

The MESSENGER of LAODICEA

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AND by the messenger of the congregation in Laodicea write." These words in Revelation 3:14 open the message of reproof which God had to give to the Laodicean, or seventh and last, period of the church's history on earth. The most of Bible scholars agree that the messages in the early part of the book of Revelation, ostensibly delivered to seven churches in Asia Minor, are really intended for the Church at large during its seven stages or periods from Pentecost until the complete ending of the Gospel age. To limit these important reproofs and commendations to the small congregations in Asia Minor (at only two of which believers can now be found) would seem to give them prominence somewhat out of proportion to their size and activity, even in the early church.

A careful scanning of the experiences of the church has convinced many thousands of earnest Bible students that Paul, the apostle, was the messenger to and of the Ephesus stage of the church; St. John, that of the Smyrna period; Arius in Pergamos; that Waldo bore the torch of truth in the Thyatira days; that Wycliffe was the outstanding champion of basic Bible teachings in the time of Sardis; that Martin Luther sounded the call to rally round God's Word in the momentous Philadelphia days, lasting from the Reformation until 1874; and that Charles T. Russell's was the devoted hand that has swept the harp of God during these latter Laodicean hours of trial, testing, and denudation in church and world.

To those who have not yet examined the testimony on these points it might seem like undue exaltation to individuals to say that these angels or messengers mentioned by the Revelator should be, some of them, people whom we know. But it must be remembered that all of God's mouthpieces have been imperfect men—with the single exception of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being imperfect men did not debar them from bearing and delivering a message; and this they did, each one uniquely in his time.

The sins of the Laodicean period of the church are singular and notable. No one who gives any thought to the matter will confound the conditions now existing with those of any other of the seven churches. Its characteristics are distinctly asserted—it is (1) lukewarm and (2) spiritually blind. Laodicea (the people's judgment) has not backslidden like Ephesus; she is not sunken in depravity like Pergamos; she is not formalistic and hypocritical after the manner of Sardis. What then? The church people of this period are thoroughly self-satisfied: they are not "cold", they do not reject the claims of Christ; but on the contrary they recognize the importance of religion to a certain extent, making a profession, paying attention to outward observances; and, altogether, account themselves very respectable religious people. This nominal church lays no particular claim to high attainment in saintship because she does not consider saintship to be desirable or even admirable. A little piety she judges to be a useful thing in her pursuits and interests; but she does not pique herself on piety nor does she like to mold her character from it. She is lukewarm—like a corpse in the sunlight.—Rev. 3:17.

To this church of these past fifty years, to this ornate, complacent, but miserably wanting church, God's message has come through Charles Taze Russell.

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL, known the world over as Pastor Russell, author, lecturer and minister of the Gospel, was born at Pittsburgh, Pa., February 16, 1852; died October 31, 1916. He was the son of Joseph L. and Eliza Birney Russell, both of Scotch-Irish lineage. He was educated in the common schools and under private tutors. In 1879 he was married to Maria Frances Ackley. No children blessed this union. Seventeen years later they disagreed about the management of his journal, and a separation followed.

Reared under the influence of Christian parents, at an early age he became interested in theology, uniting himself with the Congregational Church, and became active in local mission work. The doctrine of eternal torment of all mankind except the few elect became so abhorrent to him that at the age of seventeen he was a skeptic. He turned his attention to the investigation of heathen religions, only to find all of them unsatisfactory.

But naturally of a reverential mind, desiring to worship and serve the true God, he reasoned: "All the creeds of Christendom *claim* to be founded on the Bible, and these are conflicting. Is it possible that the Bible has been misrepresented? It may not teach the terrible doctrine of eternal torment." Turning again to the Bible he determined to make a careful, systematic study of it without reference to creeds of men. As a result the remainder of his life was wholly devoted to teaching the Bible, writing and publishing religious books and papers, lecturing and proclaiming the message of Messiah's kingdom.

