RUSSELLISM

A Counterfeit Christianity

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RUSSELLISM

A Counterfeit Christianity *

Russellism is a counterfeit which seeks to have itself accepted in lieu of real Christianity. It is unbelief and materialism masquerading under the guise of the true religion. It seeks to establish itself by a great show of Scriptural proof, and disseminates its teachings by means of the lecture platform, books, religious publications, articles in the daily press and even by moving pictures. It is not a defective system of Christianity or a mingling of truth and error, but it is a complete system of error seeking to get itself accepted in the place of the truth. It is not merely, as some may imagine, a curious form of millenialism, but an anti-Christian religion. It distorts or denies all the doctrines of the Christian Church. And it asserts that the unbelief, materialism and anti-Christian doctrines which it sets forth are the very teachings of the

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*The substance of this pamphlet was prepared some years ago. In compliance with a request for its publication, it has been revised and is now submitted to the press, in the hope that it may be of some service to the Church in guarding her members against one of the dangerous heresies of the day.

Bible itself. It is a far-reaching, well-organized and determined effort to subvert the Gospel and to substitute error in its place.

It is a mistake to suppose that Russellism is a minor peril which may safely be ignored. It is wily and insidious. It seeks to introduce its books "to Christian people of all denominations" on the plea that its so-called "Studies in the Scripture" are reliable helps to the study of God's Word. It offers the whole set of six books at a very low price, and gives them away for nothing if people are not able to pay for them. It is claimed on the title page of Volume I that as far back as 1907 that book already had a circulation of over two million copies; and since then it is claimed that the circulation has more than doubled. We are assured that the books have been translated into a dozen different languages. Colporteurs cover the land, and distribute books, tracts and papers from house to house.

Russell's name does not appear in the title of any of his books. His first book was published under the title "Millenial-Dawn, or the Plan of the Ages." Now the books are published under the seductive title "Studies in the Scriptures." His organization was first called "The Tower Publishing Co," then "The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society;" and then "The International Bible Students' Associa-

tion." The books are called "A Helping Hand for Bible Students." The author of these books accuses the learned translators of the Bible of ignorance or dishonesty (Vol. V, pp. 333, 354). And it is well known that Russellite lecturers assert that the ministers of the Christian Church do not themselves believe what they preach, and are deliberately "pulling the wool over people's eyes."

Russellism practically asserts that through all the centuries past God has kept the world and the Church in utter ignorance on the most important doctrines of Scripture, and has only made them known through Russell within the last fifty years. (Vol. I, p 24; IV, p. 613.)

The peril of Russellism lies not in any apparent ability to gain a large number of adherents for its complete system, but in the fact that where it is received, even only in part, it undermines belief in the existence of the soul and in eternal retribution for sin. Those who accept even this much of its teachings become persons for whom the Gospel loses all power of appeal; for what appeal can the Gospel make to those who believe that they have no soul and that there is no eternal death from which they need to be saved?

Though anti-Christian in all its teachings, Russellism makes a free use of Christian words and phrases. Much of its talk sounds like that of the

Christian Church. But when Russellism uses Christian words and phrases with which we have been familiar from childhood, we must bear in mind that it understands them in an entirely different sense from that in which we use them. To the Christian the words "Christ the only begotten Son of God" mean that Christ is the true and real Son of God from eternity; but when Russellism uses the same words, it does not mean the same thing. For Russellism denies that Jesus Christ is the true Son of God, and says that He is a creature. It freely uses our customary Christian phraseology, but empties it of its real meaning and understands it in a totally different sense.

