

The So-Called
“Witnesses of Jehovah”

Samuel J. Braun

Preface

The exact date this writing was originally authored in the German language by Brother Samuel J. Braun is unknown, but it can be narrowed down to an approximate span of time.

The original German publication lists Brother Braun's address at the time as 615 West Onondaga Street, Syracuse, New York. By the year 1924, the Braun family had moved to another location in the Syracuse area, 304 Twin Hills Drive. This discourse must have been written before this move took place; therefore, it could not have been written later than the year 1923.

Within the text of this writing, Brother Braun refers to the year 1914 in the past tense, further narrowing the time span. We are thus able to place the writing of this work between the years 1915 and 1923 inclusive.

This discourse was afterwards translated into the English language and published in January, 1936, under the title, *The So-Called Bible Students and Self-Styled "Witnesses of Jehovah"*. The identity of the translator is not known.

When the Apostolic Christian Publishing Company's inventory of this publication became depleted and a reprint was about to be undertaken, the publication was reviewed. The German and English versions were compared for correctness of translation, and the various quotations in the article were proved for accuracy. Upon discovering several discrepancies, it was decided that a revision of the English version was in order; particularly since many references are made to passages from the writings of Mr. Russell, the founder of the "Bible Students" movement. Russell's writings were also published in the German language, just as this discourse originally was, and it became obvious that certain inaccuracies needed to be resolved with respect to particular

references to Russell's writings. At the same time, a completely new translation from German to English was undertaken to improve the rendering of the author's thoughts grammatically and rhetorically.

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Foreword

It is of historical interest to note that Brother Samuel J. Braun had been specifically requested by the Swiss Elder Brothers to help in dealing with a rash of difficulties which had ensued as a result of the inroads the so-called "Bible Students" had already made among the congregations in Switzerland. Brother Braun undertook a trip to Switzerland to lend himself to this work around the year 1911 or 1912. It is most probable that this writing grew out of the experiences Brother Braun made in dealing with lives which had become entangled in the web of deception perpetrated by the self-proclaimed "Bible Students".

The adherents to the movement described in this discourse referred to themselves originally as the *Bibelforscher* in German, and in English as the "Bible Students". Brother Braun was always careful never to lend credence to their claim nor to ascribe to them this title in actuality, but always referred to them as the "so-called 'Bible Students'", or, at the very least, by placing the term "Bible Students" within quotes so as to qualify the usage of the term. By no means could they be considered genuine students of the Bible, and he wished neither to honor nor dignify their claim by allowing them the unchallenged title.

By the year 1936, when the first English version of this work was published, they had come to refer to themselves as the "Witnesses of Jehovah", and more recently, simply as "Jehovah's Witnesses". Brother Braun was just as adamantly opposed to these deceitful, presumptuous names.

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The So-Called Bible Students and Self-Styled “Witnesses of Jehovah”

Samuel J. Braun

A former brother is vindicating himself in various circles as having been unjustly excommunicated from the congregation of the Lord. The Word of God says, however, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds.”¹

He has now subsequently assembled with and taken “communion” (which represents a binding together) with such individuals, and also seeks to lead others to the company of those whom Paul describes and refers to in I Timothy 6:3-5 as men of perverse disputations, possessing corrupt minds and destitute of the truth; and concerning whom he commands: separate yourself from them!

Russell’s doctrine is basically a reconstruction (a revision) and a combining or an amalgamation of many heretical teachings derived from other individual doctrines of both past ages and modern times.

It should, however, be a matter for discernment and proving by every individual whether such shameless and frivolous

¹ II John 10,11

perversion of the Word of God does not in fact represent "another Gospel"; and as well, whether we should not proceed with all earnestness to punish such a thing when we read how Paul speaks concerning those who preach another Gospel,² that they should be accursed. These people call themselves the "Bible Students", but they misconstrue the good and wholesome Word of God in a very evil manner.

In the first place, they are not the humble to whom God giveth grace; rather, they puff themselves up with the perverted notion that they are the very people spoken of to Daniel: that in the last times many shall come upon his hidden word and his sealed writing and shall find great understanding,³ instead of realizing that this applies to the apostles of Jesus Christ, concerning whom alone Jesus said, "Ye are my witnesses unto the ends of the world."⁴ Even more to the point, "For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them."⁵ And in the eleventh verse it says, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."⁶ In contradiction to this, their Mr. "Pastor" Russell advances the calculated contention that in our days the "church" has more light than it did in the beginning times.⁷ Russell maintains that Paul was not permitted to reveal all the revelations given to him: neither to the churches, nor to the apostles.