He was not the founder of a new religion, and never made such claim. lie revived the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles, and turned the light of the twentieth century upon these. He made no claim of a special revelation from God, but held that it was God's due time for the Bible to be understood: and that, being fully consecrated to the Lord and to his service, he was permitted to understand it. He was sole editor of THE WATCH TOWER from 1879 until his death.

He was President of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society from its organization in 1884 until his death. He was also President of the Peoples Pulpit Association, organized in 1909, and of the International Bible Students Association, incorporated in London, in 1913. Through these religious corporations, as well as by word of mouth, he promulgated the Gospel of Messiah's kingdom. He was the author of several book and booklet publications, issued at intervals between the years 1881 and 1914, most notable among which is his series of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. The aggregate circulation of his books and booklets alone is upwards of sixteen million copies—in thirty-five different languages.

He organized and conducted a lecture bureau which constantly employed seventy Bible lecturers, who traveled and delivered lectures on the Scriptures. Each year he wrote practically all of the copy for the BIBLE STUDENTS MONTHLY, the annual distribution of which amounted to approximately fifty million copies.

His weekly sermons were handled by a newspaper syndicate, More than 2000 newspapers with a combined circulation of fifteen million readers, at one time published his discourses. All told, more than 4000 newspapers published these sermons.

HIS TEACHINGS

HAVING spued out the churchistic body nominal because of her lack of zeal and dearth of spiritual insight, Christ Jesus, the invisible Head and Master of the church, has dispensed his present truth through those who are distinguishable for the very things which Babylon lacks—zeal and sanctified vision. Head and shoulders above all such has stood Charles T. Russell.