To know what Russellism really is, we must not depend upon the public utterances of its lecturers or on partial presentations of its teachings in pamphlets, but we must examine the authoritative statements of its teachings. These are contained in its so called "Studies in the Scripture." Of these Volume V presents its teachings in the most systematic form. While it may not appear so to the casual hearer of a Russellite lecturer, it is a fact, as these volumes show, that Russellism denies the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the atonement, and the resurrection of Jesus, as well as the existence of the soul, the reality of hell, and the cer-

tainty of eternal retribution. It teaches that the natural physical death is the full penalty of sin; that man becomes extinct at death; that Jesus died and became extinct; that Jesus did not rise from the dead, but that a new spirit expressly created for the purpose appeared to the disciples and deceived them into believing that he was Jesus risen from the dead; that the body of Jesus was removed from the grave or dissolved into gas by Almighty God; that by His death Jesus "ransomed" men, but that this "ransom" is not a redemption but the securing for men a new trial—a second chance to earn salvation by becoming perfect; that men's experience of sin in this age will be the means of deterring many of them from wickedness in their new trial; that this second trial will take place in the millenium, orginally predicted to begin in 1914, at which time God will make all the extinct men alive; that those who do not make good during the millenium will die again, the second death, and remain extinct and annihilated forever; that those who become perfect will have everlasting life, by which Russellism means not everlasting life in the Christian sense, but everlasting natural physical life supported by food here on the earth, which shall abide forever; and that the only exception consists of the Russellites, who, if they here in this world approve themselves as believers by absolute and

perfect sacrifice of self, shall have immortality, that is, shall be changed into spirit beings who shall live on the same spirit plane as Christ himself and shall with Him rule the world during the millenial age; and that God is not trying to convert the world during this present era, but only means to gather out of the world His elect—the Russellites.

The errors of Russellism are so numerous, indeed all its teachings are so anti-Christian that it is difficult to decide what points to take up by way of illustration. Let us begin with its errors concerning man.

I. *Errors Concerning Man.* Russellism claims that man has no soul, in the common acceptance of that term; and that when the body dies, the whole man dies. His death is exactly like that of the dog or the horse. Much labor is expended to show that in the Hebrew Old Testament the same word is used to denote the life of the beast as to denote the life of man; and that the life of the beast is called its soul, just as man's life is called his soul.

One of the strong points of the Russellite lecturers in the eyes of the masses is their apparent familiarity with the Scriptures, and their seeming ability to prove their contentions by the citation of proof passages. The audience often fails to realize that the Russellites quote only such passages as can

be made to appear to support their contentions, but that they ignore those which too clearly contradict them.

The stock proof of Russellism for the assertion that man has no soul and dies just like the beast is taken from Eccelsiastes, especially Chapter III, verses 19 to 21; and this passage is quoted again and again, as if it were an invincible argument. The passage reads: "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth?"

Now undoubtedly these words are in the Scriptures. But just as undoubtedly they do not prove what Russellism says they prove. We need to emphasize that it is not sufficient to quote the bare words of a passage, but that we must take into consideration by whom and under what circumstances they were uttered. Unless this is done, almost anything could be proved from Scripture. By omitting from Psalm 14:1 the words "the fool hath said in his heart" and by quoting simply the next words "there is no God," it would be quite easy,

according to Russellite methods, to prove the non-existence of God. But, if we take into consideration as we must, the person who speaks these words we have a proof of the exact contrary. For the passage really declares that one who says there is no God is a fool.

To be sure, Ecclesiastes is a book of the Bible, and the words quoted above about the death of the beast and of man are in it. But why and under what circumstances did Solomon speak them? We can understand the words only if we look at Solomon the man. In his youth he was God-fearing and religious; but in middle life he fell away from God, and for a long period he led a sinful, ungodly and unbelieving life. In his old age he repented. At the end of his life, after his varied experience, he records the conclusion to which he has come. It is given in the last two verses of Ecclesiastes. He says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

But before he records this final conclusion to which he has come, he records many other conclusions to which he had come during previous phases of his career. To quote the words of Angus (Angus-Green: The Bible Handbook, page 590-1), Solo-

mon gives us "a dramatic biography of his own life, not only recording but re-enacting the successive scenes of his own search for happiness; reciting past experience, and in his fervor reproducing the various phases of his former self. The author appears to be for the moment what he himself describes. He seems to have fits of study (1: 12-18), of luxury (2: 1-11), of grossness and refinement, of conviviality and misanthropy; fits of building and of book-making, all ending in collapses of bitterest disappointment. We have in succession the man of science and the man of pleasure becoming fatalist, materialist, epicurean, stoic—and at last we have the noblest style of man—the humble and penitent believer."