2 Galatians 1:1-11

3 Daniel 12:4,9

4 Acts 1:8

5 Matthew 13:17

6 Matthew 13:11

7 Russell, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, Series 1, pp. 27-28.

But thanks be to God that His written Word, which comes to our aid in all such darkness that the Power of Darkness breeds, has still not been permitted to perish, so that it sheds light around every upright soul, that each is able to recognize Satan in his lie. That the above assertions are entirely false and lie-tainted error is evidenced by what Paul said to the elders of Ephesus whom he had called to Melitus, to whom he declared that he had held back nothing that was profitable to them and had not failed to declare to them the whole counsel of God, and had taught them publicly and from house to house. Paul continues, "Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."⁸

In their persuasion that they have now more light than was bestowed upon the first churches, these "Bible Students" arrive at the most lie-filled conclusions, and, what is more, at the most highly foolish notions possible. Among other things, one can read in Russell's books or writings that Jesus Christ, while He was in the flesh, was a "perfect man", but that He did not bear two natures: namely, the heavenly and the human. He adds to this that a mixture of two natures could result only in a bastard, or something impure ("a hybrid thing"). Further, before His incarnation He had been a spirit-being; still further, that it was only after the human aspect was offered or was dead that He was then elevated to the Godly nature.⁹ Herewith Russell would have us exchange the only and exalted Savior for a savior of his own conception; who, however, possesses absolutely no worth at all.

⁸ Acts 20:20,26-27

⁹ Russell, op. cit., pp. 179-185. Especially p. 184.

Yet again, God be thanked that His written Word is still present, in which Luke relates to us in his Gospel in the first chapter, the thirty-fifth verse, how the angel spoke to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." John wrote in the first chapter of his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word"; still further, "and the Word was with God"; and, even more explicitly, "and the Word was God."¹⁰

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."¹¹ But let us note carefully: He did not through His baptism at last become God's Son, as we through water and the Spirit must be born again in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven; rather, in His case, this was merely the fulfillment of all righteousness.¹² For He was, not only prior to His baptism, but much more, even before the very foundation of the world, the Son of God. Whereas we require a spiritual rebirth, He had no need of this. It was then by this fact that John was to recognize Him with complete certainty, for we read that he did not know Him.¹³ "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."¹⁴

Paul writes in I Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." What he might mean by this, says Brother Fröhlich, he explains immediately: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, [His

10 John 1:1

11 Matthew 3:17

12 Matthew 3:15

13 John 1:33

14 Romans 8:3

commandments] preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Does this not signify as lie-filled — indeed, as contributing to the corruption of the faith which is able to save — such an unwholesome assertion: that Christ was elevated to a Godly nature only after His sacrifice? It is no wonder that Jesus asked, “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”¹⁵

Yes, such a doctrine does not lead to God, but to eternal destruction. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.”¹⁶ And to such, the sort of bandage applied by Pastor Russell’s prescription is a more agreeable course than fleeing and being cleansed.¹⁷

From this and from other references in the Word of God, Brother Fröhlich concludes: God was manifest in the flesh; that He, for the sake of fallen man, sent His Son, the Only-Begotten from His bosom, into the world. The Word, which was with God in the beginning, became flesh, took upon Himself flesh and blood, in order to become the first fruits from the dead (through His resurrection).

When Jesus found the man born blind whom He made to see after he had been cast out by the Jews because of his testimony, He said to him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The

15 Luke 18:8

16 I Timothy 4:1-2

17 I John 3:3

man answered, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" Jesus spoke to him, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee."¹⁸

Here Christ was still in the flesh and said that He was the Son of God. Read how Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus spoke to him, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"¹⁹

In contradiction, Russell says that He was elevated to the Godly nature only after the human nature was offered, or was dead. Russell must make this assertion even because he teaches people, as previously mentioned, that Christ did not bear these two natures in Himself while He was upon the earth, but merely that He had been a perfect man.

And so we have the choice to believe the Voice of Truth — that He was already the Son of God while He was here upon the earth — and through this saving faith to be saved; or instead together with Russell to side with the unbelieving Jews who, because of His witness, decried Him as a blasphemer and condemned Him to death.²⁰

Mark describes clearly in the fourteenth chapter how the high priest questioned Him: "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus answered, "I am."²¹ It appears these people are smitten with such blindness that they deny there is only one Son of God who is worthy of this "Trinity" of God.