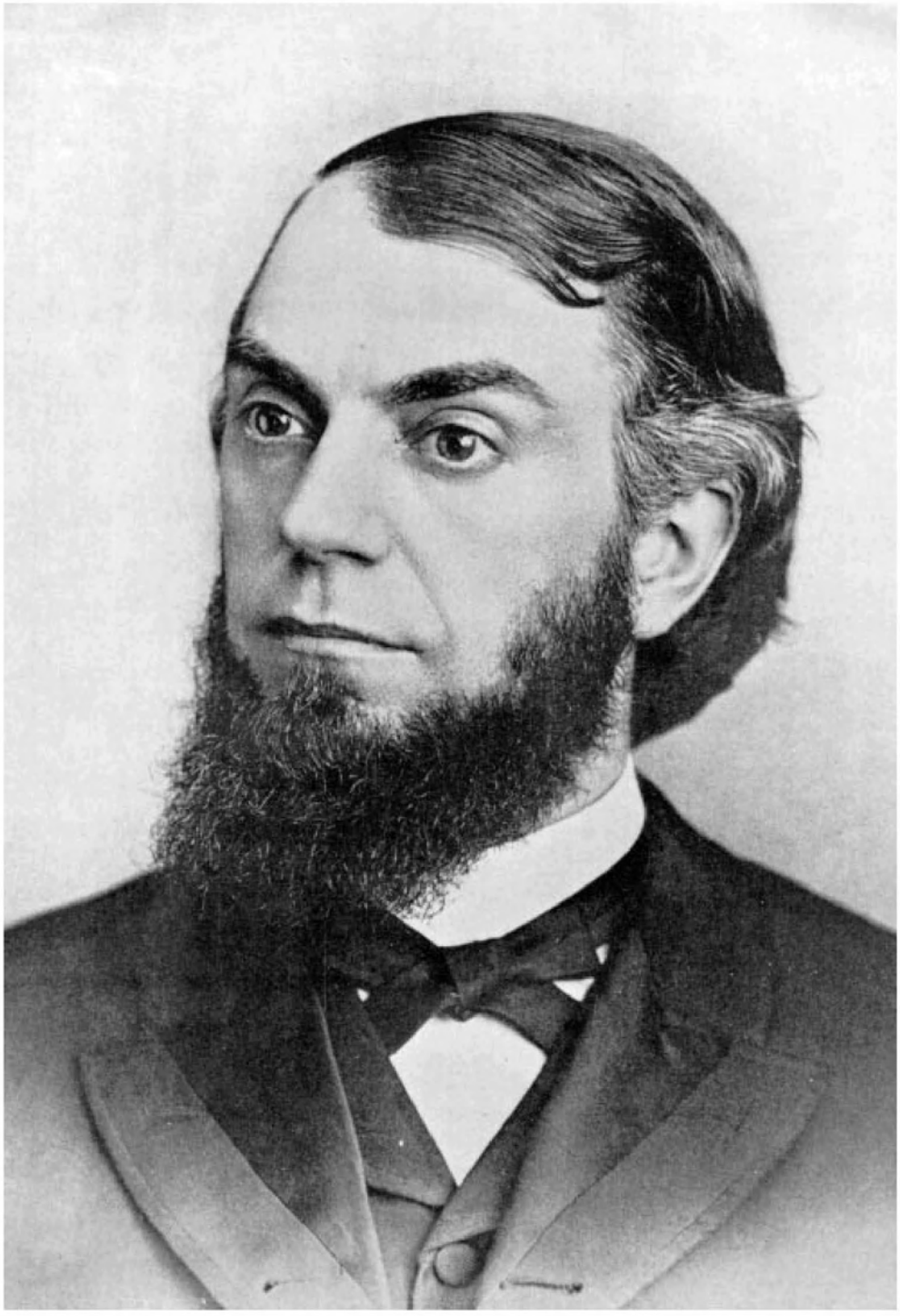
He taught, supporting his teachings by constant citation of Scripture authority, that man does not *possess* an immortal soul, but that he *is* a soul and is mortal; that the wages of sin is death, not eternal torment; that death came upon man as the just penalty for the violation of God's law; that death means the destruction of man; that God, in his goodness, has provided the great ransom price whereby man may be delivered from the bondage of sin and death; that God's beloved Son, Jesus, became a man and grew to manhood's estate, was put to death as a man and raised again from the dead a spirit being, possessing the divine nature; that by his death and resurrection Christ Jesus provided and produced the ransom price for man's deliverance and restoration; that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man; that every man in God's due time must, therefore, have a fair trial for life, and to this end there shall be a resurrection of all the dead; that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and must come the second time; that the period of time elapsing between the first and second comings of the Lord is devoted to the election of the members of the body of Christ, taken from among men; that the requirements for election to that exalted position are, full faith in the shed blood of Jesus as the ransom price, a full consecration to do the Father's will, and a faithful continuance in obedience to the Father's will even unto death; that all who are thus consecrated and begotten of the holy Spirit and are overcomers shall have part in the chief resurrection, and be exalted to positions in the heavenly kingdom of God and participate with Christ Jesus in his Millennial reign for the blessing of all the families of the earth; that during the thousand year reign of Christ all the dead shall be awakened and given a fair and impartial trial for life or death; that under that reign the wilfully disobedient shall be everlastingly destroyed, while those obedient to the righteous rule of Christ shall be fully restored to human perfection of body, mind, and character; that during this Millennial reign the earth shall be brought to a state of Edenic paradise and made fit as a place of habitation for perfect man; that man, fully restored to perfection, will inhabit tile earth forever.

The positive side of Pastor Russell's message may, therefore, be said to be two-fold—that to the church and that to the world. (Isaiah 52:7) To the church it was a message of the ransom and of the second presence of our Lord (which he understood to have begun in 1874); to the world it was a message of the ransom and of human restitution, to follow the events of this age. The negative side of his message was one of criticism and even denunciation against the hypocrisy and sham of tare religionists, and particularly the systems which they support. To him the church was still but an obscure traveler along the highway of nations; and, so far from mixing in and "leavening" the whole lump of earthly institutions with quasi-religious politics, she was intended of her Lord to remain separate from the world and to be engaged in the preliminary affairs of his kingdom.