Evidently it is not a fair interpretation of Scripture to take a passage from Ecclesiastes, like that quoted above, and to cite it as a proof that there is no difference between the fate of men and the fate of beasts when those words are the record of the views of Solomon, not as a godly and penitent believer, but as a materialist. They are a reproduction of the views which he held when he had fallen away from God and was vainly seeking happiness and contentment in earthly pursuits and pleasures apart from God. It is no more a correct use of Scripture to quote the fatalistic and materialistic Solomon in proof that man dies like a beast and

has no soul, than it would be to quote the saying of the fool in proof that there is no God.

Another argument for the claim that man has no soul and dies like the beast is based by Russellism on the fact that the Greek word Hades and the Hebrew word Sheol do not mean hell. It speaks as if it were the discoverer of that fact, though it is well known that the Revised Version retains the original words Hades and Sheol for lack of an English equivalent. Russellism arbitrarily assumes that Hades and Sheol are accurately and adequately translated by "oblivion." And then by means of this assumption it proceeds to show that the Old Testament persons who died went to oblivion, that is, became extinct. The statement of Christ concerning the rich man in Hades is, however, both so well known and so plainly contradictory to this "oblivion" theory, that Russellism is not able to ignore it. So it invents an interpretation which, to say the least, is quite extraordinary. (Vol. V, p. 376.) It is this: the whole story of the rich man and Lazarus is a figure of speech; the rich man represents the Jews who have awakened in a national Hades or oblivion, and Lazarus represents the Gentiles who are now comforted with the Gospel. This interpretation is exceedingly characteristic of Russellism, and shows the length to which it will go to establish its theory in the face

of its self-evident contradiction of Scripture.

Christ's words to the thief on the cross also expose the falsity of the Russelite teaching concerning the soul. And as these words are very familiar to nearly everybody, some means had to be found of explaining away this passage also. And this is the way in which it is done: The passage is said not to be punctuated right in the English version. The comma ought to be put after the word "today," and not after the word "thee"; and the passage should read, "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise." (Vol. VI, p. 668.) This example shows to what expedients Russellism resorts when it finds itself driven into a corner. Certainly Christ had no reason to assure the thief that he was speaking to him "today" and not yesterday or the day before. And there would be absolutely no sense in the use of the word "today" unless it refers to what follows.

One more example of Russellite exegesis: St. Paul says, I Thess. 5: 23, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here is a passage which unmistakably proves that even if the word "soul" be regarded as meaning only the spark of life in the human body, as Russellism maintains, man yet has a spirit also. But Russellism explains the passage away (Book V, p. 353) in this

manner: "The terms body, soul and spirit are figuratively used of the Church collectively."

II. *Errors Concerning Sin and Its Penalty.* Russellism's teaching on sin and its penalty looks very simple. As a matter of fact, it is not simple, but superficial. It holds that bodily death is the penalty, and the full penalty of sin. Its theory essentially is this: God said to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, incurred the penalty, and died—died the physical death at the age of 939 years. That, says Russellism, is the full and final penalty for sin—the death of the body, and extinction of earthly life. And that also is the end of the penalty. Even after the Russellite millenium, the persistently wicked will simply die again, like the beast dies, and stay dead. This staying dead, they say, is eternal punishment, eternal death. There is no hell. The worst that can befall the wicked is annihilation.