18 John 9:35-37

19 John 14:8-10

20 Matthew 26:61-67

21 Mark 14:61-62

We do not want it to escape our attention, however, that there is a difference equal to the distance between heaven and earth to be begotten of the Holy Ghost as Jesus was,²² or after the will of the flesh as all other men have been. Even if we have become children of God, we have still not proceeded forth from the Father, as though we had been with the Father beforehand as Jesus was. We are merely “adopted” or accepted as sons or daughters, but then only if we believe on the Son of God. Brother Fröhlich writes that this expression of “proceeding forth from the Father” is attributed, besides to Christ, only to the Holy Ghost. As soon as Jesus, while yet in His childhood, became conscious of Himself, He grasped that He had proceeded forth from the Father in heaven and that He had been with the Father beforehand.²³ We, however, are not able to recall that we have previously existed before our birth; but, through our new birth from heaven above, through water and the Spirit, we step into a relationship with the Father: similar to the one which Jesus had while He was upon the earth, yet only as adopted children. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”²⁴

But we may not believe even somewhat that He was elevated to the Son of God only after His resurrection, but rather that He already was while He lived upon the earth, and, indeed, even from eternity. Let us simply read how Christ caused the assembled Pharisees consternation with His question, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?”²⁵ They, to be sure, also believed

22 cf. Luke 1:30-35

23 Luke 2:49

24 I Peter 1:23; also vv. 24-25.

25 Matthew 22:41-46

that He was the son of David only.

John the Baptist was sent by God and then also compelled by God to say that he had seen and testified that this was the Son of God.²⁶ Contrariwise Russell dishonors Christ and says that He had simply been a perfect man while He was upon the earth, and that it was only later that He was elevated to the Godly nature; indeed, that He could not have borne the two natures while upon the earth, otherwise He would have been something impure ("a hybrid thing"). But contrary to this, Nathanael the Israelite, in whom was no guile, recognized Him as the Son of God.²⁷ Jesus questioned Peter, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon hearing this Jesus responded, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood [his own human understanding, or the human understanding of others] hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."²⁸

Russell wrote, however, as mentioned above, that Christ was a perfect man: in which case, one man could redeem the rest of mankind, or one creature the other. The Mormons also maintain a similar distinction between humanity and divinity, in that their doctrine proclaims that man is today what God once was: that every Mormon could conduct himself in such a manner that he could also be elevated to divinity. Therefore, the more children one produces in this earthly life, the more glorious one's dominion in the hereafter. From this thinking, they also have polygamy as a necessary part of their religion.²⁹ That Christ, however,

²⁶ John 1:6,8; also vv. 15-30 and 32-34; especially v. 34.

²⁷ John 1:48-50

²⁸ Matthew 16:13-17

²⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Vol. 18

truly had incorporated in Him both the Godly and the human natures, despite Russell's assertions, we can gather from what it pleased Him to reveal of heavenly things in His conversation with Nicodemus.³⁰

But if the rebirth of the soul of man is such a great mystery, how much more then is the incarnation of Christ? In all respects it is a matter that is comprehensible only through faith, and truly our understanding of the particulars is only piecemeal. Wherefore we must fear so that we shudder before such teachings which are so contradictory to the Gospel.

In the thirteenth verse of the above-cited chapter, Christ identifies to Nicodemus that He is in a position to speak of heavenly things; indeed, not only this, but further that He is qualified, fitted, and capable to reveal to us the will of God even because He was able to say concerning Himself that, although He was the Son of Man, yet He also descended from heaven: and even more importantly, that He had been in heaven. Christ said all these things while He was in the flesh. It is worth repeating that the incarnation of Christ is such a mystery, concerning which God has revealed to us only as much as He wished, so that it might be a criterion of our faith. But even so, it should not be forgotten that the correlation between God and man through the incarnation of Christ did not have its beginning upon the earth, but rather in heaven.³¹ Read this reference, for here Christ says again that He has come from heaven. All of this is in complete accordance with what Jesus said to the Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."³² This angered the

30 John 3:11-13, especially v 13.

31 cf. John 6:36-62

32 John 8:58

Jews, for they considered Him to be the son of Mary and the carpenter, in that they said, are not His brothers and sisters among us?³³