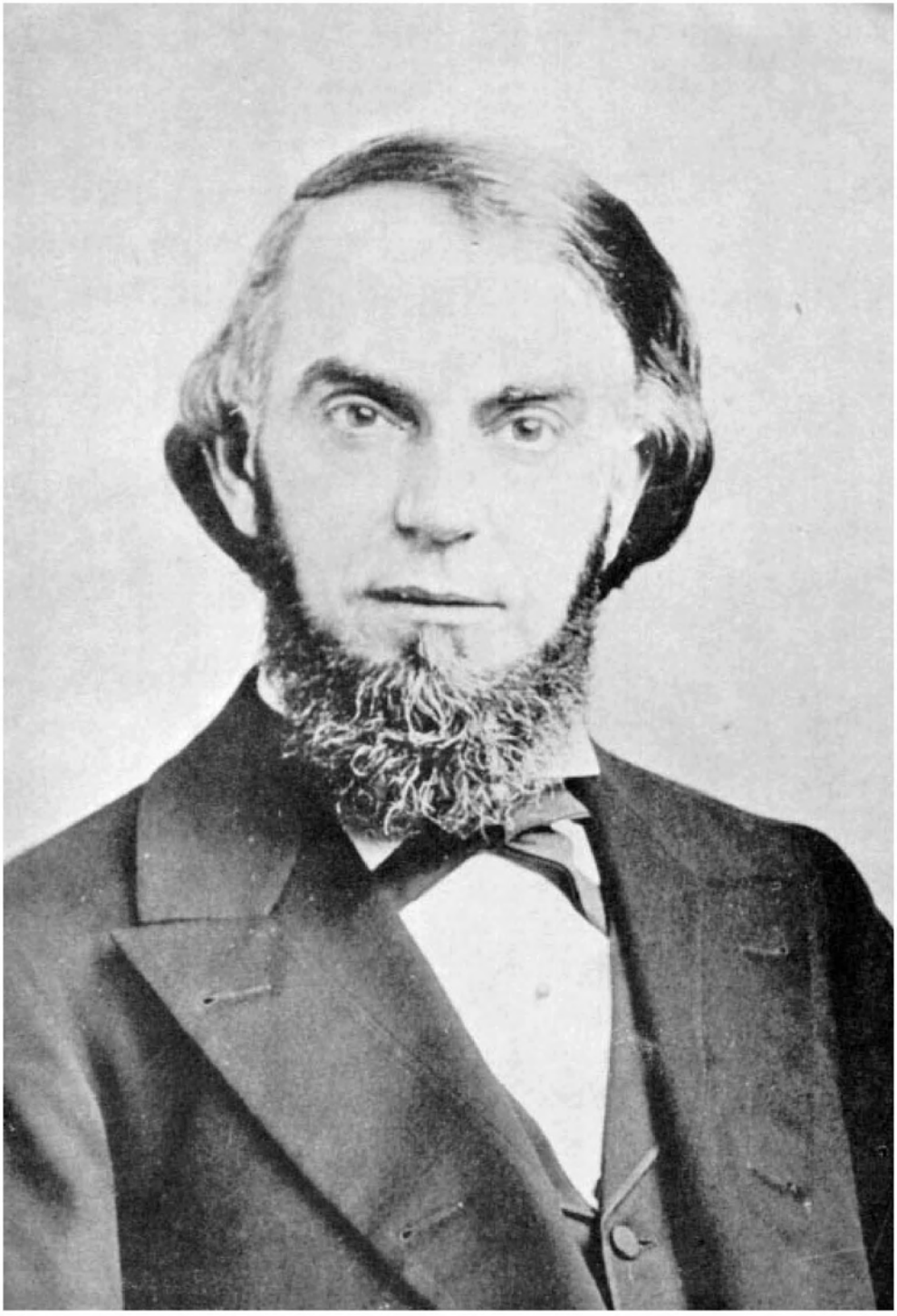
PASTOR RUSSELL AT 27

AS HE APPEARED IN 1879 WHEN
ZION'S WATCH TOWER WAS FOUNDED



