



# Pastor Russell



A Biographical Sketch

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# The Late Pastor Russell

Biographical Sketch by his successor J. F. Rutherford

“Pastor Russell's writings are said to have greater newspaper circulation every week than those of any other living man; a greater, doubtless, than the combined circulation of the writings of all the priests and preachers in North America: grater even than the work of Arthur Brisbane, Norman Hapgood, George Horace Lorimer, Dr. Frank Crane, Fredrick Haskins and a dozen other of the best known editors and syndicate writers put together” – *The Continent*

Charles Taze Russell, known the world over as Pastor Russell, author, lecturer and minister of the Gospel, was born at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, February 16, 1852; died October 31, 1916. He was son of Joseph L. and Eliza Birnie Russell, both of Scotch-Irish descent. He was educated in the common schools and under private tutors. He was married in 1879 to Maria Frances Ackley. No children blessed this union. Eighteen years later a disagreement arose about the management of his journal, and a separation followed. Pastor Russell was the author of the following publications:

Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return; food for Thinking Christians; Tabernacle Shadows; The Divine Plan of the Ages; The Time is at Hand; Thy Kingdom Come; The Battle of Armageddon; The Atonement between God and Man; The New Creation; What say the Scriptures about Hell; What say the Scripture about Spiritualism; Old Theology Tracts; The Photo Drama of Creation, etc. etc.

Reared under the influence of Christian parents, at an early age young Russell became interested in theology, uniting himself with the Congregational Church, and became active in local mission work. His instructors believed and taught the old style “Hell-fire” doctrine. At the age of fifteen his boyish zeal, in an endeavor to restore a young infidel friend, cost him his faith in the Bible. At the age of 17 he had become a skeptic. This was due to the inability of his religious teachers to substantiate the doctrine of a literal lake of fire and brimstone. This doctrine of eternal torment of all mankind except the few elect became very abhorrent to him, and he said: “A God who would use His power to create human beings whom He foreknew and predestined should be eternally tormented, could be neither wise, just nor loving; His standard would be lower than that of men”.

He continued to believe, however, in the existence of God, but was unwilling to accept the commonly understood teachings as God's revelation of Himself to man.

During the next few years, while growing up into commercial life, he devoted much time to the investigation of Buddhism, Confucianism, and other Oriental religions, only to find all the unworthy of credence. “Which is the true Gospel?” became a living question in his inquiring mind, and although he was now well on the way, commercially, to fame and fortune, he decided that he would investigate the Scriptures and let the Bible speak for itself on the question of future punishment. This was the beginning of a new ambition.

## Pastor Russell's Teachings

Naturally of a reverent mind, desiring to worship and serve the true God, Mr. Russell 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 then to the Bible, he determined to make a careful, systematic study of it without reference to creeds of men. The result was the full establishment of his faith in the Bible as God's Word. 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 the greatest religious teacher since St. Paul, and did more than any other man of modern times to establish the faith of the people in the Scriptures. His aim was to reach, if possible, every Truth-seeker --- Catholic, Protestant, Jew and free-thinker. He stood entirely free from all sectarian bonds. His work was wholly independent.

Pastor Russell was not the founder of a new religion, and never made such claim. He 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 in the light of the prophecies it was doubtless God's due time for the Bible to be understood, and that all fully consecrated to the Lord and His service would therefore be permitted to understand it. Because he devoted himself to the development of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Lord was fulfilled in him: "For if these things be in you and abound, they make you

that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – 2 Peter 1:5-8.

He clearly taught, and proves his teachings by the citations of Scriptural authority,

- That man is a soul and is mortal;
- That he does not possess an immortal soul;
- That the wages of sin is death—not eternal torment;
- That death comes upon man as the just penalty for the violation of God's Law;
- That death means the destruction of man, unless a release can be obtained;
- 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 flesh and grew to manhood's estate, was put to death as a man and raised from the dead a spirit being, possessing the Divine nature;
- That by His death and resurrection Christ Jesus secured and provided the Ransom-price for man, 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 that to this end there shall be an awakening of all the dead;
- That Jesus Christ returned into Heaven and must come the second time;

- That the period of time elapsing between the First and the Second Coming 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 over comers shall have part in the First, or Chief Resurrection, and be exalted to position in the Heavenly Kingdom of God and participate with Christ Jesus in the Divine nature and His Millennial Reign for the blessing of all the families of the earth;
- That during the thousand year Reign of Christ, all of the dead shall be awakened, and given a fair and impartial trial for life or death as human beings;
- That under the said Reign, and at its close, the willfully disobedient shall be everlasting destroyed, while those rendering heart-obedience 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 habitation for perfect man;
- That man, fully restored to perfection, will inhabit the beautiful earth during all the ages to come.