And so Russell also is confounded by this mystery instead of believing it in a childlike manner and with singleness of heart, and giving God the glory. But no, Russell steadfastly teaches that the Godly and the human natures were not in Christ at the same time. This in all cases even because Russell, like the Jews, ignores the miracle, the sign, that Christ was begotten by the Holy Ghost, and not by Joseph. We read in Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]." That this was incomprehensible to the understanding of man from that time even until now is apparent from the words which the virgin Mary gave in response to the angel, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"³⁴ The angel's clarification follows in verse 35, and the angel continues in verse 37 to give further clarification, in that he said, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Unlike Russell, Peter did not speak that they believed and recognized that Christ was a perfect man who did not bear in Himself the two natures. Rather, Peter said, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."³⁵ The Jews said, however, that He had merely claimed to be the Son of God. Even these Jews would gladly have accepted Him as a perfect man; but because He said He was the Son of God, the Jews spoke, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die."³⁶

33 Matthew 13:55

34 Luke 1:34

35 John 6:68-71. See also footnote 28.

36 John 19:7

The Savior, even as the Son of Man, allowed those men to experience something of His divinity when they went back and fell to the ground as He spoke to them, saying, "I am He."³⁷ These were His enemies. Contrariwise, that same "I am He" was a comfort for His dear disciples, for he added to it, "Be not afraid."³⁸ Christ comforted His disciples here as on many occasions, because they acknowledged Him not as a perfect man, as Russell does, but as the Son of God. It is with Russell as with those who spoke, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"³⁹ Yes, one can even testify of the gracious words which proceed from His mouth and yet speak, "Is not this Joseph's son?"⁴⁰ It is even this very way with Russell; otherwise he would long ago and openly have retracted his anti-scriptural assertions, for he would certainly have had enough time to do so, since having written that Christ was a perfect man. The eunuch believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and upon that faith he was able to receive baptism. But Russell has baptized people according to his doctrine that Jesus Christ had been a perfect man. Paul, however, testifies, "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh..."⁴¹ And yet again, "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."⁴²

To the contrary, none of us can maintain that he had existed before his creation: not even Adam, who before the Fall had not

37 John 18:6

38 John 6:19-20

39 John 6:42

40 Luke 4:22

41 Romans 8:3

42 Galatians 4:4

yet sinned. Adam, like all his descendents after him, was merely God's creation, as God in His Trinity said, "Come, let us make man."⁴³ Let us note that He said, "Let *us*." There was already a Trinity: Christ did not need to be elevated to it or to the Godly nature, as Russell fables, for He was with the Father beforehand. But a perfect man, as Russell would like to know Christ, is but a creation of God even as Adam was, and as such would never have been able to redeem us. God said, let Us make man into an image that is like unto Us: namely, approximating "Us". Now, this similarity is recognizable by the words of Paul, that we consist of three constituent elements: namely, of spirit, of soul, and of body — so also a trinity, and an image of the Godhead. Paul acknowledges this trinity of man in that he writes that we should be sanctified through and through; and that our spirit, together with our soul and body be preserved blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁴ How pointedly Paul writes about the spirit of man.⁴⁵ Again, Acts 17:29 says that only through the Spirit are we the offspring of God; and yet again, John 4:24 says, "God is a spirit", not a soul; and the Father of spirits.⁴⁶ It does not say "a Father of souls". There is no passage anywhere in the Word of God about the dying of the spirit. The Scripture does not recognize such a thing.

Russell, who has now become a leader of a previously enlightened brother, writes even more. In particular, Russell writes⁴⁷ that many Christians are of the opinion that our Lord's "glorified, spiritual body" is even the very same body which was

43 cf. Genesis 1:26

44 I Thessalonians 5:23

45 I Corinthians 2:11

46 Hebrews 12:9

47 Russell, *The Time is at Hand*, Series 2, pp. 128-129.

crucified and laid in the grave; and adds to this, however, that this is a great error. He says further, the body of our Lord was in any case removed from the grave in a supernatural manner, for if it had remained there, this would have presented itself as an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of His disciples, who, Russell says, were not yet instructed in spiritual matters. He writes further, we know nothing about what became of it other than that, according to Acts 2:27 and 31, it did not see corruption. Then he writes again, "Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows — nor is such knowledge necessary."⁴⁸

That a man who was once enlightened can take "communion" with such people speaks sufficiently for itself (or did Thomas not place his hands into His side, and his fingers into His nail prints?).