It is to be observed that what Russellism regards as eternal punishment, namely, eternal extinction or annihilation, would seem to the wicked to be no punishment at all. It would be exactly what many of them would wish. On this theory they could do just what they please—lie, deceive, cheat, defraud, steal, oppress, plunder, commit adultery, and even commit murder; and then, if they could suc-

cessfully elude human laws, the worst they would have to fear would be that they would die at last like every one else.

This Russellite teaching is of course closely related to its teaching concerning man. For if man has no soul, and the whole man dies with the body, then the logical and inevitable result must be that there can be no further punishment for sin beyond physical death. You cannot punish a man who has become extinct and who no longer exists.

The Scripture teaching concerning the reality of hell and eternal punishment is clear and unmistakable. It tells of the outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, of the wicked who are told to depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; of the fire that never is quenched; of the rich man who awoke in hell and in torments. It is not necessary to multiply passages. But it will be well for us to remember that God takes no delight in casting men into hell nor any pleasure in their sufferings there. Indeed He has done and is doing everything in His power to keep men out of hell. But if men will not heed His grace and permit Him to make them fit for heaven, what is left for Him to do with them except to shut them out of heaven into "outer darkness." The assertion of Russellite lecturers that the Christian Church represents God

as taking a delight in putting people into hell and in hearing them sizzle and broil is, of course, a gross misrepresentation of the Church's teaching.

III. *Denial of the Trinity.* Russellism denies the fundamental doctrine on which the whole Christian Church rests—the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It says that there is no real Son of God and no personal Holy Ghost.

The teaching of the Church on the basis of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ the Son of God is given in the Nicene Creed. He is "the only begotten Son of God; begotten of His Father before all worlds—God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

But Russellism declares (Vol. V, p. 84 seq.) that Jesus is only a creature of God, and not the Son of God from eternity; that there was an archangel who in some illogical way was a predecessor of Jesus; that this archangel ceased to exist when Jesus was born, though Jesus is not the archangel in human form but only a man; and that when Jesus died He absolutely went out of existence, and yet that He

is now an archangel again; that He was not the Son of God until after He had sacrificed His human nature, even unto death; and that then, as a reward for His faithfulness, God made Him partaker of the divine nature, but on a lower plane than Himself. In other words, Christ seems to be the archangel Michael raised to some kind of divinity. That there is a hiatus between the archangel and Jesus, and between Jesus and the "spirit being" who came to take His place, and that there is no vital connection between the three, does not seem to disturb Russellism.

Naturally with such a doctrine concerning Christ, Russellism teaches only error concerning His redemptive work. It has much to say about Jesus and His ransom for us; but as a matter of fact, in its eyes, Jesus has not redeemed men, but has simply "ransomed" them; *i. e.,* has secured for all men a second chance to save themselves. Though men will become extinct and annihilated at death, they will somehow be raised from the dead at the millenium, and their experience of sin in this present age will be a warning to them to avoid sin then and become perfect. The worse they have been in this world, the more their experience will then be a warning to them, and consequently the better chance they will have of making good. Thus the prospects for earning everlasting life in the second

trial are better for Nero and Judas Iscariot than for others who were not so wicked as they in this present age.

Russellism says (Book I, p. 150), "The ransom for all given by the man Christ Jesus does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man, but it does guarantee to every man another opportunity or trial for everlasting life." How this teaching is to be reconciled with John 3: 16, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life," Russellism does not say. According to Russellism the passage ought to read: "God so loved the world that he gave his archangel Michael, so that everybody, whether he believes or not, may have a second chance or new trial to earn everlasting life."

It may be worth while to look at the manner in which Russellism sets out to prove that Jesus, before He came to earth, was the archangel Michael. It finds a proof for it in John 1: 1. "Be it noted," we read in Vol. V, p. 86, "that the apostle, writing under inspiration, tells us that 'The Logos was in the beginning with *the* God, and the Logos was *a* God.' This is the literal translation of the Greek, as can be readily confirmed by any one, whether he is a Greek scholar or not. The Greek article *ho* precedes the first word 'God' in this verse,

and it does not precede the second word 'God'."