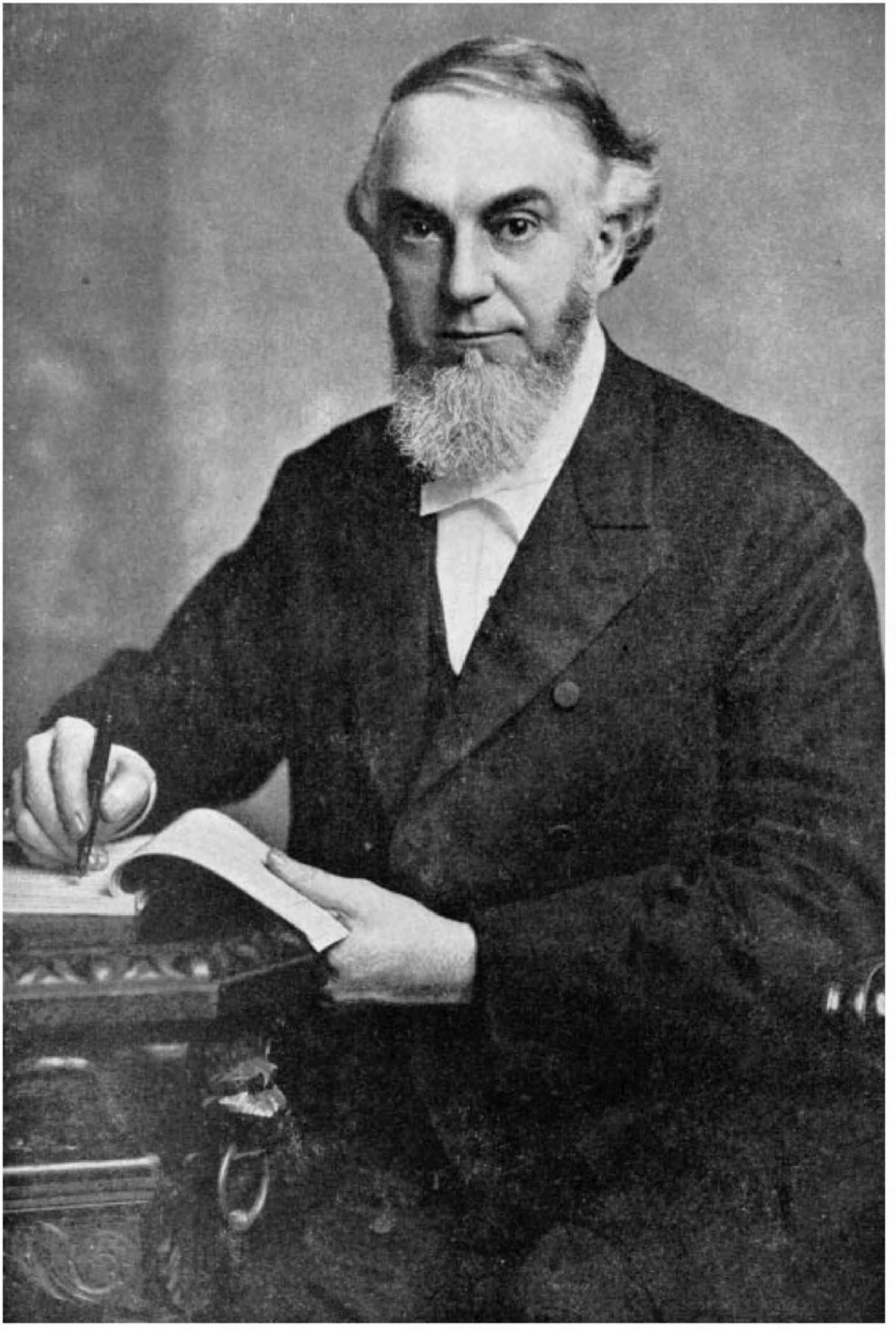
PASTOR RUSSELL AT 36

AS HE APPEARED IN 1888



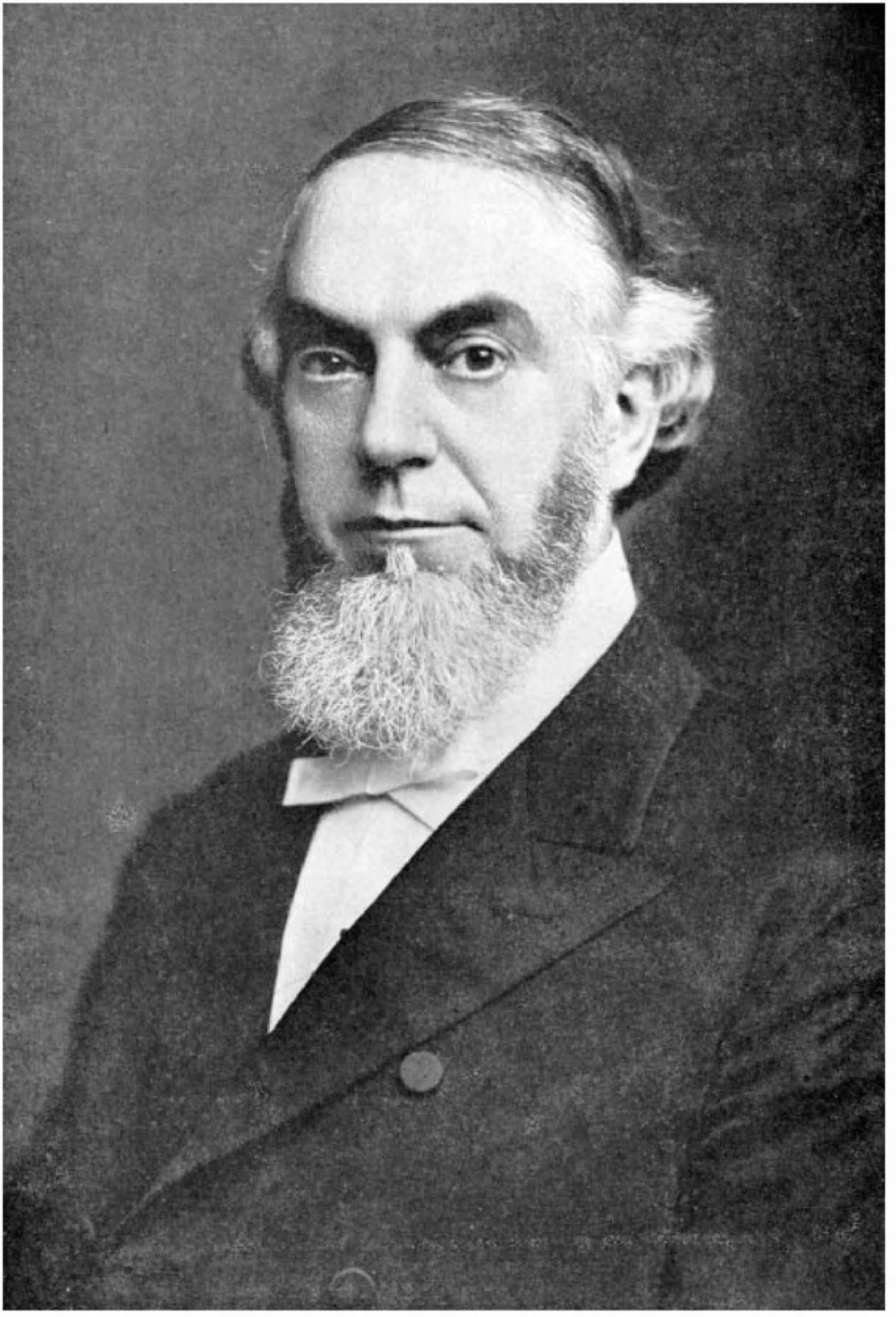