The Savior said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."⁴⁹ "But he spake of the temple of his body."⁵⁰ Russell says further in his book, "He is now exalted to the divine nature in the highest degree."⁵¹ Now I would like to ask, if Christ, while He was upon the earth, were merely a "perfect man", would He have been able to redeem mankind? Or would God have accepted Him into the Trinity after His resurrection, since, in fact, the Trinity has been from eternity? But Paul says, "Though he were a Son [let us note, not had just *become* a Son, but *was* the Son of God], yet learned he obedience by the things

48 Russell, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

49 John 2:19

50 John 2:21

51 Russell, op. cit., p. 107

which he suffered.”⁵²

Russell even maintains that the second coming of Christ took place in the year 1874 and that the blessed were already resurrected in the year 1878. According to his assertion, their resurrection took several years to accomplish. Both the holy apostles and all overcomers who have fallen asleep in Christ, Russell maintains, resurrected in the spring of 1878 and, together with the Lord Himself, are present with us — only we do not see them, he writes. But how does this correlate with the description throughout the Word of God of the second coming of Christ as being with power and glory? Because this time He shall not come in lowliness and weakness to plead with mankind, as Paul writes, “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God,”⁵³ but rather, together with His servants to establish judgment; but also, to have those enemies slain who will not have Him to reign over them.⁵⁴ His coming will be in such great glory that all shall see it. Indeed, even they that pierced Him shall behold Him, writes an Apostle.⁵⁵ Paul says, “We shall not all sleep [or die], but we shall all be changed,” and that, suddenly, not gradually, but much rather in a moment; and all this at the time of the last trumpet: “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”⁵⁶ Paul writes still further,⁵⁷ “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,” and he himself then describes further how the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the

52 Hebrews 5:6-8

53 II Corinthians 5:20

54 Luke 19:11-28

55 Revelation 1:7

56 I Corinthians 15:51-52

57 I Thessalonians 4:15-18

trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. We come now to the important point of our deliberations: afterwards, we, who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord. Let us not forget: it says *together, in the air*, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Thus in the air, and so shall we *ever* be with the Lord: not for a short while, but we want to emphasize the words *ever be with the Lord*. Let us not neglect the importance of these words and the point they emphasize: we shall be caught up together with them. Paul adds to this, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

If, however, the apostles and all those who have fallen asleep in the Lord were resurrected in the year 1878, as Russell attempts to establish, then our gathering together with the Lord in the air must also have already taken place, and since that date we must have all been with the Lord, indeed, as well with the apostles and all the blessed who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Yes, in truth we must not have been confronted with vexations, temptations, tribulations, anxieties, and with sorrows, for we would indeed now be with the Lord and the resurrected saints and apostles. Since this, however, has still not been fulfilled establishes Russell as a false witness, who, to discredit God, testifies that He could prepare no better blessedness for His own after their glorious translation than what is available in this vale of tears; which translation is even the beginning of glory, in that it occurs suddenly, yes, even in the twinkling of an eye.

For Russell himself, as well as all his followers who indeed have a good impression of themselves, dwell yet today in the valley of the shadow of death — upon the earth, which is shrouded in darkness, whose inhabitants are bound with the chains of darkness, and where "Babylon" reigns and holds sway, and revels in the crucifixion of the Lord and Savior. Has this

promised change now been fulfilled in us? Must we not much more endure all manner of sorrow, vexation, temptation, and grief upon this earth, which Lamech said already at the time of Noah's birth the Lord had cursed?⁵⁸ Or who is exempt from these things? From this perspective we can see how Russell is in blindness.

According to Russell's calculations,⁵⁹ what many people call Christendom, but God calls Babylon, should have been swept away at the end of the year 1914. This was to be the end of the world. This time as well, such a designation of a particular time evidenced itself in reality as audacity, and God instead punished such presumption with non-fulfillment, as He already had the same sort of earlier predictions. So also the prophecy of William Mueller (likewise an American), the founder of the Adventists, who foretold the destruction of the world in March, 1843; and then redesignated the time in 1844. So Babylon has also still not perished at all. All these non-fulfillments of such self-appointed prophets is clear evidence that, pertaining to this subject, it shall remain according to Jesus' response to the question from His apostles concerning this matter, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons."⁶⁰ Likewise, on an earlier occasion, Jesus said to His disciples, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."⁶¹ Whoever would still presume to designate a certain time (with the mistaken notion that more light is given now than was given to the apostles) falls into the judgment of God,⁶²

58 Genesis 5:28-29

59 Russell, *Thy Kingdom Come*, Series 3, p. 153.

60 Acts 1:7

61 Mark 13:32

62 Deuteronomy 18:20-22

and shall be revealed, according to verses 21 and 22, as a presumptuous person, whose presumptuousness shall be recognized by what we read in verse 22: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