This reference to the absence of the definite article before the second *theos* (God) is supposed to prove that the Logos was simply *a* God, that is, an archangel. But the proof becomes valueless when we remember that the omission of the definite article before *theos* is frequent in the New Testament. In the very same first chapter of John we have an omission of the article in verse 7, where we are told, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." According to Russellism it ought to read, "There was a man sent from an archangel, whose name was John." If the Russellite should object and say that the article is omitted in verse 7 because *theos* occurs after a preposition, while in verse 1 it occurs in the nominative case, it is easy to meet the objection by citing passages in which *theos* occurs in the nominative case without the article, as for example, Luke 20: 38 (R. V.): "Now he is not the God of the dead but of the living." Rom. 8: 33: "It is God that justifieth"; and others.

The author of "The Studies in Scripture" makes great pretensions of knowing Greek, but it is easy to show from his own books, that while he may know the Greek alphabet, he knows very little more. This is particularly evident in his endeavor to show from John 16: 13, 14, that the Holy Ghost is not a person. The well-known passage of Scripture reads,

"Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." In this passage the masculine pronoun "he" is obnoxious to the author of "The Studies in the Scriptures." If it stands, it proves that the Holy Spirit is a person and not simply a power or influence. So he sets out to eliminate it. And this is the remarkable way in which he does it:

He says (Vol. V, p. 171): "The word *ekeinos,* rendered 'he' in the passage under consideration, might with equal propriety be rendered 'that', 'this', 'those', 'the same', 'she', 'it'; and in our common English version it is rendered in all these different forms, and more frequently than as the masculine pronouns 'he', 'his', 'him'." He continues: "Anyone who is sceptical on this point can readily convince himself by consulting a Greek-English Concordance of the New Testament, which shows the various translations of these words." And then he goes on to give some quotations which, he says, are translations of *ekeinos*—for instance, John 20: 15, "*She,* supposing him to be the gardener, saith"; and again, Luke 20: 1: "On one of *those* day, as he taught." Now a first year Greek student would know at once that the word "she" quoted above is a translation of the *feminine* form of *ekeinos,* and that the "those" quoted above is a translation of the genitive plural. Thus it is clear that the man who

freely declares in his books that the learned translators of the Bible were either grossly ignorant of Greek or were dishonest, is himself so ignorant of Greek as not even to be aware of the fact that there is such a thing as inflection in the Greek language.

IV. *Denial of the Resurrection of Christ.* The true doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is unquestionably the pivotal doctrine of the New Testament. When the apostles chose a man to take the place of Judas Iscariot among the twelve, they were careful to select one who had been a witness of the resurrection. And when they went forth to proclaim the Gospel, they based their preaching on the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. Without the resurrection they could not have persuaded men to believe on Christ; for if He had not risen He would simply have been a man like other men who died. But His resurrection proved that He was the Son of God; for God would not have raised an impostor from the dead. The resurrection confirmed the voice which had said at His baptism, "This is my beloved Son." It proved that the sacrifice which Jesus made on the cross satisfied in full the demands of divine justice. "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."

There is no fact in history so well authenticated as the resurrection of Jesus. He re-appeared to His disciples, not as a disembodied spirit, but with the same body which had been put to death on the cross. That body could be touched and felt, and had flesh and bones. It showed plainly the marks made by the nails and the spear. But it was a new body in the sense that it had new powers and properties. It was no longer subject to the same limitations to which it had previously been subject. Jesus was able to appear and disappear at will, and to pass through closed doors. His body was a transformed and glorified body, such as ours shall be after the resurrection.