PASTOR RUSSELL AT 44

AS HE APPEARED IN 1896



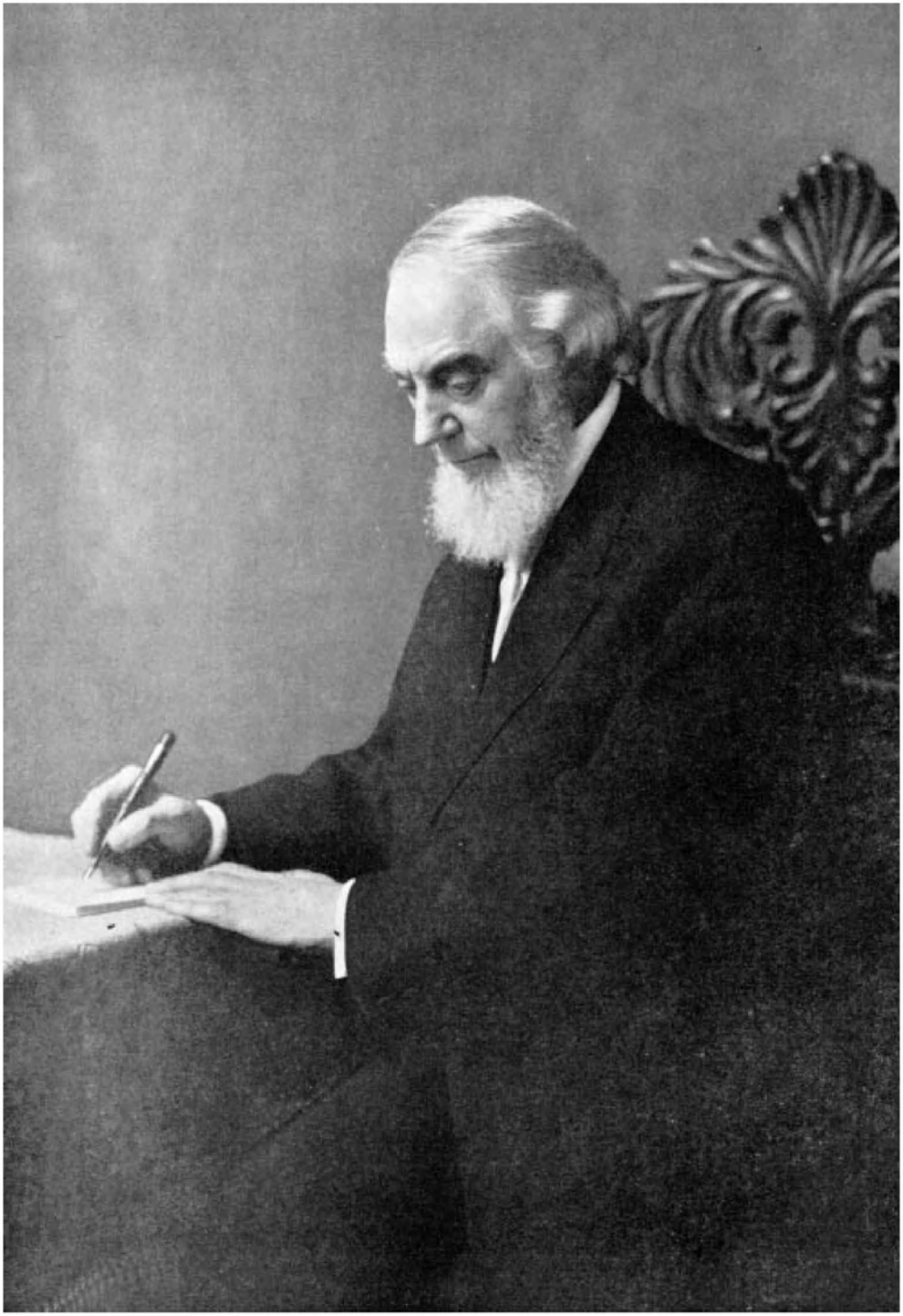
PASTOR RUSSELL AT 50

