

Handout for Lesson 23 of *Thought Provoking Questions*

THEIR HISTORY

Charles Taze Russell was the founder of what is now Jehovah's Witnesses and who brought about its far-flung organization.

Russell was born on February 16, 1852 and spent most of his early years in Pittsburgh and Allegheny, Pennsylvania, where at age 23 he was known to be the manager of several men's furnishing stores.

At an early age he rejected the doctrine of eternal torment, and as a result of this entered upon a long career of denunciation aimed at "organized religions."

Russell sued J.J. Ross for libel based on a pamphlet Ross published entitled "Some facts about the Self-Styled 'Pastor' Charles T. Russell." Ross described Russell's teaching in *Studies in the Scriptures* as "the destructive doctrines of one man who is neither a scholar nor a theologian." Ross further denounced Russell's whole system as "anti-rational, anti-scientific, anti-Biblical, anti-Christian, and a deplorable perversion of the gospel of God's Dear Son." Ross pictured Russell as a pseudo-scholar and philosopher who "never attended the higher schools of learning; knows comparatively nothing of philosophy, systematic or historical theology, and is totally ignorant of the dead languages." In the suit Russell denied Ross's allegations, thus assuming the burden of proving that he possessed all of the qualities of learning and knowledge that Ross accused him of not possessing. The only evidence offered at trial was offered by Ross's lawyer from Russell's sworn deposition. His sworn testimony was that he was familiar with the Greek alphabet, but when asked to identify them from a page he admitted "I don't know that I would be able to."

Russell continued his teaching until his death on October 31, 1916, aboard a transcontinental train in Texas. Following Russell's death, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford assumed the helm of leadership. Rutherford died from cancer on January 8, 1942 at "Beth Sarim," his palatial mansion in San Diego, California.

RUSSELL-RUTHERFORD DOCTRINE

IT DESTROYS THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE

Russellite teaching always uses as its standard for what can be true that which is acceptable to the human mind.

In the Society's official six volumes that they claim to be a better key to the scriptures than the testimony of modern theologians and the so-called early church fathers, state that they have endeavored to approach the word of God "in a manner that will appeal to and can be accepted by reason as a foundation. Then we have endeavored to build upon that foundation the teachings of Scripture in such a manner that, so far as possible, purely human judgment may try its squares and angles by the most exacting rules of justice which it can command."

IT DESTROYS THE SUPERNATURAL NATURE OF JESUS

Like Arianism of the fourth century, Russellism states that the Son of God is a created being. To Russellism he was Michael, the archangel. He became a man at the birth of Jesus, thus losing his angelic nature completely. Thus Russellism rejects that Jesus is deity; he may have been a secondary God, but he was not Jehovah God.

IT DENIES THAT SALVATION IS A SUPERNATURAL WORK OF GOD'S GRACE

Jehovah's Witnesses' denial of (1) the supernatural revelation in Scripture, (2) the supernatural Savior, and of the supernatural character of the work of salvation lead inevitably to the denial of the doctrine of divine retribution upon those who reject God's divine plan for redemption.

This doctrine takes two elements:

It denies that man is so constituted as to be able to suffer such punishment.

It denies that Scripture teaches the existence of a place of torment.

In order to make man incapable of endless suffering Russellism has invented two arbitrary definitions.

» First, man is a soul, but does not have a soul.

» Second, death means destruction, an absolute non-existence.

IT DESTROYS THE HOPE OF HEAVEN FOR MULTITUDES OF PEOPLE

To understand Jehovah's Witnesses' interpretation of the Kingdom of Heaven, it is necessary to understand that only 144,000 faithful servants will rule with Jesus in the heavenly sphere. This is based on a literal interpretation of Revelation 7:4 and 14:1, 3.

All of the dead are in a state of unconsciousness or extinction. At the end there will be a series of resurrections and those who are saved (other than the 144,000 who reign with Christ) at that point will enter into a new earth of Edenic perfection, enjoying what Christ accomplished by his death, that is, overcoming the loss of Eden and making a perfect world possible.

RUSSELLISM AND HUMAN GOVERNMENT

Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to pay homage in anyway to the flag of any nation or even to defend their own individual nation from assault by an enemy.

Patriotism as displayed in bearing arms is not one of their beliefs since they claim to be ambassadors of Jehovah and as such deem themselves independent of allegiance to any government other than His.

This contradicts Romans 13:1-7 in which Paul outlines the case for human government and goes to great length to stress that the "higher powers" are allowed and sanctioned by God.

As supposed followers of His word, the Witnesses ought to heed both Christ and Paul and "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," which in the context of Romans 13:1-7 clearly means subjugation to governmental rule.