We know from the record of the Gospel how carefully divine Providence perfected all necessary arrangements to make the proof of the resurrection sure. A Roman guard, by the request of the Jews, was placed before the tomb to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and then saying that Christ had risen. The stone rolled before the tomb was sealed with the Roman seal. The very scepticism with which the disciples received the first news of the resurrection, and the difficulty with which they were convinced of its reality, prove that Jesus rose. They demanded the strongest and most abundant proof before they would believe. Thomas even refused to believe the testimony of his fel-

low disciples, and demanded that he see and touch Jesus himself. During the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension Jesus gave the disciples so many and such plain proofs, that, slow as they were to believe, their doubts were all removed, and they were filled with an unshakable and joyful conviction of the resurrection.

Now Russellism comes to this great and pivotal doctrine of Scripture, and what does it do? It has a theory which is fundamental to Russellism and which must be maintained at every cost. That theory is, that physical death is the full and only wages of sin, and that physical death means annihilation. Unless this theory is upheld, the whole structure will fall. Therefore it safeguards the theory, no matter what the consequences are to which it leads. Before this theory, not only must all Scripture be bent or broken, but Christ himself in His own person and work must be made to fit this theory, even in the face of the plain teaching of Scripture. Accordingly, in place of the well attested Scripture doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Russellism teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ was annihilated on the cross. It declares that He died and stayed dead. He became extinct. He will never live again. He did not rise from the dead and never will. His body was in all probability dissolved into gas.

The teaching of Russellism at this point is confused, in that it claims to have one Christ, while in reality it has three. The first Christ of Russellism is the archangel Michael, who did not become a man, but who somehow went out of existence when Jesus was born. The second is the Jesus who lived on earth, and Who was a mere man, not the archangel Michael nor the Son of God, but only a man; and He was annihilated on the cross. The third Christ is "a spirit being of the highest order" who appeared to the disciples on Easter; but since Jesus was annihilated on the cross, this "spirit being" must necessarily have been an entirely different person from the Jesus who was crucified. It is evident that there is no real personal connection between the three, and that they are three independent Christs.

This "spirit being" of the highest order, whom Russellism invents after the crucifixion, and who is not the Christ who died for us on the cross, is the only Christ whom Russellism now knows. The Jesus Christ whom we know is, according to its theory, dead and will stay dead forever.

That this is the actual teaching of Russellism may be seen from the following citations: In Vol. V, p. 362, we are told, "Our Lord's being or soul was non-existent during the period of death." Vol. V, p. 454, declares: "It was necessary not only that the

man Christ Jesus should die, but just as necessary that the man Christ Jesus should never live again, should remain dead—to all eternity." Vol. V, p. 454, says: "The man Jesus is dead, forever dead." Vol. V, p. 466, declares: "The man Christ Jesus suffered for us death in the most absolute sense of the word, 'everlasting destruction'."

Thus from its own words it is clear that Russellism teaches that Jesus was annihilated on the cross; and that the Jesus whom we know from the Gospels, who taught men the truth of God, who healed the sick, the lame, the halt, the blind, who raised the dead to life, who was God incarnate and who redeemed us by His crucifixion and death, was not what He claimed to be, but was simply a man who died on the cross and stayed dead, extinct, has never lived since and never will live again to all eternity. And in His place Russellism puts another Christ who is not Christ at all, but a spirit whom God created for the occasion, and who deceived the disciples into believing that he was the real Jesus whom they knew and loved and who had now risen from the dead.

This new Christ, who is not Christ at all but a spirit created after Christ's annihilation, does not have a human body, says Russellism (Vol. II, p. 129). But when he appeared to the disciples behind closed doors he assumed a temporary body