AS HE APPEARED IN 1902



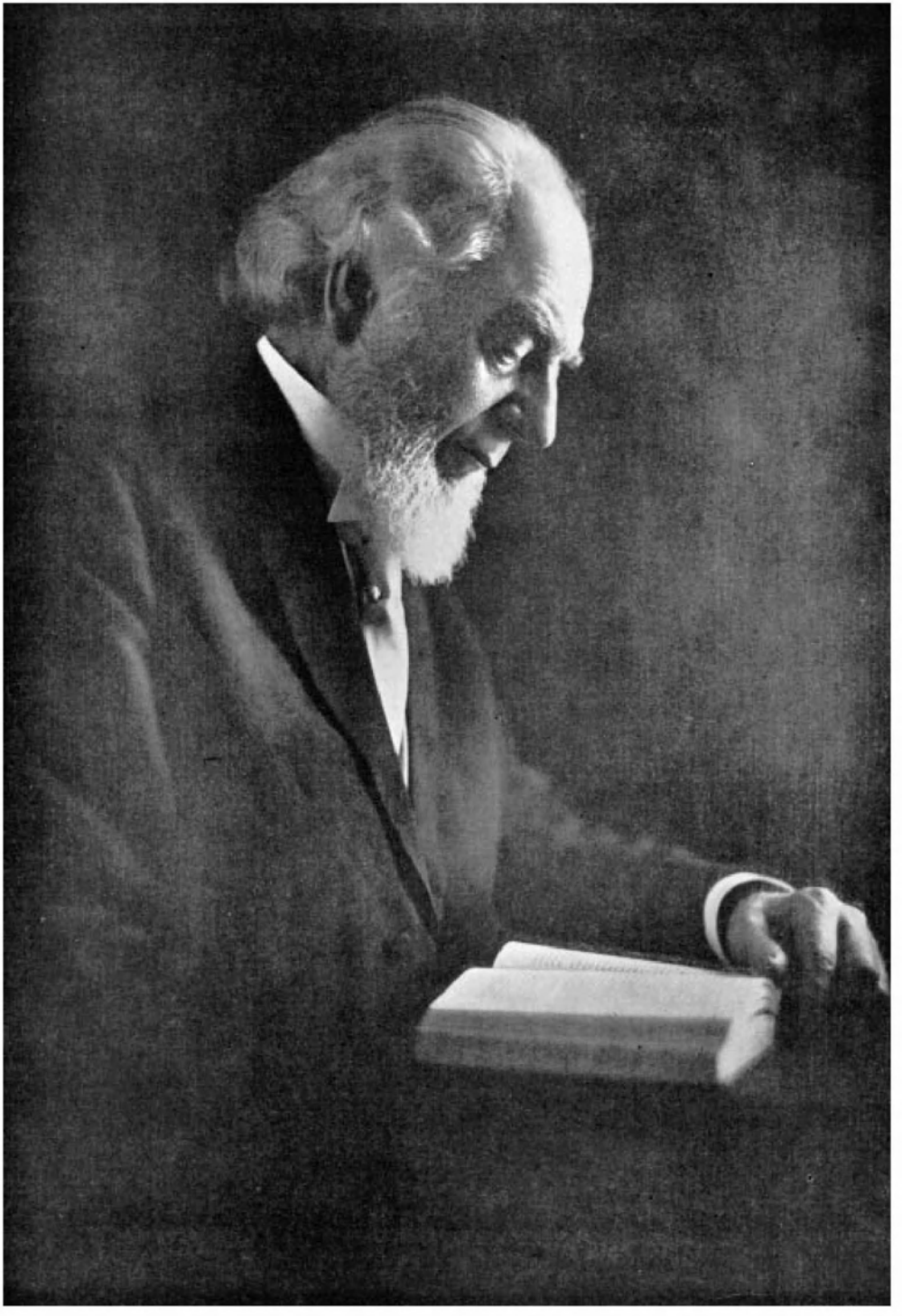
PASTOR RUSSELL AT 54

AS HE APPEARED IN 1906



PASTOR RUSSELL AT 59

AS HE APPEARED IN 1911



PASTOR RUSSELL AT 64

AS HE APPEARED IN 1916 SHORTLY BEFORE HIS CHANGE