## Pastor Russell's Work

Seeing that God has so wonderful a Plan for the blessing of mankind, Pastor Russell gave all of his power and energy to making known these great truths to the world. He never took a vacation; he worked constantly and until the day of his death.

Like other Christians he was looking for the Second Coming of Christ. Between 1872 and 1876 he discovered that the Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord would return as a spirit being, invisible to human eyes, not in a body of flesh, and that His Second Presence was due in the autumn of 1874. This led to the publication of a booklet entitled "The Object and Manner of Our Lord's Return", which had a phenomenal sale.

Many students of the Bible throughout the United States and Canada responded to the information derived from that book, and Pastor Russell's correspondence became voluminous. Realizing the necessity of keeping the Truth before the minds of those who had begun to investigate, in 1879, he began the publication of "The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence", and was its sole editor to the time of his death. This journal is issued semi-monthly; it never publishes advertisements, but is devoted exclusively to religious topics. Among the English speaking people in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, its semi-monthly circulation is 45,000 copies. It is also published in German, French, Swedish, Dano-Norwegian and Polish, reaching a large number of subscribers in America and Europe.

# **Pittsburgh Headquarters Too Small**

In 1884, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania., now a part of Pittsburgh, he organized and incorporated the "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society", of which he was President until the time of his death. By the spring of 1909 the business of the Society had expanded to such proportions in America and abroad that a closer location to Europe was found necessary, and headquarters were transferred to Brooklyn, New York.

## **Purchases Henry Ward Beecher's Home**

It was by the merest accident that the Henry Ward Beecher mansion, at 124 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, came into the possession of the Society, and Pastor Russell continued to use the home of Brooklyn's world famed pulpit orator as his study and residence until his death.

It was to this very study and Lincoln, while President of the United States, and during the trying days of rebellion, paid a secret midnight visit to the Pastor of Plymouth Church about his going abroad on a lecture tour to change the sentiment of the British and enlist it in behalf of the Union.

## **Pastor Russell's wide Propaganda**

Pastor Russell was not only President of the "Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society", the parent organization, but was also President of the "People's Pulpit Association", organized as a New York State Corporation

in 1909, and of the “International Bible Students’ Association”, incorporated in Great Britain, London, in 1913. These latter corporations were branches of the parent society, and were incorporated to comply with certain legal requirements of the different localities. Through these religious corporations, as well as by word of mouth from the platform and pulpit, Pastor Russell promulgated the Gospel of Messiah’s Kingdom. The following publications, written by him between the years 1881 and 1914, each had a phenomenal circulation, as given below.

“Food for Thinking Christians”	...	14,50,000
“Tabernacle Shadows”	...	10,00,000
“Divine Plan of the Ages”	...	48,17,000
“The Time is at Hand”	...	16,57,000
“Thy Kingdom Come”	...	15,78,000
“Battle of Armageddon”	...	4,72,000
“The Atonement”	...	4,45,000
“The New Creation”	...	4,23,000
“What Say the Scripture About Hell”	...	30,00,000

Pastor Russell was also author of the “Photo-Drama of Creation”, which prior to his death, had been exhibited to about twelve millions of people. He wrote and published the scenario of this photo-drama, which has had a very wide circulation. His publications are translated into thirty-five different languages. At the same time he was pastor of more than 1,200

congregations of Bible students in different parts of the world. Some of these he visited whenever possible, and served the others by means of "The Watch Tower" and private correspondence.

He organized and conducted a Lecture Bureau which constantly employed many lecturers, who travelled and delivered lectures on the Scriptures, as well as giving instruction to Bible Students. He organized and managed an auxiliary lecture bureau of several hundred men who gave a portion of their time to lecturing on Bible teachings. He wrote practically all the columns for the "Bible Students' Monthly", the annual circulation of which amounted to many million copies.

His weekly sermons were handled by a Newspaper syndicate. More than 2,000 newspaper with a combined circulation of fifteen million readers, at one time published his discourses. As told, more than 4,000 newspapers published these sermons.

"The Continent", a publication whose editor often opposed Pastor Russell once published the following significant statement concerning him:

"His writing are said to have greater newspaper circulation every week than those of any other living man; a greater, doubtless, than the combined circulation of the writing of all the priests and preachers in North America; greater even than the work of Arthur Brisbane, Norman Hapgood, George Horace Lorimer, Dr. Frank Crane, Frederick Haskins and a dozen other of the best known editors and syndicate writers put together."

