Zionism? And if he appeals to the Jews why does he do it? The average Jew, without reading a word about Mr. Russell, would answer any question of this kind by the curt observation, "another missionary." Some have indeed so branded Mr. Russell, but Mr. Russell hotly denies the whole business. He makes a point of advertising the fact that he is in no way connected with any of the missionary movements; and those who have aided him in some measure to get a Jewish hearing—he spoke to thousands of Jews in the New York Hippodrome—would prefer helping a thief to steal, to aiding a missionary in any of his nefarious designs. It was therefore largely in the interest of fair play that the editor of *The Jewish Advocate* paid a flying visit to New York to spend a day with Mr. Russell, determined to report his conclusions whatever they might be. And let us at once set forward the conclusion, in justice to the man: Pastor Russell is not a missionary to the Jews, he has no desire to convert them to Christianity in any form, in fact, he could not be an ordinary Christian and be Pastor Russell at the same time.

He is a realist of the resurrection idea, and has separated himself from all other forms of Christianity, even from the Adventists by certain peculiarities. His doctrine concerned the writer in so far as this, that the doctrine would show whether or not Mr. Russell has a subconscious conversionist purpose in seeking contact with the Jews.

Seated in his study he permitted himself to be questioned by the hour, and the questioner was hostile and critical, but the answers came freely and without reserve. His teachings are curiously akin to the doctrines of the Chassidim, of whose existence the Pastor and his friends know nothing. Of course the Pastor believes in the Nazarene, but it is not the common Christian conception, and what concerns us most his Christ is for the Christians, not for the Jews. He does not believe in the Trinity and regards the doctrine as contrary to all Scriptures.

Reading his Bible literally, and particularly the Psalms, he believes that the dead are all dead till the resurrection, and Sheol is the grave and nothing more. Calculating from the Book of Daniel he has some idea of the actual date of "the things to come," and his teaching and his life and that of his disciples are entirely a preparation for "the latter days." He and they and all those who are good and accept his teaching are to be, or seek to be, among the 144,000 who are to have a special resurrection, and whose Kingdom is

to be invisible, in the sky. For the rest of us there is to be a physical, material resurrection, embracing all generations since man began.

The fervid enthusiasm with which all this is related would surprise most Jews who take the hereafter, and the future life, as a matter of course. With Pastor Russell and his followers it is a matter of a burning quest. They seek to be among the saints; they want for themselves something more than that physical resurrection which they hold out with assurance to all mankind. And because of this desire they approach the Jews, and more particularly the Zionists, in a peculiar spirit of fellowship.

Pastor Russell is not looking for the resettlement of all the Jews in Palestine. He is quite satisfied if in numbers and effort they repeat what is related in Ezra and Nehemiah, but the more they move in that direction, the more they accomplish towards rebuilding Zion. Pastor Russell believes that all nations will, under the Millennial Reign become Jews.

So Pastor Russell neither practically nor theoretically favors the conversion of the Jews. But our interest in him does not quite end there. The removal of the fundamental cause for suspicion brings him, as a matter of fact, on an entirely new plane of relations with Jews. He is the possible philo-Semite. His particular creed teaches him that the Jews are entitled to their own creed, and therefore he has not the usual Christian reason for assuming an attitude of spiritual superiority towards the Jews. Thus his form of Christianity permits the Jew to be himself and offers him a measure of praise if he will be it. In the words of Pastor Russell:

“My writings and teachings in general are addressed to Christians. I am striving my utmost to help fellow-Christians out of the blindness of error and superstition and away from the misconceptions of the Divine Word which led our forefathers to persecute your race—in dense ignorance of the teachings of the holy Scriptures and the spirit thereof. From an unsectarian standpoint I am speaking to the little remnant of true Christians in the great heterogeneous mass. Those true Christians I am endeavoring to instruct from the Word of God respecting the spiritual privileges and hopes which the Bible holds out to them.

“All the good promises of His Word are sure to be fulfilled. I see it in your prophecies. I urge upon the Jew that he turn to the Voice of God speaking through Moses and the Prophets. The time for this is ripe. Set before your minds the glorious heights and depths and lengths and breadth of your Law—love to God with all your hearts, and love to your fellows as to yourself.

“Assuredly, I do not urge Jews to join any Christian sect or party, nor to accept the crudities of Christian creeds. My message to them is “To the Law and to the Prophets [testimony]. If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in

them.” (Isaiah 8:20.) True Christians and true Jews should not be very far apart in their love for God and in their well-wishes toward each other, even though they differ in their views relative to certain modes of belief.”