But aside from all this, I would still like to use this opportunity to point out that, concerning this matter, it is written, "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."⁶³

Whosoever now has not yet stored up oil, I would like to cry to him, "Do not neglect to do so!"⁶⁴ for it is not sufficient that we have oil in our lamps only: we must also have it stored in our vessels. Specifically, it is not profitable for one to believe on Christ superficially, for we read that many believed on Him, but He did not commit Himself to them.⁶⁵

A burning lamp, that is, an awareness of God and His truth, even if one sees its glow, is still not sufficient if one does not want to be numbered among the foolish virgins. Faith must be a living faith, not a dead one (not merely a confession of the mouth). Read James, the entire second chapter, with particular attention to verse 17 and the following verses. One could even come so far that God's Word would be for him in part a light for his path and a lamp unto his feet.⁶⁶ One could even be called,⁶⁷

63 Matthew 25:6

64 cf. Matthew 25

65 John 2:23-25

66 Psalm 119:105

67 Matthew 22:14

and yet fail to make his election sure,⁶⁸ so that in every respect one would have only the appearance of godliness, but despite this would have to deny the power thereof.⁶⁹ Indeed, one could even orate like a book concerning the salvation in Christ. But if one were put to the test, he would conform to this world,⁷⁰ and would advance the assertion that it is impossible to live in this world according to the example of Jesus and the apostles.⁷¹ If one, however, wants to be numbered among the wise virgins, then one must have with him, besides the lamp of the Word of God together with the understanding of it, just as much so the oil, the Spirit and His anointing,⁷² that he may love God more than his own life.⁷³ In short, to all those who are believing and faithful and serve the truth, Christ has become more than just the Light, the Truth, and the Righteousness which is by faith. He has become to them in addition to these things the following as well: namely, the Power of their lives unto the sanctification of their spirit to an eternal redemption, so that they can with David joyfully acknowledge, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"⁷⁴ What then could have the ability to separate us from the love of God? Nothing in the whole world.⁷⁵

I return now again to Russell and his disputations. It is regrettable that this poor old man did not apply his talents better than to want to convey to men a concept of hell based upon his

68 cf. II Peter 1:9-11

69 cf. Titus 1:16

70 cf. Romans 12:1-2

71 cf. Philippians 3:17-18

72 cf. Philippians 2:13,16

73 cf. Colossians 3:12-25

74 Psalm 27:1

75 cf. Romans 8

own powers of reasoning. Can something good even come out of such striving against the word of the Lord? Let us rather believe that God's Son spoke the truth, but that contrariwise all men who contend against His word are liars. Let us read Matthew 10:28. Of a truth Christ did not present us with fairy tales, for He said that He could only speak that which He had received from His Father.

Read further Mark 9:43-50, where the subject is concerning a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched. A periodical expressed itself on these arguments (contentions) of Russell concerning hell thusly: "This interpretation is a comfort to the ungodly; for even though they do not get to heaven, they at least do not have to fear hell, if Russell is right."⁷⁶ In no wise can we restrain anyone who wants to wager on Russell's prescription; and there are now, just as there have been throughout the ages, enough careless people who do just as Esau did: they sell their birthrights. Why should such teaching not find acceptance among those who shall be lost, seeing that they contradict and withstand the counsel of God? But because we know that God is to be feared, we persuade men to the good, as Paul says.⁷⁷ And still more, "For our God is a consuming fire."⁷⁸ And yet again, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."⁷⁹

I have personally read the cited assertions of Russell in his writings, and can provide evidence of their authenticity.

These are only certain of his deceptive teachings; which

⁷⁶ Source not cited — Ed.

⁷⁷ II Corinthians 5:11

⁷⁸ Hebrews 12:29

⁷⁹ Hebrews 10:26-31

should, however, suffice to convince all the sheep of Christ that this is the voice of a stranger, concerning which Jesus testifies, the sheep will not hearken to his voice.⁸⁰ Despite this, whoever follows this voice will experience what Jesus said is an eternal truth: "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."⁸¹

I, however, would not like to hearken to this false voice, but would rather all the more abide as a fruit of the truth as it is in Christ. Therefore, out of love for the truth, I have written this, and advise all believers in Christ to remain with the truth, for only this same truth can keep us in true freedom.



80 John 10:1-5

81 John 15:4