created for the purpose of making the disciples believe that Jesus had risen, while in reality His body was being dissolved into gas or hidden away, nobody knows where (Vol. II, pp. 125-130). And in order that the disciples might all the more surely be deceived into believing that Jesus had risen, Russellism tells us (Vol. II, p. 129), that "Our Lord's human body was supernaturally removed from the tomb; because, had it remained there, it would have been an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of the disciples." In other words, Almighty God Himself, according to Russellism, deceived the disciples into believing that Jesus had actually in His own body risen from the tomb, while in reality His body had been secretly removed from it or had been dissolved into gas. The claim of the chief priests and elders, that the disciples had stolen Christ's body away by night while the soldiers slept, is mild by the side of this assertion that Almighty God dissolved Christ's body into gas or hid it, and then Himself deceived the disciples into believing that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Compare this doctrine of Russellism with the simple and plain words of Holy Scripture in Luke 24: 36-44: "As they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (v. 36). Thus it is Jesus himself who stands in their midst, the One of whom

Russellism says that He is dead, extinct and annihilated forever. "But they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit" (v. 37). That is to say, the disciples at first *imagined* that they saw the very thing which Russellism says is the only thing they did see, namely, a spirit. "And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Vs. 38, 39).

Here is a denial as direct and unequivocal as any denial in human words can be, that the person whom the disciples saw before them was a "spirit-being" as Russellism maintains, and a clear and unmistakable declaration that it was the Lord Jesus himself, and that the body which had been put to death on the cross was not dissolving into gas or hidden away somewhere by God, but was risen and was there in the room with the disciples—a glorified body, indeed, with new attributes and powers, but the veritable body of Jesus, which had flesh and bones, and could be handled and felt, and which, as the next verse shows, bore the plain marks of the crucifixion. For v. 40 reads, "And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet."

Russellism seeks to harmonize this passage with its teaching by declaring, that the body with which the "new spirit-being" appeared to the disciples was not an actual resurrection body, but one which was specially created after the "spirit being" had entered into the room and was dissolved when he vanished from the disciples' sight. "The human body with its flesh and bones, etc., and its clothing, which appeared suddenly while the doors were shut did not go out of the door but simply disappeared and dissolved into the same elements from which he had created them a few moments before." (Vol. II, p. 127).

Russellism has taken away the Christ of the Scriptures and has substituted another Christ of its own invention. According to its teaching Jesus is dead and stays dead forever; and in His place there is substituted a "spirit being" who has no human body and who is not Jesus Christ risen from the dead. It starts with a theory with which Scripture must be compelled to accord. That theory is that physical death is the annihilation of man's being and the full penalty of sin. The false conclusion that Jesus was annihilated on the cross, and that a new Christ was created to deceive the disciples into believing in a resurrection which had not taken place is simply the logical and inevitable conclusion from its false premise concerning the

penalty of sin. Russellism has abolished hell and it has abolished and annihilated Jesus Christ. According to its teaching man has no soul to be saved; there is no eternal punishment from which he needs to be saved; and there is no Saviour Jesus Christ who has provided salvation for all who accept it by faith.

Other men have taught that man has no soul, that he dies like the dog and the horse, and that death ends his existence; other men have declared that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was only imaginary. But they have acknowledged that their teachings were anti-Scriptural, and that in teaching and believing these things they were rejecting the testimony of the Bible. But Russellism distorts or denies every doctrine of God's Word, and proclaims the theories of the sceptic, the infidel and the materialist; and then it asserts that these things are the teachings of Scripture! It is doubtful whether the hisory of the world shows anything more audacious than this.

It would easily be possible to go into larger detail in refuting the teachings of Russellism. But that ought not to be necessary. What has here been presented shows the spirit and method of Russellism. It bends the Scripture to fit its theory, its exegesis is thoroughly unsound and false, and its doctrines are utterly anti-Christian. Even the

few examples of its teachings and methods here given ought to convince every clear mind that Russellism is a blind leader of the blind, and that they who follow its leadership will simply fall into the ditch. It is a false and spurious religion seeking to have itself accepted as true Christianity. Those who accept it accept a counterfeit, with the consequences which that involves. The teachings of the sceptic and the materialist cannot save any one, even if those teachings are made to masquerade as the doctrines of Scripture.

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