## Harvest Work

Pastor Russell adhered strictly to the teaching of the Scriptures. He believed and taught, as before mentioned, that we are living in the time of Second Presence of our Lord Jesus, and that His Presence dates from 1874 (see his book, "The Time of the End"); that since that time we have been living in the "End of the Age", during which the Lord has been conducting His great Harvest work; that, in harmony with the Master's own statement, this Harvest work is separating true Christians designated as "wheat", from merely professing Christians, designated as "tares", and gathering the true saints into the Kingdom of the Lord.

It is interesting here to note that Jesus said, "Who then (at the time referred to) is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that He will make him ruler over all that He hath". (Luke 12:42-44; Matt 24:45-47) Thousands of the readers of Pastor Russell's writings believe that he filled the office of "that faithful and wise servant", and that his great work was the giving to the Household of Faith the "meat in due season". His modesty and humility precluded him from claiming his title. For a more detailed account of his work, reference is made to "The Watch Tower of June 1st, 1916.

Pastor Russell made frequent trips abroad. In 1892 he made a trip to Europe and the Holy Land, talking in

various countries and lecturing in the interest of the great work. In 1910 he again visited Palestine, Russia and European countries, delivering lectures to thousands of orthodox Jews on the re-gathering of the Jews to Palestine. Upon his return to America, in October of that year, he was given a great ovation at the New York City Hippodrome by many thousands of Jews. His discourse on that occasion was published by Hebrew papers throughout America and Europe. He was greatly beloved by many Jewish people. In the fall of 1911 he was the chairman of a committee of seven who made a journey around the world and specially examined into the conditions of the missionary work in Japan, Korea, China, Syria and India. At a public mass meeting held at the New York Hippodrome in the spring of 1912, to hear the report of this committee, Pastor Russell delivered the report and gave a discourse which stirred the missionary world from center to circumference.

Still later he made annual or semi-annual tours to Great Britain, visiting the London congregation and many others of which he was Pastor, and delivering various public addresses at Royal Albert Hall, London's largest auditorium; St. Andrew's Hall in Glasgow, and in many other cities, including Edinburgh and Liverpool. His addresses elicited many favorable comments from the British press. Wherever he spoke it was usually in the largest auditoriums and to record audiences. These tours in Great Britain ended only when the present Great War rendered further visit impracticable. He made many preaching tours from the Atlantic to the Pacific and throughout Canada. It was while on a lecture tour from coast to coast that Pastor Russell's wonderful life came suddenly to a close, while traveling on a express train

near Canadian, Texas, on the 31st day of last October. He literally died in the harness, continuing to the end through increasing pain and weariness to prosecute the great work to which he had been called by the Lord. He died as heroically as he had lived, his faith in God holding firmly unto the end.

During the 42 years of Pastor Russell's Christian work he never directly or indirectly solicited money. No collection was ever taken up at any meeting addressed by him or any of his associates for himself or for his work. He had faith that the Lord would supply sufficient money to carry on the work; that the work was Lord's and not man's. The fact that voluntary contributions were liberally made by many persons throughout the world proved that his conclusions were correct.

He devoted his private means entirely to the cause to which he gave his life. He received the nominal sum of \$11-00 per month for his personal expenses. He died leaving no estate whatsoever. Like all great leaders of thought, especially pertaining to the Scriptures, he was, as was his Master, misunderstood by some, and therefore misrepresented.

At his death his remains were shipped to New York, where they lay in state in the Temple in New York City, the property of the Society and the place where his lecturers were given when at home. There thousands looked upon him for the last time, as his body lay embowered in magnificent floral offerings sent in by loving hearts from all over the country. The entire Temple was decorated with a rich profusion of the most beautiful flowers. His funeral was attended by a great audience gathered to pay

their last tribute of love and esteem to the great and good man whom they so loved and revered. It was a most notable occasion. The speakers gave glowing tribute to his life and work.

The body was then taken to North Pittsburgh, the scene of his earlier life and labours, where a second notable funeral service was held in Carnegie Hall, where interment took place in the Bethel plot in the United Cemeteries, the casket being encased in a sunken vault. The path to the grave was lined with flowers.

Thus closed the career of a most remarkable man, who was beloved by, perhaps more people than any other man during the Age. He was loved most by those who knew him best.



"Remember your leaders,  
who spoke the word of God to you.  
Consider the outcome of  
their way of life and imitate their faith"  
Heb. 13:7 (NIV)

For more information  
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